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Siddha system and Fruits – A Review

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Introduction

Siddha system gives us rejuvenation and longevity of life. In day to day life activity diet plays an important role. The diet concept of siddha system is “Unavae marundhu marundhae unavu”. This verse indicates food itself act as medicine. Diet intake nourishes different physical constituents viz, udalthathukkal which gives energy to our body. Diet plays a major role in our everyday activity. Diet acts as the source of vital nutrients to gain energy and it builds our body. Improper diet habits cause disturbances in equilibrium of the three humours

(*Uyirthathukkal*) and physical constituents (*Udalthathukkal*) in turn causing several diseases.

”*Unavaemarunthu; marunthaeunavu*”

This verse, meaning diet can act as medicine, explains the importance of diet. The diet concept of Siddhars is based upon taste of foods as it indicates the natural property of the kind of food. A typical diet must therefore include a combination of 6 tastes that is best suited to the prevailing season. Hunger (*pasi* - one of the 14

physiological reflexes or *Vegangal*) indicates the need for food. Diet intake nourishes the different physical constituents, viz., *Udalthathukkal* in a particular sequence and finally provides strength to our body. However, food like milk, water and meat soup provide instant strength to body. According to Saint Thiruvalluvar, 3 main factors decide the structure of a good diet: a) Taste, b) The constitution of person who intakes the diet, c) Time of season. Fruits are nature's wonderful medicines packed with vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants and phyto-nutrients (plant derived micro-nutrients). It is absolute feast to our sight not because of only colour and flavor it has unique nutrition that keeps the body fit and healthy.

Fruits

Fruits are one of the means of nature's own methods of pro-pagation or dispersal of the seeds from place to place; mostly by the help of birds, animals and man etc. Fruits have been eaten by mankind from time immemorial, in fact Adam 'the first man' ate 'the forbidden fruit' of heavens. Vedas state that the fruits form the base of the Food of Gods. It is believed that when Lord Shiva saw that there is no existence of the heavenly fruit Mango on the earth, which was the only favourite fruit of Parvathi, Lord Shiva to please His consort, created mango trees on this beautiful part of earth. Romans ate fruits for health and strength. Holy Quran states about the fruits like grape, date, figs, olive, pomegranate etc., as the gifts and heavenly fruits of God. All these facts signify that fruits are health-giving and health-promoting.

Chemical Analysis of Fruits

Fruits are composed of the following :

1. Carbohydrate, 2. Protein, 3. Fats, 4. Minerals, 5. Vitamins, 6. Pectin, 7. Acids, 8. Water, 9. Fiber, 10. Volatile oils.

1. Carbohydrate

The sweetness of the fruits is attributable to the presence of various sugars in the form of

dextrose, glucose, fructose, levulose etc., in various concentration depending on the type and ripeness of the fruits. These sugars are quickly absorbed and disintegrated in the body. Hence, they are very useful for sick and invalids for quick energy and heat. Fruits are indispensable for all to maintain good health and longevity.

2. Protein

Fruits are a poor source of protein, however, some fruits like: guava, banana etc., contain about 1.1 to 1.5 per cent of protein respectively.

3. Fats

Fats are not rich in the fruits.

4. Minerals

Fruits supply all the essential minerals like: Calcium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, potassium, sulphur, magnesium, chlorine, copper etc., in fact, limes and oranges supply more Calcium than other fruits.

5. Vitamins

Fruits supply number of vitamins like: Vitamin A in the form of Carotene, B-Complex, C and E. The value of these life giving substances is already known to you. Natural vitamin C is more active in haemorrhagic diathesis than Synthetic Vitamin C.

6. Acids

Some of the most valuable Acids like: citric, malic, acetic, tannic tartaric, etc., are supplied by fruits. Many of these acids increase appetite, improve digestion, prevent biliousness and act as an antiseptic. They liberate carbon dioxide and water through lungs and kidneys. The acid-salts leave the alkaline bases to counteract the acidic products formed by protein metabolism. Therefore, fruits are indispensable for acid diathesis.

7. Pectin

Pectin of the fruits acts as a mechanical barrier and checks the infection. Uronic acid present in

pectin helps the flow of mucous and thereby increases the action of self regulatory defence mechanism.

8. Water

Water in the form of fruit juice is one of the safest means of pure water supply for human use. It is free from pyrogen and other impurities.

9. Volatile Oils

The essential aromatic oils of the fruits act as carminative, increase appetite and create an exhilarating sensation after eating fruits.

