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**Published Paper's Title : An Appraisal  
Of The Concept Of Diet And Dietetics In  
Ayurveda**

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## Research Paper

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# An appraisal of the concept of Diet and Dietetics in Ayurveda

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### Declaration

The Declaration of the author for publication of Research Paper in Asian Journal of Modern and Ayurvedic Medical Science (ISSN 2279-0772) Dr. Neeru Nathani, the author of the research paper entitled "An appraisal of the concept of Diet and Dietetics in Ayurveda" declare that I take the responsibility of the content and material of my paper as I myself have written it and also have read the manuscript of my paper carefully. Also, I hereby give my consent to publish this paper in ajmams. This research paper is my original work and no part of it or it's similar version is published or has been sent for publication anywhere else. I authorise the Editorial Board of the Journal to modify and edit the manuscript. I also give my consent to the publisher of ajmams to own the copyright of my research paper.

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**ABSTRACT:** Ahara is one of the three supporting factors of life, plays a key role in the promotion of health and prevention of diseases. In Vedic literature it has been equated with nectar. There is much talk about well-balanced diet in present era. Modern Science states that the balanced diet is one which contains a variety of foods in such quantities and proportions that the need for energy, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates and other nutrients is adequately met for maintaining health, vitality and general well being. According to Ayurveda the diet which nourishes both the mental and physical built is called "balanced diet". The food articles which replenish the bodily dhatus and help in eliminating the disturbance of their equilibrium are to be regarded as wholesome. Apart from quantity of food, elemental constitution, mode of preparation, habitat, combination, time and season of intake, manner of intake, body constitution and agnibala of consumer etc. are also considered in the acceptability of wholesome diet. A man votary of wholesome diet considering Ayurvedic dietetics survives for hundred years in a disease free state.

**Keywords:** Ahara, Wholesome Diet, Ayurvedic Dietetics.

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### • Introduction

Diet is one of the main factors provided by nature for healthy long life of human beings. In ancient classics

much importance has been given to Ahara (Diet), for the promotion of health and prevention of diseases. The wholesome and unwholesome foods



are responsible for happiness and misery respectively. Dietary consideration is an important component of every prescription in Ayurvedic therapy. Sometimes, dietary management in itself is a complete treatment. Ayurvedic dietetics is concerned primarily with the energetic of food as a means of balancing the biological humours (Dosha).

Contrary to modern approach, Ayurvedic dietetics does not deal only with the specific nutritional contents of food - carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals etc, but it also takes into account the food we take in and the manner in which we take it, nature of food, agnibala, mode of preparation, combination, season, place and environment etc. Field of Ayurvedic dietetics is vast and more scientific.

#### • **History of Dietetics**

The Vedas, which are considered to be the first written records of Indian literature, contain innumerable dietetic references. In Rigveda it is said that, Purusha is all that contains past, present and future. He is the governor of Atma (immortality) too and which is manifested by Anna (R.V.-10/90/2). In Taiteriyopanishad, the Anna has been regarded as 'Brahma', as all animates are produced from Anna, after production life is maintained by anna and at the end assimilate in the anna (Tait.Up.Bh.V.-2/1). In Bhagawad Geeta also diet has been accepted as a source for creation of life (Bhag.G.-3/14.1). Further to achieve success in yogic practices, there is clear cut emphasis on appropriate diet, along with other activities and regimen of life (Bhag.G.-6/17).

In Charaka Samhita, in context to the origin of Purusha (man) and his diseases the concluding remark of Punarvasu Atreya to accept the 'Ahara' as a causative factor for both, carries the historical importance of dietetics (C.Su.-25/31). In Sushruta Samhita, a

detailed description of dietetics by Lord Dhanwantari regarding the applicability and importance of diet in human life is self sufficient to prove the historical significance of it (S.Su.-46/4). In Kashyapa Samhita, Ahara is called as "Mahabhaisajya" (K.S.Khi.-4/6).

#### • **Definition of Ahara**

Defining the Ahara it has been said that, whatever material taken by mouth into the alimentary canal, which in long run after proper digestion transformed into the tissue elements and do the functions such as promotion of growth, recovery of loss, protection from diseases for survival of body, is termed as 'Ahara' (SV.Smu.-5/48). Charaka says that it is the Ahara which maintains the equilibrium of bodily dhatus and helps in promotion of health and prevention of diseases (C.Su.-25/33). According to Sushruta, Ahara is that which restores the vigour, provides strength immediately after taking, sustains body and increases the life-span, happiness, memory, power, ojas and digestive capacity (S.Ci.-24/68).

