

Dietetic Code in Ayurveda

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INTRODUCTION

The diet and dietetic code are inter-related and inseparable. Diet or Anna can be considered as Samavayi Karana for continuity of life. Ahara Vidhi Vidhana is a kind of karma or method that is equally important as food. Hence it can be considered as Asamavayi Karana. Diet is not only meant for maintenance of health but food sustains the life of livings. Dietetic rules are Ahravyabhuta Aushadhi. A lot of references are scattered in Ayurvedic classics regarding dietetic code that should be performed before meals. Diet may be wholesome as well as unwholesome. The wholesomeness depends upon the variation in dose, time, methods of preparation, habitat and constitution of the body, disease and the age of an individual. However, those responsible for diets often focus their attention on the nutritive value of the food, they hardly pay attention towards the important point i.e; "How to eat?"

Ayurveda gives equal importance to diet as well as the method of its intake. Diet and the dietetic rules are basic factors among the maintenance of health and causes for disease. Following dietetic rules, it is possible to achieve positive health and Vikara prashamana i.e; treatment of disease. In Ca Vi. 1 (Rasa Vimanam), the eight factors of diet responsible for health and diseases are described as "Ahara Vidhi Visesa Ayatanani". These are the dietetic regulations and procedure for those, who are healthy as well as certain types of patients. Susruta Samhita gives very

descriptive view regarding this subject. It is explained as "Aharavidhi". In this chapter Vagabhatacarya had given the unwholesome effects of ruksha, atisnigdha, atiushna and shita anna. Susruta Samhita gives very descriptive view regarding this subject. It is explained as "Aharavidhi" (Su. 46/445). Under this heading, the following topics are included, kitchen regimen, dining place, dining time, disadvantage of improper dining time, considerations with tasteful foods, post meal regimen and sequence order of food articles. Dietetic code in Ayurveda can be discussed as follows.

USNAM ASNIYAT (Food should be hot)

Hunger is condition of increased Vata, increased Pitta and decreased Kapha. By taking hot food, vata anulomana is achieved, Pitta gets stimulated and secreted, thereby, increasing Agni or power of digestion. Kapha in oral cavity, i.e; Bodhaka Kapha is secreted to acknowledge proper taste of food. With the above conditions, agni gets activated and the digestion process is completed in proper time. This logic can be supported by modern physiology. The salivation is greatest at the temperature of mouth. Ayurveda also describes the effects of Sita Anna. The prepared food left for a long time if taken causes stambhana, agnimandya, aruchi, hrillas, vistambha, romaharsha, etc. (A.S.). Extreme hot (atisushna) is also not advisable. If consumed it causes mada, daha, trishna, balanasha, bhrama and raktapitta (A.S.). The specific sequence of Ahara Vidhi Vidhana is also very suggestive as well as practically important. Ushnam

is the first Vidhana of food served.

SNIGDHAM ASNIYAT (Food should be unctuous)

Unctuous food obviously alleviated (Anulomana) Vata. For Agnidipana, sneha is required as is seen practically in the outer world as well as in body. Snigdha dravya promotes the first Avasthapaka and increases bala, varna, sarira and power of sense organs, which rejuvenate the body by decreasing the speed of ageing process (jara). Here, snigdha term does not mean exactly sneha dravyas like oil or ghee only, but also Godhuma, Shali rice etc. are advised as snigdha. Extreme snigdhatata (atisnigdha) or asnigdha (ruksha) both inhibit the process of digestion. Atisnigdha food is 'Guru' by properties and take more time and energy to get digested, causing praseka, hridgaurav, alasya, aruchi, etc. Opposite to this, ruksha food causes decrease in bala and varna, dryness of skin and complains of constipation. Ruksha guna increases the properties of Vata resulting in Agni vaigunya.

