

Importance of Dietary Habit in Today's Prospective in Light of Ayurveda

Journal of Pharmaceutical Research and Development

Review Article

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Submitted : 29 Sep 2020 ; Published : 13 Jan 2021

Abstract

Health is the ultimate product of food and its proper digestion and metabolism. If we take proper food, then there is no need of medicine. But now a day's food habits are changing dramatically. Good eating habits which are established in childhood often carry into adulthood. In present era, every individual prefer junk food, snacks, processed food and skipping breakfast. Their children also adopt the same pattern of diet; therefore they are more susceptible to various disorders of gastro-intestinal tract. Ayurveda is the ancient science of healing which emphasizes on restoration of health as well as the treatment of diseases. Acharya stated that health depends upon bhojana (food), bhojana depend on vidhi and vidhi depends on vikalp. Ayurveda described diet, dietary habits on dincharya (daily basis), ritucharya (seasonal basis), ashthvidh aahar vishshaayatana, dwadash pravicharna etc. According to Ayurveda homeostasis in vata, pitta and kapha doshas (humors) brings arogya (health) while their derangements cause roga (disease). Food has power of aggravating, pacifying or balancing these doshas (humors). By adopting this Ayurvedic pattern of diet and dietary regimens we can achieve a healthy and disease free life.

Keywords: Ayurveda; Diet; Ashthvidha Aahar Vishshaayatana; Dwadash Pravicharna.

Introduction

Ayurveda is the ancient science of health which main aim to restoration of health of healthy individual as well as treatment of diseases. Homeostasis in vata, pitta and kapha doshas (humors) brings arogya (health) while their derangement will cause roga (disease). In present time due to busy schedule and unhealthy food habits people are going far away from healthy life. Children also attract towards junk food, snacks and processed food, these tasty but unhealthy diet patterns brings more near children to GI tract diseases and metabolic disorders. Diet is one of most important factor to keep life healthy and diseases free. The word diet is procured from a Greek word "Diaita" which means mode of life, a word that until the last century was often used in a much broader sense than its current meaning [1]. Ayurveda offers almost every aspect related to diet and dietary pattern. Ayurveda even explained that what to eat, when to eat, how to eat, how much to eat. Acharya explained that every person should eat hitakar ahara (wholesome food) in appropriate quality on time. Acharya Charak mentioned eight principles related to diet and dietary pattern i.e. ashta ahara vidhi vishshaayatana (eight specific factors related to original quality of food, method of processing and cooking, food

combination, quantity, origin of food, time factor, rule of intake and whom to use etc.).

Material and Method

For present manuscript data was collected from ancient Ayurvedic textbook supported by research published in national and international journals from 1970 to till date searched through various search engines like Google scholar, medlar, open med and pubmed etc.

Acharya Charak mentioned eight factors, which should be considered while deciding a diet for a particular person. They are known as Ashta Ahara Vidhivishshaayatana [2]. These are prakriti (nature), karana (processing and cooking of food), samyoga (food combination), rashi (quantity of food), desha (habitat), kala (time), upayoga sanstha (rules of use) and upayokta (the user). All these eight factors have logical significance in present time which is discussed here:-

Prakriti [3] (Nature)

Prakriti represents original quality, nature, property of everything. Prakriti represents the natural properties of food like laghu (light food take less time to digest), guru (heavy food require more time to digest), ushna (hot), sheeta (cold), snigdha (oily) and ruksha (dry) etc. Similarly all individual have their own shareerika (physical), manshika (mental) prakriti (constitution) and have different digestive power according to their doshas (humors). Proper digestion and absorption of food depend upon prakriti (nature) of food and his or herself physical and mental constitution along with their digestive fire. To stay healthy and disease free, we should consider inherent physical and chemical properties of food item before consumption.

