



DIET AS MEDICINE IN AYURVEDIC SCIENCE

Anjali Goyal*, Arvind Gupta, Manjunatha.T.Sasanoor, Baldev Kumar

Dept. of P. G. Studies in Maulik Siddhant and Samhita, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

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*E-mail: anjalitonk.84@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda is a holistic system of natural health care that originated from Vedas, most ancient Indian literature of human civilization. As it deals with various aspects of life it is not merely the system of treatment but is an "Ideal way of Life". The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health in a healthy person and to cure the disease. To attain this Ayurveda mainly concentrates on various rules and regulations. In Ayurvedic classics, food is mentioned as one among the three Upasthambas (Sub-pillars) which supports the three main Sthambas (Pillars) of the body viz. Tridosha. It shows the credibility of food. Food also plays role like medicine which helps to prevent or cure to diseases. Food taken in proper manner helps in the proper growth of the body on contrary if taken in improper manner leads to various diseases. Thus Diet plays a significant task in both causation and curing of the disease. Properly followed dietetic rules and diet keeps the body healthy and prevents the diseases.

KEY WORDS: Health, Rules and regulations, Dietetic rules.

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health in a healthy person and to cure the disease. To attain this Ayurveda mainly concentrates on various rules and regulations. Dietetic Rule is one among that. If the dietetic rule is followed properly, it helps to increase health and enhance the life span. In Ayurvedic classics, food is mentioned as one among the three Upasthambas (Sub-pillars) which supports the three main Sthambas (Pillars) of the body viz. Tridosha. It shows the credibility of food. If we consider the anthropological evidence it is very likely that our hunter-gatherer ancestors learned about medicinal herbs by observing wild animals deliberately eating certain plants in their diet as a way to treat different health issues. For all of nature and throughout the history of medicine there has never been any real separation between food and medicine, and the present work aims to restore this connection. Ayurveda, firmly believes that by adopting a judicious lifestyle one can remain free from diseases. Susruta elaborates that Hitabhuk, Ritabhuk, Mitabhuk - one who takes good food (food that is good for the body, simply not taken to precipitate the taste buds), timely food (food taken when hungry) and appropriate amount of food can keep one free from diseases. . So air, water, food and any other thing a living being swallows or enjoys is included in the word. By judicious ahara-vihara one can be healthy without medicines.

For example, according to Caraka Samhita, red lentil is a food that is light, refreshing, sweet-taste and very beneficial for disorders caused by Pitta and Kapha. Raisin, with sweet flavour, is very unctuous and refreshing. It quenches the thirst, burning sensations, fever, weight-loss and disturbances of Vata and Pitta. Fresh ginger is an aphrodisiac. It is recommended for disorders of Vata and Kapha as well as against constipation. Onion aggravates Kapha and soothes Vata. It gives force, it is heavy and aphrodisiac whereas garlic (unctuous, heating, heavy and aphrodisiac, with pungent flavour) is considered as a vermifuge (as in Hippocratic dietetics). Garlic is also good for skin-diseases and Vata disorders. Cow-milk "is the best revitaliser and elixir for longevity" whereas yoghurt, that favours strength and digestion of acids and calms Vata, is contra-indicated to persons suffering from Pitta and Kapha problems.

Excessive intake of food hampers the Agni (digestive power), where as if person takes less food than required quantity there will be lose of strength and becomes victim for various diseases. While explaining the causative factors of most of the diseases Acharyas mentioned Ajirna bhojana as one of the main causative factor for eg. Grahani (Irritable bowel Syndrome), Kushta (leprosy) etc. That is why Jirne ashniyat (intake of food only after the digestion of previous food) factor is included under dietetic rules. Food which is taken before the proper digestion of previous food is considered to be poisonous. This is a major cause for most of the diseases like Grahani (I.B.S), Atisara (diarrhoea), Udara (ascitis), Jwara (fever), Yaksma (tuberculosis), Alasaka, Visuchika etc. Exactly opposite to this condition i.e. if required quantity of food is not taken even after the digestion of previous food is also not favourable. Thus Kalabhojana (timely food) is given due importance. The human body is a product of food, the diseases also arises on account of unwholesome food. Diet/Ahar is considered as main drug as per ayurveda. Ayurveda the science of life since beginning is particular about food. Here are some dietary practices to be followed in various diseased conditions.

One should not take constantly dried meat, dried vegetables, lotus tubers and stem because of their heaviness. The meat of emaciated (animal) should not be taken. Similarly one should not take continuously Kurchika and Kilata (milk products), pork, beef, buffalo meat, fish, curd, black gram and yavaka¹. One should take usually swastika, Sali (rice), barley, rain water, milk, ghee and honey.

