

Role of *Pathya Aahara Kalpana* (Diet) In Maintenance of Healthy Lifestyle

Santosh Kumar, Atul Kumar¹

Departments of Roga Nidana, and ¹Rasa Shastra, S.R.M. Govt. Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Food is as vital as breath for a living being and the most essential thing for maintenance of life. Good physical strength, intellect, complexion, cheerfulness, voice, happiness, contentment, etc are all dependent on food. Interest is continuously increasing towards *Ayurveda*, especially in search of guidelines regarding healthy food and food habits, and hence there is a need to explore the hidden knowledge in the ancient texts. Healthy nutrition is claimed with many functional foodstuffs, fortified foods and dietary supplements introduced in the food market. Such preparations are also advised for diseased persons, especially after carrying out certain therapeutic procedures (especially *Ayurvedic*) as such persons need more nutrition with least digestive load. Hence, public action is needed to promote and protect the health of the population by a harmonious use of *Ayurvedic* and modern dietary guidelines and measures to maintain good nutrition.

As per *Ayurveda*, there are eight specific factors regarding diet which should be taken into consideration before designing the best diet for a person, which also ensures optimized effect on *Tridoshas*. This article serves to elaborate these recommendations of *Ayurveda* so as to facilitate healthy eating in this modern era of food market.

Key words: *Aahara dravya*, Diet, Food, *Kalpana*, *Pathya*, Preparations

INTRODUCTION

Food is as vital as vital breath to the living beings and the most essential thing for maintenance of life. Good physical strength, intellect, complexion, cheerfulness, good voice, happiness, contentment are all dependent on food. There has been a continuous increasing interest towards *Ayurveda*, especially for guidelines regarding healthy food and food habits and hence exploration of the hidden knowledge written in the texts is needed. Consumers are now more aware about the balanced diet and better quality of food. Good quality food contains a high proportion of a valued ingredient and provides the necessary contribution to a nutritionally balanced diet.

Today, food market is overcrowded with functional foodstuffs, fortified foods and dietary supplements in the name of healthy nutrition. So public action is needed to promote and protect the health of the population using dietary guidelines and prevention measures for good nutrition. *Ayurvedic* science, which principally focuses on preventive healthcare, is thus rich in principles of food and nutrition, and descriptions of various eatables and their

preparations. Also, certain specific dietetic preparations (*pathya aahara kalpana*) as *Yavagu* (gruel), *Krisara* (thick paste gruel), *Vilepi* (thick gruel), *Manda* (liquid gruel), *Peya* (thin gruel), *Yusha* (soup) etc. have been described, which are easily digestible and have curative effects too. Such preparations are thus also advised to be administered to diseased persons and after carrying out certain therapeutic procedures (especially *Ayurvedic*) where person needs more nutrition with least digestive load.

Aims and Objectives of this study

This article serves to elaborate the important recommendations of *Ayurveda* in this regard, so as to facilitate healthy eating in this modern era of food market flooded with a large number of food products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The three basic *Ayurvedic* textbooks, 'the *Brhatrayis*' were mainly consulted for this study. The food substances have been described in the ancient classic *Charaka Samhita* and others *Brhatrayi* in various groups. ^[1, 2, 3]

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The descriptions regarding *pathya aahara kalpana* present in the basic *Ayurvedic* textbooks can be summarised as follows:

Corresponding Author: Dr.Santosh Kumar,

Assistant Professor, Department of Roga Nidana and Vikriti Vigyan, S.R.M. Govt. Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Bareilly, U.P., India.

