



Importance Of Diet And Methods Of Its Ingestion

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Ayurveda is a holistic system of natural health care that originated from Vedas, most ancient Indian literature of human civilization. The main aim of Ayurveda is to maintain the health in a healthy person and to cure the disease. According to Ayurveda, life sustains with diet but dietetic rules are to be followed strictly for maintenance of healthy life. 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 texts, aahar is mentioned as one among the three Upasthambas (Sub-pillars). It shows the importance of aahar. The time, place, quantity and way of food intake are also necessary. Food taken in proper way helps in the proper growth of the body on contrary if taken in improper manner leads to various diseases. Thus Dietetic rules play a significant role in both causation and curing of the disease. Properly followed dietetic rules and diet keeps the body healthy and prevents the diseases.

Key words: Ahara; Rules; Causative; Curative.

Definition of diet- There is no clear definition of diet is mentioned in *Samhitas*, but according to different authors the definition of diet is as follows- The substance which is taken to nourish the body is called diet¹. The liquid and solid food substance regularly consume in the course of normal living. A diet adequate in energy-providing substances (carbohydrates and fat), tissue- building compound (proteins) inorganic chemicals (water and minerals) and agent that regulate and catalyze metabolic process (vitamins), and substances for certain physiological processes such as bulk for promoting peristaltic movement of the digestive tract².

Importance of diet- According to Ayurveda, diet plays an important role for the maintenance of health. The three *Upasthambh* mentioned by *Charak samhita* – *aahar*(diet), *nidra*(sleep), *Brahmacharya* (refrained from all the sexual acts).³The diet has been recognized as an essential factor for smooth running of life. *Charak* also mentioned among all the *Upasthambha* which is mentioned by *aacharya* previously “*Anna* is the best sustainer of life”⁴. Food also maintain the life of human being and due to this all creators are inclined towards it.⁵

Importance of *aahar* mentioned by *aacharyas* as follows⁶ -

1. Complexion
2. Clarity
3. Good voice
4. Longevity
5. Genuineness
6. Happiness of all *indriyas*
7. Satisfaction
8. Nourishment
9. Intellect
10. Increase all type of energies & *ojas*

Desirable quantity of food- the quantity of *aahar* depend upon two factor mainly-

- 1- *Agni*
- 2- Stomach (*Kukshi*)

Agni⁷ - According to *Charak* , the quantity of *aahara* is depend upon the strength of *agni* of human being.

Stomach⁸ – The quantity of *aahara* according to stomach mentioned by different *aacharyas*, *Charak* has given a simplest principle pertaining to the capacity of the stomach is itself where one can have a sense of exact feeling for the area filled up. If the food article is heavy in nature only $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ of the stomach capacity is to be filled up. *Kashyapa* has mentioned the food article which is heavy in nature taken in small quantity. In the case of light food article excessive intake is not conducive to the maintenance of the power of digestion and metabolism (strength of *agni*)⁹. In this regard *Charak* further says that the purpose of taking food the stomach capacity should be divided into 3 parts- one part of it should be filled up with solid food, the second part with liquid and the third part should left for *vata*, *pitta* & *kapha*¹⁰. *Kashyapa* divided the stomach in four parts – Two parts should be filled up by food and third part with water and forth part should be left for the movement of *Vayu*¹¹.

Special peculiarities of diet^{12,13} – *Charak* and *Vagabhatta* has described the eight peculiarities of diet which are most important from the point of causative, preventive and curative aspect of disease. They are to be examined before food intake and also to be followed during and after food intake.

- Natural qualities (*prakati / svabhav*)
- Preparation (*karan / sanskar*)
- Combination (*sanyog*)
- Quantum (*rashi / matra*)
- Habitat (*desh*)
- Stage of disease (*kala*)
- Dietetic rules (*upayogasanstha*)
- User (*upayokta*)

1. Natural qualities (prakati / svabhav)- Natural qualities are the innate properties of substances i.e. heaviness is the nature of black gram & pork and light ness is the natural qualities of green gram & venison. *Sahaj*, *svabhavik*, *prakruti* and *naisargik* all are the synonyms of each other. The presence of qualities like heaviness natural property of substance used in our diet or in the preparation of the drug.

2. Preparation (karan / sanskar)- Preparation is the process performed to modify the natural properties of substances. That process again is that which modifies radically the properties of substances.

Modification is brought about by dilution, application of heat, clarification, emulsification, storing, maturing, flavoring, impregnation, preservation and material of receptacle. Innate properties cannot be changed but the modification can brought by above means.

3. Combination (sanyog)– Combination is the combining together of 2 or more substances. This chemical combination exhibits special properties which none of the constituents ever possessed. i.e. Equal quantity of *ghee* and honey are become toxic substances. The combination of honey, fish and milk are become toxic.

