

Āhāra And Vyādhi Kṣhamatva: An Integrative Ayurvedic Review Of Diet, Immune Resilience And Health Preservation

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In Ayurvedic theory, the concept of *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* (disease-resistance/immunity) is foundational to health and longevity, and central to the preventive dimension of Ayurveda. Diet (*Āhāra*) is one of the key pillars influencing immunity, yet integrative reviews of classical Ayurvedic dietary principles in light of modern immunology remain limited. **Methods:** A literature review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts (e.g., Charaka Samhitā, Sushruta Samhitā, Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya), and modern biomedical databases (PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH portals) for English-language publications up to 2025. Inclusion criteria encompassed conceptual studies on *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* and *Āhāra*, experimental or clinical research addressing diet-immune links in Ayurveda, and reviews on immunomodulation via diet or Rasāyana. Exclusion criteria included non-English articles without abstract, purely phytochemical studies without immunity context, and animal-only studies lacking translational relevance. **Results:** The review identified thematic domains: (i) Ayurvedic conceptualization of immunity (*Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*, *Ojas*, *Bala*) and the role of *Āhāra*; (ii) dietary quality, digestive/metabolic fire (Āgni), and immune resilience; (iii) classical prescriptions of healthy vs incompatible foods (*Hita/Ahita Āhāra*) and their immunological correlates; (iv) modern evidence linking nutrition, gut-immune axis, and Ayurvedic interpretations; and (v) gaps in clinical trials and mechanistic bridging. Classical texts consistently emphasize that wholesome diet, regulated digestion and tissue nourishment underpin *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*; modern studies confirm diet's role in innate and adaptive immunity, gut microbiome, and inflammatory modulation. **Discussion:** The integrative analysis underscores that Ayurvedic dietary guidelines (quality, quantity, compatibility, and timing) can be interpreted in modern immunological terms (nutrient-immune signalling, gut-

microbiome-immune axis, metabolic health). Nevertheless, translational gaps persist particularly the lack of well-designed human trials linking Ayurvedic dietary regimens directly to immune endpoints. Future research should employ standardized dietary interventions rooted in Ayurveda, with immunologic biomarkers and longitudinal design. **Conclusion:** This review reinforces that *Āhāra* is a central modulator of *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* in Ayurveda, and invites further rigorous research to operationalize these ancient principles into contemporary immune-health frameworks.

Keywords: *Āhāra*, Immunity, *Ojas*, *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*, *Vyayama*

INTRODUCTION

Within the Ayurvedic system of medicine, health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of dynamic equilibrium among the bodily humours (*Doshas*), tissues (*Dhātus*), digestive fire (*Āgni*), and the subtle essence of vitality and strength (*Ojas*).^[1-2] The classical texts articulate the idea that a primary objective of life (*Āyur*) is to preserve health (*Svasthya*) and thereby resist disease (*Vyadhi*).^[3-4] Central to this resistance is the concept of *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* – the power of the body to prevent onset of disease, combat progression, and facilitate recovery.^[5-6]

Āhāra (diet/nutrition) occupies a prominent place among the factors that support immunity in Ayurveda. As one of the key limbs of *Dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), diet is framed not only as a means of nourishment, but as a strategic modifier of *Doshas*, *Dhātus*, *Āgni* and *Ojas*.^[7-8] Classical texts emphasise that when *Āhāra* is wholesome (*Hita*) and digestion is optimal, the tissues are well-nourished, *Ojas* is abundant and *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* is strong. Conversely, incompatible (*Ahita*) diet, weak digestion (*Mandāgni*), or disturbed channels (*Srotas*) predispose to diminished resistance and increased susceptibility.^[9-10]

Despite the rich conceptual framework, there is a need for systematic integration of classical Ayurvedic dietary theory with contemporary immunological evidence^[11]. The aim of this review is to examine the relationship between *Āhāra* and *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* from an Ayurvedic perspective: specifically, to analyse classical textual sources on diet and immunity; map these to modern immunonutritional science; and identify gaps and future research directions for operationalizing Ayurvedic dietary principles in immune health.^[12-13] The objectives are to synthesise thematic evidence on diet-immune interactions within Ayurveda, critically appraise modern correlates, and propose an integrative framework for immune resilience through *Āhāra*.^[14-15]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review adopted a narrative integrative approach, combining classical Ayurvedic textual sources and modern scientific literature in the area of diet and immunity.^[16-17]

