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***Ashtavidha Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatan* an Explanation of Healthy and Balanced Diet- A Review**

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ABSTRACT

Food is the third most important thing for living beings to live after air and water. This shows the importance of food for life. These are eight specific factors of method of dieting which is called *Ashtavidha Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatan*. *Aahar* is food, *vidhi* is method, *vishesh* is peculiar and *ayatan* is abode. *Ashtavidha ahar vidhi visheshayatan* includes *Prakriti* (nature), *Karana* (processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Rashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *kala* (time/ stage of the disease), *Upayoga-Samstha* (rules for use) and *Upayoktra* (consumer). Though we know food is important and we consume it in daily life, its various roles in the body are quite different as food is very vital for energy. Lack of awareness and self-discipline are two primary reasons for falling ill. Not understanding one's own physical constitution, wrong food habits and bad life style disturbs the natural proportion of five basic elements and adversely affects the functioning of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. Every person should eat by keeping this in mind about their own *Prakriti* (constitution) and the *Prakriti* (nature) of food. The characteristics of the eight factors of dieting are inter-dependent (for example, a substance of optimum quantity taken in the right season and in the right place). Any regimen prescribed should be done after gaining a thorough understanding of the food articles from these eight aspects for them to be wholesome.

KEYWORDS

Ashtavidha; Ahar; Vidhi; Visheshayatan and *Prakriti*.



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INTRODUCTION

These days life has become very complex. The struggle for existence is very acute and keen. There is very keen competition in every walk of life. The proper intake of food has become difficult problem to be solved as proper food not only affect the body but also affect the mind of a person. There are eight factors for method of dieting explained by *Acharyas* which are called *Ashtavidha Aahar Vidhi Visheshayatan*. *Aahar* is food, *Vidhi* is method, *Vishesh* is peculiar and *Ayatan* is abode. *Ashtavidhaaaharvidhivisheshayatan* includes *prakriti* (nature), *Karana*(processing), *Samyoga* (combination), *Rashi* (quantity), *Desha* (place), *kala*(time/ stage of the disease), *Upayoga-Samstha*(rules for use) and *Upayoktra* i.e., consumer¹. Food, mind and the senses have a very strange and paradoxical relationship. The state of mind is a very important aspect of a person. Besides three *Doshas*, our state of mind influences our health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined human health in a broader sense in its 1948 constitution as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity². According to Ayurveda, mind has three major characteristics *Sattva*,

Rajas and *Tamas*. The *Rajas* quality of mind includes thinking, planning and taking decisions. The *Tamas* quality is that which hinders motion (like state of sleep, fatigue or laziness) and expansion of the mind, emotions like greed, anger, jealousy etc. the *Satva* quality of mind includes equilibrium, goodness, truth, compassion and peace. *Satva* foods when taken in proper quantity create a balance between *rajas* and *tamas* that generally predominate our modern life. Lack of proper food intake not only influences the equilibrium of *Doshas* but also causes mental ailments. Thus, for maintaining good health proper *AshtavidhaAaharVidhi Visheshayatanis* essential to maintain the health of body and mind of living beings. A perfect Ayurvedic meal is that which is easily digestible, provides nourishment to all tissues, does not create *Ama* and does not create imbalance in the *Tridosha*.

PRAKRITI

Each individual has a fundamental *prakriti* (constitution) determined at time of birth and this denotes his or her basic physical, physiological and psychological behaviour. Similarly, every food item has its own *prakriti*. *Prakriti* is a *Swabhava*, or the natural attribute or trait of a substance which is inherited naturally, such as *guru* (heaviness), *Laghu* (lightness) etc. For example, the *Prakriti* of black gram or



pork is heavy, while that of green gram or deer meat is light³. Lack of awareness and self-discipline are two primary reasons for falling ill. Not understanding one's own physical constitution, wrong food habits and bad life style disturbs the natural proportion of five basic elements and adversely affects the functioning of *Vata*, *pitta* and *Kapha*. Every person should eat by keeping this in mind about their own prakriti and the prakriti of food. To remain healthy, one should eat food of their opposite prakriti.

A. BALANCING VATA

Imbalance in *Vata* causes stress, anxiety, constipation headache, lack of enthusiasm, pre-mature ejaculation, premature menopause, scanty and irregular menstrual cycle and frozen joints. Smoking, coffee and other drinks with caffeine, late night working on computer or watching late night T.V shows should be avoided to balance *Vata*. As, *Vata* gets aggravated by *Ratri Jagran*. A warm breakfast in the morning, warm oil body massage twice a week and regular meditation at least once a day is also very helpful.

