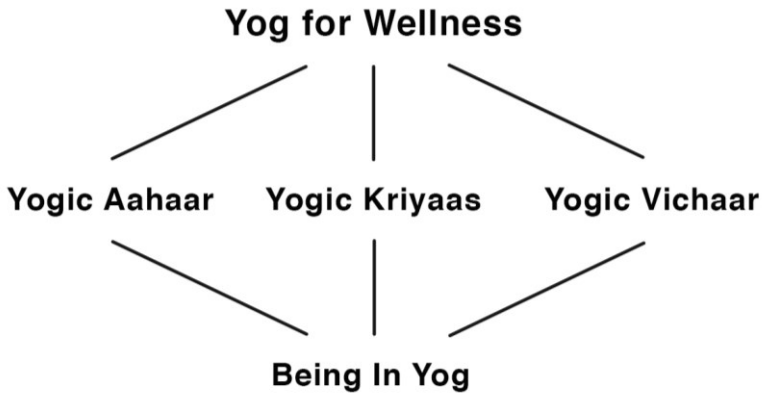




## MAP TO “FROM YOGA TO YOG” SERIES



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Illustrated by Saachi Bhansali ([saachibhansali.com](http://saachibhansali.com))

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You are responsible for your own choices, actions, and results. In the spirit of taking personal responsibility for your decisions, you should seek the services of a competent health care provider before beginning any improvement program.

# Dedication

## Peace, Love, Joy for All

May our body, energy, mind and emotions be in harmony (Yog)

May we be aligned with our true self

May each of us feel – “I’m free to be me”

May we all live fully and freely

This book is dedicated to the countless, selfless Yogis who undertook the hardest journey of all – the journey inwards – and shared its fruit - Yog - with the world, for the world.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु

मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah

Sarve Santu Niraamayaah |

Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyant

Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhaves |

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

## Meaning:

- 1: Om, May All be Happy,
- 2: May All be Free from Illness.
- 3: May All See what is Auspicious,
- 4: May no one Suffer.
- 5: Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

# Acknowledgements

To...

... my parents, Mahipal & Geeta, for giving me the gift of life and molding me into who I am

...Sundeeep, my spiritual partner in life and the wind beneath my wings

...Mukeshaanand, for transforming me, from the inside out

...my mother-in-spirit, Pamila, for her boundless love and blessings

...the 100+ Swasth Yogis who trusted me by participating in our pilots

...Vaishali and Priti, for being the backbone for the pilot batches

...Rasika, for institutionalizing the Yog curriculum for years to come

...Madhuri, for bringing this curriculum to life, by teaching and living it

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...Saachi, for being with me on this rollercoaster ride to publication

...the countless Yogis who inspire me every day to live life in Yog

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# Is this Book for me?

## *Are you at the right place?*

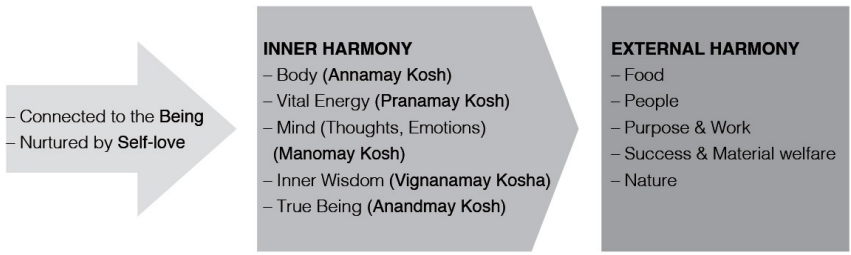
- Do you wish to enjoy true health – physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual?
- Do you want your body, energy, mind and emotions to be in harmony? Do you want them to actively support you in living your potential?
- Are you tired of chasing your health ‘goals’ through dieting, gymming, running, reading?
- Do you want well-being to be your default state of being, and not a goal to chase frantically?
- Do you want to cut through the clutter of conflicting wellness ‘tips’ you receive from myriad sources everyday?
- Are you ready to stop being taken for a ride, and get in the driver’s set of your journey towards well-being?

If so, this guidebook is for you. To be your companion as you undertake the journey towards well-being. Your age, background and type of chronic ailment or health issue do not matter. What matters is your intention.

## *Let’s face it!*

- We have a problem: Today, we are less healthy than our less ‘advanced’ older generations
- Unfortunately, the problem is worsening: Life is becoming longer, but NOT healthier.
- Fortunately, the problem is reversible: The miracle of life has given our body the ability to recover and heal itself.

