



CONCEPT OF BALANCE DIET AND RULES FOR FOOD INTAKE IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda, the knowledge of life sciences bestowed with health and longevity in the form of preventive and curative measures. For maintenance of health and life, three sub-pillars i.e. diet, sleep and celibacy has been described in Ayurveda. Among the three, diet is being given the first place because there will be no existence of life and health without it. Ayurveda puts a great stress on the diet and diet habits which are called as “*Pathya*”. It has been mentioned in Ayurveda that if a person suffering from any disease, follows strictly the regulation of diet (*Pathya*), he may not require medicine, but if he does not follow the regulation of diet, medicine may be fruitless. The dietary rules and regulations prescribed by Ayurveda has universal acceptance. Ayurveda and modern science have discussed about the hazards of unwholesome diet and the foods to be avoided, but certain methods like using additives and preservation methods are the recent developments in the field of food and nutrition. Ayurveda advices to consume food in the fresh and warm, if it is cooked one. This prevents contamination and improves digestion. The methods of food preservation are the traditional one which was in practice for thousands of years ago and they are more natural ones and the additives used were also being natural products like salt, sugar, ghee, jaggery, honey etc. which are devoid of any harmful effects. Unlike these natural preservatives, vinegar, chemicals which are non-food substance used as added preservatives, the sauces, spice-powders used in fast-food along with chemical flavouring agents disturb the digestion and lead to serious digestive system disorders and even carcinoma.

Key words Diet, *Pathya*, *Maatra*, Digestion, Balance Diet, *Tray-Upastambha*.

INTRODUCTION: Diet is one from the point of view of intake. It is the vital breath of living beings that is why the people rush to the food. Complexion, cheerfulness, good voice, life, imagination, happiness, contentment, corpulence, strength, and intellect-all these are dependent on food¹. The worldly activities done for livelihood, the vedic ones for attainment of heaven and those for emancipation also depend on food. *Ahar* is one of the tripods of life as per ayurvedic texts. 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 *Tridoshas* 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. Ayurveda categorizes food in to three categories: *Satvik*, *Rajsik* and *Tamasik*, these types of foods have different effects on the body and the mind². *Satvik* food is one that can be digested easily and brings balance to one's mind. It helps in building immunity and improving the healing response in those

who are unwell as fresh food and vegetables, salads, fresh juices, cereals (red rice), herbal tea, fresh cow's milk, dry fruits, nuts, honey, jaggery and freshly cooked food promote *Sattva* (a quality of mind which includes clarity, harmony and balance).

Rajasik food is one that is oily, aromatic, spicy and attractive to taste. This includes non-vegetarian food like meat, fish eggs, chicken, all whole pulses and daals, which are not sprouted, canned food, basmati rice, sour cream, ice cream, yeast, sugar, pickle, vinegar, garlic, onion and salted foods promote *rajas* (a quality of mind which includes energy, aggression and action).

Tamsaik food includes all kinds that are not fresh and are unnatural, overcooked, stale and processed. Such-as Alcohol, Beef, Chicken, Fish, Pork, Eggs, Frozen food, Micro-waved food, Mushroom, Drugs, Tea, Coffee, Fried food, Fried nuts, etc. promote *Tamas* (quality of mind which evokes darkness, inertia, resistance and grounding).

According to Archarya Charaka food is of two types according to source- immobile (plant kingdom) and mobile (animal kingdom), also of two types according to effect- wholesome and unwholesome. It is of four types according to the way of intake- drinks, eatables, chewable and lickables. It is of six types according to taste. It is twenty types according to *gurwadi gunas*. It has innumerable variations due to abundance of substances, their combinations and preparation³.

Concept of Balance diet in Ayurveda-

Modern science has described the balance diet in terms of carbohydrate, protein, vitamins, minerals etc. but there is no parameter to evaluate the proportion of these components in ordinary life of

peoples living in developing countries like us. But Acharya Charaka has described a single quotation for the definition of balanced diet before thousands of years as follows⁴-

Regular intake of all *Rasas* are strength promoting and regular use of one *Rasa* is debilitating ones. He further elaborated it as⁵-

One should take usually-

1. Shashtika shali- Source carbohydrate-
Madhur Rasa

2. Mudga- Source of protein

3. Saindhav- Source of minerals- *Lavan Rasa*

4. Amalaka- Source of vit.C-*Amla* and *Kashaya Rasa*

5. Yava (Barley)- Acts as roughs and controls excess fat

6. Antariksh- Pure water

7. Payah (Milk)- Contains protein, fat, vitamin and minerals

8. Sarpi (Ghee)- Source of fat

9. Jangalam- meat of animals living in forests

10. Madhu (Honey)- Source of sugar and various nutrients.

Archaya Charaka also indicated other food substances which can be used as balance diet⁶ one should take as a daily routine the articles which maintain the health and prevent the unborn disorders.

