

A Comprehensive Study of Ayurvedic Dietary Concepts

Vd. Dinesh B. Naik^{1*}, Vd. Prashant A. Suru²

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Ayurved, ²MD(Ayu),
Professor, Research Guide, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, pune.

Abstract

Food has been given very much importance since Vedic period. It has been considered equivalent to Brahma in Upanishad and great medicine by Kasyap. We grow and develop due to food and our life sustains on food. The fact that; healthy or unhealthy state of body and mind is dependent on food is accepted by Ayurved. The food has been considered as one of the three pillars supporting life. Many incurable disease conditions are produced due to unhealthy diet.

Hence Ayurved emphasizes the consumption of suitable food in the right quantity, at the right time to prevent diseases and maintain healthy state of life Ayurved has planned very broad and special conditions for intake of food, considering time of taking food, nature of food, method of processing food, quantity, time, dietetic rules, various directions of consuming food like warm and unctuous food. Habits of eating food like one should not eat very slowly or very fast. One should eat with concentration without talking and laughing. Ayurved has developed and elaborated the concept of food incompatibility (viruddha anna). Specific diet plan for each person depends on his gender, age, constitution, satmya, asatmya, disease etc. These dietary concepts are followed by peoples from thousands of years.

Key words : incurable, pillars, unctuous, incompatibility, satmya, asatmya.

Introduction

Ayurved by definition contains the knowledge of life. Health is the main pillar of quality of life. And it is an essential part of the development of mankind. In veda; to reach moksh is considered as the aim of human life. Ayurved describes the way to attain moksh by focusing on health with the help of various objectives. This is stated in charak samhita- main aim of Ayurved is to attain dharma (pious acts), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (salvation) by health. Ill health takes away the health and happiness of life^[1]. The sense of wellbeing gives us freedom from fear of diseases and fatality. Ayurved is developed by our acharya thousands of years back keeping all these views in their mind. Ayurved teaches us how to maintain and protect mental and physical health and achieve longevity. Food (ahara) and lifestyle (vihara) significantly affect one's overall health and the uprising of metabolic and degenerative diseases are the result of adaptation of modern life style. The human body is the creation of food^[2] and it is considered as the supporter of life. The kinds of food that a person, or community habitually eats is called diet. The Ayurvedic

approach to food and dietetics is very distinct. One should regularly take such food which is conducive to the maintenance of good health and is accomplished for preventing the diseases. Most of the incurable diseases are produced due to improper food. Intelligent and self-controlled person should consume appropriate food in right quantity and at right time to promote health and prevent diseases.

Material and method

Various references regarding the fundamentals and principles of Ayurved from ancient Ayurvedic texts are studied and applied as basic principles to create the foundation for the Ayurvedic Dietary Concepts. The food is one among the three sub-pillars, supporting the life. Ahara (diet), nidra (sleep) and brahmacarya (abstinence) are recognized as the three upasthambhas (sub pillars) essential for the smooth running of life^[3].

Benefits of food-

Food helps in nourishment of the body of living beings. All living beings require food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, longevity, intelligence, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are obtained from food. Professional activities leading to happiness in this world, vedic procedures leading to heaven and observance of truth, abstinence leading to liberation

are all dependent on food^[4]. Regarding the food Ayurved has described various rules with respect to time of taking food, special conditions for intake of food etc. Distinct conditions for food intake Charak has stated eight guidelines of diet as following^[5]

- 1) Quality of food- one should consider quality of food i.e. guru, laghu etc. before using it. Food of guru quality is hard to digest e.g. black gram, pork.
- 2) Method of processing food- processing a food leads to transformation of inherent characters of the substance. Various processes like mixing with water, heating, cleaning, churning, maturing etc. brings alterations in the quality of food. We have to apply right method of processing the food for desired quality. Methods of preparing of different type of food items are described in Ayurved like manda (rice water which is the clear supernatant watery portion (without rice) in which rice is boiled), peya (rice soup), yavaagu (semi solid meal thicker than peya), vilepi (thick rice soup which thicker than yavaagu) yusha (Lentil soup). The different preparations of the same food differ in their properties and digestibility. The body is the result of consumables taken in four forms i.e., ashita (eatables), peeta (liquid food), khadita (linctus) and leedha (masticable foods)^[6]
- 3) Combination- combining the food with other will develop certain qualities which were not present originally.
- 4) Quantum- It is of two types, quantity of food taken in its entirety and quantity of each of its ingredients.
- 5) Place (habitat and climate)- The place of growth affects the quality of substance e.g. medicinal plants grown in Himalaya are potent.
- 6) Time- It is of two types daily, in the form of day and night, seasons and conditional time in the form of illness, age. The quality and quantity should be decided according to these.
- 7) Directions of food intake Charaka has described ten rules (aharvidhi vidhanam) regarding the healthy diet^[7].
 - a) Eat warm food- Warm food is tasty. It improves digestion ability which digests food quickly and properly. Vata dosh gets pacified and excess kapha gets reduced.

