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Role of *Santulit Ahara* (Balanced diet) As Preventive Medicine in *Mahasrotas*

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Abstract:

Acharya Charka has explained the *Moolsthana* of *Mahasrotas* as the long channel present from *Mukha* to *Guda* i.e. alimentary canal along with the allied organs and *Hridayam*. *Poshaktatva* (Nutrients) from *Santulit Ahara* (balanced diet) absorbed from *Mahasrotas* (GIT) is the main cause of digestive health and does play major role in maintaining the life of a person. No medicine is equivalent to *Ahara*. As *Ahara* is one among the three pillars supporting to life. According to *Ayurveda* all the causes of *Mahasrotas dushti* are related to *Aahara*. Now a day's just because of consumption of *Asantulit Ahara* (imbalanced diet) increase in diseases of *Mahasrotas* occur. In this present study we can see how *Aahara* plays an important role as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas*.

Keywords –

Srotas, *Moolsthana*, *Mahasrotas*, *Santulit Ahara*, Balanced diet, Preventive medicine.

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INTRODUCTION:

Ayurved Sharir explained the unique concept of "Srotas" which means the channels present in the body which are helpful in the production and conduction of body constituents from one place to another place in the body. *Mahasrotas* is one among the important *Srotas* starting from the oral cavity (*Mukha*) to anal opening (*Guda*). *Mahasrotas* is the main digestive path in the middle of the body. The balanced and imbalanced food articles are responsible for the digestive health and their diseases respectively. ⁽¹⁾ Hence, balanced diet is necessary for good digestive health and prevention of diseases. Hence, this current survey study is carried out to observe the role of *Santulit Ahara* as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas*.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE –

To study role of *Santulit Ahara* as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas*.

Objectives -

1. To study the literature about *Mahasrotas*.
2. To define the concept of *Santulit Ahara*.
3. To study the literature about role of *Santulit Ahara* as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas*.
4. To study the above project by survey.

OBSERVATIONS:**1. To study the literature about Mahasrotas –**

Srotas are meant for carrying the (moving) *dhatu*s from one place to another and are not for stable ones. ⁽²⁾ *Acharya Charka* has described the *Moolsthana* of *Mahasrotas* as the long channel present from mouth cavity (*Mukha*) to anal opening (*Guda*) i.e. alimentary canal along with the allied organs. ⁽³⁾ *Koshtha* (belly) is the common synonym of *Mahasrotas* in the middle of the body, contains oral cavity above and then going downwards to *Amashaya* (stomach) and lastly *Pakavashaya* (large intestine). ⁽⁴⁾

Mahasrotas is also known as *Antah Rog Marg* because it acts as an excretory organ for expelling out various vitiated *dosha* which have afflicted the periphery and middle of the body. ⁽⁵⁾

Food carrying channels are two with their roots being *Amashaya* and food carrying *dhamani*. Its origin in *Amashaya*. The symptoms of its affection are *Annabhilasha* (loss of appetite), *Arochaka* (anorexia), *Avipak* (indigestion) and *Chardi* (vomiting), etc. All the causes of its affection are related to *ahara*. ⁽⁶⁾

2. To define the concept of Santulit Ahara –

Ahara is one among the three pillars supporting life. ⁽⁷⁾ *Ahara* has been given the prime importance since *Vedic* period. It is considered as a *Brahma* in *Upanishad*. ⁽⁸⁾ *Acharya Charka* has explained about *Santulit Ahara* is the food articles in such a quantities and proportion's that which maintain the equilibrium of bodily *Dhatu*s and help in the eliminating the disturbance of their equilibrium, by preventing it from diseases. ⁽⁹⁾ The balanced and imbalanced food articles are responsible for digestive health, maintains of healthy state of life and their diseases respectively. *Acharya Kashyap* gives *ahara* the name "Mahabhaisajya" and "Prandharana" as no medicine is equivalent to *Ahara*. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Diet is medicine but medicine is not diet. It is possible to make a person disease free with just a balanced diet. *Ahara* determines the origin of human being and form the chief source of their bodily elements as well as the aluminous (*ojas*) principle of their organism. ⁽¹¹⁾ Food is the source of growth, strength and healthful glow of organic beings. It is the irregularity (*vaishamya*) of diet which brings the ill-health. According to *Acharya Sushruta* Diet is classified into four types – solid food (*Ashita*), liquids (*Peeta*), food taken by licking (*Ledham*) and food that chewed (*Khadita*). ⁽¹²⁾ According to modern science balanced diet is defined as one which contains a variety of food in such a quantities and proportions that the need for maintain health, viability and general wellbeing and also makes to withstand short duration of leanness. ⁽¹³⁾ A balanced diet contains food items

