

# "Dietary Principles in Ayurveda: Aahara, Tridosha Balance, and Contemporary Relevance in Lifestyle Disorders"

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## ABSTRACT

The prime concern of human beings is to maintain good health, which solely depends on dietary pattern, in which *Ayurveda* plays a significant role. The human body requires food to provide energy for all life processes, growth, repair, and maintenance. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need of the body is adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet regularly and staying at an ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being. In *Ayurveda*, diet forms an important component of life as it is included in the *Tri-Upastambha* (three pillars of life). The *Trayopstambha* (three pillars of life) is a concept comprising 3 elements, viz. *Aahara*, *Nidra*, and *Brahmacharya* and *Aahara* is the most important among the three. (Ch.Su. 11/13).

Henceforth, this article particularly summarizes diet and related regimen in consideration of *Ayurveda* as it plays a vital role in healing. The diet mentioned in *Ayurveda* not only refreshes the body but also is a refreshing energy source for the soul. One must be particular while following *Ayurveda* diet as any faulty practice in preparation or consumption may result in body disorders, which has become a primary concern these days for health researchers and care providers as well.

**Key words** - Aahara, Nidra, Brahmacharya, Tri-Upastambha.

## INTRODUCTION

The body grows, develops strength, and gradually matures from the time of conception. Proper time (*Kala Yoga*), favorable disposition of the nature (*Swabhava Sam siddhi*), excellence of properties of food (*Ahara Sausthava*), and absence of inhibiting factors (*Navigate*) are the factors responsible for the growth of the body [1].

*Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *Ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *Sadvritta* and *Trayopasthamba* have been mentioned for the same in our classics<sup>3</sup>. The important component of life is *Aahara* (diet) as it is included in the three pillars of life (*Traya- upastambha*) in *Ayurveda*<sup>2</sup>. The body is endowed with growth, strength, and complexion when there is support by *Traya- pasteboard* and continues till the full span of life<sup>3</sup>. The human body requires food to provide energy for all life processes and the growth, repair, and maintenance of cells and tissues. The dietary needs vary according to age, sex, and occupation. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need of the body is adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet regularly and staying at an ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being.

*Ayurveda* specified the characteristics of food in terms of quality, quantity, and time, which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease, and also from person to person. One has to consume a diet that is suitable for them in all aspects, and deviation from this may cause diseases. In addition to these, wrong cooking procedures, irregular timing, consuming imbalanced and non-congenial food, and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving, and eating food may also cause an imbalance in health.

The history of dietetics comes from old times, where it was considered most essential fuel to lead a life with smooth functioning. In that context, Acharya Charaka has mentioned that diet is a causative factor in

originating *purusa* and diseases<sup>5</sup>. Maharshi Sushruta in Sushruta Samhita requested to lord Dhanwantari with regard to application and importance of diet on physicians part resulting in historical significance of dietetics<sup>6</sup>. In Manusmriti, it is advised that one must praise the food always and get delighted on seeing it<sup>7</sup>. Bhagwat geeta has described that *Rajasika* individuals prefer foods that are bitter, pungent, sour, saline or hot, burning and unctuous which in turn produces pain, grief and diseases<sup>8</sup>. In case of *Tamasika* people, food that is tasteless, stinking, cooked overnight and impure is preferred<sup>9</sup>. Dietetics, a science applied to the principle of nutrition refers to as the planning, preparation and regulation of the food and diet with relation to maintaining health along with treatment of diseases<sup>10</sup>. *Ayurveda* is the traditional system of medicine in India which describes ‘*Aahara*’ in context of two meanings: food items and the act of food intake<sup>11</sup>. As it is said, diet is not only responsible to living long (*Annam vrittikaranam*)<sup>12</sup>, but also plays a significant role in maintaining good health. *Ayurveda* explains that when the food is eaten in appropriate amount following all rules and regulations, it helps in sustaining the life, nourishes all dhatus (tissues), refreshes all our sense organs, organs of functions along with mind. It increases strength, memory, intelligence, *oja* and provides good complexion and luster to the body<sup>13</sup>.