Email: santsingh28.6@gmail.com

1. *Shuka Dhanya Varga* (Group of awned grains): This group mainly contains cereals like *Sali* rice, *Sastika* rice (*Oryza sativa*), *Yava* (barley), *Godhuma* (wheat).
2. *Shamidhanya Varga* (Group of legumes): This group mainly consists of pulses e.g. *Mudga* (green gram), *Masa* (black gram), *Rajamasa* (kidney bean), *Kulattha* (horse gram), *Chanaka* (gram), *Masura* (lentils), Pea, *Tila* (sesame) etc.
3. *Mamsa Varga* (Group of various kinds of meat): This is further classified on the basis of animal's habitat into several groups such as *Prasaha* (who take their food by snatching), *Ambucarina* (which move on waters), *Anupa* (those living in marshy lands), *Pratuda* (those who eat while striking) as these have got different pharmacotherapeutic effects on body and they are mentioned to be used in specific disorders
4. *Shaka Varga* (Group of vegetables): Different vegetables are described with their parts to be used along with their effects on body and hence their use in specific disease conditions. E.g., ripe fruit of *Kushmanda* (*Benincasa hispida*) is sweet, sour, light, diuretic, laxative and alleviates all *doshas*.
5. *Phala Varga* (Group of fruits): e.g. *Draksa* (grapes), *Kharjura* (dates), *Parusaka* (*Grewia asiatica*), *Madhuka* (*Madhuca indica*), *Narikela* (coconut), *Jambu* (*Syzygium cumini*), *Amalaki* (*Emblica officinalis*), *Tinduka* (*Diospyros tomentosa*), *Dadima* (pomegranate), *Vrksamla* (*Garcinia indica*) are described with their effects on body and hence accordingly their use is advised.
6. *Harit Varga* (Group of salad): e.g. *Ardraka* (Ginger), *Jambira* (lemon), *Mulaka* (radish), *Yavani* (*Trachyspermum ammi*), *Dhanyaka* (*Coriandrum sativum*), *Palandu* (onion), *Lasuna* (garlic) etc are described along with their effects on *Tridoshas* and the body as a whole.
7. *Madya Varga* (Group of fermented liquors): *Sura* is beneficial for those who are emaciated, suffering from obstruction in urine, malabsorption syndrome (*Grahani*) and piles. It alleviates *Vata* and useful in deficiency of lactation and anaemia. *Madira*, *Jagala*, *Arista*, *Sarkara*, *Pakwasara*, *Sitarasika*, *Gauda*, *Surasava*, *Madhvasva*, *Maireya Asava*, *Madhu*, *Sura Madhulika*, *Sauviraka*, etc are the different types of liquors described in *Ayurveda*, with specific actions and uses.
8. *Jala Varga* (Group of various types of water): Basically, all water is of one type i.e. the one which falls down as rain from the sky. Water while falling down from the sky and coming in contact with the moon, the air, and the sun, gets impregnated with the properties of cold, hot, unctuous, non-unctuous etc. The ultimate properties depend on place and time. The rainwater has, by nature, these six qualities i.e. cold, pure, wholesome, palatable, clean and light. Others (river, well, pond water etc) impart different properties depending on their source.
9. *Gorasa Varga* (Group of milk and milk products): e.g. milk of cow, buffalo, camel, mare, goat, sheep, elephant, human, etc. The

characteristics of these milks are well described in *Ayurveda*. *Dadhi* (curd), *Takra* (buttermilk), *Ghrita* (clarified butter), butter etc. are milk products with different actions and uses with respect to dose, time and place of living.

10. *Ikshu Varga* (Group of sugars/honey): e.g. Juice of Sugarcane, *Guda* (jaggery), *Khanda* (sugar), *Madhu* (honey) etc. fall under this group.

11. *Kritanna Varga* (Group of dietary preparations): This includes *Ayurveda* recipes like *Yavagu*, *Krisara*, *Vilepi*, *Manda*, *Peya*, *Yusha*; *Sattu* (floor of fried paddy) etc with their method of preparations and effects on body.^[4]

12. *Aharayogi Varga* (Group of adjuvants of food) : As the name suggests it includes items which are used as adjuvants for cooking e.g. oils of different sources like *Tila* (sesame), *Sarsapa* (brassica), *Priyala* (*Buchanania lanzan*). There is no certainty or limitation of the attachment to particular adjuvant of food.

Specifications regarding selection of food item

1. Cereals and legumes are recommended for use when they are one year old. The old one is mostly rough and light while the new one is mostly heavy.^[5]
2. The crop which comes shortly, is regarded as lighter.^[6]
3. The legumes when dehusked and properly fried, are digested easily.^[7]
4. Meat of the animals who died natural death, who are emaciated, too much fatty, too old, too young, killed by poisons, bitten by snakes, tigers, etc. should be discarded. Meat of animals other than the above is wholesome and promotes bulk as well as strength of the body.^[8]
5. Meat soup is nourishing and *Hrdya* (beneficial for heart). This is regarded as nectar for those who are suffering from phthisis, during convalescence, for the emaciated, for those with diminished semen and those desirous of strength and lustre.^[9]
6. Vegetables which are affected by insects, wind, sun, dried, old, off-season, not cooked with fat and unhygienic, should be discarded.^[10]
7. Instructions regarding salads are according to the respective items, except cooking.^[11]
8. The drinks taken after meals should be contrary to the properties of food not so to *Dhatus* (body tissues).^[12]

