

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPLES OF DIET AND DIETETICS OF *AYURVEDA***Chauhan Priyanshu<sup>1</sup>, Kumari Sapna<sup>2</sup>, Sharma Nidhi<sup>3</sup>

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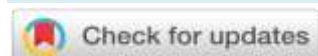
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**ABSTRACT**

The principles of diet and dietetics in *Ayurveda* are based on a holistic approach to nutrition, considering not only the physical aspects of food but also its energetic qualities and effects on the mind-body complex. In *Ayurveda*, “*Ahaar*” is called *Mahabhaisjya*, which means food is the only medicine responsible for health and disease. Different food types are categorised under *Hita* (wholesome) and *Ahita* (unwholesome) *Ahaar*. *Ayurveda* focuses on the preventive aspect as well as on the therapeutic aspects. By choosing a *Prakriti*-wise diet, one can maintain health. A person's *Prakriti* plays an essential role in selecting the diet and habits that directly impact health; a *Vata Prakriti* person should avoid dry, bitter, cold foods. It increases the *Vata Dosh*, but a *Kapha Prakriti* person can take it as it decreases the *Kapha Dosh* and helps balance *Dosh*s. Similarly, if a *Pitta* takes hot, spicy, or certain foods like ginger and garlic, it may irritate, but a *Kapha Prakriti* person can accept the same to reduce *Kapha*.

**Keywords:** *Prakriti*, *Prakriti*-wise diet, dietetics, Principles of diet

## INTRODUCTION

Food has been given prime importance since the *Vedic* period. It is responsible for all life. Food is said to enhance vitality and strength and make the body sturdy. It is considered one of the three sub-pillars supporting life<sup>1</sup>. As per *Ayurveda*, there are different rules before taking meals or choosing a meal for oneself. According to *Acharya Charaka's* rule of dietetics under the term *Aharvidhivisheshayatane*, there are eight factors one should consider before eating food. They are nature (*Prakriti*), processing (*Karana*), combination (*Samyoga*), quantity (*Rasi*), place (*Desh*), time (*Kala*), rule of taking food (*Upyoga Sanstha*), and one who takes food (*Upyokta*)<sup>3,4</sup>. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, there are rules known as *Dvadeshpravichara*. These twelve dietetic rules should be followed to maintain health, emphasising age, temperament, conduciveness, etc. The factors influencing digestion of food are influenced by six factors: heat (*Pitta, Agni*), *Vayu, Kleda* (moisture), unctuousness, time of administration, and *Samyoga* or administration of food<sup>5</sup>. All the rules have the same aim: to maintain the person's health. Another concept of diet according to the person's *Prakriti* is the most important among all the rules given in *Ayur-*

*vedic* texts. *Prakriti* is a person's natural constitution, but it differs for all humans. Each person has a distinct morphology, physiology, and metabolism from another. All the characteristics of various physical and metabolic features have been described under the *Prakriti* in *Ayurveda*.

**METHODOLOGY** Textual resources like *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Sangraha*, and their available commentaries have been used for the present study. Related websites and articles have also been searched to dive into the depth of the concepts.

### Concept of *Prakriti* and *Prakriti-wise food*:

*Prakriti* is considered to be the innate constituent of a person. It is formed during fertilisation due to the predominance of *Doshas*<sup>6</sup>. *Acharya Charaka* and *Sushruta* have categorized food items, their source, quality, and requirements. A person should consider these rules before designing an ideal dietary regimen. A person's diet should restrain the factors to keep the balance between *Doshas* for the maintenance of health<sup>7</sup>. The following food items should be taken per the *Prakriti* of the person given below.

