

## **AHARA KALPANA IN CHARAKA SAMHITA – A CRITICAL REVIEW**

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### **Abstract**

Charaka Samhita has been considered as the most important classical text for treatment in Ayurveda. It is in use since 4<sup>th</sup> B.C. for pursuing health among India and worldwide. It has narrated many important principles regarding healthy diet. Ahara Kalpana (food preparation) is a unique concept of Ayurveda. One can alter the properties of a Dravya (substance /food article) with the help of Kalpana. This is a very important feature for the Ayurvedic science. Acharya Charaka has described Ahara Kalpana for fulfilling both the aims of Ayurveda i.e. for Swastha(Healthy person) as well as for Atura (patient). Ahara Kalpana is an important factor in the field of prevention of health; where different Dravyas are used for maintaining and sustain the living body. In therapeutics also many Ahara Kalpanas are described as vehicle for Shodhana and Shamana drugs. Concept of Ahara Kalpana is more important to achieve the status of complete health which is said as Prakritisthapana (establishment of original health status) by Acharya Charaka. Approximately 68 Ahara Kalpanas have been described in Charaka Samhita. Study of Ahara Kalpana in Charaka Samhita with its placement related to particular Adhyaya and Sthana gives a clue in understanding mode of action for Ahara Kalpana. This particular study deals with compilation and classification of Ahara Kalpanas of Charaka Samhita.

**Key Words:** Ahara Kalpana, Charaka Samhita

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## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the ancient medical system of India. It offers one of the safest paths to health. Instead of assuming suitable food supplements and behaviors for particular person, Ayurveda points towards a simple, direct prescriptive path that is developed for every unique body type based on Prakriti, seasons, age etc. This takes all the presumption out of getting healthy. The benefits that occur are not only felt on body, but also can be seen on psychological and emotional status. Charaka Samhita has been considered as the most important classical text for treatment in Ayurveda. It is in use since 4<sup>th</sup> B.C. for pursuing health among India and worldwide.

Acharya Charaka has narrated many important principles related to the health. Ahara is the one of the prime factors described in Ayurveda for healthy living.<sup>[1]</sup> The chief purpose of Ahara is to promote growth, to supply force and heat, and to furnish material to repair the waste which is constantly taking place in the body.<sup>[2]</sup> This renovating material must be supplied through the medium of eatable and drinkable food material, and the best food is that by which the desired conclusion may be most readily and perfectly attained. The great diversity in character of the several tissues of the body makes it necessary that food should contain a variety of elements, in order that each part may be properly nourished and replenished.

To achieve this, Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of proper nutrition through proper food choices, food combining and cooking methods.<sup>[3]</sup> These all are based on the specific needs of the individual and various statuses of the Dosha, Dhatu and Agni etc. Ayurvedic nutrition is a vast topic that takes into account the individual constitution, the medicinal value of culinary spices, the theory of Shad Rasa and many more. Ayurveda gives more importance to digestion in comparison to

nutrition. It is believed that only the properly digested food can provide proper nutrition to the body.<sup>[4]</sup>

The whole concept of Ahara is divided in two parts as; one is the description of Dravyas (food substances) with its properties while another is the Kalpana (preparation). The Dravyas portion includes total mode of action of particular substance by Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka and Prabhava. These are described by Ahara Vargas in all classical texts.<sup>[5]</sup>

Ahara Kalpana is a unique concept of Ayurveda. One can alter the properties of a Dravya with the help of Kalpana. This is a very important feature for the Ayurvedic science. The same material after being subjected to different Kalpana shows contrary actions. E.g. Vrihi ( Rice) is heavy in digestion than Laja (Puffed rice) which is a preparation from the same rice.<sup>[6]</sup> Here the properties of Dravya changed due to process and only Kalpana can bring the change in it. On the basis of this example it can be said that significant change in the action of a Dravya can be introduced with the help of proper Kalpana.

