Critical analysis of dietetics in Ayurveda

Nagraj G. Bhat, Vijay B. Negalur, Vinaya Yaji, Krunal Thakor

Post Graduate Scholar, Associate Professor, Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Swasthavrutta, Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara College of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

Dietetics is the science of diet and nutrition. It is the branch of therapeutics concerned with the practical application of diet in relation to health and disease. Diet is prescribed for both health of the individual as well as diseased person. For healthy individual diet depends on Prakriti of the person and for diseased person it depends on the Doshapradhanyata of the disease. The treatment principle in Ayurveda is mainly based on preventive aspect first, rather than curative. Aahara is considered as the first pillar among Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya. Many common health problems can be prevented by following Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana, rules of Aharasevana, Patya-Apathya of the disease so on. Food is important as a nutritional source, also with therapeutic value and most importantly it plays an important role during the post treatment period to re-gain the diminished strength due to the harmful effect of the disease. Health is not only depending on the type of food we take, it also depend on the way of Food intake. Healthy and nutritional diet is always advisable in order to prevent the affliction of diseases as it is well known that "prevention is better than cure".

Key words: Nutrition, Diet, Dietetics, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Ahara (food) is one among the Trayopastamba, Nidra and Brahmacharya being other two.[1] The thing which we intake through mouth to sustain the life is called as Ahara. Food and Nutrition is the basic need of every individual. Dietetics is the science that deals with the study of nutrition in health and disease (i.e planning of meals for the healthy and the sick).[2] For Ahara, Maharshi Kashyapa has given the name Mahabhaishajya, means supreme medicine. Food is responsible for both health and disease, happiness and misery.[3] Food gives instant energy and strength. It increases longevity, digestive fire, enthusiasm, Ojas.[4] Consumption of pure food or Sathwika Aahara makes the mind clear, when the mind is clear it enhances the memory. Hence our health is depending on what we eat. This paper highlights about food, types of food, rules for preparation & proper intake of food.

Concept of Ahara in Ayurveda

The transforming unit from 'food' into nutrition is termed as ‘Agni’ or digestive fire, which forms the edifice upon which the Ayurvedic system is built. Agni transforms food so that nutrients can be optimally utilized. When Agni is strong, our body fully assimilates nutrients and eliminates what it doesn’t need. If the digestive fire is weak, the incompletely digested portion of the meal forms a sticky, toxic substance called Ama.[5] Ama blocks the micro channels of the body and settles in areas of the body that are out of balance, taking on many forms, such as calcium deposits in the joints, plaque in the arteries,
and cysts and tumors. A coated tongue, bad breath, dullness of the senses, depression and unclear thinking can indicate the presence of Ama. To prevent Ama from forming, drink plenty of warm or room temperature water. Do not eat late at night. Eat freshly prepared meals, and cook with seasonal, organic fruits and vegetables (avoid genetically modified foods). Strengthen Agni by "kindling" it with heating foods and spices, such as Ardraka (Gingiber officinalis) and Maricha (Piper nigrum), Pippali (Piper longum) etc. Eat a thin slice of fresh ginger sprinkled lightly with salt a half hour before taking a full meal. One should not consume food either with lustfulness or ignorance one should scrutinize it well and then eat what is wholesome for body, body is born of food. Ayurveda explains that everything absorbed by five senses like Mouth (food, water), Nose (breath), Ear (chanting, sweet music), Skin (sunlight), Eyes (nature) is food. When we consume food in adequate amount, it gives us long life and youthfulness. When consumed in inadequate amounts, it increases production of toxins which is harmful for life. Having right food is the initial step towards achieving healthy life. But just having right food is not enough. Right combination and proportion of food is also important for an individual. Ayurveda categorizes food into three categories; Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. These types of foods have different effects on the body and the mind.

When to take food?

According to Yogaratnakara, After evacuation of bowel, when senses are clear, body is light, clear belching, when mind is calm, interest to take food is present, emptiness in stomach and hunger flares up, one should take food. One should not take food within 3hrs of consumption of food as it lead to Rasodvega. Intake of food at proper time is necessary to maintenance of positive health.

