



Exploration of Basic Concepts of the Ayurvedic Dietetic

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Abstract

Acharyas had described that *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (celibacy) are *Triupstambha* (three sub pillars), which support the body itself. Here food has been placed first which represents its utmost importance to maintain and sustain life so, there is brief description in all Ayurvedic text regarding the do's and don'ts. The science of applying knowledge in food and nutrition for improving and maintaining good health is called as Dietetics. Now a day several diseases are not due to the intake of unhealthy food but it was due to the improper dietary habit, so it is important to know the proper ways to avoid several complications so this study is done to explore the basic concept of the Ayurvedic Dietetic. For this, the data has been collected and reviewed from Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita and other validated textbooks and publication in international journals. Through this review we found precious concepts about dietetic like *Prakruti*(constitution of body), quantity of food intake, discipline of eating (*Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan.*), Principle of *Pathyapathya* (wholesome and unwholesome diet) for normal and diseased person. *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet), seasonal food which have effect on

digestion so following these concepts is effective in maintenance of health as well as in the curative aspect for many diseases.

Keywords: Ahar, Ahar vidhivisheshayatan, Ayurvedic dietetic, Pathyapathya , Viruddha Ahara

Introduction

Acharyas had described that *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacarya* (celibacy) are *Triupstambha* (three sub pillars),^[1] which support the body itself. Here food has been placed first which represents its utmost importance to maintain and sustain life. The science of applying knowledge in food and nutrition for improving and maintaining good health is called as Dietetics. and as it is considered as the basis of life there is brief description in all Ayurvedic text regarding intake of food. As primary aim of Ayurveda belongs to maintain the health of an individual ^[2] there is detailed information regarding food intake as per constitution of the body, seasonal food, quantity and quality of food, guidelines of intake of food, wholesome and unwholesome diet and incompatible diet. After following all these precautions, if some pathology still occurs, here is the second aim of Ayurveda works, that is to treating the diseased person, in this

treatment also food plays very role as wholesome and unwholesome diet as per diseased and *Aharkalpana* as per the procedure. Therefore, to fulfil both the aim of the Ayurveda food is the important factor. All of above concepts of food have very much importance in these days, as in present condition several diseases are not due to the intake of unhealthy food but it was due to the improper dietary habit, so it is important to know the proper ways to avoid several complications. By this study, we can avoid the complication by improving the dietary habit

Aim: To explore the basic concept of the Ayurvedic Dietetic and its importance in modern society

Methodology: The data has been collected and reviewed from Charak Samhita and Ashtang Hrudaya, other validated textbooks and publication in international journals.

Observation

Information about intake of food are scattered in the Samhitas this can be studied in two ways as a preventive and as a curative aspect. As per the body is concerned first part which should first consider is *Prakruti* of the person. *Prakruti* is determined at the time of fertilization due to the predominance or increased status of *Dosha* so as per the food is concerned it is also different in different *Prakruti* as per predominance of *Doshas*.

Table no 1 – correlation between *Prakruti* and elements of food for suppression of *Doshas*

<i>Prakruti</i> Elements of food	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Kaph</i>
<i>Ras</i> ^[3]	<i>Madhura</i> (Sweet), <i>Amla</i> (Sour), <i>Lavana</i> (Salt)	<i>Madhura</i> (Sweet), <i>Tikta</i> (Bitter), <i>Kasaya</i> (Astringent) <i>rasa</i> (taste).	<i>Tikta</i> (Bitter), <i>Katu</i> (Pungent), <i>Kasaya</i> (Astringent) <i>rasa</i> (taste).
<i>Virya</i> ^[4]	<i>Ushna veerya</i>	<i>Sheeta veerya</i>	<i>Ushna veerya</i>
<i>Vipak</i> ^[5]	<i>Madhur vipaka</i>	<i>Madhura vipaka</i>	<i>Katu vipaka</i>

<i>Gun</i> ^[6]	<i>Snigdha</i> (Unctuous), <i>Guru</i> (Heavy), <i>Ushna</i> (Warm)etc	<i>Ruksha</i> (not unctuous), <i>Sheeta</i> (Cold), food guru	<i>laghu</i> (light), <i>ushna</i> (hot and worm food), Dry
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Quantity of the food

This is also an important factor mentioned in *Smahita*, exact what quantity should be taken by person. Acharyas divided belly into three parts, one for solid food item, one for liquid and one for *Vat, Pitta, Kapha*. There are again two types appropriate^[7] and inappropriate^[8] as per the quantity of the food.