Ahara Kalpana includes selection and preparation of the food articles according to personalized need and convention from particular Dravyas. It has been mentioned under various titles by various Acharyas as; Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana and Ahara Vidhi Vidhana by Charaka,<sup>[7]</sup> Ahara Vidhi<sup>[8]</sup> and Dwadash Ashana Pravicharana by Sushruta,<sup>[9]</sup> Saptavidha Ahara Kalpanas by Vriddh Vagbhatta etc.<sup>[10]</sup> Acharya described Ahara Kalpana with their different point of view, i.e. Charaka has mentioned this mainly for Swastha as guide for healthy living and supported with some extension in diseases<sup>[11]</sup> while Sushruta has mentioned Dwadash Ashana Pravicharana for Atura (patients) - the different kinds of diet for the particular condition of Agni of patient. Ahara Kalpana helps a person to make diet articles identical

with body by changing properties. These Kalpana produce new properties in the Dravyas and then only they can get ability to produce necessary effect in the body. Thus the concept of Kalpana is a tool for physician to achieve the desired goal of treatment.

Word Kalpanas denotes the process- Kalpana for using/ applying any substance.

Use of Kalpana with consideration of other elements makes the Dravyas suitable for human body. The Ahara Vargas like Shooka Dhanya (cereal grains), Shami Dhanya (legumes), Mamsa (meat) and Shaka (vegetables) cannot be used without applying Kalpana. So that in Brihatrayi all three Acharyas have mentioned Kritanna Vargas to explain the different Kalpanas made by Dravyas of other Ahara Vargas. In other words Kritanna Varga/ Ahara Kalpana are applied aspect of described Ahara Vargas. It consist prepared foods, methods of preparing of different type of food items like Lajamanda, Peya, Vilepi, Yusha, Yavaagu etc. Properties of cooked food according to their cooking techniques and raw material are described in this Vargas. Ashita, Peeta, Khadita and Leedha are applied forms of all the Kalpanas. It further explains the change in properties of Dravya when it undergoes process (Kalpanas); i.e. the Manda, Peya and Vilepi of similar Dravya differs in the properties and digestibility. Manda is easiest to digest than Peya and Vilepi.<sup>[12]</sup>

In therapeutics Ahara Kalpana is mainly used in 3 ways:

1. For Shodhana: a vehicle for purifier drug e.g. Madanaphala Leha, Modaka etc
2. For Shamana: for drug delivery to targeted area e.g. Vishaghna etc Yavaagoos
3. For Pathya/ Samsarjana: e.g. Manda, Peya, Veelepi etc

Ahara Kalpana helps to deliver drug to its targeted area. Keen observation of Ahara Kalpana applied in Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana can give a way to understand how different Ahara Kalpanas are used for drug delivery as per Ayurvedic thinking, e.g. Bhrishta (roasted) preparations of Yava (Barely) are used for Prameha that indicates that roasted food can reach to Meda Dhatu and helps in decreasing its excess liquid (Dravansha). Ahara Kalpanas are essential in treatment for considering Pathya Ahara. The diet articles which are indicated as Pathya in any diseased condition should be used with proper Ahara Kalpanas to make diet easily digestible and palatable to the patient. In long duration of diseased condition; if patient refuse to take the same diet/ Pathya then the same food article in different Ahara Kalpanas can be offered to patient.<sup>[13]</sup> This helps physician and patient both because, monotony can make the diet disliked; but using different Kalpanas it can be made pleasurable.

This is how Kritanna Varga or concept of Ahara Kalpana is very useful subject for practicing Ayurveda; but in present era many scholars of Ayurveda are facing difficulties while using Kritanna Varga. Reason behind this is unavailability or controversy regarding Dravyas, controversial references for preparing methods and missing of such ancient texts which describes routine procedure of cooking of that time. Dravyas which are used in time of those Samhitas are different and there preparing methods are also changed. Many new Dravyas also are in practice today which hasn't described in classical Samhitas. Some classical Dravyas are not in practice today. Therefore it is a need to revive Ahara Kalpanas in today's context which should be on the basis of description available in classical texts. For e.g. cooking techniques and gazettes like baking, sautéing, stewing, grilling, barbecuing, smoking, steaming, braising, microwave, induction cooker etc are not in use at that time. Hence any Samhita doesn't describe much about

properties of cooked products with these techniques. It is the duty of Ayurvedic physician to establish the merits and demerits of these processes of food preparations based on the fundamental principles of Ayurveda.

