

A SCIENTIFIC REVIEW ON DIETETICS IN AYURVEDA ACCORDING TO PRAKRITI (INNATE CONSTITUTION)

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ABSTRACT

Food is considered as one of the key pillars (*upstambhas*) of life in Ayurveda. Several studies have shown that an Ayurvedic diet is healthier than the typical western diet. In fact, many health problems begin to disappear as Ayurvedic living approach is integrated into daily life. Ayurveda believes in maintaining harmony with the internal as well as the external surroundings. *Prakriti* (constitution) plays a significant role on the incidence and healing of a disease. Ayurveda described different types of *Prakriti* (constitutions) of human being along with their appropriate food, drink and also what types of job, exercise are suitable for maintaining their dynamism. A person is capable to prevent various disorders from just beginning and is also able to prop up his health by the knowledge of his or her *Prakriti* and Diet. Hence it is imperative to find out the *Prakriti* of each human being for maintaining health and preventing diseases, by following certain specific schedules relating to life-style, dietary guidelines for each *Prakriti* (constitution). Ayurveda suggests that one should follow these guiding principles to prevent various muddles and endorse health. On this background present study was undertaken to find out a dietary directive according to *dosaja prakriti* (humour constitution) of each individual. Ayurvedic as well as related modern textual resources have been used in this study. Study also implies that there is extensive scope of scientific testing on this field in order to justify the textual references.

KEY WORDS: Ayurvedic diets, *Prakriti*, Constitution, Food, Nutrition

INTRODUCTION

The holistic approach of *Ayurveda* embraces various issues which are absolute or accessory in the fortitude of human's health. "Diet according to *Prakriti*" is one of such important conception. *Prakriti* is the innate constitution of an individual. It is the idiom of body functions in the form of morphology, physiology and behaviour of a human being¹. Ayurveda deems each human being as a distinct individual born with exclu-

sive physiological or metabolic characteristics which remain constant throughout life². These distinct characteristics, which contribute to the physical, physiological (metabolic) and psychological make-up of each individual are described under the term *Prakriti* (constitution) in Ayurveda^{3, 4}. Ayurveda believes in maintaining harmony with the internal as well as the external surroundings. Hence it is imperative to find out the *Prakriti* of each hu-

man being for maintaining health and preventing diseases. This is possible only by following certain specific schedules relating to life-style, dietary guidelines for each constitution³. *Prakriti* affects each factor by which a person is going to interact and decides the status of health. It is clearly pointed out in texts that lifestyle and various activities should be planned opposite to *prakriti* for the maintenance of health^{3, 4, 5}. Ayurveda gives elaborate guiding principles for achieving ideal health and enduring healthy. Comprehensive directives are given on detailed food and dietary schedules for different period of the day, different seasons, according to one's age and most decisively to outfit one's *Prakriti*⁵. The emphasis on wellness through appropriate dietary guiding principle is mostly lacking among current Ayurveda practitioners whose emphasis is mainly on *pathya-apathaya* (dietary restrictions) prescribed for management of specific diseases^{3,6}. Modern dieticians or nutritionists seem to be totally disease-oriented, they working out therapeutic diets specific for diseases like diabetes, hypertension and heart disease etc⁷. The Ayurvedic categorization of food by both *Charaka* and *Sushruta* epitomize their profound knowledge of food items, their source, quality and requirement/usage by human beings, as also food-food and food-drug incompatibilities. By considerate the individual constitution of every human being, physicians can distinguish which food and drink appropriate for maintaining their healthy life.

METHODOLOGY: Textual resources have been used for this study, from which various references have been collected. Foremost Ayurvedic texts as *Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtang Sangrah*, *Ashtang Hridaya* and the available commentaries on these books has been used in this swot up. Related modern texts and websites have also been searched for recent knowledge.

Relationship between *prakriti*, *agni*, *kostha*

diet : In Ayurveda, the word *prakriti* has been used in the sense of *deha prakriti* (body constitution) or *doshaja prakriti* (humour constitution). According to *Rasa-vaisheshik*, *prakriti* is a state which is formed at the time of fertilization due to eminence of *dosha*². According to *Acharya Sushruta* and *Charak*, *prakriti* is determined at the time of fertilization due to the predominance or increased status of *dosha* which is normal or physiological. Each *prakriti* has specific physical and mental characteristics which totally depend on the involvement of *dosha*. Hence Ayurvedic classics have mentioned *prakriti* is of seven types, i.e. *Vataj*, *Pittaj*, *Kaphaj*, three *dwandaj* and one *samadoshaja*.

Among these, *samadoshaja* is an first-rate and homeostatic state, while others are considered as substandard constitutions and inclined for an assortment of diseases^{8,9,10}. In *vata prakriti* appetite will be variable in nature so the time required for digestion will vary because of the *visama agni*. In *pitta prakriti* the appetite will be good and strong and the digestion will be quick due to *teekshna agni*. In *kapha prakriti* the appetite will not be as strong as in *pitta prakriti* and digestion will be slow and the person can even skip meal without undue discomfort.

