

MEAT CONSUMPTION FROM AN AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda an eternal system of medicine, is known for its multidimensional approach towards mankind. Utility of this science starts from fertilization till death. Health of a person means healthy body and mind together. And health of the person comes from the choice of food. *Ayurveda* accords paramount importance to food and food habits in maintaining health. Meat consumption is one of the oldest habits of human life. Long term consumption of increasing amount of meat and particularly of processed meat is associated with an increased risk of total mortality, cardiovascular diseases, colorectal cancer etc. in both men and women. Consuming too much amount of meat may have negative impact on human body. There has been some misconception about eating meat and its role in maintaining the good health as described in *Ayurveda* texts. High level of meat consumption is major social problem. Original *Ayurveda* principles include eating meat infrequently and that *Charka* mentions that meat is nourishing when prepared and eaten under certain circumstances. However, this article focuses on the changes to be made in habit or behaviour of meat consumption. Changing the meat consumption habit is challenge that requires identifying the complex social factor with meat eating and developing policies for effective interventions. Effect of meat on human body is more important than the taste and nutritional value. And this is how *Ayurveda* has classified them as beneficial or not.

Keywords: Meat (*Mamas*), Ayurveda, Non-veg, Diet.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has classified all edible things on the earth in the most elaborative way than any other science could have. A huge classification of birds, reptiles, wild, domestic and aquatic animals etc. is an interesting thing one can find. In *Ayurveda* a little anything is considered as medicine and too much is considered as poison. This rule stands for meat as well. In the ancient texts of *Ayurveda* each animal product is defined by quality and meat is recommended as therapy. For many ailments '*Charka Samhita*' and '*Susruta Sam-*

hita' has mentioned each and every minute property of these animals and their meat right from fish to peacock, Basically there is unique *Ayurveda* principle called '*Samanya Visheshha Siddhanta*' believes in similarity of all substances is always the cause of increase; this effect by their application^[1]. So, meat will increase muscle tissue in the body. *Ayurveda* principles are applied and various meats if required can be used to restore the health according to their properties and benefits to human body.

Further at mental level, *Ayurveda* describes 3 states of mind namely *Satva* (pure state), *Raja* state and *Tama* state. Generally most of the non-veg food fall into the category of '*Rajas*' and '*Tamas*' and hence regular oral intake of these substances can lead to reduction of *Satva*, since according to *Ayurveda*, the mind and body are closely related and diseases fall into category of psycho-somatic, the body will also consequently be affected. Hence a general rule *Ayurveda* advocates to consume a non-veg diet 'in moderation' again keeping in mind once digestive capacity.

Overview of Meat:

1. Pork- It is not suggested as good meat for anybody, while beef should only be eaten by *Vata Pradhan Prakriti* people.
2. Chicken- it is best for *Vata Prakriti* people, the dark meat of the chicken is best for *Vata Prakriti*, while white meat is for *Pitta & Kapha Prakriti*. It is hot and fat in its qualities and gives strength and stamina. It is also known as aphrodisiac. Soup cooked from chicken is very good in many *Vata Dosha* diseases.
3. Turkey- It is good for *Pitta & Kapha Prakriti* people. *Vata Prakriti Purusha* can eat the dark meat. It is cold, sweet and light in its qualities.
4. Rabbit- Not good for anybody.
5. Goat- It is light in its qualities.
6. Deer- To be avoided by *Vata Prakriti*, better for *Pitta & Kapha Prakriti*.
7. Fish- In general best for *Vata Prakriti* type, while *Pitta* and *Kapha Prakriti* People should only eat fish from fresh water and not sea. It strengthens and known as aphrodisiac.
8. Goat- The meat is said to be the most compatible of human tissues and it is included in whole some food in the form of soup. This is only type of red meat that *Ayurveda* allow on regular basis or as medicinal diet.
9. Sheep- It is *Shita* in *Guna* and increases the muscle strength & heavy to digest.

Things to remember while taking 'Mamsahar':

1. Appetite (power to digest the food) should be competent to digest the *Guru Guna* (heavy) meat.

The less appetite, more adverse results from the meat meal.