B. BALANCING PITTA

Imbalance in *Pitta* causes skin allergies, diarrhoea, indigestion, heartburn, hyperacidity, balding, wrinkle in skin, excessive perspiration, high temper, mouth ulcers, gall bladder stones, kidney failure,

bleeding from nose, burning sensation in the body and many diseases of the immune system. Alcohol, fried and spicy food, junk food, sour and acidic food and drinks should be avoided to balance *pitta*. Tomatoes, sour yoghurt, vinegar, tea coffee and processed cheese should also be avoided in case the imbalance of *pitta* is too much. Cucumber juice, coconut water, pomegranate juice and green vegetables e.g. *Kaddu*, *Loki*, *Tori* help a lot to balance *Pitta*.

C. BALANCING KAPHA

Imbalance of *Kapha* causes obesity, lethargy, heaviness in throat, loss of appetite, chronic cough and cold, tastelessness, arteries blockage which may also result in the lack of blood supply to the heart and brain causing heart failure or stroke. Sweets, milk products, refrigerated food and drinks and greasy food with high calories counts should be avoided to balance *Kapha*. Thirty to forty-five minutes of brisk walk and other breathing exercises e.g. *Pranayam* is very helpful. Drinking warm water all day along with work wonder to balance *Kapha*.

Unlike modern nutritional systems, which recommend 'universally acceptable guidelines' for all. Ayurveda has always had an individualized approach to nutrition. In Ayurveda each person has a unique constitution and therefore food



should be customized as per their nature to remain healthy.

KARAN

Karan (processing) is the making or refinement of the *Dravya*, or the *samskara* that are added to the properties of those substances⁴. These properties are imparted by contact of water and fire, by cleansing, churning, place, time, infusing, steeping, etc and also by the medium used for storage or processing (e.g., copper vessel, or earthen pot), etc. for example *Crud* obstruct channels, yet if churned, buttermilk enhances *Agni*. In another example when we make chapati from wheat and apply some ghee over it is *Laghu* in nature whereas if we make *Parantha* from the same or *Puri* it becomes *guru* in nature. Even *Visha* can be consumed after *Samskara*. i.e., after its *Gunaantardhan*. Pure *Visha* (poison) is fatal. *Visha* and *Upvisha* can be used in medicinal preparation only after *Shodhan* because it reduces firepower.

SAMYOGA

Samyoga (combination) is the aggregation or combination of two or more *dravya*⁵. This exhibits peculiarity that are not seen in case of individual substances, such as combination of honey and ghee, and that of honey, fish and milk. Milk and fish are good for health if taken separately but its *Samyoga* is vast for health. *Samyog*

sometimes cause *Virruddha Ahaar*, when *Virrudha Ahaar* is consumed it functions as *Dhatu Guna Vipreet* and hence causes disease. Therefore, combination of *Viruddha Guna Ahaar* should be avoided for healthy and disease-free life.

RASHI

Rashi (quantity) consists of *Sarvagraha* (account of a whole amount or unit) and *Parigraha* (account of part of a substance, or of individual parts (in case the substance is a combination of multiple ingredients or parts)) which ascertain the effect of any food article taken in proper or improper quantity⁶. If fewer amounts than required is consumed, it will not fulfil the body needs. If consumed in excess cause body disorders. Because *Ahara Matra* should be consumed according to *Agni bala* when *Agni* is *Manda* it become the cause of many diseases “*Rogasarveapiagni mandyo cha*” which cause many diseases related to *Mandaagni* like *Arsha*, *Atishar*, *Grahni* etc. so as to prevent oneself from these diseases proper amount of food should be consumed as per their digestive power.

DESHA

Desha denotes the geographic region relating that the substance(s) are local or endemic to, and thus, are suitable to⁷. There are basically three types of *Desha* explained in ayurvedic texts i.e., *Anoop*,



Jangala and *Sadharan*. Every specific *desha* has specific environment and specific food according to the environment. The people who live in the particular region become *Satmya* to *Ahaarand Vihar* of that region and hence they are not vulnerable to the diseases of the particular area. But during travelling many people suffer from sickness and get disease very easily this is due to *Desha*. When their *Desha* is changed they consume the food of changed *Desha*. Their whole physiology get disturbed and hence person suffer from many disease. So, when the *Desha* is changes person should also change their food gradually to live a blissful life.

