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# Importance of *Kalabhojanam* to maintain health

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## ABSTRACT

*Ahara* is an important factor for survival and is one of the *Trayo-Upasthamba* mentioned in Ayurveda. Where food is an essential part of everyone's lives. It gives us the energy and nutrients to grow and develop, be healthy and active, to move, work, play, think and learn. So, for an individual who wants to be healthy, food is so important but in present era most of us skip their daily food on time because of busy work schedule and their day-to-day routines. As the people when they skip their food and consume at improper time it results in metabolic disorder due to this, at young age people are prone to many lifestyle disorders, and they are not concerned about their proper time of food consumption, they consume improper way, where their bodies' mechanism is forfeited. So, we should know about our own body whether we supply our body the proper food at the proper time. Metabolic risks are a global challenge. These risks are although modifiable by lifestyle and physical activity to some extent, they are primarily related to dietary consumption. Considering a clear relationship of diet and metabolic risk factors. In *Ayurveda* classics, *Kalabhojanam* - intake of food at a scheduled time and not *ad libitum* - is suggested to be the best strategy to confer good health.

**Key words:** *Ayurveda, Aahar, Kalabhojanam, Time restricted feeding (TRF).*

## INTRODUCTION

Human body requires food to provide energy for all life process, growth, repair and maintenance. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that need of the body is adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet on proper time and staying at ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining

emotional and physical well-being. In *Ayurveda*, diet forms the important component of life as it is included in the *Tri-Upastambha* (three sub pillars of life). Being supported by these three factors, the body is endowed with strength, complexion and growth, and continues up till the full span of life. Any material in the universe, according to *Ayurveda* is composed of five basic elements, the *Pancha Mahabhootas*, namely *Prithvi* (Earth), *Ap* (Water), *Teja* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air) and *Akasha* (Ether). The *Tridoshas* (Biological Humour's) i.e., *Vata, Pitta & Kapha* which constitutes the body is also made up of *Pancha Mahabhootas*.<sup>[1]</sup> Each food article either has *Dosha* aggravating action or pacifying or balancing action on human body. To keep the homeostasis of *Doshas* (health), *Ayurveda* has described specific diet. Proper planning and indulging of the diet can maintains our body.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Importance of *Ahara*

*Ahara* is a very essential part of human. It gives nutrition and health to a person to live a happy life.

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WHO states that Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, for this one must need of proper time food, sleep and wealth.<sup>[3]</sup> Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for an organism. It is usually of plant or animal origin, and contains essential nutrients, such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals. The substance is ingested by an organism and assimilated by the organism's cells to provide energy, maintain life, or stimulate growth. It also one of the three pillars of life which *Ahara* is the prime one followed by *Nidra* and *Bramhacharya*.<sup>[4]</sup> In *Susrutha Sutra Sthana* it is mentioned that *Aahiyathe Ithi Aaharaha / Annapandi Sarvam //*<sup>[5]</sup> so, this food which is consumed on proper time will properly nourish the *Dhathus* which is responsible for *Preenam, Jeevanam, Lepaha, Snehaha, Dharana, Poorna, Garbothpadhakscha*.<sup>[6]</sup> So, when this is not consumed on time it not only affects the body it also affects the *Manas*.

- Food is the source of birth and growth.
- When food is properly consumed it helps in longevity and health.
- One can live long by giving up wealth whereas one cannot live without taking food.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Food consumed with grace props up strength and energy.
- Don't consume food for the sake of taste or ignorance, the body is the product consumed by food.
- Mind also becomes pure when food is pure.
- *Chanakya* says that water, food and wise sayings are the three gems in this earth.<sup>[8]</sup>

### Kalabhojanam

*Ahara Kala* is mentioned by *Acharya Vaghbata* in *Astanga Hrdayam*.