4. Quantum (rashi / matra)- *Rashi* is the measure of total mass and of each constituent in order to determine effects of right and wrong Doses. The measure of the entire meal as a whole is total measurement. The measuring of each article of diet is detailed measurement.

5. Habitat (desh)- Habitat is a geographic region indicates variations in qualities of substances due to difference in soil, use and climate.

6. Stage of disease (kala)– Time is used in two senses, time in the general sense and time in sense of stage. Now stage is used in relation to disease and time in general senses is used in relation to seasonal wholesomeness.

7. Dietetic rules (upayogasanstha)- These are the certain dietic rules, which are needed to be followed by one and all, and these are usually determined by strength of the digestion of a person. Ayurveda describes different types of measurements of diet. To living being definitely except diet even slightest stability of life is not obtained. The same properly used diet provide life, make the all *indriyas* happy, nourishes *Dhatu*, increase memory, intellect, all type of energies and *Ojas*, also produces clarity of complexion, if used properly definitely produces disorder¹⁴. *Carak* has also described importance of diet to be take in appropriate quantity depending upon the capacity of *Jatharagni* which is accepted by other *Aacharayas* also, the diet taken in appropriate quantity is that which get digested easily increase definitely the strength, complexion, pleasure and longevity, one should always take diet capable of providing maintenance of the body¹⁵. Beneficial diet causes progression while non beneficial diet causes regression in health¹⁶.

According to *bhavprakash* at the scheduled time of taking food the person should look at auspicious things daily, this will enhance life and righteousness *bhavprakash* also mentioned four kinds of desire arise in a man daily –

1. Eating food 2. Drinking water 3. Sleeping 4. Sexual enjoyment

Suppress in the desire of eating food give rise to body ache, loss of appetite, fatigue, debility of eyes, burning of tissue and loss of strength¹⁷. Food is comforting to the body support the body, enhances power of memory, life span, strength, complexion and mental activity¹⁸.

Specific dietic rules described by different aacharyas as follows-

- 1. Food taken in appropriate time^{19,20}**- when a individual taken the food in appropriate time it feels tasty, increase satisfaction and nutrition, get digested easily and disease do not develop due to indigestion of food when eaten after / before appropriate time produce longevity and provide strength and complexion.

2. **Effect of Satmya aahar²¹**- The food which becomes naturally favorable due to continuous use is called Satmya aahar. The one which using Satmya Aahar lives for hundred year due to good quality of Dhatu.
3. **Effect of laghu aahar^{22,23}**-Food taken in appropriate quantity so get digested easily and that does not become contradictory to health, maintenance of life, Jathragni and other activity of life. Diet in appropriate quantity increase longevity, get digested easily, does not cause trouble and reaches lower passage in appropriate time, it does not cause compression on stomach or obstruction to cardiac region as well as flanks and heaviness of abdomen and does not disturb normal activity.
4. **Effect of warm food²⁴**- the warm food eaten by individuals feel tasty, suppress kapha cause downward movement of Vayu, get digested quickly, increase desire of food, lightness and increase the Jathragni.
5. **Effect of unctuous food²⁵**- The unctuous food is pleasing to the body, also increase process, cause accumulation of Dhatus and retains strength and complexion.
6. **Effect of cleaned contrary food²⁶**-Even very well cleaned contrary food should not be taken because it destroy the life of human being quickly in same way as honey and ghrith in equal quantity. The one eating non contrary food attains health, longevity, complexion, strength, pleasure and using opposite contrary to all those.
7. **Effect of eating in clean place & pots²⁷**-The one eating in clean pot, in sacred place and being clean oneself attains satisfaction, thus attains nourishment by that; unwanted non pleasurable food should not be taken at it causes psychological trauma that is why one desirous of longevity and health should not eat unwanted food.
8. **Effect of eating in proper direction²⁸**-The man eating keeping his face eastwards become intelligent and obtain long life, eating with calmness gets happiness of all the indriyas & psychological congeniality.
9. **Effect of eating with concentration^{29,30}**-The one eating with concentration knows all these above quality, quantity, digestion and procedure. That is why the healthy should eat food with concentration without taking.,
10. **Effect of repeatedly eating³¹**-The one who eat the food repeatedly, having clean tongue and organ of taste, he know all the taste specially obtain the knowledge of taste. *Sushruta*³² has also accepted the importance of feeling of taste in the food. He has further elaborated that the tasty food generates happiness of food, psyche, strength, nutrition and happiness of body.
11. **Effect of very fast eating³³**-When a individual eating the food very fast does not obtain its proper place, he neither knows the things to be eaten first nor the quality of rasas of food, the one eating very fast does not get complete perspicuity of the indriyas and downward movement of Vayu. According³⁴ to other aacharyas when food taken very fast it may enter in the other passage there is depression the food is not established in its proper place and the individuals is not able to detected the effect and quality of food.
12. **Effect of slowly eating³⁵**-The one eating very slowly makes the food initially cold and eating excessive cold does not get satisfaction and food get digested with difficulty.
13. **Effect of very hot food³⁶**- By heating very hot food the tongue, throat, lips, cardiac region and abdomen get burn so the individual does not feel taste and get inflammation, suppuration of mouth and eyes, erysipelas, raktapitta and fever. *Vagabhatta*³⁷ says very hot food produce intoxication, burning sensation, thirst, decrease of strength and giddiness.