#### • **Classification of Food**

Acharya Charaka has classified the food articles in different ways (C.Su.-25/36). Diet is one from the point of intake, of two types according to source-animal origin and plant origin, according to effect-wholesome and unwholesome. Food may be drinkables, eatables, chewable, and lehya according to way of intake. According to Acharya Kashyapa, due to being made of panchamahabhutas, food articles are of five types viz. Akasheeya, Vayavya, Agneya, Apya and Parthiva (K.S.Khi.-4/8).

Acharya Sharangadhara (Pu.Kh.-6/2) and Bhavaprakasha (B.P.Pu.Kh.-5/144) further classified Food into six types viz., Bhojya, Bhakshya, Charvyā, Lehya, Chusya and Peya. It is of six types as per taste also. In other context Charaka has classified food



articles into twelve groups (C.Su.-27/6-7) and Sushruta classified them into twenty one groups (S.Su.-45). According to properties food is of twenty types, and of innumerable varieties due to abundance of substances, their combinations and preparations.

**• Importance of Diet**

Among three Upastambhas (supporting factors) of life, the Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep) and Brahmacharya, the diet is an essential factor for maintenance of healthy life (C.Su.-11/35). Being supported by these three well regulated factors of life, the body is endowed with strength, complexion and growth and continues uptill the full span of life. Acharya Charaka has mentioned that, Anna (food) is the best sustainer of life (C.Su.-25/40).

Taking in account the utility of food not only at individual but at universal level, it has been mentioned that whatever beneficial for worldly happiness, whatever pertains to the Vedic sacrifices leading to heaven, and whatever action leads to spiritual salvation are all said to be established in food (C.Su.-27/349-350). According to Acharya Sushruta Ahara determines the origin of beings and forms a chief source of bodily strength, complexion and ojas (S.Su.-1/36). Showing the importance of pathya (ahara) Acharya Lolimbaraja says that, if wholesome

diet is given in a planned way, there is no need for separate medical treatment and if unwholesome diet is being permitted, there is no benefit of any medication (Vaidyajeevanam-1/10).

**• Six Rasas in Diet**

Ayurveda has recommended that all the six tastes should be in every diet to enhance the bala or immunity. Six rasa are Madhura Rasa (Sweet taste), (2) Amla Rasa (Sour taste), (3) Lavana Rasa (Salty taste), (4) Katu Rasa (Pungent taste), (5) Tikta Rasa (Bitter taste), (6) Kashaya Rasa (Astringent taste). These six rasas directly influence the tridoshas and also influence the nutrition and transformation of bodily tissues.

**• Diet for different Prakriti**

Ayurveda gives emphasis to prakriti or body constitution in consideration of food intake. Three basic doshas-Vata, Pitta and Kapha form seven types of prakriti. In this world each person is a unique being of unique heredity, unique environment, unique biochemical structure and unique mental status. For this reason all the natural and good food items can't be effective with all the individuals to the same extent. Every individual should take a diet suitable to his predominant constitutional doshas, to balance them in different seasons.

**(1) Diet for Vata Prakriti**

	<b>Foods to favour (Vata alleviating)</b>	<b>Foods to avoid (Vata vitiating)</b>
	Foods of sweet, sour and salty tastes, Warm and unctuous foods	Foods of pungent, bitter and astringent tastes, Light, dry, rough, cold foods
<b>Fruits</b>	Sweet and sour fruits, apricots, banana, cherries, figs, grapes, grape-fruit, lemon, mango, orange, pineapple, papaya, pomegranate, peach, plum, raspberries, strawberries	Apple, watermelon
<b>Vegetables</b>	Cooked vegetables, brinjal, beets, cooked onion, garlic, greenbeans,	Raw vegetables, cabbage, cauliflower, peas, carrot,



	lady finger, potato, radish, sweet-potato, tomato	cucumber, leafy greens, lettuce, mushrooms, raw onion, spinach
<b>Cereals</b>	Rice, wheat, khus, oats (cooked)	Barley, corn, millet, rye, oats (dry)
<b>Pulses</b>	Mudga	Chick peas, kidney beans, lentils, peanuts, soybeans, split peas
<b>Nuts and seed</b>	Almond, cashew, coconut, walnut, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, mustard seeds	Large quantity of nuts and seeds
<b>Dairy products</b>	Milk, ghee, butter, cream, cheese, butter milk, yogurt	Ice-cream
<b>Animal foods</b>	Chicken egg, fish, shellfish, turkey	Beef, lamb, pork
<b>Oils</b>	Sesame, mustard, coconut, peanut, olive, almond	Corn, soya, safflower
<b>Condiments</b>	Asafoetida, black-pepper, basil, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, ginger, mint, mustard, nutmeg, turmeric	None
<b>Sweeteners</b>	Raw sugar, honey, jaggery, molasses, fruit sugar	White sugar

