

Concept Of Salutariness In Ayurveda With Specialreference To Aahar (Food)

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ABSTRACT:- New data from World Health Organization (WHO) reveals the growing problem of food borne illness around the world. Around 351000 deaths occurred in the year 2010 due to food poisoning. With the kind of health risks that are posed to the human race today, it has become vital to stay as hygienic as possible. Hygiene is a habit that needs to be focused on and it need not be restricted to our bodies alone; it needs to be maintained in our intakes and surroundings also. Concept of food hygiene is not new to Ayurveda. The importance of hygienic food and hazardous effects of unhygienic food are deliberately described in the ancient texts. Since ancient times our *Aacharyas* were aware of these facts, they stressed upon the hygiene. One can find the roots of today's methods of procuring, storing, processing and cooking of foods in the ancient literatures. Presently various sanitation methods, preservatives and methods of food preparations are having the impact on the immunity and are leading to hazardous effects on health therefore the development of the food hygiene practice should be based on traditional methods which are being followed since thousands of years.

KEYWORDS: Food cooking, Food hygiene, Salutariness, Standards of food selection

I. INTRODUCTION

With the kind of health risks that are posed to the human race today, it has become vital to stay as hygienic as possible. In fact, most of the new-world diseases like bird flu and swine flu have been attributed to lack of hygiene. Hygiene is a habit that needs to be focused on and it need not be restricted to our bodies alone; it needs to be maintained in our intakes and surroundings also. Adequately hygienic food is necessary for maintaining the health and vitality of an individual because food also acts as an important vehicle for transmission of the diseases. Food material is prone to contamination at different stages of its journey from the producer to the consumer. Therefore food related hygiene is foremost important because it can create significant hazards if neglected. Concept of food hygiene is not new to Ayurveda. The importance of hygienic food and hazardous effects of unhygienic food are deliberately described in the ancient texts. Since ancient times the *Aacharyas (monks)* were aware of these facts, they stressed upon the hygiene of kitchen, food storage, personal hygiene of the cook and other workers. One can find the roots of today's methods of procuring, storing, processing and cooking of foods in the ancient literatures. Presently various sanitation methods, preservatives and methods of food preparations are having the impact on the immunity and are leading to hazardous effects on health therefore the development of the food hygiene practice should be based on traditional methods which are being followed since thousands of years.

II. THE BENEFITS OF SALUTARINESS

- 2.1 To avoid the contamination of food so that it can be used further without any doubt.
- 2.2 To stop the multiplication of the organisms by stopping their growth or simply by killing them
- 2.3 To avoid the harmful chemical reactions that occurs in the food causing toxicity of the food

III. CONCEPT OF FOOD HYGIENE IN AYURVEDA

Aahar (diet) is the cause of existence of every living being on the earth. From *Aahar* (diet) one can get *Abhivruddhi* (growth), *Bala* (energy), *Aarogya* (well-being), *Varna* (complexion), *Indriya prasadana* (proper functioning of sense organs) and *Oja* (immunity ultimate)^[1]. *Aahar vaishamya* (improper diet) is the cause of *Aswasthya* (illness)^[2]. According to *Acahrya Charak* everything depends on *Aahar* (diet)^[3]. Reviewing all the above quotes it is certain that *Aahar* (diet) is the prime requirement of the human being and without proper food one can become ill or even die.

The consideration of hygiene is deeply rooted in the ancient Ayurvedic practices. Taking in to consideration the importance of salutariness, detailed description is found regarding the standard kitchen, the cleanliness of workers from kitchen and so on. The basic starts from the collection of clean food material, for this the *grahyagrahyatwa* (standards of food selection) of food material is given. Next the purification processes are given to remove impurities and lastly the procedures to slow down the effect of *kaal* (time) are given. *Grahyagrahyatwa* (standards of food selection) and purification are important before preparation of food materials while procedures for slowing down *kaal* (time) effect are important in procuring the food. Many *Aacharyas* (monks) have told techniques like cooking, heat and sun drying, use of oils and spices, use of sugar and fermentation etc. These techniques are useful to avoid the degenerative changes in food that occurs as result of *kaal* (time). Other important factors described which are to be taken in to consideration are as follows

3.1 The *Mahanasa* (Kitchen)

The kitchen should be spacious and clean. It should not be easily accessible (should be hidden). Servants in the kitchen should be loyal. Anti poisonous drugs should be available in the kitchen^[4].

3.2 Guidelines regarding food cooking

3.2.1. There are few food items which are not required to be sanitized and can be used after few cleaning like fruits and nuts etc. but most of the items has to be thoroughly cleaned and cooked. In cooking there is need of heat of deferent temperatures which kills the organisms and spores which infects the food and causes illness. This is the oldest technique of disinfection.

3.2.2. Clean utensils should be used for cooking. The food to be cooked should be thoroughly washed and properly cooked^[5]

3.2.3. Whenever the pot is not specified earthen pots should be used^[6]. The porous nature of earthen pots allows the moisture and oils to circulate freely in the utensils. The alkaline nature of the clay neutralizes the acidic contents of the food making it more delicious and safe. Always use glazed utensils, especially the brass and copper.

3.2.4. The quote from *Ashtanga Hridaya* that includes the hair and nail cutting guidelines^[7]. The reason behind this is the personal hygiene. Dirt from the nails and falling hairs can make the food infected.