14. **Effect of very cold food**³⁸ - The person eating very cold food develops colic, softness of grahani, aggravation of Kapha and Vata, cough & hiccough. According to Vagabhatta³⁹ due to consumption of cold food anorexia, nausea, constipation and lethargy have been developed.
 15. **Effect of dry food**^{40,41} - Dry food causes constipation, upward movements of gases, discoloration, vitiation of Vata, retention of urine, loss of strength and complexion, dryness of skin, obstruction of flatus and faeces developing due to consumption of dry food.
 16. **Effect of over unctuous food**^{42,43} - Over unctuous food causes drowsiness, thirst, indigestion, abdominal diseases, disorders of Kapha and meda, diseases of throat, accumulation of Kapha, excess salivation of mouth, heaviness in cardiac region, anorexia and lethargy.
 17. **Effect of overeating**⁴⁴ - Number of complications may be developed due to overeating. It produces aggravation of all the three Dosas which getting located in undigested quantum of food and lead to distention of abdomen, vomiting, diarrhoea and aggravates Vata which causes colic, dryness of mouth, stiffness of flank and constriction of blood vessels.
 18. **Effect of less diet**^{45,46} - When the person eating too less diet, disease of Teekshagni, emaciation, giddiness, non-satisfaction, lightness along with loss of sleep, faeces & urine, loss of strength and complexion, growth as well as development of body, udavart, loss of veerya, ojas, intellect and indriyas, disturbed all sar of body and produce disorder of Vata.
 19. **Effect of over liquid food**⁴⁷ - When an individual consuming excessive liquid food nausea, polyurea, pain in flanks, coryza, diarrhoea may be developed.
 20. **Effect of over desiccated food**^{48,49} - The person should not take over desiccated food, because it is not digested properly and due to burning of earlier formed rasa; it causes decrease of urine and Kapha.
 21. **Effect of eating in absence of desire**⁵⁰ - The one who eat even without having the desire, he suffers from indigestion, anorexia, vomiting, colic and tympanitis.
 22. **Effect of continuous/ repeated eating**⁵¹ - When an individual eating repeatedly, the thirst, loss of *Jatharagni*, body ache, fever, diarrhoea and diminished vision may develop.
 23. **Effect of consuming food with only one rasa**⁵² - When a person eating only one *Rasa* food the weakness and absence of stoutness develop. Non aggravations of *Doshas*, equilibrium of *Dhatus*, increase in strength and longevity, disease free state are developed in human being, by eating the food of all *Rasas*. That is why those desires of disease free State should give up practice of food of all *Rasa*.
- 8. User (upayogastha)**- The user is he who makes use of food, habitation depends upon him.

These different factors give rise to good and evil effects and are helpful to one another. The physician should try to know them and having known them he should make use of wholesome only. Out of ignorance, he should not make use of any diet or any other thing which is pleasant but unwholesome with unhappy consequences.

DISCUSSION- Dietetics is a science that deals with the adequacy of diet during normal life and modification required during disease condition. Like all scientific disciplines it is an ever expanding and constantly evolving field. Considering the utility of *aahar*, *Charaka* has stated that it sustains the life of human being. Recognizing the biological response of *aahar*, *Sushrut* has also stated that it nourishes as well as instantly promotes strength and keeps up the integrity of body. Biogenic contribution of *aahar* in term of metabolic transformation being directly governed by *jatharagni* and

the resultant effects apparently seen in maintenance of body tissue element by means of its growth and repair process.

Conclusion- 1. Ahara vidhi Vidhana is one of the most important rules and regulations put forth by Ayurvedic classics for the attainment of the main aim i.e. maintenance of health in healthy person and curing the disease in diseased.

2. These dietetic rules should be applied along with proper diet. Wholesome diet if taken in improper way can lead to diseases. In the same way improper diet taken in proper manner leads to disorders. Hence, the equal importance of Ahara along with Ahara Vidhi Vidhana should always be considered, in maintenance of health and prevention of diseases.

3. Thus both Ahara (Diet) and Ahara Vidhi Vidhana (Dietetic rules) are equally important. Proper utilization of both maintains healthy condition on contrary improper utilization leads to various diseases

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