## (2) Diet for Pitta Prakriti:

	<b>Foods to favour (Pitta alleviating)</b>	<b>Foods to avoid (Pitta vitiating)</b>
	Foods of sweet, bitter & astringent tastes, Cool, slightly dry and little heavy foods	Foods of sour salty & pungent tastes, Hot, sharp and light foods
<b>Fruits</b>	Sweet fruits, apple, dates, figs, grapes, mango, melons, orange, plums, pear, pineapple, pomegranate, raspberries	Sour fruits, apricot, banana, cherries, grape-fruit, lemon, papaya, peach, strawberries
<b>Vegetables</b>	Cabbage, cauliflower, potato cucumber, fresh peas, green beans, lady finger, lettuce, mushrooms,	Beets, brinjal, chillis, garlic, onion, radish, spinach, turnip, tomato
<b>Cereals</b>	Rice, wheat, barley, oat	Corn, millet, rye
<b>Pulses</b>	All beans viz., kidney, soya, chick peas, split peas, mudga	Peanuts, lentils
<b>Nuts and Seeds</b>	Coconut, sunflower	Almond, cashew, peanut, pumpkin seeds, sesame, walnut
<b>Dairy products</b>	Milk ghee, cream, cheese (unsalted)	Cheese (salted), butter milk, yogurt, ice-cream
<b>Animal foods</b>	Egg- white, chicken, turkey	Egg- yolk, beef, fish, shell fish, lamb, pork
<b>Oils</b>	Coconut, soya, sunflower	Corn, mustard, olive, peanut, sesame, almond, safflower



<b>Condiments</b>	Coriander, cumin, cardamom, fennel, mint, turmeric	Asafoetida, basil, black-pepper, cinnamon, cloves, fenugreek, garlic, ginger, mustard, nutmeg.
<b>Sweeteners</b>	Raw sugar, fresh honey, jaggery, fruit sugar	White sugar, old honey, molasses

### (3) Diet for Kapha Prakriti:

	<b>Foods to favour (Kapha alleviating)</b>	<b>Foods to avoid (Kapha vitiating)</b>
	Foods of pungent, bitter and astringent tastes, Warm, light, dry foods	Foods of sweet, sour and salty tastes, Cold, heavy, unctuous foods
<b>Fruits</b>	Apple, pomegranate	Sweet and sour fruits, banana, berries, cherries, dates, grapes, grape-fruit, lemon, mango, melons, orange, pineapple papaya, plum, pears
<b>Vegetables</b>	Cabbage, cauliflower chillis, fresh peas, green beans, garlic, lettuce, mushroom, onion, radish, turnip, spinach	Brinjal, cucumber, carrot, lady-finger, sweet potato, tomato
<b>Cereals</b>	Barley, corn, millet, rye, dry oats	Rice, wheat, khus, cooked oats
<b>Pulses</b>	All beans viz. kidney, soya, lentils, mudga, peanut split peas	Chick peas
<b>Nuts and Seeds</b>	Sunflower, pumpkin	Almond, coconut, cashew, peanut, sesame, walnut
<b>Dairy products</b>	Goat milk, butter milk, soyamilk	Milk, ghee, butter, cheese, cream, yogurt, ice-cream
<b>Animal foods</b>	Chicken, turkey	Egg, fish, beef, lamb, pork, shell fish
<b>Oils</b>	Corn, mustard, sunflower, safflower	Almond, olive, peanut, soya, sesame
<b>Condiments</b>	Asafoetida, black pepper, basil, cloves, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, ginger, mint, mustard nutmeg, turmeric	None
<b>Sweeteners</b>	Honey	White sugar, brown sugar, jaggery, molasses, fruit sugar

#### • Most Wholesome and Unwholesome Dietary Articles

Acharya Charaka has described various dietary articles which are most wholesome and unwholesome by nature (C.Su.-25/38-39).