## **OBSERVATION**

### **Classification of Ahara Kalpanas of Charaka Samhita**

If one observes Kalpana in Charaka Samhita carefully, it is easy to realize that in all processes mentioned as Kalpana, Toya (Water) Sannikarsha and/or Agni (Heat) Sannikarsha are mandatory. The proportion and amount may differ in different process. So in a broad sense Kalpana can be classified under three major groups. (Table 1) The kalpanas prepared by agni sannikarsha has been sub divided into Saagni and Niragni Ahara Kalpana.<sup>[14]</sup>

- (1) Kalpanas prepared by Toya Sannikarsha.
- (2) Kalpanas prepared by Agni Sannikarsha.
- (3) Kalpanas prepared by Toya - Agni Sannikarsha.

Maximum numbers of Ahara Kalpanas are included in Toya-Agni Sannikarsha as water and fire both are essential for cooking. These are some examples only. All processes can be included in three groups on this line.

### **Classification as per vegetarian / Non vegetarian Kalpana**

Out of total 68 Kalpanas, only few Kalpanas like Veshavara, Rasa, Mamsa, Drikavanika, Andarasa and Khanishka are non vegetarian; rest of all are vegetarian.

## **DISCUSSION**

Life is impossible without food. It provides nutrition to the body to survive but it is not possible to take all the food articles in their raw form. Many of those cannot be digested

by the human digestive system in raw form. It needs to be converted in such a form that can be used by the human tissues to get sufficient nutrition from it. This is the primary aim of food processing or Ahara Kalpana. Palatability is another aspect to be considered regarding making of various Ahara Kalpana. Nutritious food if is in palatable form, it can serve its aim in better way. Apart from these two, Ayurveda describes one other most important objective for using various Ahara Kalpana i.e. changing the natural attributes. Same Dravya can be used for different purpose by applying different Procedures. Maharshi Charaka mentions this under the title of Samskara.<sup>[15]</sup>

Maharshi Charaka in Vimansthana 1<sup>st</sup> chapter defines Samskara under the description of Aharavidhi Visheshha Ayatana,<sup>[16]</sup> and the applied aspect of this principle is found in the whole text. At various places, for various purposes Charaka used different Samskara to make different Kalpana. As mentioned earlier total 68 Ahara Kalpana (Table 2) have been described in the whole Charaka Samhita. Maximum of them are found in Sutrasthana (51 Kalpana) followed by 12 (+01 by Chakrapani) in Chikitsasthana. (Table 2) Sutrasthana is the base to understand the entire Samhita. It is the most important part of text and maximum fundamental knowledge has been given in Sutra form in this part. Charaka himself says that this Sthana is the Shira (head) of the text.<sup>[17]</sup> This is the reason why maximum Ahara Kalpanas have been described in this part. Another reason is mentioning the total description of food science. For this a special Chatushka (group of four chapters) named Annapana chatushka has been described in Sutrasthana.<sup>[18]</sup> Almost all the important things regarding food i.e. description of Dravyas, their properties, their mode of action, their functions in body, concept of Viruddha Ahara etc. have been described at this place. As Ahara Kalpana is the subject of dietetics it is quite obvious that it should be describe with other aspects of dietetics.

**Table 1: Examples of few Kalpana under these three groups as shown**

Toya Sannikarsha	Agni Sannikarsha	Toya-agni Sannikarsha
Panaka	Parpata	Peya
Shaktu	Yavaka	Odana
Tandulambu	Dhana	Yavaagoo

**Table 2: Classification of Ahara Kalpana as per description in Charaka Samhita**

No.	Sthana	Adhyaya	Ahara Kalpana
1.	Sutra Sthana	2	Yavaagu
		3	Tushodaka , Veshavara
		5	Koorchika, Kilata
		6	Udamantha, Sidhu, Madhvika, Mantha
		7	Madira
		8	Saktoo
		13	Yoosha, Odana, Vilepi, Rasa, Mamsa, Soopa, Shaka, Kambalika, Khada, Leha, Paayasa, Krishara, Peya
		25	Sashkuli
		27	Lajamla, Manda, Kulmasha, Apooa, Yavaka, Vatya, Dhana, Madhukroda, Pindaka, Poopa, Poopalika, Gaudhoomika, parpata, Prithuka, Yava, Sarasa, Vimardaka, Rasala, Panaka, Raga, Shadava, Shukta, Aasuta, Shindaki, Kalamla
2.	Nidana Sthana	4	Dadhimanda, Udashvit, Katvara, Khadayoosha, Upadamsha
3.	Vimana Sthana	8	Modaka
4.	Sharira Sthana		No new Kalpana described
5.	Indriya Sthana		No new Kalpana described
6.	Chikitsa Sthana	2	Utakarika, Andarasa, Vartika
		6	Apooa
		15	Tandulambu
		20	Grinjja
		21	Avalehika
		22	Madyambu, Gudambu
		24	Rasaprilepi, Khanishka (Chakra.), Poopavarti, Shuktodaka
7.	Kalpa Sthana		No new Kalpana described
8.	Siddhi Sthana		No new Kalpana described

