Dietetics in Ayurveda with special reference to Prakruti

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ABSTRACT

Dietetics can be defined as the branch of knowledge concerned with diet & its effects on health. According to WHO the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. Ayurveda, the "science of life," is a system of medicine that utilizes various therapies including diet, herbal preparations and yoga, to restore harmony and balance within the body. It focuses more on the healthy living and well being. One of the main goals of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a healthy individual and to attain the health in the diseased. As per our Science, of the 3 pillars of health diet is the most important & is responsible for the growth & development of the human body.

One of the important concepts in Ayurveda is “Prakruti”- the innate nature of an individual & is determined at the time of conception itself & remains the same throughout the life. Knowing of prakruti helps in maintaining the health and preventing the diseases. Ayurveda prescribes various foods and lifestyles according to one's Prakruti and suggests that one should follow these guidelines to prevent various disorders and to promote health. In this era of lifestyle disorders in order to improve the quality of life & to bring down the cost of health care one should know about his prakruti & the diet suitable for his body constitution. Hereby this paper is intended to explain the concepts of diet in Ayurveda in a backlight of prakruti.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Diet, Prakruti, Lifestyle disorders

Introduction:

Ayurveda, the "science of life," is a system of medicine that utilizes various therapies including Diet, Yoga, and herbal preparations, to restore harmony and balance within the body. The principles of Ayurveda are based on the concept of Tridoshas- Vata, Pitta and Kapha, the dynamic forces with distinct characteristics that shape all things in the universe¹. Tridoshas are nothing but a combination of Panchamahabhutas- Prithvi, Ap, Theja, Vayu, Akasha in different permutations & combinations.²

In humans, the Doshas control all mental, emotional, and physical functions and responses, and also determine the state of the soul. They produce natural urges and individual preferences in food. They govern the maintenance and destruction of bodily tissue and the elimination of waste products³.

In Mahabharata it is said that from Ahara only all living beings are created & are further nourished⁴. One of the main goals of Ayurveda is to maintain health of a healthy individual⁵. As per the Science, of the 3 pillars of health, Diet(Ahara) is the most important & is responsible for the growth & development of the human body⁶. According to WHO the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. In this era of lifestyle disorders in order to
improve the quality of life & to bring down
the cost of health care one should know
about his Prakruti & the Diet suitable for his
body constitution. Hereby this article is
intended to explain the concepts of diet in
Ayurveda in a back light of Prakruti.

WHAT IS PRAKRUTI??

“Prakruti” a distinctive concept in
Ayurveda is the innate constitution of an
individual. It is the expression of body
functions in the form of morphology,
physiology & behavior of an individual. It is
determined at the time of conception when
the male & female gametes join. The state
of existence of Dohas in dominance in the
Sukra(male) & Aartava(female) during their
union determines the prakruti. The prakruti
formed here will be a qualitative,
quantitative and unchangeable Doshik
predominance from birth to death.

WHY TO KNOW THE PRAKRUTI??

By understanding the individual constitution
of every individual, we know which food
and drink and what type of job, exercise are
appropriate for maintaining their health. If
the constitution is known then herbs, diet&
other regimens including yogic postures can
be advised correctly both for disease
treatment & to promote longevity. A person
is able to prevent various disorders from
developing and is also able to promote his
health by knowledge of his/her Prakruti.
Prakruti plays a very important role on the
onset / occurrence of disease and
management / treatment of a disease. Ayurveda suggests that one should follow
these guidelines to prevent various disorders
and to promote health.

TYPES

According to Ayurveda there are seven
types of Prakruti where a combination of the
three Doshas manifests each individual. They are like

Mono types (Vata, Pitta or Kapha predominant)

Dual types (Vata-Pitta, Pitta-Kapha or, Kapha-Vata)

Equal types (Vata, Pitta and Kapha in equal proportions)

Very few people belong to Ekadoshaja
Prakruti and most of the people belong to
Dwandwaja or Dwidoshaja Prakruti. But for
all practical purposes Vata pradhana, Pitta
pradhana and Kapha pradhana Prakrutis are
considered for diagnostic and physiological
purposes.

HOW TO KNOW ONES PRAKRUTI??

Some of the Physical & Psychological
characters exhibited by each Prakruti is
enlisted in the table given below. Table 1 &
2 by which one can easily assess ones
own Prakruti.