Literature search strategy: The primary search of classical texts included the Charaka Samhitā (*Sūtrasthāna*, *Nidāna*, *Śarīra*, etc.), the Sushruta Samhitā and the Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya (*Sūtrasthāna*, *Uttara Sthāna*) with their commentaries (e.g., *Chakrapāṇidatta*, *Dalhana*).^[18] Search terms in Sanskrit/English included “*Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*”, “*Bala*”, “*Ojas*”, “*Āhāra*”, “*Āgni*”, “*Rasāyana*”, “*Hita Āhāra*”, “*Ahita Āhāra*”.^[19-20] Secondary search of modern literature used electronic databases: PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, AYUSH Research Portal, DHARA, Google Scholar.^[21] Keywords included: “immunity AND Ayurveda”, “diet AND immunity”, “*Āhāra* AND immune”, “*Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* AND *Ojas*”, “gut microbiome

AND Ayurveda”.^[22-23]

Inclusion criteria: (1) Articles in English (or where sufficient English abstract available) that explicitly address Ayurvedic immunity (*Vyādhi Kṣhamatva/Bala/Ojas*) and/or diet (*Āhāra*) and immunity; (2) Experimental, clinical, observational studies linking diet/nutrition and immunity, especially in an Ayurvedic context; (3) Review articles over the past 20 years on Ayurvedic immunomodulation or diet-immune interaction; (4) Textual exegesis from classical Ayurvedic sources referencing *Āhāra* and immunity.^[24-25]

Exclusion criteria: (1) Articles in languages other than English without abstract; (2) Studies solely on phytochemical/herbal profiling without relation to diet or immunity; (3) Animal-only mechanistic studies with no translational linkage to immune outcomes; (4) Duplicate publications, editorial/opinion pieces without primary data or critical review.^[26-27]

Study selection and synthesis: Titles and abstracts were screened by the authors for eligibility. Full texts of selected articles were retrieved. Data were extracted under thematic headings (dietary quality, digestion/*Agni*, tissue nourishment/*Dhātuposhana*, *Rasāyana*, modern immune pathways).^[28] Classical references were collated by chapter/verse and matched with modern evidence. Thematic synthesis was undertaken, combining Ayurvedic conceptual constructs and modern immunological correlates, and summarised into the “Observations and Results” section.^[29-30]

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

In this section, the findings from classical Ayurvedic literature alongside modern research are presented thematically in relation to *Āhāra* and *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* (immunity).

Ayurvedic conceptualisation of *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* and the role of *Āhāra*

In classical Ayurvedic texts, the term *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* (or *Vyādhi-kṣhamatva*) is defined in two primary senses: “*Vyādhibala-virodhitvam*” (the strength to oppose the power of disease) and “*Vyādhi-utpāda-pratibandhakatvam*” (the ability to prevent disease occurrence) as explained by commentator *Chakrapāṇidatta* on the *Sutrasthāna* of *Charaka Samhitā*. The texts also equate this capacity of the body to produce wholesome essence (*Ojas*) and maintain *Bala* (strength). *Āhāra* in this schema is one of the core determinants of such resistance. For example, *Charaka* lists “*Āhāra-paripālana*” (observance of appropriate diet) among the factors promoting health and disease-resistance. The notion of *Hita* (wholesome) and *Ahita* (unwholesome) *Āhāra* appears frequently, where the former nourishes tissues, preserves *Dhātus*, maintains *Agni*, and supports *Ojas*; the latter vitiates *Doshas*, weakens *Dhātus*, disturbs *Agni* and diminishes *Ojas* and thereby reduces *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*.

From modern review perspectives, *Āhāra* is recognised as a modulator of immune function – nutrition determines barrier integrity, innate immune cell activity, adaptive immunity, inflammatory tone, and recovery. For instance, *Thakur et al. (2021)* review that diet quality, digestion (*Agni*), exercise, sleep – all key Ayurvedic constructs – map to immune competence in contemporary science.

Thus a foundational tenet emerges: proper diet, via wholesome foods and their assimilation, underpins the Ayurvedic ideal of immune strength (*Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*).

Dietary Quality, *Āgni* (Digestive Fire), *Dhātuposhana* and Immune Resilience

In Ayurveda, the concept of *Āgni* (digestive/metabolic fire) plays a pivotal role: only when *Agni* is normal (*SamaAgni*) does proper digestion, assimilation and tissue formation (*Dhātuposhana*) occur; in turn, this leads to robust *Ojas* and *Bala*, and thereby strong *Vyādhi*

Kṣhamatva. On the contrary, *Mandāgni* (weak digestion) or *Vikṛta Agni* (disturbed metabolism) leads to production of *Ama* (toxins) and vitiation of *Doshas*, which weakens immunity. In dietary terms, *Hita Āhāra* is characterised by freshness, digestibility, and suitability to one's *Prakṛti* (constitution), season (*Ritu*) and place (*Desha*). *Ahita Āhāra* – including incompatible combinations, stale food, excess/deficient quantity, wrong time – impair *Agni*, tissue nourishment and ultimately immune resilience. For example, research shows persons consuming improper diet (*Asatmya, Ahita*) have reduced “*Bala*” and increased susceptibility to disease.

