

**Āyurvēdic APPROACH TO PATHYA
(IDEAL DIET PLANNING) - AN APPRAISAL**
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ABSTRACT

Most health problems develop due to the wrong eating habits and cooking methods. *Āyurvēda* deals with the *pathya, apathya or pathya vyavastha* (planning of diet- dietetics) in a very scientific and holistic way of Dietetics. The diet planning mentioned in our classical literature is very rational and based on certain principles. Lot of importance is given to the diet with regard to its processing, quality, quantity and so on. Due consideration is given to the atmosphere, psychological condition, status of health, digestion etc. of the person while dealing with this issue. The diet should also be planned according to the age, season, habitat and the preference of the person. In this paper the fundamental principals of *Pathya vyavastha* (dietetics) with appropriate references, recommended diet based on the texts and clinical findings for some important diseases such as diabetes, liver diseases, acid -peptic disorders, cardiac diseases are dealt with. The proper incorporation of diet not only can prevent many preventable disorders but plays major role in the management of the Diseases.

Āyurvēda has very holistic and scientific approach in planning the diet. The fundamental principles like *tridōṣa, prakṛti*, the tastes, processing of food, the quality, quantity, and the rules regarding eating food if considered while incorporating the diet one can keep away from many diseases of body and mind.

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Background

Āyurvēda lays stress on positive health, a blend of physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual welfare and this holistic medical science considers three important factors while dealing with the health and disease i.e. *Ouśadha* (Drug & therapies), *Āhāra* (Diet) & *Vihāra* (Practices). *Āyurvēda* also includes *Āhāra* as one among the tripods giving the first and foremost place to *Āhāra* (*Carakasūtrasthana* 11/34). *Pathya* (or a proper diet) is defined as the ahara, which is congenial to the channels of the body & relished by the person (*Carakasūtra* 25/45). The *Pathya* is the one which keeps the person healthy, maintains normal body functions, leads to proper functioning of the organs, nourishes the mind and intellect, prevents diseases and at the same time corrects the irregularities that may occur in the body. *Āyurvēda* specified the characteristics of *Āhāra* in terms of quality, quantity and time which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease and also from person to person. One has to consume the diet, which is suitable to him in all aspects, and deviation from this may cause diseases. In addition to these, wrong cooking procedures, irregular timing, consuming imbalanced and non-congenial food and neglecting the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food may also cause imbalance of health (*Caraka Sūtra* 25/45).

The improper digestion produces 'āma'-toxin (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya* 13), which leads majority of diseases, for eg. *āma* causes *ānavāta* (Rheumatoid arthritis) when it afflicts the joints. The relation between the faulty food & diseases are well explained like if one consumes only *Madhurarasa* (Sweet) in excess, he may develop diabetes (*Mādhava Nidāna* 33/1). If one regularly consumes articles that are heavy to digest, he may become obese.

Now a days, the diseases like *ānavāta* (rheumatoid arthritis), *madhumēha* (diabetes), *sthoulya* (obesity), *arbuda* (cancer), *yākrit vridhhi* (liver diseases), *nidrānāsa* (insomnia), *chittōdvēga* (anxiety neurosis) and *tamaka śwāsa* (bronchial asthma) are highly prevalent and are labeled as lifestyle disorders.

These lifestyle disorders are due to avoidable causes mainly faulty diet habits and practices. Therefore, due consideration mentioned in *Āyurvēda* should be given to all aspects of diet planning in the treatment of diseases and to maintain the health.

Fundamentals of Pathya (Dietics)**Pañcamahābhūta**

Theory Any material in the universe, according to *Āyurvēda* is composed of five basic elements, the *pañcamahābhūtas*, namely *Pṛthvi* (Earth), *Āpya* (Water), *Tēja* (Fire), *Vāyu* (Air) and *Ākaśa* (Ether) including human body and the food. Planning and indulging in the diet balancing these elements maintain the homoeostasis of body.

Tridōṣas (Biological Humors)

The human body is similarly constituted from *pañcamahābhūtas*. The *Tridōṣas* (Biological Humors) i.e. *Vāta*, *Pitta* & *Kapha* which constitutes the body is also made up of *pañcamahābhūtas*. Each food article either has *dōṣa* aggravating or pacifying or balancing action on human body. To maintain the balance of *dōṣas* (health) which are disturbed due to various factors like season, age etc., *Āyurvēda* prescribes specific diet. (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Sūtra* 13/6)

ṣaḍrasa (Six basic tastes)

The food contains six basic tastes and each taste has pre-dominance of particular elements of *Pañcamahābhūta* (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Sūtra* 10/1)

Which exerts specific effect on the *Tridōṣas* and *Dhātus*.