like cereals, pulses, leafy vegetables, milk, oil and fats. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Proteins – In the nutritional diet proteins have greatest value. One fifth of the body weight of an individual is constituted by proteins. Proteins are complex organic homogenous compounds that contain nitrogen and thus they differ from carbohydrates and fats. Proteins should be included about 16 % of our daily diet. Proteins are built of amino acids. Human body requires 22 amino acids. Out of these 8 are called ‘essential’ because the body cannot synthesise them in sufficient quantity. These must be obtained from the resources we consume.

Proteins are needed by the body for body building, repair and maintenance of body tissue, maintenance of osmotic pressure and synthesis of certain substances like antibodies, plasma proteins, haemoglobin, enzymes, hormones and coagulation factors. Proteins are connected with the immune mechanism of the body.

Humans obtain protein from two main dietary sources (a) animal sources: Milk, meat, eggs, cheese, fish and fowl. (b) Vegetable sources: Pulses, cereals, beans, oil-seed cakes, etc.

Fats – Fats are solid at 20 deg.C, they are called as ‘oils’ if they are liquids at that temperature. Fats and oils are sources of energy. Fatty acids are divided into saturated fatty acids such as lauric, palmitic and stearic acids, and unsaturated fatty acids which are further divided into monounsaturated (MUFA) (e.g. Oleic acid) and poly-unsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) (e.g., linoleic acid and alpha- linoleic acid) mostly found in vegetable oil. Fats in the body supports viscera such as heart, kidney and intestine, and fat beneath the skin provides insulation against cold.

Carbohydrates - Major component of food and main source of energy, providing 4 kcal per gram. Carbohydrates are also essential for the oxidation of fats and for the synthesis of certain non-essential amino acids. There are three main sources of

carbohydrates, viz., starches, sugar and cellulose. Starch is the basic to the human diet. It is found in abundance in cereals, roots and tubers. Free sugars along with starches constitute a key source of energy. Cellulose which is the indigestible component of carbohydrate with scarcely any nutritive value, contributes to dietary fibre.

According to *Ayurveda Santulit Ahara* (Balanced diet) consists-

Cereals-

Shali (rice) – It is cooling in potency, light in digestion and imparts strength. It is a good disinfectant and anti-toxic. Wheat –Tonic, rejuvenicent, and improves the relish for food.

Pulses-

Kudhanya – Pungent in digestion, purify and invigorate the organ of vision. *Kulattha* proves curative in cases of *Anaha*, obesity, piles, hic-cough and dyspnoea. *Tilam* acts as a curative as a plaster for ulcers. Beneficial to the skin, teeth, improves the intellect and digestion, helps the growth.

Vegetable – Proves curative in cases of *Anaha* and *Ashthila*. Improves digestion, laxative and proves curative in many diseases.

Roots and tubers – *Vidari-kanda* acts as constructive tonic, *Shatavari kanda* as appetising and proves curative in cases of *Grahani* (mesenteric diarrhea) and piles.