Adequate quantity of diet in Ayurveda

One should take food in (proper) quantity; this quantity of food depends on the power of digestion⁷. According to Acharya Vagabhatt quantity of food depends on type of food material as well as power of digestion⁸ such as one portion of the space for solid food items, one for liquids and one for *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. While taking food in such quantity, one is not inflicted with any harmful effect caused by food taken in appropriate quantity⁹.

Heavy substances, if taken in a little quantity, become light. Likewise light substances become heavy if taken too much. Thus quantity is one of the factors governing heaviness and lightness of substances. Hence a little of heavy substances should be taken while in case of light ones one may take them unto the point of saturation. A substance depends on quantity and this, in turn depends on *Agni*. Consideration of heaviness and lightness is particularly important in case of weak, inactive, unhealthy, and delicate and those accustomed to comfortable living. But this is not so important for the persons who have strong digestive power, taking hard food, are overactive and with large belly¹⁰.

Prescribed method of taking food according to Ayurveda There are eight specific factors of method of dieting described in Ayurveda such as –*Prakriti* (nature), *Karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Raashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *Kala* (time), *Upayogasmastha* (rules for use) and *Upayokta* (User).

One should eat warm food because it tastes well, the eaten food stimulates the digestive fire, gets digested quickly, carminates flauts, reduces mucus.

One should eat unctuous food, it tastes well, stimulates the unstimulated digestive fire, gets digested quickly, carminates flatus, develops the body, provides firmness to sense organs, increases strength, produces clarity of complexion.

One should eat in proper quantity, food taken in proper quantity without disturbing *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* only promotes lifespan, easily passes down to anus, does not disturbs the digestive fire, gets digested with comfort. Even the wholesome food also taken in proper quantity, does not get

digested due to anxiety, grief, fear, anger, uncomfortable bed and vigil.

One should eat when the previous meal is digested because if one eats during indigestion, the eaten food mixing the product of the earlier meal with that of the later one vitiates all the *Doshas* quickly, on the contrary, when one eats after the previous meal is digested well, the *Doshas* are situated in their own location, *Agni* is stimulated, appetite is arisen, entrances of the channels are open, eructation is pure, heart is normal, flatus passes down and urges of flatus, urine and feces are attended to, the eaten food promotes only the life-span without afflicting any *Dhatu*.

One should take food consisting of the items non-antagonistic in potency, while doing so one is not afflicted with the disorders caused by food antagonistic in potency.

One should eat in favorable place and favorable accessories, while eating in favorable place one does not fall victim to psychic disturbance due to such factors found in otherwise places. Similarly while having favorable accessories.

One should not eat too fast because by eating fast the food may enter into a wrong passage, there is depression and the food is not established in its place, over and above, detection of the defects of food and achievement of the merits of the same are not certain.

One should not eat too slowly because by eating too slow one does not get satisfaction, eats much; food becomes cold and is digested irregularly.

One should not talk or laugh and with concentration, by taking food while talking or laughing or with mind elsewhere, he is inflicted with the same defects as by eating too fast.

One should eat after due consideration to himself, this is suitable or unsuitable for me if known in this way then only it becomes suited to himself.

This is the prescribed and scientific method of dieting for the sick (in certain cases) as per Ayurveda.

CONCLUSION:

Food and drinks with desirable smell, taste and touch and having been taken according to prescribed method is said as vital strength by the expert on the basis of observing their results directly, because the condition of internal fire depends on their fuel. They produce energy in mind, constitution of *Dhatus*, strength, complexion and clarity of sense organs, if properly taken, otherwise they become harmful¹³.

Food is consumed for nutrition purpose on daily basis and it can also be used as a drug when ever required according to the disease condition. In other hand, the food also cause many disorders too if it is infected, contaminated, treated with chemicals or by nature itself (e.g. Poisonous mushroom, Toxins etc). Hence it becomes essential for the physicians to check the food habits of the patients before starting the treatment. If any deficit found in the food habits and hygiene it should be suitably corrected along with creating the awareness. Nutrition is of the highest priority in today's life and it's the hub of everyone who is desirous of good food health. The importance of nutrition is emphasized by its role in maintaining health.

Hence it is wise to select the natural, hygienic and nutritive food which stabilizes the healthy state of body and mind.

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