- But the “right” tools for reversal seem hard to find today: There is an overload of often conflicting tools and information, retractions of previously accepted “research” after long-term studies leaving people confused.
- Consequently, we have given our power away: Powerless, we have outsourced our health to providers (doctors, dieticians, yoga teachers, healers, therapists) and technology (fit-bits, Google, apps)
- The “modern” approach to well-being is fundamentally flawed: Most modern wellness practitioners have a flawed approach - reductionist and silo-ed. Dieticians reduce the food we consume to nutrients and schools of thought fight over the importance of proteins or carbohydrates or fats. Gym instructors work with isolated body parts, in a bid to build out specific muscles. Neither of them address the importance of our mind. Dieticians feed us fear and guilt. Gym instructors nurture strong bodies but give rise to inflexible and hyperactive minds.
- The key to well-being lies with(in) us: Ancient Indian researchers (Yogis) had given us the science to remove the root cause behind “dis-ease” and make well-being our default state. The “secret sauce” to well-being is Yog. Yog is NOT Yoga. It empowers us to take charge of our health and our life, to reach and live our true potential.



***We believe and know, beyond doubt, that***



...your body, energy, mind and emotions can be your greatest supporters to reach your potential

...health is your natural state of being, and you can be healthier today than you were a decade ago

...the journey towards well-being can be full of peace, love and joy

## **SOME TOOLS USED**

- Yogic Aasans, Praanaayaam & Kriyaa
- Body Wisdom & Awareness
- Yogic & Ayurvedic Food
- Laughter Yoga
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Chanting & Sound Resonance
- Affirmations & Mirror Work
- Life Coaching
- Emotion Release Tools
- Creative / Art based therapy

### ***This guidebook will do the following***

- Make well-being attainable: Enable you to make simple, but profound changes to your life. Provide tools that are feasible for integration in your life in minimal budget and time.
- Present a bouquet of integrated tools: Addressing the body, energy, mind and emotions holistically through different tools
- Bridge the gap between the East & the West: Present ancient Ayurvedic and Yogic concepts adapted to today's context with modern tools

- Empower, instead of create dependencies: Build knowledge of foundational principles, helping you to choose information presented by various health service providers and technology
- Make this a joyful journey: Help you discover your inner child, hidden talents, and dreams in the process...

***At the end of this journey, you will have***

- Well-being: A tangible, measurable difference in health which YOU can perceive. A feeling of well-being.
- Independence: The knowledge and motivation to continue your journey to well-being independently.
- A healthy family: Tools to impact and influence the health of your friends & family.

**Health Issues addressable directly, with a HIGH impact**

- Muscular pains & fatigue, especially in the back and neck
- Joint Pains
- Gastro-intestinal disorders such as Acidity, Peptic Ulcers, IBS, Piles, irregularities in Bowel movements & Urination
- Obesity or excessive weight gain
- Headache or Migraine
- Menstrual problems, PCOD/PCOS
- Imbalances in appetite, sleep, energy levels
- Better management and reduction of side effects/complications of chronic ailments
  - Hypertension, Cholesterol
  - Asthma
  - Metabolic disorders such as diabetes
  - Hormonal imbalances such as Thyroid, Acne
  - Arthritis (Osteo and Rheumatoid)
  - Auto-immune disorders

## **Health Issues addressable indirectly, with SOME impact**

- Relief from acute or infectious diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, pain, and tuberculosis
- Neurological disorders (e.g. epilepsy, movement disorders such as Parkinson's disease, Speech and language disorders, Injury to brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves, Sleep disorders, Behavioural /cognitive syndrome)
- Mental & mood disorders, anxiety & depression, phobias, eating disorders (e.g. anorexia nervosa, bulimia)
- Rehabilitation post accidents, health shock such as , Cerebro-vascular stroke, surgery, geriatric cases
- Problems in external organs such as skin allergies, ENT disorders, Dental issues
- Any other ailments not covered in “addressable section”

### ***Are you the right fit for this journey?***

With power comes responsibility. For our health too! If you wish to merely get rid of pain, you can take painkillers or countless therapies available. But if you wish restore your body's innate healing capacity, and get in the driver's seat of your journey to well-being, you need to commit to some responsibilities:

- Honoring the commitment towards your well-being, by reading!
- Commitment to modifying your lifestyle and habits in line with recommendations
- Taking out 30 minutes every day for self-care
- Completing reflection questions and experimental activities to maximize your learning– such as health status measurement questionnaire, health diary, checklists to track activities

The following questions will help you in determining if you're at the appropriate inner and outer circumstances in life to undertake this journey.



## Questions for Reflection

- What health challenges am I facing currently?
- How are these health challenges impacting the quality of my life?
- What could happen, if this situation continues for a few years?
- What is my intention behind undertaking this journey to well-being?
- If this happens, what would be the impact on my life?
- To meet my health goal, what am I ready to commit to?

