

Health Tips from The Vedas



A Compilation of Articles from
"Akhand Jyoti"

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Preface

Ayurveda – the Vedic Science of Health, is being seen by many as the leading mode of Alternative and Complementary Medicine and Therapy in the future because of its comprehensive approach to the mind-body system. In the ancient times Ayurveda was found effective in inducing *kāyākalpa* (transformation of a diseased or weak body into a young vigorous one) and providing longevity of youthful health and charm. The polluted environment and inability of people to stick to the ascetic disciplines desired for *kāyākalpa* certainly restrain such magical effects in the modern times. However, the holistic healthcare and natural healing offered by this ancient medical science continue to justify its importance in several respects. Moreover, *yoga* is an integral part of the total healthcare approach under this Vedic Science. Applications of the rapidly becoming popular choice of herbal therapies would also be incomplete without the knowledge of the original science of these emanated from the Vedas – the Ayurveda. This perhaps is the main reason why more and more people, not only in India but also across the globe, are getting attracted towards Ayurveda.

The holistic approach of Ayurveda pays attention to every aspect of life. It gives us practical guidance on the secrets of perfect health, which lie in its principle of ‘living in complete harmony with our natural system’. It is amazing to note that the recommendations made in the Ayurvedic scriptures ages ago remain valid and effective even today. The ancient experts of this Vedic science had compiled a volume entitled “*Swastha Vrattha Sammucchaya*” to describe the methods of prevention of sickness and maintenance of health under changing conditions of weather, place, time, etc. This book on Health-Tips from the Vedas gives the excerpts – most relevant in today’s context — from such scriptures for our ready-reference. If we could adopt even a fraction of these in our daily life, lot of our time and money would be saved from running around the clinics and dispensaries in our hectic and stress-inducing schedules.

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Yoga & Ayurveda

The world, at the peak of scientific and technological advancement is not able to reach the much sought for goal of progress, which is happiness. Even the crucial front of healthcare is facing adversities and challenges without any definite support. Increasing health hazards and stresses on the one hand, and inability of single-tracked, reductionist approaches of modern medical science on the other have made it necessary to investigate holistic health management incorporating complementary therapies^[1-4]. Yoga and the Vedic medical science – Ayurveda show us the silver line of hope in resolving the crisis. This book aims to introduced the readers with practical guidelines from Ayurveda to enable them enjoy healthier and happier life by simple efforts.

Both Yoga and Ayurveda are scientific disciplines of Vedic knowledge revealed for the welfare of mankind and hence of every entity in Nature. While Yoga is the science of consciousness, Ayurveda is the science of its physical manifestation in life forms. The principles and theories of Yoga emanate from the deeper science of Soul-Spirit and Supreme Consciousness. Ayurveda deals with the Vedic medical science of diagnostics, therapeutics and maintenance of total health. Yoga focuses on refinement and evolution of the individual self and presents a comprehensive science of *sādhana* practices for this purpose. Healthy and hearty state of the mind-body system is the major focus of Ayurveda. Sound health and purity of the body and mind is a prerequisite for *yoga-sādhana* practices and therefore Yoga also encompasses the methods of maintenance and enhancement of mental and physical vigor by vital spiritual energy. Thus, these two Vedic sciences share common objectives and are mutually complimentary in some respects.

Some scholars opine that Yoga is an integral part of Ayurveda since its inception. According to them, Yoga-science seems to have been developed in order to study the mind and mental health up to the deepest depths of the inner-self; this would have eventually evolved into a separate branch of Vedic sciences. Their argument is based on the implications of the ancient Ayurvedic scripture “Charak Sanhita”. According to the descriptions in this scripture, the gist of *yoga-shastra* was present in the eternal knowledge of Ayurveda, which is a sub-Veda. However, despite this interpretation and belief, most scholars regard Ayurveda and Yoga having evolved separately in the same Age and in the same country – namely in the Vedic Age and in India. The Vedic sages-scientists (*rishis*) are revered as the founders of the principles and theories of both and also as the investigators of their practical applications.

Dr. Ramharsh Singh highlights the interrelation of Yoga and Ayurveda in his scholarly volume entitled “Swastha Vrattha Vigyaan”. According to him Ayurveda is a comprehensive Vedic medical science, which encompasses multiple dimensions of wellbeing – including the foundational pillars of duty-bound, progressive and fulfilling life viz. – *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokśa*. In the same context, he also elaborates that Yoga primarily aims at spiritual evolution of consciousness; elevation of human self from the confined peripheries of a ego-bound mortal being towards the high realms of divine enlightenment. Ayurveda is a total science of life in the soul’s worldly existence and expansion, whereas Yoga is a highly specialized science pertaining to specific, namely spiritual facets of life.

The incorporation of the teachings and practices of Yoga and Ayurveda had been prominent in the ancient Indian society of the prehistoric times. Both the streams of invaluable knowledge were quite advanced in the early Vedic Age – the Rigveda period; both had flourished independently. There is no scriptural description of their overlap or interdependent development in the Vedic Age. The focus seems to have shifted to their

interdependent aspects and collective use only in the post-Vedic period.

The Yajurveda mentions a great deal on attainment of ultimate knowledge by *yoga-sāadhanās*. Mental concentration and engrossment of mind all the time in deep meditation upon God are emphasized here. Ayurveda is referred in this Veda as a healing science; certain divine medicinal plants and qualities of expert *Vaidyas* (devoted experts of Ayurvedic medicines) are also cited in the Yajurveda. These descriptions also affirm the development of Yoga and Ayurveda as independent and complete sciences in themselves – Yoga as the supreme science of ultimate spiritual accomplishments and Ayurveda as the holistic science of healthy life and wellbeing. Thus, as per this Veda, there appears to be no direct association between the two despite common and implicit objective of mental and emotional purity and peace.

The tradition of Yoga in the Samaveda is focused more on attainment of divine light. The teachings on Yoga explain here – how a yogi reaches the highest state of spiritual knowledge and self-realization by rigorous practices of *yoga-sāadhanās*. It also describes the methods of yoga-trance for linkage of the inner self with the Almighty. As per the philosophy and science of Yoga highlighted here, the yogis attain desired spiritual purification and potentials by different kinds of *yoga-sāadhanās* and gradually focus the scattered and diversified mental power and attention by trance-meditation to unify it with the impulse of omnipresent supreme Consciousness Force.

Ayurveda is independently described here (in the teachings of Samaveda) with reference to the analysis of different herbal medicines and their therapeutic effects. Plant medicines (herbs) are also likened here with food grains that are essential for sustenance of vigorous life; it is further advised here to take some of these in appropriate quantities everyday like other food-ingredients.

The Atharveda cites Yoga as a means of absolute salvation and the success of the *tapa* of the yogis is prayed for in the hymns here. The diagnostics of Ayurveda are elucidated here with emphasis on identification and removal of the root-causes of the diseases as part of its holistic healing approach. Yoga, as described here is the method of uprooting all ego-centric urges, vices, worries, and fears of the lower false-self.

According to the Atharveda (teachings), dedicated adoption of the disciplines and practices of *yoga-sādhanās* leads to controlling the *prāṇa* (vital spiritual energy, life-force) and attainment of supramental knowledge by its elevation. Enlightenment of the inner-self by elevated force of *prāṇa* gradually helps accomplishing higher levels of *sādhanā* and attainment of absolute knowledge of the soul. This is how a yogi reaches the ultimate unalloyed blissful state of beatifying realization of the *Brahm* – Eternal, Omnipresent Supreme Consciousness Force and Bliss.

Ayurveda is dealt in great detail in the Atharveda. In fact, Atharveda is also considered as the origin of this sub-Veda. Apart from detailed description and guidelines on the philosophy and comprehensive approach of this natural science of healing, rare knowledge of many medicinal herbs is also revealed in Atharveda. Paeans of the divine (healing) properties of several herbs are sung in its hymns. The major herbs cited here include – *Shyama*, *Rohini*, *Prashniparni*, *Pippali*, *Apamarg*, etc. Remarkably, this Veda also mentions the existence of germs (microbes) that infect and malign air, water and body and spread several diseases. The methods of destroying them and curing the diseases by mantras are discussed in this context. This mention of mantra-based therapy indicates an intersection between Yoga and Ayurveda.

The post Vedic scriptures – like the Upanishads and Brahmanas – describe the independent development and applications of Yoga and Ayurveda in greater detail, together with highlighting

certain aspects that correspond to their mutually supplementary nature. The philosophy and science of Yoga dealt in the Upanishads takes in its sweep mind and body systems as well, while keeping the major focus on the sublime domains of consciousness. In the former respect it is concordant with the philosophy and principles of Ayurveda. In particular, the Upanishads analyze multiple dimensions of Yoga and its linkage with human life at its deepest depths. Different *yoga-kriyās*¹ and their effects are discussed here at great length together with the *yoga-sādhana*s.

The individual self, its manifestation in the world and allied aspects of life, and also its sublime origin together with immortality of the soul and its unification with the *Brahm* – all are discussed here in a logical and scientific manner. The Upanishads are indeed masterpieces of the majestic knowledge and enlightened acumen of the Vedic Rishis. Ayurvedic science is also cited here in the context of the gross manifestation of the individual self as a living being in the physical world. Its (material) scientific aspects, philosophy as well as techniques and modes of healing are described here, indicating the astonishing advancement of Ayurvedic research and remedial procedures by that time. For example, the mention of cutting an organ of Rishi Atharvana and its replacement by that of a horse in an Upanishad signifies sufficient development and successful use of surgery and organ-transplant technology in Ayurvedic developments of that time.

Among all Upanishads, the Kathopinashad explains the science of yoga in minutest detail. Like the methods (e.g. *virechana*) of cleansing the body system – regularly at specific time intervals of weeks or months and before medication – essentially prescribed under Ayurveda for sustenance of good health, Yoga also lays emphasis on bodily and mental refinement and control. The Yoga principles and practices of *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma* fall under this category pertaining to the physical body, and external activities of mind and behavioral disciplines.

The internal Yoga methods of *Dhyāna*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Pratyāhāra* and *Samādhi* supplement the requirement of inner purification for spiritual evolution of the self and eventual realization of *Brahm*.

Ayurveda and Yoga both signify the importance of clean body (externally and internally) and pure mind for higher-level attainments – be that vigorous health, supernormal potentials or enlightenment of consciousness. The *Yama-Niyama* of Yoga, as described in the Upanishads are equivalent in their effects to the *Sadvratas* referred in the scriptures of Ayurveda. The *Āsana-Charakas* prescribed in the Ayurvedic scripture by Rishi Charak are very similar to the physical exercises of *Yoga-Āsanas*. These findings indicate that despite being originated and developed independently and for distinct purposes, both these streams of Vedic Sciences share a lot in common. The “Trishikh Bindu-Upanishad” presents the similarity between their principles.

The “Smritis” preach adoption of *Yama-Niyama* as integral part of Dharma (Righteous Living). Of the eight *Yama-Niyamas* of the Asthang Yoga, *Bramcharya* – chastity of body, mind and character – is referred as of utmost importance for protection and growth of vital spiritual energy; the same is stressed for physical and mental vigor in Ayurveda as well. Ayurveda underlines *Brahmcharya* as a universal source of protection and remedy against all infirmities and diseases. The ‘Smritis’ also describe the properties and use of herbal medicines prescribed under Ayurveda. The Puranas fall in the same tradition and deal with both Yoga and Ayurveda. Research on the scriptures and teachings of later times further affirm the importance of Yoga and Ayurveda and highlight their similarities and coherence in several respects.

The Valmiki Ramayana cites Yoga in the context of *tapa*³ for mental peace and enlightenment. The mention of miraculous medicinal plants (like the life-saving herb “Sanjeevani” which was brought from the Himalayas by Hanuman) and surgery in its several episodes indicates the advanced state of (Ayurvedic)

medical science at that time. Mahabharata and Bhagvad Gita teach the philosophy of Yoga in a scientific and practical manner. Yoga (word meaning “union”) is described here as the union of the *Jīva* (individual ego-bound self) and the *Brahm*. The *yoga-kriyās* effectuate the control of the perpetually oscillating and unstable tendencies of the mind and thus open the path to salvation. Knowledge of the Nishkama Karma-Yoga is the most distinct and precious gift of Bhagvad Gita to mankind. On the Ayurvedic side, Mahabharata highlights several kinds of mental disorders and toxic effects and their remedies. There is a systematic discussion on surgical means and mantra-therapy and mention of experts in these fields in India those days. Ashtanga Ayurveda is a unique gift of that Age, which augmented the synergy of Yoga and Ayurveda.

Attainment of Bodhisatva is the ultimate objective of the Buddhist Yoga. Lord Buddha preferred Ashtanga path of Yoga instead of the Hatha-Yoga. The healthy and calm state of mind and body is essential for success along this path. Therefore, the Buddhist monks are taught to make use of specific medicines for calming the mind. In several episodes of the Buddhist scriptures like “Vinay Patak” there is mention of use of ancient medicinal practices for healing. The “Jainagama” scriptures of Jainism cite the eight major components of contemporary Ayurveda and its therapeutic approach. Ayurvedic experts (Vaidyas) are termed “Pranacharyas” here. Yoga in Jainism is largely a system of *sādhana* practices for spiritual transmutation. It is also referred here as the source of absolute control over mind and body. The need of an adept guide (guru) is emphasized here for guidance in both the disciplines.

Simultaneous propagation of both Yoga and Ayurveda was witnessed through the Gupta period up till pre-medieval era. The “Charak Samhita” and the “Yoga Sutras” both were the guiding treatises for joint development and applications of both the sciences. However, with the compilation of more specialized volumes like Ashtang Sangrah and Ashtang Hradaya,

Ayurveda became principally the science of diagnostics and therapeutics; the complementary applications of Yoga became a specific subject of study here. Yoga also flourished with multiple branches, though converging to ultimate focus on spiritual elevation in the later ages.

The scriptural descriptions of the Vedic and post-Vedic times and scholarly works of the later ages glorify the immense contributions made by both Ayurveda and Yoga towards the bodily, mental and spiritual wellbeing and ascent of mankind. We can benefit from these teachings and practices even today and enjoy the nectar of purposeful and fulfilling life. Interdisciplinary research in modern sciences has opened up new horizons of technological advancement. The same is also being attempted for the medical sciences towards the goal of total health today. Comprehensive approach based on natural coherence and common roots of Yoga and Ayurveda offers promising results in this regard. The Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya, Shantikunj, Hardwar has initiated innovative courses in its post-graduate teaching programmes in Yoga and Ayurveda as a laudable step in this direction.

Notes:

1. ***Yoga-kriyās***– practices of yoga performed physically – incorporating both mind and body – e.g. certain *prāṇāyāms* with mental engrossment on the subtle sound of rhythmic breath, etc.
2. ***Prāṇāyāma***– A *yoga*-exercise of controlled breathing aimed at augmenting and harmonizing the flow of *prāṇa* (vital, spiritual energy; life-force).
3. ***Tapa***– devout ascetic practices and self-imposed penance for spiritual purification of body, mind an inner-self.



Unique Approach of Ayurveda: Relevance & Necessity in Healthcare Today

Ayurveda – the ancient Indian medical - science is believed to be the oldest repository of diagnostic, pharmaceutical and therapeutic knowledge. This Vedic science draws upon an integral approach to healthcare by considering the physical, mental and deep emotional well being simultaneously. It encompasses thorough knowledge of the *Ādhibhautik* (physical, pertaining to the gross body), *Ādhidaivik* (mental, emotional and *prāṇic*, pertaining to the subtle body) and *Ādhyatmik* (spiritual, pertaining to the astral body) aspects of health. No other branch of ancient or modern disciplines of medical sciences, perhaps, has such deep and expanded foundations as *Ayurveda* has. This ancient science of medicine enfolds the secrets of youthful longevity and is therefore also referred as a comprehensive science of happy and hearty life.