3. To study literature about the role of Santulit Ahara as preventive medicine in Mahasrotas –

As per above explained importance of *Santulit Ahara*, *Aahara* may be defined as the kind of food on which a person or group lives and life is impossible without *Ahara*. By definition, preventive medicine is applied to “healthy” people. Its primary objective is prevention of disease and promotion of health. ⁽¹⁵⁾ By definition of Balanced diet contains variety of food in proper quantities and proportion and according to *Ayurveda Matra* (quantity) of diet is that which does not harm the quantity can’t be the same for all persons because the strength of

digestive fire varies in each individual. ⁽¹⁶⁾ As *Mahasrotas* contains *Grahani* which is the place of *Pachaka Pitta*. The *Pachakagni* digests food. Good digestion depends on *Agni* (digestive fire). It means consumption of imbalanced diet leads to *Agnimandya* (weak digestion). Hence it is necessary to consume balanced diet for good digestion. According to *Ayurveda* all the causes of *Mahasrotas dushti* are related to *Aahara*. Now a day's just because of consumption of *Asantulit Aahara* (imbalanced diet) people are suffering from many GIT related diseases. Apart from taking long term treatment for these diseases it is difficult to cure perfectly. Hence it is necessary to prevent our body from these diseases by consumption of *Santulit Ahara*.

Material and Methods –

For survey study of role of *Santulit Ahara* as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas* we prepared a questionnaire.

Methodology –

- I. Study design: - Type of study design – Survey study.
- II. Study setting: - At our Hospital and institute.
- III. Study duration: - 30 days
- IV. Sample size: - 30 Subjects.
- V. Sampling technique: - Random study.
- VI. Methods of selection of study subjects: -
 - a. Inclusion criteria:
 1. Age group between 20-30 years irrespective to gender.
 2. Subject having regular dietary habit.
 - b. Exclusion criteria:
 1. Subjects having age below 20 and above 30 years.
 2. Subjects having irregular dietary habit.

Table 1.- Role of Santulit Ahara as preventive medicine in Mahasrotas Questionnaire –

SN	Questions	Answers			
1.	Have you consumed following food items in your daily diet? a) Milk/Milk made food items b) Chapati c) Rice d) Dal e) Vegetable	YES	NO		
2.	What is frequency of irregularity in consumption of balanced diet?	Everyday	Once in a week	Once in a fortnight	Once in a month
3.	Have you experienced any symptoms out of following? If YES then write down its frequency.	1)Anorexia 2)Heartburn 3)Nausea 4)Tastelessness 4)Vomiting 5) No symptoms.			

The survey study envisaged the following questions and their objectives listed below in table

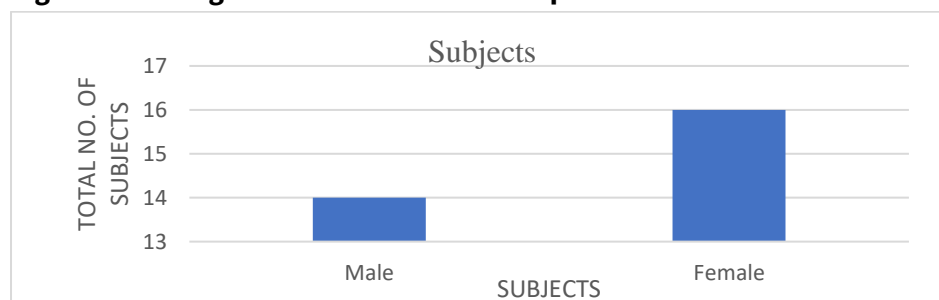
Table 2. - The survey study questions and their objectives.

Survey Study Questions	Objectives
Have you consumed following food items in your daily diet?	To understand the consumption rate and frequency of the balanced diet into their daily habit.
What is frequency of irregularity in consumption of balanced diet?	
Have you experienced any symptoms out of following? If YES then write down it's frequency.	To evaluate the incidence of GIT problems due to consumption of balanced diet.

Observation- We have conducted survey on 30 subjects about consumption of *Santulit Ahara* and occurrence of symptoms of *Mahasrotas dushti*, and following observations are seen. Among total subjects 46.66% (N=14) were male and 53.33% (N=16) female subjects.

