CODEN: WJAPAC Impact Factor: 5.48 ISSN: 3049-3013

World Journal of Advance Pharmaceutical Sciences

Volume 3, Issue 5, Page: 68-70 Research Article www.wjaps.com

A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF SENSORY INPUTS (SHABDA AND ROOP) AS MENTAL DIET (MANASIKA AHAR) AND THEIR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN AYURVEDA

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How to cite this Article: Dr. Amar B. Abhrange*[1], Dr. Smita A. Patil[2], Dr. Swati A. Patil[3], Dr. Archana A. Abhrange[4], Dr. Surabhi S. Jangate[5]. (2026). A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF SENSORY INPUTS (SHABDA AND ROOP) AS MENTAL DIET (MANASIKA AHAR) AND THEIR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN AYURVEDA. World Journal of Advance Pharmaceutical Sciences, 3(5), 68-70.

Article Info

Article Received: 01 March 2026,

Article Revised: 21 March 2026,

Article Accepted: 11 April 2026.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19923871

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, places paramount importance on *Ahar* (diet) as a key determinant of health and disease. While traditionally associated with physical nourishment, Ayurvedic philosophy implicitly broadens the scope of Ahar to include sensory inputs (*Arthas*) as nourishment for the mind (*Mana*). Among these, *Shabda* (auditory stimuli) and *Roop* (visual stimuli) play a dominant role in influencing mental health. This conceptual study examines the rationale behind considering sensory perception as a form of diet by comparing the processes of digestion (*Pachana*) and perception (*Artha Grahana*). Classical Ayurvedic references, including the conceptual similarity between *Pittadhara Kala* and *Majjadhara Kala*, suggest an intrinsic link between digestive and neurological functions. Modern scientific concepts such as the gut-brain axis and neuroplasticity further support this analogy. The study proposes a structured framework termed "Manasika Aharvidhi" (guidelines for sensory intake), emphasizing regulation of quality, quantity, timing, environment, and awareness in audiovisual exposure. It concludes that disciplined sensory consumption has significant preventive and therapeutic potential in maintaining psychological and neurological well-being. Further empirical studies are recommended to validate these concepts in contemporary healthcare.

KEYWORDS: Ahar, Manasika Ahar, Artha Grahana, Shabda, Roop, Sensory Regulation, Ayurveda, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is fundamentally rooted in principles that establish connections between seemingly unrelated physiological systems. One such profound concept is the relationship between the digestive system and the nervous system. Classical commentaries suggest that *Pittadhara Kala* (associated with digestion) and *Majjadhara Kala* (associated with nervous function) are functionally analogous, indicating a deeper connection between physical nourishment and cognitive processing.

The process of *Artha Grahana* (sensory perception) involves the interaction of *Atma*, *Mana*, *Indriya*, and *Artha*, ultimately leading to knowledge acquisition. This sequential process resembles digestion, where food

undergoes ingestion, transformation, absorption, and assimilation.

In this context, sensory inputs (*Arthas*) can be conceptualized as a specialized form of diet for the mind. Among the five sensory modalities, auditory (*Shabda*) and visual (*Roop*) inputs are predominant, contributing significantly to mental activity. Modern scientific advancements, including the concept of the gut-brain axis, further validate this ancient perspective.

Understanding sensory inputs as a form of diet opens new avenues for preventive and therapeutic strategies in both Ayurveda and modern medicine.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To elucidate the conceptual basis of considering sensory inputs, particularly *Shabda* and *Roop*, as a form of Ahar (diet) for the mind.

Objectives

- To analyze similarities between physical digestion and sensory perception.
- To explore the therapeutic implications of sensory regulation.
- To propose a structured guideline (Manasika Aharvidhi) for healthy sensory intake.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

Conceptual and literature-based analytical study.

Materials

- Classical Ayurvedic texts (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya)
- Commentaries and philosophical texts
- Modern scientific literature on neuroscience, gut-brain axis, and neuroplasticity

Methods

A comprehensive review and comparative analysis of classical and contemporary literature were conducted to:

- Understand the processes of digestion and perception
- Identify parallels between them
- Evaluate their clinical and theoretical implications

OBSERVATIONS

Concept of Ahar and Its Broader Implications

Ahar is traditionally defined as the source of nourishment and one of the three pillars of life (*Trayopastambha*). It contributes to physical strength, vitality, longevity, and mental clarity. Ayurveda emphasizes that proper diet acts as medicine, while improper diet becomes a cause of disease.

Extending this concept, sensory inputs can also be viewed as nourishment for the mind. Since the mind continuously processes sensory information, its quality directly influences mental health.

Concept of Artha Grahana

The process of perception involves:

- Activation of *Indriyas* (sensory faculties)
- Mediation by *Mana* (mind)
- Integration with *Atma* (self)
- Final cognition (*Pratyaksha*)

Sensory organs receive stimuli, which are processed into meaningful information. This transformation parallels digestion, where food is converted into absorbable nutrients.

DISCUSSION

Similarity Between Digestion and Perception

The digestive process involves:

- ग्रहण (Reception)
- पाचन (Digestion)
- विवेचन (Analysis)
- उत्सर्जन (Excretion)

Similarly, sensory perception involves:

- Reception of stimuli
- Conversion into neural signals
- Interpretation by the brain
- Response generation

Just as improper digestion leads to disease, improper sensory intake can disturb mental equilibrium.

Neurophysiological Correlation

Modern science supports this analogy:

- **Gut-Brain Axis:** Demonstrates bidirectional communication between digestive and nervous systems.
- **Neuroplasticity:** Indicates that repeated sensory exposure shapes brain function.
- **Sensory Therapies:** Used in conditions like anxiety, depression, and neurological disorders.

Therapeutic Applications

Ayurveda

- *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* (mental discipline)
- *Mantra Chikitsa* (sound-based healing)

Yoga

- Practices like *Yoga Nidra* use guided auditory input for mental relaxation

Modern Medicine

- Music therapy and visual therapy
- Cognitive behavioral approaches using controlled sensory exposure

PROPOSED MANASIKA AHARVIDHI (CODE OF SENSORY DIET)

No.	Principle	Application for Shabda & Roop
1	Quality (Ushna, Snigdha)	Choose positive, calming, meaningful content
2	Quantity (Matravat)	Avoid excessive screen time and noise exposure
3	Timing (Jirne)	Allow intervals between sensory inputs
4	Compatibility (Virya Aviruddha)	Avoid conflicting or disturbing content combinations
5	Environment (Ishta Desh)	Maintain a peaceful and supportive setting
6	Tools (Upakaran)	Use appropriate devices (proper lighting, sound quality)
7	Duration (Natidruta/Nativilambita)	Maintain balanced exposure duration
8	Non-distraction (Ajalpan)	Avoid multitasking during sensory intake
9	Attention (Tanmana)	Engage with full awareness and focus
10	Self-awareness (Atmanam Abhisamiksha)	Critically evaluate content before consumption

CONCLUSION

This study establishes that:

- Sensory perception closely parallels the process of digestion.
- *Shabda* and *Roop* can be conceptualized as "mental diet."
- The quality and quantity of sensory intake significantly affect mental health.
- Regulation of sensory inputs through a structured framework (Manasika Aharvidhi) offers preventive and therapeutic benefits.

Integrating this concept into clinical practice may enhance management of psychological and neurological disorders. Further experimental and clinical validation is required.

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