Table no 2 – Quantity of food and its signs

Quantity	Signs
Appropriate	No obstruction in heart, no pain in side, no excessive heaviness in abdomen, saturation of sense organs, cessation of hunger and thirst, ease in standing, sitting, lying down, movement, inspiration, expiration, laughing and gossiping, easy digestion, promotion of strength, complexion and development
Inappropriate	<i>Vat</i> - colic pain, hardness in belly, body-ache, dryness of mouth, giddiness, irregularity of digestion, stiffness in side, back and waist constriction and spasm in blood vessels. <i>Pitta</i> - fever, diarrhoea, internal heat, thirst, necrosis, giddiness and delirium, <i>Kapha</i> - vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, fever with cold, lassitude and heaviness in the body

Discipline of eating

Eight factors should be considered before taking food: 1. *Prakriti* (nature), 2. *Karana* (processing), 3. *Samyoga* (combination), 4. *Rashi* (quantity), 5. *Desha* (place), 6. *Kala* (time), 7. *Upyoga-sansatha* (rules for use), 8. *Upyokta* (consumer)^[9]

Table no 3 – Factors of discipline eating and its principles

	Factors		Principles
1.	Nature	:	Natural existence properties

2.	Processing	:	Refinement of the natural product through water, fire, cleansing, churning, place, time, infusing, steeping, duration, utensil
3.	Combination	:	Aggregation of two or more substance
4.	Quantity	:	1) <i>Sarvgrah</i> (total count)- the accounting of the quantity of the entire food in totality 2) <i>Parigrāh</i> (individual account)- individual items in food
5.	Place	:	Related to growth, distribution and also the suitability in respect of place
6.	Time	:	Eternally moving time related to seasonal and conditional time related to diseases
7.	rules for use	:	Depends on digested food
8.	Consumer	:	Who consume the food

The above proscribed method of dieting for the healthy and sick who take wholesome food timely and usually, one should eat warm unctuous, in proper quantity, after the previous food is digested, non antagonistic, in favorable place, with all the favorable accessories, not too fast, not too slow, not while talking or laughing and with full concentration after due consideration to the self.^[10]

Wholesome and Unwholesome Diet

Pathya (wholesome) and *Apathya* (unwholesome) are defined as the substance or regime which do not adversely affect the body and mind are regarded as *Pathya* (wholesome); those which adversely affect them are considered to be *Apathya* (unwholesome). *Charak* had stated that wholesome food is one of the causes for the growth and wellbeing of humans while unwholesome food is the root of all disease. *Charaka* enlist product which are beneficial and non beneficial the human body^[11]

Table no 4– Indicated and contraindicated food in day to day life

Indicated food	Contraindicated food
<i>Sastika shali</i> (rice)	Milk products
<i>Mudga</i> (pulse)	Dried meat
<i>Saindhav</i> (rock salt)	Dried vegetables
<i>Amalak</i>	Pork
<i>Yava</i> (barley)	Beef
Milk	Buffalow meat
<i>Ghee</i>	Fish
Honey	Curd

Rain water	Black gram
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Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet)

The substance, which are contradictory to *Dehdhatu*, behave like antagonist to them, this antagonism may be in terms of properties, combination, processing, place, time, dose or natural composition. *Charak* enlist the several examples to explain the incompatible diet with their effect. *Cilacima* Fish with milk cause great obstruction of channels, Meat of domestic, marshy and aquatic animals with honey, sesamum, jiggery, milk, black gram, radish, lotus stalk or germinated grains causes deafness, blindness, tremors, coldness, indistinct voice, or death. The protherb of *Puskara* or *Rohini* of meat of pigeon fried with mustered oil mixed with honey or milk causes obstruction in bold circulation, atherosclerosis, epilepsy or death. After eating radish, garlic, *Shigru*, *Tulasi* one should not take milk because of the risk of leprosy. Protherb of *Jatuka* or ripe not be taken with honey or milk, it may cause death, loss of strength, lustre and impotency. Ripe of *Nikuca* not with black gram, pulse, jiggery and ghee and all sour liquid and non-liquid with milk, they all are antagonistic. *Kangu*, *Vanaka*, *Makusthaka*, *Kulattha*, black gram, *Nispva* are antagonistic to milk. *Upodika* with sesamum pest cause diarrhoea. Meat of peacock attached to the stick of *Errand*, cooked in fire with castor wood fuel and mixed with castor oil causes instantaneous death. *Pipali* with fish cooking media and *Kaqkmacjhi* with honey causes death. Hot honey, honey and ghee in equal quantity, honey and rain water in equal quantity all cause death. Hot water after taking *Bhallataka*, *Kampallik* cooked with buttermilk, *Kakamachi* and *Bhasa* roasted on iron rod all are antagonistic.^[12]