AYURVEDA AND BALANCED DIET

A proper and healthy Diet is a much
discussed topic nowadays. Changing
lifestyles, busy life schedules and the
partiality to junk food and fast food over
home cooked meals, more often disrupt the
entire Dosha balance in the body leading to
diseases. Overeating, skipping meals, eating
overcooked, stale or frozen food can
adversely affect the body constitution.

In Ayurveda diet is based not just on the
nutritional values but also on the Prakruti of
the person. When the body ingests food
based on its Prakruti, the Doshas remain
balanced leading to a healthy body and a
peaceful mind.

Though different kinds of diet are suggested
in Ayurveda, there is no specific diet which
can be said to be ideal for every human body. It is because every human being is unique with his Prakruti. There are various factors that need to be kept in mind while working out the ideal Diet for every individual as it will be distinctly different based on the person's specific constitutional characteristics.

Just like modern science explains balanced diet based on macro and micronutrients. In Ayurveda, one has to look at the Prakruti, Agni, Kostha of a person and Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka of food and also the Rutu(season) for designing an ideal dietary regimen.

**Tables**

**Physical Characteristics (Table 1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>VATA</th>
<th>PITTA</th>
<th>KAPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body Structure</td>
<td>Short/lean</td>
<td>Sensitive body parts</td>
<td>Well built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Parts</td>
<td>Habit of shaking/moving</td>
<td>Excessive body odour</td>
<td>Wide chested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visible prominent blood</td>
<td>Scanty eyelashes</td>
<td>Long limbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vessels &amp; tendons</td>
<td>Eyes appear reddish on exposure to</td>
<td>Wide Prominent eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsteady gaze</td>
<td>sun alcohol or anger</td>
<td>with long eyelashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eyes not completely</td>
<td>Coppery coloured palate, lips, tongue</td>
<td>Fleshy body parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>closed during sleep</td>
<td>&amp; sole</td>
<td>Large forehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rough palm &amp; sole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>Tendency for cracking</td>
<td>Tendency for yellowish</td>
<td>Soft/unctuous skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; tanning of skin</td>
<td>discolouration</td>
<td>Cold in touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cold in touch</td>
<td>Hot in touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presence of multiple moles/birth marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>Scanty hair on scalp &amp;</td>
<td>Scanty hair on scalp &amp; body</td>
<td>Stiff hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>body</td>
<td>Brownish/blond hair</td>
<td>Curly hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rough/dry hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>Rough/dry/uneven</td>
<td>Coppery colored</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joints</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deep &amp; well lubricated joints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Alert Sleep</td>
<td>Less sleep</td>
<td>Excessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Dry/hoarse</td>
<td>Commanding</td>
<td>Pleasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Quick/restless</td>
<td>Motivated/purposeful</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Psychological features (Table 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VATA</th>
<th>PITTA</th>
<th>KAPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Have a meticulous approach towards studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick in grasping things but fails</td>
<td>Neat &amp; tidy</td>
<td>Slow in understanding things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to retain for long</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily susceptible to happiness/</td>
<td>Tendency to be angry on</td>
<td>Not easily susceptible to happiness/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sorrow/ grief / likes &amp; dislikes</td>
<td>slightest provocation</td>
<td>sorrow/ grief / likes &amp; dislikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Easily Prone to jealousy  Cannot endure stressful activities  Has a good endurance to stress
Has less number of friends/associates  Likes hearing praises/pleasing things about him  Very popular among friends/associates