2. The meat has *Tamas Guna* so it affects other *Satva* and *Rajas Guna* as well as the psychology of human being. Those who want to develop *Satava Guna* should keep distance from non-veg diet.
3. The preparation method plays an important role to enhance, affect or alter the meat preparation. eg- marinating with curd, using cream while cooking various cuisines from deep frying, using alcohol, while cooking the meat alters the originally good properties of meat into incompatible one.
4. Barbeque is the most favourite dish in meat eaters. Usually cooking meat without water directly on high flames is discouraged in *Ayurveda*. Because even in moderate science has proved that the brown crust though smells nice and tastes amazing, they are the AGE'S. (Advanced glycolized end product). These AGE'S are supposed to produce immunity disorders, oxidative stress and are termed as carcinogenic (cancer producing). In short, they are highly dangerous for human if consumed very frequently and in meal quantity.
5. Processed preserved and salted meat is devoid of the nutritional benefits and it's harmful in many ways.
6. Eating meat with other heavy food (e.g. black gram, sprouts) with milk or milk products may lead to face allergies, skin disorders and other metabolic diseases.
7. Cooking with simple spices or consuming in the form of soup is advocated in *Ayurveda* texts.

The Classical Ayurveda Literature Review:

Susruta gives detail description of division of *Mamsa Varga* i.e. group of meats such as following. Each of these has two subdivisions and each successive group is more superior. [2]

1. *Jaleshaya*- Meat of animals which lives in water.
2. *Anupa*- Meat of animals living in marshy region.
3. *Gramya*- Meat of domestic animals.
4. *Kravyabhujya*- Meat of carnivorous animals.
5. *Ekashapha*- Group of animals living in single hoof.
6. *Jangala*- Group of animals living in dessert like lands.

The classics of *Ayurveda* gives numerous elaborate descriptions as per the properties of various meats especially for their *Vata Dosha reducing* properties. Those such as beef is said to cure dry cough, exhaustion, chronic nasal catarrh, emaciation and excess hunger. Another e.g. peacock meat was commonly used for improving eyes, voice, intellectual capabilities, complexion, hearing etc. Goat meat was also well known for bulking the tissues and often used as meat soup or even in *Basti Chikitsa*. Goat and mutton are said to be the strengthening of body mass and so good for *Vata Prakriti* people and severe debilitated conditions. Meat of goat is not too cold, too heavy and too unctuous, does not vitiate *Doshas*, because of similarity with *Dhatus* it promotes the bulk of body and does not block the channels and also does not cause Malas or waste in body.^[4] Meat by its nature itself is aphrodisiac, lubricating and increasing strength. *Siddha Mamsa*, *Phalamla* is good for health, bestows strength, helps in taste, but difficult for digestion. The same added with milk and processed with fragrant substances i.e. spices should be understood as aggravating *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas* and increases strength, helps in growth of muscle and power of digestion.^[6]

The ancient author *Susruta* in *Susruta Samhita* also mentions the various ways in which meats can be cooked and taken and their own therapeutic actions as a result of these, including soups, minced meat, roasted and those cooked with herbs etc. and their specific actions accordingly.^[5]

Charka mentioned that good quality meats are *Brimhana* and *Balya* means which promotes bulk as well as strength of the body. The meat soup (*Mansarasa*) as one of the best for body that they are 'Sarvrogaprashamanam' and promotes voice and strength of age, intelligence, sense organs and life. Also, if prepared accordingly alleviates all diseases.^[7]

Charka also states that insanity can be avoided if one obtains from eating meat or impure diet etc. Hence are seen as causative factors of various kinds of insanity, various meats are given with their various factors and qualities in *Ayurveda*, according to their chemical reaction on mind which are described as aggravating *Rajas* and *Tamas* in mental channels, blurring percep-

tions. As such, they are to be avoided in such conditions where mental disorders are present. Muscular tumours and cancers result due to excess eating of meat.^[14]

Relative to mind however, meat consumption should be avoided in meditation and psychological issues and in some cases where there is hyperactivity. Sometimes heavier, unctuous and heating substances required to help 'ground' *Vata Dosha*. Many meats on this note are classified as having a *Kapha* and bulking quality that helps ground subtle element of *Vata Dosha*, having more Parthiv element giving stability to their fragile and light weight bodies, thereby calming their overactive minds and imaginations. For disorders of mind in more *Pitta* and *Kapha Dosha types* however, meats can aggravate their conditions by their unctuous, heating and heavier nature and thus best avoided for them.