# How to use this book?

## How is this series structured?

This is a 5-series book addressing the body, energy, mind and emotions, holistically

- 1: Yog for Wellness (Yogic Philosophy of disease genesis and healing pathway)
- 2a: Yogic Aahaar (what we call Nutrition)
- 2b: Yogic Kriyaas (what we know as 'Yoga')
- 2c: Yogic Vichaar (approach to Mind & Emotions)
- 3: Being in Yog (how to use the tools, to be in Yog)

## How to approach this series?

The first book covers foundational concepts of Yog, and it is highly recommended that you read it, before reading anything else.

Based on this, you can select which Yogic tool(s) – Yogic Aahaar, Yogic Kriyaas and Yogic Vichaar – you wish to explore for your well-being. Each of the three books has a deep-dive into focus Yogic tools for well-being. You may choose one, or two or all three. We suggest choosing the path that is most aligned to your temperament, and which you will be most committed to implementing in life. As without implementation, these ideas will only stay on paper and not translate into your physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual well-being!

The last book makes it easier for you to stay committed to the tool(s) of your choice, and most importantly, to make the journey towards your well-being joyful and therefore, sustainable. This is not a crash dieting or exercising or detox program that you implement once and forget. This is a way of life!

Hence, it is highly recommended, that you read the last book in the series, along with, or after the selected tool(s).

### **Note on the journey through the series:**

The secrets to fully utilizing the benefit of any Yogic tool for well-being are in the first and the last books. Without them, the essence of the tools will be lost. Yogic Aahaar will become the same as obsessive dieting, Yogic practices will be no different from mindless exercising. It will be like using a supercomputer as a calculator for addition. You will be able to add, yes, but will not be tapping into the amazing abilities of the supercomputer.

### **How to make the most of the 3 books on Yogic tools?**

Yogis outlined a 3-step process to integrating any new knowledge – Shraavan (श्रवण, listening or reading), Manan (मनन, reflection and contemplation) and Nididhyaasan (निदिध्यासन, integration). Modern research on learning is also echoing this approach.

This book has been designed accordingly. For each tool, the book explains overarching principles of each tool, provides activities for self-reflection or experiencing concepts and provides supporting information, checklists and formats to enabling you to get started and stay on track through self-tracking.

The implication for you is that reading this book to build fundamental concepts is only 10% of the impact. To get the other 90% of the impact, we suggest you do the following:

- **Reflect:** Reflect deeply during and at the end of each chapter, before moving to the next. Compare what is written with your past experiences, or your future experiences if you haven't

been aware in the past. Use the self-reflection questions, and maintain a separate journal to track your responses.

- Do: Get started, and implement the learnings in your life!
- Experience: Do the activities or real-life experiments in the book for experiencing concepts. Guided audios for many exercises mentioned are available on our YouTube channel (see Resources at the end). Approach the activities with an open mind and heart. Be aware of the holistic experience of implementing the learnings in your life. Trust your experience more than the words in this book!
- Persevere: Stay on track. Implement this for 6 weeks to start with. Using self-tracking formats and checklists given in the book, and read the last book for troubleshooting advice for commonly faced issues.
- Enjoy: Most, most important of all, enjoy the journey! More important than the % of insights you implement, is the % of joy you experience during this journey. After all, everything we do or want in life, is for joy, right? If you implement nothing, but stay joyful throughout your journey, your well-being is guaranteed!

*Remember, the goal is not to finish the book,  
but to bring it alive in your life!*

**Welcome to the world of peace, love and joy!**

# **Special Note on how to read this part in the series**

## **Part 2a: From Obsessive Diets to Yogic Aahaar**

When it comes to well-being, nutrition is one of the most confusing topics. This is due to a huge range of conflicting information available on what constitutes healthy food. The issue is compounded given the regional, religious, cultural and social factors that influence what we eat. What is local to one country, is exotic for another.

However, instead of getting confounded by the geographical complexity, we can keep our life simple, if we understand the principles for nutrition, which are universal in nature.

Hence, we urge you to read this book primarily to understand the principles for Yogic nutrition, which are globally relevant. At many places in this book, examples local to India are used. While the foods mentioned may not be available in your country, you can use the principles and your resourcefulness to find equivalents for your unique context and constitution.



# Chapter 1

## Importance of Yogic Aahaar

### Introduction

According to Ayurved, Aahaar is that which fuels and nourishes us physically, energetically as well as emotionally. It is wholesome and therefore moves beyond the concept of only calories and nutrients.

In the *Charak Samhita*, it is stated that **a living being is made up of the food** he or she consumes and Aahaar is therefore an important pillar of healthy life.

The Yogic philosophy in recognition of this belief, has named the first sheath of existence “Annamay” Kosh (“Ann” meaning food).

**We are what we consume.**

## Role of Aahaar

All that we eat is transformed into us through the digestive process (*Agni*) and therefore it fuels our desires and actions. Everything that we consume as food, be it plants, seeds or animal products has an intrinsic “Praan” that gets transferred to us. This is why, in yogic culture, food is revered and eaten with gratitude.