KALA

Kala is time. It can be taken to be the ever-moving time, as in seasons (e.g., suitable to seasons), or as duration from the standpoint of a condition (e.g., a condition that does not get treated within a specific duration becomes incurable). There are two types of *kala* i.e., one is *Nityaga* and other is *Awasthik*⁸. The *Awastha* is divided into three *kala* i.e., *Bala* (childhood), *Yuva* (adulthood) and *Vridhdha* (old age). In *BalyaAwasthaKapha* is predominant whereas in *Madhyam Awastha* *pitta* is predominant and in *Vridhdha Awastha Vata* is predominant. If one wants to remain free from disease that person should consume

food of *VipretGuna* of their *Awastha* so as to maintain equilibrium of *Dosha* in the body. In another type i.e., *Nityyag kala* it means diet according to seasons. During *SheetaKala (Hemanta)* due to the contact of cold wind, the *Agni* (digestive fire) of strong/healthy individuals gets trapped in the body (like in a closed chamber) and becomes strong or powerful. So, the *Agni* becomes powerful enough to digest food that is heavy not just in quantity as well as in nature. So, person should consume the heavy food in *SheetaKala*. Whereas in *GrishmaRitu* (summer season), the Sun, by its rays, excessively dries up the environment. So, in this season food and drinks having sweet, cold, liquid and unctuous qualities are considered wholesome. *Agni* also become *Manda* in this season so one should consume less quantity of food so that it does not cause *Ama* and so the body do not get toxicated. And hence remain free from diseases.

UPAYOGA -SAMSTHA

Upayogasamastha denotes the rules for dieting. This depends on the digestible features (of the food). Basically, indicates when to eat and when not to eat⁹. It is expected that one should eat only when previous diet is digested.

UPAYOKTRA

Upayokta is the one who consumes the food. On him depends the *Oka-satmya*



(i.e., habituation developed by practice). Thus, are described the specific factors of the method of dieting¹⁰. One should think of own constitution and eat accordingly. Basically, denotes who eats who. *Oka-satmya* directs towards the eating habits of the person which are developed according to ones likes and dislikes, constant consumption of any food item etc.

By following all these *Ashtavidha Ahar Vidhi Visheshayatanone* can enjoy health out of eating food. If not properly consumed, food can vitiate *Dosha* that can affect body and mind. We have developed wrong routines for our convenience that should be avoided to have good health.

OTHER FACTORS TO BE KEPT IN MIND

One should take food consisting of the items that are non-antagonistic in nature to ensure one is not afflicted with the disorders caused by food that is unsuitable to the individual. One should eat in a favourable place and with favourable accessories because it is important to feel comfortable and satisfied while eating. One should not eat too quickly to ensure the food does not get into the wrong passage, and that the person is able to ascertain the qualities and taste of the food or even detect any defects in the food. One should not eat too slow, because by eating too

slow one does not get satisfaction, eats much, and the food becomes cold and is digested irregularly. One should eat with utmost concentration on the food, while not talking or laughing. By taking food while talking or laughing or with mind elsewhere, he is inflicted with the same defects as by eating too fast. One should eat with due consideration to self, i.e., knowing one's own constitution and tastes. He/she should take food that is suitable to him/her.

DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the eight factors of dieting are inter-dependent (for example, a substance of optimum quantity taken in the right season and in the right place). Any regimen prescribed should be done after gaining a thorough understanding of the food articles from these eight aspects for them to be wholesome. Food or any other *Dravya* that is liked but is unwholesome and likely to result in unpleasant consequences should not be used by ignorance or carelessness. The prescribed method of eating for the healthy and the sick (in certain cases) who take wholesome food timely and habitually is that one should eat warm, unctuous food in proper quantity, after the previously consumed food is digested. The food eaten should be



non-antagonistic (i.e., not unsuitable to one's constitution or habit) and should be consumed in a favourable place, with all the favourable accessories, not too fast, not too slow, not while talking or laughing, and with full concentration.

CONCLUSION

Vishamaashana (irregular diet) is one of the cause of *Sosha*. When a person takes food – drinkable, eatable, chewable and likable – irregularly in terms of nature, preparation, combination, quantity, place, time, and various dietary rules (do's and don'ts) appropriate for his constitution, his *Doshas* get imbalanced. These imbalanced *Doshas* spread in the body, obstructing the openings of various channels and the flow of *dhatu*s. In such cases, the body survives on the support of *Malas*. Hence *mala* should be protected, particularly in case where the patient has already been afflicted with phthisis and in cases where the individual is emaciated or very weak. The vitiated *Vata* causes pain, body ache, irritation of throat, chest pain, pain in shoulders, hoarseness of voice and coryza. Vitiated *pitta* causes fever, diarrhoea, internal heat and vitiated *Kapha* causes coryza, heaviness of head, anorexia and cough. After observing many troublesome diseases caused by irregular dieting, the

wise should eat wholesome, measured and timely food with self-restraint. By following *AshtavidhaAahar Vidhi Visheshayatan* restrain the unhealthy diet and promote balanced diet and healthy life.



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