Karana [4] (Processing and Cooking of food)

Karana also refers as samskara (processing), means addition of good qualities or deletion of undesired qualities. Karana represents processing and cooking of food. Alteration in qualities of food can be done by jalsamyoga (water contact), kalasamyoga (appropriate time), agnisamyoga (contact of fire), manthan (churning), shauch (cleaning), desh (place), vashana (container), bhavana (infusing) and kalaprakarsha (period of preservation). There are some examples of samskara in ancient text like, a solid substance may be softened or liquefied by adding water or cooked on fire. Acharya has given equal importance to time factor such as honey, guda (jaggery) and ghrita develop medicinal properties on passing time. Thus, in this way property of these preparations become change on longer duration of storage. Cooked rice is lighter than the uncooked rice. Curd blocks the channel and can cause edema, but after churning it becomes takra (buttermilk) which relieves edema. Cleaning of food substances makes them free from microbes, pesticides and chemical. Climate, temperature and soil play an important role in enhancing the properties of grain as well as plants. Flavor to any food article helps to enhance the palatability of that. Infusion of some decoction during food preparation can increase the nutritional value of food. Material of utensil in which food is cooked, kept or stored also can change the properties of food. By the all these processing and cooking methods which are described by Acharya Charak help us to increase qualities and nutritional value of food.

Processing of food in modern times has a variety of applications at domestic level as well as in industry. The methods of processing of food described in ancient texts are primitive and basic of food processing, but in today's world it has emerged as a big industry. The food industry offers products that fulfill many diverse needs. In present time people choose flavor and taste over the quality along with processed food rather than fresh prepared food. All these type of processed foods make them sick rather than provide a good health. Thus food processing is the set of methods and techniques which are used to convert raw ingredients into food or to transform food into other forms to make them suitable for consumption by humans or animals.

Samyoga [5] (Combination of food)

Samyoga means mixing or combination of two or more substances, results in manifestation of new attribute which is not present in individual substances. Neither honey nor ghee cause death but when they are mixed in equal quantity, cause death. Similarly if fish is taken with milk causes kushtha roga (skin disease). Result of

combination may be good or bad, dependent of nature and quantity of substances like virudhha aahar (dietic incompatibilities), when virudhha aahar (incompatible diet) is consumed then it interrupt metabolism resulting in various disorders. Acharya Charak has mentioned eighteen type of incompatible diet which should be avoided other on engulfing them an individual will face lots of hazards in the form of various disorders.

Now-a-days it is a trend to mix various food items to relish them. But it may produce harmful effects on body due to incompatibility of different substances. Now it is the need of time to rediscover combination in such a way that after mixing those these substances remain compatible with each other.

Rashi [6] (Quantity of food)

It represents the quantity of food. It is of two types; Sarvagraha presents the total quantity of diet and Parigraha represents the quantity of individual item of diet. Both the types of quantities should be taken in to account while deciding a quantum of diet for a particular person. This will depend on the individual's digestive power. The quantity of diet will also affect digestion. Even light diet in excess may become heavy for digestion. A balanced diet not only takes into account the total quantity of food items i.e. sarvagraha but also the proportion of different food items or nutrients (parigraha) must be balanced to ensure better nutrition as carbohydrates must contribute for 60 to 70 percent of total calories need similarly fat and protein must for 20-25 % and 10-12% of total calories. Thus, if diet is consumed in less quantity then required one then it can leads to under nutrition and if it is consumed in huge quantity then cause over nutrition related disorders like obesity. Thus this is mentioned by Acharya that quantity of diet for any individual depend upon individual digestive.

Desha [7] (Habitat of substance)

Desha refers to the place of food and drug where they are cultivated. Attributes or qualities of food and drug article will depend upon soil, temperature and climate of place in which they are cultivated. The substances produced in their natural habitat have better qualities than produced elsewhere and are better suited to persons of that region. Climate is an essential aspect to understanding the world around us. It is the long term summation of weather patterns for a region. It affects the region physically (i.e. vegetation and soil patterns) and culturally (i.e. agriculture and population).

Hence the foods grown in different climates have different properties and are best suited for people living in those climatic regions only.

Kala [8] (Time)

Acharya describes two types of kala viz: nityag kala and awasthik kala. Nityag kala is eternally moving in the form of day and night, related to the seasonal suitability while Awasthik kala relates to the diseased condition of the individual. In the diseased condition diet have to be selected according to dosha involved in and the stage of the disease.