Anatagonistic food is the cause of impotency, blindness, erysipelas. Ascots, pustules, insanity, fistula- in – ano, fainting, necrosis, tympanitis, spasm in throat, anemia, *Amavish*, leucoderma, leprosy, *Grahani*, oedema, acid gastritis, fever, rhinitis, genetic disorders^[13]

Seasonal food

Diet leads to promotion of strength and complexion only if he knows the whowsomeness according to seasons depend upon diet. According to the movement of the sun two parts are their i.e. *Adana* and *Visrga*^[14] Their is predominance of *Saumya Guna* in *Visarga kala* and *Agneya Guna* in *Adan kala* [thusthe sun , wind and the moon are responsible for appearance time, season, *Rasa*, *Dosha* and bodily strength according to the nature.^[15]

Table no 5 – Season and its relation with food

Season	Parts	Taste	Type of food
Adana	<i>Vasant</i> ^[16]	<i>Amla</i> (sour), <i>madhur</i> (sweet) avoid	Barley and wheat, meat of <i>Sarabha</i> (wapiti), <i>Sasa</i> (Rabit), <i>Ena</i> (antelope), <i>Lava</i> (common quail), <i>Kapinjala</i> (grey partridge), harmless vinegars and wine
	<i>Grishma</i> ^[17]	Sweet, <i>Snigdha</i> (fatty) and <i>Shit</i> (cool) food should taken sour, <i>Lavan</i> (salty) and <i>atu</i> (pungent) food avoid	Cold and sweet <i>Manth</i> (unctuous drink), meat of wild animal and birds, <i>Ghee</i> and milk along with rice. Wine in little quantity of with plenty of water
	<i>Varsha</i> ^[18]	Sour, salty, and fatty food	Avoid cold drink. River water, old barley, wheat and rice along with wild meat and prepared soup wine and other type of fermented liquor mixed with honey boiled and cooed water from well or tank or rain water
<i>Visarga</i>	<i>Sharad</i> ^[19]	Sweet, bitter <i>Ras</i> Pradhan	<i>Laghu</i> (light), cool, <i>Pittanashan</i> , meat of <i>Lava</i> (common quail), <i>Kapinjala</i> (grey partridge), <i>Ena</i> (antelope), <i>Urbhra</i> (sheep), <i>Sarabha</i> (wapiti), rabbit , rice, barley and wheat, avoid fat, oil, meat of aquatic

			and marshy animals, alkali, curd. and <i>Hamsodak</i>
	<i>Hemant</i> ^[20]	sour, fatty and salty <i>Ras</i> ,	Meat of fatty aquatic and marshy animals meat of burrow – dwelling and <i>Prasaha</i> , wine and vinegar with honey, milk product, cane sugar, fats, oil, new rice, hot water, fermented <i>Laghu</i> and <i>vat</i> increasing and light food is avoided
	<i>Shishir</i> ^[21]	pungent, bitter, and <i>Kashay</i> (astringent) <i>Ras</i> ,	Same as <i>Hemant</i> <i>vat</i> <i>vardhak</i> and <i>Laghu</i> <i>Gun</i> food

Discussion

Food and drinks with desirable smell taste and touch and have been taken according to the prescribed method is said as vital strength by expert based on observation of their results.^[22] So it is very important to study the structure related to the *Annahava strotas* and the products, which have interference with the digestive system. *Amashaya* and the *Annavahini Dhamini* are the *Moolsthan* of the *Annavah Strotas* here *Amashaya* is related to the stomach and *Annavahi Dhamini* related to the oesophagus and small intestine,^[23] *Pakwahsya* also plays an important function as it the suite of *Pittadhara kala* and *Purishdhara kala* here *Pakwashaya* is related to the large intestine^[24]. Even after normal structure of all this all thesere are several problem related to the digestion due to the non-exploration of this basic fundaments of Ayurvedic dietetics.

