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Critical analysis of dietetics in Ayurveda

Nagraj G. Bhat, Vijay B. Negalur,¹ Vinaya Yaji,² Krunal Thakor³

Post Graduate Scholar, ¹Associate Professor, ^{2,3}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,

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Nagraj G. Bhat

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Swasthavrutta,
Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara College of Ayurveda,
Udupi, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: nagarajayu@gmail.com

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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.^[6] 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.^[7] 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.^[8] Ayurveda categorizes food in to three categories; *Satvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. These types of foods have different effects on the body and the mind.^[9]

When to take food?

According to *Yogaratanakara*, 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 (*Prakritri*), processing (*Karana*), combination (*Samyoga*), quantity (*rashi*), place (*Dasha*), time (*Kala*) rules of taking food

(*Upayogamstha*) and one who takes food (*Upabokta*).^[10]

Properties of *Nitya Sevaniya Ahara Dravyas*^[11]

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.
7. Rain water is the translation in the text but because of environmental pollution a better meaning would be pure water. It's interesting to note that the source of water determines its *Doshic* qualities. Well water is heavy while moving water is lighter. Hot water reduces *Kapha* and body weight while cold water increases *Kapha* and body weight. It maintain the fluid in the body and minerals.
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
1.	Sheeta	Trushna, Ushnata, Mada, Daha, Raktapitta, Visha, Murcha, Stree Sanga Kshina.
2.	Ushna	Kapha-Vata Vikara, Virikta, Snehapeeta, Aklinna Kaya
3.	Snigdha	Vataprakruti, Ruksha Dehi, Vyayama and Vyavaya Ksheena
4.	Ruksha	Medo Dhatu Vyapta, Snigdha Shareera, Prameha Peedita, Kaphadika Shareera.
5.	Drava	Shushka Dehi, Pipasarthi, Durbala
6.	Shushka	Praklinna Kaya, Vrunita, Prameha Pidita
7.	Ekakaala	Durbhalagni Vrudhi
8.	Dvikaala	Samagni
9.	Aushadyukata	Aushadha Dveshi
10.	Matrahina	Mandagni, Rogi
11.	Doshprashamana	Rutu Anusara
12.	Vrutyardha	Shareera Nirvahana, Sarvarasa

Pathya Kalpana - Diet in Ayurveda

Pathya Kalpas play a pivotal role in healthy and diseased conditions.

Prophylactic and promotive nutrition - If wholesome diet is given in a planned way, then what is the need for separate medicinal treatment.

Clinical nutrition - If unwholesome diet is being permitted, the advantage of treatment becomes questionable.

Pathya may be in day today life or in diseased condition or in *Samsarjana Karma*. It makes a huge difference in maintaining Health. *Kritanna Varga* preparation are as follows.

Table 2: Types of Kritanna and ratio of water

Sl. No.	Food particle	Rice : Water
1.	Yavagu	1:6
2.	Vilepi	1:4
3.	Manda	1:14
4.	Anna	1:5
5.	Krsara	1:6

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 *Prakruti* 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.

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