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DIETETIC RULES IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract: Ahara is supreme or Brahma. All the beings originate from Ahara. Anna is present in all living beings in the form of food sheath Annamayakosha. Human biological system requires diet or food to provide energy for all life process, growth, repair and maintenance. Ahara is very much emphasizes in Ayurveda for the prevention and management of a wide range of disorders. As per the view point of Ayurveda, both the living human body and the diseases afflicting it are the products of Ahara. Use of Hita Ahara (wholesome diet) promotes health and longevity and Ahita Ahara (unwholesome diet) promotes manifestation of different disorders. Therefore, Ahara is considered as Prana (basis of life). The principle of dietetics and nutrition in Ayurvedic system of medicine include different classes of Ahara i.e. eating and drinking items, principle of Pathyapathya (wholesome and unwholesome diet), discipline of eating (Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan, Dvadasha Asana Vidhi etc.), Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet). Eating balanced diet on a regular basis and staying at ideal weight are critical factors for maintaining emotional and physical well-being. Ayurvedic dietetics places greater emphasis on processing food, its compatibility and rules of food consumption.

Keywords: Ahara, Diet, Dietetics, Ayurveda

Introduction: Ahara has described as one of the Trayopastambha (three subsidiary pillars) of life which are Ahara, Nidra (sleep) and Brahmacharya (celibacy) ^[1]. Here Ahara, has been enumerated first, which shows its more importance. Diet is considered as vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients and promotes longevity. Ahara is the food which is ingested; it includes all foods like eatable, lickables, drinkables etc ^[2]. Kasyapa gives it the name Mahabhaisajya ^[3]. This is responsible for the growth, development and enhancement of Ojas. No medicine is equivalent to food. It is possible to make a person disease free with just proper diet. Ayurveda specified the characteristics of food in terms of quality, quantity and time which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease and also from person to person. One has to consume the diet, which is suitable to him in all aspects, and deviation from these may cause disease.

Materials and Methods: Review Ancient Text related to the topic.

Time for Taking Food: According to classics man should take food twice daily in the morning and evening. Consumption of food in

between is contraindicated like Agnihotri. After evacuation of bowels, when senses are clear, body is light, clear belching, heart is devoid of blemishes, Vayu is normal, interest for intake of food is present, and emptiness in stomach and hunger flares up, one should consume food ^[4]. After the digestion of Rasa, Dosa and Mala, one should consume food without giving consideration to time. Proper belching, clarity, enthusiasm, proper evacuation of urges, lightness in the body, hunger and thirst are the features of proper digestion ^[5]. One should not take food within three hours (1 Yama) of consumption of food as it leads to Rasodvega and one should not fast more than six hours (2 Yama) as it leads to loss of strength. One should not consume food after the prescribed time or food should not be consumed in less or more quantity. Consumption of food before feeling of lightness produces Mandagni, indigestion or even death. If one consumes food after long gap, Jatharagni gets destroyed by the aggravated Vata, producing difficulty to digest the food taken. Even through the food consumed in the morning is not digested properly; the food consumed in the evening does not get vitiated ^[6]. In Seasons where the nights

are lengthy, one should consume food in the morning only, seasons where days are lengthy one should consume food indicated in first *Prahara* at night and in afternoon itself. Seasons where day & nights are of same length, food should be taken at indicated time^[7].

Ahara Matra: Quantity of diet depends upon the power of digestion and metabolism^[8]. There is no fixed quantity in which different food articles are to be taken. One third of the stomach should be filled with solid food, One third with liquids and one third should be left empty for *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*^[9]. The food consumed in proper quantity at proper time always enhances digestion. It is also dependent on nature of food consumed. Heavy food should be consumed half to stomach, light food should be consumed in excess. The amount of food consumed should be so that it gets digested easily.

Order of intake of different tests: One should consume food with full concentration^[10].

1. *Madhura*- Pacifies aggravated *Vata* due to excess of hunger.
2. *Amala & Lavan* – Increase *Agni*, so that digestion of food is easy.
3. *Katu, Tikta, Kasaya*- In the end reduces *Pitta* produced in excess.

Always Conducive Food (*Sada Pathya Ahara*): Taking ginger & salt before food is always good, it enhances *Agni*, tests, clears tongue & throat^[11].