The rising graph of psychosomatic disorders and challenging diseases and the limitations of the widely used modern medical sciences in coping with them on the one hand, and the risks of harmful side-effects of antibiotics and synthesized drugs on the other, have revived new interest in this ancient science. The preventive and remedial measures derived under Ayurveda deal with multidimensional complexities and problems of human life and provide solutions in perfect harmony with Nature. It is therefore most relevant and promising towards achieving total health in the present times as well. The *Shastric* scriptures on Ayurveda define it as –

*Hitāhitam Sukham Duhkhamāyustasya Hitahitam |
Mānanca Tacca Yatroktamāyurvedaḥ Sa Ucyate ||*

Meaning: The grand treatise, which contains the details of healthy and long age (*āyu*) and which defines what is good (*hita*) and what is bad (*ahita*) for the four different types of *āyus* (namely, *hitāyu*, *ahitāyu*, *sukhāyu* and *dukhāyu*, concerning different conditions of diseased or healthy life) – is Ayurveda.

The basic purpose of Ayurvedic knowledge is cited in the *Shastrik* literature as –

Swasthasya Swāstharakṣaṇamā ĩ Turasya Vikāra Praśamanam Ca |

Meaning: Ayurveda aims at the protection and maintenance of good health of the healthy people and elimination of and control over the ailments and health-disorders of the unhealthy.

The following are the signs of a healthy person according to Ayurveda:

Samadoṣaḥ Samāgniśca Samadhātumala Kriyaḥ |
Prasannātmendriyamanāḥ Swastha Ityabhidhīyate ||

Meaning: Only that person is healthy, whose *doṣas*, *dhātumala* and *agni* (the basic elements and functional energy streams as per one's natural constitution or *prakṛati*) are balanced and free from all defects and disorders and whose mind and soul are in perfect harmony.

The above definition conveys comprehensive and complete approach of the *rishis* who founded this great science of medicine and total health.

A hymn in the Ayurveda scriptures says –

Dharmārtham Nārthakāmārthamāyurvedo Maharṣibhiḥ |
Prakāśito Dharma Parairicchadbhiḥ Sthānamakṣaram ||

Meaning: The great *rishis* – the devoted seekers of God, the scientists of ultimate knowledge, the true followers of eternal religion – had developed Ayurveda for pure altruistic purpose (of human welfare) and not for any materialistic gain.

Thus, with its very purpose and approach Ayurveda is so different as compared to today's medical sciences where healthcare management, treatment of patients has become a profession, a source of making huge money.

In spite of having higher health conscience as compared to their parents and grand parents, people at large are draining their vitality and vigor due to undisciplined life-style and sensual pleasures; their wrong attitude and life-style is adding to their stresses. As though it was not enough, the shrinking residential space, drying sources of drinking water, and expanding pollutions are worsening the health conditions today. But contrary to the increasing demands of healthcare, the methods of diagnostics, treatment, and the medicines are becoming more and more expensive every day. The need for a comprehensive and inexpensive mode of treatment and maintenance of health has become all the more crucial and urgent these days.

Preventive and holistic approach to healthcare, thorough consideration of the mind-body system and synergist use of multiple herbs, natural plant products as per the patient's physiological and psychological characteristics are among the unique features of Ayurveda that make this ancient Indian science a suitable choice in the present scenario.

Ayurveda also represents one of the outstanding examples of science and technology development in ancient India. The Atharveda (3000-1200 BC) and the treatises by *Charaka*, *Sushruta*, and *Vagbhata* (1000-500 BC) and consequent scriptures provide an elaborate database of Ayurvedic description of symptoms, diseases, diagnostics and therapeutic advice along with detailed descriptions of over 700 plant medicines/herbs.

The *Dravyaguna Vidnyan* which defines structure and properties of all natural substances of plant, animal and mineral origin forms the primary material database. Some Ayurvedic texts also provide detailed information on product development and

effective drug delivery systems. Specifics are given on the selection of raw materials, the season for collection of specific herbs, and other quality guidelines for herbal and mineral materials. The formulations can be manufactured in a variety of forms including: *Churna* (powders), *Āsava* and *Ariṣṭa* (medicated wines), Tablets, Ghana (concentrates), decoctions of many types (*Hima*, *Phānt*, *Kādhā*), *Siddhatailam* & *Ghr̥at* (medicated oils and ghee), etc.

Apart from these, several texts and compilations provide extensive information on therapeutic advice (*Chikitsa*) in the form of thousands of multi-herb, multi-functional formulations for every conceivable diagnosis (*Nidāna*). Investigations into the logic of such formulations employing modern bio-informatics tools will certainly provide new insights for future syntheses.

Prakṛati Nidāna – the basis of diagnosis and healing under Ayurveda – deals with characterization of one's natural constitution (*prakṛati*) in terms of three basic functional elements or physical, mental and emotional energy patterns called the *tridosha* namely, *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*. In terms of the physique and physiological activities of the body, the modern researchers interpret *vāta* as the energy of movement, *pitta* as the energy of digestion or metabolism and *kapha* as the energy of lubrication and structure. Harmonious balance of *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* is regarded as the sign of normally healthy state. Any disturbance, excess or deficiencies in any of these upsets the normal concentration of vital elements, and physiological and (bio) chemical reactions and functioning inside the body and therefore results in different kinds of diseases.

Recent scientific research^[5] indicates that the concept of *tridosha* also has empirical value and that analysis of these could open up new insight into our understanding of the biological system of the body more thoroughly. The subtle combinations of *tridosha* and hence *prakṛati* is regarded to be as specific and individualized as the DNA sequence based genetic makeup. Notably significant

of the modern findings^[6] substantiating this fact is that it also explains genotype phenotypic relationship and thus provides potential solution to the major goal modern scientists are searching for in this post genomic era of biotechnological advancement.

Most remarkable feature and beauty of Ayurveda is that despite being so deep in incorporating the gene-level details and mental tendencies in its conceptualization of health, this Vedic science of healthy life provides easy and practical modes of efficacious healthcare. So much so that one can sustain excellent health conditions simply by following the daily routine, diet and work habits according to the tips it provides. Next few chapters will guide us on these aspects.



Guidelines on Morning Chores

Ayurveda recommends disciplines in eating habits, sleep, and other phases of daily routine, etc, as per one's *prakṛati* and the nature of the climate and the ambience one lives in. One of the major causes of generally bad health and mushrooming of diseases in the modern times is the haphazard and undisciplined life style adopted by most people today. If we care for natural maintenance of good health, it is worth paying heed to the tips provided under the teachings of Ayurveda.

Let us first look at what is described as the ideal routine of the day according to Ayurveda. After getting up in *Brahm-muhūrta* (about three hours before sunrise); five to ten minutes *sāadhanā* of contemplation on self-realization, paying respect to mother earth in the form of *Namaskar*, drinking substantial amount of water to fill the stomach for proper cleansing by excretion, cleaning the teeth, massaging the body with oil, morning walk, physical exercises (by suitable *yogāsanas*), bathing followed by *japa-sāadhanā* with meditation, *swādhyāya* (study of enlightening books and scriptures) – are the successive steps of the daily routine before having lunch.

Getting up in the *Brahm-muhūrta* is given significant importance in the scriptures for physical, mental and spiritual development.

*Brāhme Muhūrte Hyuttiṣṭhejjīrṇā Nirūpayan
Rakṣārtha Māyusaḥ Swastho |*

– A. Su.3

Brāhme Muhūrte Budhyet Swastho Rakṣārthmāyusaḥ |

– Bha. Pra. 1 | 24

Implications: In order to enjoy a long, healthy life, a person should get up in the *brahm-muhūrta* with positive thinking. He should also take care of what he eats at night; whether it is digested properly or not? (That means, the night-meal should be light and taken much earlier before going to sleep so that one will not feel heavy and drowsy in getting up so early).

Maharshi Manu has advised –

Brāhme Muhūrte Budhyet Dharmārthacānucintayet |
Kāyakleśānsca Tanmūlānvedatatwārthameva Ca ||

– Manu. 4 | 92

Meaning: Every man and woman should get up in the *brahm-muhūrta* and think of *dharma* and *artha*. (That means one should determine the righteous mode of utilizing the day ahead and also plan for constructive use of his time and efforts during the day for progressive augmentation of resources and talents). One should also contemplate on his body-functions and analyze whether it is in healthy state or not. If not, he should try to investigate (by introvert concentration on the body) the cause of what is going wrong. Reading and contemplating on the teachings of the *Vedas* should also be a part of this morning phase.

Today, there is a general habit of eating late in the night, watching television still longer. Then how could one get up early in the morning? But if we want to be away from all diseases and enjoy a vigorous and hearty life, we will have to change this wrong trend. We must inculcate the habit of getting up before sunrise. Human life is indeed a rare opportunity for self-realization. We must make best use of every moment of this precious gift. We should get up every morning with a feeling of having a new birth and plan constructively for the best use of the day, as though the next twenty-four hours would be the entire span of the new life.

Lotus blossoms with bliss with the dawn of the day, birds welcome it with sonorous warbling, wind flows smoothly with a refreshing touch.... Everything in Nature's creation appears to gain new life, new energy in the *brahm-muhūrta*. If we miss these beautiful moments by sleeping, great will be our loss in terms of soul awakening. *Brahm-muhūrta* is said to be the best period of the day. It is most favorable for maintaining good health and also for intellectual and spiritual progress. Nature wholeheartedly enshowers – during this time phase – all that is essential for mental and bodily strength, vigour, happiness, intellectual brilliance and productivity and spiritual benefits.

The ancient scriptures of Ayurveda mention the above fact at one place as –

*Varṇa, Kīrti, Mati, Lakṣmīm, Swāsthyam Āyusca Vindati |
Brāhme Muhūrte Sanjāgracchiyaṁ Va Pankajaṁ Yathā ||*

Meaning: Getting up in the *brahm-muhūrta* helps gaining beauty, charm, brilliance of intellect, glory, prosperity, health and long life. The body gets energized and blossoms like a lotus flower if one is awake at this time....

We should get up in this supremely energizing phase of the day and do the *sāadhanā* of *ātmabodha* (self-realization). The *ātmabodha sāadhanā* is performed just after getting up. The conscious mind and all associated faculties go into rest with sound sleep in the night. The visible world ends and one lives in a different world of unconscious perceptions. The soul has only a tenuous connection with the body and the gross world in this phase; which is just sufficient to enable continuity of the vital functions that maintain the living state of the body. The consciousness and its intimate connection with the body is regained the moment one gets up. Thus, the instance of getting up is somewhat like having a new birth.

In order to perform the above *sāadhanā*, sit up on the bed or on some cloth piece with erect spine; preferably with legs folded as

in *sukhāsana*. Keep both the hands on your lap. (The body may be covered with extra warm clothes in winter). Take a deep breath in a relaxed mode and exhale it slowly (breathing should be through the nostrils only). Try meditating on bluish light during the first breath, yellowish light during the second and reddish light during the third. Thank the Almighty for giving this life and feel happy to have this opportunity of a new lease of life for the day ahead. Contemplate for few minutes that God is blessing you for the next twenty hours and is going to keep watch on how you plan to make ideal use of this boon. Think positively of doing something constructive and adopting a virtue and/or giving up a bad habit in your behavior and actions that day. (Plan something that is do-able; howsoever small it may be, it will boost your self-confidence if you are able to follow what you resolve).

The next step of your routine should be to pay obeisance to the mother earth. The following *śloka* describes what should be our feeling at these moments (the *śloka* may be chanted like a prayer):
Samudra Mekhale Devi Parvatastana Maṇḍale|
Viṣṇu Patnīm Namastubhyaṁ Pādasparśaṁ Kśāmaswa Me ||

Meaning: You who wear a waistband of oceans, huge mountains cover whose breasts; who is the eternal Companion of Lord Vishnu, I pay obeisance to you Oh Mother Earth! Kindly forgive me, as I have to commit the sin of putting my feet upon your surface (to begin my journey of life for the day ahead).

The third major step is drinking fresh water. It should be drunk slowly, but continuously, to fill the stomach completely. This should be done before going to the toilet, as it helps in fast and smooth excretion and proper cleansing of the stomach. This activity is called *uṣāpāna* and is recommended in Ayurveda as – “One who does *uṣāpāna* every day after getting up in the (early) morning indeed protects his body from diseases and makes his body healthy”. Generally cold (normal temperature below lukewarm) water is supposed to give best effects.

It is a pity to note that even in India – the land of the genesis and practice of Ayurveda, many people – mostly the so-called educated ones, who are supposed to be more aware of health – are now getting used to ‘bed tea’ or ‘bed coffee’ which is harmful for our body in all respects. Normally cold water is good for our teeth and it also strengthens our digestive system. Our metabolic system has the capacity to heat up the chilled things entering the stomach, but there is no process to cool down the hot things up to the healthy or normal temperature. Consumption of hot tea, coffee, other drinks or eatables damages the delicate tissues in our tongue, food pipe and the stomach; these give rise to ulcers at times, which might become cancerous, if neglected.

Uṣāpāna in the morning is also useful as it helps curing the indigestion, if any, due to the food consumed during the previous night. The following quote in “Bhav Prakash” also highlights the importance of *uṣāpāna*:

*Savituh Samudaya Kale Prasṛati Salilasya Vivedaṣṭau |
Roga Jarā Parimukto Jīveda Vatsaraśatam Sāgram ||*

Meaning: The person who drinks eight ‘*anjali*’ (deep cup made by joining the two hands) water every day at the sunrise time becomes free from all ailments. He lives for hundred years and the (weakness and other problems of) old age does not even touch him.

Indeed, people used to have hundreds of years of youthful life in the *Rishi*-Age.

Complete cleansing of the stomach by *uṣāpāna* not only keeps the body light but also refreshes the mind. It eliminates problems of white discharge etc. Sexual complexities, boils, ulcers, headache and problems pertaining to eyesight are also found to be naturally cured by regularity and consistency in this simple exercise.

Greater benefits of *uṣāpāna* are obtained if one can (after due practice of *jala-neti* etc) drink about 250 ml of water through the nose instead of mouth. Its positive effects are cited in the Ayurvedic scriptures as –

Vigat Ghan Niśithe Prātarūthāya Nityam, Pivati Khalu Naro Yo Ghrāṇarandhreṇa Vāri |

Sa Bhavati Mati Pūrṇaśca Kśuṣāḥ Tārksyatulyo, Vali Palita Vihinā Sarvarogervimuktaḥ | |

Meaning: The person, who consumes water through the nose, soon after the darkness of the night is over, gains bright intellect and sharp eyesight; his hair do not become gray or white and he remains free from all diseases.

The water used in *uṣāpāna* may be kept at a lukewarm temperature in the winter seasons to avoid irritation in the nose/throat.

The next step (after *uṣāpāna*) in the daily routine is excretion of faeces (*śauca*). Sushrut (one of the Vedic masters of Ayurveda) has mentioned about its importance as –

Ayuṣyamuṣasi Proktaṁ Malādīnām Visarjanam |

Meaning: Excretion of the dirt inside the body in the morning before sunrise helps in maintenance of long healthy life.

The Indian style of toilets is most suitable in terms of proper pressure on the legs and stomach. Excretion at the right time in the morning is important as a delay in it leads to harmful deposits of the toxic and waste substances in the body that eventually cause or support the occurrence of diseases. Everyone desirous of healthy and active body and mind should have *śauca* twice a day – once in the morning after the *ātmabodha sādhanā* and *uṣāpāna* and once in the evening. Some people resist going to the toilets or urination at times against the call of nature. This should be avoided, as it is quite harmful for health. Also, care should be taken to wash hands, legs and face after each visit to

the toilet. This is essential for hygiene and also for refreshing the body and mind.

Because of the fast and tension-filled routine, many people have complaints of constipation or unclear stools these days. Apart from *usāpāna*, some specific *yogāsanas* and physical exercises would be beneficial in such cases. Use of coarse flour, cereals, fibers, green vegetables and pulses with skins (especially sprouted ones) in food is also recommended as a good remedy against such problems. In severe cases of constipation (e.g. due to some long-term hidden mental tension) taking one spoon of the Ayurvedic herbal medicines, such as *haritaki*-powder every night gives fast relief.

“*Dantadhāwan*” – the process of cleaning the teeth and mouth is also given significant importance in Ayurveda. Root causes of many diseases are said to grow from dirty teeth. Shining white and healthy teeth are often compared to pearls and add to one’s charm. Teeth are like the guards sitting at the main entrance of the body. Teeth are cut a few months after the birth of our body. If we do not take care of our teeth through proper eating habits and cleaning, these become the hideouts of germs. The diseases of gums, formations of cavities in the teeth, toothache, etc are clear signs of the damages caused to the teeth by our negligence. Much before such manifestations, the dirt and the bacteria hidden in the teeth are carried inside the body along with whatever we eat. We must therefore follow prescribed disciplines for keeping our teeth clean and strong.