10. Fibre

The fibre content of the fruits is lower than other leafy and non leafy vegetables. But there are some fruits like, guava, grapes, pineapple etc., that contain fibre which acts as an expander in intestines and helps the moisture retention. Hence, eating fruits regularly prevents and cures constipation.

Nutritive and Medicinal Value of Fruits

Nutritive and medicinal value of the fruits is attributable to the presence of the explained food-chemicals. These Chemicals play a major role forming a protective food and help the regular anabolism of the body. It is proved that supplementing fruit juices in the form of lime, orange, mango-juice taken with milk, helps the easy digestion and imparts health and growth in children. Fruits have a marked effect in retaining the minerals like Calcium, phosphorus, magnesium in the body. Fruit juice taken with milk reduces the curd tension and makes it easy digestible.

Effects of fruits on various systems of body

(a) Central Nervous System

Fruits like: apple, date, Manga, Sapota etc., have a direct action on the central nervous system.

The phosphorus, glutamic and vitamin A and B-complex of these fruits exert a protective and tonic effect on the nerves and keep one healthy and strong. Particularly, regular fruit-diet sharpens the memory and prevents one from nervous exhaustion, mental tension, proconvulsions, insanity, hysteria, insomnia and impotency. Fruits are particularly useful for those devoted to intellectual pursuits, neurotics, old and convalescents.

(b) Cardio-Vascular System

Heart is a very strong muscular pump which is constantly working in the body even before the birth. Its activity is regulated by self-generating energy. This energy is regularly supplied to heart as long as one eats a sound balanced diet in the form of fresh fruits and green vegetables. It is a remarkable discovery that fruit-sugars, calcium, iron, vitamin A, B-complex and C control the gradation of this heart energy. Hence eating fruits like apple, banana, oranges, limes, pomegranate, etc., aid the proper functioning of the heart and keep it healthy even in old age. Fruit juices with rice-diet is found to be effective in reducing primary and secondary high-blood-pressure. This is notably seen by giving water-melon and the emulsion of its seeds.

(c) Digestive System

It is already said that the fruit-acids play a major role in toning the digestive system. I have been treating gastric ulcer and other digestive disorders with milk, mixed with plain grape juice with gratifying results. Even rheumatism and gout can also be cured by giving a mixture of orange, pineapple and mango juice in early stages. But unfortunately, patients seek the proper medical or surgical help only when nothing could be done to cure gastric disorders or any other chronic disease. It can be emphatically said that regular eating of fruits and leading a sober life will certainly prevent all the incurable diseases.

In certain gastro-intestinal diseases like: Irritable colon and Post-operative phase of abdominal diseases fruit juices produce abdominal due to

fermentation caused by Raffinose and Stachyose micro-organisms on the cane-sugar and citric acid. This can however, be prevented by adding honey instead of ordinary sugar to fruit juices.

(d) Urinary System

The basal diet having grapes and grape-juices on the Urine pH and found that pH value of urine increased from 0.8 to 1.2 units and ammonia excretion fell with an increased alkaline reserve. He confirms that fruit juices have a definite action on lowering the urine acidity. Potassium, magnesium and sodium content of the fruit acts as a diuretic.

Therefore, fruit juices can be safely given during B-coli infection, nephritis, pyelitis, cystitis cardiac oedema, toxæmia of pregnancy, albuminuria etc. Fruit juices can also be used as adjuvant in the treatment of salicylates, sulphanimide etc. However, fruit juices should be given with care in kidney failure.

(e) Infections

Fruits have no specific individual curative value on any known infection in its active phase. Therefore, any fruit can never be given as a specific medicine for any serious infection caused by lethal micro-organisms, such as, streptococci, staphylococci, Koch's bacilli, Kleb's Löffler's bacilli, etc. Proper use of antibiotics along with fruit juices should be used in these infections. However, eating fruits regularly prevents the infections caused by these micro-organisms and malnutrition.

This protective mechanism of fruits is due to extra action of vitamin A, C. These vitamins restore capillary permeability and check the penetration of large molecular proteins of viruses and molecules of bacterial polysaccharides. Fruits supply ionised minerals along with pure water and remove waste products during infections. Because of these, nutritive and medicinal values of fruits, they are called the Food of Gods.

