



## REVIEW ARTICLE

# DWADASHA ASHANA PRAVICHARA: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO DIETARY PRACTICES

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has different concepts of food and nutrition for prevention of diseases, promotion of health and as a part of therapies. One such unique concept of dietetic prescription is given under the heading “*Dwadasha ashana pravichara*” (the twelve kinds of food administration). This concept gives different ways of food administration based on the quality and quantity of food in relation to the condition of the individual, be it healthy or diseased. Here, an attempt is made to analyse the practical application of this concept. For example, in reduced digestive capacity, less quantity of food is advised once a day. This is to facilitate easy digestion and to kindle the digestive fire slowly, just like a dying fire is gradually strengthened by putting in small quantities of fuel and not bulk of fuel at a time. In this way, understanding and application of these twelve administrations will help the individuals to either promote their health or to treat diseases with the help of foods.

**Key words:** Ayurveda, Swasthavritta, Ahara, Agni, Ashana, Vyadhi

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## INTRODUCTION

Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for an organism. In nutrition, diet is the sum of food consumed by a person. The word diet often implies the use of specific intake of nutrition for health. A diet that contains the proper proportions of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water necessary to maintain good health is called balanced diet.

Ayurveda too has the concept of food, nutrition and balanced diet in a broad way but the difference and uniqueness lies in individualistic approach to each individual based on their *prakriti* (body constitution), *agni* (digestive capacity) and *avastha* (health status). Various concepts of food and nutrition like *Nitya sevaniya ahara* <sup>[1]</sup> (foods for daily consumption), *Ashtavidha ahara vidhi vishesha ayatana* <sup>[2]</sup> (eight factors to be considered while planning diet), *Aharavidhi* (rules of dietetics), *Dwadasha ashana pravichara* (twelve types of food administrations) are given in the form of principles, where the understanding and application of them depends on the intelligence of physician.

### Dwadasha Ashana Pravichara

This unique concept is given in *Sushruta Samhita*. The twelve different forms of diets are,

I. *Sheeta ahara* (cold food)

- II. *Ushna ahara* (hot food)
- III. *Snigdha ahara* (food with fat)
- IV. *Ruksha ahara* (food without fat)
- V. *Drava ahara* (liquid food)
- VI. *Shushka ahara* (food without moisture)
- VII. *Ekakalika ahara* (single time food)
- VIII. *Dwikalika ahara* (two time food)
- IX. *Aushadhayukta ahara* (food with medicine)
- X. *Matraheena ahara* (less quantity of food)
- XI. *Doshaprashamana ahara* (food pacifying the vitiated dosha)
- XII. *Vriyarthahara ahara* (food to maintain health) <sup>[3]</sup>

### Sheeta ahara:

Foods with cold potency and in cold condition are recommended in conditions like, *Trishna* (excessive thirst), *Ushna* (excessive heat), *Daha* (burning sensation), *Raktapitta* (bleeding disorders), *Visha* (poisoned), *Murcha* (unconsciousness) and *Vyavaya upahata* (emaciated due to excessive copulation) <sup>[4]</sup>. Such foods are *Shali* (rice), *Yava* (barley), *Mudga* (green gram), *Ksheera* (milk), *Dhanyaka* (coriander), *Dadima* (pomegranate), *Amalaki* (Indian gooseberry) and *Sharkara* (sugar). The following can be some of the recipes:

- i. **Trishnarta and Ushnarta:** *Dhanyaka hima* with *sharkara* (cold infusion of coriander seeds with sugar) <sup>[5]</sup>, *Laja* and *Mridweeka sidda yavagu* (thick gruel

prepared with popped rice and raisins)<sup>[6]</sup>, *Laja Manda* (thin gruel prepared with popped rice)<sup>[7]</sup>, *Yashtimadhu khseerapaka* (milk cooked with *Glizerhyza glabra*), *Yava saktu manta* (cold infusion prepared with roasted barley power)<sup>[8]</sup>, *Dadima swarasa* (pomegranate juice)

- ii. **Mada:** *Kharjuradi mantha*<sup>[9]</sup> (cold infusion prepared with dates, dry grapes etc), *Upodika* and *Dadhi sidda Yavagu* (thick gruel prepared with creeping spinach and curds)<sup>[10]</sup>, *Lajamanda* with *Dadima swarasa* (thin gruel of popped rice added with pomegranate juice).
- iii. **Vishaarta and Raktapitta:** *Mudga yusha* (green gram soup)<sup>[11]</sup>, *Mudgoudana* (rice cooked with green gram soup)<sup>[12]</sup>, *Mridweekadi sidda yavagu* (thick gruel prepared with Raisins, popped rice, long pepper, honey, ginger and *Hemidesmus indicus*)<sup>[13]</sup>.
- iv. **Murcha:** *Mardweekambu* (dry grape juice)<sup>[14]</sup>, *Panaka of Ushira, Chandana* (juices prepared with khus khus grass, sandal wood).