Ayurveda and balanced diet: Just like modern science explains balanced diet based on macro and micronutrients. In Ayurveda, one has to look at the *prakriti* (constituents), *agni* (digestive power), *kostha* (digestive system) of a person and *rasa* (taste), *guna* (property), *vieerya* (active potency), *vipaka* (digestion and metabolism) of particular food and also the *rutu* (season) for designing a ideal dietary regiment. The diet of a person should restrain the factors which will keep the *doshik* balance of the body in equilibrium. For instances person of *Vata prakriti* should consume *Madhura* (Sweet), *Amla* (Sour), *Lavana* (Salt) *rasa*

(taste). Person of *Pitta prakriti* should take *Madhura* (Sweet), *Tikta* (Bitter), *Kasaya* (Astringent) *rasa* (taste) and person of *Kapha prakriti* should consume *Tikta* (Bitter), *Katu* (Pungent), *Kasaya* (Astringent) *rasa* (taste) etc.

Diet for *Vata prakriti*:

General guideline:

Rasa (Taste of foods): Diet should contain *Madhura* (Sweet), *Amla* (Sour), *Lavana* (Salt) taste. Sour and salty taste should prefer in summer. In winter should consume salty predominant food and sweet taste can be consumed in both seasons as a supplement.

Guna (Properties of foods): Properties of the diet should be opposite of properties of *Vata* like as *Snigdha* (Unctuous), *Guru* (Heavy), *Ushna* (Warm) etc.

Veerya (Active potency), Vipaka (Digestion and metabolism): Diet with *Ushna veerya* and *Katu vipaka* are generally ideal for *Vata prakriti*.

Example: Person of *Vata prakriti* following types of food can take as regular food³ - **Cereals** like Rice, wheat, **Pulses** like Black gram, Horse gram. **Fruits** like, gooseberry, grapes, banana, dates, apple, pineapple, pomegranate. **Spices** like Asafoetida, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, cumin, garlic, coriander. **Dairy product** like Milk, ghee, curd, buttermilk, butter, Oils like sesame oil, mustard oil, coconut oil, **Meat** of cow, goat, buffalo etc.

Restricted: Should not take as regular food like Barley, corn, millet, Green gram, Bengal gram, lentil, Snakegourd, Cabbage, Brinjal, Bittergourd, cucumber, Pear, melon, Tamaric, corn oil. Should avoid pungent, astringent, cold foods and drinks.

Note: *Vata dosha* is aggravated and increased during *Varsa* (Rainy season), Autumn and early winter. During these seasons all mind-body types can include some of the above foods and decrease others. Mental and emotional peace and constructive daily life rou-

tines are vital to restoring and maintaining stability. Animal foods like aquatic fish and meat should prefer as these food can promote *Kapha* level.

Diet for *Pitta prakriti*:

General guideline:

Rasa (Taste of foods): Diet should contain *Madhura* (Sweet), *Tikta* (Bitter), *Kasaya* (Astringent) *rasa* (taste). Ayurveda suggests the intake of bitter and astringent foods during both summer and winter to promote *Vata* in summer and *Kapha* in winter. One can take sweets all year around.

Guna (Properties of foods): Properties of the diet should be opposite of *pitta guna*, like as *Ruksha* (not unctuous), *Sheeta* (Cold), food with moderately heavy texture etc.

Veerya (Active potency), Vipaka (Digestion and metabolism): Foods with *Sheeta veerya* and *Madhura vipaka* are generally idyllic.

Example: Person of *Pitta prakriti* can take regular food like³ **Cereals** such as rice, wheat, barley, millet, **Pulses** like green gram, bengal gram, ghee, butter, fresh curd, milk, **vegetables** such as snake gourd, bitter gourd, brinjal, cabbage, spinach, **fruits** such as gooseberry, grapes, apple, dates, pomegranate, banana, **spices** such as coriander, turmeric, **meat** of deer, goat, buffalo and rabbit are beneficial. **Oils** like Sesame oil, Coconut oil, sunflower oil.

Restricted: Should not take as regular food like Cereals such as corn, Pulses such as black gram, horse gram, sour buttermilk and curd, radish, onion, sweet potato, citrus fruits, pea, spices such as cumin, garlic, pepper, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, asafoetida, sea fish, Almond, corn, mustard oil. Better to avoid oily, hot, salty, heavy foods.

Note: *Pitta dosha* is aggravated and increased during summer, hot, dry seasons. During these seasons all mind-body types can include some of the above foods and decrease others. Mental and emotional peace and constructive lifestyle routines are important to restoring

and maintaining balance. Vegetarian diet should prefer.

Diet for Kapha prakriti:

General guideline:

Rasa (Taste of foods): Diet should contain *Tikta* (Bitter), *Katu* (Pungent), *Kasaya* (Astringent) *rasa* (taste). Ayurveda suggests the intake of bitter and astringent foods during both summer and winter to promote *Vata* in summer and *Kapha* in winter. Excessive pungent should be avoided in summer.

Guna (Properties of foods): Properties of the diet should be opposite of *Kapha guna*, like as *laghu* (light), *ushna* (hot and worm food), Dry etc.