It is really that India being an agricultural country. its fruit cultivation and consumption is far below when compared to other countries. It is not because that fruits cannot be grown here, but because it is the mass ignorance of food science, particularly about the nutritive and medicinal value of fruits and vegetables, misconception of canned foods and poverty that discourages the fruit growers and food packers to limit their production in fear of economic loss.

It is better to consume only unripe fruits except some types of ripened fruits, where their sour and astringent tastes are changed into sweet taste. Ripe fruits of plantain, mango and jack fruit contain nutrients which give the body strength. But these fruits cause indigestion. To get rid of this ill effect, they should be taken along with food. Mostly, all fruits are laxatives. Among the fruits, *Mussa oxtilis* type of thick skinned plantain is the best laxative; country fig (*Ficus glomerata*), jack fruit (*Artocarpus intigrifolia*) and grapes (*Vitis vinifera*) are also the best laxatives. Foreigners consume fruits after food. Our ancestors consumed certain fruits before food and certain fruits after food. We shall see the qualities of some fruits here.

Indian gooseberry (*Emblica officinalis*)

Indian gooseberry which is similar to Ambrosia, should be consumed before food during the day. It cures pitha diseases and gastritis.

Wood apple fruit (*Feronia elephantum*)

Wood apple fruit gives pleasure to the body, increases the appetite. It cures thirst due to pitha. This may be consumed before and after food.

Jujubee fruit (*Zizyphus jujuba*)

Jujubee fruit cures giddiness due to pitham. This should be consumed only after food since it aggravates the digestive fire and thereby causes gastritis.

Plantain fruit (*Musa paradisaca*)

Among the eight varieties of plantain fruits the red fruits, white fruits, rasthali, mondhani species, double fruits, mountainous species like chirumelai, green plantain and dark coloured fruits are good for patients. The dark coloured fruits produce good effects. All the eight varieties are not good for the patients having vata disorders. But if consumed with food, they produce good effects. Pitha diseases are cured by the plantain fruits.

Peyan - a variety of plantain (*Musa oxitilis*)

Peyan fruit cures insanity and the sense of heat and aggravates vatahumour. Its potency is cool and its action is laxative.

Jack fruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*)

Sweet jack fruit causes several diseases.

Mango (*Mangifera indica*)

Mango fruit inhibits the appetite. But increases spermatogenesis.

Country fig (flesh) (*Ficus glomeratica*)

The fruit of country fig cures the effects due to derangement of pithavatham. This also relieves constipation. The flesh portion acts as haematogenesis and laxative. It has both hot and cold potency.

Tamarind (*Tamarindus indicus*)

Tamarind fastens ageing. But it cures vomiting and pitha diseases.

The old tamarind cures the derangement of three humours. vata diseases, throbbing pain, phlegm and vomiting. This also cures eye diseases and pitha disorders.

Janmoon plum (*Eugenia jambolam*)

The fruit of janmoon plum are of three varieties. They cure polyuria, sense of heat and morbid

thirst. It increases the blood and spermatogenesis. But it causes indigestion.

Guava (*Psidium guajava*)

Guava fruit causes eczema, gives strength to the body and acts as a laxative.

Cashew (*Anacardica occidentale*)

Cashew fruit cures thirst and the sense of heat.

Custard apple (*Annona squamosa*)

Excessive intake of custard apple causes psychiatric disorders.

Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)

Pomegranate fruit gives coolness to the body and improves haematogenesis.

Date fruit (*Phoenix dactylifera*)

Date fruit cures pitha diseases, diabetes and constipation.

Pine apple (*Ananas sativus*) - (Poonthazham pazham):

Pine apple fruit cures pitha diseases and gives beauty. If this fruit is consumed in excess hunger, it causes dysentery and if it is consumed during indigestion, it increases the appetite. It causes throat inflammation and sinusitis.

Balsan pear fruit (*Momordica charantia*)

Balsan pear fruit cures dysentery and diarrhoea.

Grapes (*Vitis vinifera*)

Grapes give coolness to the body. It brightens the vision and improves the spermatogenesis and haematogenesis.

Plamyra palm fruit (*Borassus flabellifera*)

If the palmyra palm fruit is consumed regularly as food, it causes eczema, skin diseases, constipation etc..

Conclusion

All these facts signify that fruits are health-giving and health-promoting. Fruits also promote the longevity of life. Fruits have the quality of reduced risk of chronic diseases, nutrients present in that plays a important role in health and maintenance of the body. It is important that one should have a habit of regular consumption of fruits in an appropriate quantities to maintain the body in healthy condition.

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