

ROLE OF POSHANA IN AYURVEDA***Dr. Aparna Sharanagat, Dr. Meenakshi Chauhan, Dr. M. B. Pillewan and Dr. Shruti Dixit**

Department of Samhita Siddhanta Rani Dullaiya Smriti Ayurved P.G. College & Hospital, Bhopal (M.P.).

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Aparna Sharanagat**

Department of Samhita Siddhanta Rani Dullaiya Smriti Ayurved P.G. College & Hospital, Bhopal (M.P.).

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ABSTRACT

Poshana derived from Pus dhatu plus ana, meaning to bringing up, to lighting, to nourishing and to maintaining etc. The opposite word of Poshana is Shoshana (drying up). Importance of "Ahara" - Contents of food and "Agni", the process of digestion and absorption of food in body. While Ahara is recognized as "Upstambha" the very pillar of life, the "Agni" is kept in the category of "prana". Poshana starts from ahara paka, dhatu paka, dhatu poshana, and creation of sara and kitta. Ayurveda gives credit to Aahara and Agni for nourishment of body and soul together and believes that it is optimum nutrition of body and mind which shall make one capable to follow the ideals of life i.e. Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha the four fold aims of life. There are multiple factors which determine the qualitative and quantitative parameters of food to achieve nutrition. These include, prakriti-Constitution, Vaya- Specific age group, Desha-Physical structure of individuals, geographical zone. Kala-Particular phase of life, Ritu- Particular season and Agni - Capacity of individuals to digest. When all these factors are taken into consideration by individual only that is "Hitahaara" or Samahaara "Ideal food".

KEYWORDS: Poshana, Ahara, Dhatu paka, Hitahaara, Nutrition.**INTRODUCTION**

Food is one among the three sub pillars Ahara, Nidra and Brahmacharya, which support the body itself. Here Ahara, has been enumerated first, which shows its^[1,2] importance. World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April every year, WHO highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with food safety under the slogan "From farm to plate, make food safe". Promotion of proper nutrition is one of the eight elements of the primary health care.^[3] Ayurveda is not only a medical science but also a complete science of life, which deals with health promotion, prevention and management of disease. Daily consumptions of Hita, Avirudha, Satmya and Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara makes the person disease free condition, so one should plan diet according to the "Asta Ahara Vidhi Visesaayatana." Acharya Charaka and Vagbhata explained the Nitya sevaniya Dravyas which is similar to the balance diet. To bring global attention towards Ayurvedic system of medicine in concern to nutritional programmed in our system, a great interest has to be focused on the role of dietary factors in the promotion of health.

According to Ayurveda Acharyas, most of the disease occurs from malfunctioning Agni loosely translated as individual digestive capacity. It is not enough to eat proper food but is more important to digest what one has eaten. The chronic indigestion lies at the root of most of the disease. The properly digested food yields the

nutrient fluid Ahara Rasa that is capable of nourishing the body constituents and thus ensures continuation of life process. When the digestion is not complete or improper the result is a highly contamination and toxic metabolite called Ama. Since it is produced in place of Ahara Rasa it has access to all the body. constituents and thus it results in malnourishment. Depending upon the length of time and severity of malnourishment various complex disease processes manifest in the body. Every principle has a deep insight and firm foundation, but the theory of Tridosha i.e. vata (movement or neurological function), pitta (transformation and metabolism or endocrinological function) and kapha (growth/immunological function) is most important one.^[4]

The living body is the product of a continuous process of digestion and metabolism (Agni). In fact, most of the diseases are due to disturbance of Agni at some level. When Agni is physically powerful, our body fully assimilates nutrients and eliminates what it does not need. Every classical text of Ayurveda has incorporated different explanations on food such as 12 categories of sources, according to specific actions (prabhava), according to mode of intake, six tastes in each meal to make it tasty, delicious, balanced and therapeutics, best and worst dietetic items, effect on vata, pitta and kapha and mental qualities, different processing methods of food, dietetic rules, effects of insufficient and excess food intake, food related diseases, diet suitable and to be

avoided by persons of different constitutions (Prakriti), ideal time for meals etc.

Important dietary principles

Life process and bodily strength directly proportional to the activity of Agni on ingested food through aharapachana (digestion), dhatuposona (nourishment), and dhatuparinama (transformation and metabolism).^[5] According to Ayurveda, the idea of diet selection is not to generate ama, a sticky, poison like substance (aa: nearer to, ma: poison) in the gastrointestinal tract and other organ systems.^[6] A coated tongue, bad breath, dullness of the senses, depression and unclear thinking indicate presence of Ama in the system.