The ideal time for taking food is-

1. After elimination of faeces and urine
2. Mind is clean
3. *Dosha* in natural pathway (*Sthana*)

4. When hunger is manifested
5. Flatus moves down
6. Sense organs are clear
7. Body is light.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Kalabhojanam and TRF

*Kalabhojanam* does not mean that food can be taken at will during the 24 hours. It must conform to and be in coherence with *Dinacharya* such as waking-up and remaining awake during the day and sleep timings during night.<sup>[10]</sup> Further, while consuming food just once a day is the best strategy and will automatically have a longer fasting period, but a second meal is neither prohibited nor is likely to impair *Agni* or sleep.<sup>[11]</sup> Yet, even if the food is consumed twice during a day by those whose digestive system is in optimal state<sup>[12]</sup> the feeding time must remain restricted during morning to evening (i.e., a maximum of 12-hour eating window and thus a minimum 12-hour gap), and not during the night.<sup>[13]</sup> Thus, it extends the window between evening meal and morning meal. As *Dinacharya* involves waking, elimination, hygiene, physical activity, application of oil, and many more, a person cannot eat soon after waking up in the morning. The time of first meal, therefore, is often after about 2 to 3 hours from waking up, except perhaps for those who prefer a very early eating. Thus, feeding time further gets restricted during 8.00 ante meridiem (am) to 5.00 post meridiem (pm) or so depending upon when one feels hungry during this available window of eating opportunity. There is another important difference between *Kalabhojanam* and TRF that practitioners need to keep in mind. *Ayurveda* suggests that even if what one has consumed in the morning is not properly digested, a second meal in the evening may not be harmful. But if the evening meal has not been digested, then eating during the morning next day may lead to undesirable consequences due to indigestion.<sup>[14]</sup> A morning meal does not lead to indigestion even when *Agni* is weak. However, evening meal must always be light. It is also worth clarifying that meal-time alone is not the solitary factor that has relevance for diet, yet it is of prime significance. *Ayurveda* has a very comprehensive diet science.<sup>[15]</sup>

Indeed, there are a large number of references on food, diet and dietetics, embedded in different contexts in *Ayurveda*. For example, one of the most fundamental guidance suggests that since many troublesome diseases are caused by irregular dieting, the wise should eat wholesome, measured and timely food with self-restraint.<sup>[16]</sup> Also, diet is not the only factor relevant in metabolic risks. Many other factors including physical inactivity, sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diet are important.<sup>[17,18]</sup> In this article, however, the focus is on meal timings as described by *Kalabhojanam* because among all the factors that confer good health, it is of prime significance. *Kalabhojanam* is described in the context of *Agryasangraha*, i.e., interventions and materials that are of principal significance for achieving a particular objective. This clearly implies that assuming that one follows every guidance of Ayurveda to achieve good health, but compromises or ignores just the *Kalabhojanam*, sustainable health span may remain unachievable. *Kalabhojanam*, therefore, is an indispensable component to confer *Arogya*. Finally, treating metabolic challenges is a global priority that should not rely merely on a medicalized approach.<sup>[19]</sup> It is of paramount importance to draw on widely applicable, acceptable and easily implementable non-pharmaceutical interventions to solve contemporary health challenges.<sup>[20]</sup>

**Table 1: Interpretation of Kalabhojanam and TRF<sup>[21]</sup>**

SN	<i>Kalabhojanam</i>	TRF	Interpretation
1.	The appropriate <i>Kala</i> (time) for a meal is after the evacuation of bowels and urine, when the heart/mind has become free from malice, <i>Doshas</i> have moved towards equilibrium, belching is clear, flatus moves out naturally, digestive fire is	TRF refers to the strategy of intake of food at a schedule time or during a window of time and not <i>Ad libitum</i> . TRF is a form of intermittent fasting that may also have the	Taking food <i>Ad libitum</i> is not permitted both in <i>Kalabhojanam</i> as well as TRF. Both strategies refer to scheduled feeding and reduction in meal frequency, but TRF span through a window of time when eating is permitted and <i>Kalabhojanam</i> is not merely related to "time"