#### **Ushna ahara:**

Foods with hot potency and serving hot are recommended in conditions like, *Kapha-Vataamaya* (diseases predominant of *Kapha*

and *Vata dosha*), *Viriktaan* (after purgation therapy), *Snehapaayi* (after *Snehapana*/oleation therapy), *Aklinna kaaya* (less *kapha* and *dravarooopi pitta* predominant condition)<sup>[15]</sup>. Such foods are *Kulattha* (horse gram), *Shunti* (ginger), *Haridra* (turmeric), *Jeeraka* (cumin seeds), *Hingu* (hing/*Asafetida*).

The following can be some of the recipes,

- i. **For Jwara:** *Ashtaguna manda*<sup>[16]</sup> (thin gruel prepared with rice, green gram, pepper, long pepper, ginger, coriander seeds, rock salt and *Asafoetida*)
- ii. **For Tamaka shwasa:** *Kulattha yusha* (soup prepared with horse gram)<sup>[17]</sup>, *Adaki yusha* (soup of Pigeon pea)<sup>[18]</sup>, *Chanaka yusha* (soup of chick pea)<sup>[19]</sup>, *Dashamoola yavagu* (thick gruel prepared with 10 drugs like *Aegel mermelos*, *Premna mucronata*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Stereospermum suaveolens*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Solanum inicum*, *Solanum xanthocarpum*, *Desmoium gangeticum*, *Uraria picta*, *Tribulus terrestris*)<sup>[20]</sup>, *Shunti sidda jala* (ginger water).
- iii. **For Amavata:** *Saptamushti yusha* (soup prepared with horse gram, green gram, barley, ginger, *Piper longum*, coriander seeds and radish)<sup>[21]</sup>, *Kwathitha jala* (water boiled and reduced to 1/4<sup>th</sup> part)<sup>[22]</sup>.

### **Snigdha ahara:**

Foods which are unctuous are recommended in conditions like, *Vatika* (body constitution predominant of *vata* /condition predominant of *vata dosha*), *ruksha deha* (dryness of body), *vyavaya upahata* (emaciated due to excessive copulation), *vyayamina* (one who performs regular physical activity) <sup>[23]</sup>. Such foods are *Ksheera* (milk), *Grita* (ghee), *Mamsa* (meat). Some of the preparations are, *Ksheera-Grita abyasa* (daily intake of milk with ghee), *Mamsa rasa* (meat soup) <sup>[24]</sup>, *Dadhyanna* (curd rice), *Payasa* (Kheer) <sup>[25]</sup>, *Krishara* (kichdi) <sup>[26]</sup>, *Masha yusha* (soup of black gram) <sup>[27]</sup>, *Mamsarasa sidda yavagu* (thick gruel prepared with meat soup).

### **Ruksha ahara:**

Foods which are dry (which absorbs excess fluids from body and requires more digestive juices for their digestion) in nature are recommended in conditions like, *Medasaabhipareeta* (covered with excessive fat), *Snigdha* (excessive unctuousness), *Meha* (Diabetes mellitus with obesity), *Kaphaabhipanna* (excessive *kapha*) <sup>[28]</sup>. Such foods are, *Yava* (barley), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Kudhanya* (millets), *Madhu* (honey). Some of the preparations are *Yava rotika* (barley roti) <sup>[29]</sup>, *Godhuma rotika* (wheat roti) <sup>[30]</sup>, *Madhudaka* (honey water) <sup>[31]</sup>, *Trina dhanya Odana/ Kudhanya sidda Anna* (rice prepare with millets) <sup>[32]</sup>, *Shaaka sidda Odana*

(vegetable pulav) <sup>[33]</sup>, *Yava mantha* (cold infusion of barley) <sup>[34]</sup>, *Udrita sneha takra/ Ruksha takra* (butter milk) <sup>[35]</sup>.

### **Drava ahara:**

Liquid foods and various juices are recommended in conditions like, *Shushka deha* (dehydrated), *Pipasarta* (excessive thirst) and in *Durbala* (weakness due to dehydration) <sup>[36]</sup>. Some of the preparations are *Shritha sheeta jala* (boiled and cooled water) <sup>[37]</sup>, *Ksheera with sita* (milk with sugar), *Aamra panaka* (raw mango juice) <sup>[38]</sup>, *Rasala panaka* (mango juice) <sup>[39]</sup>, *Nimbuka panaka* (fresh lime juice) <sup>[40]</sup>, *Chincha panaka* (tamarind juice) <sup>[41]</sup>, *Kharjuradi mantha* (cold infusion prepared with dates, dry grapes etc) <sup>[42]</sup>, *Laja manda* (thin gruel prepared with popped rice) <sup>[43]</sup>.

