



NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA: A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient, holistic medical system that originated in India. It places a strong emphasis on personalized nutrition and lifestyle practices (Āhāra & Vihāra) to maintain health and prevent illness. A central part of this approach is balancing the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—through diet, daily routines, seasonal changes, and mindful living. This article reviews the key Ayurvedic principles of nutrition and lifestyle and their relevance in modern health sciences.

KEYWORDS:- nutrition, Ahara, Vihara, Holistic & Health.

1. INTRODUCTION

आयुषो वेदः आयुर्वेदः |

Ayurveda, derived from Sanskrit meaning “knowledge of life,” is a traditional medical system that focuses on the relationship between the body, mind, and environment at its core.

समदोषाः समाग्निश्च समधातु मलक्रियाः|

प्रसन्न आत्मेन्द्रिय मनः स्वस्थ इत्यभियते ||

Ayurveda believes that health is maintained through the balance of physiological forces (doshas), proper digestion (Agni), and a balanced diet and lifestyle. Modern research is

increasingly recognizing the value of these principles in preventing illness, supporting metabolic health, and managing chronic diseases.

2. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS IN AYURVEDA

शरीर दूषणात् दोषः धावतो देहधारणात् |

वातपित्तकफाः ज्ञेयाः मालिनीकरणान्मलाः ||

शारंगधर संहिता ०५/२४

2.1. Doshas

दूष्यंती इति दोषः |

Ayurveda describes three bio-energetic forces known as doshas

- Vata: Governs movement and functions of the nervous system.
- Pitta: Regulates metabolism, digestion, and body heat.
- Kapha: Provides structure, lubrication, and immunity.

Each person has a unique constitution or Dosha balance (Prakriti), which influences their dietary needs and lifestyle choices.

2.2. Agni (Digestive Fire)

Agni represents the strength of digestion and metabolism. When Agni is balanced, digestion is efficient and nutrients are well absorbed. When Agni is weak, it can lead to the formation of toxins (Ama), which are considered the root cause of many diseases.

2.3. Dhatus and Malas

Dhatus are the body tissues, and Malas are the waste products. Proper nutrition and lifestyle practices are essential for maintaining healthy tissues and eliminating toxins from the body.

3. AYURVEDIC NUTRITION PRINCIPLES (ĀHĀRA)

आहारः प्रीणनः सद्यो सद्यो बलकृद्देहधारकः|

आयुस्तेजः समुत्साहस्मृत्योजोअग्निविवर्धनः|| सु. चि. २४/६८

3.1. Food Classification

Food is categorized based on

- Taste (Rasa): Six tastes—sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent.
- Energy effect (Virya): Heating (Ushna) or cooling (Shita).
- Post-digestive effect (Vipaka): Sweet, sour, or pungent outcomes after digestion.

- Qualities (Gunas): Attributes like heavy/light, stable/mobile.

3.2. Diet Based on Dosha

Dietary recommendations are customized according to an individual's dosha

- Vata: Recommended foods include Ushna (warm), Aardra(moist), Kandamula (Tubers) with sweet and sour tastes. Avoid Sheet (cold), Ruksha (dry), Apakva (raw), or Laghu (light foods).
- Pitta: Sheet (Cooling) and Mrudu (mild) Aahara with Madhur (sweet), Tikta (bitter), and Kashay (astringent) tastes are advised. Avoid Katu (spicy), Lavan (salty), and Amla (sour) Rasayukta Ahar, as well as stimulants.
- Kapha: Laghu (Light), Ruksha (dry), and Ushna (warm) Aahara with Katu (pungent), Tikta (bitter), and Kashay (astringent) tastes are beneficial. Avoid Guru (heavy), Snigdha (oily), Madhur (sweet), or dairy-heavy foods.

3.3. Importance of Seasonal Diet

शीते वर्षासु च आद्यान् त्रीन् वसन्ते अन्त्यान् रसानभजेत् रसान् भजेत् |

स्वादुम् निदाघे, शरदि स्वदुत्तिकषायकान् || अ. ह सू अध्याय ३ श्लोक ५५

नित्यम् सर्वरसाभ्यासः स्व स्व आधिक्य ऋतौ ऋतौ || अ. ह सू अध्याय ३ श्लोक ५७

ऋतूनुसार गुणासमाविष्ट आहार

शरत् -वसन्तयोःरुक्ष, शीतं धर्मधनान्तयोः |

अन्नपानं समासेन विपरीतम्-अतो-अन्यदा ||अ. ह सू अध्याय ३ श्लोक ५६

Ayurveda aligns nutrition with the seasons

- Spring (Kapha): Light, detoxifying foods with bitter greens.
- Summer (Pitta): Cooling foods and hydrating fruits.
- Monsoon: Easily digestible foods, with less raw vegetables.
- Autumn/Winter (Vata): Warm, nourishing foods and the use of spices.