One has to consume the diet, which is suitable to him in all aspects, and deviation from these may cause diseases. In addition to these, wrong cooking procedures, irregular timing, and consuming imbalanced and non-congenial food and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food may also cause imbalance of health. The improper digestion produces toxin (*Ama*), which leads to majority of diseases, e.g. it causes Rheumatoid arthritis (*Amavata*) when it afflicts the joints. The relation between the faulty food & diseases are well explained like if one consumes only Sweet (*Madhurarasa*) in excess, he may develop diabetes. If one regularly consumes articles that are heavy to digest, he may become obese. Nowadays, the diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes (*madhumeha*), obesity (*sthoulya*), cancer (*arbuda*), liver diseases (*yakrit vridhhi*), insomnia (*nidranasha*), anxiety neurosis (*chittodvega*) and bronchial asthma (*tamaka swasa*) are highly prevalent and are labeled as lifestyle disorders. These lifestyle disorders are due to avoidable causes, mainly faulty diet habits and practices. Therefore, due consideration mentioned in *Ayurveda* should be given to all aspects of diet planning in the treatment of diseases and to maintain the health.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A comprehensive literature in the present article has been searched on the concept of Ahara, Dietetics and *Ashtha Aahar Vidhi Visheshayatana* from standard text books of *Ayurveda* including Charaka samhita, Sushrut Samhita, Ashtang Sangraha and from ancient commentaries like Manusmriti, Bhagwat Geeta as well. Research articles from different online journals of standard e-database like PubMed, PubMed Central, Google Scholar, Medline and Science Direct were searched to get relevant research papers related to manuscript.

The food contains six basic tastes and each taste has pre-dominance of particular elements of *Panchamahabhoota*<sup>14</sup> which exerts specific effect on the *Tridoshas & Dhatus*.

Rasa	Panchbhautika constitution
Madhura (Sweet)	Prithvi & Aapa
Amla (Sour)	Prithvi & Agni
Lavana (Salt)	Aapa & Agni
Katu (Pungent)	Agni & Vayu
Tikta (Bitter)	Vayu & Akash
Kashaya (Astringent)	Prithvi & Vayu

It is mentioned that, drugs having sweet, sour and salty taste alleviate *Vata*, those having astringent, sweet and bitter tastes alleviate *Pitta* and those having astringent, pungent and bitter tastes alleviate *Kapha dosha*.

**Four forms of food:** Basically, Ayurveda describes four forms of food preparations-

1. *Ashitam* – Eatables
2. *Khaditam* – Masticable Food
3. *Peetam* – Drinks, Beverages
4. *Leedham* – Licking Form

**Principle of Balance Diet** -According to *Ayurveda*, the stomach should be divided into four parts: two parts filled with solids, one part filled with liquid, and one part left empty for the *Doshas*. The term "balanced diet" refers to a diet that nourishes both the mental and physical structures. Balanced diet in *Ayurveda* can be defined as “the diet enriched with *Shadarasa*, required *Gunas*, *Veerya* and given to the individual after consideration of *Prakrati*, *Agni*, *Kostha* and *Ritu*. In Ayurveda, *Matravatashniyata Ahara*. There are two forms of *Matra*. One is *Sarvagraha*, and the other is *Parigrah*, so the diet must include a range of foods in sufficient quantities from various classes in order to include both micro and macro nutrients. Furthermore, Acharya Charaka determines the amount of food to be consumed based on its consistency.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Incompatible Diet (*Viruddha Ahara*):** The food with incompatible or contradictory qualities has poisonous effect on the body that aggravates *Tridoshas* intern leading to various disorders

viz: *Gulma* (Lump), Fever, Allergic Dermatitis, Eczema, Abscess and other Skin diseases. It also destroys strength, vigour, memory, immunity etc <sup>[16]</sup>.

