

Understanding Dietary Do's and Don'ts from Hathayoga with Ayurvedic Principles - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Ayurved, the life science and Yoga, the spiritual science are cohesive tributaries of higher knowledge with extensive relationship and vast interconnections. Hence their integrative study fallouts into better conclusion. Yoga needs Ayurved to maintain physical fitness and Ayurved needs yoga to acquire proper mind control. Entire health is an outcome of composed application of both. Amongst several Yogic paths, supreme connectivity between Hathyoga and Ayurved is found. Hathayoga is the “dynamic yoga” aimed at liberation through physical tolerance. Amongst the contents of Hathayoga, this article is focused on proper and improper diet with specific dietary rules recommended for yogi person as stated in Hathayoga pradipta. Hathayoga has recommended specific diet for its follower but not justified it. So this article has reviewed dietary dos and don'ts from Hathayoga with proper analysis and interpretation on the basis of Ayurved. Thus importance of Hathayogic dietary protocol and its relevance for health is established.

Keywords: Mitaahara, Snigdha, Atyahara, Hathayogi

INTRODUCTION

Ayurved, the life science and *Yoga*, the spiritual science are two sides of one coin. David Frawley, eminent *Ayurved* scientist has also rightly said that these systems cannot be understood unconnectedly. Both of these are cohesive tributaries of higher knowledge. Though their goals are different, both have extensive relationship and vast interconnections. Hence their integrative study fallouts into better conclusion. *Ayurved* is aimed for physical, mental, intellectual as well as social wellbeing. Being a life science, it involves a thorough system of medicine in the view of diagnosis and treatment, internal and external medicine, dietetics, study of medicinal herbs, psychology, ideal living, longevity and rejuvenating therapy. In short, *Ayurveda* is ‘*Chikitsa School*’ (school of

specific treatment) with preventive and curative measures directed for body and mind as well. [1-2] Apart from this, it has remarkably mentioned *Yoga* in various contexts. *Yoga* is aimed at self-liberation far off the body and mind. Interdependency of these sciences is clarified here. Diseases are the main hurdles in the path of self-liberation and *Yoga* prerequisites *Ayurvedic* therapeutic guidelines to cure them. On the other side, *Ayurved* considers unhealthy dietary habits, abnormal behavioral pattern and negative emotions as main etiological factors of physical, mental or psychosomatic disorders. [3] These causative factors are certainly avoidable by controlling mind through application of *Yoga*-principles in real life further leading to self-liberation. In this way *Yoga* needs *Ayurved* to maintain physical fitness and *Ayurved* needs *Yoga* to

acquire proper mind control. In short, healthy physical and mental status is an outcome of composed application of *Ayurved* and *Yoga*. Thus, *Ayurved* and *Yoga* are assuredly connected.

Several Yoga-paths like *Rajayoga*, *Karmayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, *Mantrayoga*, *Dnyanayoga*, *Hathyoga* are recommended for self-liberation depending upon the nature of the person. Amongst these, *Hathayoga* and *Rajayoga* are more neighboring to *Ayurved*. As *Ayurved* is bodily science and *Hathayoga* is “Vigorous Yoga” aimed at liberation through physical stability or tolerance, their supreme connectivity is found. *Hathayoga* tradition precisely remarks *Ayurvedic* terms like *Doshas* (biological humors), *Prana* (life energy), *Agni* (digestive power), *Dhatus* (body tissues), *Mamsa* (muscle-belly), *Meda* (Fat), *Kapha* (one biological humor) relative to the physical side of practice. *Aasana*, *Kumbhak*, *Mudra* and *Nadanusandhan* are four components of *Hathayoga* amongst which *Aasana* (bodily posture) is recommended as the prime one. Along with main objective of *Yoga* i.e. self-liberation, *Hathayoga* has mentioned physical benefits of various *Aasanas*. Also proper and improper diet with specific dietary rules is suggested for yogi person to preserve his health. Amongst these health promoting components, this article is focused on diet and dietary rules from *Hathayoga* along with its *Ayurved* constructed justification.

Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika, an authentic text on *Hathayoga* has mentioned some proper and improper food items for *Hathayogi* along with proper and improper means of food consumption [4-10] As dietary do's and don'ts are specifically cited in *Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika*, it proves that it has specific significance in the life of *Hathayogi*. But no such reasoning behind their recommendation is interpreted in *Hathayoga* science. On the contrary, *Ayurved* has considered food as one of the pillar of body and extensively specified dietary principles with various views such as natural properties of raw dietary

ingredients, properties changed by various dietary combinations and processing, seasonal diet, rules and improper modes of food consumptions, healthy diet, disease generating diet and likewise. On the basis of such vast elaboration, dietary do's and don'ts given for *Hathayogi* are assuredly and precisely enlightened. Thus, this article analyses and interprets *Hathayogic* diet with its probable *Ayurvedic* explanation.