The *rishis* – the founders of Ayurveda – had given due importance to teeth as the key elements of healthy body. They had recommended *dātuna* (small pieces of soft branches of certain medicinal trees) as the best for *dantadhāwan*. The medicinal trees/plants of *Nīma* (margosa), *Babūla* (acacia), *Sihora* (Siamese Roughbush), *Khādira* (Black Catechu), *Kanera* (Indian Oleander), *Mahua* (Bassia Latifolia), *Arjuna* (Terminalia Arjun), *Bādāma* (almond), etc are found most suitable for this

purpose. The Scriptures say –

*Avekśyartuṁ Ca Doṣaṁ Ca Rasaṁ Virya Ca Yojayate |
Kaṣāyaṁ Madhuraṁ Tiktaṁ Katukaṁ Prātarūthitaḥ | |
Nimbaśca Tiktake Śreṣṭhaḥ Kaṣāye Khadirastathā |
Madhuko Madhure Śreṣṭhaḥ Karañjaḥ Katuke Thatā | |*
Su. Chi. A. 24

Meaning: A *dātuna* of sweet, bitter, astringent or spicy taste should be used as per the state (determined in the Ayurvedic diagnostics in terms of – *kratu*, *doṣa*, *rasa* and *vīrya*) of the teeth and general health of a person. *Dātuna* of *Nīma* is acrid spicy, *Khādīra* is astringent, *Mahua* is sweet and *Kanera* is bitter in taste. Use of these strengthens and beautifies the teeth with shining glow.

Acharya Shushrut has also recommended the *dātunas* of the above kinds for different tastes and effects. *Nīma* is generally good for every one as it eliminates the dirt and mucus in and around the teeth, gums and mouth, works as a disinfectant and removes stinking odors from the mouth.

It is also important to use a *dātuna* properly. The teeth should be brushed gently and the *dātuna* should be pressed beneath the teeth so that its juice is extracted and spread around the teeth and gums and fills the mouth. One should sit and use the *dātuna* with full concentration; whenever needed, the saliva or the used juice of the *dātuna* should be spitted in a pit, bathroom-canal or washbasin without dirtying the surroundings. Usually, a *dātuna* should be about six inches long and have thickness about that of the little finger. After brushing the teeth the *dātuna* should be torn into two pieces from its central axes; one portion of this should be used as a tongue-cleaner. The palate should be cleaned by rubbing the other portion on it with the support of the thumb. Cleaning of the tongue and the palate is as important as that of the teeth and the gums (as cited in the following scriptural quote):

Meaning: The tongue cleaner could be (if not of *dātuna*) made up of gold, silver or any metal or wood but it should be soft, smooth, flexible and (long enough for proper cleaning of the tongue).

In case people have problems in getting *dātun* every day, they may make use of (herbal) toothpaste or toothpowder. Use of powdered rock salt, mustard oil, and powders of dry ginger, *sal ammoniac*, dried green-leaf of guava, dry bark-skin of *Molaśri* (Surinam Madler), *Kāyaphal* (Myrtalberry) and *triphalā* etc is recommended in preparation of good Ayurvedic toothpastes or tooth powders. One may make use of a brush and stainless steel tongue-cleaner but the method of cleaning should be slow, consistent and long enough, as it is while using a *dātuna*. The toothbrush should be moved upward and downward on each tooth (on the front as well as back and around). Middle finger could also be used for this purpose. The teeth should be cleaned with the help of this finger with proper gargling each time we eat something. Sometimes some particles of eatables or grains are stuck in between the teeth; in such cases, the particle should be brought out with the help of the brush or toothpick followed by thorough gargling.

The teeth should also be cleaned before going to bed. Many people have a habit of drinking milk before sleep. They should be extra careful, as the deposited layers of milk, if left unclean, will invite attack of germs. Proper cleaning of the teeth, gums and mouth (including tongue and palate) in the morning and night is a healthy habit that must be adopted by every one who cares for good health.

Some Other Important Steps of Morning Routine:

As we saw above, Ayurveda lays special emphasis on prevention of diseases and disorders and takes scientific consideration of every aspect of daily routine in this regard. In the last chapter we had elucidated a brief background of Ayurvedic medical concepts and described the successive steps of morning routine. The major steps included – Best timings and mode of getting up, *Ātmabodha Sāadhanā*, *Uśāpāna*, *Śauca* and *Dantadhāvana*. Now we proceed further in this sequence and discuss about *Abhyang* (oil massage), *Kśaurkarma* (shaving), physical exercise, morning walk, bathing and suitable type and mode of wearing clothes. At a first glance, one might doubt as to what could be scientific about such routine chores. But reading the views of the *rishis* in Ayurvedic scriptures tells us how deeply and comprehensively they had looked at every aspect of health vis-à-vis our physical organism and environment.

Abhyang (oil massage):

Atha Jātānna Pānecho Mārutadhnaiḥ Sugandhibhiḥ |
Yathartusamsparśa Sukhaistailairabhyāṅgaḥ Mācaret | |

Meaning: If one wants to eat food for good health and wants to avoid loss of appetite or indigestion then as per the season, he should use warm and fragrant oil in winter and cooling and naturally scented oils that reduce gastric problems in summer for massaging the body.

Abhyāṅgamācarenityam Sa Jarāśramavātahā |
Draṣṭiprasāda Puṣṭayāmu Swapna Sutvakadāḍharya Kṛata |
Śiraḥ Śraṇapādeṣu Taṁ Viśeṣeṇa Śīlayeta | |

Meaning: Daily oil-massage (of the body) prevents gastric problems, fatigue and aging. Clear eyesight, good sleep, long age, beautiful skin and stout body are gained by this practice. Oil-massage should be especially applied on the head, ears and legs.

The *rishis* further state –

Sārṣapam Gandhatailam Yattailam Puṣpavāsitaṁ |
Anyā Dravyayutaṁ Tailam Na Duṣyati Kadācana | |

Meaning: Mustard oil, fragrant natural-oil and oils extracted from flowers and mixed with other natural substances are usable. Massaging with the sesamum or mustard oil (as per the season) is supposed to be the best.

Snehābhyaṅgādyathā Kumbhaścarma Snehavimardanāt |
Bhavatyupāṅgo Dakṣaśca Dṛaḍaḥ Kleśasaho Yathā | |
Thatā Śarīramabhyaṅgādṛaḍam Sutvak Prajāyate |
Praśāntamārūtābādham Kleśavyāyāmasangrahaṁ | |
Sparśane Cādhiko Vāyuh Sparśananca Twamāśritaṁ |
Twacyaśca Paramobhyaṅgastamāttam Śīlayennarah | |
Na Cābhighātābhihataṁ Gātramabhyaṅgasevinaḥ |
Vikāram Bhajateetyartham Balakarmani Va Kwacita | |
Suspārśopacitāṅgaśca Balavān Priyadarśanaḥ |
Bhatyabhyaṅga Nityatvānnaroolpojara Eva Ca | |

Meaning: As polishing with lubricants makes a pot, leather and cartwheel shining, smooth and strong, the body also becomes strong and possesses beautiful skin by massaging it (daily) with oil. The *vat* (gas and movements related) problems are also allayed and the resistance and stamina of the body increases.

Massaging the body everyday with due care makes the skin smooth and the body-parts strong; the signs of aging become less visible and the body becomes charming. Oil-massage helps in increasing one's life-span and the glow of the body. The importance of oil is in no way less than that of *ghee* (clarified butter) in strengthening one's health.

Ghratādaṣṭa Guṇam Tailam Mardane Na Tubhakṣaṇe |

Meaning: The power of oil is eight times more than that of *ghee*; the only difference is the latter is useful in eating while oil is beneficial in massaging.

Method of Massaging:

First apply oil in the navel. It should then be rubbed on the nails of hands and legs. Then the soles should be massaged followed successively by the feet, above the feet, knees, thighs and hips. Then the hands, arms, neck, waist, back, abdomen, stomach should be massaged in that order. The chest should be massaged in the end. The hands should move in upward direction in all parts of the body except the neck; massaging the neck from top to bottom is more useful. Care should be taken to massage the chest slightly away from the heart. Massaging should be done in the morning before bathing. It is most beneficial if done in an open space; it could be beneath the shade of a tree etc, in summer. In winter it should be in the sun; in case there is cold breeze, it is advised to do it inside a room.

A drop of oil could be poured in the ears while massaging them gently; this is quite useful against the problems of *vat*. Massaging the soles sharpens the eyesight because of the soothing effects on some nerves. Massaging should be done slowly; it need not take much time. (Although greater is the benefit if it is done for half an hour or so in case of adults). Some time should be given between massaging and bathing to help proper absorption of oil (for best effects, one should lie down or sit in a relaxed position for fifteen minutes or so if possible); shaving the beard and cleaning the nails etc could be done during this time. Massaging should be done every day. However, if one does not have time, it could at least be done on Sundays or holidays. Care should be taken not to do massaging for at least three hours after meal or eating something. Massaging should not be done during illness.

Kśaurkarma (shaving):

Shaving is a necessary requirement of the daily routine for adult males in most normal cases. Hardly do we know its importance other than looking and feeling neat and clean. The Ayurvedic

scriptures (e.g. the *ślokas* below) tell us that this daily chore is important for mental and physical health, too.

Pauṣṭikaṁ Vṛaṣyamāyusyaṁ Śuci Rūpavirājanam |
Keśaśmaśrunakhādīnām Kalpanaṁ Samprasāadhanam | |
Pāpopaśamanaṁ Keśanakharomāpamārjanam |
Harṣalāghavaśaubhāgyakaramutsāha Vardhanam | |

Meaning: Maharshi Charak (the founder of herbal medicines and Ayurvedic pharmacology) has defined “shaving” as a cleansing and beautifying exercise, which augments health, life span and happiness. The second *śloka*, which is from “Sushruta Samhita”, also has similar meaning (Maharshi Sushruta is revered as the founder of surgery in ancient India). It conveys that shaving everyday alleviates the evil tendencies of mind, reduces tension and heaviness and induces a cheerful mood and enthusiasm.

Therefore everyone who needs it should shave his face every day. It makes one feel neat and energetic. Those who like to grow beard should take care of cleaning it and keeping it orderly (and in proper shape as far as possible). Hair on the head should be cut at least once in 3 to 4 weeks. Women should also keep their hair clean and tidy. [It should be noted that the “*kśaurkarma*” also implies cleaning and cutting (wherever applicable) hair on all parts of the body and cleaning and cutting the nails]. Nails should also be cut regularly (once a week or fortnightly, in general) and cleaned everyday. The brush, razor etc used for cutting the hair, nail etc should also be kept clean. As far as possible, one should shave and cut the nails by himself; there are chances of infections in a barber’s shop, as he uses the same shaving brush and razor for several people without taking care of disinfecting them regularly.

Physical Exercise:

According to *Ayurveda*, regular exercise of the body is essential for everyone.

*Śarīra Ceṣṭā Yā Ceṣṭā Sthairyārthā Balavardhinī |
Deha Vyāyāma Sankhyātā Mātrayā Tām Samācareta | |*

Meaning: The movements (and postures) of body aimed at stabilizing and strengthening it constitute what is known as 'Physical Exercise'

As food is essential for sustenance of life, so is physical exercise vital for its health. A (mechanical) clock doesn't work without periodical winding. Similarly the body can't function properly without any physical exercise. Regular physical exercise is like the nectar-milk of *Kāmadhenu* (a heavenly cow referred in mythological scriptures) for good health.

According to Maharshi Charak -
*Laghavaṁ Karmasāmarthyam Sthairya Duḥkha Sahiṣṇutā |
Doṣakṣayoognivṛddhiśca Vyāyāmādupajāpate | |*

Meaning: Physical exercise gives lightness to the body, increases its stamina (for hard work), stability and potential for tolerance. It helps in elimination of the bodily deficiencies and defects and augments the appetite.

As per the scripture named "Bhav Prakash" –
*Vyāyāmadṛaḍhagātrayasya Vyādhirnāsti Kadācana |
Virūddham Vā Vidagdham Vā Bhuktaṁ Śīghraṁ Vipacyate | |*

Meaning: The body is strengthened by regular physical exercise and is prevented from catching diseases. Its capacity of resistance and defense (immunity) against diseases also increases. Physical exercise helps digestion of heavy food (which is difficult to digest easily).

Physical exercise is a must to avoid or reduce obesity. Regular exercises of the body keep one fit and cheerful. Such people are free from the 'usual' problems of old age. Proper physical

exercises strengthen the muscles and keep the body in shape, harmonize the blood flow, give power to the lungs and energize the nerves.

Physical exercises should always be done at a place where there is sufficient flow of fresh air. For an average man and woman, it is advised to practice physical exercises that use only half or little more of their stamina in a given season. Different types of exercises are recommended for people of different age groups, physique and general health. For example, jogging is very good for young and healthy people but it may not suit the older ones.

Overdoing an exercise or stretching/stressing any part of the body beyond its limits proves to be harmful. The blind followers of aerobics or those going to the so-called health-clubs out of craze or 'fitness fashion' centers should take special note of this. Ayurveda warns us against the negative effects (*balārdha*) of over- or improper (unsuitable to one's body) exercises:

Hṛadisthāne Sthito Vāyuryadā Vakram Prapadhyate |
Vyāyāmaṁ Kurvato Jantoḥ Stadvalārdhasya Lakṣaṇam | |
Kakṣā Lalāṭa Nāsāsu Hastapādādisandhiṣu |
Prasvedānamukha Śoṣācca Balārdhamtaddhi Nirdiśeta | |

Meaning: If the air (oxygen) to be supplied to the heart begins to be absorbed in the mouth (i.e., gasping) then it is a sign of *balārdha*. Unusual perspiration through the armpits, forehead, nose and leg-joints, etc implies *balārdha*.

The *rishis* of Ayurveda further say –

Kṣayastraṇārūcchirdi Raktapittabhramaklamāḥ |
Kāsaśoṣa Jwarśwāsā Ativyāyāma Sambhavāḥ | |

Meaning: Improper or over-exercising may lead to excessive thirst, vomiting, giddiness, piles, problems of blood circulation, cough, breathing problems, fever and even tuberculosis (due to excessive weakness) etc.

Should everyone practice physical exercise or is it inadvisable for some? In this regard the Ayurvedic treatises say -
Raktapitti Kṛāṣaḥ Śoṣī Śwāsakāśakṣatāturaḥ |
Bhuktavanstrīṣu Ca Kṣīṇo Bhramārtaśca Vivarjayet | |

Meaning: The patients of plethora, asthmatic attack or severe cough, withering of body, acute anemia and underweight, heart disorders, vertigo, etc or the one who has just eaten or drunk something should not do physical exercise.

Ayurveda recommends practice of *yoga* for physical and mental wellbeing. *Yoga* in its true sense means the path, which leads to spiritual awareness. However, the trends today have, to a large extent, diluted and even distorted the meanings and forms of *yoga*. Moreover, people in sheer frantic hurry to get rid of specific health problems or eager to slim the body, often start practicing some of the *āsanas* of *yoga* as advertised in a magazine or 'taught' in a health club without realizing the possible adverse side-effects, unless these *āsanas* are accompanied by some complementary *āsanas* or without following the proper disciplines associated with them. Such practices should be avoided. All kinds of physical exercises or *yoga* should be practiced under proper guidance. It is also important to understand the underlying philosophy of *yoga*.

In view of the time-constraints of the people today and realizing the need for comprehensive but easy to follow *yoga*-practices in today's life-style, Pandit Sriram Sharma Acharya had advocated a new set of *yoga*-exercises called "*Pragya Yoga*". It is taught in the training programmes of Gayatri Teerth Shantikunj, Hardwar and at some of the branches of Gayatri Mission in India and abroad where trained teachers are available. It has been found very effective and suitable for most people in the teenage to middle age group. The common urinary diseases, constipation and other digestive problems, mental and physical fatigue, stress etc are cured by its practice. It is especially effective in relaxing

and strengthening the nerves and muscles and enhancing the grasping power of mind. It serves the triple purpose of strengthening the body, calming and energizing the mind and cleansing the inner emotional self. Its sincere practice with the *japa* of *Gayatri Mantra* helps in awakening the *pragyā* (spiritually enlightened pure intellect).

