

Concept of *Ayurvedic* Dietary Guidelines and its Relevance in Today's Modern Era: A Review

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Abstract

Food is a most important component of every human life. According to *Ayurveda*, food is considered as one among the Three Sub pillars. Now a days, lifestyle disorders are difficult problems in front of the world caused due to change in dietary habits and wrong method of cooking. A faulty habit of taking food directly affects normal body mechanism. So, everyone must have to learn how to eat, when to eat, how much quantity, where to eat and many more things. Unhealthy eating habits are leading global risk to health. Poor eating habits can impair our daily health and wellbeing and reduce our ability to learn an enjoyable and active life. Traditional way of cooking, serving and eating the food plays an important role in prevention of various disorders. It expands the micro channels carrying *Doshas* (according to *Ayurveda* three dynamic substances), *Dhatus* (Fundamental tissues) and waste removes

their sluggishness and it is effective in maintenance of health as well as in the curative aspect for many lifestyle diseases. Dietary principles are described in *Ayurveda* which is applicable for healthy and unhealthy individuals. *Ayurveda* gives immense importance of food and explains that how healthy and technique eating is important for healthy body, mind and soul. So, here the article tries to elaborate such principles of *Ayurveda* known as “*Ahar-Vidhi-Vidhan*.” (Dietary guidelines)

Keywords: – *Ahara-Vidhi-Vidhan*, Dietary guidelines, Dietetic Rules, Lifestyle Disorders.

Introduction:

Food is very important factor in healthy and diseased condition. Proper diet is the base of healthy life, as well as for strength, complexion, growth etc. Health is a homeostasis between *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*, as well as the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing^[1]. Appropriate nutrition is the basic need for

the healthy life. *Ayurveda* described food in detail and believes that proper nutrition nourishes the body, mind and soul. Now a days lifestyle diseases (non-communicable diseases i.e., NCDs) are increasing rapidly. They are characterized on the basis of prevalence of daily habits of individuals and are fall outs of an inappropriate relationship of individuals with their surroundings. Various factors contribute to lifestyle diseases, most importantly unhealthy food habits, physical inactivity, disturbed biological clock, and excessive consumption of junk food, alcohol^[2]. The metabolic syndrome, disturbed metabolism of glucose or insulin, *dyslipidaemia* hypertension, and abdominal obesity, are the conditions caused due to unhealthy food habits^[3]. According to WHO data of 2016 from total death worldwide, 40.5 million individuals died of NCDs^[4]. In 2016, 63% of the total death in India was due to NCDs and from the total death worldwide, 35 million individuals died of NCDs in 2005^[4]. This number of death due to lifestyle diseases are increasing year by year. Faulty dietary habits may result in disturbed functions of the body leading to various lifestyle diseases. It can impair our daily health and wellbeing and reduce our ability to lead an enjoyable and active life. Poor nutrition can contribute to stressful conditions, tiredness and decreased work capacity and can contribute to the risk of developing some illnesses^[5].

In *Ayurveda* classics is explained the right way to eating food. Food consumed in the right manner serves as *amrutam* (Ambrosia) to rejuvenate the body and maintaining the health. *Ayurveda* has given basic dietary guidelines that includes appropriate food, cooking methods, combinations of food, geographical and environmental conditions quality &

quantity of food, etc^[1]. to overcome this problem, everyone should take proper diet with proper dietary guidelines. Therefore, the further article illustrates the concept of Dietary guidelines which is mentioned in *Ayurvedic* Classic as “*Ahar-Vidhi-Vidhan*”^[6] and its relevance in today’s modern era.

