

**A REVIEW ARTICLE: TO REVIEW PREVENTIVE PROMOTIVE AND
CURATIVE ASPECT OF DIETARY IMPORTANCE W.S.R. TO
PATHYAHAR.**

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ABSTRACT

A balanced diet is the accepted mean to safeguard a population from nutritional deficiencies. Our body is an outcome of the food we eat. It gives strength, longevity, etc of life. The food should be taken in proper quantity which should be digested properly by jathragni. Ayurveda described constituent of balanced diet i.e. sastika, Sali, green gram, saindhava salt, aamalaki, milk, ghrita, honey, yavan, antariksha jal, jangal meat. These are the products having high nutritional values, easily digestible. Time also plays important role in digestion, food should be taken at proper interval of time & samashana, vishamashana, addhyashana & amatrashana should be avoided. It is called that 'we are what we eat', so satvik, rajasik, tamasik food causes that type of physical & mental fluctuations. So food should be properly cooked,

clean, having all six tastes. In paper importance, constituents, rules & manner of taking food is discussed.

KEYWORDS: Balanced diet, jatharagni, virudhhashana, satvik, rajasik, tamasik food, shadrasatmak aahar.

INTRODUCTION

Food has been recognized as important for human being in health & disease. More recently, a great deal of interest has been focused on the role of dietary factors in the pathogenesis of non-communicable diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes & cancer.

A diet may be defined as the kind of food on which a person lives. A balanced diet is defined as one which contains a variety of food such as quantities & proportions that the need for energy, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates & other nutrients is adequately met for maintaining health, vitality & general well being & also makes a small provision for extra nutrient to withstand short duration of leanness. A balanced diet has become an accepted means to safeguard a population from nutritional deficiencies. (ref. Park- nutrition & health).

According to ayurveda in every food there are certain factors developing the mental faculties & certain other factors developing physical built of the body. According to ayurveda the diet which nourishes both the mental & physical built is called balanced diet.

Importance of diet

Ayurveda has recognized that the body is the result or an outcome of the food we eat. Showing the importance of food Acharya Charak has described that the life of all living things is food & all the world seeks food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength, & intelligence are all established in food^[1]. Whatever is beneficial for worldly happiness, whatever pertains to vedic sacrifices leading to heaven & whatever action leads to spiritual salvation is said to be established in food. Acharya Sushruta described the food as the food which nourishes & gladdens the heart & directly increases the body strength. It improves memory, digestive power, energy, strengthens mind, increases 'ojas' & increases the longevity of life^[2].

Proper measure of diet

Ayurveda pays attention towards the amount of food which one should take every day. There is great variability in measures of food according to each individual & his duties in his routine life. People having more physical & mental exercise, certainly desire an adequate, nutritious diet, in comparison to those who pass their idle life. Acharya Charak has advocated a principle for food & diet. According to him one must eat in measure & the measure of food is determined by the strength of one's Jatharagni – gastric fire^[3]. In view of enlightening the rationality of digestion & denoting the pathya & apathy relationship of food & the body, he has further stated that 'a proper measure of food when taken, is digested in the time without impairing one's health & positively promotes one's strength, complexion, health & life^[4]. Properly measured diet can be determined by some symptoms like the consumed food should not create pressure on the stomach, should not hamper heart rate, should not create heaviness in the stomach, all senses should be satisfied, fulfillment of hunger & thirst, all activities of the body

can be performed easily, food should be digested properly at evening & morning, it strengthens the body & improves complexion⁵. Vagbhatacharya told that half cavity of stomach is filled with food; a quarter with water & remaining part is to be left empty⁶. Water may be taken during the meal, if taken in the beginning it retards digestion and has tendency to make one lean, if taken at the end it produces obesity. So a thirsty man should not eat before quenching his thirst & a hungry man should not drink before taking food⁷.

Constituent of a well-balanced diet

Acharya Charak has described the constituent of wholesome diet in chapter 5 of Charak Sutrasthan, which can be taken in daily diet. Good & fine rice like 'sastika' & 'sali' (red rice), green gram, rock salt, gooseberry, rain water, milk, ghee, flesh of animals living in forest (jungle), & honey should be adopted in diet generally⁸.

