IMPORTANCE OF UPAYOGASAMSTHA (DIETETIC RULES) IN RELATION TO DIGESTION OF THE FOOD

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ABSTRACT

According to Ayurveda food is one of the important factor for health as well as source for diseases i.e. wholesome and unwholesome food is responsible for happiness and misery respectively.. Beside the quality and quantity of the food it is very much important that how it is taken, because food taken in improper way can lead to various diseases. Keeping these things in mind 8 factors (Aharavidhivishayatan) has been mentioned in Vimanasthana of Charak Samhita which determines the utility of the wholesome food. ‘Upayogasamstha’ is the eighth factor among these which deals with the dietetic rules. Further in the sixth chapter of Sharirasthana six factors which are necessary for the transformation and digestion of the food (Aharaparinamakara bhava) have been mentioned. The study was planned to evaluate the relation between ‘Upayogasamstha’ (dietetic rules) and digestion of the food. It is found that each and every rule mentioned in Upayogasamstha (dietetic rules) has very essential role in the process of digestion. Conflicts of these rules are directly mentioned as the causative factors for the production of Ama (undigested food), which is the cause for several diseases. Along with balanced diet, incorporating the dietetic rules in our daily routine can prevent many diseases. All the rules mentioned under ‘Upayogasamstha’ (dietetic rules) strengthen the Aharaparinamakar Bhavas (digestive factors) and also governs the digestion process along with Agni.

KEY WORDS: Aharavidhivishayatan, Upayogasamstha, Aharaparinamakara bhava, Dietetic rules

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda being the science of life deals with several aspect of the human life and also cares a lot about the factors responsible for its maintenance and prosperity. Ahara (Food), Nidra (Sleep) and Bramhacharya (Celibacy) are said to be the tripods of human life and proper balance of them is responsible for the health of an individual (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). Among these also ‘Ahara’ is considered as the chief factor since the complexion, longevity, happiness, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and intellect are all conditioned by it (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). In the conceptual part it has been found that all the authors of Ayurveda have emphasized on Ahara (Food) as well as its Matra (quantity), Kala (Time of preparation), Samskar (processes of preparation), Desha (place; including soil, climate and surrounding conditions), Swabhava (constitution) and Ashanavidhi (codes and conducts of taking food). Modern science has particularly described Ahara according to the nutritional value of its components. They have not described about Hita (wholesome), Ahita (unwholesome), Pathya (healthy), Apathya (unhealthy) Ahara etc. for each individual. There is no constraint of diet imposed in the Allopathic methods of treatment, where medicines are given principal importance. But it is not so in the case of Ayurveda where, on the contrary, appropriately selected and controlled diet is an integral part of treatment so as to enhance vitality and regulate the medicinal effects in natural harmony with the entire system of the body and mind.

For the sustenance of an individual digestion plays an important role. The good quality food taken in appropriate amount will nourish the tissue elements of the body along with mind and senses only when it is properly digested. ‘Agni’ is considered as the key factor in the process of digestion and metabolism, and all the diseases are said to be produced due to the weakness of Agni (Atridev Gupt, 1997). Along with ‘Agni’ there are many co-supportive factors which also control the digestive process as the same type of food could have contrary effects, under different circumstances or for different persons; most important is what guidelines one follows in the selection and preparation of food and in his eating habits. In today’s fast paced life, many norms regarding diet & regimen have been compromised which is showing the overall declining status of health in the society. Ahara and its related codes and conducts have been long forgotten by the human being; hence to evaluate this ancient science of dietetics this study was undertaken.

The present review deals with ‘Upayogasamsthā’ (dietetic rules) which governs the process of digestion as all these rules can be included under the factors which are necessary for the digestion. Also this review explores the importance of Upayogasamsthā (dietetic rules) and evaluates the relation between Upayogasamsthā (dietetic rules) and digestion.

MATERIALS

The data from various texts (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005) along with Brihatrayee has been collected, compiled and analyzed for the discussion and attempt has been made to draw some conclusions.

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic nutrition is a vast topic that takes into account the individual constitution, the medicinal value of culinary spices, the theory of shad rasa (or six tastes, which should all be present for a meal to be balanced), and more. The founders of Ayurveda had affirmed food as the essential source of sustenance and strengthening of health. However, they had also alerted that "what one eats and how?" could be the major factor for or cause of illness. According to modern science, 'people who are eating according to the rules of a traditional food culture are generally healthier than those of eating a modern western diet of processed foods.