**Seasonal- dietetics according to *Ayurveda***<sup>17,18</sup> –

Ritu\Season	Indications	Contraindications
1. <b>Shishira</b>	Fresh crops, unctuous, salty, sour, veg-aquatic and marshy animals, Products of fermented sugarcane juice, Alcohol, cow milk, fat, oil, honey, lukewarm water.	Pungent, astringent, bitter taste, light and cold food that vitiates Vata.
2. <b>Vasanta</b>	Barley, particularly old, wheat, light nonfried (without oil or ghee) food, among Nonveg - quail, antelope, sheep, and rabbit.  Products of fermented sugarcane juice and grapes, honey, mango juice, ginger water, Vijayasara and chandana water, water with honey, and Nagarmotha	Heavy, sweet, sour, unctuous, cold food and sleeping in the daytime.
3. <b>Greeshma</b>	Shali rice with cow milk and ghee, Sweet, cold, liquid, unctuous (with oil or ghee).  Sweet, unctuous, cold, liquid Mantha with sugar, less amount of alcohol with large amounts of water, Rasala (a product made of curd), Raita, fruit juices, and cold buffalo milk at night.	Salty, sour, pungent, and hot food, exercises, and sexual activity

<b>4. Varsha</b>	<p>Use honey with preparation, sweet, unctuous, sour, salty, old barley, wheat, Shali rice, among nonveg- meat of aried animals and vegetable soup.</p> <p>Use honey with preparations such as alcohol, fermented drinks, water of pure rain, well, or pond after boiling.</p>	Mantha with much water, sleep in daytime, frosts, river water, strenuous exercises, exposure to the sun, and sexual activity
<b>5. Sharada</b>	Sweet, light, cold, bitter, astringent, barley, wheat, Shali rice, Moonga, sugar, Amalaki, Patola, Madhu, among non-veg-quail, grey partridge, antelope, sheep, and rabbit.	Sun exposure, fat, oil, curd, sleep in daytime, eastern air, frost, meat of aquatic and marshy animals, alkaline salt, and strong alcohol.
<b>6. Hemanta</b>	<p>Sour, bitter, and salty taste, Unctuous (with oil and ghee), alkaline salt, grains of new crops, products of jaggery, wheat, and masha.</p> <p>Alcohol, fermented product of grapes and sugarcane, honey, fat, oil, cow milk and its products, new crops and warm water.</p>	Food and drink that are light and help to vitiate Vata dosha.

### Rules to have Ahara/ food according to Ayurveda- 19

#### Indications-

- The food should be tasty, warm, qualitative, unctuous, and easily digestible.
- It should be eaten neither too fast nor too slow.
- The food should be eaten only when hungry, after the last meal has been digested.
- Should include all the tastes, namely sweet, salty, sour, pungent, bitter, and astringent, in the daily diet.
- Should eat food that is nourishing and suitable to the particular constitution, mental and emotional temperament.
- It is best to focus on food while eating.
- One should eat while comfortably sitting.
- Food should be eaten in pleasant surroundings with utensils and prepared of the individual's choice.

#### Contraindications-

- The food should not be contrary to each other in action. e.g. – fish and milk together, radish and milk together, honey and ghee in equal quantity.
- Eating should not be in a hurry.
- It should not be very slow either.
- Should not eat when emotionally upset.

- Too much use of any of the 6 tastes, namely sweet, salt, sour, pungent, bitter, and astringent, is not conducive to health.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION-

The root cause for the strength, complexion, and vitality of living beings is *Ahara* (food). It can control the disease pathology and promote health as well. When consumed in a proper way (*samyak yoga*), *Ahara* maintains the body, while *ati* (excess), *mithya* (improper), and *hinayoga* (inadequate manner) lead to awful effects on the body. A balanced diet contains different types of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need of the body is adequately met. Eating a well-balanced diet regularly and staying at an ideal weight are critical factors in maintaining emotional and physical well-being. In Ayurveda, diet forms an important component of life as it is included in the *Tri-Upastambha* (three pillars of life). Each food article either has a *Dosha* aggravating action or a pacifying or balancing action on the human body. To keep the homeostasis of *Doshas* (health), Ayurveda has described a specific diet. Proper planning and adherence to the diet can maintain our body.

The primary goal, as mentioned in our authentic books, is “*Swasthasya Rakshanam*” which means to protect and preserve health, which is only attained by following a dietary regimen according to *Ritus*, *Doshas*, diseases depending on gastric fire, intake of food at a desired time with a relaxed state of mind. There is no need for medicine intake if one follows a proper dietary regimen, as said in *Vaidyajeewanam*. All human beings should have proper information about food and its importance to obtain better benefits from it.

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