<i>Madhura</i> (Sweet)	–	<i>Pṛthvi</i> and <i>Āap</i>
<i>Amla</i> (Sour)	–	<i>Pṛthvi</i> and <i>Agni</i>
<i>Lavaṇa</i> (Salt)	–	<i>Āap</i> and <i>Agni</i>
<i>Kaṣṭu</i> (Pungent)	–	<i>Agni</i> and <i>Vāyu</i>
<i>Tikta</i> (Bitter)	–	<i>Vāyu</i> and <i>Ākaśa</i>
<i>Kaṣāya</i> (Astringent)	–	<i>Pṛthvi</i> and <i>Vāyu</i>

Prakṛti (Psychosomatic Constitution)

Āyurvēda provides unique classification of human being based on psychosomatic constitution of individual according to the domination of *tridōṣas*. They are of 7 type viz., *vāta* predominant *prakṛti*, *pitta* predominant *prakṛti*, *kapha* predominant *prakṛti*, *vata-pitta prakṛti*, *vāta-kapha prakṛti*, *pitta-kapha prakṛti* and *sama prakṛti*. The *prakṛti* approach is adopted for assessment of proneness of the disease, diagnosis and treatment to incorporate appropriate diet plan and regimen. (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Sūtra* 13/10).

Āyurvēda has well thought of the importance of kitchen and utensils in dietetics. The kitchen should be spacious, clean, airy but free from dust and dirt. The prepared food should be well protected from insects, animals, dirt and dust and properly covered.

The *Āyurvēda* explain in detail 8 attributes related to the food (*Caraka Vimāna* 1/21)

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|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1 <i>Prakṛti</i> | – | Qualitative characteristics of the food |
| 2 <i>Karana</i> | – | Processing of food |
| 3 <i>Satīyōga</i> | – | Mixing |
| 4 <i>Rāśi</i> | – | The quantity |
| 5 <i>Deśa</i> | – | Habitat of the person |
| 6 <i>Kāla</i> | – | Time & seasonal variation |
| 7 <i>Upayōga Saṁstha</i> | – | Variable digestibility of various food articles |
| 8 <i>Upayōkta</i> | – | The person who takes the food |

Diet & Mind

Diet plays an important role in keeping the mind healthy. Considering this, it is classified into following 3 types.

1. *Sātvika* diet – Ideal diet containing vegetarian, non-oily, non-spicy articles which are congenial to the body.
2. *Rājasika* diet – Too spicy, hot, sour, salty that excites the mind.
3. *Tāmasika* diet – Too oily, heavy food that leads to lethargic mind.

Four forms of food

Basically *Āyurvēda* describes four forms of food preparations (*Caraka Vimāna* 3/17)

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| 1. <i>Asitam</i> | – | Eatables |
| 2. <i>Khaditam</i> | – | Masticable food |
| 3. <i>pītam</i> | – | Drinks, beverages |
| 4. <i>Lidham</i> | – | Licking form |

Method of consumption of diet

1. One should take food with full eating awareness i.e. “*Tanmanabhunjita*” (*Caraka Vimāna* 1/24).

2. Traditions and food habits vary as per the region one live in. Hence, one should consider the type of food and quantity according to the habitat for maintaining good health (*Dēśa Sātmya*)
3. One must take wholesome food in proper quantity and at proper time to maintain the homeostasis of all the three bodily humors.
4. *Āyurvēda* strongly regards that eating before or after the usual timings of meals is unhealthy or 'Svāsthyavighāṭak' which causes physical and mental illness.
5. *Suśruta* advices intake of food which is easily digestible, energetic, soft, warm and to be taken in proper quantity only when one is hungry (*Suśruta Sūtra* 46&47)

Incompatible Diet / Viruddha āhāra

The food with incompatible or contradictory qualities has poisonous effect on the body that aggravates *Tridoṣas* intern leading to various disorders viz: *Gulma* (Lump), fever, allergic dermatitis, eczema, abscess and other Skin diseases. It also destroys strength, vigour, memory, immunity etc. (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Sūtra* 7/44)

Few contradictory combinations are

1. Fish or its soup along with milk.
2. Equal quantity of honey with ghee.
3. Milk or milk products with alcoholic beverages.
4. Processed food or cereals with milk.
5. Radish consumed with milk.
6. Lotus stem with honey etc.

Seasonal Dietetics

The *Āyurvēda* prescribes specific diet for different seasons. (*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Sūtra* 3)

Spring season – Bitter, hot and astringent diet is advised while salty, sour and sweet food should be avoided. Wheat, barley, honey syrup, fruits like mango, jack fruit-etc. and meat of forest animals is advised.

Summer season – Due to hot climate aggravation of *pitta* occurs. Hence *pitta* pacifying food etc., cold, liquid, sweet and oily diet is advised. Excessive hot, spicy, sour salty diet should be avoided. Intake of rice, milk, ghee, sugar, grapes, coconut water, meat of forest animals are advised.

Rainy season – In this season aggravation of *vāta* occurs due to cold climate. Hence *vātaśāma* food, i.e., sweet, sour and salty food and drinks are preferred. The food should be hot, dry, fatty and easily digestible. Preserved rice, wheat, barley and mutton soups are advised.