Review of Literature

The concept of disciplinary diet was put on decades ago but holds strong even in today’s era. In order to remain healthy, individual must take into consideration the basic nature of food that will suit to the body, because this diet will stabilize the *dosha* and replenish the *dhatu*s (fundamental tissues). Balanced diet taken with proper dietary guidelines can lead to better health or else can lead to diseases. Method of cooking as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. That’s why *Acharya Charak* in *Vimanshana* has given the twelve principles of dietary concept for healthy and unhealthy people^[6]. They are

1) *UshnaAshniyat* (Taking Warm Food) - According to *Acharya Charak*, one should take warm food. When taken warm, it is appetizing after intake. It provokes digestive power and maintains *Vata-Kaphadosha* at equilibrium. It instigates the factors (enzymes) in the abdomen which is responsible for digestion. It gets digested quickly and helps in the downward passage of *Vatadosha* (flatus) and detachment of *Kaphadosha*^[7].

2) *SnigdhamAshniyat* (Unctuous Food) - According to *Acharya Charak*, One should take unctuous food. Unctuous food is delicious after intake. It provokes the subdued power of digestion. It gets digested quickly. It helps in the downward movement of *Vatadosha*

(wind). It strengthens the sense organs, increases moistness of the body and brings out the brightness of complexion^[8].

3) *MatravatAshniyat* (Food in proper quantity) - According to *Acharya Charak*, one should take food in sufficient quantity. If it has taken in sufficient quantity, it promotes longevity without afflicting *Dosha*. It helps to pass down to the rectum without impairing the power of digestion. It gets digested within time and make digestion easy^[9]. According to *Acharya Charak*, stomach is divided into three parts out of which first part is filled up with solid food, second part with liquids and third part is left for *Vata - Pitta - Kaphadosha*. The food taken by these principles, doesn't have harmful effects which arise out of food taken in improper quantity^[10]. Improper quantity of food is either in deficient amount or in excess amount. If food taken in deficient quantity, it produces impairment of the strength, complexion and plumpness of body. It creates distension and absence of downward movement of food in stomach and intestine. It impairs the longevity, virility and immunity. It distresses body, mind intellect and sense organs. It impairs the *Dhatu* (fundamental tissues) and creates varieties of *vata* disorders.^[11] If food taken in large quantity, it aggravates all the three *dosha*. One who fills up the stomach with solid food and then takes liquid food in excessive quantity all the three *dosha* i.e., *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* residing in the stomach get too much compressed and simultaneously aggravated. This aggravated *dosha* mixed up with the undigested food. Then all the three *dosha* obstruct a stomach and move upward and downward instantaneously.

If food taken in excess, the downward movement of *Vatadosha* produce colic pain, constipation, malaise, dryness of mouth, fainting, irregularity in the power of digestion. Aggravated *Kaphadosha* produces indigestion, laziness, heaviness, vomiting, anorexia, cold and fever in the body^[11].

4) *JeerneAshniyat* (Intake food after digestion of previous meal) - According to *Acharya Charak*, one should take meal after digestion of previous meal. If one takes food before the digestion of the previous food i.e., immature *rasa* (digestive juice) gets mixed with the product of food taken afterward resulting in the instigation of all *doshas* instantaneously. If food is taken when *doshas* are in their proper places after the digestion of previous food and digestive fire is provoked. The entrances of the channel of circulation gets open and eructation gets purified which regulates the flatus, urine and stool to downward^[12].

5) *VeeryaAviruddhamAshniyat* (Consumption of food having no contradictory potencies) - According to *Acharya Charak*, one should take food having no contradictory potencies. Ayurveda emphasizes on the prohibition of incompatible food intake for the protection of health. Incompatible food is difficult to digest. It decreases the digestive power and lead in to the production of toxins which in turn lead to obstruction of micro channel. Thus, they produce various acute and chronic diseases^[13].

6) *Ishte Deshe Ishta Sarva Upkaranam Ashniyat* (Intake food in proper place with proper utensils) - According to *Acharya Charak*, one should take meal at proper place with all the accessories. If

food has taken at comfortable and clean place which increases happiness and longevity. It calms the mind^[14].

7) *Na AtidrutamAshniyat*(Intake not in hurry) - According to *Acharya Charak*, Food should not be taken in hurry. Food consumed hurriedly affects the digestive fire by increasing the *Vata Dosha*. Food enters into a wrong passage other than stomach. In hurry one cannot determine the taste of food articles^[15].