Special condition for intake of foods

Eight factors have to be considered before taking food. They are nature (Prakriti), processing (Karana), combination (Samyoga), quantity (rashi), place (Desha), time (Kala) rules of taking food (Upayogasamstha) and one who takes food (Upabokta).

Properties of Nitya Sevaniya Ahara Dravyas

1. Shashtika is a kind of rice which grows very quickly to maturity, within sixty days (meaning of shashtika) and is therefore light on digestion. It is rich in carbohydrates, potassium.
2. Shali is a variety of rice, sometimes translated as red rice. It is rich in carbohydrates.
3. Mudga is a pulse called green gram similar to lentils which is light in digestion. It is rich in proteins, phosphorus, calcium, potassium.
4. Saindhava is called rock salt, it is powdery, light pink in color. Its composition is said to include more of potassium than of sodium. This salt is cooling unlike other types of salt.
5. Amalaki is a type of fruit indigenous to India. It is rejuvenative, antioxidant, pacifying to all Doshas but Pitta, especially. It is rich in vitamin C and calcium.
6. Yava (barley) is also light, laxative, diuretic and is especially useful for removing excess Kapha from the body. It is rich in carbohydrates, Vit. B1, B2, phosphorus.
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8. Paya (milk) that comes fresh from cows udder is best among milks. It is more easily digested if brought to a boil then drank warm. Milk is light in digestion, nourishing the body and Tri-Doshic. It rich in fat, protein, vitamins and minerals.
9. Ghee is clarified butter and is best among oils for pacifying Pitta. It also pacifies Vata and because it
increases the digestive fire and is digested easily it does not aggravate Kapha. Rich in fat.

10. Honey pacifies Kapha predominantly and Pitta secondarily. Honey must be raw, uncooked and never used in foods to be cooked. The lighter the colour means the less sharpness in it.

**Table 1: Dvadasha Pravicharana Ahara**

| S.No | Ashana | Indication                                                                 
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ushna</td>
<td>Kapha-Vata Vikara, Virikta, Snehapeeta, Aklinna Kaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Snigdha</td>
<td>Vatoparakruti, Ruksha Dehi, Vyayama and Vyavaya Ksheena</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Drava</td>
<td>Shushka Dehi, Pipasarthi, Durbala</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Shushka</td>
<td>Praklinna Kaya, Vrunita, Prameha Pidita</td>
</tr>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Ekakaala</td>
<td>Durbhalagni Vrudhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Dvikaala</td>
<td>Samagni</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Aushadyukata</td>
<td>Aushadha Dveshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Matrohina</td>
<td>Mandagni, Rogi</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Doshprashaman</td>
<td>Rutu Anusara</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Vrutyartho</td>
<td>Shareera Nirvahana, Sarvarasa</td>
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**DISCUSSION**

Indian traditional medicine has incorporated various explanations regarding this vital pillar of life. This includes the classification of foods according to the geographical area and also with respect to the bodily *Tri-Doshas* and mental qualities, different processing methods of food, importance and role of food on the body and mind, wholesome and unwholesome diets and the pattern of metabolism.

Some rules like intake of hot and unctuous food, it makes proper digestion of food. One should not take the food too fast or too slow it hampers the digestion. One should not take the food while talking and laughing. At last proper *Jeernahara Lakshanas* should be assessed before intake of next food.
To attain Purushartha Chatushtaya, Arogya is the main tool. Our health is depending on what we eat. If a person is concerning about his method of eating, can lead a disease free life. Two main stream of Diet we can prescribe are one is Santarpana Ahara for Apatarpanotta diseases. And another one is Apatarpana Ahara for Santarpanotta diseases. Wise Physician can prescribe the diet according to Dosha Dhatu vitiation and according to the Prakriti of the individual.

CONCLUSION

Take of food at proper time, means eat only when you feel hungry. Eat when previously eaten food is digested. Signs of proper digestion should be consider. Half of the stomach should be filled with solid food, ¼ th with liquid, remaining ¼ th should be kept empty for digestion. Oily food, junk food and food which is heavy to digest should be avoided. Dietic rules should be followed properly. If a person knows how to take food, he can prevent the diseases in wise manner and he can lead a healthy life.

REFERENCES


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