Duration of Food Digestion (*Ahara Pachan Awadhi*): Food will be digested in four *Yama*, medicine in two *Yama*, in *Samagni* person. In *Tiksnagni* person it gets digested fast & takes longer duration in *Mandagni* person^[12].

Principle of Balance diet: The concept of *Sadrassa* is central point in *Ayurveda* cuisine. These six tastes viz. *Madhura* (Sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavan* (Salty), *Katu* (Pungent), *Tikta* (Bitter) and *Kasaya* (Astringent) should be present in balanced proportions. Each taste has an influence on *dosa* and hence contributes to the health or disease. Intake of all six *Rasas* is the best among strength enhancing factors^[13].

Rules of Food Intake (*Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana*): Eight factors have to be considered before taking food. They are Nature (*Prakruti*), processing (*Karan*), combination (*Samyoga*), quantity (*Rasi*), place (*Desa*), time (*Kala*), rules of taking food (*Upayoga Samstha*), and one who takes food (*Upaokta*)^[14].

1. Nature (*Prakruti*): Here *Prakruti* means natural quality of food and medicine like *Guru* (heavy), *Laghu* (light) etc. As black gram is

heavy, green gram is light, pork is heavy and deer's flesh is light^[15].

2. Method of Processing Food (*Karana*): *Karana* means processing substance which leads to transformation of inherent characters of the substance. They are brought about by the treatment with water, application of heat, cleaning, washing, churning, storage, soaking, place, maturing, flowering, impregnation, preservation and container etc. During formation of substance a particular mode of combination of *Panchbhuta* impart particular properties to the drug or food. By processing there is change in qualities^[16].

3. Combination (*Samyoga*): *Samyoga* is the combination of two or more substance. This result in manifestation of specific qualities, which are not present when present singly. Ex. combination of ghee and honey, fish and milk^[17].

4. Quantity (*Rasi*): *Rasi* is the quantity of food to be taken. It is of two types i.e. *Sarvagraha*; the quantity of food taken in its entirety and *Parigras*; the quantity of each of this ingredients^[17].

5. Place (*Desha*): Place relates to habitat. It may be the place of growth, movement of a substance in a particular locality, like drugs grown in Himalaya are potent, those in desert are light, the *Desha* can be divided into three types; *Jangala*, *Anupa*, *Sadharana* and food should be consumed accordingly^[18].

6. Time (*Kala*): The *Jatharagni* digest food, in absence of food it digests *Doshas*, in absence of *Doshas* it digests *Dhatus* and ultimately in absence of *Dhatus* it digests *Prana*, as it takes away the life. So if one feels extremely hunger he should consume food irrespective of time. One desirous of strength and longevity should consume food in the morning, only when food taken at night is digested properly. *Acharya Chraka* gives higher importance for intake of food at proper time for maintenance of positive health. Two kind of time has described in ancient text i.e. Daily (*Nityaga*) and Conditional (*Aavasthika*). Daily (*Nityaga*) is in the form of day and night. One should consume food two times a day according to rules. One should consume food according to season as told in *Ritucharya*. Conditional (*Avasthika*) means according to diseases one should consume food which is conducive to the disease. In health one should see his age and consume food accordingly^[18].

7. Dietetics Rules (*Upayoga samstha*): These are the rules for taking food for diseased as well as healthy. One should consume articles which are wholesome to body. They are the dietetics rules, dependent on symptoms of digestion; such as clear belching, enthusiasm, evacuation of urges accordingly, lightness, hunger and thirst are the features of proper digestion^[18]. One should eat in proper quantity which is hot, unctuous, and not contradictory in potency and that too after proper digestion of previous meals. Food should be taken in proper place, without talking, laughing, with concentration of mind and considering oneself^[19].

a. Eat Warm Food: Warm food is tasty, increase digestive fire (*Jatharagni*), gets digested quickly, *Vata* gets pacified and reduces the excess of *Kapha*^[20].

b. Eat Unctuous: Food Unctuous food is delicious, it stimulates the digestive fire, gets digested fast, *Vata* gets pacified, nourishes the body, strengthens the sense organ, promotes strength, brings out good complexion^[20].

c. Eat According to Quantity: If food is taken in proper quantity it prolongs life, it does not aggravate *Doshas*, easily passes down to rectum, does not impair the power of digestion, gets digested without difficulty so food should be taken in proper quantity. The food consumed in proper quantity at proper time always enhances digestion. It is also dependent on nature of food consumed. Heavy food should be consumed half of stomach, light food should not be consumed in excess. The amount of food consumed should be so that it gets digested easily^[20].

