

Indigenous Knowledge's for Healthy Habits and Life

Salini K.P* and Smitha Rosey Xavier
Technical Officer, SEETTD, CMFRI
Email*: salinicmfri@gmail.com

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Introduction

Health and habits are interrelated. Our older generations viewed nature and all living beings as the beads of the same manacle. From rising up early in the morning till the moment of sleep enraptures us at night we are entangled in various activities that goes hand in hand with nature. Our ancestors realized much earlier that the pros and cons of these deeds will reflect through our health.



Fishing is not only a livelihood option to many but also a lifestyle based on the traditional values of a group of people. This job includes hard work, risk, and uncertainty, unable to maintain proper food timing, stress occurring due to climate, odd timings; use of drugs, low financial status, limitation of living space, unhygienic toilet etc , which directly and indirectly affect the health of those involved herein.

Knowingly and unknowingly and due to certain pressure of the current scenario, we have diverted our lifestyle from that was earlier followed by our ancestors. Here we are trying to catch up or peep into the old and traditional ways followed earlier.

1. What is health?

*"sama dosha sama agni scha sama dhatu mala kriyaaha|
Prasanna atma indriya manaha swastha iti abhidheeyate" – Sushruta Samhita*

Meaning:

One is in perfect health when the Three Doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) Digestive fire (digestion, assimilation and metabolism) all the body tissues & components (Dhatus) (the entire physical body) all the excretory functions (the physiological functions of urination and defecation) are in perfect order with a pleasantly disposed and contented mind, senses and spirit.

As defined by World **Health** Organization (WHO), "**Health** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." It is a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. A healthy society is a gathering of individuals and families living in different level. Air (Oxygen), food, water, clothes, habits, hygiene, exercise, shelter, rest and different other entities influences health.

- **Oxygen**

In pre-historic era, the level of oxygen in the atmosphere was 30-35 %. For a healthy environment we need at least 20-22%. We can live without food and water for many days but it is impossible to live even a second without oxygen.

A healthy man having an approximate of 5 liter of blood should consist 95% – 100% oxygen and 30% – 38% should be iron content. We use only 30% - 35% of lungs for breathing. The level of oxygen is more in coastal area. Area where air pollution is more the level of oxygen is decreased to 15% - 20%. Taking deep breath is important to maintain the required level of oxygen in the body the absence of which can lead to many health issues.

- **Food**

Healthy and balanced nutrition is important for everyone. A healthy diet is the basis for a well-functioning body. Food is the source of energy for all of our bodily functions and directly affects how our bodies and minds function in every stage of life. There are a variety of reasons why a healthy diet is important, including disease prevention, maintenance of a healthy weight and quality of life. Food is also an important aspect for maintaining our health. Food is essential for our bodies to develop, replace and repair cells and tissues; produce energy to keep warm, move and work; carry out chemical processes such as the digestion of food; protect against, resist and fight infection and recover from sickness. A healthy and balanced diet provides foods in the right amounts and combinations that are safe and free from disease and harmful substances. Eat staple food with every meal. If possible eat sprouted legumes every day. Vegetables and fruit are an important part of a healthy and balanced meal. Fats, oils and sugar are good sources of energy. Drink plenty of clean and safe water. As the proverb says “If wealth is lost, nothing is lost. If health is lost, something is lost”

- **Types of Food:**

Basically there are 4 types of food, one is chewable food, second is swallowed, third is drinkable food and fourth is eaten by licking. Chewable food when chewed gets mixed with the 24 types of digestive enzymes present in saliva. The time when we hear the name of the food/see/smell/touch etc. our sense organs react and the impulses reaches the brain which in turn boosts up our digestive enzyme accordingly.

- **How to Cook:**

Pots, pans, and other tools used in cooking often do more than just hold the food. The trace elements of the cooking material that they are made from can leach into the food that is being cooked which can cause bad effects for our body. Non-enameled clay utensils are used even in our present time because this natural material, which “breathes”, has no analogue. The dish prepared in the clay utensils has a specific aroma and refined taste. A great feature of non-enameled ceramics is that clay does not come into reaction with food, does not contain toxic substances, and it is absolutely safe to prepare food in it, because while being heated it does not discharge substances that are bad for health.