One should take guru ahar (heavy in digestion) in 1/3rd or 1/2 of total stomach capacity and laghu ahar (easily digestible food) should not take in overloaded. One should imagine three part of stomach then 1st part fill by murta dravya (solid), 2nd part by amurta (gas) and 3rd part by dravya (liquid).

One should not take curd in night, that without ghee and sugar, without soup of green gram, honey or amalaka (*Embelica officinalis*) and that which is hot². A person after having food should never eat heavy preparation of flour and rice. One should not take food before excreting faeces and urine and without appetite or excessive hunger³.

One should consume hot water regularly for drinking purposes. Hot water has capacity of reducing the excess fat content and it can scrape the unwanted material from the

body. The consumption of hot water in Jwar (except pittaj Jwar), cold, cough, rheumatoid arthritis and sinusitis occurs because of atmospheric pollution, can be easily and safely managed with the hot water.

Masa (Black gram) is aphrodisiac, gives sexual potency. Masura (lentils) is very useful in diarrhoea. The vegetables of Vastuka (*Chenopodium album*), Kakamachi (*Solanum nigrum*) are grahi and useful in diarrhoea⁴. Buffalo milk is very useful in insomnia⁵. Camel milk is beneficial in abdominal diseases, worm diseases and piles⁶. Nasal drops of human milk are very good in internal haemorrhage⁷. Curd is relishing appetiser, aphrodisiac, strength promoting, bulk promoting. It is useful in rhinitis, diarrhoea, shivering, intermittent fever, anorexia, dysuria and emaciation⁸. Honey, if heated or taken by a person suffering from heat becomes fatal due to its association with poisons⁹.

The intake order of food items makes difference in the digestion and absorption process. The sweet substances should be consumed first followed by the sour, salty then followed by pungent, bitter, astringent substances¹⁰. During having meal firstly have fruits then liquid then solid diet or chief food¹¹. Always take food in proper meal time not more before or more lately. Do not have meal in excessive quantity or in very less quantity.

After the oil rich food one should consume yusha (gruel mixed with cereal), peya (gruel) and for food which is heavily loaded with ghee one should take hot water.

Sesame oil is best for daily cooking purposes. It has vitamin E which is an anti-oxidant and has been correlated with lowering cholesterol levels. It can be practiced as a common substitute like Tila taila for cooking in place of ordinary oil, Saindhava lavana (Rock salt) in place of normal salt, Jaggery for sugar, honey as a sweetener as per our availability and knowledge.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO BE FOLLOWED TO CONTROL STHAULYA (OBESITY):

Powder of barley and amalaka is an excellent formulation¹². In diet prasatika (an inferior cereal), kangu, syamaka (*Echinochloa frumentacea*), yavaka (small barley), yava – barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), jurna, kodrava (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), along with patola (*Luffa acutangula*) and amalaki fruits are to be used. After meals, honey water should be taken as drink¹³. Avoid excess water just after meal. One desirous of giving up obesity should gradually increase vigils, sexual intercourse, physical exercises and mental work¹⁴. Avoid new cereals, fresh wine, meat soup of domestic, mershy and aquatic animals, curd, ghee, sugarcane, rice, black gram, products of jiggery, daily masage etc.

Prameha (Diabetes):

One should eat rough food. Articles such as boiled barley, barley cakes, flour of parched grains and apupa (a dietary preparation) with palatable meat-soup of wild birds particularly gallinaceous and peckers¹⁵. One should take old Sali rice with soup of mudega (*Phaseolus mungo*-green gram) etc. and bitter vegetables added with oil of danti (*Baliospermum montanum*) and ingudi (*Balanites aegyptica*) or linseed and mustard¹⁶. The seeds of bamboo and wheat may also be useful. One should take the powder of haridra (Turmeric) mixed with honey along with the juice of amalaki fruits¹⁷. Pramehas disappear quickly by the use of various physical exercises (including yogasanas), profuse anointing, baths, sprinklings of water. Take Hinga (*Asafoetida*) and sandhava lavan with yush (gruel mixed with cereal)¹⁸. Walking a distance of hundred yards after meals as directed

by the Sushruta, one can be successful in controlling diabetes¹⁹.

Udar Rog (Abdominal diseases):

When the belly is filled up with dosas, agni (digestive fire) gets diminished, so appetising and light food should be taken such as red Sali rice, barley, green gram with animals and birds, milk, honey etc²⁰. The patient of udar rog should avoid aquatic and mershy meat and vegetables, flour preparations, sesamum seeds, physical exercise, travelling on foot, day sleep and journey on vehicles. Besides, he should avoid hot, salted, sour, burning and heavy food, cereals and water drinking²¹. If one is afflicted with oedema, hardness in bowels, colic, thirst and fainting camel's milk is useful. Likewise, if one is debilitated goat or buffalo milk is useful²².