Heavier meats are also heavy for digestion. Heavy and regular meat consumption can give rise to diseases due to accumulation of *Ama* or toxins. And thus, also more likely to cause psychological issue to their difficult metabolism. Fish, lamb, goat, chicken, and other birds were hence the main staple of people in India as a result and beef was thus rarely consumed the same for pork etc. which were heavier.

Charaka states that meat of animals who dies by natural death, are emaciated, too much fatty, old & young killed by poison, not maintained on posture graze and bitten by snakes, tigers etc. should be discarded. Meat of animals other than above is wholesome and promotes bulk as well as strength of the body.^[8]

Things to be examined before taking meat as per Ayurveda:

The Habitat, food, part of body, nature, sustaining materials, activity, gender, size, processing and quantity these are the things should be taken under consideration before choosing meat for preparation and consumption.^[9-10] 'Chara' denotes the habitat such as marshy land, water, sky, desert etc., and also food habits. Thus, animals born in water and marshy land; moving in those places and taking heavy food are regarded as heavy, on contrary to this, those taking light food, born in desert and moving in the same light.

Body parts are thigh, head shoulder etc. is heavier than the flesh of thighs, then comes the chest and thereafter head. Testicles, skin, penis, pelvis, kidneys, liver, rectum, these are heavier than flesh and also the trunk and bones.^[11] In all animals the middle part of the body is hard for digestion; the front portion in male animals and lower portion in females are hard.^[12] By nature, quail and grey partridge are light (*Laghu*). Likewise, pig and buffalo are heavy. Among *Dhatus* heaviness increases in progressive order. Active animals are particularly light in comparison with the idle ones. As regards gender, generally the meat of male animals is heavier than that of female ones. In their own class, those of big size are heavy otherwise light.^[13]

By processing the heavy ones become light and vice versa. Heavy substances become light when taken in small quantity and light substances become heavy when taken in large quantity. Thus, quantity is one of the governing heaviness and lightness of substances.^[13]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Worldwide meat production increased heavily by 5 times in second half of 20th century and the amount eaten per person is doubled. By 2050 meat consumption could increase by as much as another 160%. This will put pressure on crop and water resources. Long term consumption of increasing amount of meat and particularly of processed meat is associated with an increased risk of total mortality, cardiovascular diseases, colorectal cancer and type II DM in both men and women. Consuming too much processed meat may have negative impact on the development and functioning of human body.

Changing meat consumption habits is a challenge that requires identifying the complex, social factors associated with meat eating and developing policies for effective interventions. *Ayurveda* principles are applied and various meats if required can be used to restore the health according to their properties and benefits to human body.

Worldwide, per capita meat consumption has increased in tremendous amount. Meat as complete

high-quality protein containing all essential amino acids your body needs for optimal health. Making healthier choices can help you eat meat as part of healthy balanced diet. But on the other hand, eating excessive amount of meat in certain ways may negatively affect your health.

Improper cooking and preparing methods of meat may increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, colorectal cancer, diabetes etc. So, to avoid all the above possibilities *Ayurveda* has mentioned the consumption of meat as well as preparation and cooking methods. So however, preventing the diseases and maintaining the health will require changes in habits or behaviours related to the meat consumption. Thus, we can conclude that effect of meat on human body is more important than taste or nutritional value and this is how *Ayurveda* has classified them as beneficial or not.

So, to maximize benefits and minimize negative effects one should follow the guideline which are given in classics of *Ayurveda* for ideal meat consumption.

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