d. Eat after Feeling of Hunger: One should take food after the digestion of previous food. Otherwise improperly digested food mixes with food product and aggravates all *Doshas*. There is good appetite, pure eructation channels open up, unimpaired cardiac function, proper evacuation of faeces, flatus and urine, promotes longevity and growth^[20].

e. Eat Food which is not Contradictory: One should take foods which are not having contradictory property. Otherwise person may get afflicted with skin diseases like *Kushta*, *Visarpa* etc^[20].

f. Eat Indesired Place with Desired Articles: By doing this one does not get afflicted with factor which result in emotional strain, one should be supplemented with all accessories^[21].

g. Do not Eat in Hurry: If food is taken very fast, then food may enter in wrong passage. It gets depressed and may not enter into stomach

properly. One cannot relish the taste of the food. Person cannot make out some foreign bodies if present^[21].

h. Do not Eat Very Slowly: Does not give satisfaction, eats more than required, food becomes cold, irregularly digested^[21].

i. Eat with Concentration without Talking and Laughing: During eating one should not laugh or talk, similar problems occurs as in case of fast intake of food^[21].

j. Eat after Considering Oneself Thoroughly: One should consume food in prescribed manner. The knowledge of usefulness of food, whether it is wholesome for him or not should be thought^[22].

8. Person who Takes Food (*Upabhokta*): He is the one responsible for the habitual intake of things i.e. *okasatmya*^[23].

Seasonal-Dietetics: The *Ayurveda* prescribes specific diet for different seasons.

Hemanta Ritu: The flesh of water animals, carnivores and animals residing in burrows should be consumed during cold seasons along with sweet, *Sidhu* (variety of fermented preparation) & honey. One should drink milk, juice of sugarcane and its products^[24].

Sisira Ritu: The season is more cold and rains are present along with cold wind. Other characters are similar to that of *Hemanta Ritu*.

Vasanta Ritu: One should consume food made of old barley (*Yava*), wheat (*Godhuma*) & flesh cooked by holding in arrow along with honey. One should take mango juice along with them. The mango juice having heavy, sour, unctuous and sweet qualities is good for health. One should drink alcoholic preparations like *Asava*, *Arista*, *Sishu*, *Maradvika*, *Madhava* and water medicated with ginger, *Khadira* (*Accasia*), honey & *Musta*. One should avoid heavy, cold, unctuous, sour and sweet^[25].

Grisma Ritu: Always sweet, cold, unctuous and liquid food is good in this season. Cold *Manth* preparation with sugar, flesh of terrestrial animals, birds, ghee, milk and rice should be consumed during *Grisma Ritu*. Alcoholic preparation should be avoided, if one is addicted then large quantity of water should be mixed. One should avoid salt, sour and pungent food and excess of exercise^[26].

Varsa Ritu: One should drink *Sanskarita* (medicated) water & rice (*Sali*) along with honey. One should consume sour, salt & unctuous food to pacify the aggravated *Vata* in *Varsa Ritu*. One should consume food which, protect the *Agni* like old barley, wheat, rice,

prepared meat soup, Dal soup (*Yusa*). One should drink little quantity of alcoholic preparations like *Madhvika* & *Arista* along with honey^[27].

Sarad Ritu: One should consume sweet, bitter, light, cold and *Pitta Samaka* food in the required quantity accordingly. Flesh of *Lava*, *Kapinjala*, *Ena*, *Urabhra*, *Sasa*, *Sali* variety of rice, barley & wheat should be consumed. One should avoid fat, oil, mist, meat of marshy and aquatic animals, alkali, curds, daysleep & easterly wind. One should use the water which is purified by the rays of sun in day time and rays of moon at night time and by the birth of agastya star, for the purpose of drinking, bathing and immersing. This Hamsodaka is devoid of Dosa, clear, pure and like nector (*Amrta*)^[28].

Dietary Incompatibility (Viruddhahara): *Ayurveda* also described some dietary incompatibility (*Viruddhahara*) which should be avoided by all individuals. The dietary incompatibility is of eighteen types, which are as follows^[29].