Oily foods when cooked several times may contaminate the food and becomes unhealthy to be consumed. When highly unsaturated vegetable oils are heated at frying temperature (365 F) for extended periods--or even for half an hour--a highly toxic compound, HNE (4-hydroxy-trans-2-nonenal) forms in the oil thus LDL cholesterol, liver, arthritis, Parkinson, Cancer and many other problems occur. It is better to avoid red meat, but brown food is good for health. Always avoid the 4 whites-sugar, Maida, salt and white rice. The purpose of eliminating these white foods will help get you started in adopting a healthier way of eating.

- **When to eat:**

Morning never skip breakfast. The auspicious time to have breakfast is shortly after 07.00-08.00Am. because it directly related to sunrise and sunset. The morning intake is the most effective food for our body because we get all the required ingredients for our body development. We should consume food within 10-12 minutes. You will also want to make sure to eat at regular intervals, to help make sure your body has the fuel it needs to run all day. It is a good idea to drink water, juices, smoothies, teas, and the such. However, soda, cola, and all sorts of soft drinks should definitely be avoided since it contains chemicals, preservatives etc. Generally reduce the amount of unhealthy saturated and trans fats in your diet. These are found in foods like chips, margarine, oils and many boxed or frozen foods. Pure Coconut oil is relatively the healthiest, but still not good. Try to focus on eating foods which deliver lots of vital nutrients and minerals. You can try citrus fruits, dark greens like kale and spinach, grains like brown rice and quinoa, lean proteins like lentils and chickpeas. The best time for lunch is between 12.30 to 1.00 Pm and the best for dinner is 07.00-08.00Pm. Leaving dinner later than 08.30 pm can be a dieting disaster. People are less active in the evening, with low metabolic rate, so calories are not burned properly. The most important message is not to skip meals and not to have heavy dinner or leave dinner too late. Eating too close to bedtime increases your blood sugar and insulin, which makes it harder to sleep. Try adding a slice of lemon, lime, or orange to your water for a great taste; cucumber slices for an even crispier taste! 8 Oz. glasses of water are recommended for most adults, though some people need more and some people need less. However, unless your diet consists of crackers, you will get a lot of that water from foods. Drinking a lot at once will also be very ineffective for your body. Consume food as a medicine (i.e. 1/2 stomach rice, 1/4 stomach water, 1/4 stomach air). Chew the food items according to the number of teeth you have. Hardworking and people working under the sun ,hot temperature should make it a routine to consume food which is enriched with water and slaine.

When it comes to digestion, sleeping on the left side may be preferable to the right side due to the simple matter of gravity. Specifically, lying on the left side allows food waste to easily move from the large intestine into the descending colon (meaning you're more likely to have a bowel movement upon waking). Sleeping on the left side also allows the stomach and pancreas to hang naturally (our stomach lies on the left side of the body), which can keep the development of pancreatic enzymes and other digestive processes humming. Moreover **Melatonin** hormone produced in the brain helps in control your sleep and wake cycles. Natural levels of **Melatonin** in

the blood are highest at night. It is linked with how our body gets ready for sleep. Once it gets into the blood melatonin goes to all parts of the body.

- **How does food influence health and character:**

All creation, including food, is composed of three subtle qualities (gunas): elevating, activating, and darkening. In Sanskrit, these qualities are called **Sattwic**, **Rajasic** and **Tamasic**. When we eat or surround ourselves with one of these qualities, our consciousness is drawn in that direction.

Any type of food has 3 types of quality (**Sattwa** = Goodness, **Rajas** = Passion, **Tamas** = Darkness, inactive).

- **Sattwic: Elevating**

Means balanced, harmony, purity, health and wellbeing. Sattwaguna is the positive quality, drawing us toward goodness, truth, purity and spirituality. Foods that are natural, calming, or cleansing are sattwic, which increase life, vitality, purity, strength, health, and joy. These include raw fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, as well as water, air and sunlight. They foster within us such qualities as expansiveness, intelligence, creativity, love, sympathy, calmness, patience, devotion and truthfulness.