Raktapitta (Haemorrhage):

One should take saturating drink in upward Raktapitta and liquid gruel in the downward. The patient who feels thirsty with Raktapitta should be drink cooled boiled water²³. Pomegranates and amalak fruits, cereals like Sali, sashtika, priyangu (*Callicarpa macrophylla*), lentils, green gram, makustha (*Phaseolus aconitifolius*) and adhaki (*Cajunus cajan*) for pulse-soup²⁴, vegetables like Patola, Nimba (*Azadiracta indica*), tip of Vetra (*Salix carpea*), tender leaves of Plaksha (*Ficus glibosa*) and Vetasa, Kiratatikta (Swertia chirayita) and Kathillaka²⁵, meat of Dove, Pigeon, Common quail, Raktaksa (crane), Harina and Kalapucchaka (types of deer) are wholesome in Raktapitta²⁶. In Raktapitta associated with kapha vegetable soup and in that with vata meat soup is prescribed²⁷. Clear water kept with Usira (*Vetiveria zizanioidis*), Water lily, Sandal and cooked earthen cold (or brick) well-cooled and mixed with sugar and honey should be administered to check excessive bleeding²⁸. Grape juice, sugarcane juice, milk, juice of pomegranate, visit to rivers and lakes, glaciers, favourite and soothing narratives pacify Raktapitta.

Rajyakshma (Tuberculosis):

Ghee mixed with dates, mradwika, sugar, honey and long pepper alleviates impairment of voice, cough, dyspnoea and fever along with Rajyakshma²⁹. Well prepared meats of carnivorous animals which are particularly buck-promotive should be given. The meat of animals nourished on meat only of animals and birds is an excellent flesh-promoting due to its being sharp, hot and light. The meats of peacock, partridge, cock, swan, boar, camel, ass, cow and buffalo are excellent flesh-promoting. The patient well massaged should be made to dip in the tub full of uncting substance, milk and water in order to remove the blockade of the channels and to improve. After he comes out of the tub, he should be uncted again with the mixed fat and strength³⁰. Avoid physical exertion disproportionate to strength, suppression of natural urges, excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse and fasting and irregular diet. For the patients of phthisis with Rajyakshama the cereals which have passed one year (at least one year old) should be prescribed. The cereals which are light have not lost their potency, palatable, fragrant and exhilarating are the most wholesome ones³¹.

Atisara (Diarrhoea):

When one is weakened by hunger, he should be given light food in meal time thus he attains relish, power of digestion and strength quickly. In the beginning he should be managed with buttermilk, sour gruel, saturating drinks, wine and madhu (a particular wine) according to suitability. Thereafter he should be given gruel, paste gruel, khada, soups and rice with meat soup added with appetisers and astringents³². In case of excessive elimination of stool leading to dryness of

mouth (dehydration), the patient should be fed on Sali rice with the soup of cereals such as barley, green gram, black gram, Sali rice, sesamum along with kola and tender fruit of bilva fried in yamaka (ghee and oil combined) and added with curd and pomegranate fruit³³. When the patient is free from ama (indigestive juice) and suffers from prolapsed of rectum with pain, he should take sour ghritha³⁴. Agni (digestive fire) should be stimulated gradually by giving soup of green gram, lentils, harenu, makustha and adhaki or meat soup of common quail, grey partridge, rabbit, harina, ena and kalapucchaka (types of deer) slightly or not soured. If diarrhoea continuous, one should be administered appetising, digestive, pacificatory and astringent formulations³⁵.

THERE ARE SOME COMMON PRACTICES TO BE FOLLOWED WHILE CONSUMING THE FOOD AS:-

1. Person should take food at a suitable place and time. Face and mouth should be well cleaned and he should eat food that is not used by others, heated only once, not very hot and overcooked. In general, the person should eat food with relish for better results.
2. In the beginning, foods which are either watery or hard to digest, sweet and fatty should be consumed, next should have those, which are sour and salty and lastly should consume foodstuff that are dry, non-fatty, liquid in nature and of other tastes.
3. Intake of food very slowly (vilambit ahar) leads to increase in consumption. Food also becomes cold. Food also should not be consumed hurriedly (atidrutam ahar) accompanied by excessive talking, laughter and the person should not engage mind on other things while eating, as all these leads to the food passing into the wrong passage thereby delaying the digestion process.
4. One should not eat food items, which one does not like. One should eat neither too fast nor too slow, without talking or laughing and with full concentration.

Acharya says that healthy food alone is responsible for the development of the body tissues and treating different pathogenesis on the other hand the unhealthy practice of diet is the root cause for all the diseases.

CONCLUSION:

The basic principles of Ayurveda explain in detail about the food items as medicine in different conditions and also mention the do's and don'ts to be followed while consuming food. It also explains the faulty habits involved in the pathogenesis of the disease. By following simple cautions and minute life style changes one can defend themselves from the diseases.

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