



## CONCEPT OF DIET IN YOGA SHASTRA AND AYURVEDA – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT:

In this era lifestyles are changed which has a negative impact on health. Eating habits are also changed due to technological advancement and easing lifestyles. Due to this risk of lifestyle is also increasing. *Yoga* and *Ayurveda Shastra* are life sciences that give importance to diet for a healthy life. *Yoga* gives the concept of *Satvik*, *Rajsik*, and *Tamasik* diets along with *Mitahar*, *Hita Ahar*, and *Ahita Ahar*. *Ayurveda* gives the concept importance of *Ahar*, *Shadrasatmak Ahar*, *Bhojan Kala*, *Ahar matra*, etc. Both *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* give similar concepts of diet such as *Satvik Ahar*, *Mitahar* (moderate and balanced diet), *Pathya Ahar* (beneficial and preferred diet), and *Apathya Ahar* (harmful and prohibited diet). Also gives importance to the time of food intake, and quantity of food. Both *Hathyog* and *Ayurveda* teach how to keep the physical body healthy, and how this health relates to our diet in our spiritual journey. So this study aims to comply with the literature regarding yogic Ahar mentioned in different Yogic and *Ayurveda texts*.

**Keywords** – Diet, *Ahar*, *Yoga Shastra*, *Ayurveda*.

## INTRODUCTION

In this era of modernization and civilization, lifestyles are changed and it has a negative impact on health both physically, socially, psychologically, and spiritually. The reasons for those are lack of physical exercise, using technology for easing life, moving with transportation from place to place, and sitting for long hours. Eating habits are also changed due to technological advancement and easing lifestyles. Previously natural food, fruits and vegetables are used by people this changed into an artificially produced fast food that lack a nutritional diet. Due to this risk of lifestyle disorders like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease are increasing and in India, non-communicable diseases account for 60% of death in a year.<sup>[1]</sup> That's why there is a need for daily practice of *Yoga* with all the rules and regulations along with recommended diet.

*Yoga* and *Ayurveda Shastra* both are life sciences that originated in ancient India. *Yoga* is the ancient art and science of preparing the body and mind for the eventual liberation and enlightenment of the soul. *Ayurveda* which means "Knowledge of life," is the art and science of keeping the body and mind balanced and healthy. The main aim of *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* is to attain *Moksha* (liberation) and it is only possible when individuals are physically

healthy and mentally fit. *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* teach us the way of life concerned with physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

According to *Yoga Shastra Atyaahar* (overeating) is one of the *Yogavighatkar Bhava* i.e., obstacles in the path of *Yoga* and *Yoga* practice without *Mitahar* (quantitative food) may lead to disease condition and not making progress in *Yoga*. So Yogi should adopt the *Mitahar* or *Pathya Ahar* (wholesome diet) during *Yoga Abhyas*. *Ayurveda* also mentioned that *Hita Ahar* (wholesome food) is responsible for health and happiness as *Ahita Ahar* (unwholesome food) leads to disease and misery.<sup>[2]</sup> So both shastras give importance to food for maintaining health and reaching the ultimate goal of life.

That's why this study aimed to evaluate the literature regarding yogic *Ahar* mentioned in different *Yoga* texts and *Ayurveda*.

## AIM

To evaluate the literature regarding Diet mentioned in different *Yoga Shastra* and *Ayurveda* Shastra.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### *Yogic Ahar according to Bhagvata Geeta*

*Yoga* is the union of the soul with God. The opposite of *Yoga* is *Bhog*, which means engagement in sensual pleasures. Indulgence in *Bhog* violates the body's natural laws and results in *Roga* (disease). If the body becomes

diseased, it impedes the practice of *Yoga* but those who are temperate in their habits of eating, sleeping, working, and recreation can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system.<sup>[3]</sup>

*Ahar* is classified into three types i.e., *Satvika*, *Rajasik*, and *Tamasik* <sup>[4]</sup>

#### **Satvik Ahar**

A diet that increases the Ayu (life and vitality), *Satva*(purity), gives *Bala* (strength), *Arogya*(health), *Sukha* (*happiness*), and *Priti* (satisfaction) are termed *Satvik*. Such food is *Rasya* (savory), *Snigdha*(oleaginous), *Sthira* (substantial), and *Hridya* (pleasing to the heart) are liked by *Satvik* people.