8) *Na AtivilambitamAshniyat* (Intake not too slow) - According to *Acharya Charak*, food should not be taken too slow because it will not provide satiety. It makes food cold. One can eat food in excess amount which results into indigestion^[16].

9) *AjalpanaAhasanaTanmanaBhunjita* (Intake with Concentration) - According to *Acharya Charak*, avoid talk and laugh while taking food. Otherwise, it gives the same trouble as the one eating too hurriedly^[17].

10) *AtmanamAbhisamikshya* (Intake with self-confidence) – Food has to be taken in prescribed manner with due regard to self. The knowledge of the usefulness or otherwise of food articles is essential for self-preservation.^[18]

According to *Sushrut Samhita*, same dietary guidelines are explained in *Uttartantra*^[19]. But the difference is that it is only for the unhealthy and diseased person.

Discussion:

Food is considered as the basic most important part of life. Not only diet but also method of its intake has important role in the continuity of healthy life. Current faulty and altered habits of food are causes for lifestyle disorders. Due to lifestyle changes and busy schedule, most people are not taken warm food. Most of the students who went to other

places for higher studies are dependent on canteen and hostel. So, they are not able to take warm food. According to *Acharya Charak*, everyone should take warm food. The human digestive system works better with foods and liquids that are at warmer temperature because it doesn't have to work hard to digest the food. Warm food kills microbes. On taking cold food more energy will be used for digestion which may lead lethargy. When food is fresh and warm the taste receptors often send a stronger signal to the brain. Hot food makes the digestion process smooth. Nutrients from hot food are more easily absorbed. This makes more nutrients available to the body^[20]. Now a days, various types of oils or *Vanaspati* ghee are used which are dangerous to health. *Ayurveda* says, everyone should take unctuous food in daily diet. It provides a concentrate source of energy. It increases growth and development, building of nerve cells and brain. Fat is required for absorption of Vitamins A, D, E and K. Consuming fatty acids can boost metabolism^[21]. For example, one should take ghee in daily diet. Ghee enhances the absorption in small intestine and decrease the pH of gastrointestinal tract. Daily consumption of ghee in adequate amount, imparts various health benefits such as binds toxins, complexion and glow of the face and the body, a great rejuvenator for the eyes, increase physical and mental stamina in addition to providing sustaining energy^[22].

There are many types of food available. So, people are eating too much to fulfill the cravings for different tastes. *Ayurveda* says, one should take food in sufficient quantity. Food Quantity can be determined on the basis of lightness and

heaviness of food. Food taken in lower quantity slows down the metabolism leading to malnutrition, wasting of body and immune suppression while the food taken in excess amount takes longer time to digest. That means it slows the digestive process and food will remain in the stomach for the longer period of time and be more likely to turn into fat resulting in various metabolic disorders^[21]. Due to *colonisation*, people have a habit of having breakfast through there is no hunger because of morning duty schedule. According to *Ayurveda*, one should intake after the digestion of previous of meal. Digestion gets slow if food is taken before the digestion of previous food which in turn store more food in a stomach for a longer period of time, promoting excess fat store in the body^[21].

Now a days, people have a habit of trying new combination of food i.e., milk with different types of fruits, cheesy food with cold drinks etc. According to *Ayurveda*, one should intake of food having no contradictory potencies. Incompatible food interrupts the metabolism of tissue, which inhibits the process of formation of tissue^[23]. Incompatible food can lead to inflammation at a molecular level. It can prove harmful which may be imparting its untoward effects on immune system, cellular metabolism, growth hormone and *dehydroepiandrosterone* sulphate^[23]. As per the science proteins do not get combined with starch and carbohydrates and may be consumed differently. Ptyalin is present in saliva. The process continues in the small intestine. Amylase breaks down the maltose into simple glucose, fructose, and *galactose* which is absorbed into the bloodstream, and taken to the liver. It dispenses the energy to whatever

cells in the body need it. If there is no need of glucose, it will be converted to glycogen and stored in the liver, or into fat to be stored in adipose tissue. If insufficient amylase is present in the mouth, starch will not be digested in the stomach. Fats inhibit the secretion of digestive juices, and reduce the amount of pepsin and hydrochloric acid, so they should be avoided with protein-rich foods. The unwanted effect of wrong combinations of food is hampered the gastrointestinal tract and major systems of the body^[23].