Morning Walk:

Most of us are aware of the importance of morning walk. It is regarded as an integral part of the daily routine in *Ayurveda*. The morning time is ideally conducive for enhancing and purifying the physical and mental energies. The air is fresh and pure, especially near the plants and trees and is full of soothing fragrance. Its cool touch is very pleasant; even in the peak of winter one enjoys it (wearing sufficient warm clothes) and finds it energizing. The mild and soothing smell emerging from the soil in the early morning hours also has healthy effects.

For best effects one should walk silently with erect neck, straight spinal column and a relaxed but stretched chest. Both the hands should also move as much as possible while walking. Breathing should be deep and only through the nostrils (the mouth should be kept closed). Walk with as light and less clothes as feasible in the seasons of summer and autumn. Walking speed should be as fast as one could manage with ease. If possible, one should also jog for some time. The mind should be trained to visualise “through each in-breath, I am absorbing vital energy and radiance floating in Nature and throwing away the metabolic wastes, infirmities and defects with its exhalation....”. Healthy youngsters should practice jogging and the elderly people should walk as much distance as possible every day. Despite their busy schedules, Mahatma Gandhi used to walk about four kilometers every day after his morning prayers and Maharshi Dayanand used to run around a long track.

The immediate gains of morning walk are elimination of constipation and digestive problems. Those suffering from erotic

thoughts and untoward excitements and imaginations should practice running regularly every morning; it gives rapid remedial effects in such cases.

Any clean and airy place is good for morning walk. Although lawns, gardens or open grounds or terrace are the best for the purpose, there is also a substitute. Those who do not have access to these places can instead practice “Still march fast” (by folding the knees one after the other up to the stomach in each step keeping the thighs perpendicular to it while standing straight at one place) at a fast pace in an open room. This exercise should be practiced for about fifteen to thirty minutes.

Bathing:

Bathing every day at least once is a necessary discipline of Vedic way of life. It cleans the body and opens the skin pores. Bathing in the morning removes all the drowsiness and laziness and refreshes the body. It soothes the mind and hence helps in concentration, meditation, studies, etc. Water has been referred as *amṛat* (nectar) and *jīvana* (life) in the Vedas. Bathing with sufficient water is also regarded important in Naturopathy and Ayurveda.

Āpa Id Vā U Bheṣajīrāpo Amīvacatanīḥ |
Āpo Viśvasya Bheṣajīstāstwā Muncantu Kṣetriyāt | |

Meaning: Water is a medicine in itself; it is an enemy of diseases. It has the potential to kill diseases. It increases lifespan and helps in wellbeing.

At one place the Vedas even say – *Bhiṣagyo Bhiṣaktarā Āpaḥ |*
(Meaning: Water is the best among all medicines.)

Realizing this importance of water, water-therapy is given prominent place in Ayurveda and Naturopathy. Many of the modern healing institutes also use it as a significant mode of

prevention and cure. Dr. Louis of Germany used to treat all his patients by water-therapy alone.

Bathing every day helps healthy growth of the body and its activeness. Its obvious effects are cleansing and freshening of the body and inducing a feeling of freshness in the mind as well. Maharshi Charak has also affirmed these benefits in his treatise—

Pavitraṁ Vṛāṣyamāyusyaṁ Śramaswedamalāpaham |
Śarīra Balasandhānaṁ Snānamojaskaraṁ Param ||

Meaning: The body is purified by bathing. Bathing enhances life span, eliminates fatigue, sweat and dirt. It augments the liveliness and force of the body.

According to Maharshi Sushruta –

Snānaṁ Dāhaśramaharaṁ Swedakaṇḍūtraśāpaham |
Hṛadyaṁ Malaharaṁ Śreṣṭhaṁ Sarvendriyaviśodhanam ||
Tandrāpāpopaśamanaṁ Tuṣṭidaṁ Punsatva Vardhanam |
Raktaprasādanaṁ Cāpi Snānamagneśca Dīpanam ||

Meaning: Bathing eliminates heat, fatigue, sweat, itching, and thirst. It cleans the sweat on the body, boosts up the heart and naturally cleans the sense organs. It removes the drowsiness and helps in recharging the blood circulation and energy; it also augments body-force.

Very warm water should not be used for bathing; as its heat has negative effects on the eyesight and on delicate skin. Bathing with cold (up to the temperature easily tolerable by one in a given season) water is best for healthy effects; it allays the excess heat of the body and plethora of other problems.

Bathing should be started from the head. At least three to four bathing-mugs full of water should be poured on the head in its straight and bent (comfortably by bending the neck) positions. Doing so helps outflow of the heat of the head and the whole body from the soles. The other parts of the body should then

be bathed in succession from top to bottom. Using paste of *besan* (flour of gram pulse), turmeric and mustard oil, or suitable natural herbs twice or thrice a week is better than the soaps. The body should be rubbed by wet towel of *khadi* (raw cotton woven on handloom) or a similar rough fabric after bathing so that the skin pores are opened up properly. Care should be taken to wipe up all the joints (including those behind the ears and near the nostrils, etc) this way. The body should be clothed only after it has dried completely.

Do not bathe after having food or when having fever, or weakness due to dysentery, etc. Proper sponge bath could be taken while suffering from minor cold and/or some disease of ears or eyes. Bathing serves as a medicine as soon as the body is in a position to bathe comfortably.

Clothing:

The Ayurvedic texts describe –

Kāmyam Yaśasyamāyusyamlakśamīghnam Praharṣaṇam |
Śrīmatparīṣadam Śastam Nirmalāmbara Dhāraṇam | |

Meaning: Neat and clean clothing has pleasant and healthy effect; it eliminates (the signs of) indigence and enables one to sit with the civilized and cultured people.

Different types of clothing are recommended (for best effects) for worshipping, working in the house, outing and sleeping. Different types of fabrics suit for different seasons; for example – light (especially white and light in texture), loose and thin clothes in summer, warm clothes (woolen, silky and dark colored that suppress *kaph* and *vat*) in winter and easily drying clothes (especially whitish) in autumn.

Washing one's clothes by oneself is a good physical exercise and also ensures careful cleaning. Do not wear unwashed clothes. Although the choice of color for healthiest effect on the mental and physical health depends on chromopathic and astrological

theories in Ayurveda, it is generally true that very bright and gaudy clothing should be avoided. Tight clothes have negative effects on blood circulation and nervous system. Choice of clothing should be such that it allows comfortable movement of body and makes the personality graceful.



Importance of Food: Scriptural Excerpts

Having discussed the different activities that should be the integral part of an ideal daily routine, let us now look at the most common and important routine of our lives, viz., food. Whatever one eats or drinks, or rather, whatever goes inside the body via the food pipe (G.I. tract), falls in the category of food, which, upon being processed by the metabolic system, becomes a source of energy for the different organs and parts of the body. We all eat (or keep eating!) everyday and are generally aware of the importance of its purity, freshness, calorie-contents, etc as per the modern views on diet control. But, how many of us pay attention to its subtle properties too?

Healthy food is compared with nectar in the *vedic* scriptures. At the same time, the scriptures also alert us to be careful about the quality of food, which apart from the gross and subtle properties of the ingredients, also depends upon the way it is earned, prepared and eaten.

*Annāhārārtham Karma Kuryādanindyam,
Kuryādāhāram Prāṇa Sandhārṇārtham |
Prāṇāhā Sandhāryāstatva Jijñāsanārtham,
Tatvam Jijñāsyā Yena Bhūryo Na Duḥkham | |*
-Yoga Vashishtha

Meaning: Earn your food by proper (just and honest) means. Eat it with purity to sustain your vital energy (and body-force). Elevate your vital energy to be able to gain knowledge and attain vigorous potentials to get rid of all infirmities and sorrows.

According to Ayurveda, the food we eat is used in the production/strengthening of seven major components/elements (*dhātus*) in the body; at a gross level, these *dhātus* are – physiological fluids, blood, serum, flesh, bones, muscles and sperm/ovum. Food is given prime importance here in prevention as well as in cure of diseases. It mentions a great deal on what kind of food should be taken for sustenance of a healthy body. As the levels of the three functional energies (*vāta*, *pitta* and *kaph* or the *tridoṣas*) are regarded here to characterize one's natural constituent, the triplet of proper food, sound sleep and chastity are considered as the predominant factors in regulating the health of the mind-body system. Of these three, diet (food) is given maximum importance as it plays a direct role in the maintenance of the seven *dhātus* and in affecting the balance of the *tridoṣas* (*tridoshas*).

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.

Maharshi Charak, one of the founder experts of Ayurveda has elucidated six aspects, which should be considered in deciding what is worth eating and what is not in a given condition.

Mātrākālakriyā Bhūmidehadoṣa Guṇāntaram |
Prāpya Tattaddhi Dṛaśyante Tato Bhāvastathā Thatā |
Tasmātsvabhāvo Nirdiṣṭastathā Mātrādirāśrayaḥ |
Tadapekśyobhayaṁ Karm Prayojyaṁ Siddhimicchatā |
Tadeva Hyapathyaṁ Deśakāla Sanyogavīryapramāṇāti
Yogādbhūyastarampathyaṁ Sampadyate |
Tatra Khalvimāni Aṣṭāvāhārvidhiviśeṣāyatanāni Bhavanti |

Meaning: **Quantity** (of food), **time** (at what time it is prepared or is being eaten), **process** (of its preparation), **place** (including soil, climate and surrounding conditions, etc) at which its raw constituents have grown, **constitution** (chemical, botanical, properties, etc), **defects** (subtle and gross defects, unnatural effects or impurities, if any) – are the principal factors responsible for the making a food *pathya* (worth eating, healthy) or *apathya* (not worth eating, harmful). The unhealthy nature or flaw in any one or more of these could convert a generally edible food into non-edible or *apathya*. Charak further enjoins that some substances are naturally non-edible; they should never be used in food. Even the medicinal plants, vegetables and grains should be taken only in proper mode while taking into account the above aspects.

Eating Process:

The “Charak Sanhita” describes eight principal factors associated with the process of eating. These are collectively termed as – *aṣṭavidh āhāra vidhi viśeṣāyatan*. These are supplementary to each other and comprehensively represent the process of eating. Each of them contributes to healthy or negative effects of the food being eaten. These are: (i) natural quality of food; (ii) method of preparation of food (who prepares the food, how and where – all are part of this important factor; whereas, for most of us only the ‘taste’ matters), (iii) combination (of various components or constituents of the food); (iv) amount or quantity of food; (v) place (at which the food-ingredients are grown; where it is prepared and being eaten) – the seasonal effects are also included here; (vi) time (of preparation and consumption of food); (vii) the mode of eating; (viii) the physical and mental state of the person who is eating it.

The importance of above factors is justified scientifically. For example, it is well known that which food will be digestible in

which season and in what quantity etc, depends upon the basic properties of the raw substances in it, the method of preparation (e.g., mixing some other substances increases or negates some of its qualities; or steam-cooking would be healthier than frying, etc) and upon the metabolic fitness of the person who eats it. That metabolic system is highly sensitive to mental condition is also confirmed in many clinical trials the world over. Apart from these, the “Charak Sanhita” also takes into account the subtler aspects – e.g. the *sanskāras* of the food (this includes the manner in which it is obtained/purchased, the way the money/resources used in getting or preparing it are earned, etc) and the *sanskāras* (intrinsic tendencies) of the person who prepares the food, etc.

Types of Food:

Acharya Sushrut has described the major categories (from medical point of view) of food under the heading “*dwādaśāśan vicāra*” in the following *shloka*:

Ata ūrdhwaṁ Dwādaśāśan, Praticārān Vakśayāmaḥ |
Tatra Śītoṣṇa Snigdha Rukśa, Dravśuṣkaika Kālika
Dwikālika Auśadhiyukta Matrāhīna Doṣa Praśamana Vṛatyarthāḥ | |

This *shloka* implies twelve different types of food in terms of their gross basic properties and also conveys what type is good under what natural conditions. Let us look at these properties and the conditions – in terms of the prominent natural constitution or *tridoṣa*-level and/or diseases caused by the imbalance in the *tridoṣa* – under which they are prescribed.

1. **Śīta (Cold):** This type of food (which has a cooling tendency) is advised for those suffering from acidity, heat or plethora. It is also advised for those weakened by excessive sexual indulgence, or due to some toxic effect.
2. **Uṣṇa (Warm):** It is recommended for those suffering from the diseases or problems of excess of *vāta* or *kaph doṣas*. The food intake (in small quantity) after total stomach cleansing, fasting, etc, should also be of this category.

3. **Snigdha (Smooth or Naturally Oily):** This type of food is suitable (in appropriate quantity) to suppress the *doṣa* of *vāta*. Those used to physical labor or substantial physical exercises also benefit from such food. It is also remedial against dry-skin, bony, thin or weak body.
4. **Rukṣa (Rugged & Arid):** It helps controlling the *doṣa* of *kaph*. Those having fatty body or oily skin should also use this type of food.
5. **Drava (Liquid or Watery):** The diet of those suffering from dryness inside the body (which may lead to boils, peptic ulcer, or ligament problems, etc) should consist of this type in substantial proportions. .
6. **Śuṣka (Dry):** Those suffering from leprosy, *prameha* (excretion of sperm and several vital hormones with the urine), erysipelas or wounds should be given dry food.
7. **Eka-Kālika (One-timely):** Those suffering from loss of appetite or weak digestive system should take food only once a day to help normalization of the appetite and metabolic disorders.
8. **Dwikālika (Two-timely):** In normal course, healthy people should take proper meals only twice a day.
9. **Auśadhi-Yukta (Medicinal):** Those who cannot take medicines orally may be given these mixed in appropriate food. Sometimes, specific medicinal plants or herbs are also advised as essential ingredient of the regimen in specific diseases.
10. **Mātrāhīna (Light):** Those having liver problem, suffering from fever or having loss of appetite due to some other disease(s), should take light and easily digestible food. (This may be dry or liquid, warm or cold type, as per the nature of the ailment and natural tendency in terms of the level of *tridoṣa*).
11. **Praśamanakāraka (Tridoṣa-Controller):** For healthy as well as diseased persons, the choice of food should be according to the season and the level of *doṣas*. For example, warm and sour and sweet food helps suppressing the *vāta doṣa* in rainy season.

12. *Vṛatti Prayojaka (Naturally Soothing)*: For healthy persons, nourishing food is that which helps maintaining and strengthening the vital elements and stamina and which increases resistance against diseases.

Apathya (unsuitable) Food:

This category of food corresponds to what either causes some ailment or disorder of some kind or aggravates or prolongs an existing disease or weakness. 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; it could even prove to be toxic. In fact, the same type of food could have contrary effects, though invisible, under different circumstance or for different persons; most important is – what kinds of guidelines one follows in the selection and preparation of food and in his eating habits.

According to the following *shloka* appearing at “Sutra Sthan” in Chark Sanhita, the food or medicine, which might suppress an ailment or temporarily control the imbalance of the *doṣas* but does not uproot or eliminate them completely – is also *apathya* (unsuitable and harmful).

Yatkiñcitaddoṣamāsādyā, Na Nirharati Kāyataḥ |
Āhārajātaṁ Tatsarvamahitāyopapadyate | |

We give below excerpts of what the Charak Sanhita describes as unsuitability of different types of foods or medicines under different circumstances:

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Place:

Rugged or arid food and herbs are harmful or unsuitable in a wild land or in a desert, while cold and greasy-smooth, oily or fatty substances or preparations (including medicines) are bad for health (or have negative effects) in a wet (highly humid) or swampy area.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Season:

Cold eatables and drinks and foods having chilling tendency are avoidable winter; whereas the use of hot and spicy foods and substances having tendency to increase body-heat should be avoided during summer and spring.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Appetite:

Eating without having proper appetite is harmful. Similarly, not eating nourishing food in appropriate quantity even while feeling hungry is also harmful to health and has negative effect on appetite and metabolism.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Combination:

Eating a combination of *ghee* (clarified butter) and honey in equal proportion causes severe toxic effect (while individually each has important nourishing and medicinal effects if taken in appropriate quantity with respect to other factors). Similar is the case with several other 'non-compatible' combinations.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Body's Adaptability:

If one's body has got accustomed to acrid, spicy and hot (in tendency) foods then sweet and cold (in tendency) foods would be generally unsuitable to his body's adaptability.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Tridoṣas:

The food or medicine, that might have properties similar to those inducing the tendencies of any of the three *doṣas* (*vāta*, *pitta* and *kaph*) but, that causes contrary effects because of disharmony (with one's natural constitution, habits and physical or mental work pattern) in practice is said to be non-compatible w.r.t. the *tridoṣas*.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Utensils:

Boiling milk in pure copper pot makes it poisonous in its effects. These or some other types of metallic utensils are highly

unsuitable for cooking meals; while several types of substances are unsuitable for preparation of chilled drinks, desserts, etc.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Eating Habits:

Eating hot (in tendency) food with cold (in tendency) substances or vice-versa, simultaneously or without substantial time gap causes harmful effects.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Digestive System:

Giving laxatives or strong medicines or foods to someone having a delicate digestive system or intra-body structure is harmful.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Sleeping Habits:

Food or medicine which intensifies *kaph* tendency is not suitable for people who are generally slow and sluggish in their routine or who sleep heavily; it further induces lethargy or drowsiness.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Routine:

Eating without proper excretion of urine and stools is harmful. Those desirous of good natural health should never eat food without really feeling hungry.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Sequence of Eatables:

Having water, cooling food or any medicines after drinking or eating smooth oily stuff causes negative effects. (One might vomit instantly or have sour throat in such cases.)