#### **Rajasik Ahar**

Foods that are of excess *Katu* (pungent), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salted), *Ati Ushna* (steaming hot), *Ati tikshna* (excess spicy), *Ruksha* (ununctuous / dry), *Vidaahi* (irritant in nature), Such foods cause distress Misery and disease.

#### **Tamasik Ahar**

*Yata Yama* (food which is not freshly cooked), *Gatarasam* (which is tasteless), *Pooti* (stale food), *Parsishutam* (putrid food or refrigerated food), *Uchistham* (leftover or decomposed and unclean), *Tamas Priya* (food liked by ignorant people) is the food that is contraindicated for the person who practice *Yoga*. <sup>[4]</sup>

#### **Ahar mentioned in Shiv Samhita**

***Yogvighnakar Bhava*** – *Amla* (sour), *Ruksha* (ununctuous), *Tikshna* (excess spicy), *Lavan* (salty), *Sarshap* (mustard), *Katu* (pungent), *Tail* (oil) *Vidaahi* (corrosive food), *Upavas* (fasting), *Atvahar* (overeating) this thing should be prohibited during the *Yoga Abhyas*. <sup>5</sup>

***Yogasiddhikar Bhav*** – *Ghrut* (ghee), *Ksheer* (milk), *Mishtanna* (sweet foods), *Tambul Churna Varjitam* (betel leaf without lime), *Karpura* (camphor), *Nistusha*(without husk) are recommended for *Yogasadhak*.<sup>[6]</sup>

At the beginning of *Yogabhyas* *Ksheerajya Bhojan* i.e. food with milk and ghee is advised Later, when the practice becomes stable, such a rule is not necessary.

**Quantity of food** – *Yoga* practitioners should eat small amounts of food several times.

Time of consumption of food – *Practitioner of Yoga* should always eat food when *Surya Nadi* is activated (breathing from the right side of the nostril) and sleep only when the *Chandra Nadi* is activated (breathing from the left side of the nostril). *Yoga Sadhak* (*practitioner*) should not practice *Yoga* immediately after a meal or while being very hungry<sup>[7]</sup>

#### **Mitahar**

According to *Hathyoga Pradipika* food which is Palatable, sweet and some portion of food should be offer to *Shiv* and one fourth of stomach is free after meal. <sup>[8]</sup>

In *Gherand Samhita* food which is pure, sweet and well lubricated. Half of the stomach filled by food, one quarter by water and the fourth quarter should be empty for the movement of *Vayu*.<sup>[9]</sup> Alongwith *Mitahar* recommed diet and prohibited diet also mention with some rules and regulation.

#### ***Pathya Ahar by Hathyoga Pradipika***

Food recommend such as *Godhum* (wheat), *Shali*(rice), *Yava*(barley), *Shashtik* (rice), *Ksheer* (milk), *Ajya* (ghee), *Khand* (jaggery), *Navneet* (butter), *Sita* (sugar), *Madhu* (honey), *Shunthi* (dried ginger), *Panchshak*, *Patol*( Pointed Guard), *Mung* (green gram), *Divya Udak*( store rainwater).

Food which gives strength, which is sweet, nourishing, food which is mixed with cow milk and ghee and which nourishes the dhatus and pleasant to mind is advised to Yogi.<sup>[10]</sup>

#### ***Apathya Ahar by Hathyoga Pradipika***

Prohibited food is *Katu* (bitter), *Amla*(sour), *Tikshna* (pungent), *Lavan* (salty), *Ushna* (hot in nature), *Harit Shak* (green leafy vegetables), *Souvir* (kanji), *Tai I*(oil), *Tila* (sesame), *Sarshap* (mustard), *Madya* (alcohol), *Mastyas* ( fish), *Ajadinams* (meat), *Dadhi* (curd), *Takra* (buttermilk), *Kulaththa*(horse gram), *Kola* (jujube), *Pinyak* (left-overs after expelling oil from the seeds of *Sesame*), *Hingu* (asafoetida), *Lashun*( garlic), etc.