<b>Group</b>	<b>Hitatama Ahara</b>	<b>Ahitatama Ahara</b>
Cereals	Red shali rice (orza sativa)	Yavaka (a variety of Hordeum vulgare)
Pulses	Mudga (green gram)	Masha (Black gram)
Green vegetables	Jivanti (Leptadenia)	Sarshapa (Mustard)



	reticulata)	
Rhizomes	Sringavera (Ginger)	Aluka (Potato)
Fruits	Mridvika (Dry grapes)	Nikucha (Artocarpus nikucha)
Salts	Saindhava (Rock salt)	Usara
Sugarcane Products	Sarkara	Phanita
Drinking water	Antriksha jala	River water in rainy season
Milk	Gavya (of cow)	Avika (of sheep)
Ghrita	Gavya (of cow)	Avika (of sheep)
Vegetable fats	Tila oil (sesamum)	Kusumbha oil (Canthamus tinctorius)

#### • Dietetic Principles of Ayurveda

Apart from elemental constitution of food various dietary rules and other factors like matra (quantity), kala (time or season), kriya (mode of preparation), bhumi (habitat or climate), deha (constitution of person), desha (body humour & environment) etc. also play a significant role in the acceptability of wholesome diet.

#### Quantity of Diet

Quantity of diet depends upon the power of digestion and metabolism (C.Su.-5/3). There is no fixed quantity in which different food articles are to be taken. One third of the stomach should be filled with solid food, one-third with liquids and one-third should be left empty for Vata, Pitta and Kapha (C.Vi.-2/3).

#### Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana

It is not possible to derive the entire benefit out of food, simply on the basis of quantity of intake, without considering these eight factors-Prakriti (nature of food articles), Karana (method of their processing), Sanyoga (combination), Rashi (quantity), Desha (habitat), Kala (time in the form of day, night or seasons and state of individual), Upayogasanstha (rules governing the food intake), Upayokta (wholesomeness of individual who takes it).

#### Dvadasha Ashana Pravichara

Acharya Sushruta has described twelve dietary considerations and mentioned that which type of food is suitable for

which individual (S.U.-64/56), like Shita, Ushna, Snigdha, Ruksha, Shuska, Drava, Single diet a day, twice daily, Ausadhiyukta Ahara, Mitahara, Shamana and Vrittipayojaka Ahara.

#### Viruddhahara (Dietetic Incompatibility)

Incompatible diets are responsible for various disorders in human beings. Acharya Charaka has described eighteen factors responsible for dietetic incompatibility (C.Su.-26/86-87)-

1. Desha (climate)
10. Avastha (state of health)
2. Kala (season)
11. Krama (order of food intake)
3. Agni (digestive power)
12. Parihara (restriction)
4. Matra (quantity)
13. Upachara (prescription)
5. Satmya (accustom)
14. Paka (cooking)
6. Doshas (tridosha)
15. Sanyoga (combination)
7. Samskara (mode of processing)
16. Hridya (palatability)
8. Ahara virya (potency of food)
17. Sampad (richness of quality)
9. Kostha (bowel habits)
18. Vidhi (rules of eating)

#### Seasonal Consideration of Dietetics

In Ayurvedic classics, there has been a thorough consideration for seasons, besides the dietetic regimens for days and nights. Whole year is divided into six seasons and detailed dietetic regimen for these seasons is prescribed (C.Su.-6).

#### Climate and Dietetics





Vata alleviating diet is more appropriate to cold, dry, windy climates, like the high desert or high plains regions. Pitta alleviating diet is suitable for hot climates including the Southern United States and the lower desert of the Southwest. Kapha alleviating diet is more congenial to damp and cold climates like the mid West, most of the East and Northeast, and the Northwest (C.Su.26/88; A.S.Su.7/232-234; K.S.Ka.7/41-55).

#### **Practices before taking Food**

Due to its great significance, the food has attained the highest position of 'Brahman' in this universe. Hence, before taking the food, for the betterment of life, it should be worshipped in its full religious and ethical discipline. Acharya Charaka has been given much detail of these principles (C.Su.-8/20). These religious practices increase devotion towards diet and have good impact on the mind and body.

#### **• Conclusion**

Healthy citizens are the roots for development of any nation. So we have to improve the health of every people. Physical, mental, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, these all dimensions of health could be balanced by taking congenial diet. Every human being should aware about own Prakriti, own Agni bala, state of Doshas in body, characteristics of different food articles, their mode of preparation and rules of intake. Proper knowledge of Ayurvedic dietetics and its application in our daily routine is essential for healthy long life.

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