According to Ayurveda, a food only be termed as diet when it fulfils five criteria: maintain bio-balance (doshasamyā), macro and micro channels friendly (pathyam), good for body constitution (hitam), pleasing for mind (manasa priyam),^[7] and produces vital energy and tissue essence known as Ojas. It is the vital essence of all seven dhatus from 'rasa' to 'shukra' and closely related to physical, mental and spiritual strength of an individual.

Balanced diet refers to the articles of diet which as a whole maintaining health and prevent disease, increase strength of the body, health span, vitality, memory etc., and consists of six components namely, energy yielding/ jeevaniya, structure building/ brimhaniya, prevent fat accumulation/ lekhanīya, elimination of waste products/ bhedaniya, repairing damaged tissues/ sandhaniya, and promotes digestion/ deepaniya according to Charaka Samhita. the principles and practice of Ayurvedic Medicine.^[8]

Preventive strategies are the backbone of Ayurveda where food plays a major role because both the body and disease are product of food. Ayurvedic texts clearly pointed out that food should be taken only after completion of digestion of previous meal having four important characters, i.e., right quality of food/ hita bhojan, right quantity/ mita bhojan, in right time / kala bhojan, along with control of need and greed (jitendriya). If diet intake is correct, utility of medicine is secondary.^[9]

Twelve categories of food

These include both liquid and solid food materials: Corns (shuka dhanya), Pulses (shami dhanya), Meat and fishes (mamsa varga), Vegetables (shaka varga), Fruits (phala varga), Greens (harit varga), Wines (madya varga), Water (ambu varga), milk and milk products (goras varga), Sugars (ikshu varga), Cooked food (kritana varga), Food adjuvant or spices (ahara yogi varga).^[10]

Balanced diet in Ayurveda

The concepts of balance diet are mentioned in Charaka Samhita, under things which are always conducive for health and should be consumed regularly for the

maintenance of health. According to Acharya Charaka the list of foods those are advisable to consume daily are Shashtika-shali (rice grown in 60 days), Godhuma (wheat). Yava (barley), Mudga (green gram), Saindhava (rock salt), Amalaki (*Emblīca officinalis*), Antariksha jala or Divyodaka (rain water), Ghrita (ghee), cow milk, Madhu (honey), Jangala Mamsa (meat of animals from arid land) can be correlated as balance diet in today's era.^[11,12]

According to Acharya Vagbhata Godhuma (wheat), vegetables like Sunishannaka, Jivanthi, Balamulaka, Pathya (*Terminalia chebula*), Mrudwika (*Vitis vinefra*), Patola (*Trichosanthes doica*), Sharkara (sugar). Dadima can be consumed habitually.^[13]

Disease due to over Nourishment

Diseases due to over nourishment (santarpana janya vyadhi) are Prameha, Pidika, Kotha, Kandu, Pandu, Jvara, Kustha, Ama Pradosha (Alasaka, Visuchika), Mutra kruchchha, Arochaka, Tandra, Klabya. Ati Sthulya, Alasya, heaviness of body, Moha, Shopha etc.^[14]

Disease due to nutritional deficiency

Deha-Agni- Bala- Varna- Oja- Kshaya, Emaciation of body, Jvara, Kasa, back pain Arochaka, Shrota Daurbalya, Unmada, Mala-Mutra Vibandha, Pain in calf thigh, joints and Vata janya Vyadhis.^[15]

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda gives equal importance to drugs (Aushadha dravyas) and food substances (Ahara dravyas) and explained elaborately in the texts. As per Kashaya Samhita, ahara is 'Mahabhaishajya' i.e. food is a great medicament. Diet is an art and science with multiple aspects such as nutritive value, effect on various body parts, and effect on emotions, mind, and spiritual qualities. Aims of balanced and nutritious diet that assist in formation of Ojas, which is responsible for physical, mental and spiritual strength, maintenance and protection of the body of an individual. Therefore, entire life of an individual depends on food. The vital breath (prana), positive immunity (ojas), and cellular energy (tejas) are all expressions of proper nutrition via Agni. Daily consumption of Nitya Sheelaniya Dravyas does the promotion of health of healthy individuals and prevent the disease condition i.e. "Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam Aturasva Vikara Prashamanam. manam. Swasthahita". Ayurvedic method of understanding and analyzing Kuposhanajanya Vikaras (nutritional disorders) is necessary to adopt Ayurvedic nutritional management.

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