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Review Article

NUTRITION IN AYURVEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *NITYASEVANEEYA* AND *ANITYASEVANEEYA DRAVYAS*

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ABSTRACT

It is an undeniable fact that food choices make a huge impact on health of an individual. 21st century has witnessed an increase in incidences of non-communicable chronic diseases also known as lifestyle diseases. One of the major factors responsible for it is the unhealthy food habits. Thus, it is the need of the hour to understand more about the right food choices for daily nutrition.

Ayurveda explains about of nutrition under *Pathyapathya*. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of *Pathyapathya* in the maintenance of health as well as management of diseases. *Nityasevaneeya dravyas*, are the food items which are ideal for regular use like green gram *(Mudga)*, ghee *(Go ghruta)*, honey *(Madhu)*. These help to promote and maintain health as well as prevent diseases. At the same time *Anitya sevaneeya dravyas*, are those food articles which are not suitable for regular use like Paneer *(Kurchika)*, curd *(Dadhi)*, black gram *(Masha)*. These food items on regular consumption can lead to many diseases. In this study a detailed review of each drug mentioned under *Nitya sevaneeya* and *Anityasevaneeya dravyas* both in Ayurveda and contemporary science are done. Review indents to highlight the scientific background behind each food article to re-establish their relevance in today's time.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, *Anityasevaneeya dravya*, Curd, Cheese, Ghee, Honey, Lifestyle diseases, Cow's Milk, *Nityasevaneeya dravya*, Paneer, Red meat.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, there has been an alarming increase in lifestyle disorders worldwide due to rapid modernization and increased westernization of lifestyle. The major cause of lifestyle disorders is unhealthy food habits. Hence, it is very important to choose right kind of food in our daily meals in order to maintain health and prevent diseases. And Ayurveda has a vital role to play in this regard.

Ayurveda has explained about nutrition under the heading *Pathyahara* in detail. *Pathya* is that substance or regimen which is favourable to our body and mind whereas *Apathya* is the substance or regimen which is unfavourable to the body and mind.[1]

Ahara is the foremost among the three sub-pillars as per Ayurveda which supports the body.[2] It is said in Charaka Samhita that food is the life energy of living beings and life is sustained by food. It is responsible for the nourishment and strength of a person. In the same way, *Ahita ahara* (unsuitable food) is responsible for diseases. Unsuitable and unwholesome food habits in the causation of a disease have been given great importance and it has been dealt in detail. Thus, the explanation of every disease starts with a detailed description of dietary causes.

Ayurveda, explains in detail about food items that are ideal for regular consumption and those which are not suitable for regular consumption called as *Nityasevaneeya* and *Anitya sevaneeya dravya* respectively[3]. These play a vital role in maintaining the proper nutrition as well as in preventing diseases caused mainly due to unhealthy dietary practices. Further discussion regarding the scientific analysis of these food articles is discussed in this article.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A review of literature about the *Nityasevaneeya* and *Anityasevaneeya dravyas* as mentioned in *Charaka Samhita*. Analysis of these food articles in Ayurvedic and contemporary perspective to re-establish their relevance in today's time.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is a review of each food article under *Nityasevaneeya* and *Anityasevaneeya dravyas* mentioned by Acharya Charaka. The Ayurvedic

review of each drug has been compiled from Ayurvedic literatures- such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hrudaya* along with commentaries. Contemporary review has been collected from scientific journals and research studies conducted on these drugs.

DISCUSSION

Nityasevaneeya dravya are food articles which can be consumed regularly. These add to the daily nutrition to one's body. *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Vagbhatta* have explained about *Nitya sevaneeya dravyas* in detail. These are the substances which on daily consumption, help in maintaining the health and also prevent the manifestation of diseases in the future. They are *Shashtika shali, Mudga, Saidhava lavana, Amalaki, Yava, Antareeksha jala, Go ghruta, Jangala mamsa* and *Madhu*.

Anityasevaneeya dravyas are food items which should not be consumed on a regular basis as these are the foods with potency to vitiate the *Doshas* and cause disease. They are dried meat and vegetables, paneer, cheese, meat of pig, cow, buffalo, curd, black gram and fish.[3]

Analysis on the *Nithya sevaneeya dravyas*

1. *Shashtika shali* (*Oryza sativa* L.)

