

CONCEPT OF PATHYA (WHOLSOME DIET) IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Man has evolved his habitual dietary pattern to maintain good health, after a good deal of trial and error. The culture and tradition developed thereafter also offered a number of combinations and preparations to promote health through nutrition. The aim of *Ayurveda* is to promote and preserve the health, strength and longevity of the healthy person and to cure the disease in the ailing and afflicted. It has been considered equally essential to follow the dietic rules and regulations for a successful treatment. In many instances food itself is used as a curative measure in *Ayurveda* and hence prescribes specific diet pattern in the diseased conditions and also recommends some prophylactic and interventional diet.

Keywords: Nutrition, Diet, Prophylactic nutrition, Interventional nutrition, clinical nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the only medical science which has insisted more importance on prevention of disease and maintenance of health rather than treating any disease¹. It insists on the ideal food to be consumed to attain and sustain good health. The precisely constituted, calculated cooked food is known as *pathya*. It is said to be 'Mahabheshaja' by Acharya Kashyapa².

Definition

The root term for *pathya* is 'patha' means various channels in body and 'anapetam'

means not causing any harm to human body. So, any food which is not harmful for body channels and on the contrary which is wholesome soothing for body can be labelled as *pathya*³.

Need of *Pathya*

- It is suggested in various places in *Ayurveda*
- It is suggested in *swasthavrittha* as a routine to maintain the proper health.

- *Pathya kalpana* must be used in *Dinacharya* and *Rutucharya*.⁴
- It is very much necessary for the patients to have the food which will keep their *dhatu* in a healthy state and will not let them get vitiated more from *doshas*. So the patients must follow the 'healthy way of consumption of food' i.e. *pathya*.
- It is also used in *panchakarma* to boost the fatigued *annavaha srotas*, *purishavaha srotas* to regain the healthy stage from weakened one.

Importance of Diet

Ayurveda has recognized that the body is the result or an outcome of the food we eat. Showing the importance of food *Acharya charaka* has described that the life of all living things is food and the entire world seeks food. Complexion, clarity, good voice, long life, understanding, happiness, satisfaction, growth, strength and intelligence are all established in food⁵.

Acharya sushruta described the food as the food which nourishes and gladdens the heart and directly increases the body strength. It improves memory, digestive power, energy, strengthen mind, increases 'ojas' and increases the longevity of life⁶.

Constituent of well balanced Diet

Acharya charaka has described the constituent of wholesome diet in chapter 5 of *sutrasthana* which can be taken in daily diet. Good and fine rice like '*shastika*' *shali*, green gram, rock salt, gooseberry, rain water, milk, ghee, flesh of animals living in *jangala pradesha* and honey should be adopted in diet generally⁷.

Fundamentals of pathya (Ayurvedic Diet)

Ayurveda consists of three important factors for health and disease i.e. *oushadha* (drugs), *ahara* (diet), *vihara* (conducts). The diet has been advised based on the age, digestive power, constitution, habitat, season, disease and so on.

Ayurveda has minutely described qualities and effects of different food on human body. As per *Ayurvedic* principles diet should contain all the *Pancha mahabhutas* (five basic elements) as the body is made up of five basic elements⁸. Diet should also possess all the six *rasas* (sweet, sour, salt, astringent, bitter and pungent) as each *rasa* promotes specific diversified effect of nourishment of body.

Besides prescribing the medicines, *Ayurveda* also recommends some prophylactic and interventional diet which also plays a major role in the prevention and management of the disease. Food and regimen which is congenial (*satmya*), suitable protects the body tissues and controls their excess or vitiated conditions and also helps in growth and development is called '*pathya*'. On the contrary, any food or regimen that is not beneficial to health is called as '*apathya*'. *Pathya* if followed properly is competent of preventing many diseases.

Prophylactic Nutrition

In *Ayurvedic* paediatrics various rituals (*samskara*) have been mentioned for the recognition of milestones and to extend the required nutrition and immunity during the process of growth and development. These rituals improve intelligence, digestive fire, physical power, and immunity.

Table 1: Prophylactic Nutritional Interventions

Prophylactic nutrition	Age	Rationale
<i>Swarna prashana</i> ⁹	Immediately after birth	Initial immunization to elicit rooting reflex and for maintenance of humidity
<i>Phala prashana</i> ¹⁰	6 th month	Allows vitamin c and other nutrients, laxative too
<i>Anna prashana</i> ¹¹	10 th month	Introduction of complex food substances gradually, its delay results into deficiency disorders.

Interventional Nutrition

A detailed description regarding qualities and medicinal use of each and every food is available in the classical texts of *Ayurveda*. In many diseases food itself is used as a curative measure in *Ayurveda*

Ayurveda mentions congenital and non congenital diet in respect of particular disease and stresses that by the non-observance of those rules, the disease may not be cured easily even with effective medication.