Aim– To review dietary Do's and Don'ts from *Hathayoga* and analyze them on the basis of *Ayurvedic* dietary principles

Objectives -

1. To study dietary do's and don'ts from *Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika*.
2. To analyze and interpret their effect on body and mind on the basis of *Ayurvedic* dietary principles.
3. To highlight their importance in the life of *Hathayogi*.
4. To explore profound connection between *Hathayoga* and *Ayurved*.

MATERIALS

1. *Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika*
2. *Charak Samhita* with *Ayurved Dipika* commentary by *Chakrapani Datta*
3. Other allied ancient Indian literature.

METHODOLOGY

- Dietary do's and don'ts from *Hathayoga* have been studied.
- Their effects on the body and mind are analyzed and interpreted on the basis of *Ayurvedic* dietary principles
- Their need for Yogi has been highlighted.
- Connection between *Hathayoga* and *Ayurved* is established.

DISCUSSION

According to *Ayurved* and other ancient literature also, food not only influences body but senses, mind and intellect all are nourished by proper healthy food. Now-a-days, food habits are totally changed and their adverse effects on all above components are found. *Cchandogya Upanishd* has quoted that purity of mind is

an outcome of healthy food which finally results into exclusive memorizing capacity. It has also established the link between nourishment of mind through food. It quotes- at the end of digestion, food is fragmented into three parts and the micro part is used for the nourishment of mind. *Ayurved* has also legalized the interconnection between properly consumed healthy diet and heightening of *Satva* property in the mind. [11] All these references illustrate the deep connection between food and mind.

Other *Yoga* types have not made any direct comment on proper diet for *Yogi* Persons. They have recommended and

accepted all dietary basic principles as mentioned in *Ayurved*. As *Hathayoga* proceeds for self- liberation through bodily procedures, it gives equal importance to physical health too. According to *Ayurved*, balanced status of three *Doshas*, seven *Dhatus*, three *Malas* along with proper digestive capacity, well controlled senses and pleasant peaceful mind and soul result into graceful life. Amongst all these factors, strength is especially depends on *Vayu*, *Kapha*, *Rakta*, *Mamnsa*, *Asthi*, *Shukra* and *Oja*. If normalcy of these body-elements is maintained, then extensive strength is acquired and can be utilized in *Hathayogic* practices as well.

Table.1 Recommended Diet and Dietary Properties

Titles	Details
Dietary Food Items	Wheat, rice, barley, rice matured in six months. unadulterated food, (cow milk, Cow Ghee, butter from cow milk, sugar candy, Honey, dry ginger, 5 vegetables having names <i>Jeevanti</i> (<i>Leptadenia reticulata</i>), <i>Vastuka</i> (<i>Justicia adhatoda</i>), <i>Mulyakshi</i> (<i>Alchemilla vulgaris</i>), <i>Meghanad</i> and <i>Punarnava</i> (<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i>), green gram, <i>Adhaki</i> (<i>Cajanus cajan</i>), pure rain water
Dietary Properties	Proper unctuous food, proper sweet food
Dietary Rules	Quantity, purpose of food consumption, food nurturing and strengthening body-elements, proper tasty food likable to mind, appropriate food items

Justification of recommended diet and dietary rules:

- **Proper Unctuous diet –**

It means the food which produces appropriate oleation to body-elements. Food increasing unwanted fat (salty butter, cheese, paneer, deep fried items etc.) is not expected here. Food such as cow milk, butter and ghee obtained from cow-milk is actually proper unctuous food. Such food is likable to mind as it is tasty. It intensifies weakened digestive power, gets digested easily, nurtures and strengthens body and channelizes *Vayu* in its original path and direction. [12] Unctuous property is the only property which has capacity to range up to the microelements such as senses, mind and intellect. In this way by nourishing body and above said microelements, it increases overall immunity and entire tolerance too. This helps the yogi to perform vigorous yogic body-postures. Additionally such food maintains dominance of *Satva* in mind. [13] Governing *Satva* keeps the yogi free from unfavorable factors and controls mind

easily. It also enhances intellectual skills. Thus physical, mental and intellectual capacity is strengthened which can be utilized to accelerate the path of self-liberation through *Hathayoga*.