MATRAVAT ASNIYAT (Food should be taken in proper quantity)

Food should be taken in proper quantity. For proper maintenance of positive health one should eat in proper quantity which depends upon power of digestion. Ayurveda believes that every human being is unique and different from others the quantity of food needed also differs from one person to other. Ayurveda contributes special view in regard of the matra of food. To decide appropriate quantity of food that is sufficient for a person's good health, Carakacarya narrated that the amount of food which without disturbing the equilibrium gets digested as well as metabolize in proper time is to be regarded as proper quantity (Ca. Su. 5). In Ca. Vi. 2 i.e; 'Trividha Kuksiya'. Acarya Caraka said the stomach should be imagined to be divided in three equal parts and the food items should be taken accordingly.

The symptoms of appropriate matra are; there should be no undue pressure on the stomach due to the food, no interference in the proper functioning of heart, no pressure in the parswa (sides of chest), no excessive heaviness in the abdomen, proper nourishment of the senses, relief from hunger and thirst, feel of comfort in all functions

like standing, sleeping, walking and talking. Food taken in the morning should get digested by the evening and food taken in evening should get digested by the next morning.

According to Acarya Caraka, Amatra is of two types, viz; Hina and Adhika. Hina matra (food deficient in quantity) causes impairment of the strength and complexion, not capable to give the feel of satiety, impairment of longevity, virility and ojas, affliction of body, mind, intellect senses and impairment of the excellence of Dhatus.

Adhika matra (excessive quantity of food) aggravate all the Dosas, which produce the Vatic diseases like colic pain, distension of abdomen, body ache, dryness of mouth, giddiness, agni vikrity, various types of pains. Vitiated pitta causes jwara, atisara, internally sensation of burning, thirst, giddiness and delirium. Vitiated kapha causes vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, cold fever laziness and heaviness in the body. One should decide matra after minutely examine the condition of the dosa, desa, bala, kala, digestive power, constitution, age, satva (mind), satmya (accustoms), ahara (food and food havits) and avastha (stages of the diseases).

VIRYA AVIRUDDHAM ASNIYAT (Avoid Dietetic Incompatibility)

Virya is one of the qualities of dravya, every action is the result of it. Diets that are opposite to the body elements tend to disagree with the system and they are termed as 'Viruddha Ahara'. This incompatibility of diet is of several types. Drugs and diet which are variance with place, time, power of digestion, doses, habit, dosa, mode of preparation, potency, bowel, state of health, order of proscription and prescription, cooking, combination, palatability, richness of quality and rule of eating are all unwholesome (Ca. Su. 28). Some diseases that are caused by Viruddha Ahara are adhmana, amavisha, grahani, amlapitta, kustha, pandu, shotha, jwara, andhata, indriyadaurbalya and even death. Regular intake of Viruddha Ahara is very common nowadays. Carakacarya has mentioned only viryaviruddha while Susrutacarya has mentioned rasa, virya, vipaka viruddha because Carakacarya is the believer of Shaktiviryavada while Susrutacarya believes in Gunaviryavada. Caraka has included

all types of Viruddha, i.e; Dravya, Rasa, Virya, Vipaka under the term "Virya". So rasa viruddha, virya viruddha, vipaka viruddha, guna viruddha are included under the "Virya Viruddha".

ISTE DESE, ISTA SARVA UPAKARANAM ASNIYAT (Food should be taken in proper place and with appropriate appliances)

The place should be clean, hygienic and should not produce disturbing emotions like kama, krodha, chinta, bhaya, visada, etc. Susrutacarya had given some specific guidelines regarding the place for eating, place of food preparation i.e; Mahanasa (kitchen) and the place where the food should be kept before serving. The place of eating should be pleasant which can provide calm and healthy state of mind needed for good concentration towards food. It should be attractive and beautiful. The food should be consumed in a place free from various hurdles like dust and dirt which is necessary for the hygienic condition as well as sound psychological condition during meals. Some contraindicated places indicated by Acaryas are; below any tree, not on the bed, not in the hot sunlight nor in a dark place. All these factors influence psyche as well as affect the hygiene of the place. It is very obvious that for healthy food, healthy surrounding is required. Pure and hygienic food eaten at unhygienic place can lead to unhealthy state. The weather around should be according to the seasonal conditions e.g; cool air in summer and a little warmth in winter. Though this is a relative term changing with every individual generally a pleasant atmosphere is expected while eating.