3.2.5. The time of consumption of cooked food is well defined. After the specified time the food is unfit for eating.

3.2.6. The specific metal utensils are described for cooking the foods and storing^[8].

TABLE: Food substances and their storing material.

Substances	Utensils for storing / serving
<i>Ghee</i> (clarified butter)	Iron
Drinks, soups and other liquids	Silver
Fruits and other dry main cores	Banana leaves
Dry and curd or buttermilk marinated food	Gold
Water	Copper
Alcohol and elixirs	Earthen pots

3.3 *Grahyagrahyatwa* (standards for selection) of food

Ancient Ayurvedic literature contains the defined standards for the selection of food. The sub standards should not suppose to be consumed. Those ancient guidelines given are still applicable.

3.3.1 Cereals, vegetables and fruits

Cereals and vegetables that are not fresh, infested by pests, grown on unhealthy land and grown in season other than its natural season that have not properly ripened or are over ripe should not be consumed. Similar conditions are applicable for cereals also^[9].

3.3.2 Milk

Milk having foul smell, taste, color and in which curdling appears, should not be used. Milk should be boiled before use as raw milk kept for long time gets spoiled and unfit for use. Milk along with other liquids is advised to be served in utensils made of silver. Ability of silver particles to kill bacteria is well established in modern era too.

3.3.3 Meat

Meat of animals that died self - death due to age or disease, that is very lean or very fatty, too young or very old, died due to poison, the one that was reared in unfavorable habitat kept on unhealthy diet, meat that is dry, putrefied, foul smelling should not be consumed. This leads to various conditions like nausea and gastric upset^[10]. Dried meat can cause anorexia, rhinitis and its heavy to digest^[11]. In Ayurvedic texts meat is advised to be properly processed using oil, *Ghrit* (clarified butter), *kanji* (fermented cereals), buttermilk, spices like long pepper and black pepper^[12]. This not only makes it palatable and easy to digest but also increases its shelf life.

3.4 Contra indications for food Food given by enemies, food provided at *Yadnya* (holi sacrifices), *Panchayat* (village committee), *Veshya* (sex workers), *Panik* (small vendors) should be avoided. Food whose manufacturing source is unknown should be avoided^[13]

3.5 Storage of the raw material

After the procurement of raw material due emphasis is given on its proper storage to protect it from contamination. Food grains and other dry substances like spices should be kept in a tight container placed well above the ground to protect it from fire, water, smoke, dust, rodents and other pests Store should be fumigated regularly with aromatic incense sticks^[14]. 3.6 Food cooking and serving The description of *Mahanasa* (Kitchen) is given in detailed. Importance has been given to the place where the food is cooked. Kitchen should be clean and spacious. Obedient workers accompanying the master chef should prepare the food and keep it in clean place^[15]. Freshly prepared, clean and hygienic food is to be served^[16]. In ancient time, rules for serving food were also very specific and elaborated. According to the food items vessels were chosen so that to avoid harmful contamination/reactions and also to promote hygiene. Dining area should be situated in corner, beautified with aromatic flowers, clean and hygienic decorum is maintained regarding the positioning. During preparing and serving food various combinations are described which should be avoided in order to avoid the toxicity. This is a unique concept of Ayurveda termed as *Viruddha-Ahara* (incompatible food).^[17]

IV. DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda the diet plays a very delicate role for maintenance. It is included in three pillars of life. Many of the times, same food which provides the necessary nutrition and energy, if not processed properly, may get contaminated and may provide some unwanted elements, organisms and cause the disease. Though modern science has made much advancement in food, nutrition and dietetics and the hygiene regarding the food or food sanitation is not a new concept. Detailed descriptions regarding the topic are available in the classical texts of Ayurveda. It gives importance to minute details regarding food like how the raw material is obtained, what should be the quality of food, how it should be processed, whether the food is prepared, served and consumed in right manner or not. Similarly properties of food articles along with various methods to procure, store, process and serving it are also discussed. Personal hygiene along with the cleanliness of the kitchen and dining area are dealt in detail. Use of different types of utensils is mentioned to prevent the contamination due to heavy metals and also to enhance the properties of food. Silver was preferred because of its antibacterial properties. Food substances that may react with metals were served in stone vessels. Table manners are explained and food presentations were done in systematic way. Food hygiene not only deals with procuring and preparation of hygienic food but it also deals with how the food is used by the consumer. Food prepared with all the cautions may also turn unhealthy and may produce toxins if improper combinations are made. *Viruddh ahara* (opposite compositions) concept is very unique concept of Ayurveda. Thus we must ensure that due importance was given to food hygiene along with its properties. This aspect helps in fulfilling the foremost aim of Ayurveda, '*swasthasya rakshnam*' (persuing healthy state). Food given by enemies can be hazardous for health. Food provided at *Panchayat* (village committee) can be unhealthy as it is prepared from the charity done by the people. The mass manufacturing of food is also tending to contaminate as many people are involved in the cooking process. Food from sex worker should be avoided as she might be carrying any disease which may transmit trough food. In short one can get complete guidelines regarding each and every aspect of food.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Scientific description of food hygiene is given in Ayurveda. Various methods that have to be followed in order to maintain proper hygienic conditions are given in the classical texts. In recent years modern concepts of food and nourishment has also been developed in a scientific manner. Ayurvedic overview on the subject can help it grow further and ultimately will benefit the mankind.

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