- **Proper Madhura Diet –**

Amongst the six tastes only *Madhura* rasa i.e. sweet taste is recommended for *Hathayogi* with certain terms and conditions. [10] *Madhura* rasa is habitual to human since birth. It seems to be beneficial by nurturing body tissue in growing age, by maintaining strength in youngster life and through making the ageing graceful in old age. It extends life-span. [14] *Yogi* can utilize such extensive life-span for vigorous penance. Additionally, *Madhura* rasa also nourishes mind, senses and intellect and maintains dominance of *Satvaguna* in mind. [15] Due to optimum *Satvaguna*, mind is controlled and preserved which upgrades the path of self-liberation. But here to obtain all said benefits, selection of appropriate sweet food is very essential. Man-made artificial sweets

are not expected here but the food items which are naturally sweet are recommended which mainly covers the dietary elements like wheat, brown rice matured in six months, barley, sugar candy, honey, green gram and non-contaminated rain water. According to *Ayurved*, most of these food items are naturally *Swasthavruttkar* i.e. they preserve the overall health of the body and mind. [16] They also uplift muscular strength and enhance immunity leading to smooth practices of various *Hathayoga*-postures and penances. Amongst these, wheat intensifies bonding in tissues. [17] Barley takes more time for digestion but it maintains entire energy level i.e. it is not over nutritive in nature. Moreover, it reduces excess fat and *Kapha* thus lightens body. On the other hand, other artificial sweet food items may accumulate excess *Kapha* and fat in the body and obstruct channels resulting into weight gain. Such person cannot perform even routine activities also. So it is highly difficult for them to practice various *Hathayogic* postures. Such damaging results are not caused by above recommended naturally sweet food items. Hence they are beneficial for *Hathayogi* to uplift his physical and mental health.

- **Properly measured food**

The term '*Chaturthansha-vivarjita*' shapes the quantity of meal. It is also labeled as *Mitahara* which is nothing but measured diet. [18] As per this instruction, half part of stomach is to be filled with solid food having unctuous property and naturally sweet food items and one fourth part is to be filled with liquid food and remaining one fourth part of stomach is to be kept free for the free movements of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* [19-20] Such food maintains the equilibrium of *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* and also gets digested properly without damaging digestive power resulting into clear bowels. Thus such quantified food keeps a *Yogi* disease-free. [21] All such benefits result into longevity of life and ultimately reflect into easier accomplishment of *Hathayogic* bodily postures. [22] Ultimately the *Yogi* is

benefitted by longer and healthy life which will be reclaimed for progressive path of self-liberation. Considering these benefits, *Hathayoga* has incorporated *Mitahara* in ten *Yamas* at utmost level. [23-24]

Likewise, in *Bhagwad-Geeta*, the relation of food quantity and properties of mind (*Triguna*) is explained. It means, full stomach diet leads to aggravation of *Rajo-guna* and the diet more than the capacity of stomach leads to aggravation of *Tamo-guna*; whereas properly measured food preserves the dominance of *Satva*. [25] Consistently dominant *Satvaguna* stimulates *Hathayogi* in the path of self-liberation. Additionally, excess diet is a cause of simultaneous vitiation of *Tridoshas* further leading to several disorders. It also creates extra pressure on heart and on the lateral sides of abdomen resulting into severe pain. [26] Such person also feels difficulty to perform even routine activities like seating or standing so it is highly difficult for him to perform *Hathayogic* postures. He remains far away from practicing various vigorous physical penances or *Pranayam*. Also by regular intake of excess food, digestive power is hampered and one suffers from many more diseases. Moreover, *Tamo-dosha* gets increased in the mind due to the tendency of excess food consumption. [25] Such *Yogi* is unable to acquire the knowledge of self-liberation. Hence consumption of *Mitahar* (measured food) is crucial in the path of *Hathayoga*.

- ***Yogi's* intention towards food-**

It is expected that *Hathayogi* should consume food only for the purpose of survival and not for pleasure of tongue and stomach. Hence he is not expected to keep over affection with food. Keeping unwanted concerns with food results into overeating, selection of unhealthy food and many more other abnormal eating patterns. These abnormalities are not favorable for *Hathayogi* as they result into imbalanced state of body and mind ultimately reflecting as severe disorders or early death. [27] Imbalanced body and mind could not cope up with energetic *Hathayogic* activities.