Winter season – ‘*Vātavṛddhi*’ occurs due to cold, dry, chilli atmosphere in this season. Hence *vātaghna*, *pittavardhaka* diet is recommended. Hot, sweet, sour and salty food, milk, sugarcane, rice, oils and fats are advised.

Rules of Eating

Do’s

- The food eaten should be tasty, warm, qualitative, unctuous and easily digestible.
- Food should be eaten neither too fast nor too slow.
- The food should be eaten only when hungry, after the previous meal has been digested.
- Food should be taken that include Sadrasa all the six tastes namely sweet, salt, sour, pungent, bitter and astringent in daily diet.
- Should eat food, which is nourishing and suitable to one’s particular constitution, mental and emotional temperament.
- It is best to focus on food while eating.
- One should eat in comfortably sitting posture.
- Food should be eaten in pleasant surroundings with utensils and preparation of individual’s choice (*Caraka Vimāna 3/24*).

- The food should not be contrary to each other in action. e.g – fish and milk together, radish and milk together, honey and ghee in equal quantity.

- Eating should not be in a hurry.
- It should not be very slow either.
- Should not eat when emotionally upset.
- Too much use of any of 6 tastes namely sweet, salt, sour, pungent, bitter and astringent is not conducive for health.

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1. Seeds of barley, wheat, beans like green gram, fenugreek, horsegram etc.
2. Fruits of bittergourd and other varieties of gourd, green leafy vegetables like fenugreek, coriander.
3. Black berry, and other sour fruits.
4. Use of is useful. (*Suśruta Sūtra* 46&47)

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1. Red variety of rice, barley, horse & green gram.
2. Garlic, ginger, leave of lady's finger, black pepper.
3. Leaf and fruit of patola (a variety of cucumbar).
4. Warm water and light diet are beneficial in this condition.

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1. Red variety of rice, wheat, barley, green gram, beans
2. Banana, pomegranate, black berry, resin.
3. Sugarcane juice, buttermilk, radish,

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1. *Lēkhanadravya* (trimming articles) like barley, red variety of rice, green gram, puffed corn.
2. Fruits like banana, white gourd, mango, pomegranate, raisin, citrus fruits.
3. Garlic, onion, dry ginger.
4. Butter milk, honey, jaggery, meat soup etc.

1. Milk diet.
2. , Pomegranate, resin, papaya etc.
3. Cereals like red variety of old rice, wheat, green gram etc.
4. Small and frequent meals are preferable.

1. Milk & milk products, different types of gruels made from cereals & grams, sweets
2. Green vegetables, cereals, fruits
3. Unpolished rice, green, horse & black gram etc.

1. Milk & milk products
2. Honey, sweet & little fatty food.
3. Raisin, almonds and other dry fruits
4. Sweet jam made up of , white gourd, grapes etc.
5. Wholesome meals, which are nutritive and digestive by adding ghee, , cumin seeds, fenugreek, etc.

1. Diet aggravating *Vāta doṣha*, dry foods, preserved, unwholesome should be avoided.
like milk, ghee etc. are advisable in moderate quantity.
3. Easily digestible food barley, red variety of rice, green gram, black gram should be taken.
4. Fruits like banana, citrus & seasonal.

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सारांश

आयुर्वेद में पथ्य के सिद्धांत

सुलोचना एवं जी.एस. लवेकर

अधिकतर स्वास्थ्य समस्यायें खाने की गलत आदतों एवं पकाने की गलत विधियों के कारण उत्पन्न होती हैं। आयुर्वेद बहुत वैज्ञानिक तथा सार्वभौमिक तरीके से पथ्य व्यवस्था से संबंध रखता है। हमारे शास्त्रीय ग्रंथों में बताया गया आहार बहुत ही युक्तिसंगत तथा कुछ सिद्धांतों पर आधारित है। आहार के साथ-साथ इसकी प्रक्रिया, गुणवत्ता तथा मात्रा एवं इसी प्रकार अन्य चीजों को भी बहुत महत्त्व दिया गया है। इस विषय पर विचार करते हुए व्यक्ति के वातावरण, मनोवैज्ञानिक परिस्थितियों, स्वास्थ्य की स्थिति और पाचन आदि पर भी ध्यान दिया जाता है। व्यक्ति की आयु, ऋतु, निवास तथा रुचि को ध्यान में रखकर ही आहार नियोजित करना चाहिए। इस शोध पत्रक में उपर्युक्त संदर्भ में पथ्य व्यवस्था के मूलभूत सिद्धान्त, शास्त्रों तथा नैदानिक तथ्यों के आधार पर आहार परामर्श तथा कुछ महत्त्वपूर्ण रोगों जैसे मधुमेह, यकृत-विकार, एसिड पेप्टिक-विकार, हृदय रोग आदि के बारे में बताया गया है। उपर्युक्त आहार का सेवन न केवल बहुत से विकारों से बचाता है, बल्कि रोगों के प्रबन्धन में एक महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है।