Prakruti is depend upon the fundamental constitution of the body and nature of food is also depend on it, nature of the food should always conflict to the nature of the *Doshas*. Like in *Vataj Prakruti* the qualities of *Vata Doshas* i.e *Ruksha*, *Laghu*, *Shit*, *Khar*, *Chala*, and *Kshushma*. so in food the qualities which are conflict to these qualities are used, like in *Madhur*, *Amla* and

LavanRasa are used in *Vata Prakruti* because *Snigdha*, *Shit*, and *Guru* qualities in *Madhur*, *Snigdha*, *Ushna*, *Laghu* qualities in *Amla Rasa*, *Snigdha*, *Ushna*, *Guru* qualities in *Vat Doshas* which are opposite to that of *Vata Doshas*,^[25]. Similarly, *Ushna Virya* food is and *Madhur vipak* food used in *Vat Prakruti*. These kind of food used in maintenance of *Doshas* as per the *Samanya Vishese Sidhanta* present in the body.

After the quality of food quantity of food also one of the component which hamper the digestion process, as per Ayurveda belly is divide in to three parts for proper transmission of the *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* in the stomach, as per this transmission the food is divided in to appropriate and inappropriate diet. Appropriate diet leads to promotion of strength, complexion and development^[8] whereas inappropriate diet into several diseases.^[9]

Discipline of the diet is the main component of the ayurvedic dietetic in which nature is the existing property of the food related with the *Ras*, *Virya* and *Vipak*. Inprocessing of the food, it changes its quality and make it suitable to the individual. Combination is also the most essential element, which is to be considered while taking the food as the food changes its character and which may be fatal some time^[26]. Quantity of food includes total count in which all type of constituent of food is present where as in individual count single constituent of food is present. Place, which is mentioned here in two way first related to the food where it grows and distributed and second related to place of the individual where he lives. Time is also an important factor, which should take in consideration while taking the food; here it is again divided in to two-circumstance *Nityaga* related season and *Avasthik* related to the diseases. In both of these condition assimilation of food is depend the nature. The basic rule for the intake of the food is depend upon the power of digestion of the individual. Lastly, these all rules are stick

to the consumer who are taking part in assimilation so he is the utmost elements in the dietetics.

Wholesome And Unwholesome diet is used in curative as well as preventive aspect. Concept of these diet is two directional, if one is beneficial to some diseases, it may contraindicate to other. Like sweet and fatty food is indicated in thin person or to the *Vat Doshas* whereas same food is contraindicated to obese person or in *Kaphas Doshas*.^[27] so each food has its two directional views as per their suppressive and expressive nature. Therefore, it is important to analyse each product, which are taken orally as per their property.

The concept of incompatible diet is also depend upon the combination of the product. Due to the mixture, the formed product has property very different to that of the single one, like milk and fish both are useful to body when they used separately. However, when they are used in combination the nature of this formed product is sweet in taste, *Vipak* is also sweet, and become a great obstrucuter for the channels due to antagonistic property of *Virya*, as milk is of *Shitvirya* and fish is of *Ushna*^[13].

Season is also have an influence on the diet of an individual. The movement of the sun changes the nature of the season, as it moves towards the north produces roughness in *Shisira Vasnataa* and *Grishma* and by moving toward south, it cooled down by heavenly waters. It also affect the nature of the *Doshas* as environment changes from *Ruksha* rasa to *Aruksha* rasa. So the accumulation, vitiation and pacification of *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Vata* occurs in seasons of rain respectively^[28] so the food is also according to the presence of *Doshas* and nature.

Above all discussion it can clearly state that there are only two points which can be consider while taking the food is the user and the basic constitution of the consumer. Any food, which have been taken, shows their effect by two ways first by potential and second by qualities present in

food in terms of *Gun*, *Ras*, *Viya* and *Vipak* as it alter the balance of the *doshas* and balance the equilibrium of *doshas*. There are other several factors, which help in process of digestion like *Vajraasan*, *Ardhmastedrasan* ect^[29]so it can also be considered as part of Ayurvedic dietetic.

Conclusion

Ayurvedic dietetic is the broad concept explained in all compendia, as it is considered as the basic pillar of the body. Without food, it is hard to consider the life, but without understanding the proper ways regarding the assimilation, it is hard to be healthy. Because in this era most of the diseases are due to the bad eating habit. So while considering meal *Prakruti*, quantity of food intake, *Ahara Vidhi*, *Visheshayatan*, *Pathyapathya*, *Viruddha Ahara* and season plays an important role as it alters the basic constitution of the body. Therefore, consideration of these all elements are important for healthy life.

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