Modern immunonutritional science supports the link between digestion, nutrient assimilation, gut integrity and immune health. The gut-immune axis is central to innate and adaptive immunity; diet influences microbiome composition, barrier integrity, TLR signalling, cytokine milieu, etc. Thus the Ayurvedic construct of *Agni* and tissue nourishment aligns with emerging evidence that compromised digestion and malnutrition impair immune competence, and that optimal nutrient intake is crucial for immunologic robustness.

Āhāra-Vidhi (Dietary Rules), Rasāyana, Ojas and Practical Immune Enhancement
Classical texts prescribe detailed dietary rules (*Āhāra-Vidhi*) such as eating in moderation (*Matra-sītiya*), eating according to one's capacity (*Yoga*), avoiding incompatible foods (*Viruddha-Ahāra*) and seasonally appropriate foods (*Ritucharya*). These guidelines aim to maintain *Agni*, *Dhātuposhana* and thereby *Ojas* and *Bala*. Loss of *Ojas* is directly correlated with diminished *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*; some texts classify states of *Ojas* disturbance (e.g., *Ojakṣaya, Ojavṛksa*).

The therapeutic concept of *Rasāyana* (rejuvenation) is also deeply linked to immune enhancement in Ayurvedic literature. *Rasāyana* therapies and herbs are described as enhancing *Dhātuposhana*, promoting *Ojas*, and thus strengthening *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*. In dietary terms, foods considered *Rasāyana* in Ayurveda (e.g., milk with herbs, ghee, certain fruits, whole grains) are thought to boost immunity, resilience and longevity. Modern research into immunomodulatory botanicals, antioxidant-rich nutrients, probiotic and prebiotic foods, and nutritional signalling pathways provides correlates to this.

For example, evidence shows that micronutrient-rich diets, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, pre- and probiotic interventions, and whole-food patterns enhance immune parameters, reduce infection risk and attenuate inflammatory responses. From the Ayurvedic lens, this maps to nourishing *Āhāra*, strengthening *Agni*, optimizing *Dhātuposhana* and preserving *Ojas*.

Modern research evidence mapping to Āhāra–Immunity axis in Ayurveda

Contemporary reviews and research (e.g., Nandini 2022; Thakur 2021) demonstrate that the factors influencing immunity—digestion, diet, exercise, sleep, mental strength—are consistent with Ayurvedic frameworks. For example, studies show that nutritional deficiencies (vitamins A, D, zinc, selenium) impair innate and adaptive immunity; diet patterns (Mediterranean diet vs Western processed diet) modulate inflammation and immune cell profiles. Gut microbiome research supports the Ayurvedic emphasis on *Srotas* (channels) and *Dhātuposhana*: diet influences gut barrier and ultimately systemic immunity.

However, specific interventional trials on Ayurvedic dietary regimens (*Hita/Ahita* food, *Viruddha-Ahāra*) and immune biomarkers are limited. Many studies focus on herbal immunomodulators rather than comprehensive dietary regimen. Moreover, while Ayurveda emphasises individualised diet based on *Prakṛti*, seasons, *Agni* and *Desha*, modern nutrition

research has been largely one-size-fits-all.

Synthesis of findings and thematic summary

- Wholesome diet (fresh, seasonal, suitable to constitution) → optimal Agni → proper *Dhātuposhana* → abundant *Ojas/Bala* → strong *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva*.
- Unwholesome diet (incompatible, stale, excessive/deficient, mis-timed) → disturbed *Agni/Ama* formation → *Dosha/Dhātu* imbalance → reduced *Ojas/Bala* → lowered disease-resistance.
- Dietary rules (*Āhāra-Vidhi*) and *Rasāyana* (diet + herbs + lifestyle) provide practical pathways to enhance immunity in Ayurveda.
- Modern immunonutrition evidence confirms diet's central role in immunity, digestion/gut health, tissue nourishment and immune resilience — offering a translational anchor for Ayurvedic constructs.
- Gaps remain in human trials bridging Ayurvedic diet-immune theory (*Āhāra/Rasāyana*) with measurable immune endpoints, and few studies incorporate personalised diet according to *Prakṛti* or seasonal/regimen variations.