- **Rajasic: Activating**

Means activity, readiness, stress and anger. Rajoguna is the neutral quality—i.e, not necessarily either “good” or “bad.” It is, however, activating, creating constant activity and motion. Foods that are cooked, spiced, stimulating or gourmet tend to be rajasic, as does food that is excessively hot, bitter, sour, fatty or salty. Naturally rajasic foods include lamb, poultry, fish, whole grains, lightly cooked vegetables and fruits, onions, garlic, eggs, coffee, tobacco, refined sugar, soft drinks, fats, and oils. They lead us toward such "movement-oriented" qualities as ambition, curiosity, restlessness, impulsiveness, over-seriousness, or being demonstrative.

- **Tamasic: Darkening**

Means lethargy, dullness, laziness. Inertia, ignorance. Foods that are overcooked, spoiled or unwholesome are tamasic. Tamasic foods include alcoholic beverages, moldy cheese, deep fried food, dried meats, very hot spicy foods, and foods that are over processed, chemicalized, canned or fermented. Tamasic foods lead us toward dullness, laziness, anger, negativity, covetousness, deceit, lust, and body consciousness.

Material foods impress the mind with certain good or bad qualities. And people's thoughts, actions, and health generally are determined by the foods they eat. We need to choose, those material foods which emit and lodge spiritual vibrations in man's mind and brain.” If we eat food with the right energy, it will affect our consciousness favorably.

One's diet should be confined to foods which are easily converted into energy. This means pure, natural foods that promote good health and optimum vitality. Even

fresh foods, however, have varying effects on our consciousness. We should follow a diet that promotes harmony rather than stimulation, one that keeps the nervous system calm and peaceful, and fills the body with energy, vitality and strength (i.e. a diet that includes foods with both Sattwic & Rajasic vibrations). We need to balance our need to fulfill worldly duties (Rajas) with the need to keep the breath calm for meditation (*Sattwa*)

We are all made up of different combinations of each Guna, but at certain times of your life, one Guna will be dominant. Harmonizing oneself with this fact can be profoundly empowering. No man is completely -ve /+ve. Man is a combination of the habits and mind of all living beings. Fear, anger, curiosity produces many changes in attitude, appearance, and other factors because of the adrenal glands situated just above your kidneys are absolutely vital to your wellbeing. They play a hugely important role in producing the hormones that we need, particularly during times of stress. When under stress, our brains send a signal to the adrenal glands which react instantly by releasing these stress hormones. Among other things, they slow down our digestion, increase our awareness and divert blood flow to important areas like our brain and muscles. These hormones when mixed with blood in sufficient quantity will produce a toxic resulting shivering, color change in the body, loosing temper, increasing heartbeat, fast breathing, sweating etc. When our cortisol levels (cortisol helps us meet life's challenges by converting proteins into energy, releasing glycogen and counteracting inflammation) stay elevated, it interfere with many functions in our body, including immune function, digestion, sleep and even the ability to produce other essential hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and thyroid hormones. This can lead to high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess abdominal fat, and inflammation. In the meantime, our health is compromised, along with our moods, and even our sex drive.

- **Dress:**

The right clothes can make you feel better about yourself, even smarter, but the wrong clothes can in some cases make you feel pain and even make you sick. As season changes, our body's metabolic processes also accordingly changes. Hence, it is necessary to know that what should we eat and wear during these seasons. In order to maintain our health we should wear clothes which are suitable for our climate. In summer, we should wear thin and loose cotton clothes. In winter, to bring warmth to our body we should wear warm woolen clothes like sweaters, shawls, blankets, caps, mufflers. All these clothes protect the body from cold and Hypothermia. Try to wear light color dress as white color reflects sunlight and dark colour absorbs more sunlight. Some Energy *Points (Chakrs)* are situated in our spinal cord needs different colours present in the sunlight for its well performance hence to absorb max. Sunlight to our body it is good to wear white coloured dress are light coloured dress.