### VATA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eat more</th>
<th>Eat less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereals like Rice, wheat</td>
<td>Barley, corn, millet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses like Black gram, Horse gram</td>
<td>Green gram, Bengal gram, lentil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables like radish, sweet potato, onion, pumpkin, spinach</td>
<td>Leafy vegetables, Snakegourd, Cabbage, Brinjal, Bittergourd, cucumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits like gooseberry, grapes, banana, dates, apple, pineapple, pomegranate</td>
<td>Pear, melon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices like Asafoetidea, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, cumin, garlic, coriander</td>
<td>Turmeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of cow, goat, buffalo etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk, ghee, curd, buttermilk, butter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils like sesame oil, mustard oil, coconut oil</td>
<td>Corn oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of goat, buffalo etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PITTA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eat more</th>
<th>Eat less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereals such as rice, wheat, barley, millet</td>
<td>Cereals such as corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses like greengram bengal gram</td>
<td>Pulses such as black gram, horsegram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee, butter, fresh curd, milk</td>
<td>sour buttermilk and curd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables such as snakegourd, bittergourd, Brinjal, Cabbage, Spinach</td>
<td>radish, onion, sweet potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits such as gooseberry, grapes, apple, dates pomegranate, banana</td>
<td>citrusfruits, peach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices such as coriander, turmeric</td>
<td>Spices such as cumin, garlic, pepper, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, asafoetida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils like Sesame oil, Coconut oil, sunflower oil</td>
<td>Almond, corn, mustard oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat of goat, buffalo</td>
<td>Sea fish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### KAPHA PRAKRUTI DIET (Table 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eat more</th>
<th>Eat less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereals and grains like rice, barley, corn, millet</td>
<td>Cereals like Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses like Bengal gram, Horse gram, Greengram</td>
<td>Pulses like Black gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables like Brinjal, radish, Snake gourd, Bittergourd, Cabbage</td>
<td>ash gourd, Onion, sweet potato, cucumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices like Asafoetida, Black pepper, Cloves, Coriander, Cumin, Turmeric, Cardamom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fruits
Gooseberry, grapes, pomegranate, papaya, Lemon
Apple, pineapple, Banana, Dates, ripe mango, plum, orange

Diary products like Buttermilk
Curd, ghee, milk, butter

Oils like Sesame oil
Oils like Coconut oil,
Groundnut oil, Sunflower Oil

Meat of goat
Meat of buffalo, fish

Relationship between Agni & Prakruti

Agni of a person is an imperative factor which should be looked into before advising a diet plan. Agni represents the digestive capacity and power. A proper Agni is one of the most important indications of good health. Foods that have a greater amount of Teja Mahabhuta increase The Agni and those that have a greater amount of Jala or Prithvi tend to decrease the Agni.

In VATA PRAKRUTI-VISHAMAGNI appetite will be variable in nature, so the time required for digestion and characteristic features of digestion will vary because of the Vishma Agni.

In PITTA PRAKRUTI-TEEKSNAGNI the appetite will be good and strong and the digestion will be quick due to Teekshna Agni.

In KAPHA PRAKRUTI- MANDAGNI the appetite will be relatively lesser and digestion will be slow and the person can even skip a meal without undue discomfort.

Relation between Rasa & Prakruti

The diet of a person should contain the Gunas(characteristics) and Rasas(taste) which will keep the Doshik balance of the body in equilibrium. The food consumed by a person should comprise of those Rasas in large quantity that are opposite to the innate nature of Dosha that forms his Prakruti.

VATA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Tikta, Katu, Kashaya Rasa in him so his diet should be consisting of Madhura, Amla, Lavana Rasa. PITTA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Katu, Amla, Lavana Rasa so his diet should be rich in Madhura, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa.

KAPHA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Madhura, Amla, Lavana in him so balanced diet for Kapha Prakruthi should be one that is rich in Katu, Tikta, Kashaya Rasa.

Relation between Guna & Prakruti

The food consumed by a person should comprise of those Gunas in large quantity that are opposite to the innate nature of Dosha that forms his Prakruti.

VATA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Ruksha, Laghu, Seeta etc Gunas in him so his diet should be consisting of Snigdha, Guru, Ushna etc Gunas.

PITTA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Snigdha, Teekshna, Ushna etc Gunas so his diet should be rich in Ruksha, Manda, Ushna etc Gunas.

KAPHA PRAKRUTI person will have dominance of Snigdha, Seeta, Guru etc Gunas in him so balanced diet for Kapha Prakruti should be one that is rich in Ruksha, Manda, Ushna etc Gunas.
The diet chart for each Prakruti is listed out in tables 3,4,5 considering the Rasas & Gunas suitable for each Prakruti.

**Conclusion:**

Improper dietary habits are the primary reason for the increasing trend of health disorders in the current era. Every human being is unique therefore considerations on Ahara should also be unique to that individual. Ahara when taken in proper quantity at proper time following all Niyamas contributes to health. More over in this era of lifestyle disorders one should know his Prakruti and the diet suitable for him inorder to improve the quality of life & bring down the cost of health care. Last but not the least one should always keep in mind , “eat healthy & live healthy,” and healthy diet and healthy life can only be possible by knowing his Prakruthi and the diet that is best suited for it.

**References:**


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