Maximum Ahara Kalpana found in Charaka Samhita are made from Shooka Dhanya Varga i.e. grains or cereals, followed by Shamidhanya (pulses) and Mamsa (meat) Varga. (Table 3)

The reason behind this is the use of cereals as the principal food article at the time of Charaka Samhita.<sup>[19]</sup> Even today cereals are the chief part of Indian food. It may be rice or wheat.



**Table 3: Classification of Ahara Kalpana according to Ahara Varga**

No.	Ahara Varga	Ahara Kalpana
1.	Shooka (Cereals) Dhanya	Yavaagoo, Peya, Mantha, Shaktu, Odana, Veelepi, Krushara, Shashkuli, Kulmasha, Poopavarti, Yavaka, Vatyaa, Dhana, Madhukroda, Pindaka, Poopa, Poopalika, Gaudhoomika, Prituka, Yava, Sarasaa, Modaka, Utkarika, Vartika, Tarpana, Tandulambu, Yavaudana, Apooa, Grinjja
2.	Shami (Pulses) Dhanya	Yoosha, Soopa, Parpata, Paayasa, Khadayoosha
3.	Mamsa (Meat)	Veshavara, Mamsha, Rasa, Drikalavanika, Khaanishka
4.	Shaaka (Vegetables)	Shaaka, Khada
5.	Fala (Fruits)	Vimardaka, Panaka, Raga, Shadava
6.	Harita (Green Vegetables)	Upadamsha, Aasuta, Kaambalika
7.	Madya (Alcohol)	Shidhu, Madvika, Madira, Shukta, Shindaki, Kaalamla
8.	Gorasa (Milk And milk products)	Koorchika, Kilata, Rasaalaa, Dadhimanda, Udshvit, Katvaram
9.	Ikshu (Sugarcane Products) Vikara	Leha, Rasapraleha, Rasa Pralepi

**Table 4: Classification of Ahara Kalpana as per form**

No.	Formation	Ahara Kalpana
1	Ashita-eatable	Yavaagoo, Odana, Veelepi, Krushara, Shashkuli, Kulmasha, Poopavarti, Yavaka, Vatyaa, Dhana, Madhukroda, Pindaka, Poopa, Poopalika, Gaudhoomika, Prithuka, Yava, Sarasaa, Modaka, Utkarika, Vartika, Tarpana, Yavaudana, Apooa, Grinjja, Parpata, Veshavara, Khaanishka, Kaambalika
2	Khadita-chewable	Shaktu, Shaaka, Khada, Vimardaka, Raga, Shadava Upadamsha, Koorchika, Kilata,
3	Pita-drinkable	Peya, Mantha, Tandulambu, Yoosha, Soopa, Paayasa, Khadayoosha, Mamsha, Rasa, Drikalavanika, Panaka, Aasuta, Shidhu, Madvika, Madira, Shukta, Shindaki, Kaalamla, Dadhimanda, Udshvit, Katvaram
4	Lidha-lickable	Rasaalaa, Leha

In southern and eastern part of India rice is the main part of regular diet while in western part wheat is the chief part of regular menu. Pulses are the part of regular diet in entire country but not as the principal food. It is used with rice or chapatti as secondary food article. Very less number of non vegetarian Ahara Kalpana (Table 4) indicates that since the era of Charaka Samhita Mamsa (meat) is not the routine diet in India. Detailed description of Mamsa Varga (meats) is available in about all the classical text of Ayurveda. Maharshi Charaka described Mamsa Varga in depth in Sutrasthana Ch. 27 just after cereals and pulses.<sup>[20]</sup> At that place he described subclasses of this food class as Mriga