### PRAKRITI-WISE FOODS<sup>8,9</sup>

S.NO.	PRAKRITI	FOOD ARTICLES
1	<i>Vata Prakriti</i>	<p><b>Cereals:</b> Wheat (<i>Godhuma</i>), Rice (<i>Shali</i>), sesame (<i>Tila</i>), Horse gram (<i>Kulaththa</i>), Lemon grass (<i>Jambira Harichaya</i>), black gram (<i>Masha</i>), green gram (<i>Mudga</i>),</p> <p><b>Vegetables:</b> Tomato, onion, garlic, carrot, Indian beans (hyceinth bean), parval (trichosanthes), pumpkin (ash gourd), amaranths, coriander, cumin seeds, asafetida, soyabean, brinjal, raddish, raddish leaves, <i>Jeevanti, Vastuka, Shigru</i> (drumstick), <i>Surana</i> (elephants' foot), <i>Asparagus racemosus, Upodika</i>(Indian spinach), <i>Ushira, Changeri, Chakramardapatra,</i></p> <p><b>Spices:</b> Ginger, mustard, fenugreek, camphor, <i>Shatpushpa, Pippalimoola</i>, mint, <i>Tejpatra, Javitri, Jatiphala</i>, poppy seeds, saffron, <i>Tulsi</i>, soda bicarbonate, blackpepper,</p> <p><b>Fruits:</b> <i>Amlaki</i>, mango (ripe), papaya, orange, sugarcane, mulberry, custard apple, <i>Rajdanta</i>, pear, sweet lime, <i>Matulunga</i>, apple, pineapple, banana, coconut, grapes, strawberry, cherry plum, pomegranate, cashew, kharjura, walnut, chironji, <i>Shringataka, Kapiththa</i>, almond, pistachio,</p> <p><b>Oil:</b> <i>Sarsapa</i> oil, sesame, coconut, sunflower. <i>Atasi</i> oil, <i>Kusumbha</i>, white mustard oil, cotton seed, ground nut oil.</p>
2	<i>Pitta Prakriti</i>	<p><b>Cereals:</b> Wheat, rice, <i>Nivar</i> (type of rice), barley, sesame, lentil, <i>Makustha</i>, kidney bean (rajma), <i>Nishpava</i>, corn, <i>Jwara, Kangu, Kodrava</i>, banyard millet (<i>Shyamaka</i>), green gram, <i>Tuvar</i>,</p> <p><b>Vegetables:</b> Sweet potato, lady finger, beetroot, Indian bean, cucumber(unripe), spinach, cau-</p>

		<p>liflower, <i>Sleshmantaka</i>, tinde, pumpkin, ridgr gourd, ash gourd, <i>Kantola</i>, coriander, buck wheat (<i>Rajagara</i>), soyabean, <i>Shigru</i> (drumstick), raddish leaves, bitter gourd, cabbage, potato, <i>Jeevanti</i>, <i>Ratalu</i> (yam), <i>Vastuka</i>, <i>Aluka</i>, <i>Shatavari</i>, <i>Makoi</i>, <i>Patha</i>, <i>Uppodika</i>, <i>Ushira</i>,  <b>Spices:</b> clove, <i>Haridra</i>, fennel seeds, <i>Mishreya</i>, poppy seeds,  <b>Fruits:</b> Plum, mulberry, <i>Amlaki</i>, mango (ripe), sugarcane, muskmelon, <i>Rajadanta</i>, custard apple, <i>Bael</i>, <i>Badar</i>, <i>Falsa</i>, <i>Kapithha</i>, apricot, <i>Shringataka</i>, chironji, walnut, kharjur, apple banana, grape, coconut, pomegranate, guava, jackfruit, sweet lime, jamun, naspati, almond, <i>Pugaphala</i>,  <b>Oil:</b> Tila , coconut, ground nut, safflower oil.</p>
3	Kapha Prakriti	<p><b>Cereals &amp; Pulses:</b> Rice, millet, barley, sesame, lentil, <i>Makustha</i>, kidneybean(rajma), <i>Nishpava</i>, <i>Kulathha</i>, corn, <i>Jwara</i>, <i>Kangu</i>, <i>Kodrava</i>, banyard millet (<i>Shyamaka</i>), lemon grass, green gram, red gram (<i>Tuvar</i>),  <b>Vegetables:</b> Carrot, cauliflower, <i>Sleshmantaka</i>, parval, amaranth, karkotaki, <i>Dhanyaka</i>, <i>Jeeraka</i>, <i>Hingu</i>, red chilli, green chilli, buck wheat (<i>Rajagara</i>), <i>Shigru</i>, <i>Karvellaka</i>, <i>Mulaka</i>, <i>Mulakapatra</i>, <i>Vartaka</i> (brinjal), <i>Vastuka</i>, <i>Surana</i>, <i>Didinsha</i>, <i>Makoi</i>, <i>Patha</i>, <i>Chakramardpatra</i>, <i>Changeri</i>,  <b>Spices:</b> Ginger, garlic, mustard, fenugreek, clove, cardamom, camphor, black pepper, dil seed, turmeric, <i>Yavani</i>, fennel seeds, <i>Mishta Nimba</i>, mint, <i>Pippalimool</i>, cinnamon, nutmeg, Kumkum, tulsi, soda bicarbonate  <b>Fruits:</b> <i>Amlaki</i>, mango (raw), <i>Bilva</i>, falsa, cashew, walnut, grapes, lemon, pomegranate, <i>Bi-japur</i>, Jamun, pistachio, naspati, anjir, <i>Pugphala</i>,  <b>Oil:</b> castor, sesame, sunflower, safflower, <i>Atasi</i> tail.</p>