- b) Eat unctuous food- suitable oily food is delicious. It gets disintegrated quickly and gets digested. It pacifies vata, nourishes the body, strengthens the sense organs, promotes strength and brings out good complexion and brightness.
- c) Eat according to proper quantity- It prolongs life, it easily gets digested and does not aggravate doshas or impair digestion power. The amount of food which without disturbing the equilibrium (of dhatus or doshas of the body) get digested as well as metabolized in proper time is to be regarded as the proper quantity. The quantity of food also depends on the nature of food. Heavy food like sugar cane, milk product, flesh of aqueous animals should be consumed half of stomach. Light food like rice, green gram, rabbit should not be consumed in excess. The stomach capacity is divided into three portions and two portions should be filled by solid and liquid food and one portion should be left for the easy gastric movements and air, to facilitate the digestion process^[8].
- d) Eat after the completion of digestion of previous meal- Take food only after the digestion of previous food. Otherwise it gets mixed with the food under the digestion process, aggravating all doshas. After the completion of digestion, doshas are at their proper places and agni is activated, producing appetite, the entrances of various channels of circulation are opened, cardiac function is unimpaired, downward passage of vata and proper manifestation of the urges for voiding flatus, urine and stool. This promotes longevity and growth^[9] Duration of food digestion- food is digested in four yama, medicine in two yama in samagni person. In tikshnagni person it gets digested fast and takes longer duration in mandagni person.
- e) Eat food which is not contradictory- Take food which is not having contradictory properties. Otherwise the person may get afflicted with diseases like skin diseases, visarpa etc.

The food which is wrong in combination, has undergone wrong processing, consumed in incorrect dose, and/or consumed in incorrect time of the day and in wrong season can lead to viruddha ahara (incompatible diet). Examples of incompatibility/antagonistic fish + milk, heated honey, honey + cow's ghee mixed in equal proportion, consuming curd at night etc. Ayurveda literature has described 18 types of viruddha ahara^[10] which can be summarized as follows: a) desha (place) viruddha b)

kala viruddha c) agni viruddha d) matra (quantity) viruddha e) satmya (wholesome) viruddha f) dosha viruddha g) sanskar (mode of preparation) viruddha h) veerya (potency) viruddha i) kosktha viruddha i) avastha (state of health) viruddha j) krama (sequence) viruddha k) parihar viruddha l) upachar (treatment) viruddha m) paak (cooking) viruddha n) samyoga (combination) viruddha o) hriday viruddha p) sampad (richness of quality) viruddha q) vidhi (rules for eating) viruddha f) Eat in desired place with desired articles- by following this one does not get afflicted with factor which result in emotional strain, one should be supplemented with all accessories. Acharya Charaka mentioned the influence of negative emotions on the digestion of food. Healthy and wholesome food if taken even in proper quantity do not get properly digested when the individual is afflicted with grief, fear, anger, sorrow and excessive sleep ^[11]. g) Do not eat in hurry- if we eat rapidly, then food may enter in wrong passage. It is not digested properly. In this condition the taste of food is not determined properly. The foreign substances like hair can be swallowed. h) Do not eat very slowly- because it does not give satisfaction. One may eat more than required. Food becomes cold and irregularly digested. i) Eat with concentration without talking and laughing- Similar problems as in case of fast intake of food occurs. j) Eat after considering one self 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. The food is categorized as hitakara (wholesome) and ahitakara (unwholesome). In a similar context, the terms pathya and apathya are also used to denote the acceptability and adoptability of a particular. Acharya Charaka provides a list of diet which should be and should not be taken regularly. Shashtika, sali, mudga (greengram), amalaki (Indian gooseberry), rock salt, rain water, ghee, jangalamamsa (meat of animals of arid, desert-like land) and honey are wholesome and can be taken regularly ^[12] . Guru (heavy) food such as vallura (dried meat), sushka saka (dried vegetables), lotus rhizome, lotus stalk, meat of diseased animals, kurchika (boiled buttermilk) kilata, pork, beef, meat of buffalo, fish, curd, masa (blackgram) and yavaka (pounding barley to remove chaff and then boiling the grain in water or milk) should not be taken regularly ^[13]. Curd shouldn't be taken at night.

