



BASIC CONCEPTS OF HUMAN NUTRITION IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Ayurvedic poshana is very vast, the word “poshana” is derived from “posh” dhatu + “ana” meaning to bringing up, to lighting, to nourishing, supporting, maintaining etc. Poshana is defined as a complete biological process by which a living being utilized ahara to support its life system. It start from Aharapaka, Dhatuposhana, Creation of sara and kitta. Ayurveda poshana includes not only about the nutritional diet but also it teach us the all rules of dietary conduct such as Ashtaahara vidhi viseshayatana (8 rules of dietary processing), Dvadasa asana vichara (12 rules of consuming food), Ahara vidhi vidhana also the concept of virudha ahara (Dietary incompatibility).

There include the explanation of compatible diet and Apathya ahara Accordind to Rithucharya, Benefits of Individual Factors of Good Diet, Poshana for all age group, The concept of Dhadhuposhana. Thus, concluded that most important principle is that the food should not only be nutritious from the physical stand point but it should be such as would develop the intellectual & spiritual aspects of man.

KEYWORDS: *Poshana , Nutrition , Pathyaahara.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the ancient wisdom for health, Balance and Dietary freedom. In which food is considered as Mahabhaishajya, Vrithikaranam sreshtam (Best sustainer of life) and one of the upastambha (Subpillar). The concept of Ayurvedic poshana is very vast, the word “poshana” is derived from “posh” dhatu + “ana” meaning to bringing up, to lighting, to nourishing, supporting, maintaining etc. Poshana is defined as a complete biological process by which a living being utilized ahara to support its life system. It start from Aharapaka , Dhatuposhana, Creation of sara and kitta. Ayurveda poshana includes not only about the nutritional diet but also it teach us the all rules of dietary conduct such as Ashtaahara vidhi viseshayatana (8

rules of dietary processing), Dvadasa asana vichara (12 rules of consuming food), Ahara vidhi vidhana also the concept of virudha ahara (Dietary incompatibility). Food and nutrition are mandatory for overall physical and mental health for an active life. Ever since the pandemic has wreaked havoc in addition to personal hygiene awareness about healthy food and nutrition has started to spread in every corner because as all know prevention is better than cure, it is better to keep ourself healthy to fight with the disease.

“Ayukameya manena dharma artha sukha sadhanam”¹

Ayurvedopadeseshu videyaha paramadhara

(AH SU 1/2)

Ayurveda is not only a medical science for Indians but also it is a lifestyle for us and a complete referring tool too, including slokas that reveals our culture, languages, vrithas, upamas, descriptions of our desa, kala, Bhu, prakruthi, nature of wind, mountains. Ayurveda teach us at what time we should get up, what are the things we should eat. what are the ideal and contraindicated things for us, Really it is a complete holistic science.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SAREERA

Sareera is the medium to attain purushardhas, so it is very important to maintain our health.

“Api kriyartham sulabham samithkrusham

Jalanyapi snana vidhikshamani the

Api swasakthya thapasi pravarthathe

Sareeramadyam khalu dharmasadanam”

[kumarasambhavam]

In this lord siva advices Devi parvathy that doing penance according to your ability only (No moreover exertions) the body is surly the foremost instrument for all deeds. It reveals the importance of maintaining the good healthy life style to maintain our sareera as dharma sadanam. In which the essentiality of our food is all so described,

“annapoorne sadhapoorne sankara prana vallabhe”

Not only the Upanishad, Acharyas of ayurveda all so give due importance to our food habits

“Na cha aahara samam kinchith bhaishajyamupalabhyathe

sakyathe apyanna mathrena nara; karthu niramaya”

(kasyapa samhitha khilasthana 4/5)

Acharya kasyapa explained there was no medicines equal to our food. If a person takes his diet at proper manner and time, he will be fine and healthier at his entire life time. All Acharyas of ayurveda explained about the importance of ahara by giving much importance to that subject. In our Brihathtrayis, there are separate chapters for explaining the diversity of food and food habits.

“Aharasambhavam vasthu rogacha ahara sambhava”²

(cha su 28/45)

The food is the sustainer of life and considered as mahabhaishajya. It is true, at the same time Acharya remembered as that the unhealthy food habits lead to diseases. All these reveals to the importance of ahara and poshana to us. Ayurveda places Special emphasis on ahara and believes that healthy nutrition nourishes the sareera, mana and athma.

*“Pranaha pranabhrutham annam annam loke abhidhavathi”*³

(cha su 27/349)

It is clear that ahara is one of the main subpillar (upastambha). At the same time it is the root cause of disease also, So we must know about the pathya (compatible diet) Dietary disciplines, vairodhic ahara (Incompatible diet), food convention, etc.