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Cooking:

Eating half-cooked or overcooked or over-fried food is unhealthy. Similar is the case with food cooked using polluting fuel.

Non-compatibility w. r. t. Composition:

Drinking any preparation of mixing acidic substances (including fruits) with milk is harmful for health. Curd (unless well set and fresh) and desserts prepared with fruits kept in milk for some time – are also prohibited in Ayurveda.

Twelve Major Categories of Nourishing Eatables:

“Charak Samhita” and some other Ayurvedic scriptures, focus a great deal on investigating the impact of food on physical, mental and spiritual health. It broadly classifies the nourishing substances into twelve categories as highlighted in the following *shloka*. This description is based on the common crops and vegetation available in ancient times. What other cereals, plants etc are available today could also be added into the corresponding categories.

*Śūkadhānyam Śamīdhānyam Samātītam Praśasyate |
Purāṇam Prāyaśo Rūksam Prāyeṇābhinavam Gurū | |
Yadyadāgacchati Kśipram Tattallaghutaram Smṛatam |
Purāṇamām Sankliṣṭam Krimivyālahimātapaiḥ | |
Adeśākālam Klinnam Yatsyātphalamasādhu Tat | |*

As per this *shloka*, the twelve categories of nourishing eatables are identified as – *śūka*: grains (cereals, e.g. barley, maze, wheat, rice, etc); *śamī*: grains (all kinds of pulses and grams); *śākas*: (all fresh vegetables; fruits; greens - fresh, naturally green substances that contain chlorophyll), *Ambu*: (watery substances); *Goras*: (cow-milk and its pure, fresh products); *Iksu*: (sugar cane and its fresh products); *Krattana*: (food cooked – on fire – from cereals, pulses and vegetables); *Yaugika*: (all kinds of nourishing minerals and compounds). Alcoholic substances (wine etc) and animal-based foods (including meat, fish, etc) are prohibited in Ayurveda primarily on the grounds of their negative impact on spiritual health and subtle mental tendencies.

Best Amounts of Food:

Jatayu’s conversation with Ravana as scripted in the Ramayana also has some reference to the quality of food. Talking of moral principles, Jatayu says – “Eatable food is that which is completely digested in a natural way, without producing any harmful effect inside the body”.

Some scriptures also comment on the best quantity of food intakes. For example, the Vishnu Purana suggests –

*Jaṭharam Pūrayedardharmannairbhāgam Jalena Ca |
Vāyoh Sancarṇārthāya Caturthamavaśaiṣayeta ||*

Meaning: The portion of solid food should be about half the capacity of the stomach; one-fourth of the latter should be filled with liquid diet and water and the remaining one-fourth should be left empty for free movement of air and fluids inside the stomach.

According to Ayurvedic insights, most of the diseases have their roots in over-eating and improper cleansing of the digestive system. This is true in case of urbanized life-style of cities of today. Excessive eating or consumption of lavish, gravy foodstuffs or fast foods, processed and canned foods, non-vegetarian dishes, etc do not suit the biomechanics and natural process of metabolism of the human body. Unless assimilated and digested by exerting physical labor and some cleansing methods of *yoga*, these unnatural foods eventually result in constipation, acidity or other problems of indigestion. Defective metabolism leads to weakening of the body-system. The undigested heavy molecules and other kinds of un-excreted dirt inside the body cause varieties of untoward reactions. Germs and other infections also get extra support in such a host system.

If there isn't sufficient space for airflow within and out of the stomach, it may cause unnatural pressure on the heart, often leading to 'angina', which is a common heart-problem these days. The suggestion of keeping one-fourth of the stomach free for airflow as advised in the above *śloka* further reflects the remarkable insight of the *rishis* in deciphering the intricacies of the nature and functions of the mind-body system so minutely without using any instrument or external help.

Their instructions in the scriptures on “Why to eat? What to eat? When to eat? How much to eat? And, how to eat?” provide us the key to a happy, healthy and hearty life. We shall touch upon these points in continuation of our discussions on health-tips of Ayurveda pertaining to food. We close this chapter with a short quote that conveys an invaluable advice, which could be adopted forthwith:

Jīrṇabhojinam Vyādhirnopasarpati |

– Chanakya Sutra

Meaning: He/she, who eats only when the food consumed earlier has been properly digested, remains free from all diseases.



Subtle Qualities of Food

For most of us, food is meant to be only for satisfying hunger and nourishing the body. However, as per Vedic Scriptures, what we eat and drink significantly, though subliminally, affect our subtle and astral bodies as well. For instance, the Chhandogya Upanishad says—

Āhāraśuddhau Sattvaśuddhiḥ Sattvaśuddhau Dhruvā Smṛatiḥ, Smṛatilambhe Sarvagranthīnām Vipramokśaḥ |

Meaning: Purity of food helps in purifying the inner self. Purification of the inner self and hence of the mind and intellect, accelerates elimination of illusions and ignorance. This in turn, paves the way for salvation of the soul.

The sages of the Vedic times, the *rishis*, had researched and categorized the gross and subtle qualities and effects of food in three categories – *sātvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. They had also enjoined that those desirous of having the purity, piety and sagacity of thoughts, feelings and emotions along with the vibrant health of the body, should avoid *tāmasika* and *rājasika* food and take only *sātvika* food.

Apart from recommending suitable food-choices for different seasons for persons of different age groups, the Ayurvedic scriptures also focus at the intrinsic properties of food, which affect the subtle (mental) body. The food, which is worth taking in terms of its physical and subtle qualities, if taken at right timings in correct mode of eating, is described here as nectar. On the contrary, the wrong eating habits or method of preparation could make the food unsuitable or even toxic to one's health. It is therefore equally important to know not only what to eat but also when and how to eat it.

Brahadyogiyagyavalkya Smriti states –

Amṛatam Kalpayitwā Ca Yadannam Samupāgatam |
Prāṇāgnihotravidhinā Vidhinā Bhojyam Tadwadaghāpaham | |

Meaning: Having food should be treated like a *yajña* in which (holy) sacrifices are made in the sacred fire of *prāṇa* (vital, spiritual energy). Such a food becomes a source of elimination of all sickness and weakness of the body and mind.

The Bagvad Gita says (c.f. Ch. 17 | shloka 8) –

Āyuh Satva Balārogya Sukha Prītivivardhanā |
Rasyāḥ Snigdhaḥ Sthirā Hryadyā Āhārāḥ Sāttwikapriyā | |

Meaning: A person of *Sāttwika* nature likes to eat foods that prolong life, purify one's inner being, give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome and pleasing to the heart.

The Bhagvad Gita further mentions about the foods liked by persons of *Rājasika* and *Tāmasika* natures (c.f. B. Gita 17 | 9-10):

Katva-amla-lavaṇāti-uṣṇa-tikṣṇa-rukṣa-vidāhina |
Āhārā rājasasyestā dukha-śokamaya-prada | |

Meaning: Foods that are bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to a person of *Rājasik* nature. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease.

Yātu yamam gata-rasam pūti paryusitam ca yat |
Ucchiṣṭamapi cāmedhyam bhojanam tāmas priyam | |

Meaning: Stale, tasteless, decomposed, putrid and leftover foods are dear to a person of *Tāmsik* nature.

In the Bhagvad Gita (17 | 7) the Divine Teacher says–

Āhārastwapi Sarvasya, Trividho Bhavati Priyaḥ |
Yagyastapastathā Dānam, Teṣāṃ Bhedamimam Śṛṇu | |

Meaning: What kind of food one likes is also of three types according to one's own intrinsic nature. Similarly, *yagya*, *tapa* and alms are also of three types (*sātvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*). Let me tell you their (broad) differences.

Āyuh Satvabalārogya, Sukhaprītivivardhanāḥ |
Rasyāḥ Snigdhāḥ Sthirā Hradyā, Āhārāḥ Sātwikapriyāḥ | |
Kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇa, Tikṣṇarūksavidāhinaḥ |
Āhārā Rājasasyeṣṭā, Dukhaśokāmayapradāḥ | |
Yātayāmaṁ Gatarasaṁ Pūti, Paryuṣitaṁ Cha Yat |
Uchchhiṣṭamapi Chāmedhyaṁ, Bhojanam Tāmasapriyam | |

Meaning: Pure, health-giving, juicy (watery), smooth (e.g. boiled vegetables), fresh and naturally soothing eatables that enhance life, vigor, mental strength and sharpen the intellect – are liked and used as food by the people having *sātvika* tendency. Sour, salty, bitter, hot, spicy, fried and dry kinds of food stuffs, which are of highly stimulating taste, but are usually difficult to digest and cause burning sensation in the stomach –are mostly liked by the people of *rājasika* tendency. Those having *tāmasika* tendency generally like half-cooked, raw and pungent, stale, foul-smelling, juice-less foodstuffs; they don't even care for the cleanliness and purity of food.

All, who care for physical, mental and spiritual health, should remember the above guidelines of the Bhagvad Gita. We should modify our eating habits accordingly. The Shastric saying “*annau vai manaḥ*” affirms that what we eat (and drink) also contributes to the making of the tendencies of our minds. Similar views are expressed in the Scriptures dealing with spiritual *sādhana*s. That is why Ayurveda lays so much emphasis on purity and subtle properties of foodstuffs and cautions us about what to eat and what not to eat.

Our mental and emotional state while eating, the feelings with which we take our food, all have subliminal but intense impact upon our subtle and astral bodies. Our *rishis* had therefore taught

that food should be treated as sacred as the *naivaidya* (consecrated 'food' offered to a deity). They had also founded the tradition of sitting with clean body and calm mind and chanting specific mantras before having meals. These mantras include the great Gayatri Mantra and the prayer-mantras like – "*sahanāvavatu, sahanaubhunaktu saha vīryam karavāvahai*", or, "*Brahmārpaṇa Brahmahavirbrahmāgnau Brahmanā Hutam*" |", etc. The intrinsic sentiment associated with each of these prayers is that what we are eating should nourish and purify us from inside-out; we should eat with the notion that the food is not being eaten for this 'visible physical self', rather, we are sacrificing it to the omnipresent *Brahmā*. Such sentiments emanating from within us sanctify our food and make it like a *naivaidya*, every morsel of which purifies our gross as well the inner body.

As we had discussed earlier, food should be pure and austere and earned and prepared by righteous methods. If we search for pure, austere and nourishing food, which enhances the vitality and physical strength and also sharpens the intellectual potential and mental concentration, the best choice would be that of the vegetarian food recommended as *pathya* under Ayurveda. Cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables and milk, prepared without destroying their natural qualities (i.e., without putting excessive spices or frying or overcooking the food) are most suitable.

The Charak Samhita cautions –

Na Rāgānnāpyavijñānād, Āhārānupayojayet |
Parīkṣya Hitamaśnīyād Dehohyāhāra Sambhavaḥ | |

Meaning: Don't eat because of the greed of the tongue or in forgetfulness. Be aware of what you should eat and eat everything carefully, because what you eat makes your gross body. Before consuming it you should test and make sure that your food is of *sātvika* (or *satoguṇī*) tendency, for, this will give righteous nourishment to your mental tendencies.

Referring to similar aspects (pertaining to the subtle effects of food), the Manu Samhita highlights –

Pujitam Hyasanam Nityam, Balamurjam Cha Yachchhati |
Apujitam Tu Tad Bhuktam, Ubhayam Nasayedidam | |

Meaning: Purified and ‘consecrated’ food provides energy and power whereas impure, unconsecrated food causes adverse effects. Here, by ‘consecrated’ is meant – sanctified by offering to the Deity and eaten gracefully with corresponding feelings; it is found to have healthful, ennobling effects on the gross and the subtle bodies.

The following *Mantra* from the “Chhandogya Upanishad” also elucidates the hidden effects of what we eat and further illustrates the majestic insights of the *rishis* of *vedic* times:

Annamaśitam Tredhā Vidhīyate Tasya Yaḥ Sthaviṣṭho
Dhātustatpurīṣam Bhavati Yo Madhyamastanmāṅsam
Yo~ṇiṣṭhastanmanah |

Meaning: Food has three parts. Whatever is eaten has three simultaneous effects accordingly. The gross part is what is not consumed by the body (by metabolism) and is excreted; the subtler part, referred as ‘*rasa*’ (in Ayurveda) is used in making the elements (flesh, bone, etc) of the gross body; the subtlest, invisible part contributes to nourishing the mind.

The above-mentioned subtler properties and effects of the food we eat are most sensitive to the sentiments with which the food is prepared and eaten. If we pay attention to this fact and adopt the disciplines laid down by the *rishis* and the ancient experts of Ayurveda, the food we eat could provide enormous benefits to our physical, mental and spiritual health.

More and more people are being attracted now-a-days towards the so-called fast-foods, eating anything preferred as ‘tasty’ food outside in the gardens or roadside stalls, restaurants, hotels, etc. They are driven by the greed of the tongue and suffer from

varieties of health hazards as a consequence. It has therefore become extremely important that we understand and care for the role of food in our life from all angles. The scenario of physical and psychological health would improve, and more importantly, the rising trend of mental vices would be checked, if people realized the significance of the perceivable and subtle properties of food and adopt the disciplines of eating pure, properly cleaned and cooked, naturally healthy foods with the feeling of consecration and sanctification.

It is stated in “Brahhaspati” that – “*Sarveśāmeva Śaucanāmanna Śaucam Viśiṣyate*” (Meaning: Purification of food is the most important purification”).

The *rishi* author of “Mahabharata” writes –

*Mitam Bhukte Samvibhajyāśritebhyo Mitamswapityamitamkarmakṛatwā |
Dadātyamitreṣvapiyācitāḥ Sanstamātmavantaḥ Prajahatyānarthāḥ ||*

Meaning: All diseases and sorrows escape from the life of the one who observes self- continence, who eats only minimal necessary quantity of food after offering it to his dependents; who works hard during the day for good purposes and sleeps in night only for the duration essential for healthy relaxation of the body and who is generous to even those not friendly to him or not known to him.

This *Shloka* conveys that it is not only sufficient to just eat. We should be attentive to– proper quality and quantity; and eat after sharing the food with the needy around us rather than just grabbing and gobbling; we should also practice appropriate physical exercise and adopt disciplined work habits and self-restraint over sense organs; take sufficient sleep but avoid lethargy and dullness. Being humble and kind even to those who may not be favorably disposed towards us is also important for our health (especially of the subtle body).

Our hunger often increases or is suppressed depending upon what type of food is kept before us; at times, our mood also varies accordingly after seeing the food in front of us and thus affects our health. Analogous effect is induced in the reverse direction as well – the quality (especially the subtle impact on health) of food changes according to the state of our mind, the level of our thoughts and feelings while eating. The same food would have healthier effects if eaten in a happy mood, whereas mental excitement, disturbance or depression etc, would make it harmful or less suitable to our health. As many of us might have experienced, the food eaten in a state of anger or tension is not digested properly and causes acidity, constipation, etc.

The negative effects of mental state upon food are equally significant for our spiritual health. An Ayurvedic scripture “Bhava Prakasha” warns in this regard –

*Īrṣyābhayakrodha Samanviten, Lubdhena Rugdainya Nipīditena |
Vidweṣayuktena Ca Sevyamānam, Annam Na Samyakparipākameti |*

Meaning: If there is any sentiment of jealousy, fear, anger, greed, lust, gloom, sorrow, hatred, etc, or there is an attack of some disease while eating, then the food consumed cannot be digested (and will be hazardous to health).