8) Person who takes food- He is responsible for the habitual intake of food. Sushruta's twelve principals of the diet ^[14] 1) Cold potency food- Patients suffering from thirst, heat, alcoholism, internal hemorrhage, poisoning etc. should take

this type of food. 2) Hot potency food- Patients suffering from disorders of kapha, vata, those under purification therapy, drinking oils should take this type of food. 3) Unctuous food- Persons with vata constitution, rough skin, dry kosktha etc. should take this type of food. 4) Rough food- Patients suffering from obesity, prameha, have taken snehan should take this type of food. 5) Liquid diet- Patients suffering from dehydration thirst and debility should take Liquid diet. 6) Dry food- Patients suffering from accumulation of water, wound, prameha should take dry food. 7) Single diet in a day- Persons having poor digestion power should eat only once in a day. 8) Diet twice in a day- Persons having good digestion power can eat twice in a day. 9) Diet containing medicine- If the patient has aversion for a medicine, It can be given mixed with food. 10) Diet in small quantity- Persons having low digestion power should eat small amount of food. 11) Palliative diet- It is an appropriate diet in consideration of season and place. 12) Normal diet- It is a diet for a perfectly healthy person.

Anupana (post-meal drinks) It is the drink taken after the intake of food or medicine. This increases the effects of food and drugs and their palatability. Generally taking water before meals reduces adiposity, after meals increases adiposity and during meals promotes digestion. In the cases of indigestion, toxicity and diarrhea, water also works as a therapeutic agent. Water taken in excess restricts digestion and dilutes nutrients.

Discussion

Ayurveda is a complete way of life. It improves not only a person's health, but also his wellbeing, behavior and state of mind. Ayurved is prevention-oriented, treats the root cause of a disease rather than just the symptoms. It lays great deal of importance upon proper diet for the preservation and promotion of positive health, and prevention and cure of diseases. For each and every disease wholesome and unwholesome (pathya and apathya) food ingredients have been stated. If a person suffering from any disease follows strictly the regulations of diet; he may not require medicine, but if he does not follow the regulations of diet, medicine may be fruitless. Food taken in proper quantity

provides strength, vigor, good complexion and nurtures the health of the tissues. In order to live healthy, one must live in harmony with his surroundings and follow a diet suitable to one's own bodily constitution.

Conclusion

- 1) The basic principles of Ayurved are having broad spectrum focusing on the importance of proper diet for the preservation and promotion of positive health.
- 2) Observing the cause and effect relationship carefully, Ayurved has prepared a firm platform of rules and regulations regarding diet especially for the health.
- 3) Ayurved recommends diet plan in accordance with individuality of a person. No common or generalized diet plan has been provided by Ayurved.

References

1. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutrasthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 1/15, 06.
2. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 25/40, 131.
3. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 11/35, 74.
4. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 27/349-350, 174.
5. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, viman sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 1/21, 235.
6. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 28/3, 174.
7. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, viman sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 1/24, 236.
8. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, viman sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 2/3, 238.
9. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, viman sthan,

1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 1/24(4), 237.

10. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 26/81, 149.
11. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, viman sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 2/9, 238.
12. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 5/12, 38.
13. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Charak Samhita with commentary by Chakrapanidatta, sutra sthan, 1994, Chaukhambha sansrit bhavan, Varanasi, 5/11, 38.
14. Vd. Jadavaji Trikamji Acharya, Sushrut Samhita with commentary by Dalhana, uttatantra, 1980, Chaukhambha Orientalia, Varanasi, 64/57-64.