### **Shushka ahara:**

Foods which are dry (devoid of liquid/moisture) are recommended in, *Praklinna kaya* (*dravarooopi pitta* and *kaphayukta sharira*), *Vrani* (*Dushtavrana* – ulcers) and *Shushka mehi* (Diabetes mellitus with emaciation) <sup>[44]</sup>. Some of the preparations are *Yava saktu* (roasted barley powder) <sup>[45]</sup>, *Yava mantha* (cold infusion of barley powder) <sup>[46]</sup>, *Shushka Moolaka sidda Odana* (rice prepared along with dried radish).

### **Ekakalika ahara:**

One meal a day and *heena maatra* (less quantity) is recommended in *Durbalagni* (very less digestive capacity) <sup>[47]</sup>. This is to facilitate

easy digestion and to kindle the digestive fire slowly, just like a dying fire is gradually increased by putting in small quantities of fuel and not bulk of fuel at a time<sup>[48]</sup>.

**Dwikalika ahara:**

Two meals a day and *Maatravat* (proper quantity as per digestive capacity of a person) is recommended in *Samagni* (optimum digestive capacity) nothing but in healthy individuals<sup>[49]</sup>.

**Aoushadhayukta ahara:**

Foods prepared or added with medicines are recommended in persons who are averted to take medicines<sup>[50]</sup>. Some of the preparations are *Pravicharana sneha*<sup>[51]</sup>, *Dashamoola yavagu* (thick gruel prepared with *Dashamoola*)<sup>[52]</sup> used mainly in *Kapha-vata roga*, *Panchakola yavagu*<sup>[53]</sup> (thick gruel prepared with *Panchakola*) used mainly in *Mandagni* (less digestive power), *Mudgamalaka Yusha* (thick gruel prepared with Green gram and *Emblica officinalis*) is mainly indicated in *Vibandha* (constipation), *Sthoulya* (obesity)<sup>[54]</sup>.

**Matraheena ahara:**

Less quantity of food and once a day is recommended in *Mandagni* (weak digestive capacity) and in *Rogi* (suffering with diseases – as there is *Mandagni* always)<sup>[55]</sup>.

**Doshaprashamana ahara:**

There is change in state of *Tridoshas* (*Vata* – *Pitta* – *Kapha*) according to change in seasons

as *Chaya* (abnormal increase) – *Prakopa* (aggravation) – *Prashama* (subside) of *Tridoshas*. To avoid the ill effects from this abnormal state of *doshas* and to bring them back to normalcy, specific diet has to be prescribed in specific seasons; this is called *Doshaprashamana ahara*<sup>[56]</sup>. For example, in *Vasanta Ritu* there will be *Kapha prakopa*<sup>[57]</sup>. So, some of the preparations used are *Purana shashtika shaali Odana*, *Godhuma rotika* (wheat roti), *Patola*, *Nimbaadi tikta shaaka sidda ahara* (food prepared with bitter vegetables), *Krita Mudga yusha* (seasoned green gram soup), *Madhudaka* (honey water), *Ushna jala* (warm water)<sup>[58]</sup>.

**Vrityartha ahara:**

This is recommended for *Sharira dharanarta* (maintaining the health of individual). This includes *ahara* with *Shadrasa* (*Madhura*, *Amla*, *Lavana*, *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya*) and consumed as per one's *Prakriti* (body constitution), *Agni* (digestive capacity), *Satmya* and *Asatmya* (like – dislike and habituation)<sup>[59]</sup>.

**DISCUSSION**

The general understanding of diet prescription based on *dosha* dominance is as follows:

- Body constitution or condition dominant of *vata* – *Drava* (liquid), *Ushna* (warm and freshly cooked), *Snigdha ahara* (unctuous food).

- Body constitution or condition dominant of pitta – *sheetha* (cold), *Shushka Alpa sneha sidda ahara* (dried and very less oil used foods)
- Body constitution or condition dominant of Kapha – *Ushna* (freshly cooked and warm), *Ruksha* (dry – without oil), *shushka* (dry –without adding liquid)

Based on the intelligence and common sense of the dietician/physician, one can also combine these prescriptions. In *Mandagni* (poor digestive/absorption power), two prescriptions are mentioned viz., *Matraheena* (less quantity) and *Ekakalika* (single meal). Based on the condition of the person under treatment, he can be prescribed with less amount of food only one time a day if *Agni* (digestive capacity) is very poor or two time with less than his normal capacity if *Agni* (digestive capacity) is moderate. Similarly in *Pipasa* (excessive thirst), *Drava* (liquid) and *Sheeta* (cold potency and cool form) are to be given.

## CONCLUSION

This concept gives different ways of food administration based on the quality and quantity of food in relation to the condition of the individual, be it healthy or diseased. Understanding and application of these twelve administrations will help the individuals to

either promote their health or to treat diseases.

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