In short, it is repeatedly warned that the sickness of mind or having a negative emotional state while eating is as pernicious as eating in a state of physical ailment. In fact it is more damaging, as it not only causes immediate untoward effects on physical health, but, if it occurs frequently, it eventually becomes a cause of chronic diseases and psychosomatic disorders as well.

The practice of chanting *mantras* before having food eliminates such risks and increases the chances of positive, healthy effects in two ways. Contemplation over the meaning of the *mantra* and the associated feelings calm down and purify our mind.

The vibrations of *mantra* induce soothing effects on the endocrine glands and also generate sublime currents of healthy spiritual impact. The latter kinds of benefits are achieved only after the practice of physical and mental purification and chanting the *mantras* before eating becomes a regular habit, observed sincerely with due mental and emotional engrossment.



Practical Tips: What to Eat How to Eat?

We have been discussing about – what Ayurveda says regarding the role of food in maintenance of vigorous health. There is an interesting and important episode described in the text of Ayurvedic Medicine. While discussing with *rishi* Punarvasu – the author of “Charak Samhita”, some *vaidyas* (ancient Ayurvedic doctors) raised the query “*Ko’rūka?*” (Meaning: who does not fall ill?). Somebody said – one who eats *chyavanprash* every morning. “Who takes *lavan bhaskar* and *triphal* regularly” said some others; eating *chandravati* every day was described by another *vaidya* as the source of health. Finally the fundamental principle of natural maintenance of good health was expressed by Vagbhata as – *Hitbhuka, Mitbhuka, Ritbhuka*. *Hitbhuk*: means eat that which is nourishing for your health and do not eat merely for taste. *Mitbhuk*: means eat moderately (only that much which is essential for sustenance of the vitality and stamina of the body). *Ritbhuk*: means eat that which is earned and prepared by righteous means and also what is suitable in a particular season.

Broadly speaking, the above principles are not new to us. We all might have read or heard about these in one form or the other. But how many people (including ourselves) really pay due attention to these? In view of the life-style adopted by most of us today and considering the growing pollution in the gross and the subtle environment, we ought to be more careful about healthy food. This book is meant to give a glance of the pearls of knowledge from Ayurveda – the science of leading a long, happy and healthful life. In the last chapter we had mentioned about the twelve categories of naturally nourishing food as described in the Charak Samhita. Here we look at these in detail to have some practical tips on what should we eat every day and how?

1. **Śūka Grain (Cereals):** Wheat, rice, barley, maize, millet, corn etc, are principal ingredients of Indian cooking. The cereals are natural sources of nourishment for human body. Carbohydrates are their major constituents. They also contain about 6 to 12 % proteins. The presence of minerals and vitamins is, however, nominal in the cereals; only vitamin B is found in greater quantity in their outer sheath. The shelf life of these cereals ranges between one to two years after harvesting. Sprouted cereals have more nutrition value and are richer in proteins and vitamins.

2. **Śamī Grains (Pulses and Legumes):** This category of grains consists of grams and pulses, which are rich in proteins. Gram, green gram, kidney-bean seeds, red and yellow gram and lentil, black-gram, soyabean seeds, dry-peas, etc. fall in this category. These are main source of proteins for vegetarians. The protein contents and mode of metabolism of these are healthier and more compatible with the metabolic functioning of the human body as compared to those in the non-vegetarian foods (meat, chicken, eggs etc). Use of fresh sprouts of whole pulses and legumes in balanced quantities in breakfast and main meals is an excellent means of maintaining natural health.

3. **Kandamūla (Tubers and Roots):** Potato, sweet tuber (sweet potato), carrot, beetroot, turnip, radish, etc are members of this class of naturally healthy foods. They are rich in carbohydrates and are important sources of balanced calories in our bodies and activation of metabolism. These, if eaten in appropriate quantities, are good means of strength and energy in the body system. These could even be used as substitutes for varieties of cereal dishes. The *rishi-munis* of the ancient times used to take only *kandamūla* as their main food. The term *phalāhāra* for the food prescribed during fasts refers to these only.

4. **Phal (Fruits):** As we all know, vitamins, minerals, natural glucose and carbohydrates are present in substantial proportions in fresh fruits. *Amalki*, apple, *bilva* (wood-apple),

banana, black-plum (rose-apple), dates, figs, grapes, guava, mango, orange, pomegranate, papaya, sweet-lime, etc are easily available fruits in almost all parts of India. According to Ayurveda, these fruits also have medicinal properties. Fruits like apricot, cherry, pineapple, strawberry; etc could also be used when available. Ayurveda emphasizes that fruits should be eaten in their specific season, and should be naturally ripe. Over-ripe or rotten fruits are harmful. Raw fruits would be difficult to digest and will not have the desired natural qualities. Care should be taken to avoid eating fruits preserved in cold storage and those ripened through the use of chemicals like carbide. These have severe negative effects; frequent use of such unnaturally ripened fruits might cause dreaded diseases like cancer.

5. *Śākas* (Vegetables): Fresh vegetables are important ingredients of a healthy food. They provide us with essential vitamins, minerals and compounds. Use of different types of green beans, bitter gourd, brinjal, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, green-gourd, ladies-fingers (*bhindi*), tomato, etc is very good for health. Different types of vegetables supplement each other in fulfilling the body's requirement of vitamins, minerals etc. Likewise the use of fruits, specific vegetables should also be consumed only in the specific season of their natural growth. Use of vegetables of one season in another season is prohibited in Ayurveda.

6. *Harit* (Greens Leafy Vegetables): Coriander-leaf, fenugreek-leaves, green peas, mint-leaves, radish-leaf, spinach, etc should be part of a healthy diet. Iron, calcium, and other minerals and vitamin C and E etc, present in these green leafy vegetables or salads, are essential for our body's proper nourishment.

7. *Śuska Phal Va Tilahan* (Dry Fruits and Oil Seeds): Almond, cashew nut, chestnut, coconut, groundnut, peanut,

pistachio, etc are very rich in proteins. The oils inside these provide natural lubricants and fats necessary for the body's mechanical and other functions. The edible, oily-seeds of seasamum, mustard, etc also serve this purpose.

8. *Ikśu* (Glucose rich substances): Molasses, sugarcane, sugar, treacle, and other glucose rich substances fall in this category. These are often used to sweeten the drinks and eatables. These contain hundred percent carbohydrates, which are the major source of producing energy in the body.

9. *Ambu* (Watery or juicy substances): This category includes all edible substances that are rich in water-content. Fruits like watermelon, which contain about 90% water, are prominent in this category. Major part of our body-system is filled with water. We should fulfil the consistent requirement of its supply by drinking substantial amount of water. Fresh lemon squash, etc and juice of watery fruits, if taken in balanced quantities, also supply us with other nourishing substances along with water.

10. *Goras* (Milk-products): Milk, curd, buttermilk, cheese, etc fall in this group. Pure milk (esp. that of cow) and buttermilk are described as 'divine' food or best source of nourishment for *sādhakas*. Many people observe *kalpa* (long-term fasting) only with the intake of milk or buttermilk. Milk (especially, cow-milk) is said to be a whole food in itself. Curd is also nourishing food with several medicinal qualities, if taken fresh and in appropriate quantities in different seasons as per one's *prakrati* (level of *tridoṣa*). Fresh cheese and its products (if not fried) are wholesome sources of calories. Buttermilk (*takra*) is referred in Ayurveda as an important medicinal food. Condensed milk and milk powder might be easy to preserve and use, and may help in making delicious dishes, but these are harmful to health, particularly in the cozy life-style we have adopted and because of the chemical synthesis processes used in their preparation. Use of condensed milk and milk powder or dairy whiteners

should therefore be avoided as far as possible. In view of the reports of adulteration of milk by mixing urea and other chemicals, contaminated water, etc, these days, we should be careful in verifying and ascertaining that milk and its products are free from toxins.

11. Sneha (Oils and Fats): Butter, *ghee* (butter clarified by boiling and straining), edible oils and fatty substances, if taken in balanced amounts, are also part of a healthy diet. These are highly rich in calories. (On an average, about nine calories are gained from one gm of any of these substances). These help in fulfilling the requirements of lubrication of body parts (especially, joints) and energy production in the body-system. They also generally contain vitamins A, D, E and K. However, excess use of these substances is harmful to both physical and mental health. Extra care should therefore be taken to keep the level of proportion of this category to the essential minimum in our daily meals.

12. Krattāna Va Yaugika (Cooked Food and Edible Compounds): Ayurveda considers 'cooked food' as a separate class of food. All the categories described above are independent of each other and, as we know, most of the constituents of these could be consumed raw or sprouted. Cooking changes the natural properties of food ingredients. However, eating this class of food is important because proper cooking (esp. of cereals and pulses) makes the food easily digestible and many of the new edible compounds produced under this process would also be of vital use in the metabolic system and other body-functions. Cooked food could consist of members of more than one of the above classes and help giving new combined positive effects. The concept of cooking as referred in Ayurveda is quite different from what it is for most of us today.

Cooking today is mostly aimed to make the food more delicious; different experiments are tried out by the catering experts in this regard and ever new 'dishes' and new recipes are derived.

Deep fried food, varieties of spices and arbitrary combination of foods of non-compatible natural qualities are harmful to our health according to Ayurveda. But we don't think of it as long as the food is palatable. The use of pre-cooked food-ingredients and the so-called "fast foods" should be avoided, as it has very adverse effects on our body-system. Apart from lacking in nourishing value this type of 'modern' food is very likely to impair the normal functioning of our digestive system and cause harmful mutations due to the chemicals in the preservatives, the artificial flavors and the chemically processed cooking involved in its preparation.

Having looked at the different categories of edible foods described in Ayurveda, let us now see what the Ayurvedic Principles tell us about – what, how much and when to eat? Why to eat and how to eat?

What to eat? – The principle of "*Hitbhuk* and *Ritbhuk*" conveys us that we should always eat properly earned, pure, seasonal and nourishing food. A balanced combination (depending upon the physical and mental labor required in one's daily routine) from the above-described categories of healthy foods would be best suited. For example, you may use wheat, barley, maize, and some pulses, curd, butter, groundnuts, oilseeds, etc, in appropriate quantities with larger amounts of green, leafy and other vegetables; some sprouts should always be part of your food. Don't eat over-cooked or deep fried food; use of spices, salts, sugars and oily substances should be restricted to the essential minimum. Should always eat fresh food. Desist consuming toxic substances, stimulating and alcoholic drinks, and non-vegetarian foods. If you want to enjoy vigorous mental and physical health as per the guidelines of Ayurveda abstain from tobacco, betel-nuts, betel-leaves, etc; stop taking wine, liquor and other alcoholic drinks; resist from drinking tea or coffee as well; never eat eggs, fish, chickens, any kind of animal-flesh, etc.

How much to eat? – The answer lies in the principle of “*Mitāśi Syāt*”. Meaning, eat moderately. Howsoever nourishing or healthy the food may be, it would cause harm if eaten in excess. So, be cautious about the quantity of your diet. As per the practical guidance of Gurudev Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya, don’t fill your tummy more than half its space, leave one-fourth for water and the remaining one-fourth for air. Those doing physical labor need more of proteins, carbohydrates and fats. But those engaged in sedentary and mental work or meditation-devotion etc, should take lighter foods such as boiled vegetables, thin *chapatis*, *daliya* (boiled crushed wheat), milk, sweet fruits, etc.

When to eat? – As per the *vedic* routine, one should eat only twice a day after performing *agnihotra* (*homam*) in the morning and in the evening (before sunset). In today’s circumstances, the best timings for the morning meal are any time between 8 a.m. to 12 noon and those for the dinner sometime before 7 p.m. This way the food is easily digested and keeps the body strong and energetic. In any case, be regular in the timings of taking your meals; avoid eating late in the night. One of the major causes of metabolic disorders and varieties of diseases caused thereby is that people keep watching TV and eat very late in the night. Remember! It takes about 8 to 11 hours for proper natural digestion of food. Eat only when you feel hungry. (Suppose you are not hungry at the regular timings, don’t eat; you may take only something light, say milk with water as a substitute). Eating is a kind of *agnihotra*. The *āhutis* are made in *agnihotra* only when its fire is lit well; putting the *āhutis* in half-burnt or smoldering wood would only produce smoke instead of healthy effects of *agnihotra*.

Why to eat? – Eat to maintain and strengthen the health and vigor of your body. Healthy mind resides in a healthy body. The first principle of the “*Yug Nirman Satsankalp*” guided by Gurudev implies – “We shall regard our body as the temple of

our soul and maintain its sanctity and health by observing self-restraint and punctuality in our routine". The purpose of food is to sustain healthy and harmonious functioning of the body system, the physical medium of our life, to enable us to perform our duties towards God and His creation. Food is not meant to satiate the greed of our tongue or stomach.

How to eat? – Take your food gracefully in a calm state of mind, paying full attention to eating; every morsel should be chewed properly. Food should be revered like the *prasāda* (offerings made to the Deity). Enough water should be taken before and after the meals. Water is like nectar for our vital functions. Drink at least a tumblerful of water before taking food. Don't drink more than half a bowl of water while eating. Drink sufficient water after about an hour of taking the meals. This helps in proper digestion.

The type of food and mode of eating should also take into account the seasonal effects. The rainy season is very critical with respect to healthcare through controlled food. In this period (known as *visarga kāla* in Ayurveda) the sun begins to move towards the winter solstice (*dakṣiṇāyana*). The *vāta* accumulated in the body due to the heat of summer begins to show its ill effects, it diminishes the appetite and causes gastric troubles, etc. Normal digestion also takes longer time in this season because of this *vāta*, which, if one does not take proper care in the selection of food and eating habits, catalyzes the *doṣa* of *pitta* as well. The rise in humidity makes this season risky towards the rise of *kapha doṣa*. People prone to cold and cough should therefore be extra careful about their food during the monsoons.

In view of these Ayurvedic observations, one should eat light and easily digestible meals and firmly resist from lavish, heavy stuff. Else the vicious effects of undigested food and associated accumulation and rise of *doṣas* will invite one disease after the other, some of which might manifest gradually in the successive seasons. As a preventive measure, drinking water should be boiled in this season and vegetables and salads, etc should also

be washed in clean, boiled water. A combination of sweet-sour-salty juicy substance should be used in food to reduce the *vāta* effect. Ginger should be used in food preparation to make it easily digestible. Vegetables like green gourd, *bhindi* (lady's-finger) *paraval*, are suitable, as these do not increase gastric problems; use of sprouts or pulses of green-gram and roasted or cooked maize is also beneficial.

Ayurvedic scriptures advise against the use of milk in the month of *shravan* (the second month of rainy season in India) and buttermilk in *bhadon* (the third month of rainy season in India); curd should be generally avoided during the entire season of monsoon. Viral fever, malaria, typhoid, jaundice, conjunctivitis, gastroenteritis and skin infections are quite common diseases (in India) during this season. Necessary precautions should be taken in this regard. Preventive herbal medicines may also be used as a support in high-risk areas. (Detailed information and the herbal medicines are available from the Ayurvedic Pharmacy of Shantikunj, Hardwar).

If preventive care is taken as regards taking healthy foods in the rainy season, the winter would prove to be beneficial towards enhancing the vigor and health of the body. Ayurveda also lays stress on spiritual effects of food. We shall present this information extracted from Vedic scriptures in the next chapter.



Guidelines on the Routine of Night

We have discussed in detail multiple aspects of food with respect to regain/sustenance of good health as prescribed in Ayurveda. Now we proceed further with other phases of the daily routine. In particular, in the present chapter we shall focus upon – what should be the ideal routine since evening till early morning (called *rātricharyā*).

The following *shlokas* provide guidelines on the major aspects and activities pertaining to the *rātricharyā* – including late evening routine, going to bed, sleep, dream, disciplines of chastity, etc.

