

AYURVEDIC PRAKRITI BASED AHARA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISEASES

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Article Received on
03 September 2024,

Revised on 24 Sept. 2024,
Accepted on 14 October 2024

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202420-34363



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ABSTRACT

Modern nutrition illustrates the diet consisting of components including carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals as per the nutritional value and calories. In Ayurveda, Aahara is described under one among the three supporting pillars of life known as Trayopastambha and Ayurveda Acharyas advise to consume food depending on one's digestive fire and the season. Ahara that we consume provides us the longevity, strength, nourishment, complexion, satisfaction, enhances process of growth & development, immunity, improves functioning of sense organs and imparts physical & mental wellbeing and last but not the least protects from infections. Ahara is very crucial for the sustenance of life and maintenance of normal physiological functions of human body. Prakriti of an individual is like a roadmap that provides us the complete information both about the disease and the patient. Consumption of the aahara, vyayama and the other activities should be based on the Prakriti, anything against it will

lead to the diseases. The present study is an attempt to evaluate the relationship between the Prakriti and Aahara and their role in the management of diseases.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Prakriti, Aahara, Vyadhi.

INTRODUCTION

Human survival is based on the food and as a result it plays a vital role in the maintenance of health and disease. According to the Ayurveda, healthy life starts with healthy food and Aahara is described under one among the three supporting pillars of life known as Trayopastambha. Ayurveda Acharyas advise to consume food depending on one's digestive fire and the season. In addition, knowledge regarding six ritus or the seasons have been explained in detail with specific lifestyle regimens and dietary practices. Centuries back, Acharyas had understood the connection between the seasons, the gut microbiome and aahara. Modern scholars have demonstrated that the lifestyle and dietary factors can enhance pathogen susceptibility, inflammatory diseases, alter the commensal microbial communities and lead to ametabolic health disorders like non-communicable diseases. Modern nutrition illustrates the diet consisting of components including carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals as per the nutritional value and calories. But nothing regarding the effects of aahara such as Hita- ahita ahara and the diet conducive to health has been described. On the contrary, Ayurveda has entailed about the aahara and indicates to consume according to one's prakriti or the constitution that can be understood as customized or individualized approach to maintain positive health and prevent diseases. Very importantly, the ahara is indicated based action of rasa (taste) which is six in number such Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta and Kashaya.^[1]

Ahara that we consume provides us the longevity, strength, nourishment, complexion, satisfaction, enhances process of growth & development, immunity, improves functioning of sense organs and imparts physical & mental wellbeing and last but not the least protects from infections. Ahara is very crucial for the sustenance of life and maintenance of normal physiological functions of human body. In addition to nourishment, aahara also provides health benefits through its nutritional value, but when food is not prepared in the right method or consumed in proper manner, then such food will be deprived from nutrition and does not provide significant health benefits. Ayurveda encompasses all these concepts explained by Acharya Charaka under the heading Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana, the ten concepts including rules and regulations of ahara and its preparation.^[2]

Both the healthy body as well as the diseases are said to be the outcome of *Ahara*. Food consumption in the proper manner occupies the most important position among all the factors for achieving positive health as diet or *Ahara* serves as the best medicine. Nobody can sustain

without ahara on this earth, but due to the modernization throughout the world and the fast paced lifestyle most of the dietary practices have been compromised leading to illness from wellness and gradual declining health status.^[3] Prakriti is defined as the distinct phenotypes of human beings that can be depicted by physical, psychological, physiological characteristics and the behaviours of individuals.^[4] It is observed to be influenced by both genetic and acquired factors. Genetic constitution depends on Shukra (sperm) and Shonita (ovum) during the conception and the acquired constitution depends on several environmental elements such as age, race, heredity, climate, season and area.^[5]

In Ayurveda, Prakriti holds a very high position and according to the Acharyas, the union of Shukra (sperm) and Shonita (ovum), Atma and Manah in the mother's Garbhashaya (womb) results in the development of Prakriti under the influence of Tridoshas. Dominance of one two or all three Doshas or the body humours such as Vata, Pitta, and Kapha determines the qualities and features of the future child and its prakriti as Ekadoshaja Prakriti -Vata, Pitta, and Kaphaja, Dvandvaja - Vatapitta, VataKapha, and Kaphapitta or Sam prakriti with Vata, Pitta, and Kapha in equal proportions.^[6]

KNOWLEDGE OF PRAKRITI

Characteristics of Vata Prakriti

In this prakriti, the individual physique looks like a manikin with emaciated dry, raspy and lengthy voice. Most commonly the person remains wide awake with light and erratic motion and eating habits. Sense organs including eyes, eyebrows, jaws, lips, tongue, head, shoulder, hands, and legs present with quivering joints. Being very talkative, fast to act, quick to forget, quick to experience dread, quick to comprehend, quick to identify likes and dislikes, aggravate easily and display morbid symptoms are some of the features exhibited by the Vata prakriti people. In addition, intolerance to cold weather conditions with shivering and stiffness is prone to disorders caused by cold. Roughness in the skin, nails, teeth, face, hands, feet, hair on the head, face and other regions of the body is very frequent and cracking of limbs especially foot and presence of crepitus in the joints.^[7]