1. *Desha Viruddha* (contrary to climate)
2. *Kala Viruddha* (contrary to season)
3. *Agni Viruddha* (contrary to digestive power)
4. *Matra Viruddha* (contrary to measure)
5. *Satmya Viruddha* (contrary to adaptability)
6. *Dosh Viruddha* (contrary to body humors)
7. *Sanskara Viruddha* (contrary to processing)
8. *Virya Viruddha* (contrary to potency)
9. *Koshtha Viruddha* (contrary to bowel habits)
10. *Avastha Viruddha* (contrary to patient's state)
11. *Krama Viruddha* (contrary to order of eating)
12. *Parihara Viruddha* (contrary to restrictions)
13. *Upachara Viruddha* (contrary to observances)
14. *Paka Viruddha* (contrary to cooking)
15. *Samyoga Viruddha* (contrary to combination)
16. *Hridaya Viruddha* (contrary to palatability)
17. *Sampata Viruddha* (contrary to rich quality)
18. *Vidhi Viruddha* (contrary to mealtime rules)

Daily Indicated Ahara (Pathya Ahara): *Rakta Sali* (*Oryza sativa*), *Mudga* (*Phaseolus radiates*), rain water, *Saindhava* (Rock salt), *Jivanti* (*Leptadenia reticulata*), meat of *Ena* (Antelope), *Lava*, *Godha*, *Rohita*, Cow's ghee, Cow's milk, *Tila Taila* (Sesame oil), Fat of Pig, Fat of *Culuki* fish, Fat of White swan, fat of hen, fat of goat, ginger, grapes and sugar are considered as most *Pathya Ahara* articles^[30].

Daily Contraindicated Ahara (Apathya Ahara): *Yavaka* (Variety of *Hordeum vulgare*), *Masha* (*Phaseolus mungo*), river water in rainy season, *Usara* (Salt from saline soil), mustard,

beef, meat of young dove, meat of frog, fish *Cilcima*, Ghee of sheep, sheep's milk, *Kusumbha taila*, fat of buffalo, fat of *Kumbhira* (Crocodile), fat of *Cataka* (sparrow), fat of elephant, *Nikuca* (*Atrocarpus nikucha*) & *Phanita* are considered among most *Apathya Ahara* articles^[30].

Satmya: *Satmya* means that which suits the self. *Satmya* and *Upasaya* have the same meaning. It is of three types superior, inferior and medium and of seven types according to six *Rasas* individually and collectively. Amongst them use of all the *Rasas* collectively is superior that of one *Rasa* is inferior and in between these two medium. The inferior and the medium types of suitability are upgraded to the superior type in graded manner^[13].

Results: 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 a regular basis and staying at ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being. *Ayurveda* specified the characteristics of food in terms of quality, quantity and time which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease and also from person to person. One has to consume the diet, which is suitable to him in all aspects, and deviation from these may cause diseases.

Discussion: Without proper diet, medicine is of no use. With proper diet, medicine is of no need. Diet is considered as the foremost factor for keeping oneself healthy. If diet is taken in proper manner it will maintain health and can even curb diseases. But if taken in an improper way it may be the causative factor for diseases as *Mithya Ahara* is said to be one of the causes for the occurrence of diseases in *Ayurveda*. *Ayurveda* provides a complete and systemic understanding about the effect of food on our physical and mental functioning. *Ayurveda* consider *Aahara* as not only food, but also the source of taste, smell and satisfaction. It is more important than the medicine itself. To become a proud possessor of sound health, it is also equally important that your daily diet contains all the six tastes, time, quantity of food and considering all dietetics explained in *Ayurveda*. When food was taken in disproportion, result into distortion in any of the three *Doshas* or body humors and which result into production of various diseases. *Ayurveda* consider *Aahara* as a medicinal as one of the main factors to

achieve optimal health. Each and every bite of food that we consume contributes to our health or ill health.

Conclusion: Food or diet is the most essential requirement of all living beings. According to *Ayurveda* both the living human body and the diseases that afflict it are the products of food. The contemporary modern science has particularly described *Ahara* according to the nutritional value of its components and not described about *Hita*, *Ahita*, *Pathya*, *Apathya Ahara* etc. for each individual. *Ayurveda* described a wide range of dietetics and nutrition including the *Pathyapathya*, incompatible diets, discipline of food intake like *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayantan* and *Dvadasha Asana Vidhi*. Thus, *Ayurveda* proposes an entirely different approach to food, diet, and nutrition that is in strong contrast to the conventional Western approach. *Ayurvedic* dietetics places greater emphasis on processing food, its compatibility and rules of food consumption.

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