Same is stated in *Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika* that excess food consumption is the main obstacle in the path of self-liberation. [28] *Hathayoga*-follower should stick to different intention i.e. he must keep in the mind that the food is being taken for the love or belief in lord Shiva. He should assume himself as lord Shiva and consume food accordingly for his pleasure. This divine intention prevents the Yogi from over affection with food. [20]

- *Dhatupraposhaka* food (food nurturing and strengthening body)-Extreme physical strength is required for *Hathayogi* to survive successfully during *Hathayoga* practices. As food is the prime and best source of strength and nutrition it is directed that, the follower must consume food which is nutritious for his body tissues. [10]

Proper tasty food agreeable to mind (Manobhilashita)-

Mental status of *Hathayogi* has also given enough importance in this path. As self-liberation is not possible without mental balancing, it is expected that the food consumed by *Hathayogi* must be tasty or likable to mind. It is also expected that the follower should not keep over affection with food. When such unwanted attachment with food is thoroughly removed then the question of 'likability of food' becomes insignificant.

Appropriate (Yogya) food items-

Along with the likability of food, *Hathayoga* highlights that appropriate food must be consumed by its follower. Such food resembles with the expected properties of food which are already discussed above.

The entire application of all above said factors together come with an outcome in the form of balanced strengthened physical and mental status leading to better *Hathayogic* practices.

Table.2 Non Recommended Diet and Dietary Properties

Titles	Details
Dietary Food Items	leafy vegetables, oil, sesame, mustard, alcohol, fish, meat, curd, butter milk, meter(type of cereal), extract after removal of oil from sesame, asafetida, garlic, (<i>Kola</i>)the jujube fruit, (<i>Sauvir</i>)drink containing less alcohol derived from barley
Dietary Properties	Food having spicy-sore-salty tastes, penetrating nature, hot and dry properties
Dietary Rules	Excess food consumption, food combined with sour or salty tastes, reheated food and poor quality food

Justification of avoidable food for Hathayogi

- **Katu Rasa –**
Katu rasa i.e. spicy food has dominance of *Vayu* and *Akash-mahabhutas*. Its consumption results into vitiation *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Rakta* and pacification of *Kapha*. It also lessens *Shukra* and creates excess dryness in the body. [29] It diminishes physical strength as well as leads to elevated level of *Rajoguna* in mind. Due to imbalance in *Vata*, *Kapha Dosha* and *Shukra Dhatu*, strength certainly gets declined. Direct connection of strength and *Shukra-Dhatu* is accepted by *Hathayoga* as well. Even, *Hatha-Yoga-Pradeepika* reveals that, *Shukra*, mind and life span are deeply connected. So normalcy of *Shukra* is essential to maintain stability of mind

followed by longevity of life. [30] According to *Bhagavad Geeta* also, *Katu Rasa* imbalances mind and reduces strength by aggravating *Rajo-guna*. So its minimal consumption is accepted. Amongst above said food items, *Katu* taste is present in mustard, assafoepida, garlic etc. food ingredients. So these are incorporated in the list of non – recommended diet list.

- **Amla and Lavan Rasa-**

Though these tastes are unctuous in nature, still they are not recommended for *Hathayogi*. [31] Food-recipe-combinations with sour or salty food ingredients are not permitted for *Hathayoga* follower i.e. these two tastes even as a supplementary food are also not recommended for the path of *Hathayoga*. So definitely they have some anti-properties which certainly obstruct the

journey of self-liberation. i.e. they vitiate *Pitta*, *Kapha* and *Rakta* as well as aggravate *Rajo-guna* in mind. Their excess consumption results into loosening of body tissue especially the tissues of blood and muscle mass. Normalcy of blood tissue is very important because *Prana* i.e. subtle energy is circulated through blood. Moreover strength mainly depends on the compactness of muscle mass. Due to equilibrium of *Rakta* and *Mamsa Dhatus*, *Hathayogi* certainly maintains his liveliness and immunity. Thus he can smoothly perform *Hathayogic* activities like *Aasanaas* and *Pranayam*.

- **Teekshna Property–**

Teekshna property has penetrating action. Dietary element having this property assimilates and processed very fast in the body. [32] It vitiates *Pitta Dosha*, *Rakta Dhātu* and reduces *Kapha Dosha*. Vitiating of *Pitta* and *Rakta* leads to excess dryness, excess heat in the body. Due to these increased levels, lubrication amongst the body tissue is altered. On the other hand, due to declined *Kapha* level, the bonding between body tissues gets loosened resulting into declined muscle tone with weakened strength. Equilibrium of *Kapha Dosha* has a key role in the process of growth and nutrition. So property has less nutritive value. Fast penetrating action of *Teekshna* also leads to early aging and early diseased conditions ultimately resulting into tapered immunity. Thus, *Hathayogi* consuming *Teekshna* becomes unable to practice his expected path consistently.