Veerya (Active potency), Vipaka (Digestion and meatbolism): Foods with *Ushna veerya* and *Katu vipaka* are generally idyllic.

Example: Person of Kapha prakriti should take regularly³ **Cereals and grains** like rice, barley, corn, millet, **Pulses** like Bengal gram, Horse gram, Greengram, **Vegetables** like Brinjal, radish, Snake gourd, Bittergourd, cabbage, **Spices** like Asafoetida, Black pepper, Cloves, Coriander, cumin, Turmeric, cardamom, **Fruits** Gooseberry, grapes, pomegranate, papaya, Lemon, **Diary products** like Buttermilk, **Meat** of goat, rabbit, deer, **Oils like** Sesame oil, Mustard oil.

Restricted: Should not take regularly cereals like wheat, pulses like blackgram, ash gourd, onion, sweet potato, cucumber, apple, pineapple, banana, dates, ripe mango, plum, orange curd, ghee, milk, butter, meat of pig, cow, buffalo, fish, eggs, oils like coconut. Avoid sweet, cold, heavy foods and drinks.

Note: *Kapha dosha* is aggravated and increased in spring season. During this season should consume less food and select drier, fibrous foods during cold season.

Diet for Dwandvaja prakriti and Samadoshaj prakriti: Individuals having a constitution dominated by a combination of two or three *doshas* should follow the diet of combination of the respective *doshas*^{12,13}.

DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, foods are aligned with the *doshas* which makes the diet appropriate for the body. Each individual is born with a distinctive stability of *tridosha* that is his *prakriti*. Also, all the bodily systems, psychological and spiritual phenomena are governed by these. The *doshas* helps individual to understand which foods are right for the body and which foods need to be avoided. This helps for weight loss, energy, and overall health and wellness. One man's food is another man's poison. Hence to make one's life healthy, happy and balanced, the knowledge of *dosaja* constitution or *prakriti* is extremely indispensable. People are often confounded when it comes to decide the healthiest diet to follow. It is hard to distinguish which diet is the best, as all human beings are dissimilar, and each diet is different. The body reacts differently to various foods, and even the same foods under different conditions and at different ages. However, several diets are evidently healthier than others. Extensive research is needed in this aspect.

CONCLUSION

Improper dietary habit is the primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in the current era. Every human being is unique with respect to his *prakriti*, *agni*, *koshta* etc. Therefore considerations on *Ahara* (diet) should also be done with specificity to the individual. *Aahara* (diet) when taken in proper quantity at proper time following all *niyamas* (guideline) contribute health. By understanding the personage constitution of every human being, physicians can distinguish which food and drink appropriate for maintaining their healthy life.

Table: Ideal applicability of various types of food according to three major types of prakriti (innate constitution) are summarized in the following tables-

DIET	PRAKRITI			DIET	PRAKRITI		
CEREALS	VAT A	PITTA	KAPHA	PULSES	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA

Rice	Yes	Yes	Yes		Bengal Gram	No	Yes	Yes
Wheat	Yes	Yes	No		Horse Gram	Yes	No	Yes
Millets	No	Yes	Yes		Black Gram	Yes	No	No
Corn	No	No	Yes		Green Gram	No	Yes	Yes
Barley	No	Yes	Yes		Spices			
Vegetables					Garlic	Yes	No	Yes
Radish	Yes	No	Yes		Fenugreek	Yes	No	Yes
Brinjal	No	Yes	Yes		Clove	No	Yes	Yes
Cabbage	No	Yes	Yes		Cinnamom	Yes	No	Yes
Potato	Yes	No	No		Cardamom	Yes	No	Yes
Onion	Yes	No	No		Ginger	Yes	No	Yes
Beetroot	Yes	No	No		Pepper	Yes	No	Yes
Bitter Gourd	No	Yes	Yes		Coriander	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yellow Pumpkin	Yes	Yes	Yes		Cumin	Yes	No	Yes
Snake Gourd	No	Yes	Yes		Asafoetida	Yes	No	Yes
Cucumber	No	Yes	No		Oils			
Spinach	Yes	Yes	No		Sesame Oil	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fruits					Coconut Oil	Yes	Yes	No
Apple	Yes	Yes	No		Mustard Oil	Yes	No	Yes
Banana	Yes	Yes	No		Sunflower Oil	No	No	Yes
Grapes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Milk And Milk Products			
Gooseberry	Yes	Yes	Yes		Milk	Yes	Yes	No
Plum	Yes	Yes	No		Butter Milk	Yes	No	Yes
Mango (Raw)	No	No	Yes		Curd	Yes	No	No
Mango (Ripe)	Yes	Yes	No		Ghee	Yes	Yes	No
Papaya	Yes	No	Yes		Butter	Yes	Yes	No
Orange	Yes	No	No		Non-Vegetarian Food			
Pineapple	Yes	No	Yes		Deer Meat	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lemon	Yes	No	Yes		Mutton	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dates	Yes	Yes	No		Pork	Yes	Yes	No
Pomegranate	Yes	Yes	Yes		Beef	Yes	No	No

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