Characteristics of Pitta Prakriti

Pitta Prakriti person presents with features such as a warm face, intolerance to heat, freckles, black moles etc associated with extreme hunger and thirst with rapid onset of wrinkles, greying of the hair and balding. Presence of some soft hair on the face, head and other parts of the body is common. With a sharp physical prowess and a strong digestive system has the

great ability for high-calorie intake. Looseness and suppleness of the joints and muscles are observed with profuse perspiration and excretion of urine and faeces. Excessive body odour with foul-smelling axilla and mouth combined with lack of sperm, sexual desire, and reproduction compared to other prakriti people.^[7]

Characteristics of Kapha Prakriti

Kapha prakriti people is endowed with unctuousness of organs, softness of organs and looks attractive with good complexion. These individuals will have an increased sperm production, more sexual desire with high procreation rates. Their stability, compactness and firmness of the physique make the organs round and plump. They are slow in movement, eating, and breathing activities with good walking style. Though they are slow in beginning of tasks, but complete it with perfectness associated with irritability and morbid behaviours. Unable to tolerate intense heat, thirst, hunger and sweat. Being always happy is the secret of kapha prakriti people with sound voice and complexion.^[7]

Characteristics of Dwandvaja Prakriti

This includes the combination of two doshas such as vata-pitta, pitta-kapha and vata-kapha and people with this prakriti will exhibit that particular features of the doshas involved.^[8]

Characteristics of Sama prakriti

Sama prakriti refers to the combination of tridoshas in equilibrium. These people present with the features of all three Doshas in equal measure.^[9] To lead a healthy life with healthy lifestyle and proper dietary practices, In Ayurveda we find vast description regarding ahara with guidelines and activities that needs to be followed in accordance to their Prakriti.^[10]

Among the concepts of Ahara, Agni or the digestive fire is one of the important components and the root cause of many disorders where, Acharya Charaka has described four different forms of Agni based on the prakriti such as Vishmagni in Vata Prakriti, Teekshnagni in Pitta Prakriti, Mandagni in Kapha Prakriti and Samagni in Sama Prakriti. The ability or strength of the individual can also be determined by the assessment of Prakriti as the bala is crucial before the administration of the chikitsa and even the ahara. Kapha Prakriti is said to possess more bala compared to Pitta and Vata Prakriti.^[11] Determining patient's prakriti is vital before the establishment of any treatment procedure for the successful and effective results. In this context, Acharya Charaka has highlighted the principle of "Prati Purusha Siddhanta" that stress the importance and the need for taking into account the patient's Prakriti and other

related information. For instance, in Jwara, an Amaja vyadhi Apatarpana chikitsa can be adopted for a Kaphaja prakriti person and not for a Vataja prakriti person.^[12]

A quote is very well said as healthy diet is vital for a healthy body and a healthy mind. As the objective of the science aims towards the maintenance of health and prevention of disorders it describes many concepts that needs to be inculcated in daily life and followed according to the seasons. An ideal diet as per Ayurveda should incorporate the six rasas or the tastes as prescribed in the shastra. The term rasa refers to taste and that which is perceived through the tongue. According to Acharya Vagbhata, rasas are six in number: madhura rasa (sweet), amla rasa (sour), lavana rasa (salty), katu rasa (pungent), tikta rasa (bitter), and kashaya rasa (astringent).^[13] Prognosis and diagnosis of the diseases is decided by the knowledge of Prakriti wherein, Acharya Charaka describes the factors which determine the nature of the diseases which are easily curable (Sukhasadhya) and Prakriti is one of the factors among them that establishes the curability of the disease.^[14]

AAHARA ACCORDING TO PRAKRITI OR THE CONSTITUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Vata Prakriti

The ahara that are sweet in taste and hot in potency are conducive to Vata prakriti people as their Agni or the digestive capacity is variable based on certain conditions. Therefore, it is suitable for them to follow an appropriate dietary routine. These people should consume food in small quantities. Food items that are acceptable for Vata prakriti people are Ginger and garlic to maintain proper digestive abilities, cereals such as wheat, sesame are ideal to them than Maida, pulses such as black gram, green gram, milk products such as curd, ghee, butter, cheese, sesame oil, castor oil, cod liver oil etc oils and vegetables such as white gourd, drumstick, onion, asparagus, radish and fruits such as mango, coconut, grapes, dates, pineapple, almonds, figs can be liberally consumed by Vata prakriti people. On the contrary, the foods that are dry, cold and possess astringent properties, cereals such as barely, horse gram, pulses such as sprouted pulses, masur, chana dal, vegetables such as dry leafy vegetables, potato, bitter gourd, and fruits like jamun, cucumber, watermelon and spices such as chillies, pepper with honey and sugarcane juice should be used in limited quantities as these foods the digestive capacity or the Agni of the person.^[15]

