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Nitishree Chordia

MA (Yoga), Mohan Lal Sukhadia
University, Udaipur, Rajasthan,
India.

Concept of yogic diet according to yoga literature

Nitishree Chordia

Abstract

Diet plays a vital role in our life. It is said that “As you eat so you behave.” According to yogic thinking, mind is formed by the core of food. Healthy eating is essential for healthy mind and body. Diet plays an important role in achieving perfection and success in yoga. A yogic diet leads to peace and progress in spiritually. So in this article we will go through diet mentioned for yoga sadhak in yogic literature like *Hathayoga Padipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Shrimat Bhagwadgita*.

Keywords: Yogic diet, ahara, mithara, pathya-ahara, apathya-ahara, sattvik diet

Introduction

Yoga is spiritual discipline which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. The word ‘Yoga’ is derived from Sanskrit root ‘Yuj’, meaning to join or ‘to yoke’ or ‘to unite’. Yoga is not merely a form of exercise for the body. It is an ancient wisdom – for a healthier, happier and more peaceful way of living – which ultimately leads to union with the self. Yogic Philosophy believes that diet is an integral part of yoga. This not only helps in developing a mindful eating practice but also supports and nurtures your yoga regime.

Aim and Objectives

To study in details about diet mentioned in yogic literature of yoga sadhak.

Material and Methods

Following Traditional texts have been reviewed critically.

1. Shrimat Bhagwatgita (B.G)
2. Hathayoga Pradipika (H.P)
3. Gheranda Samhita (G.S)

Yogic diet

Diet in yoga is named as ‘Ahara’. Diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of Yoga and spiritual progress is called Yogic diet. According to yogic philosophy gross part of food nourishes the outermost sheath i.e. *Annamaya Kosha* and subtle part of food nourishes the *Pranmaya Kosha* and *Manomaya Kosha* of a person. These different sheaths symbolize different levels of consciousness. To raise one’s consciousness one should purify the outermost sheath by following prescribed dietary guidelines *Pathya* (wholesome)/*Apathya* (unwholesome) as mentioned in these Yogic Scriptures. These scriptures tell Quality, Quantity Timing and order of taking food. The diet that not only fulfils the appetite but also satisfies senses (indriya), give pleasure to mind (maan) and provide peace to the soul (Atma) is called yogic diet. Thus yogic diet provides Physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Concept of yogic diet in Shrimat Bhagvadgita

Shrimat Bhagwatgita defines yogic diet as under:

युक्ताहारविहरस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वानावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुः खहा ॥ (B.G) 17.6

He who is regulated in his habits of eating sleeping, recreating and work can mitigate all

Corresponding Author:

Nitishree Chordia

MA (Yoga), Mohan Lal Sukhadia
University, Udaipur, Rajasthan,
India.

material pains by practicing the yoga. 17.6.

The Bhagwadgita also classifies food as sattvik, Rajasik and Tamasik Diet.

Sattvik ahara

It highly preferred yogic diet.

आयु सत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धना ।

रास्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आघराः सात्विक प्रियाः ॥ (B.G) 17.8

Food dears to those is the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify ones. Existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such food is juicy, fatty, wholesome and pleasing to the heart. (17.8)

Sattvik food nourishes the Body, balances the energy intellect and purifies the mind. It e.g.:- fresh fruits, dry fruits, berries, raw or lightly cooked vegetable, salads, grains, honey, dairy products etc.

Rajasik ahara

कटुबल्लवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरुक्षविदाहिनः ।

आहारा राजसस्येषु दुःखषोकामधप्रदाः ॥ (B.G) 17.9

Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to those in passion. Such foods cause distress misery and disease. (17.9)

The food make the mind rest less and case disease e.g.:- onion, garlic, coffee, tea, tobacco, alcohol, fast food, chocolate, etc. Yoga sadhak should avoid Rajasik food.

Tamasik diet

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं चयत् ।

उचिच्छमपि चामेध्यं भोजन तामसप्रियम ॥ (B.G) 17.10

Foods prepared more than three hours before being eaten, food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear to those in the mode of darkness. (17.10)

The food which is stale, tasteless, impure is Tamasik in nature. Such food creates a feeling of heaviness, lethargy. e.g.: meat, fish, egg, drugs, alcohol. Food which is burned, fried, reheated many times.