Appropriate appliances for dining are needed and indicated in detail by Acaryas for serving, storage and dining etc. For specific kind of food, specific material is mentioned (Su. Su. 46/448) e.g; ghee should be kept in iron vessel (kantloha) and fruits and all edible snacks be kept in vessel made of leaves. This specification is due to some chemical reactions between the food material and utensils. This reaction can be helpful for longer preservation of food as well as its healthy effect on body. Some materials are strictly contraindicated for specific foods, e.g; sour food should not kept in copper utensils, as the chemical reaction produces poison like substances and leads

to many disorders. Such a detail description gives an idea about the keen observation, deep thinking and practical knowledge of our ancients.

NA ATIDRUTAM ASNIYAT/ NA ATIVILAMBITAM (Food should not be taken too speedily or too slowly)

The food should not be taken too hurriedly. If it is eaten so, the food is liable to go into other pathways, food cannot be placed properly and one can neither know about the bad qualities nor good qualities of food. The food when eaten with hurry violates its normal route that can be understood by an example i.e; "Hikka". The Annaja Hikka is the best example of vimarga gamanam. Due to hurry, Vata gets stimulated which misleads the food producing the symptoms like 'Hiccup'. The taste of food is not properly felt whether it is bad or good. Good qualities like smell, taste and sight of food always help in digestion. When the taste, odours or sight of food is felt and enjoyed, it promotes the salivation and digestion. Person who eat too leisurely, naturally tend to eat more till satiety cannot be achieved. The temperature of food gets altered i.e; the hot items become cold. All these factors hamper agni and the food is not digested properly.

AJALPAN, AHASAN, TANMANA BHUNJITA (Food should be eaten without, talking, laughing and with enough concentration)

Food should be eaten without much talking and laughing. The food should be eaten with enough concentration towards it as well as towards the eating process. Talking and laughing divert the attention from the meals and the food is eaten too hastily or too slowly. The secretion of digestive juices gets disturbed and finally the system also gets affected which affects body as well as mind. The relation between body and mind is well understood by Ayurveda. There is nothing about man that is exclusively psychic or exclusively somatic, everything is psychosomatic. So in every aspect, the concept of sarira and mana is interdependent and inseparable. Process of digestion is totally a psycho physiological phenomenon so better state of psyche can yield better digestion. Ayurvedic scholars were much aware about this topic since ages.

CONCLUSION

One should consume only that food in proper quantity which is ushna, snigdha and matravat. Food should be consumed after the digestion of previously ingested food, food should be virya aviruddha, taken in an isht desha and provided with sarvopakarana. Food should not be taken speedily or too slowly, without Ahara Vidhi Vidhana and Dwadasa Asana Vicara. These are the code and conducts for taking diet of any dietetic science. The concept of Ahara Vidhi Vidhana of Carakacarya leads towards general guideline for every one where as the concept of Dwadasa Asana Vichara of Susrutacarya seems to be for particular

condition. For e.g; general benefits of ushna ahara is given by Carakacarya but Susrutacarya explains it as ushna ahara should be given to those person who are afflicted with the aggravation of bodily kapha and vayu as well as those already treated with purgatives of sneha and those whose body is full of kleda. Now a day's very little percentage of population is aware about the rules for eating and their role in matter of health. Faulty dietary habits are common which are leading to many diseases. Digestive system is the most sensitive system of body to exhibit the good and bad effects of diet and dietetic rules. According to Ayurveda, these rules affect annavaha and purishavaha srotas causing various disorders.

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