(animals), Varichara and Varishaya (aqueous animas), Pratuda (birds), Matsya (fishes - sea food) etc. with their properties.<sup>[21]</sup> Chakrapani while commenting on the initial verses of Mamsa Varga says that Mamsa Varga is described after Shami Dhanya because for preparation of food it is of the next choice after soup etc.<sup>[22]</sup> In spite of having this much detail description, Charaka has not much used this food class to make Ahara Kalpana. It may be assumed that Maharshi Charaka was not in opinion to use meats as diet. Being a scientist he described the properties of meats but he himself not applied it as a routine diet. In Unmada Chikitsa<sup>[23]</sup> Charaka has advised not to use meat.

**Table 5: Classification according to Saagni & Niragni Ahara Kalpana**

No.	Ahara Kalpana	Agni Samyoga	Without Agni Samyoga
1.	Yavaagoo	Y	
2.	Peya	Y	
3.	Tushodaka		Y
4.	Koorchika	Y	
5.	Kilat	Y	
6.	Udmantha		Y
7.	Sidhu	Y	
8.	Madhvika	Y	
9.	Mantha		Y
10.	Madira	Y	
11.	Shaktu		Y
12.	Yoosha	Y	
13.	Odana	Y	
14.	Vilepi	Y	
15.	Soopa	Y	
16.	Shaka	Y	
17.	Kambalika	Y	
18.	Khada	Y	
19.	Leha	Y	
20.	Payas	Y	
21.	Krishara	Y	
22.	Shashkuli	Y	
23.	Kulmasha	Y	
24.	Veshavar	Y	
25.	Rasa	Y	
26.	Mansa	Y	
27.	Driklavanika	Y	
28.	Andarasa	Y	
29.	Khanishka	Y	
30.	Dadhimanda		Y
31.	Udshwita		Y
32.	Katvara		Y
33.	Khadayoosh	Y	
34.	Upadansha		Y
35.	Modaka		Y
36.	Utkarika	Y	
37.	Vartika	Y	
38.	Tarpana	Y	
39.	Tandulambu		Y
40.	Yavaudana	Y	
41.	Apooa	Y	
42.	Pramathya	Y	
43.	Madyambu		Y
44.	Gudambu		Y
45.	Shuktodaka		Y
46.	Poopavarti	Y	
47.	Yavaka	Y	
48.	Vatya	Y	
49.	Dhana	Y	
50.	Madhukroda	Y	
51.	Sapindaka	Y	
52.	Poopa	Y	
53.	Poopalika	Y	
54.	Gaudhoomika	Y	

55.	Parpata	Y	
56.	Pruthuka	Y	
57.	Yava	Y	
58.	Sarasa	Y	
59.	Rasala		Y
60.	Vimardaka		Y
61.	Panak		Y
62.	Raga	Y	
63.	Shadava	Y	
64.	Shukta		Y
65.	Aasuta		Y
66.	Shindaki		Y
67.	Kalamla		Y
68.	Rasapraleh	Y	

Note: Y =Yes

Even though when and where meats are needed, Charaka used it without any hesitation. Description regarding food in Rajyakshama is the best example of this where meats of unusual birds and animals are prescribed for the benefit of the patient. Agni is medium for transformation. With use of heat diet articles become soft and easily digestible in compare to raw food. This is the reason maximum numbers of Ahara Kalpana are Saagni- cooked with heat. (Table 5) Only Agni is capable to change the Pancha Bhautic composition of any Dravya. It is the Paka or Pachana process which changes the whole composition.<sup>[24]</sup> Any kind of transformation on this universe is not possible without the functioning of Agni. Therefore all the principle food articles described in Charaka Samhita are Saagni Ahara Kalpana.

## CONCLUSION

Charaka Samhita, an authentic treasure of knowledge for Ayurveda described 68 Ahara Kalpanas aimed to maintain the health and also for therapeutic use. From different classifications it is cleared that maximum number of Kalpanas are described in Sutrasthana as it is the first Sthana with all principles together. Application of Kalpanas can be seen in Chikitsa and Kalpa Sthana too. Majority of Kalpanas are made of Toya - Agni Samyoga and from vegetarian ingredients. Maximum Kalpanas are made of Shooka Dhanya as it is the principle food article.

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