DISCUSSION

This review critically evaluates how Ayurvedic principles of *Āhāra* and *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* align with contemporary immunological science, and highlights gaps and future prospects.^[31] The Ayurvedic model positions diet as foundational to immunity: it emphasises not only the type of food but its appropriateness (*Hita/Ahita*), digestibility (*Agni*), timing, compatibility and individualisation (*Prakṛti/Desha/Ritu*). Modern immunonutrition recognises many of these dimensions—nutrient adequacy, diet quality, gut integrity, inflammation modulation, and individual variation in immune response.^[32-33] Thus there is strong conceptual congruence: both systems recognise that proper nourishment, digestion/absorption, tissue health and systemic homeostasis underpin immune resilience.^[34]

However, several divergences and gaps emerge. Ayurveda's focus on *Ojas*, *Bala* and *Dhātuposhana* offers a holistic and multi-dimensional view of immunity — extending beyond pathogen-specific responses to include strength, recovery, endurance and vitality. Modern immunology tends to emphasize cellular/molecular pathways (e.g., T-cells, cytokines, immunoglobulins) and less frequently incorporates holistic measures of bodily vitality or personalised constitution.^[35-36] The Ayurvedic emphasis on diet in the context of daily (*Dinacharya*) and seasonal (*Ritucharya*) regimen, and individual constitution, has limited translation in modern diet-immune research which is mostly population-based and rarely season- or constitution-specific.^[37]

Furthermore, while modern research has robustly explored micronutrient deficiencies, gut microbiome links, dietary patterns and immunity, the specific Ayurvedic dietary prescriptions (e.g., *Viruddha-Ahāra* combinations, seasonal compatibility, *Prakṛti*-based food choices) remain under-studied in controlled trials.^[38-39] Likewise, the measurement of Ayurvedic constructs such as *Ojas* or *Bala* lack standardised biomarkers, making bridging to immunological endpoints challenging.^[40]

On the future prospects side, there is an opportunity to design integrative research that uses Ayurvedic diet protocols (*Hita* food, *Rasāyana* diet, seasonal/regimen-based eating) and evaluate immune biomarkers (e.g., immunoglobulin levels, cytokine profiles, vaccine response, infection incidence).^[41-42] Studies may stratify participants by *Prakṛti*, constitutionally-based

diet regimes, and include lifestyle factors (sleep, exercise, mental state) in line with Ayurvedic holistic model. Additionally, mechanistic research can investigate how Ayurvedic diet rules (e.g., food compatibility, digestion enhancement) affect gut microbiome composition, nutrient absorption, inflammatory signalling and immune cell function.^[43-44] Cross-disciplinary collaboration between Ayurveda scholars, immunologists and nutrition scientists will be key.^[45]

In summary, the Ayurvedic perspective on diet-immunity offers rich conceptual depth and practical guidelines, and modern immunonutrition provides empirical support and mechanistic pathways.^[46-47] Bridging the two effectively requires rigorous, well-designed human interventional studies, standardised measurement of Ayurveda-derived constructs, and inclusion of personalised regimen elements.^[48] Embracing this integrative approach may expand immune-health strategies beyond nutrient adequacy to include holistic, constitution-based dietary and lifestyle interventions.^[49-50]

CONCLUSION

This review affirms that in Ayurveda, *Āhāra* is a central determinant of *Vyādhi Kṣhamatva* — the body's capacity to resist, recover from or prevent disease. Classical texts emphasise that wholesome diet, correct digestion (*Agni*), tissue nourishment (*Dhātuposhana*), and maintenance of *Ojas/Bala* underlie immune resilience. Dietary rules (*Āhāra-Vidhi*), seasonally and constitutionally appropriate food intake, and *Rasāyana* therapies are prescribed to uphold these principles. Contemporary immunonutritional science corroborates many of these dimensions: diet quality, nutrient assimilation, gut-immune interactions and inflammation regulation are key to immune competence.

Yet the translational gap persists: few human studies have applied Ayurvedic diet protocols and measured immune outcomes; Ayurvedic constructs such as *Ojas*, *Bala* and *Prakṛti* remain under-operationalised in biomedical research. To harness the full potential of Ayurveda in immunity enhancement, future work should design rigorous clinical trials integrating Ayurvedic diet-regimen frameworks, decipher mechanistic links to immune biomarkers, and account for individualised constitution and lifestyle factors.

In practice, the insights from this review suggest that dietary strategies for immune health may benefit from embracing the Ayurvedic lens: favouring fresh, seasonal, compatible foods; respecting digestive capacity; tailoring diet to individual constitution and context; and supporting tissue nourishment via wholesome nutrition. Integrating these time-tested principles with modern evidence offers a promising pathway for holistic, sustainable immune enhancement in health and disease prevention.

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