Scientific analysis of all the above ingredients of foodstuff rightly satisfies the essential requirement of the body. The rice 'sastika' & 'sali' (red rice) are examples of carbohydrate food. Raktashali (red rice) which is classed as a glutinous rice is specially recommended. The red covering of rice is known to possess special nutrient properties even the days of Charak & Sushruta.

The green gram, which represents the protein content of food, is considered as best of all pulses. The black gram which is known to be more nutritious is not preferred, because it was comparatively too hard to digest. Black gram is more dosh prakopak rather than supportive to health. Though both are rich in protein, light & easily digestible protein has been preferred to a heavy one.

Saindhav (rock salt) represents the mineral content of food. Among all salts, saindhav is preferred because it possesses cooling property as compared to others. Chemical analysis shows it has peculiar oxidizing properties which the sea salt does not possess. Even in cases, where common salt is prohibited certain amount of saindhava salt is permitted by Ayurveda.

Amalaka represents the vitamin content of a balanced diet in addition to milk & vegetable. It is a rejuvenative drug, is the richest source of vitamin C.

Yava (barley) again represents carbohydrates, it is preferred to wheat, particularly for invalid diet, it is easily digested as it is rich in dietary fiber & is a diuretic. Wheat is proportionately more nutritive & is considered to be Satvika.

Payah (milk) represents a complete food containing proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins, & all that is required for man from infancy to old age. Milk is Satvik food. Cow milk is preferred.

Antariksham (rain water), it is the safest & best drink among any water.

Sarpi or ghrita represents not merely the fat content but also the intellect & immunity building principle. Superiority of ghrita over other fats, both vegetarian & animal fat, is very well described by charak. It is promotive of memory, intellect, vital fire(agni), semen, vital essence(oja), kapha & fat. It cures vata, pitta, toxicosis, insanity, consumption (shosha), inauspicious look & fever.

Jangal indicates flesh of animals living in dry forest. This represents animal proteins. The flesh of these animals considered as light & easily digestible as compared to flesh of other animals & is prescribed only to those who are non-vegetarian by habit.(ch.su.27/231) It is very useful in cases of sannipata (three dosas are affected) with pitta vitiated greatly, vata moderately & kapha mildly.(A.sangrah 7/88).

Madhu (honey) is most refined glucose (fructose & sucrose), in a liquid form. In addition to its carbohydrates & vitamin content, honey is recommended as kapha-hara & because it is collected from numerous plants, it is said to contain certain peculiar essence of those plants.

Thus we see that in one shloka of four lines, so much information is condensed. The food should not only nutritious but it should develop the intellectual & spiritual aspect of man.

General rules regarding diet

Food taken only two times daily is the ideal for an average person. It should be taken, in the morning between nine & eleven O'clock, & in the evening between six to eight O'clock^[9]. But the hard workers, students can take food more than twice if they feel hungry. They should not take food within three hours after last meal nor starve more than six hours (1 yam)^[10], eating after eating i.e. before the previous food digested is adhyashana; particularly samashana, vishamashana, addhyashana & amatrashana should be avoided.

Nowadays knowledge of best food is not needed but there is difficulty for obtaining sufficient food of proper quality. It is very difficult for each individual to take healthy diet, which does not cause any disease. The food having all six tastes is the best one but having only one taste

is worst^[11]. Acharya Charak has given some rules of taking food in Vimansthana, that food should be warm, unctuous, in proper quantity, after digestion of previous meal, non-antagonistic in potency, in clean place, neither very slowly nor quickly, without talking or laughing, having full concentration & regard to oneself^[12]. Vagbhatacharya in Sutrasthana said that food taken should neither be in less quantity nor more, taken at proper time, it should be clean, light^[13]. Sushrutacharya also told about time & quantity, because it may give rise to various diseases & may further cause death^[14]. Food does not get digested even if it is suitable, light & taken in time by excessive intake of water, irregular eating and suppression of natural urges and disturbance of sleep^[15]. Food taken by a person who is subdued by envy, fear, anger, greed, grief, depression & aversion does not get digested well, & these are major causes of most of the diseases because of fast & worried life style^[16].