Acharya Charaka has described ‘Ashta Aharavidhivisheshayatanā’ (eight factors determining utility of the food) (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). These eight factors are...
associated specifically with the useful and harmful effects of the food and they are conditioned by one another. ‘Upayogasamsthra’ is the eighth factor among these which indicates the dietetic rules. Healthy as well as diseased individuals should follow these rules even while using wholesome food by nature. According to Charaka; Ushma (heat), Vayu, Kleda (moist), Sneha (Uncuousness), Kala (time) and Samayoga (appropriate intake) are the ‘Aharaparinamakara bhavas’ (Digestive factors) (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). The rules mentioned under Upayogasamsthra and their relations with Aharaparinamakara bhava are as follows

i. Ushnam Bhunjit (Food should be warm)

When the food is taken warm, it becomes appetizing and after intake it provokes the factors responsible for the digestion. It gets digested quickly and helps in the downward movement of Vata and alleviation of Kapha.

This warmness indicates the ‘Ushma’ (heat), which is the most essential and vital factor responsible for the digestion as it directly takes part in the digestion (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). On the other hand, when the food is kept for longer time after preparation or when stale food is consumed, it takes more time to digest or sometimes may produce Ama (undigested food) (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). In modern science also it has been mentioned that stale food can lead to food poisoning at times.

ii. Snigdham Bhunjit (Food should be u nctuous)

The unctuous food is said to be delicious and after intake it provokes the subdued power of digestion. It gets digested quickly, helps in Vatanulomama (downward movement of Vata), promotes growth of the body (Sharira upachaya), strengthens the sense faculties, and brings out the complexion.

It indicates the third and fourth factor of digestion i.e. Sneha (unctuousness) and Kleda (moist). Due to them the food particles become soft and well dissolved, so that they can be easily digested. On the contrary Ruksha ahara (food having dry nature) is mentioned as one of the causative factor for the production of Ama (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005) and also can lead to Vatavyadhis (disorders caused by Vata dosha).

iii. Matravat Bhunjit (Food in proper quantity)

When the food is taken in proper quantity, it promotes the longevity of life without afflicting Vata, Pitta and Kapha. It does not impair the power of digestion and gets digested without any difficulty. For the proper digestion one part of the stomach should be left for the free movement of Vata, Pitta and Kapha. In modern science also it has been said that, always leave the table a little hungry; many cultures have rules that you stop eating before you are full. In Japan, they say eat until you are four-fifths full. Islamic culture has a similar rule and in German culture they say, ‘tie off the sack before it’s full’ (Michael Pollen, 2006).

Hence this rule can be correlated with the second factor necessary for digestion i.e. Vayu. Prana Vayu (one among the 5 subtypes of Vata dosha) takes the food nearer to the site of Agni and Samana Vayu (one among the 5 subtypes of Vata dosha) stimulates Agni, facilitating the process of digestion (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005). If one fills his stomach with excess of the food then it leads to obstruction in free flow of the ‘tridoshas’ due to which the digestion becomes uneasy. Atimatrasana (Excessive intake of food) is mentioned as the major factor for the production of Ama (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005) whereas Pramitashana (less intake of food) is described to produce emaciation of the body.
Table 1: Relation between Upayogasamstha and digestion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. no.</th>
<th>Upayogasamstha</th>
<th>Digestive factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ushnam</td>
<td>Ushma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Snigdham</td>
<td>Sneha, Kleda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Matravat</td>
<td>Vayu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jeerne, Natidrutam, Nativilambitam</td>
<td>Kala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Veerya aviruddha, Ishta deshe Ishta sarvopakarane, Tanmana bhunjit, Atmanamabhisamikshya</td>
<td>Samayoga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv. **Jeerne ashniyat (Intake after digestion of previous meal)**

According to Ayurveda, one should take the food after the complete digestion of previous food. Such food promotes the longevity of the body and keeps the Doshas in balanced state. On the other hand, when an individual takes food before the digestion of previously taken meal, then it gets mixed with Apakva Ahararasa (partially digested food) of previous meal; which leads to the vitiation of all the three Doshas instantaneously.