- **Habit:**

Good habits help to keep our body strong and healthy. Keeping a regular and consistent sleep schedule helps your body get into a natural rhythm. Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day. By doing so you will begin to naturally fall asleep and wake up at the same time each day. Waking up will feel more natural. In

addition, it will help you fall asleep at a more regular schedule. A person who is interested in preserving the health and longevity should get up early in the morning in **Brahma-muhurta**. **Brahma muhurta** is the second last muhurta before sunrise, which is one hour thirty six minutes before sunrise. *Brahma* means knowledge. The time apt for perceiving knowledge is known as **Brahma muhurta**. When you wake up, roll to your right side and get out of bed because at a lower level of metabolic activity, if you suddenly roll to your left, you will put pressure on your cardiac system. Slowly wake up and sit and move your hand, legs and head to both sides. Take a deep breath and fill your lungs with air. Rub your hands together and place your palms upon your eyes. There is a heavy concentration of nerve endings in your hands. If you rub your palms together, all the nerve endings are activated and the system comes awake immediately. Stretch deeply to wake up your limbs. Your heart is not located half-way down, it is placed three-fourths of the way up because pumping blood up against gravity is more difficult than pumping it down, or parallel to earth. The blood vessels which go upward are a finer arrangement compared to those going down. As they go up into the brain, they are almost hair-like, to such a point that they cannot even take one extra drop. If one extra drop is pumped in, something will burst and you will have a hemorrhage. When the body is positioned horizontally, you can immediately make out that your pulse rate drops. The body makes this adjustment because if blood is pumped at the same level, too much will go into your head, causing damage. Now, if you place your head to the north and stay that way for 5 to 6 hours, the magnetic energy pull will cause pressure on your brain. If you are beyond a certain age and your blood vessels are weak, you could have hemorrhages and paralytic strokes. Or, if your system is sturdy and these things don't happen to you, you could get up agitated because there is more circulation in the brain than there should be when you are sleeping.

After waking having water empty stomach is a good way to purify your internal system. Drinking water in the morning protects and hydrates our vital organs and makes them healthy and maintains their functioning. When you drink water first thing in the morning on a daily basis, you help balance your body's lymph system. Lymph glands found in your lymph system fight infections helping you to perform your daily activities. They also balance the fluids in your body. Drinking water on an empty stomach helps in correcting bowel movement, which may prevent constipation, bad digestion and intestinal infections. Drinking water cleans your body, keeps your gut healthy, fight infections, keeps skin healthy. A few *Tulsi* leaves dropped in drinking water can purify and kill germs. Soak some Indian gooseberries in water overnight. In the morning, crush the fruits in the solution, strain the liquid and drink it. Follow this procedure on a regular basis to lose weight and reduce obesity.

Pranayama (Breathing) Exercise provides freedom from negative and harmful mental conditions like anger, depression, lasciviousness, greed for money, arrogance etc. It is better to avoid food containing fat, by people who are not involved in hard work and unmarried girls. Avoid taking antibiotics for pain relief. More intakes of ayurvedic medicinal plants are beneficial to get relief from many big diseases.

Cleanliness, Exercise, Rest

Cleanliness helps to prevent disease, and it also helps to give us a good appearance. Healthy living depends upon the practice of a few simple principles of health and hygiene rules. It has been rightly remarked that healthy body is the means of achieving the highest goal of life. Hence we cannot ignore the importance of personal cleanliness and personal hygiene in our life. It is a good practice to have an urge for excretion in the morning hours. Hands should be washed with soap in order to avoid any types of ailment, because germs may remain hidden beneath dirty nail. Routine washing hands before taking food or drink is necessary. Brush your teeth, after that scrape your tongue with a scraper who is not sharp and gargle your mouth with plenty of water to remove debris of **Streptococcus** and bad taste in the mouth. Besides this, regular exercise, proper rest and sleep are also equally important for personal health- heart and lungs healthy. An ideal form of exercise will work all the muscles of the trunk, neck and limbs, and will cause full movements of all the joints in their different parts. Exercise provides an outlet for emotional tension and promotes self-confidence. Whereas, lack of exercise causes ill health in many ways. There may be loss of appetite and constipation. Similarly, sleep is an important as food. This is the only periodical rest of both the mind and the body. It restores energy after getting rid of fatigue. The amount of sleep varies with age, type of work and individual habits. In tropical countries eight to ten hours sleep is necessary. But, we should not sleep just after meals. It is better to walk for a few minutes especially after night meals. In fact personal hygiene deals with matters pertaining to the health of the individual who is himself responsible to preserve and improve the health of his body and mind. However, to live healthy every individual should be conscious of their personal health and physical changes.