Pitta Prakriti

In case of Pitta Prakriti people, the foods that are cold, dry, sweet and bitter are very

beneficial for them. Food items such as wheat cereal, pulses like masur dal, green gram, Channa dal, Milk products like Ghee, butter, fresh buttermilk, vegetables such as snake gourd, white gourd, carrot, beetroot, fruits such as dried grapes, apple, pomegranate, ripe bananas, Old jaggery. And spices such as coriander, rock salt holds very good for their health. On the contrary, foods that are hot, pungent and sharp (teekshna) in properties are not with pulses such as black gram, horse gram, sprouted pulses, sour curds and butter milk, beef, mutton, sea fish, vegetables such as brinjal, drumstick, green leafy vegetables, fruits such as oranges, lime, tamarind, unripe mango and spices such as garlic, pepper, chillies, asafoetida should be used in limited quantities.

Kapha Prakriti

For Kapha prakriti people foods that are light, hot, dry and pungent in properties are advised as they help to maintain their good health. Food items ideal to them include cereals such as barley, pulses such as masur dal, horse gram and green gram, mustard oil, sesame oil, bitter melon, drumstick, snake gourd, onions etc vegetables and fruits like pomegranates, lemon and spices such as dry ginger, black cumin seeds, garlic, pepper, meat of deer, old wine and honey etc are the foods that are good for their health, whereas foods which are sweet, cold, heavy in properties are not beneficial to Kapha Prakriti and it includes like fresh rice, black gram, buffalo's milk, curd, ghee, butter, oils from animal fat, sweet potato, cabbage etc vegetables, banana, guava, grapes, coconut, jack fruit etc fruits, mutton, egg, fresh water fish, sugarcane juice, jaggery, freshly prepared beverages and spices such as coriander are not conducive to people of this prakriti.^[17]

DISCUSSION

The current era is focussing towards prevention than just maintenance of health and has seen a significant shift in the way people think about health and disease. Personalized care and medicine is need of the hour regarding both for the patient and the disease. Ayurvedic science gives more importance to diet or the Aahara both in the treatment of the diseases and to prevent it. based treatment. Due to the advanced and rapidly changing scenario of globalization, non-communicable diseases that account for nearly 80% of the diseases are on rise including cancers. Prakriti of an individual is like a roadmap that provides us the complete information both about the disease and the patient. Consumption of the aahara, vyayama and the other activities should be based on the Prakriti, anything against it will lead to the diseases. This individual constitution, or Prakriti classification shows the differences in

physical, physiological and psychological characteristics and is not based on racial, ethnic or geographical considerations. Although, each individual has the combination of all three vata, pitta and kapha doshas, dominance of one dosha decides the type of prakriti.

Ayurveda looks at disease as an imbalance and treatment aims towards the balance of these three doshas. By practicing daily regimen, seasonal regimens as well as dietary regimen will help the individual to live a happy, healthy and a disease free life. The concept of prakriti is also helpful in predicting an individual susceptibility to a particular disease, prognosis of a disease and the selection of the treatment.^[18]

When the body is in harmony, it seeks healthy nutrients, but when the body or mind are out of balance, there is imbalance between them and thus an individual prefer diet that are opposite to our Doshas of our prakriti. This is known as the "Samanyam Vriddhikranam" concept, which states that "like attracts like." Food that decreases the intensity or the imbalance of doshas said to be the ideal or the pathya, whereas foods that increases the doshas are called as apathya aahara that in turn leads to the diseases. Hence, it becomes more important to analyze our prakriti and consume ahara according to Ayurvedic guidelines to have a healthy and a happy life.

CONCLUSIONS

In today's generation, lifestyle disorders have taken a prime place due to the altered lifestyle, lack of physical activity and improper food habits. These disorders affects 80% of the population and is the cause of non-communicable diseases or the chronic disorders. Increased awareness of Ayurveda among the people has led to inculcate the principles of Ayurveda such as Dinacharya, Rutucharya, Pathya Aahara Vihara and Apathya Aahara, Vihaara etc regimens in the maintenance of health and prevention of disorders. In this context, Prakriti plays a major role by analysing the nature of the individual, physical and psychological characteristics such as bala, agni jarana shakti etc. Knowledge of our Prakriti and consumption of Aahara according to one's nature has shown the maintenance of health and prevention of disorders in various studies.

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