- **Ushna Property –**

Ushna is nothing but food having hot potency. It vitiates *Pitta*, *Rakta* and lessens *Kapha*. Its regular consumption soaks up moisture and body-fluid levels get disturbed. Body tissues are also not nurtured properly by consuming *Ushna* diet. Ultimately it results into drop out in the energy levels, loss of strength. This condition is not good for consistent vigorous *Hathayoga* practices. Hence such food is not recommended for *Hathayoga* follower. [32]

Considering the unwanted results of *Ushna* and *Teekshna* properties in the path of *Hathayoga*, consumption of food items like fish, meat, curd, butter milk, *Kulattha* (meter-cereals), oil and sesame is not recommended.

- **Ruksha property –**

Ruksha means drying property. Food having this property absorbs excess moisture and lubricants from the body. It does not nurture body, senses and mind too. It increases *Vata* and reduces *Kapha*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi* and *Shukra Dhātu*. Its excess consumption leads to osteoporosis. Skeleton holds the body in proper posture. One can't sustain in expected posture due to increasing porosity in bones. Muscular elasticity is very much needed for all *Hathayogic* practices which certainly decline by consumption of food having *Ruksha* property. Moreover it also imbalances mind by increasing level of *Rajoguna*. Such unhealthy diet finally results into feebleness and becomes hurdle in the path of *HathYoga*.

- **Excess food consumption –**

Atyahar means habit of excess food consumption. *Mitahar* is opposite to it, importance of which is already discussed earlier. Excess food creates excess pressure on the walls of stomach and abdomen too. It takes much more time for digestion. It also results into vitiating of *Vata-Pitta-Kapha* at the same time. It also vitiates *Prana*. It develops symptoms like excess sleep, drowsiness, laziness, inactiveness, weakened strength, indigestion. According to *Bhagavad Geeta*, excess food consumption habit leads to aggravation of *Tama* property in the mind. [25] *Tama* is cause of ignorance or loss of orientation and is opposite property to *Satva*. Such person becomes mentally and physically inactive and thus fails to practice *Hathayoga* and acquire self-liberation.

- **Reheated food –**

It is the food which is already cooked much time earlier and heated again for eating purpose. It may be the stale food and is reheated to create taste. But such

reprocessed food has less nutritious values. [8] Additionally it is heavy to digest, its constant consumption results into weakened digestive power and strength. [8] It also causes symptoms like heaviness in body, loss of luster and obstruction in the path of *Vayu*. So, freshly prepared food is always preferable for *Hathyogi*.

Role of poor quality food-

Food having no or less nutrients is considered in this term. Such food never provides strength and is also not beneficial for senses as well as mind. [8] Therefore *Hathyogi* should have food with recommended qualities.

CONCLUSION

- 1) According to *Ayurved*, physical and mental strength is mainly governed by *Vata*, *Kapha*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Asthi*, *Shukra*, *Oja* and *Satvaguna* of mind. Such strength is certainly acquired and preserved by consuming food recommended by *Hathayoga* for easier *Hathayogi* practices.
- 2) Amongst all six tastes, food having only natural *Madhura Rasa* is recommended for consumption and *Ayurved* has also indicated that this taste has body and mind strengthening effects.
- 3) Spicy, sour and salty tastes are not permitted by *Hathayoga* as they decline strength. According to *Ayurved* they do not nurture and do not maintain proper bonding between body tissues.
- 4) Amongst the properties of food, only *Snigdha* property is allowed. *Ayurved* elucidates this as it intensifies physical, mental, sensory and intellectual strength by providing nutrition. But food items having *Ruksha*, *Ushna*, *Teeksna* properties are not recommended to consume. *Ayurved* explains this as they take out moisture from body components leading to improper nourishment of above said components.
- 5) *Ayurved* strongly states that proper quantity, combinations and processing of food have outstanding significance. *Hathayoga* also recommends same in

the life of *Hathayoga*-follower to acquire success in the path of self-liberation.

- 6) Undoubtedly, recommended and non-recommended food in *Hath-Yoga-pradipika*, has a crucial role in the path of *Hathayoga* and their positive and negative effects are certainly justified on the basis of *Ayurvedic* dietary principles.

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