Different stages of life have different demand of different types of nutrients a growing child needs protein in larger amount to ensure proper growth, similar is the case of pregnancy or lactation

where dietary modifications are needed to cater the specific physiological needs of these conditions. Different seasons have various physiological arrangements as per the needs of season. Therefore, it is mandatory that each individual will follow dietary guidelines to remain healthy and disease free.

Upayogasanstha [9] (Rules of intake)

Upyogasanstha is related to rules of dietetics. Most common rule of the dietetics is that the diet should be consumed after the proper digestion of previous one ingested meal. In accordance of this Acharya describe some important rules related to taking diet in proper manner for proper digestion and absorption.

Acharya Charak explained these rules [10] like, Ushnam Ashniyat (Eating of hot and fresh food), Snigdham Ashniyat (Eating of unctuous food), Matravat Ashniyat (Eating food in proper amount), Jirne Ashniyat (Eating after proper digestion of previous meal), Virya Avirudha Ashniyat (Eat those food which are not antagonist in potency), Isht deshe (at proper place) and Ishtasarvopakarnam (sitting with all the Accessories needed during taking meal), Na Atidrutam Ashniyat (not to eat in slow pace), Na Ativilambit Ashniyat (not to eat very fast), Ajalpana (without talking), Ahasan (without laughing), Tanmanabhunjitam (with full mental peace), Aatanam Abhisamikshya Bhunjitam (according to ones likes, dislikes and digestive capability).

Upayokta [11] (User)

Upayokta refers to the person taking the food. User should consider that what is suitable to him or what is not suitable to him. Thus, individual is mainly responsible for deciding the wholesome or unwholesome by the habitual intake of food item which is called as Oakesatmya. Hence Acharya says that before eating anything, people should aware about the qualities of food item suitable for him.

Discussion

The concepts of Ashta ahar vidhi visheshayatan was given by Acharya Charak decades ago but have equal importance even in present's era. Requirement is to apply it in our daily routines. Before consuming food, each individual must be aware about his own prakriti and prakriti of food. Modern system recommended universally acceptable guide lines for all but Ayurveda had individualized approach to nutrition according to prakriti, digestive power and diseased state. In context of Karana, the processing and cooking methods which are described by Acharya Charak can enhance the qualities and nutritional value of food. Some researchers have shown that methods of samskara like thermal processing, soaking, fermentation, etc increase the physicochemical approachability of micronutrients and decrease the content of anti-nutrients such as phytates or increase the content of compounds that improve the bioavailability. For example, thermal processing improves the bioavailability of micronutrients like, thiamine and iodine by destroying some anti-nutrients factors such as goitrogens. Fermentation produces low molecular substances like citric acid and lactic acid which enhances the iron and zinc production [12]. The unawareness of people leads them to consume unhealthy combination of diets. These combinations are called Virudh Aahar in Ayurveda. Topography is a new branch of science which is related to

combination of food or tells about the combination of basic category of the food [13]. According to this science protein must not get combined with starch and carbohydrates and may be consumed differently. Consuming proteins and starches together will result in absorption of one being delayed by the other. Alike this, eating sugars and acid fruits impede the action of ptyalin and pepsin, reducing the secretion of saliva, and delaying digestion. The unwelcome effect of wrong combinations of food is not effect gastrointestinal tract only but may hamper the major systems of the body [14]. Knowledge of wholesome food combination will prevent the food incompatibility. In present time, due to busy and changed life style man has almost forgotten the importance of desha and kala in context of his diet which is a serious issue. These eight rules are effective in maintenance of health as well as keep individual disease free. Therefore, all these eight features are very important in our life to keep us healthy and disease free. These should never be considered as an option but also considered as important as diet.

Conclusion

Diet is the most basic necessity of healthy and disease free life. Quality, nutritive value, and food composition should be the prime focus before people think about eating products. Method of taking food is also important as much as diet. Many diseases may arise due to faulty dietary habits. In present era, due to busy lifestyle every person neglects the quality, quantity of food and digestive power too; all of these lead to manifestation of various diseases. Healthier eating may help lower the risk of many metabolic and gastro-intestinal tract diseases. All aspects related to diet and rules of taking food are clearly mentioned by Acharya should be adopt during dining will help us to get healthy and disease free life.

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