## DISCUSSION

One of the critical strengths of Ayurvedic dietetics is its emphasis on individualised nutrition. Ayurveda recognises that each person has a unique constitution (Prakriti), which influences their dietary requirements and responses to different foods by considering factors such as body type (*Dosha*), digestive capacity (*Agni*), age, season, climate, and health status, Ayurveda custom dietary recommendations to the specific needs of the individual. *Ayurvedic* dietetics aims to balance the three doshas (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) to maintain health and prevent disease. Foods are categorised based on their tastes (*Rasa*), qualities (*Guna*), and post-digestive effects (*Vipaka*), which influence *Doshic* balance. For example, individuals with a predominance of *Pitta Dosha* may be advised to consume cooling, sweet, and bitter foods to pacify excess heat and acidity.

In contrast, those with a predominance of *Vata Dosha* may benefit from warm, nourishing, and grounding foods to stabilise their energy. Critical Analysis: While balancing *Doshas* can promote health and well-being, the rigid categorisation of foods based on

*Doshic* effects may oversimplify dietary recommendations. *Ayurveda* emphasises the importance of maintaining intense digestive fire (*Agni*) for proper digestion and assimilation of nutrients. Correct food combinations, cooking methods, meal timing, and mindful eating practices are recommended to support *Agni*. Foods that are easy to digest, such as cooked vegetables, soups, and herbal teas, are preferred, while heavy, difficult-to-digest foods are avoided, especially for individuals with weak *Agni*. While supporting digestive fire is a fundamental concept in *Ayurveda*, limited scientific evidence supports specific dietary practices for improving *Agni*. Additionally, individual variations in digestive capacity may not always align with *Ayurvedic* classifications of foods as light or heavy.

*Ayurvedic* dietetics considers food as a source of nutrients and a form of medicine that can influence physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. The effects of food on the mind-body complex (*Sharira-Manas*) are considered when making dietary recommendations. Dietary guidelines may include mindful eating, gratitude towards food, eating in a calm environment, and avoiding excessive consumption or fasting.

While the holistic perspective of *Ayurvedic* dietetics offers a comprehensive approach to nutrition and health, the subjective nature of concepts such as food energetics and the mind-body connection may limit their applicability in evidence-based practice.

## CONCLUSION

The principles of diet and dietetics in *Ayurveda* are entrenched in a holistic understanding of nutrition, emphasising individualised nutrition, *Doshic* balance, digestive health, mindful eating practices, and the therapeutic potential of food. These principles provide a comprehensive framework for promoting health and well-being by harmonising the body, mind, and spirit through dietary choices and lifestyle habits. Principles of diet and dietetics in *Ayurveda* offer valuable insights into personalised nutrition, *Doshic* balance, digestive health, and holistic well-being. While many of these principles align with modern dietary recommendations, some concepts may need more scientific validation or may not be universally applicable. Further research is required to evaluate the efficacy and safety of *Ayurvedic* nutritional practices and integrate them with evidence-based nutrition guidelines for optimal health outcomes.

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