Table 2: Nutritional interventions in some major diseases

Disease	<i>Apathy</i> (diet restricted)	<i>Pathya</i> (diet advised)
<i>Vata vyadhi</i>	Dry, cold, scanty food, fasting/ starvation etc	Warm food, easily digestible food, milk products etc.
<i>Madhumeha</i>	Excessive use of milk products, fresh grains, sugar products etc	Barley, old wheat, green gram etc.
<i>Kushta</i>	Use of uncooked food, over eating of sour, salty substances etc	Old barley, wheat green gram, old ghee etc.
<i>Udara</i>	Consumption of adulterated uncooked, incompatible food etc	Butter milk, green gram, old horse gram etc.
<i>Arsha</i>	Consumption of dry food articles causing constipation, fish, black gram etc	Barley, wheat, buttermilk, red variety of rice etc.
<i>Vrana</i>	Food and drinks which are saline, sour, pungent, hot, and heavy etc	Food and drinks which are not too cold, not too heavy etc
<i>Amlapitta</i>	Food which are saline, pungent, sour and curd, sesame etc.	Consumption of old rice, wheat, barley, sugar, honey etc
<i>Medoroga</i>	Milk products, fatty food substances, meat, fish, day sleep etc	Dry food, green gram, hot water, honey, fasting etc
<i>Aamavata</i>	Curd, fish, jiggery, untimely taking food, incompatible food etc	Old rice, buttermilk, castor oil, garlic, drumstick, hot water etc
<i>Shwayathu</i>	Meat of domesticated, aquatic and marshy land inhabiting animals, freshly harvested cereals and pulses etc	Soup of <i>kulattha</i> with <i>pippali</i> , soup of <i>mudga</i> with <i>trikatu</i> , sesame, etc

Pathya kalpana – clinical nutrition

Ayurveda prescribes specific diet patterns in the diseased conditions. According to the princi-

ples of *Ayurveda* derangement of the digestive power occurs in many diseases and hence it is

important to restore normalcy of the digestive power.

Table 3: Clinical nutrition

Verities of clinical nutrition	Ratio	Uses
<i>Manda</i> ¹² – the filtered liquid portion obtained after boiling one part of rice and fourteen parts of water	1:14	Carminative, digestive
<i>Peya</i> ¹³ – one part of rice and 14 parts of water boiled into water consistency	1:14	Quickly digestible, stops loose motions, nourishes the tissues
<i>Vilepi</i> ¹⁴ – one part of rice four parts of water cooked into thick paste	1:4	Strengthening, nourishes, good for heart, diuretic
<i>Yavagu</i> ¹⁵ – one part of grain rice and six parts of water cooked into thick paste	1:6	Strengthening, nourishing

Role of *pathya* in *nidana parivarjana* concept

Nidana considers the disease causing factors like; like diet, life style, environmental factors and injuries as source of any disease which overall leads the imbalance of *doshas*. The ancient text of *ayurveda* correlates causative factors with the type of *doshas* associated with disease. In *ayurveda*, *nidana parivarjana* or avoiding cause is considered as the first line of treatment in most of the diseases.

Nidana parivarjana is avoiding the causes which are responsible for the manifestation of diseases and *pathya* is adopting the wholesome diet in healthy individuals to stay fit and in patients to keep their channels in a healthy stage. The knowledge of both *nidana* and *pathya* is essential in preventing the disease manifestation and its progression. Along with *nidanaparivarjana* if *pathya* is adopted, the treatment becomes successful.

DISCUSSION

Concept of *pathya* changes at every moment and with every individual. What is *pathya* to

one person may not be *pathya* to another person. Even it changes in the same person depending upon various components like age-physiological condition, conditions of *dosha dhatu*, area and habits of patients etc. So, considering and elaborating the diet plan need a lot of attention from the physician. Certain food items like red variety of rice, rock salt, green gram, milk, ghee etc are considered as '*Sada pathyakara*' means those which are beneficial at all times. These food items increase appetite, improves digestion, impart taste to the food, hence should be included in the daily diet irrespective of the changes in climate.

The chief purpose of *Ahara* is to promote growth, to supply force and heat, and furnish material to repair the waste which is constantly taking place in the body. This renovating material must be supplied through the medium of eatable and drinkable food material, and the best food is that by which the desired conclusion may be most readily and perfectly attained. The great diversity in character of the several tissues of the body makes it necessary

that food should contain a variety of elements, in order that each part may be properly nourished and replenished. This can be achieved by proper following of dietic rules.

Practically *pathya* is advised as a diet plan in healthy individuals to let them stay fit, to the patients to keep their channels in a healthy stage and in patients getting treated with *panchakarma* to help their *mahasrotas* coming back to normal.

CONCLUSION

The diet consumed according to power of gastric fire, at proper time with full concentration will help to be healthy if not will cause diseases. Less quantity causes malnutrition and more quantity causes obesity and faulty food habits are one of the root causes of the life style disorders. Hence to live healthy and fit one should follow dietic rules.

It has been considered equally essential to follow the dietic rules and regulations for successful treatments. The significance of *pathya* has been quoted as, 'there is no need of any medicine if an ailing individual follows the dietic rules (*pathya*) because medicine alone is not sufficient for complete recovery from the disease.'

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