Shashtika shali is considered as the best among the cereals (*Shuka dhanya varga*).[4] It is *Laghu* (light), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Tridoshahara* (pacifies all 3 *Doshas*) and is *Balaprada* (strengthening).[5] It is proven to have anti-oxidant activity, anti hyperglycemic effect and helps in improving the glycaemic control. It has low glycemic index due to the presence of high amounts of dietary fibre and other polysaccharides such as arabinoxylan and ß-glucan. It is also proven to have anti-hyperlipidemic effect and helps in growth of beneficial bacteria like lactobacillus & bifidobacterium in the gut.[6]

2. *Mudga* (*Vigna radiata* L.)

Mudga is considered as the best among the pulses (*Shami dhanya varga*).[4] It has *Laghu guna*[7] thus it can be easily digested and will not affect metabolism on daily intake. It is an important protein source, as it has high content of protein (25%) in it. It has high fibre content and low glycaemic index of 31. It also has high amount of vitamin C and potassium in it[8].

3. *Saindhava Lavana* (Rock Salt)

Saindhava lavana has got slight *Madhura rasa* (sweet taste) along with *Lavana rasa* (salt taste). It is *Laghu* (light) in nature, *Tridoshahara* (pacifies all 3 *Doshas*) and is *Anushna* in *Veerya* (potency).[9] *Lavana* tends to cause *Pitta prakopa* but due to its *Madhura rasa* (sweet taste) and *Anushna veerya* (mediocre in potency), *Saindhava lavana* does not cause aggravation of *Pitta dosha*. Thus, it is considered as the best choice, among all types of *Lavana* (salts), for daily consumption. Even though it is mentioned under *Nityasevaneeya dravyas*, it should only be consumed in small quantity, i.e., the quantity sufficient for cooking food, as *Lavana* is one among the three drugs which contraindicated to be taken in large quantities (*Trividha atisevaneeya varjya dravyas)*.[3] Rock salt contains 84/92 trace elements including Ca, Zn, Fe, K, Mg, Cu[10]. It is also devoid of free flow agents and other additives like other market available commercial salts.

4. *Amalaki* (*Emblica Officinalis* Gaertn.)

Innumerable health benefits of *Amalaki* are very well known. It is *Tridoshahara* (pacifies all 3 *Doshas*), *Rasayana* (rejuvenating) and best in *Vayasthapana* (delays ageing).[11] It is the richest source of natural Vitamin C. Presence of trace element chromium gives the anti-diabetic effect to *Amalaki*. Chromium enhances insulin function and influences carbohydrate, protein and fat metabolism. Embilicannin A & B are strong anti-oxidants present in *Amalaki* giving it anti-oxidant properties. It is very well known for its immuno modulatory actions[12].

5. *Yava* (*Hordeum Vulgare* Linn.)

Yava is a very important *Dravya* among the *Pathyas*. It is also useful as *Pathya* in many diseases. *Yava* has *Kashaya rasa* (astringent taste), *Ruksha* and *Guru guna* (dry and heavy properties). It also has *Lekhana* (scraping) property.[13] It has anti-diabetic and anti-hyperlipidemic action. Various studies on *Yava* shows, the consumption of *Yava* regularly can give significant results in the management of *Prameha* (Diabetes mellitus) in addition to the medications. Barley has a very low glycemic index and is a great source of soluble fibres β glucan. It is also a rich source of Magnesium and presence of micronutrients like – Vit B6, Vit E, Calcium and Zinc are also found in barley[14].

6. *Antariksha Jala* (Rain Water)

Antariskha jala is considered as the purest water in nature. It is the source of all the water available. It is also devoid of soil pollutants like heavy metals and agricultural chemicals. In this era, as the atmosphere is filled with pollutants it is always better to filter, boil and use rain water.

7. *Ksheera* (Cow's milk)

Ksheera is best among the *Jeevaneeya* (vitalising) category of drugs, it is *Rasayana* (rejuvenating), *Balaprada* (strengthening) and has properties similar to that of *Ojas* (Quintessence of all the tissues as per Ayurveda).[15] It is a rich source of calcium and other minerals like phosphorous, potassium, magnesium, zinc, selenium. Milk also contains both, B group water soluble vitamins (riboflavin and B12) and fat-soluble

vitamins (e.g., A and E) along with essential fatty acids like linoleic acid and alpha linoleic acid[16]. Presence of these constituents makes milk an ideal choice for daily intake to maintain good bone health.