COMPATIBLE DIET (PATHYA AHARA)

Ayurveda promotes wholesome and balanced diet

*“Pathyam patho anapetham yath thachauktham manasapriyam”*⁴

(cha su 25/45)

The ahara vihara which is beneficial and nutritional to the body and also give the happiness to the mind is known as pathya and opposite to this is apathy.

FOOD INDICATED FOR HEALTHY PERSONS*“Shashtikan shalimudgan cha saindhava amalake yavan 5
Anthareeksham paya sarpir janghalam madhau cha abhyaseth”*

[cha soo5/12]

Sashtika rice (Ripens in 60 days)

Shali

Saindhava (Rock salt)

Mudga (Green gram)

Amalaka (Goose berry)

Rain water (collected at strategic high points)

Ghee

Meat of animals dwelling in aired climate

Honey

FOOD CONTRAINDICATED FOR HEALTHY PERSONS*“Valloran shushkasakacha shalookani bisani cha”*⁶*Nabhyaseth gouravan mamsam krusham naivopayojayeth”*

(cha soo 5/10)

Vallura (Dried meat)

Dry vegetables

Lotus rhizomes and Lotus stalk

Meat of diseased animals

Long time use of pippali, kshara , lavana (cha vi 1 chapter)

PATHYA APATHYA ACCORDING TO RITHUCHARYA ⁷

(cha su 6/11-18)

Table 1: Pathya Apathya for Winter season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Take the unctuous and salty juices of meat of aquatic and marshy which are fatty.	Avoid food and drinks which are light and areliable to vitiated vata.
The meat of burrow dwelling animals andbhrta prepared of animals of prasaha.	Under feeding and intake of gruel are also tobe avoided.
Preparations of cow milk, cane juice, fat, oil, new rice.	

Table 2: Pathya Apathya for Dewy season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Similar to winter season	Avoid cold, light diet and drinks
	Avoid taking are possessed of pungent, bitter and astringent taste.

Table 3: Pathya Apathya for Spring season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Take food consisting of barley and wheat, meat of sharabha, sasha, ena, lava, kapinjala	Avoid heavy unctuous, sour and sweet diets

Table 4: Pathya Apathya for Summer season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Food and drinks that are sweet, cool, liquid, unctuous are used	Either drink alcohol in little quantity or should not drink at all and even if one drink, he should drink along with plenty of water
Ghee, milk, curd, sugar, old rice and old wheat are preferred	Avoid taking diet which are salty, sour, pungent or hot

Table 5: Pathya Apathya for Rainy season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Generally use honey in preparing diet, drinks and other.	Avoid the taking mantha diluted in excess
Drink the madhvika or arishta type of liquor	
Take salty sour and unctuous diet	

Table 6: Pathya Apathya for Autumn season

PATHYA	APATHYA
Sweet, light, cold and bitter foods and drinks which have potentialities to alleviate pitha	Vasha , taila , meat of aquatic and marshy land animals
Meat of lava, kapinjala, ena, urabha, sharbha, rice, bareley and wheat	Alkaline salt preparations, curd
Ghee prepared with bitter medicines	
Use hamshodakam	

Vaidya Lolimbraj in his book “vaidya jeevanam” has given a very important principal regarding pathya and apathy

“Pathye sathi gadharthasya kimoushadha nishevanai:

Pathye asathi gadarthasya kimoushadha nishevanai”

BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS OF GOOD DIET ⁸

(Cha vi 1/24)

Table 7: Factors of good diet and its benefits

SI No	Factors	Benefits
1	Hot food	- Increase taste perception
		- Kindles digestive fire , easily digested
		- Is carminative, Dissolves excess kapha
2	Snigdha ahara	- All above except dissolving kapha
		- Act as a building block of the body
		- Increase strength and good for complexion
3	Optimum quantity	- Easily digested and absorbed
		- Dose not cause dosha imbalance, conducive to long life
4	Proper time	- Increase longevity of life
5	Proper combination	
6	Proper place	
7	Eating not too fast	
8	Eating silently	
9	Eating not too slow	- Results in satisfaction
		- Dose not become cold
		- Dose not cause indigestion, un-interesting

Eating according to atma shakthi (means eating with knowledge of what is good and beneficial one-self.

FACTS TO REMEMBER

1. Prakruthi (Natural qualities)
2. Karana (preparation)
3. Samyog (combination)
4. Raashi (quantity)
5. Desha (habitat)
6. Kala (time)
7. Upyog sanstha (Rules of use)
8. Upayokta (User)

POSHANA FOR ALL

- ✓ Garbha poshana
- ✓ Bala poshana
- ✓ Madhya poshana
- ✓ Jara poshana

1. GARBHA POSHANA

Asanjat anga pratyanga bibhaga, where garbha take nourishment by upasweda and upasneha of mother by Tiriaggata rasavahi dhamanies

a) Upasneha

guru snigdha parts (Dense nutritious materials)

Eg : Glucose , lipid by products and protein by products .

b) Upasweda

Liquid / Gaseous (Less heavy nutritious material)

Eg : vitamins , enzymes , gases like oxygen

c) Nourishment by Apra

Throughout pregnancy, the Apra (Placenta) retains the primary role of all biologic membranes.