Table 3.1 – Categorical distribution of sample chosen.

Category	Subjects
Male	14
Female	16
Total	30

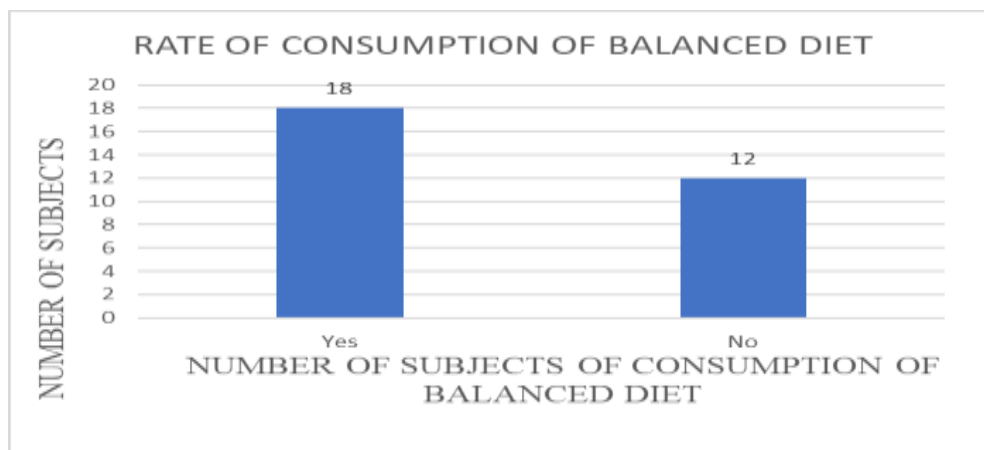
Figure3.1- Categorical distribution of sample chosen.

Subjects were 60% (N=18) regular and 40% (N=12) were found irregular in consumption of balanced diet.

Table 3.2- Categorical distribution of rate of regularity in consumption of balanced diet.

Category	Subjects
Yes	18
No	12

Figure 3.2: Categorical distribution of rate of regularity in consumption of balanced diet.