This rule is nothing but the fifth factor of the digestion process i.e. *Kala* (time). Even in the presence of all other factors, digestion requires time for completion of the process. Hence *Kala* (time) is described as one of the major factor as it brings the maturity of the process of digestion. Vishamashana (intake of food at wrong time), Adhyasthana (intake of excess food), Ajirnashana (intake of food before the digestion of previous food) etc. known causative factors can be included under the title of Akalabhojan (intake of food at wrong time) which is nothing but opposite of Kalabhojana (intake of food at proper time).

v. **Veerya aviruddha ashniyat (Intake of food having no contradictory potencies)**

One should take the food having no contradictory potencies. By taking such food one does not get afflicted with diseases and all the attributes of the food are transformed into the tissue elements. If the properties of food articles are contradictory against each other, one may suffer from the diseases like *Kushtha* (skin disease), *Visarpa* (cellulitis) etc (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005), and also such food ruins the body gradually (Tripathi Ravidutt, 2005).

vi. **Ishta deshe, Ishta sarvopakarane (Intake in proper place and with all accessories)**

*Desha* is such a factor which is to be understood in three ways in relation to food i.e. *Bhoomi* (soil), *Ahara Dravya Desha* (originating place of the food material) and *Atura Desha* (eating place). Here in this context it is mainly related with the latter one. According to Ayurveda an individual should take the food at proper place which is clean and desired. Food consumed at unhygienic or undesired place may disturb the mindset leading to indigestion. In modern science also it has been revealed that hundreds of millions of people are affected by preventable diseases originate in the environment in which they live.

Further one should be equipped with all the necessary equipments while taking the food; because in absence of these, an individual may not be satisfied even with the good quality of food.

vii. **Natidrutam (Intake not in hurry)**

One should not take food too speedily. If food is taken too hurriedly it enters into a wrong passage; it gets depressed and it does not
enter into the stomach properly. In this situation one can never determine the taste of food articles and will lead to improper mixing of Bodhaka Kapha (one among the 5 subtypes of Kapha dosha), which softens the food particles and thereby facilitates the process of digestion. Further, an individual taking food speedily is unable to detect the foreign bodies like hair etc., mixed with food.

viii. Nativilambitam (Intake not too slow)

One should not take food very slowly because this will not give satisfaction to the individual. In this situation he would take more than what is required; the food would become cold and there will be irregularity in the digestion process. Also by taking food very slowly, enzymes responsible for digestion will come late in contact with food and in an irregular manner and this will result in irregular digestion.

The above mentioned two rules (seventh and eighth) are also related with the factor Kala (time). Hence they again emphasize the importance of Kala (time) in digestion process.

ix. Tanmana Bhunjit (Intake with concentration)

One should not talk or laugh or be unmindful while taking food. An individual taking food while talking, laughing or with detracted mind, subjects himself to the same trouble as one eating too hurriedly. In modern dietetics also it is said that, ‘If we eat while we are working or while watching TV or driving, we eat mindlessly and as a result eat a lot more than we would’ (Michael Pollen, 2006).

dx. Atmanamabhisamikshya (Intake with self confidence)

One should take food in a prescribed manner; with due regard to his own self. The knowledge of the usefulness of food articles is the main thing for self-preservation.

Rule number five, six, nine and ten can be understood under the broad heading of ‘Samayoga’ (appropriate intake) which is the last factor necessary for digestion. Samayoga means appropriate intake of the food which brings the equilibrium of Dhatus. In absence of this even the wholesome food is not digested well.

CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda food plays a prominent role in promoting health and is therefore considered medicine. Ayurvedic concept of digestion takes into account many things viz. food, its quantity, place, time, factors affecting it, dietetic rules, digestive factors, Agni etc.; which is the most ideal than any other science. Along with Agni there are many other factors which are found useful for proper digestion and by taking care of which one can eliminate the causes of imbalance. Each and every rule mentioned in Upayogasamstha has very essential role in the perspective of digestion. Conflicts of these rules are directly mentioned as the causative factors for the production of Ama, which is the cause for several diseases. Along with balanced diet, incorporating the dietetic rules in our daily routine can prevent many diseases. All the rules mentioned under ‘Upayogasamstha’ (dietetic rules) strengthen the ‘Aharaparinamakar Bhavas’ (digestive factors). Hence these ten rules are directly related with the ‘Aharaparinamakar Bhavas’ (digestive factors) and govern the digestion process.
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