Re-heated food, dry/devoid of natural oil, excessively Salty or acidic, Stale, or which have too many types of vegetables should be avoided.<sup>[11]</sup>

#### ***Ahar mentioned in Gherand Samhita***

##### ***Grahyahar (food recommended)***

*Shali*, *Yava*, *Godhum*, *Mudga*, *Mash*, *Chanak*, etc after removing their husk. *Patol*, *Panas* (jackfruit), *Kankol*, *Shukashuk* (bitter gourd), *Dradhika*, *Karkati* (cucumber), *Rambha* (banana), *Dumbari* (cluster fig), *Kantakantakam*, *Amarambha*, *Balrambha*, *Rambhadand*, *Vatarki*(eggplant), *Mulak* (white raddish), *Riddhi*, *Balshak*, *Kalshak*, *Patolpatra*, *Vastuk*, *Hilmochika*, *Ela* (cardamom), *Jati*(nutmeg), *Lavang*(cloves), *Pourush*, *Jambu* (rose apple), *Haritaki*(chebulic myrobalam), *Khajuraho*(dates).<sup>[12]</sup>

##### ***Agrahyahar (food prohibited)***

*Katu*, *Amla*, *Lavan*, *Tikta*, *Bhrushta* (overcooked or burnt foods), *Dadhi* (curd), *Takra* (buttermilk), *Shakotkat*(vegetables which give heaviness), *Madya*( liquor), *Tal*(palm fruit), *Panas* ( jack fruit), *Kullatha* ( Horse gram), *Masur*(Lentils), *Pandu*, *Kushmand* ( pumpkin), *Tumbi*(gourd), *Kol*( berries), *Kappitha* (wood apple), *Kantabilba*, *Palash* (bastard teak), *Kadamb* (burflower tree), *Jambir* (lemon), *Nimba* (lime), *Lakuch* (monkey jack), *Lashun* (garlic), *Priyal* (charolli nut),

*Hingu* (asafoetida), *Shalmali* (silk cotton tree), *Kemukam* (costus speciosus)<sup>[13]</sup>  
Food should be *Laghupaki* (easily digestible), *Priya* (agreeable), *Snigdha*, and *Dhatupraposhan* (which nourishes the dhatus) and *Manoabhilashit* (pleasant to the mind) is desirable to *Yogi*. Food which is *Kathinya* (hard), *Duritam* (polluted), *Puti* (putid), *Ushna* (hot potency), *Paryushit* (stale), *Atisheet* (excessive cold), *Atiushna* (excessive hot).<sup>[14]</sup> *Ekahar* (having a meal only once time in a day), *Nirahar* (not having a meal at all), *Yamante* (Meal taking just after three hours, or eating between meals) should be discontinued. At the beginning of *Yogabhyas*, one should take a meal with milk and ghee.

**Time of meal** – *Yogi* should eat twice a day in *Madhyanha* (between 9 am to 12 pm) and *Sayanha* (between 3pm to 6 pm).<sup>[15]</sup>

#### According to Ayurveda

*Ahar* is part and parcel of the three *Upastambha* as *Ahāra* sustains the life of all beings, all living beings in this universe are in pursuit of food (*Ahāra*) because life depends mainly upon food.

Food imparts the *Varna* (Complexion), clarity, good and pleasant *Swara* (Voice), *Jivana* (Longevity), *Pratibha* (Genius), *Sukha* (Happiness), *Suṣṭhi* (Satisfaction), *Pusthi* (Nourishment), *Bala* (Strength) and *Medha* (Intelligence). Professional activities like

agriculture, business, etc lead to happiness in this world, Vedic rituals lead to abode in heaven and observance of truth and brahmacharya leads to salvation, in the same way, individuals indulge in *Matravat*, *Kalavat*, and *Hita Bhojana* (Healthy food) receive the spiritual benefits<sup>[16]</sup>

#### Influence of food over mind and emotions:

*Ayurveda* asserts that the mind is directly influenced by the quality of food eaten, food preparation, appearance, aroma, and freshness of the food. These factors influence all five senses and regulate proper digestion. It advocates that the quality of the food also regulates emotion, mental agility, and mental vigor.