8. *Sarpi* (Cow's Ghee)

Sarpi is *Deepana* (increases digestive fire), increases *Dhi* (discriminating power), *Dhruti* (mental stability), *Smriti* (memory), *Medha* (intellect) and *Bala* (strength)[17]. It contains vitamin A, D, E, K along with CLA, 9 phenolic antioxidant & numerous other minerals. It also contains unsaturated and saturated omega 3 & omega 9 essential fatty acids. Ghee is rich in Butyric acid and other Short Chain Fatty Acids (SCFA)[18]. SCFAs are the main energy source of colonocytes, making them crucial to gastro-intestinal health and butyric acid provides your colon cells with about 70 percent of their total energy needs. Ghee is found to have lipophilic action, facilitating its transport to a target organ and final delivery inside the cell, since the cell membrane also contains lipid. Ghee also triggers fat metabolism thus helps in weight loss. Ghee also helps in reducing the lipid peroxidation, which is the oxidative degradation of lipids in the body[19]. Ghee has got high flash point thus, helps to prevent it from producing free radicals that damage cell function in the process of heating. This makes ghee a better medium for cooking, especially deep frying compared to refined cooking oils.

9. *Jangala Mamsa* (Meat of animals residing in arid regions)

Jangala mamsa has *Laghu guna* (light for digestion), it is *Hrudya* (good for cardiac health) and is *Vatapittahara* (pacifies *Vata* and *Pitta*). Thus, it is easy to digest and does not cause *Ama* (metabolic toxins) in the body[20,21]. Due to these qualities *Jangala mamsa* is included under *Nitya sevaneeya dravya*. But in today's era, meats of many animals which are considered best under *Jangala mamsa* are unavailable. Under this category, *Aja mamsa* (goat meat) can be considered as an ideal choice for regular consumption as it is practically available even today and has unique properties. *Aja mamsa* is neither heavy to digest nor too unctous, does not cause blockage in the channels and is *Brumhana* (nourishing. *Acharya Charaka* and *Vagbhatta* have explained *Aja mamsa* has qualities very similar to the qualities of muscle tissue of human beings. Due to this similarity with human muscle tissue, consumption of *Aja mamsa* does not increase *Kapha dosha* even though it has *Guru* (heavy) and *Snigdha* (unctuous) properties.[22] Thus, it can be understood that *Aja mamsa* is a good choice of meat for regular consumption.

10. *Madhu* (Honey)

Madhu is considered *Agrya* (best) in pacifying *Kapha* and *Pitta*.[23] It has *Ruksha guna* (dry), *Madhura* (sweet) and *Kashaya rasa* (astringent taste), it relieves *Trushna* (thirst) and is *Chakshushya* (beneficial to eyes).[24] The ingredients of honey have been reported to exert antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antiproliferative and anti-metastatic effects. Flavonoids and polyphenols, which act as antioxidants, are two main bioactive molecules present in honey. Honey also contains 31 variable minerals including- Ph, Na, K, Ca, Su, Mg, Cl, Amino acids and proteins and other bioactive constituents. Studies have proven the ability of honey to lower elevated blood glucose, fructosamine and HBA1c. It also showed efficacy to reduce post prandial glycaemic response and to reduce plasma glucose rise compared to dextrose, sucrose and other sweeteners. Honey also has antihyperlipidemic property and helps in weight loss via modulation of appetite regulating hormones such as leptin, ghrelin and peptide.[25]

Analysis on the *Anityasevaneeya dravyas*

1. *Vallura, Shushka shaka* and *Mamsa*

Dried meat and vegetables, meat of emaciated and diseased animals is to be avoided as they do not give any nourishment to the body and will cause aggravation of *Vata* leading to various diseases. Consumption of meat of diseased animals can also be a cause for different infectious diseases.