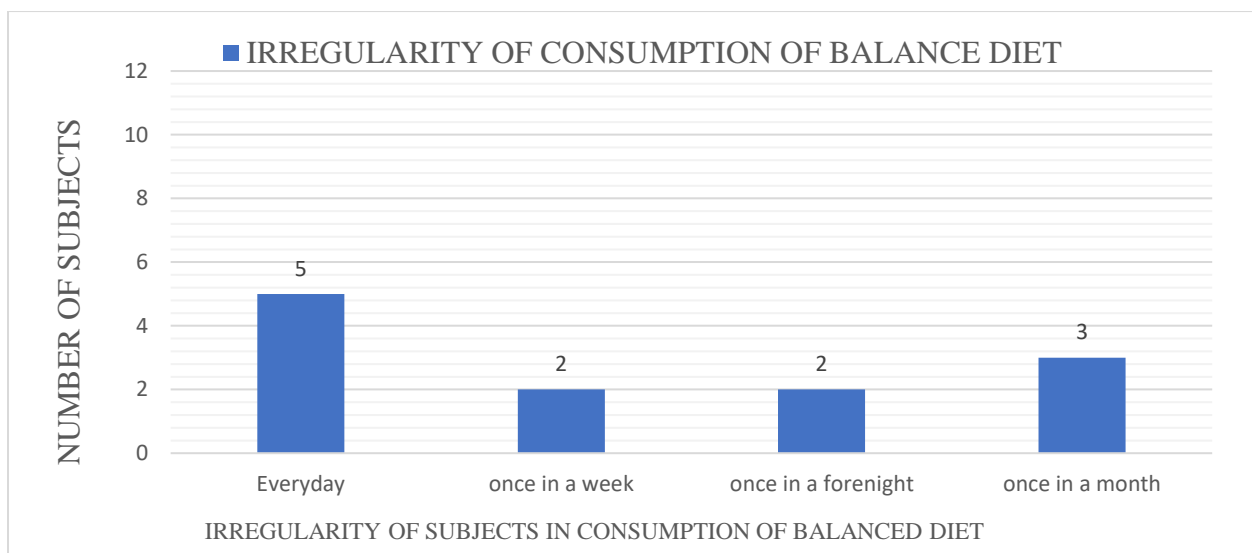


Irregularity in consumption of balanced diet amongst subjects- 16.66% subjects are found to be irregular in consuming balanced diet every day, while 6.66% consuming once in a week, 6.66% once a fortnight and 10% subjects are irregular once in a month.

Table 3.3 - Categorical distribution of irregularity in consumption of balanced diet.

Category	Subjects
Everyday	5
Once in a week	2
Once in a fortnight	2
Once in a month	3

Figure 3.3: - Categorical distribution of irregularity in consumption of balanced diet.

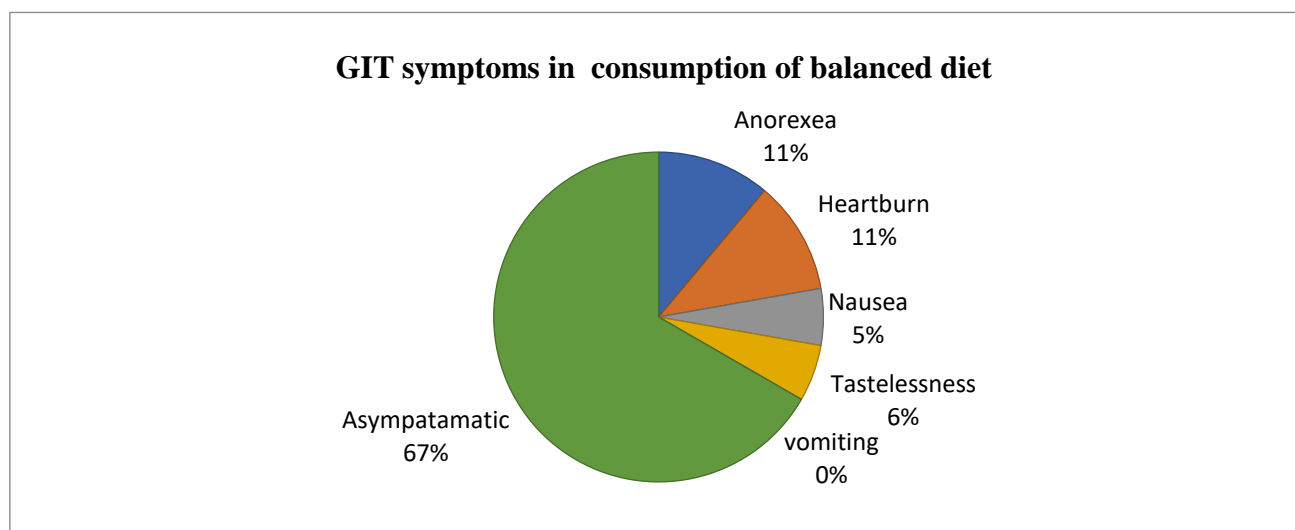


Occurrence of GIT (Mahasrotas) symptoms in consumption of balanced diet - Out of 18 regular balanced diet consumers 67% subjects does not have occurrence of any GIT (Mahasrotas) related symptoms, 11% have anorexia, 11% have heartburn, 6% have tastelessness, 5% have nausea and 0% means none of the subject have vomiting.

Table 3.4: Categorical distribution of occurrence of GIT symptoms in consumption of balanced diet.

Category	Subjects
Asymptomatic	67%
Anorexia	11%
Heartburn	11%
Tastelessness	6%
Nausea	5%
Vomiting	0%

Figure 3.4: Categorical distribution of occurrence of GIT symptoms in consumption of balanced diet.

