

THE GREAT ANCIENT FOODS AND FOOD PRACTICES THAT PREVENTS AILMENTS LIKE CANCER

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ABSTRACT :

Every country has a different way of living, but more importantly they have different foods and food habits. India is known for its exotic spices since ancient times. The civilization of India goes back to the 2500B.C. and during that time even food was a major part of Indian lives. They created traditional believes meal composition and cycles special occasions such as feasting and fasting. The greatness of our ancestors is that they included all the medicinal properties consisting items in their dietary menu along with it they followed a healthy food practices which kept them far away from certain ailments. Discussed some of the foods and food practices of ancient Indians which helped them to stay far from the dreadful diseases like cancers.

Keywords : Civilization; Food practices; Ayurveda; Ancient India; Spices

INTRODUCTION: Ayurveda advocates more on prevention rather cure of diseases and obviously emphasizes on the ideal food to be consumed to attain and sustain good health. Food is most essential substance consumed to provide nutritional support to the body and also to sustain a good life and the same food if consumed injudiciously becomes the root cause of many diseases. That's why Ayurveda has considered food as one of the important pillars for sustaining health (Trayopasthambha) while many foods can be eaten raw; many also undergo some form of preparation for reasons of safety, palatability, texture, or flavor. At the simplest level this may involve washing, cutting, trimming, or adding other foods or ingredients, such as spices. It may also involve mixing, heating or cooling, pressure cooking, fermentation, or combination with other food. In some, preparation is done to enhance the taste or aesthetic appeal; other preparation may help to preserve the food; others may be involved in cultural identity.

OBJECTIVES: To recapitulate some of the foods and food practices of ancient times so as to use them as guidelines in prevention of certain diseases like Cancer etc. which are of high prevalence now a days due to current lifestyle practices.

The food that is consumed properly in proper times provides:

- a) *Tushti* (Satisfaction)
- b) *Pushti* (Nourishment)
- c) *Dhriti*
- d) *Buddhi* (Intellect)
- e) *Pourusha* (Valour / courage)
- f) *Bala* (Strength)
- g) *Swara* (Appealing voice)
- h) *Ojas* (Immunity)
- i) *Teja* (Sharpness / Brilliance)
- j) *Jeevana* (Sustenance of life)
- k) *Pratibha* (Virtues / Cleverness)
- l) *Prabha* (Radiance)

MATERIALS:

Haridra (Turmeric): Curcuma Longa: Curcumin has been clinically proven to retard the growth of cancer cells causing prostate cancer, melanoma, breast cancer, brain tumour, pancreatic cancer, and leu-

kemia. ¹Curcumin promotes apoptosis (a programmed cell death) that safely eliminates cancer breeding cells without posing a threat to the development of other cells.²

Mishreya (Fennel):*Foeniculum Vulgare*: It contains ANETHOLE⁴ a major constituent that resists and restricts the adhesive and invasive activities of cancer cells. It suppresses the enzymatic regulated activities behind cancer cell multiplication.

Kesar (Saffron): *Crocus Sativus*: Crocetin ³ is primary cancer fighting element present in it, in olden days it is given to pregnant women.

Jiraka (Cumin): *Cuminum Cyminum*: Thymoquinone⁵ is the active ingredient present in cumin seeds that checks proliferation of cells responsible for prostate cancer.

Twak(Cinnamon):*Cinnamomum Zeylanicum*:

A natural food preservative, cinnamon is a source of iron and calcium. Useful in reducing tumour growth.

Ajamoda(Oregano): *Apium Graveolens*: Phyto- chemical QUERCETIN⁷ present in oregano restricts growth of malignant cells in body and acts like a drug against cancer centric diseases.

Ardraka(Ginger):*Zingiber Officinale*⁴:

This helps lowering cholesterol, boosts metabolism and kills cancer cells.

Kadali (Banana): *Musa Paradisiaca* : Banana with black dots or ripened banana has anti-cancer properties.

Eranda Taila (Castor Oil): *Ricinus Communis*: Piclitaxel is a chemotherapy drug containing CREMAPHOR EL which is a derived from castor oil. Cremaphor EL is proved agent reducing the negative effects of radiation.

Nimba (Neem):*Azadirachta Indica*: AZADIRACHTIN and NIMBOLIDE are the chief bio active components in neem that help in inhibition of cell proliferation,

suppression of cancer angiogenesis, restoration of cellular reduction / oxidation balance and enhancement of host immune responses against tumour cells.

Cooking in Earthen vessels: This adds calcium, phosphorous, Iron, Magnesium, Sulphur, and several other minerals to food. Clay pots are alkaline in nature they mix well with acidic food and balance its ph level.⁸ Remember cancer cells do not develop in alkaline medium.

Eating food with hands: When we put food in our mouth through our hand , the five fingers together form a mudra (a yogic position) which activates the sensory organs that keep prana vayu in balance. It also improves digestion because when the hand touches food, the brain sends signals to the body releasing digestive juices.

Sitting on floor while eating: Sitting on floor cross legged a typical Indian eating posture is a yogic posture called SUKHASANA, which is said to massage abdominal muscles boost circulation in lower part of body thus improving digestion. Early dinner and not stocking up of foods in refrigerators are also some healthy food practices followed by ancient Indians.

DISCUSSION: Diet plays an important role in Ayurveda, restriction or modification of which would help in curing of the disease. It also plays major role in the maintenance of a healthy life. If the diet consumed by the individuals is in accordance with their constitution, sound health prevails. If unsuitable and wrong diet is consumed, disease follows. It has been said in *Vaidyajeevanam* of *Lolambaraja* that, Medicine is of no need if one adheres to proper diet and it also said that Medicine is of no use if one does not observe the diet. Dietary products influence the patho-physiology of the diseased conditions and also interfere with the pharma-

cological actions of the prescribed drugs. Due to this reason, dietary products to be consumed in different diseases were mentioned and these should not be ignored to get better results. The *Panchabhoota* theory of Ayurveda says that the same primordial elements combine to form gross elements of nature whether in the form of food, medicine or man. The disturbance of *doshas* caused in man due to disease is brought back to equilibrium by the medicines and suitable foods containing the opposite effects of the symptoms caused by the disease. Charaka has mentioned the dietary products, which are generally suitable for maintenance of health. He has also mentioned the dietary products, which generally are not suitable and to be avoided. Seasonal variations can also influence our digestive system and as well as our health. Dietary products to be consumed in various seasons are mentioned in Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, Food is medicine and an Ayurvedic diet brings with it energy, healing and balance. 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. So a planned and knowledgeable intake of diet prevents disease.

CONCLUSION: Ayurveda believes that the disease manifestation in a man depends on the constitutional peculiarities of the individual and his adaptive reactions which ultimately depend on his dietary habits. Therefore proper knowledge about the food and its importance should be known by all to derive better benefits from it. All

the Ayurvedic classics emphasize over consumption of suitable food as per different seasons and has identified and recommended wide range of foods and food preparations to suit every season and individual for maintenance of good and positive health and also to cure diseases.

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