Etāni Pancakarmāṇi Sandhyāyām Varjayed Budhaḥ |
Āhāraṁ Maithunām Nidrām Sampāṭham Gatimdhvani ||
Bhojanāñjāyate Vyardhirmaitunādgarbhavaikṛtiḥ,
Nidrāyā Niḥswatā Pāṭhāyurhānirgaterbhayam |
Pradoṣa Paścimau Yāmau Vedābhyāsena Taunayet ||
Prahardwayaṁ Shayāno Brahmabhūyāya Kalpate |
Ratrau Ca Bhojanam Kuryātprathamapraharāntare |
Kincidūnam Samaśnīyād Durjaram Tatra Varjayet ||

Meaning: Wise men and women avoid the following five activities during the first of the four phases of night– eating, sleeping, general reading or studying, sexual activities, and roving away from the house. Eating in this phase causes health disorders or diseases, sleep makes one dull and eventually leads to failure or poverty, conceiving in this period results in defective foetus, general reading (or studying) reduces vitality (due to unnatural mental fatigue along with other factors), roving around in the dark is risky and it also disturbs one's disciplined schedule. As far as possible, one should have dinner before

sunset or early in the first phase of *rātricharyā* (The period, say about an hour after sunset to an hour before sunrise is called *rātri*, which is divided into four phases of equal duration). The food should be light and easily digestible; the quantity eaten should be less than what one eats in the morning/afternoon. One should sleep in a relaxed state of mind and body during the second and the third phases of *rātricharyā*. The first phase of *rātricharyā* since evening should be used for prayers and study of or contemplating on vedic literature, spiritual books etc. The last phase (i.e. the period about 2-3 hours before sunrise till about an hour after) should also be used for this purpose along with worship, meditation and yoga.

The guidelines given by the rishis in the above *shlokas* are scientific from the viewpoint of mental and physical health. For example, taking light dinner before sunset or in the first phase of night is found to be ideal for healthy metabolism. It gives sufficient time to the GI tract to distribute the processed food in the various organs of the body. Jainism prescribes the discipline of not eating anything after sunset. Unfortunately the routine adopted by most of us in modern times is unscientific with respect to our natural metabolic system. We sleep late after watching television till 11 or 12 in the night; eat whatever we like as and when we feel like.... Get up late; often take breakfast at the time, which according to Ayurveda, is supposed to be the time for lunch. The result is obvious. We hardly enjoy good health and vitality, which nature wants to endow us with.

As we have discussed earlier, the *sandhikālas* (junctions between evening and night and that between night and morning, say around sunset and sunrise time) are crucial for physical, mental as well as spiritual health. Eating or sleeping at these time periods is strictly prohibited in our scriptures. The *rishis*, the scientist-sages of yore had advised specific *sāadhanā* practices and prayer-meditations during these junctures. The linkage between solar radiations and our biological clocks has also been found to be very distinct during these periods of time in some modern

laboratory experiments. Even if we could sit calmly and do a deep breathing *prāṇāyāma* exercise during these time intervals, our physical fatigue and mental stress and tensions would disappear. Practicing meditation (especially on the soothing brilliance of the rising or setting sun) at these junctures bestows added advantage of gradual sharpening of intellect and also deepening of spiritual aspirations.

Sound, dreamless sleep for six hours during the second and third phases of night is sufficient for relaxing, and rejuvenating our mind-body system. Few hours of *yoganidrā* are found to have marvelous effects. It is a pity that we have chosen the other extreme. What we watch on the television in the name of entertainment or 'enjoy' through other audio-visual mediums these days is saturated with obscenity and violence, which perversely affect our mind and emotions. *Yognidrā* is impossible in such circumstances. In fact many of us hardly get sound sleep because of the wrong *rātricharyā* we have adopted. No doubt, we should have some time for healthy entertainment but it should be chosen wisely and discriminately.

Ayurvedic experts always advise that there should be a minimum of three hours' gap between the dinner time and the time to go to bed. One must drink substantial amount of water after one hour's interval during this period. This helps proper digestion of the meal, good sleep at night and natural cleansing of the bowels after getting up in the morning. Consuming hot drinks (including tea or coffee), especially in the evening or night, is harmful to health, as it disturbs sleep and eventually the mental and bodily health. One does not feel fresh in the morning if one has not slept well in the night. Morning-fatigue, drowsiness and general dullness upset one's work efficiency.

The savants of Ayurveda advise that one should wash the feet (using cold water in summer and warm in the winter) before going to bed. Those still having problems with sleep should massage the soles with *ghee* (clarified butter) prepared from

cow's milk or with mustered or other prescribed herbal oil. This also minimizes the chances of catching cold or cough.

Maharshi Vedvyas writes in the Mahabharata –

Naktamācaryām Diwāswapnamālasyaṁ Paisūnammadama |
Atiyogamayogaṁca Śreyasoarthī Parityajet | |

Meaning: One who cares for his wellbeing should avoid – keeping awake at night, sleeping in daytime, lethargy, intoxication, habits of criticizing or complaining about others, extremities in eating and other activities.

What is sleep?

“Yogasutra” gives its precise definition as – *Abhāva Pratyayāvalambanā Vratti Nidrā* – the state of mind in which its (extrovert) tendency to experience the gross material existence disappears. Acharya Charak regards sleep as one of the three essential prerequisites for the health of physical body – ‘*Traya Upastambhā Ityāhārah Swapnau Brahmcharyamiti*’ – Proper food (and eating habits), good sleep and continence. We observe none of these three and so it is natural that we largely remain deprived of good health, vital energy and vigor.

The number of patients suffering from acute insomnia is in crores today; much larger is the number of those who somehow sleep with the help of tranquilizers. Many more have troubles of not getting good, sound sleep. Starting with general dullness and drowsiness, the disorders of sleep often result in varieties of other mental or physical ailments. Ayurvedic scriptures have given significant importance to good sleep at proper times in the night and have affirmed it as a sign and source of healthy life. “Kavya Mimansa” quotes – *Samyak Swāpo Vapuṣaḥ Paramārogyāya |* Here ‘*Samyak Swāpah*’ implies sound sleep (without any dreams) at right times for proper duration. ‘*Paramārogyāya*’ implies – that which ensures a state of enduring good health and immunity against disease. The poet further states the same in other words

as – ‘*Ardharogahari Nidrā*’ (Good sleep does at least half the remedial work of natural recovery from sickness).

While talking of sleep, Ayurvedic scriptures further provide some practical guidelines. For instance, putting *anjan* (collyrium or lamp-black eye-lotion prepared from *ghee* of cow’s milk or specific herbal oil) in the eyes before going to bed is said to induce soothing effects on the eyes.

Eyes are sensors and processors of light and related functions and hence regarded as functionally constituted of the *agni tatva* (one of the five basic elements) and are thus prone to diseases caused by *kapha doṣa* (one of the three *tridoṣas* described in Ayurveda). As the latter is supposed to mainly manifest as *śleṣma* (origin of phlegm, which grows with chill, moisture and impurities, on the base of *jala tatva*), it is advisable to protect the eyes from it. The substances like *anjan* are supposed to be suppressors of the *kapha doṣa* in the eyes and are therefore considered efficacious in protecting the natural health (and radiance) of the eyes and as inducers of sound sleep.

Surama, which seems to have been popularized in the Middle East and India by the Greeks, is also a type of *anjan*. Putting few drops of rosewater in the eyes also cleans the eyes and gives a soothing sensation and helps in inducing good sleep. Ayurveda mentions of applying pure honey on the pores (inner edges) of eyes; it gives burning sensations initially, but it is supposed to be a natural preventive medicine against cataract. However it should be used only upon (Ayurvedic) doctor’s advice, after ensuring the purity of honey.

Ayurvedic scriptures describe several methods of preparing *anjans* for specific purposes. The most common and suitable for most of us is the following. Lit a lamp of pure castor-oil using a clean cotton wick to get consistent yellow flame. Collect the lamp-black by keeping a clean pot of bronze on the tip of the burning flame while taking care that the flame should remain

yellow. Mix *ghee* of cow's milk in appropriate proportion and small quantity of good quality, finely powdered camphor in the lampblack. The *anjan* is ready to be used as an eye-lotion. In view of the sensitivity of the eyes, it is recommended that one prepares it in the presence of an expert. Quality of the collyrium or lamp-black should also be tested. It should not be used for more than six months. Needless to say that extra care should be taken for the hygiene of fingers while using them to apply this eye-lotion inside the eyes.

As most of us are aware, we must clean the eyes (before putting the *anjan* or even otherwise) and teeth before going to bed. As we had discussed in one of the earlier sections on morning routine, Ayurveda advises the use of natural herbs (especially *neem-dataun*) for cleansing the teeth.

Before Sleep:

As for other facets of the daily routine, the founder *rishis* of Ayurveda have also paid significant attention to the activities before sleep to enable healthy and hearty sustenance of life. We had discussed most of this (*rātricaryā*) in the previous section including eye-care before going to bed. Here we highlight some more health tips especially those pertaining to sleep.

Cleanliness of nightdress or the clothes worn while going to the bed is also emphasized in Ayurveda. One should preferably avoid wearing the same clothes, which one has been wearing during the day. The clothes on the body should be loose while sleeping. The bed should be neat and tidy; the sheets covering the body and the bed should also be clean.

According to the adept guidelines of Ayurveda, the mattresses and bed-sheets should be made up of cotton. Use of foam, sponge, nylon etc for long is harmful. As far as possible, one should develop the habit of sleeping on a thin mattress; only a mat with bed-sheet should be enough in the summer. Cots

having straight wooden planks are preferred to maintain the natural vigor of the body (especially the spinal cord) as compared to those having the base made up of plastic fibers, jute or metal etc. The scriptures also advise not to use the bed sheets or body-covers used by others (including family members) unless these have been washed and dried properly. Beds and even the cots should not be shared; this is essential to restrain the spread of infections. Sleeping on separate mats put on the floor is best if one can't afford separate cots for each family member.

The bedroom should have sufficient cross-ventilation. Windows and ventilators should be kept open while sleeping (for airflow), with arrangements of mesh etc, to prevent mosquitoes and other insects) while sleeping. This is not only necessary to avoid suffocation but also to minimize the chances of infections of common cold, flue etc.

The following *shloka* of Sushrut Samhita is of particular relevance in today's circumstances when the world is threatened by varieties of contagious diseases –

Prasangāt Gātra Sansparśānti Śwāsātsahabhojam |
Sahaśayyā Satāccāpi Vastramālyānulepanam | |
Kuṣṭham Jwarasya Śoṭhaśrca Netrābhiṣyanda Eva Ca |
Auparsargika Rogāśca Sankrāmanti Narāntaram | |

Meaning: Sexual relationship, other kinds of bodily contacts, inhaling others' exhaled breath, exchange of body-fluids, sleeping on the same bed, sitting neck to neck, eating together from a common plate, or eating somebody's leftovers, sharing clothes, ornaments, unguents (soap, lotions etc) spread leprosy, infectious (viral, etc) fevers and other diseases, conjunctivitis, common cold, etc from person to person.

Sleep is referred as *bhūtadhātṛī* (which takes care and nurtures all creatures) in the Ayurvedic scriptures.

Rishi Charak writes –

*Rātriswabhāva Prabhavā Matā Yā, Tām Bhūtadhātrīm Pravadanti
Nidrām | |*

Meaning: The sleep of night is a natural (gift), which is rightly termed by the sages as *bhūtadhātri*.

In the views of Chakrapani –

Bhūtāni Prāṇino Dadhāti, Puṣṇāti Iti Bhūtadhātri |

Meaning: Sleeping in the night is essential and most beneficial. As a *dhātri* (wet nurse, *aayaa* or governess) looks after an infant, sleep also nourishes all creatures. It is therefore called *bhūtadhātrī*.

According to Chand Kuashik –

*Cittam Prasādayati Lāghavamādadāti
Pratyangamujjavalayati Pratibhāviśeṣam |
Doṣānudasyati Karoti Ca Dhātu Sāmyam
Ānandamarpayati Yogaviśeṣagamyam | |*

Meaning: Good sleep induces happiness in the mind, relaxation in the body and rejuvenation in its every component; it also enhances mental talents and intellect. It helps eliminate the defects and weaknesses and ensures harmonious balancing between healthy functions of the body; sound sleep also offers the joy that one would experience by doing certain kinds of yoga exercises.

But who is the one to get this natural bliss of good sleep? Charak Samhita provides the answer:

*Brahmcaryarateḥ Grāmyasukha Nispraha Cetasah |
Nidrāsantoṣatrāptasya Swam Kālam Nātivartate | |*

Meaning : One who reads good books and attempts acquiring knowledge (and mental enlightenment), who does not indulge

in sensual pleasures and accumulation of material possession, whose mind is contented, his/her sleep remains punctual in its proper timings and duration.

“Padma Puran” also states that one who has disciplined his sense organs and who sleeps at the right time will enjoy good sleep and get up at the right time in the early morning with fresh energy.

One should have deep sleep during the night. As far as possible, one should avoid sleeping in the daytime; the time of lying down on the bed during the day should be kept to the minimum. Ayurveda describes the sleep of night as *pitta-nashak* (which eliminates the *doṣa* of *pitta* – the problems of acidity, excess of heat or lack of specific fluids in the body, abnormality in metabolism, etc). The sleep during the daytime is termed as *kapha-sangrahaḥ* (which aggravates the *kapha doṣa* – the problems of breathing, cold and cough, drowsiness, etc). With adoption of the present day habits of sleeping late in the night and getting up late in the morning, sleeping after lunch in the afternoon etc, the cases of problems pertaining to *pitta* and *kapha* have indeed increased in the modern times.

The Ayurvedic sages of Vedic Age emphasized the importance of sleeping in the second and third phases (out of the four phases since sunset to sunrise) of night. The evening (lying in the first phase of night) time should be used for reading and contemplating on the teachings of vedic scriptures and/or devotional prayers etc. The last phase which lies at the junction of night and morning called *Brahm-Muhurt* (the four hours period beginning 2-3 hours before dawn) is best for spiritual practices of *mantra japa*, meditation and other *sādhana*s. The period for sleep (approximately between 9p.m. to 3:30a.m.) is referred as *mahāniṣā* in the scriptures and is said to be the most suitable time for healthful sleep. All the body-functions of a person who sleeps only during this specified period remain in

good order and energized and so do all his other faculties. Even simple food works like ideal nutritious diet for such a person and he enjoys and relishes a purposeful and vigorous life.

Along with sleep, Ayurveda mentions a great deal about dreams also. In fact, analysis of dreams used to be an important method of comprehensive diagnostics in this ancient science of healthy life.

What the “Charak Samhita” states at one place implies that – one who does not get sound sleep sees varieties of dreams through the agile subconscious mind. Experiencing too many or too frequent dreams is a sign of unbalanced or perturbed state of the mind-body system. According to Ayurvedic theory, dreaming abruptly during sleep disturbs the sleep and prevents proper relaxation of the body and also deprives the mind of rest and relaxation. Hard working laborers or those who practice substantial physical exercise and go to the bed in a relaxed mood get good sleep; their body and mind are infused with new energy and joy when they get up in the morning.

The Ayurvedic scriptures describe seven categories of dreams of which five correspond to the dreams that are meaningless and mere reflections of disturbed sleep and non-pacified emotions, mental excitations, tensions or simply the agility of the (subconscious) mind. The dreams of diseased, agonized, stressed, insane, and sensually excited or erogenous persons fall in this category. Only two categories of dreams are said to of notable importance – these include precognitive dreams and spiritually enlightening dreams.

The Vedic literature contains rare and precious knowledge of the science of sleep and dream^[7-8], from which Ayurveda derives several of its methods and measures of characterization of natural constitution and diagnosis/prognosis of the existing ailments as well as prediction of future (likely) diseases.



Regularity of Prayers & Worship

Along with physical exercise, the daily routine should also have place for some activities to maintain mental and spiritual fitness. *Sandhyā-upāsanā* and certain yoga *kriyās* with meditation are therefore described in the scriptures as integral parts of ideal daily routine. Doing *sandhyā-upāsanā* every day with the *japa* (rhythmic chanting) of *Gāyatrī Mantra* is said to bestow longevity, strength, intelligence, success, glory and spiritual light. *Upāsanā* provides sublime food for the soul. Nurturing the soul is more important than nourishing the body.