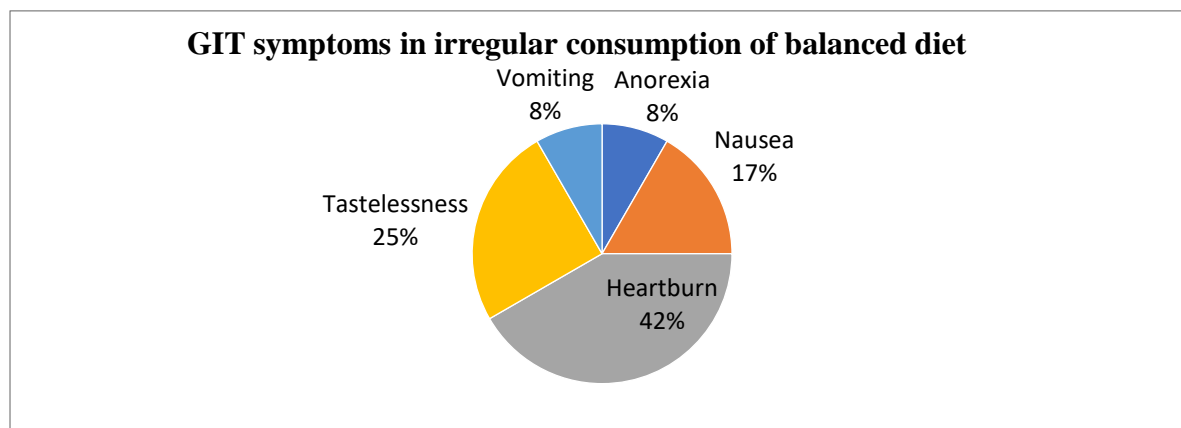


Occurrence of GIT (Mahasrotas) symptoms in irregular consumption of balanced diet – Out of 12 irregular balanced diet consumers 42% have heartburn, 25% tastelessness, 17% nausea, 8% anorexia and 8% vomiting.

Table 3.5: Categorical distribution of occurrence of GIT symptoms in irregular consumption of balanced diet.

Category	Subjects
Heartburn	42%
Tastelessness	25%
Nausea	17%
Anorexia	8%
Vomiting	8%

Figure3.5: Categorical distribution of occurrence of GIT symptoms in irregular consumption of balanced diet.



DISCUSSION –

Since ancient time *Ahara* is known as *Brahma*. *Santulit Ahara* is which maintain equilibrium of bodily *dhatu*s, circulates through *Mahasrotas* and help in eliminating the disturbance of their equilibrium, by preventing diseases. This survey reveals that total of 30 subjects participated in the study. Among them 46.66% male and 53.33% females. Out of that 60% participants were regular and 40% were irregular balanced diet consumers. The majority participants were regular balanced diet consumers. *Santulit ahara* (balanced diet) is responsible for good digestive health. It is the chief source of bodily elements as well as the aluminous (*ojas*) principle of their organism. But irregularity in consumption of *Santulit ahara* (balanced diet) brings ill health. Now a days due to the changed busy lifestyle there is increase in irregularity in consumption of balanced diet and also increase in intake of imbalanced diet which are the main cause of many digestive related diseases.

The study highlights that regular balanced diet consumers have less occurrence of *Mahasrotas* (GIT) related symptoms. The study shows that most of the participants were irregular every day, whereas the least percentage of participants eat once a fortnight. Among irregular balanced diet consumers there is more occurrence of *Mahasrotas* (GIT) related symptoms. With the help of the study

it is observed that subjects consuming *Santulit Ahara* have fewer occurrences of diseases of *Mahasrotas*.

CONCLUSION –

Santulit Ahara is most dominant cause for good digestive health. In above survey study it is cleared that consumption of irregular balanced diet is reason behind *Mahasrotas* (GIT) related diseases. *Santulit Ahara* plays an important role as preventive medicine in *Mahasrotas*. So, it is possible to make a person disease free with just a *Santulit Ahara*.

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Conflicts of interest

Nil.

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