^[17]In *Bhagvatgeeta* Shree Krishna said the person taking proper food, having proper life style & deeds is a yogi. He told food according to the psychology of individuals i.e. satvik, rajasic, tamasic food. Satvik food – food which promotes life, strength, vitality, health, happiness; which are succulent, juicy, nourishing & pleasing to the heart are dear to one in goodness (Satvik), food like milk, fruit, grains, vegetables.

Rajasic food – food which are very bitter, very sour, very salty, very hot, very pungent, spicy, very dry & burning causes unhappiness, misery & disease, decreases longevity of life are palatable to one in passion (rajasic).

Tamasic food – food which is stale, tasteless, putrid, decomposed, foul & impure as well as the leaving of others is dear to one in nescience (tamasic) food like meat, fish, fowl, eggs, wine, alcohol, garlic, onion, mushrooms which come from fungus.

So the individual interested in healthy life should conscientiously avoid all foods characterized by raja guna & tama guna & resort exclusively to foods that are of satva guna.

Manner of intake of diet

Acharya Charak & Sushrut divided diet into four groups - soft food, drinks, lickables & hard food^[18]. Bhavprakash mentions two other groups i.e. bhakshya & charvya but these are the subdivisions of 'bhojya' described by Sushrut^[19].

At the time of meal the sequence of eating, it is good to take sweet taste food first, sour & salty in middle, bitter-pungent-astringent at last. Bhavprakash told that hard & buttery

substance should take at beginning, soft & in middle & liquid at the end^[20]. Talented persons should take fruits before meal, but banana & cucumber should be avoided^[21]. It is good to take a little rock salt and fresh ginger before taking food as it acts as appetizer and clears the throat.

Wholesome dietary guidelines for specific health need i.e. pathya kalpana: It is very much necessary to have the food which will keep Dhatus (basic elements) in a healthy state and will not let them get vitiated more from Doshas. So one must follow the “healthy way of consumption of food” i.e.”Pathya”. Formulation prepared from rice and water are Manda, Peya, Vilepi, Yavagu. Processing of rice in different quantity of water Manda Kalpana is prepared by using rice and water in 1:14 proportion and only water content of the prepared formulation is collected as Manda (watery portion of rice gruel). It is light and cold, it increases digestive capacity, appetite, reduces water content in faeces, vatanuloman. Peya kalpana is prepared by using rice and water in 1:14 proportion. The rice is cooked in said proportion of water and then maximum watery content of the prepared formulation is collected with few grains of cooked rice is known as Peya (rice gruel). It is light in digestion. Vilepi This is thick rice gruel prepared by cooking rice with 4 times of water.it is sweet,light in digestion, deepana, rochaka (Enhance taste),grahi,vrushya (Aprodiastic). Yavagu is a type of gruel prepared with 6 times water to nearly thick or semisolid consistency. It is made up of only rice or by mixture of rice, green gram, black gram and sesamum.^[22]

Container also affects the food. Food served in golden container is the best from medicinal point of view, & it is supposed to be the best tonic for the eye. Eating in silver container promotes hepatic functions; zinc improves the intelligence & appetite, brass promotes wind & heat, expels worms. Use of steel & glass vessels cures chlorosis & jaundice. A stone or clay service brings poverty. Wooden plates help the secretion of phlegmatic humour. The use of certain leaves as plates acts as antidote against poison^[23]. For drinking water copper vessel is considered as best for this purpose, the next best is clay pot. Glass vessels are also pure & cooling.

CONCLUSION

The diet consumed according to power of gastric fire, at proper time with full concentration will help to be healthy, if not will cause diseases. Less quantity of food produces malnutrition & vata-pitta dushti, more quantity causes obesity. And faulty food habit is one of the root

causes of the life style disorders. Hence to live healthy and fit one should follow above diet & the rules.

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