2. *Shaluka* and *Bisa* (Lotus stem and stalk)

Both lotus stalk and stem are having *Guru guna*.[26] Thus, it is heavy to digest and on continuous intake causes *Agnimandya* (indigestion) and *Ama* (metabolic toxins) leading to different diseases. They might contain parasites, so if not cooked properly, can be detrimental to health.

3. *Kurchika* and *Kilata* (Paneer and Cheese)

These can be correlated to paneer and cheese on the basis of their process of preparation. Both are *Guru* (heavy) in nature and causes *Agnimandya* (indigestion) and *Ama* (metabolic toxins) and vitiates all three *Doshas*.[27] Thus, not advised for daily consumption. According to contemporary research, both are high fat and protein diet, thus are a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases as well as cancer.

4. *Shaukara, Gavya* and *Mahisha mamsa* (Meat of Pig, cow and buffalo)

Meat of pig, cow and buffalo (red meat) is contraindicated to be consumed regularly. They have *Snigdha guna* (unctuous property), and *Guru guna* (heavy for digestion).[28] So, on regular intake they may cause *Agnimandya* (indigestion), *ama* (metabolic

toxins) and *Santarpana janya vikaras* (diseases due to over nourishment).

Many researchers have proven the health hazards of excess red meat consumption. But unfortunately, these are the most consumed type of meat worldwide. Components of red meat like Branched-chain amino acids (BCAA's), Advanced glycation end products (AGE's) and heme iron increases the risk of several chronic diseases like CVD, Type 2 DM, Colorectal cancer etc. The practice of cooking red meat at high temperatures (e.g., pan frying and barbecuing) leads to the production of heterocyclic amines (HAA's) which are thought to increase risk of cancer[29]. Furthermore, several microbial genera promoted by intake of red meat have also been associated with increased levels of trimethylamine-N-oxide (TMAO), a proatherogenic compound that increases risk of cardiovascular disease[30].

5. *Dadhi* (Curd)

Dadhi has *Guru guna* (heavy), it is *Ushna* (hot) in potency and does aggravation of *Kapha* and *Pitta*. It may also cause *Shopha* (swelling) in body[31] and may lead to *Agnimandya janya vikaras* (disorders due to reduced digestive functioning) and diseases caused due to aggravated *Pitta* on regular intake. Due to these reasons, *Acharyas* may have advised to avoid the regular intake of *Dadhi*. Not enough studies are available in contemporary science to prove ill effects of regular consumption of curd.

6. *Masha* (Black gram)

Masha has *Guru* (heavy for digestion) and *Snigdha* (unctuous) properties. It is *Ushna* (hot) in potency and considered as *Agrya* (best) in aggravating *Kapha* and *Pitta*. Thus, it might lead to *Angnimandya janya vikaras* (disorders due to reduced digestive functioning) and disorders due to vitiated *Pitta* and *Kapha*[32]. It is considered as *Apathya* in many diseases such as *Kushta* (skin disorders), *Amlapitta* (Acid peptic disorder).

7. *Matsya* (Fish)

Matsya intensely vitiates *Kapha* and fish varieties like *Chilichima* (prawn/shrimps) causes vitiation of all the three *Doshas*. [33] Hence, *Acharyas* has included *Matsya* under *Anithyasevaneeya dravyas.*

CONCLUSION

Based on current reviews, we can conclude that the food articles under *Nityasevaneeya dravyas* are those substances which are easily digestible and better metabolized. They do not create stress on digestion and thus are ideal for regular consumption. They also add more nutritional value to our diet. Whereas those food articles under *Anityasevaneeya dravyas* can act as causative factor for different diseases as they contain many harmful constituents which are probable risk factors in the development of various diseases.

On the basis of studies conducted on these drugs we can establish the importance of diet and nutrition in Ayurvedic way. These studies help to re-establish the importance of these drugs to live a healthy life and provide proof to already established knowledge in Ayurveda.

It is the need of the hour to take this knowledge to public, as many of the *Anitya sevaneeya dravyas* are regularly consumed in most of the households. Avoiding the causative factors is the first and foremost line of treatment in Ayurveda, hence understanding this knowledge is of great importance for a healthy future.

It is said in the book *Vaidya Jeevanam*, if a person suffering from any disease, strictly follows *Pathya*, he may not require any medicine, but if he does not follow *Pathya*, even medicines maybe fruitless.

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