*Ayurveda* also has classified the food category into three basic groups:

*Satva* or light food such as fresh vegetables, rice, milk, butter, honey, fruits, and nuts when eaten it will balance all three *Doshas*, bring mental harmony, and evoke conscious awareness.

*Rajas* or Rich food such as garlic, coffee, and wine, fried food, too spicy or too hot will stimulate fantasy, jealousy, and ego. Although these emotions may appear as negative aspects, some of these emotions are needed to lead a normal life. Rajasic food should be included in the diet with modesty. Food that

aggravates *Pitta* and *Vata* *Dosha* which increases anger and restlessness.

Food that increases inner darkness and confusion is called *Tamasik Ahar*. Tamas or Dull and sluggish food lists contain frozen food, certain root vegetables, peanut, leftovers, and meats that may need more energy to digest. Such food may enhance emotions like ignorance, greed, and laziness. This food category must be included in the diet with caution. [17]

#### ***Shadrasatmka Ahara***

*Sarvarasaabhyaso Balakaranam* so it is advised to take *Shadrasatmak Ahar* i.e. *Ahar* contains six *Rasas* viz *Madhur* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), and *Kashaya* (astringent). Each of these has a role to play in our health and well-being. [18]

#### ***Bhojan Kala (Time of food intake)***

A healthy individual should consume the food twice a day i.e. in *Pratah*(morning) and *Sayam* ( evening. Food should not be taken in between this, because the method of eating food has been done like performing *Agnihotra*, and *Agnihotra* karma is performed only in the morning and evening. One should not take food within three hours (1 *yama*) of consumption of food as it leads to indigestion and one should not fast for more than six hours (i.e., 2 *yama*) as it leads to loss of strength. [19] That means after getting awake at

6 a.m., following the daily regimen one should have food before 6 hours (i.e., 2 *yama*) which is about before noon whereas, in the evening time, food should be taken before 6 p.m. i.e., the time of sunset.

Timely intake of the *Hita ahāra* (Wholesome food) and *Mitāhāra* (Safe and hygienic food) prevents the occurrence of the diseases.

#### ***Ahar Matra (Quantity of the food intake)***

The amount of food always depends upon the *Agni* (digestive capacity). Every time the individual should assess the capacity of the *Agni* before food intake. The amount of food that does not affect the normalcy of an individual, which gets digested accurately at the right time without any hurdles, that amount is considered the appropriate quantity of food for a particular individual. [20]

Two parts of the stomach should be filled with eatables and one part with drink and remaining. One part of the stomach should be left empty for the movement of the *Dosha*. This is considered the appropriate quantity of food. [21] One-third or half part of the stomach should be filled with food that is heavy to digest and food that is easy to digest should not be consumed stomach full. [22]

#### ***Pathya (food recommended)***

According to *Acharya Charaka*, the list of foods that are advisable to consume daily are *Shashtikashali* (rice grown in 60 days), *Godhuma* (wheat), *Yava* (barley), *Mudga* (green gram), *Saindhava* (rock salt), *Amalaki* (*Emblica officinalis*), *Antarikshajala* or *Divyodaka* (rainwater), *Ghrita*, Cow milk, *Madhu*, *Jangalamamsa* (meat of animals from arid land).<sup>[23]</sup> Can be correlated as balanced diet in today's era. *Acharya Vagbhata* explains some extra *Dravyas* like *Godhuma* (wheat) *Sunisannaka*, *Jivanthi*, *Balamulaka*, *Pathya*, *Muhlesim*, *Patoli*, *Sharkara* (sugar), *Dadima*<sup>[24]</sup> can

#### **Apathya (food prohibited)**

*Acharya Charak* has also mentioned some food articles which should be avoided by healthy people. Such food articles are *Vallura* (dried meat), dried vegetables, lotus rhizome, and stalk and one should never consume the meat of Diseased animals.<sup>[25]</sup>