Susrutha, Hridayakara, Dalhana and Bhela described this mechanism to be happening by KEDARIKULYA NYAYA (Theory of microcirculation and tissue perfusion)

2. BALA POSHANA

Immediately after birth it is advices to given the mixture of honey and ghee for immunemechanism. Then the swarna prasana, oral consumption of fine paste of gold for intelligence. Also, Brahmi, Vacha, Bala, Satavari for intelligence and immunity. in the first dayit is advised to give honey, butter, Hemidesmus indicus, gold to promote higher mental functions and nervous system. In the third day colostrums, ghee, honey to promote higher mental functions and central nervous system. In the sixth month phala prasana introduce different fruits to fulfill the nutritional needs. In 10th month annaprasana introduce different cereals and pulses in the diet for the fulfill the nutritional demand.

3. MADHYA POSHANA

In the mid part of life span Pitha dosha will be naturally dominant. During this period of life diet and nutrition prescribed for pitha constitution can be used. Pitha calming diet with fewer amount of spices and more amount of sweet, astringent and bitter foods should be advised. some of the advisable ingredients to balance down pitha are raisins, sweet fruits, Pomegranate, Pointed gourd, Cucumber, Milk, Dairy products, Ghee etc.

4. JARA POSHANA

Every living being on the earth has to pass through the process of ageing and human being is not different. According to Sushruta, Vardhakya is Svabhava and this can be restrained to the extent with the use of Rasayana remedies.

Dhatuposhana and maintenance of Health in Jara-Avastha

Concept of Saptadhatu - Rasa-rakta-mansa-meda-asthi-majja and shukra and their co-relation with body tissues according to conventional system of medicine. Physiological parameters to assess the Sapta Dhatu - i.e. blood plasma, white blood cells, red blood cells, haemoglobin, packed cell volume, bleeding time, coagulation time, muscular strength, measurement of body surface area having excessive fat deposition, study of bone density, bone marrow sperm count, etc.

- Dhatuposhana in Ayurveda through Svayonivardhana dravya prayoga-
- Rasa dhatu poshana - Madhura, Snigdha, Sheeta dravya.
- Rakta dhatu poshana - Amla, Guru, Snigdha, Ushna dravya.
- Mansa dhatu poshana - Amla, Lavana, Ushna dravya.
- Meda dhatu poshana - Madhura, Guru, sheeta, Snigdha dravya.
- Asthi dhatu poshana - Sthira, Vishada dravya.
- Majja dhatu poshana - Snigdha, Pichhila, sheeta dravya.
- Shukra dhatu poshana - Snigdha, Pichhila, Sthira, Vrishya Karma dravya.

Basics of Dhatuposhana in advance age

- Dravyas having following properties are best in Jara-avastha -Laghu, Snigdha, Pichhila, Shlakshana, Mridu.

Rasayana Drug substances and Dhatuposhana

Rasayana has been one of the important branches of Ashtanga Ayurveda since very beginning as found in Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita. The very object of Rasayana is to live long life without any disorders. According to Charaka, the means by which one gets the excellent rasadi saptadhatu - rasa-rakta-mansa-meda-asthi-majja and Shukra, is called Rasayana.

Benefits of Rasayana - according to Charaka people who undergo Rasayana therapy obtain longevity and freedom from disease.

Aindri (Bacopa monnieri), Kapikacchu (Mucuna pruriens), Atirasa(Asparagus racemosus), Payasya (Holostemma rheedei), Kshiravidari(Ipomoea digitata), Ashvagandha (Withania somnifera), Bala (Sida cordifolia), Atibala (Abutilon indicum), Amrita (Tinosporacordifolia), Abhaya (Terminalia chebula), Dhatri (Emblica officinalis), Jivanti(Leptadeniareticulata), Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica), Sthira (Desmodium gangeticum), Punarnava (Boerhaavia diffusa).

Drug Substances of Mineral Origin used as Dhatuposhana (Nutritive)

Svarna (gold), Rajata (silver), Tamra (copper), Yashada (zinc), Vanga (tin), Loha (iron), Abhrak a (mica). Mineral origin drugs are mostly used in the form of Bhasma. Before using them, one must ensure that they are made in accordance with the classical methods for best efficacy, least adverse effect and of standard quality.