Many people are taking food in standing position in buffet parties. As per *Ayurveda*, one should intake food at comfortable place with proper utensils. When individuals sit on the floor properly while eating, most of the muscles are used. In sitting position, feet are beneath the heart. The blood flow is directed to feet. In sitting position while eating, strengthens the lumbar region and reduced distress. The hips and pelvis gets flexed. Central muscles are stretched, and the lower legs additionally get extended. When the individual sits to eat in an appropriate position, digestive juices are secreted in the stomach, which gets ready for mixing with the food. When the individual sits on the floor, the nerve performs better and transmits all signals effectively^[25]. Due to busy schedule people don't have time to eat. They eat food too hurriedly. According to *Ayurveda*, food should not intake in hurry. According to a recent study, positive associations of fast eating speed with general and abdominal obesity among children in both sexes and different age groups where, children in the fast-eating speed group tended to consume more fruit, meat/meat products as well as have a higher frequency of consuming fried food^[26]. Eating too fast may activate the

sympathetic activity i.e. Flight and fright responses, which lowered the digestive secretion and blood circulation is shifted from central pool to periphery. This situation is not proper for eating which leads to improper digestion. Eating quickly on a regular basis reduces the body's metabolism, which is said to reduce good cholesterol levels and increase bad cholesterol level^[27]. If we eat slowly, the brain must also receive signals from digestive hormones secreted by the gastrointestinal tract. Stretch receptors which is present in the stomach are activated and hormonal signals are released. In that situation, partially digested food enters the small intestine. One example is *cholecystokinin* (CCK) which is released by the intestines in response to food consumed during a meal. Another hormone, leptin which is produced by fat cells. That communicates with the brain about long-range needs and satiety. That *leptin* amplifies the CCK signals, to enhance the feeling of fullness. Other research suggests that leptin also interacts with the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brain to produce a feeling of pleasure after eating. The theory is that, by eating too quickly, people may not give this intricate hormonal cross-talk system enough time to work^[28].

In parties, people are taking too much time to complete their food because of late orders or gossips. But *Ayurveda* says, one should not intake too slowly. If food has taken very slowly, digestive enzymes will come in contact with food in irregular manner and this will result in irregular digestion^[29]. One doesn't get satisfied, eats more and food gets cold. Eating slowly can lead to weight loss and decreased enjoyment of food. Now a days, people show laughter club episodes on television

during taking a food. According to *Ayurveda*, avoid talking or laughing while eating. Mindful eating is crucial for athletes and physically active people. Eating food with concentration has excellent effect on body. If food has taken with full concentration, it treat many conditions including eating disorders, depression, anxiety and various food related behaviours. It helps in distinguish between emotional and physical hunger. It also increases awareness of food related triggers. It may aid weight loss by changing eating behaviours and reducing the stress associated with eating. It can help to prevent binge eating. It can both reduce the frequency of binge and the severity of each binge^[30]. According to *Ayurveda*, one should eat with self-confidence. When we are eating out of accompany with our bodies, some people have feelings of guilt and shame. This self-judgement cycle can lead to food restriction, overeating or dieting which have shown a negative impact on well-being and health outcomes^[31]. Therefore, to overcome all the problems *Ayurveda* explained specific rules for diet intake. If everyone followed all the rules of food intake, it may provide better health to human life.

Conclusion:

Hence, we concluded that if we follow the dietary guidelines as per *Ayurveda*, the foremost aim of *Ayurveda* i.e., maintenance of health and prevention of disease is accomplished.

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