Intake of wholesome and unwholesome food together is called *Samasana*. Intake of less or more food at irregular times is called *Visamasana*. Intake of food before digestion of food consumed earlier is called *Adhyasana*. All three, produce death or dreadful diseases.<sup>[26]</sup>

For maintaining health everybody should consume only a wholesome diet, and prepare the food, considering eight factors

before eating food- *Prakriti* (nature), *Karan* (mode of preparation), *Samyog* (combination of food), *Rashi*(quantity), *Desha* (place), *kal*(time), *Upagsamstha* (dietic rules), *Upabhokta*( person who takes food).<sup>[27]</sup>

If these important rules are adopted appropriately in food processing, preparing, and consuming will help in enhancing the status of health as a wholesome diet, and contrary to this may lead to various ailments which are termed as an

All these eight factors are complementary to each other and denote the wholesomeness of diet. Eight important rules are involved in the intake of a proper diet. These are called *Ashṭa Ahāra Vidhi Visheshayatana* (Eight Factors of Diet and Dietetics).

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#### **DISCUSSION**

The nature of the food that we consume can influence our physical and mental health that's why both *Yoga* and *Ayurveda shastra* give importance to *Ahar*. In three types of *Ahar* *Satvik Ahar* is easily digestible, helps to build immunity and rapid healthy response, and brings harmony between physical and mental health. *Satvik Ahar* does not agitate the stomach at all. By maintaining a peaceful state of mind and preventing it from any kind of agitation. The mind-body equilibrium is

destroyed by *Rajasik Ahar* (foods) and they make the mind restless and uncontrollable. *Tamasik Ahar* is unprocessed food and unhealthy food which slows down our activities and prevents us from performing our activities. *Ahara Rasa* directly acts on Dosha *Samyata* as *Mana* is *Annamaya* and maintains a calm state of mind which helps prevents mental and physical disease.<sup>[28]</sup>

Ayurveda explains *Shadrasatmak Ahar* i.e. all six rasas include in the diet but not in excess quantity and *Yoga Shastra* predominantly *Madhur Rasa* is used and avoid excessive use of all *Rasa*. *Madhur Rasatmak Ahar* is *Shadindriyaprasadkar*(pleasant to Six Indriya), *Sarvadhaturvardhana*(nourishing to all *Dhatus*), *Tarpan*(nourishing), *Hridaya*(pleasant to mind) and also *Satvik* in nature.

The quantity of food should depend on the capacity of the stomach that' is why the concept of *Mitahar* is given and it depends on individuals *Agni* and the nature of food. One should know about what to eat and what not to eat that's why both Shastra mentioned healthy and unhealthy diet and gives equal importance. *Acharya Charak* mentioned *Nitya Sevaniya Dravya* and *Varjaniya Dravya* similar concepts of *Pathya* and *Apathya Ahar* is given by *Yoga Shastra* except for the *Jangal Mamsa*. *Acharya Sushruta* described the food as that which Nourishes and directly increases the

body's strength. It Improves memory, digestive power, and energy, Strengthens the mind, increases *Ojas*, and increases the longevity of life *Pathya*.<sup>[29]</sup> A yogic diet is a diet that restores balance at all levels or dimensions i.e. gross physical body, *Prana*, Mind, Intellect, Emotions, and Spiritual Dimensions.

*Pathya Apathya Ahar* will be categorized in *Satvik*, *Rajasik*, and *Tamsik Ahar* according to their qualities. *Pathya Ahar* and *Mitahar* will be considered as *Satvik Ahar* and *Apathya Ahar* or *Agrahya Ahar* will be *Rajasik* or *Tamsik*.

## CONCLUSION

In this modern era dietary pattern change which adversely affect the physical and mental health of person. To encounter this our ancestor, give concepts of *Satvik Ahar*, *Mitahar* and *Pathya Ahar* to attaining a calm state of mind and attaining health. Also gives importance to the time of food intake, and quantity of food. Both *Hathyog* and *Ayurveda* teach how to keep the physical body healthy, and how this health relates to our diet in our spiritual journey. Thus we comply the literature regarding diet from various *Yogic* texts and *Ayurvedic* texts

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