The “Chanakya Niti” highlights this as –

*Vipro Vṛakṣastasya Mūlaṁ Ca Sandhyā,
Vedāḥ Śākhā Dharmakarmāṇi Patram |
Tasyānmūlaṁ Yatnato Rakṣaṇīyam,
Chinne Mūle Naiva Śākhā Na Patram ||*

– Chanakya Niti. || 10-13

Meaning: *Sandhyā* (*upāsanā*) is the root of the tree of (healthy, hearty and enlightened) life. The *Vedas* (i.e. source of righteous knowledge) constitute its branches and religious activities are its leaves. Blossoming growth of a tree is dependant on the life of its roots. Without the roots there will be no possibility of any branch or leaves.

In essence, the above *śloka* (likewise many guidelines in the *Shastric* Literature), conveys that *sandhyā* (*upāsanā*) is the basis of human life in the truest sense. The rituals of *śaṭkarmas*² – namely, *pavitṛikaraṇa*, *ācamana*, *śikhābandhana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *nyāsa* and *prathvīpūjan* – are simple but effective practices for psychological boosting of the mind and energizing the body.

If possible, one should try to practice *sandhyā-vandan* thrice a day. In any case, one must do it twice – once in the morning and once in the evening – may be, for ten minutes only, if it is difficult to find more time. The best time-slots are (as the word ‘*sandhyā*’ implies) the junctions (*sandhi*) between successive phases of the day. These transitional time-periods are defined in the scriptures as –

Ahorātrasya Yā Sandhiḥ Sūryanakṣatra Varjitā |
Sātu Sandhyā Samākhyātā Munibhistatva Darśibhiḥ | |

(Meaning: Around the times of sunrise and sunset when neither sun nor any of the stars are seen even in the clear sky).

These time intervals (*sandhyā*-times) are described as extremely sensitive with respect to the effect on bodily, mental and spiritual wellbeing. We should be very careful about what we do in this period. As per the Ayurvedic treatise “*Sahityika Subhashita Vaidyakam*” –

Catvārī Ghorarūpāṇi Sandhyākāle Parityajet |
Āhāraṁ, Maithunaṁ, Nidrā, Swādhyāyaṁ Ca Vivarjayet | |

Meaning: Eating, sexual intercourse, sleeping, reading/writing during the *sandhyā*-times are extremely harmful and are strictly prohibited during these time intervals.

On the contrary, doing *prāṇāyāma*, devotional meditation, and prayers in these time-phases of the day induce intensive positive (healthy) effects.

Reemphasizing this point, the “*Garud Purana*” says –If God Vishnu is found asleep during the *sandhyā* times (around sunrise and sunset times), Lakshmi (His divine consort, the Goddess of prosperity and progress) would leave Him.

These timings are of crucial significance in the practice of *Gāyatrī Mantra japa*, as the brilliance of rising sun happens to be the

focus of meditation in this *upāsana*. The more intense the emotional engrossment of the devotee, the greater would be the spiritual and mental enlightenment. Awakening of discerning intellect is the immediate benefit of this practice. One may chant other prayers and mantras as per his faith, but the science of yoga and spirituality, as also the Ayurveda, affirm the pre-eminent impact of the *Gāyatrī Mantra japa* during *sandhyā-upāsana*

About a century ago, Maharshi Dayanand had revived the Vedic tradition of *Gāyatrī - sandhyā* in day-to-day life with the foundation of Arya Samaj. Vedmurty Taponishtha Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya had further spread it in a scientific way amongst the masses through Gayatri Pariwar. Along with *Gāyatrī Upāsana*, the comprehensive compilation of easy and effective *yogāsanas* and *kriyās* taught by him under "*Prajña Yoga*" provide practical guidelines for harmonizing the mind-body functions by enhanced flow of vital energy together with inner purification. The sequence of physical exercises and postures in *Prajña Yoga* is coupled with specific deep breathing practices, which are found to give instant relaxation and rejuvenation.

Sūryanamskāra is a well-known *yoga* exercise, which is given great importance in therapeutic applications of *yoga* under Ayurveda. The scriptures also stress its importance. For instance, the Matsya Puran says –

Ādityasya Namaskāraṁ Ye Kurvanti Dine-Dine |
Janmāntara Sahastreṣu Dāridrayaṁ Nopajāyate ||

Meaning: Those who practice *Sūryanamskāra* every morning are relieved from all infirmities and sickness in this life and in the lives to follow.

Prajña Yoga is a modified version of *Sūryanamskāra* and is more suited for the modern life-style. It is taught as an integral part of the *sādhana* courses and personality development training

programmes at Shantikunj, Hardwar and in many of the centers (*Shakti Pithas*) of the Gayatri Pariwar³ in India and abroad.

Notes:

1. *Sandhyā-upāsanā* or *sandhyā-vandan*: *Upāsanā* means devotional practice of sitting near God (i.e., with an emotional proximity with divinity). This, if practised at specific time intervals (*sandhyā*-times) with *japa* of *Gāyatrī Mantra* preceded by *prāṇāyāma* and certain purificatory rituals, is called *sandhyā-upāsanā* or *sandhyā-vandan*).
2. Detailed information on each of these rituals is given in the booklet entitled “ *Gāyatrī Sāadhanā*: Why and How?” published by Shantikunj, Hardwar (Uttarakhanda, India).
3. Practical training and informative booklets/audio-visual CDs on *Prajñā-Yoga* are available at Shantikunj, Haridwar Uttarakhanda, India.



Remedies to Control the Aggravated Doshas

If due to ignorance, negligence, habits or pressures of circumstances one is not able to follow the ideal routine and disciplines recommended in earlier chapters, one is most likely to suffer from imbalances of the *tridosha* and consequent health problems. This is quite a common scenario these days because of the polluted surroundings and stresses people are mostly living with. So let us look for easy, self-remedies to control the *dosha* related problems.

Ayurvedic treatment emphasizes more on fasting and diet restraint rather than on consuming medicines to fight out the diseases. Ayurveda asserts that half the disease is cured simply by appropriate diet control. As the principles of diagnostics and therapeutics under Ayurveda are based on the identification of the level of *tridoshas* – *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*, so are the disciplines of fasting and diet. Let us first look at the recommended diet for the maintenance of generally good health. Followed by this are some common guidelines for major classes of diseases and disorders due to the three *doshas*.

What is generally recommended as good or edible? Wheat among the cereals, green kidney-bean pulse (green-gram) among the pulses, and vegetables like green gourd, raw papaya, pointed gourd, round gourd, ridged gourd, bitter gourd, cabbage, spinach, carrot, green fenugreek, sprouted beans, etc cooked with some ginger and / or a little quantity of green chilly, etc are most commonly recommended for people of all age groups. Except for variations in the mode of preparations, these are also suitable as food ingredients for patients as well. Cow-milk and *ghee* of cow-milk's butter, are regarded the best for maintenance of vigorous health. In case of non-availability of cow's milk, it could be replaced by buffalo's milk.

The generally recommended fruits are – naturally ripened apples, papaya, *chikku*, pomegranate, guava, sweet lime, blackberry, pears, etc. Those in the category of dry fruits are cashew nut, chestnut, dates, figs, small and big resins, *chilgozā* (pine-tree fruit), dry dates, and fox-nut.

The lists of edibles and non-edibles in different classes of diseases are as follows.

1. The diseases caused by excess of *vāta dosha*: The diseases under this category include gastro problems, arthritis, rheumatism, joint-pains, spondylitis, etc. Vegetables like flower of silk cotton or kidney-bean, flowers and fresh beans of drumsticks, green fenugreeks, cabbage and pointed gourd, prepared in steam with a little amounts of ginger, garlic and aniseed are supposed to be excellent in reducing the *vāta dosha*.

Avoid taking black gram (horse bean), red gram (*masūra*), dry grams and beans such as *chanā* (black gram), *rājamā* (red kidney bean), rice, cauliflower, potato, green peas, cucumber, tomato, lemon, orange, grapes, and carbide ripened fruits which are usually mango, banana, papaya, etc. Sour substances like curd, butter-milk, pickles should also be avoided. The patients having bone related ailments due to *vāta*, should not bathe with cold water. Fomentation of the swollen parts of the body (e.g. near the joints), using salt in hot water, helps allaying the pains.

2. The diseases caused by excess of *pitta dosha*: Acidity and related ailments of the digestive system, some kinds of blood related diseases, chronic fever etc, are common manifestation of the disorders due to *pitta dosha*. Light diets of the eatables listed for generally good health are also beneficial here. Thin *chapatis* of whole wheat, *daliyā* (meal prepared from coarse wheat-flour), easily digestible boiled vegetables, and oil-free watery pulses prepared from green

gram, etc are supposed to be good in reducing the *pitta dosha*. Coconut water, cold diluted milk, big resin or figs soaked in milk are excellent supplements.

While coconut water is good, its cream (core) is harmful in the *pitta* diseases; so are vegetables like brinjal, green and red chilies and deep fried, oily and spicy eatables. These should be strictly avoided. Use of green chilly, garlic and ginger should also be stopped or kept to a minimum as per the Ayurvedic doctor's advice.

3. The diseases caused by excess of *kapha dosha*: Cough, cold, asthma, and other ailments of the respiratory, chest and throat-nose-ear system, etc fall under this category of diseases and disorders. Warm and fresh food prepared using the items listed in common category of edibles is suitable here. Drinking warm milk, which is boiled with small quantities of turmeric and dry-ginger (*sauntha*) or dates, big resins, dry dates, etc – is good antidote for the *kapha dosha*. Black pepper is also a good remedy; if possible one may just keep one or two of its seeds in the mouth or some pieces of *haraḍa* (*chabulic myrobalans*). However, care should be taken that these two things are not suitable in case the patient also has problems of piles or acidity. *Chapati* prepared from mixed flour of wheat and roasted gram (*chanā*) with *bathuā sāga* (vegetable prepared from leaf of white goose - foot plant) is also beneficial. The non-edibles listed for *vāta* problems are usually harmful in case of *kapha dosha* as well. Butter, oil, *ghee* and other fatty substances should also be avoided. Mustard or sesamum oil in small quantities could be used for preparing the vegetables.
4. In case of Diabetes: Eating thin *chapatis* of wheat flour mixed with soya bean and gram flours along with vegetables like bitter gourd, soya bean and blackberry seeds are supposed to be beneficial for the patients having this disease in acute state. They should also eat few leaf of

margosa (*neem*) or drink its juice. Blackberry is also the best fruit for them. If the blood sugar level is not so high, they may also eat guava, apple, sweet lime, pomegranate and Indian papaya.

The diabetic patients should refrain from eating sweet substances (including fruits like ripened banana, mango etc), rice, potato and other carbohydrates.

5. In case of Piles: The items listed as edible for generally good health would suit the patients of piles. Extra care should be taken – not to have chilly or spicy and deep- fried eatables. Raw mangos, brinjal etc should also be avoided. They should also pay attention to eat well before sleep and have substantial water throughout the day. This would minimize the chances of constipation as well.
6. In case of Cardiac Diseases: In this case also, the easily digestible, light food as listed under the generally good category is suitable; the proportion of fresh green vegetables, fibers and sprouts should be more. Intake of salt and fatty substances should be minimized. Apple, papaya and juices of orange, sweet lime and other fruits are also supposed to be good for those suffering from heart related problems. Cow's milk without cream is very good; small quantity of *Isapgol* (an Ayurvedic medicine) may be taken mixed in milk occasionally. Drinking the powder of the herb *Arjun chhala* (bark skin of the Arjun tree; *Terminalia arjuna* Bedd) boiled in milk is a useful remedy as well as a preventive medicine against blood pressure related problems.
7. In case of Jaundice: Use of oil, *ghee* and other fatty substances and yellow colored eatables is prohibited for those suffering from this liver ailment. Even milk is restricted, so are rice, chilly and other spices. *Chapaties* of barley, wheat, fresh butter-milk, curd, boiled vegetables like green gourd, ridged gourd, boiled lentil of green gram with substantial water and similar light, oil-free food-items constitute healthy food in this case.

8. In case of Hypothyroidism: It is caused due to deficiency of thyroxin hormone. The food suitable for generally good health are also recommended here. Sour substances including raw mango (dried or fresh), curd, lemon, tomato, pickles, tart or acidic fruits etc should not be eaten. Cauliflower and artificially ripened fruits should be avoided. Naturally ripened (on the tree) sweet fruits like mango, papaya may be eaten. Iodine-rich fruits, vegetables are beneficial. *Chapati* prepared from mixed flour of wheat, gram and soya-bean is good. *Kachanāra* (mountain ebony) is considered as most effective natural remedy against this hormonal disorder. Those suffering from hypothyroidism should keep a small, cleaned piece of the bark-skin of the *kachanar* tree in the mouth and suck it as long as possible every day.
9. In case of Obesity: Overweight of the body is the root cause of many other diseases and disorders. Strict diet restraints should be followed in general. In particular, use of sweet, fried and fatty substances should be stopped. Light, but nutritious food (as described under generally good category) devoid of sweets and fats should be taken with large proportions of green leafy vegetables, fibers, etc; balanced amounts of cream-free cow-milk may also be taken. Drinking lukewarm water in the morning, physical exercises (especially morning and evening walk) and taking medicines as per the doctor's advice help in getting rid of obesity in general.

What should be always avoided by everyone desirous of a naturally healthy life?

The list of the nearest enemies of our health includes tea, coffee, cold-drinks, ice-creams, tobacco, *gutaka*, *paanmasala*, wine (liquor/alcohol), synthetic food and confectionery, fruits that are ripened artificially (e.g. using carbide). Ayurveda also warns against eating food-items preserved under cold storage and eggs, meat, breads prepared from *maidā* (fine white wheat flour), etc.

Common Modes of Medication in Ayurveda: Ayurvedic medicines are usually available in the forms of *vaṭi* (tablets), *cūrṇa* (powder of herbs), *ras-bhasma* (specially grinded, prepared fine powders of processed herbs), syrups and decoctions of different types – *āsava*, *ariṣṭa*, *kwātha* or *kādhā* etc. Apart from these, some herbal oils and ointments are also prescribed for external use. The following are general guidelines for using the different classes of Ayurvedic medicines.

- (1) For *vaṭi* and *cūrṇa*: These types are usually recommended to be taken around 10-20 minutes after meal. Should be taken with warm water in case of diseases due to *vāta-j-kapha dosha*, and with normal water in case of *pitta doshas*. Unless they taste bitter or pungent, the tablets (*vaṭis*) should preferably be chewed rather than gulped down with water. The special tablets like muktadi, madhunashini and kayakalpa *vaṭis* are recommended to be taken with fresh water about one hour before meals. Often people use some *cūrṇas* just because of their taste and soothing effects on digestion. This is not correct, such *cūrṇas* are also medicinal – e.g. for controlling acidity – and might cause imbalance in the *dosha* levels; these should also be taken only as per the doctor's advice.
- (2) For *rasa* and *bhasmas*: These are usually eaten with honey, fresh cream of milk or with warm water (depending upon the *dosha* and ailment type) at least half-an-hour before meals.
- (3) For *āsava* and *ariṣṭa*: These are drunk with fresh water (mixed in equal proportion) about 10 to 15 minutes after meals.
- (4) For *kwātha* (*kādhā*): *Kwātha* should be best drunk freshly prepared at timings as prescribed by the doctor. It is recommended that nothing should be mixed in it. However, if it is bitter in taste and one just can't bear that bitterness then minimal quantity of honey or sugar-crystals (*mishri*) could be mixed.

- (5) For *kwātha*-bathing: At times, depending upon the type and state of disease, bathing or fomenting in the steam of boiling *kwātha* of specific types are advised. In such cases, the prescribed herbal medicines are to be cooked in a pressure cooker with about 1-1.5 kg water. A tube of appropriate size (and of material that could bear the high temperature) is to be connected at the outlet for steam (where usually a weight-whistle is kept on the cooker). A small piece of cloth is tied on the other end of the cloth; the desired body-part is exposed to this end at a safe distance so that direct spray of steam does not burn the skin. If available, an appropriate steaming device should be used instead of pressure-cooker. After steaming for prescribed duration of time, the desired body part should be fomented by gently bathing it in the medicinal solution (left in the cooker) while the latter is cooled up to a bearable temperature.
- (6) For Massaging (by Ayurvedic oils): Massaging of the particular body-part should always be done gently and at a slow pace. Its direction should always be towards the heart.

If the guidelines and disciplines of Ayurvedic medication and preventive care are followed strictly, the patients enjoy fast recovery and natural vigor thereafter. The medicinal preparations and therapeutic aspects of Ayurveda are presented in a separate book^[9] .



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