A yogi should consume sattvik diet and should avoid tamasik and Rajasik diet.

Concept of yogic diet in hatha yoga

Hatha yoga text is Hathayoga Pradipika and Gheranda Samhita define yogic diet in three categories

1. Mitahara – moderate and balance diet.
2. Pathaya-ahara – beneficial and preferred diet.
3. Apathaya-ahara – Harmful and prohibited diet.

Mitahara

Mitahara in Hathayoga text is defined as-- agreeable and sweet food leaving the one fourth of stomach free and eaten as offering to please God (Prasad).

It means that food should be fresh pleasant taste, lubricated. The rule of food intake is that half of stomach should be filled with food, one fourth should be filled with water and remaining one fourth should be kept empty for circulation of air. Eating until the stomach is full is prohibited.

A practitioner who undertakes yoga without moderating the diet suffers from many diseases and doesn't make progress in

yoga. (G.S. 5/16)

Pathya-ahara: (Food should be taken)

The most conductive food for the yogic according to Hathayoga Pradipika and Gheranda Samhita are: good grains, wheat, rice, barley, milk, ghee, jaggery, Mishri, Honey, dry ginger, parval, mung, urad and such pulses, pure water, seasonal green vegetables, brinjal, unripe banana, figs, cucumber, bitter gourd etc. Five leafy vegetable similar to spinach (balashaka, kalashaka, patolapatraka, vashtaka and himalochika) are highly recommended. Cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, haritaki and dates can be taken.

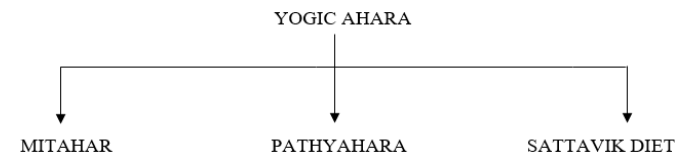
Only food which is easily digestible, agreeable, lubricating, strengthening nourishing the Dhatus and acceptable to the mind should be eaten. (G.S. 5/29)

Apathya-ahara: (Food should be avoided)

The food which is harmful is described in Hatha yoga Text are as: one should avoid food that taste bitter, sour, pungent, salty, heating, heavy vegetable, oil – sesame and mustard, cured, buttermilk, fish, flesh food, horse gram, garlic, asafoetida, fried food alcohol, plam nuts, over ripped jack fruit, pumpkin etc.

Unhealthy diet should not be taken that food which is reheated after becoming cold, which is dry, which is excessively salty or acidic and which is stale or have many vegetables. (H.P. 1/60)

Having only one day a meal, not eating at all or eating between meals should be discontinued. (G.S. 5/29)



Principles of eating food

Some Traditional Yogic Text mentioned *Three valuable points* regarding intake of food:

- Mitabhuk- One should take a balance diet
- Ritubhuk- One must according to the Seasons
- Hitabhuk- Diet must be suitable to health (sattvik diet)

Discussion

As per the classical text of yoga, consumption of food in excess quantity and of poor quality acts as obstacle in the pathway of yogic practices. On other hand consumption of Mitahara, pathyaahar and sattvik diet helps in achieving yogic goals.

Conclusion

Yogic diet is specifically designed for yogic practices such that a Yogic practitioner does not get ill and throughout his practice he/she remains healthy. Yogic diet is mainly of vegetarian type. People having sedentary lifestyle can be immensely helped if they along with their regular Yogic practices also follow Yogic diet. As yogic scriptures say that certain dietary precautions are kept under consideration before practicing various Yogic practices. Yogic diet believes in the concept of mitahara and sattavik ahara. Thus intake of food for yoga sadhak depends on three things

1. Quality of food – It should be sattvik.
2. Quantity of food – Half of stomach should be filled with food. One fourth with water and one fourth should be empty for air.

3. State of mind while taking meal should be calm and quiet.

As yogic scriptures say that certain dietary precautions are kept under consideration before practicing various Yogic practices.

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