3.4. Food Combining

देहधातुप्रत्यनिकभूतानि द्रव्याणि देहधातुभिर्विरोधमापह्नन्ते

परस्परगुणविरुद्धानि कानिचित्, कानिचित् संयोगात्

संस्कारादपराणि देशकालमात्रादिभिश्चाश्वापराणि तथा स्वभावादपराणि । अ. ह. सु. २६/८१

While explaining the concept of Viruddha Aahar it has been stated that if Dravyas (food items), along with their gunas(characteristics/qualities) are opposite towards the gunas (qualities) of Dehadhatus (RasaRaktadi dhatus) are considered as Virudhaa aahars with respect to Rasa Raktadi dhatus.

Some Dravyas are gunavirudha (characteristically incompatible), samyogaviruddha (non-combining), samskarviruddha (characteristically non-transformable), Deshaviruddha (non-compatible towards peculiar geography), Kaal viruddha (non-compatible towards time), Maatra Viruddha (incompatible quantity) and swabhav Viruddha (by nature incompatible).

यच्चापि देशकालाग्निमात्रासात्म्यानि लादिभिः।

समस्कारतो वीर्यतश्च कोष्ठावस्थाक्रमैरपि॥ अ. ह. सू २६/८६

परिहारोपचाराभ्याम् पाकात् सम्योगतोः अपि च।

विरुद्धं तच्च न हितं हृत्संपद्विधिभिश्च यत्॥ अ. ह. सू २६/८७

The Aahar i.e. food items which are contrary towards Desha (Geographical region), Kaal (Timings), Aagru (Digestive Capacity), Maatra (Quantity), Satmya (Suitability), Vatadi Doshas, Samskar (Characteristic transformation), Veerya (Potency), Koshta (Visceral functionality), Aavastha (Phase), Krama (Order), Parihaar(Avoidance), Upachara (Remedial action), Paak (Metabolic transformation), Samyoga Viruddha (Combination incompatibility), Hridaya Virudhaa (Incompatible to one's conscious), Vidhi Virudhaa (Incompatible to thumb rules) are considered as absolutely harmful. Improper food combinations (Viruddha Āhāra) are thought to cause digestive issues. Examples include combining milk with sour fruits or fish with milk.

3.5. Mindful Eating

तत्र खल्विमान्यष्टावाहारविधिविशेषयतनानि भवन्ति; तद्यथाप्रकृतिकरणसंयोगराशि

देशकालोपयोगसंस्थोपयोक्ता अष्टक्रमानि भवन्ति॥ च. वि. १/२१

Ayurveda promotes

- Eating in a calm and pleasant environment.
- Chewing food thoroughly.
- Avoiding overeating.
- Making meals enjoyable and aligned with the season.

4. AYURVEDIC LIFESTYLE (VIHĀRA)

4.1. Daily Routine (Dinacharya)

A structured daily schedule supports the body's natural rhythm and metabolic balance.

Key practices include

- Waking up before sunrise.
- Tongue cleaning and oil pulling.
- Abhyanga (self-massage with warm oil).
- Eating at regular times.
- Moderate exercise (Vyayama).
- Getting enough sleep at consistent hours.

4.2. Seasonal Routine (Ritucharya)

Adjusting routine with the changing seasons helps maintain balance.

For instance:

- In winter, increase warmth and nourishing foods.
- In summer, prioritize hydration and cooling practices.

4.3. Mental Hygiene

Ayurveda places importance on mental well-being, including

- Meditation.
- Pranayama (breathing exercises).
- Positive social behavior (Sadvritta).
- Managing stress effectively.

5. SCIENTIFIC CORRELATES AND MODERN RESEARCH

Modern studies have recognized several evidence-based links between Ayurveda and contemporary health science.

5.1. Personalized Nutrition

Research supports the idea that individuals have different metabolic responses, a concept that aligns with Ayurveda's understanding of Prakriti influencing diet and disease risk.

5.2. Gut Health and Agni

The Ayurvedic emphasis on digestion parallels current interest in gut microbiota, digestive enzymes, and nutrient absorption.

5.3. Lifestyle and Circadian Rhythm

Ayurvedic daily routines echo modern findings on the role of circadian rhythms in regulating metabolism, sleep quality, and hormonal balance.

5.4. Chronic Disease Management

Ayurvedic anti-inflammatory foods, herbal adaptogens, and balanced lifestyles may help in managing conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and stress-related disorders.

6. DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic recommendations consider physical, mental, Spiritual and environmental factors. Unlike standard diet, Ayurveda takes into account seasonal shifts, individual constitution, and lifestyle habits. The focus on mindful eating, routine, and holistic health aligns with trends in preventive medicine and wellness. For that one of the important component is Mithya Ahar & Vihar which emphasizes over Viruddha Ahar which directly affects the balance of Dosha Dhatu & Mala resulting in to Mandagni which in turn affects the wellbeing of people resulting in to Vyadhi Utpatti (emergence of disease).

7. CONCLUSION

The nutrition and lifestyle frameworks of Ayurveda provide a comprehensive approach to health maintenance and disease prevention. Although rooted in tradition, these principles are increasingly being recognized within modern research on personalized nutrition, gut health, and lifestyle medicine.

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