	kindled and person is hungry and his/her body feels light.	elements of reduced meal frequency.	but has more comprehensive and inclusive meaning as noted in column related to <i>Kalabhojanam</i> in this table.
2.	According to <i>Ayurveda</i> , time of food intake depends on several factors including, but not limited to, difference in individual physical constitution, type and nature of food emotional status of a person, status of <i>Agni</i> , status of digestion of previous diet, functioning of excretory system, seasonal and climatic variation, individual energy requirements and so on. However, for a healthy person it is certain that one should not consume more than two meals in a day and temporal spacing among these two meals should be decided by specific factors.	TRF concentrates more in time and less on other factors. Unlike <i>Ayurveda</i> , TRF does not limit the number of time one can take food, but limits the temporal duration within which one can eat or fast.	Prohibition of <i>Ad libitum</i> eating in TRF is clearly incorporated in <i>Kalabhojanam</i> as well, but <i>ayurvedic</i> strategy is much more comprehensive. Indeed, coupled with sedentary life and suppression of non-suppressible urges, non-adherence to <i>Kalabhojanam</i> is the key factor that leads to perpetual illnesses.
3.	Among the multitude of factors, at a minimum <i>Ayurveda</i> recommends to practice being <i>Hitashi</i> (consumption at appropriate time). Here, caloric	Research in TRF has moved in both direction-TRF without calories restriction and TRF with caloric restriction.	Even as 'time of taking food' has some differences in terms of comprehensiveness of the meaning in <i>Ayurveda</i> and TRF, yet in both streams of knowledge it has prime and overriding

	restriction has also received equal emphasis in <i>Ayurveda</i> , but as <i>Kalabhojanam</i> has been placed in <i>Agryasangraha</i> , it carries the fundamental significance among all these factors.	Yet, the benefits are realized even without caloric restriction, perhaps because time-window may act as inherent restriction on the quantity of food one would often consume. Thus, time of eating has prime significance in TRF as well.	significance. The translational value of this understanding is that even if one follows every guidance of ayurveda to achieve good health, but ignorance the <i>Kalabhojanam</i> , sustainable health span may not be achievable. However, while implementing the strategy, <i>Kala</i> should be interpreted in a comprehensive way as proposed by <i>Ayurveda</i>
4.	Two precondition for adherence to <i>Kalabhojanam</i> are being <i>Jitendriya</i> (person who has control over sense organ;self-restrint) and awareness of the consequences of diseases that develop due to irregular dieting. Without a firm resolve to comply, <i>Hitashanam</i> , <i>Mitashanam</i> or <i>Kalabhojanam</i> does not work.	Enablers of TRF include deciding and adhering to a routine, family support, personal commitment adjustment in work schedule and resisting the temptation during social events and festivities.	At a personal level, self-restraint and awareness of the consequence of disease are important enablers of <i>Aalabhojanam</i> and TRF. At the family and community level, external support and facilitation also matters. In cases involving clustered metabolic risks, multimodal interventions such as diet and physical activity may have more beneficial effects.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Human body requires food to provide energy for all life process, growth, repair and maintenance. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need of the

body is adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet on *Kala* (time) a regular basis and staying at ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being. In *Ayurveda*, diet forms the important component of life as it is included in the *Tri-Upastambha* (three pillars of life). Each food article either has *Dosha* aggravating action or pacifying or balancing action on human body. To keep the homoeostasis of *Doshas* (health), *Ayurveda* has described specific diet. Proper time and planning of the diet can maintain our body. In *Ayurveda*, many holistic and scientific approaches have been described about planning of the diet. The fundamental principles like *Tridosha*, *Prakriti*, the tastes, processing of food, the quality, quantity, and the rules regarding eating food if considered while incorporating the diet, one can keep away from many diseases of body and mind. As it is said in *Vaidyajeivanam* that, there is no need of medication if the person is in proper diet on time. As this all helps the person to remain healthy one shouldn't skip their meal or one shouldn't have food in untimely manner. One should consume food in the way that it nourishes properly, and they should consume food for the healthiness of the person.

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