Dietary substances Administered as Dhatuposhana (Nutritive)

Dhatuposhana: Substances, which have ultimate effect to nourish the seven bodily dhatus, are either vegetable/plant or of animal origin.

a) Vegetable origin-

Jivanti-shaka (leave of Lepadenia reticulata), Punarnava shaka (leave of Boerhaavia diffusa and Boerhaavia verticillata), Shatavari ankura (young shoots Asparagus racemosus), Balapatra (leaves of Sida cordifolia) Sringataka fruit (endosperm of Trapa- bispinosa), Varahikanda (bulb of Dioscorea bulbifera), Kharjura (fruit of Phoenix dactylifera), Akshota (endosperm of Juglans regia), Vatada (endosperm Prunus amygdalus), Mridvika (dried fruit Vitis unifera).

b) Animal origin-

Mansa of Aja (goat), Aavika (lamb), Varaha (pig), Chataka (sparrow), Kukkuta (male chicken), Anda (egg), Matsya (fish).

GARBHINI POSHANA

Pregnancy is the most important and critical part of every woman's life. So systematic Examination, Dietary and other advice are very important; this systematic supervision is called as Garbhini Paricharya (Anti Natal Care)

Masanumasika Pathya: (Month Wise Dietary Regimen): During pregnancy foetus starts to get nutrition from mother through placenta. Adequate nutrition is needed for monthly constant and proper growth of embryo. The requirement of nutrition varies according to developmental stage of foetus month wisely (Masanumasika vrudhi). Pregnancy imposes the extra nutrients requirement. Thus, the dietetic requirements of the mother also change month wise.

RULES OF DIETARY CONDUCT

The principles of Ashta ahara vidhi visheshayatana i.e., eight rules of dietary processing described by Charaka and Dvadasha asana vichara (12 – rules of consuming food) help as to improve the dietary habits. Similarly, the concept of viruddhahara (dietary incompatibility) and its 18 – fold approach need to be observed in dietary care. It will be advisable to identify common food articles in terms of their Tridoshik attribute to help planning balanced diet on principles of Ayurveda.

DIET TO BE ALWAYS AVOIDED

Virudha ahara¹⁰ (Diet which is harmful due to processing , combination or other factors

(cha su 26/ 80-111)

Common vairidhic food habits are, Heated honey

Milk with sour things, Milk with fish, Curd taken at night, Ghee and honey mixed at equal amounts

The incompatible food has poisonous effect on the body that aggravates Tridoshas and leading to various disorders like Gulma, Fever, Dermatitis, Eczema etc.

NUTRITIONAL DEFFICIANCY

Dhatu Kshaya - Rasa-rakta-mansa-meda-asthi-majja and shukra dhatukshaya causes following disorders:

- Hritpida (cardiac pain), Kampa (tremor), Trishna (thirst), Sirashaithilya (venous changes/loosening), Dhamaishathilya (arterial changes/Loosening).
- Sandhi saumyata (Softness of joints), Asthikshaya (decay of bone), Asthishula (pain in bone), Alparaktata (Decrease of haemoglobin), Maithune anashakti (Reduction in sexual urge/act).
- Mandacheshta (diminished activity), Rukshata (body dryness), Nishprabhata (lack of lustre), Mandoshma (diminished body heat), Mandagni (loss of appetite), Vishamagni (irregular appetite), Anidra (insomnia).

Marasmus (Balasosha) – It is a protein energy malnutrition.

Management – priyalamajjadi modaka for prenanana

Kwashiorker (Parigarbhika) – Improvement the appetite by agnideepana

Osteomalacia (Phakka roga) – snehapana followed by virechana

Use of Trichakraradha

BENEFITS OF DISCIPLINED EATING

- Strength
- Stamina
- Good complexion
- Good health
- Happiness
- Long life
- Vitality

It is rightly said that the jatharagni or the digestive fire, need fuel in the form of diet to sustain itself. (cha su 5/8) (cha su 27/ 342)

CONCLUSION

Concluding the discussions, the most important principle is that the food should not only be nutritious from the physical stand point but it should be such as would develop the intellectual & spiritual aspects of man. Good smell of the food as well as the place excites the salivation as well as secretion of digestive juice. Both Ahara and Ahara Vidhi vidhana are helpful in getting good health and prevention of disease. Thus, Ahara is the Dravyabhuta Chikitsa whereas Ahara vidhi vidhana is the Adravya bhuta chikitsa. Thus, both Ahara (Diet)

and Ahara Vidhi Vidhana (Dietetic rules) are equally important. Proper utilization of both maintains healthy condition, on contrary improper utilization leads to various diseases. In total one should properly take food by following all the dietetic rules. Then only one can think of a good healthy life.

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