Dietetic Incompatibilities

The substances which are contrary to *Deha Dhatus* (body tissues) behave with *Viruddha* (antagonism) to them. This antagonism may be in terms of properties, combination, processing, place, time, dose etc. or natural composition (antagonistic as part of food, which is mostly used)^[13, 14] e.g.:-

1. One should not take fish with milk. Combination of both of them is *Madhura Rasa* (sweet taste), *Madhura Vipaka* (tastes sweet after final transformation after digestion), *Mahabhisyadi* (great obstructor/blocking for the body channels), because of milk is *Sita*

(cold potency) and fish is *Ushna* (hot potency) i.e. *Viruddha Virya* (antagonistic in terms of *potency or dynamic property*). Due to conflicting *viryas*, it initiates blood flow and due to *mahabhisyadi* it creates obstruction in the channels. Any such entire drug or diet which excites the *dosha* but does not eliminate it out of the body, becomes harmful.

2. For the person in arid zone (*Jangala Desa*) rough and sharp substances, and in marshy region (*Anupa Desa*) unctuous and cold ones are known as antagonistic in respect of place.

3. If one takes rough and cold etc, in the winter and pungent, hot etc in the summer it is antagonistic in terms of time.

4. *Madhu* (honey) and *Grhita* (clarified butter) taken together in equal quantity is antagonistic in dose.

5. The use of sweet, cold etc by a person accustomed to pungent, hot etc is antagonistic in suitability.

6. Use of diet, drug and behavior which is similar to *Doshas* in properties but adverse to the person's practice is antagonistic to *Doshas*.

7. When the edible food items becomes poisonous by particular processing such as in case of peacock's meat attached to the castor stick, it is known as antagonism in processing.

8. Antagonism in richness (of qualities) is when there is immature or over mature or damaged *rasa* in a substance.

9. It is antagonism in rules, if the food is not taken in clean and hygienic place.

Adverse effects of antagonistic food items on body

Antagonistic food is the cause of impotency, blindness, erysipelas, ascities, insanity, fistula-in-ano, fainting, necrosis, tympanitis, spasm in throat, anaemia, *amavisha*, leucoderma, leprosy, *grahani roga* (sprue/malabsorption syndrome), edema, hyperacidity or gastritis, fever, rhinitis, genetic disorders and even death.^[13,14]

Therapeutic measures to eliminate adverse effects

Ayurveda has indicated many measures to counteract the above and other disorders caused by antagonism, such as emesis, purgation, use of antidotes, for pacifying and prior conditioning of the body with similar substances.^[13, 14]

CONCLUSION

Diet design

There are eight specific factors regarding diet, which are to be taken into consideration before designing the diet for a person to derive best of its effects.

1. Nature of food, i.e. basic properties of food e.g. by nature green gram and gray partridge are light.

2. Processing: by processing, the heavy ones becomes light and vice versa such as *Vrihi* (rice grains) becomes light when transformed into *Laja* (parched rice) after frying. On the other hand flour of

roasted grains becomes heavy when processed to form cooked bolus.

3. Combination of different dietary items.

4. Quantity of individual item of food as well as the food as a whole.

5. Place

6. Time

7. Direction of use

8. User selection of item of food should be done on the basis of suitability or unsuitability to the user.

The prescribed method for healthy eating

1. One should take food only after the previous food is digested and that too in proper quantity. In *Ayurveda*, the quantity of food differs from person to person, which is determined by his/her digestive capacity. Also, the physical form of food is given importance i.e. one should take solids and liquids in one-third amount each of the total capacity of intake and leave the rest third empty for proper movement and *Tridoshas* to act upon it.

2. One should eat warm (freshly prepared) and unctuous food.

3. One should select the combinations which are not antagonistic.

4. One should ensure proper hygiene of place before eating along with all the favorable accessories.

5. One should not eat too fast or too slow.

6. One should eat food with full concentration and avoid laughing and talking while eating.

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