### Real life observation

The material for a child's gradual growth into a full-sized adult comes from the food he/she consumes. As adults, the food we eat does not contribute to additional growth (except in cases of weight gain). But it is still needed, to provide the energy/fuel to carry on our activities.



### Real life observation

Food provides us energy for all our activities. Additionally, even if we don't engage in much physical or mental activity, the body still needs food. This demonstrates a function of food beyond growth and fuel for activities – repair of our cells. Our cells are constantly dying and re-generating, the material for the new cells comes from food.

## Meaning of Aahaar

The meaning Aahaar goes beyond what we eat, i.e. our diet. Aahaar factors in:

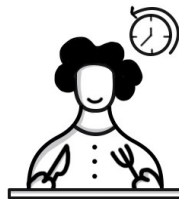
- **Purchasing ingredients:** Season, region, quality of inputs (e.g. soil) available for ingredient to grow



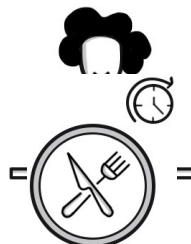
- **Cooking:** Vessel used, mode of cooking, kind of heat used, the emotion with which food is cooked



- **Before eating:** Environment, time, company, mood, time of eating, gap between cooking and eating



- **Eat:** Food combinations, order of consumption, quantity consumed, speed of consumption, posture
- **After eating:** Activities post eating, gap between consecutive



meals

## Impact of Aahaar on Health

Aahaar contributes to the integrity and health of the whole human being. Many philosophies state that Food is Medicine. **We consume food in some form, at least 3 to 4 times a day. Whatever we eat, whether an apple or chicken, is assimilated into our body, and “becomes us” within 3 days.** Thus, Aahaar can have an immense impact on our health – it can nourish us, or it can cause diseases. We are facing many health concerns today, as individuals and as a society, due to incorrect Aahaar:

- The USA, despite high availability of food, high incomes and a massive health budget (5 times more than defense budget) faces a huge health crisis - 40% of Americans are obese, and about half of them are taking some form of prescription drugs, The most prescribed drug for cholesterol – Lipitor – is the most prescribed drug in the world. Almost 1 in 4 American 4 year olds are considered to be obese. This could be the first generation of children that lives lesser than parents.
- Heart attacks are the biggest cause of deaths in Mumbai, India. Most of these can be traced to blockages and hypertension, caused by hardening of arteries due to cholesterol deposits from incorrect food consumed.

The first manifestation of disease in the physical body (after crossing Manomay and Praanmay Kosh) can be traced to the breakdown of our digestive process or Agni. Our digestive fire or Agni is our ability to transform anything that requires to be processed. In Ayurved we say a man is as old as his Agni. Good, nourishing food leads to good, nourishing blood, healthy blood then nourishes all our tissues. Therefore, eating according to our body's needs leads to a healthy individual. Incorrect habits of any

part of the act of consumption (Aahaar) destroys Agni. When Agni is depleted, diseases begin to manifest.

## **Yogic Aahaar**

Yogic Aahaar focuses on building a connection with our body, understanding the body's response to various foods and eating intuitively with this connection (i.e. Yog). Our inner intelligence knows what our body needs and what is right for it.



### **Real life observation**

If you've noticed, children and babies have an inner knowledge of when they are hungry and when they must stop eating. We have lost our touch with that intuition.



### **Real life observation**

When our pets are unwell, they retreat into a corner and stop or significantly reduce their consumption of food until they get better. If we notice, our body gives us similar signals (reduced hunger, not enjoying the taste of most food) in times of cold, fever, diarrhoea etc, so that the digestive system can get rest, and the energy (Praan) saved can be utilized by the body to heal itself.

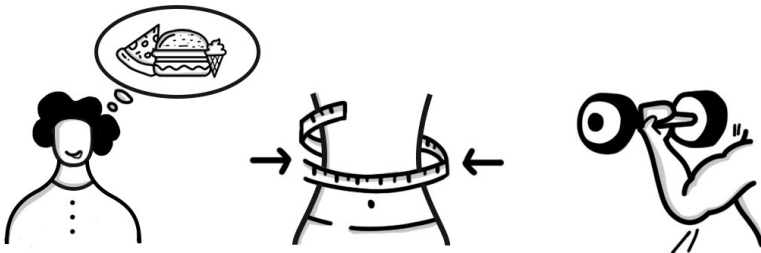
## Disconnecting from Yogic Aahaar

If we go against the principles of Yogic eating then we lose our connection to our inner wisdom. We become caught up in chaos of our cravings and reduce our self-awareness, leading to the following chain reaction:

- Improper or unwholesome food reduces our digestive fire (Agni)
- Poor agni leads to poorly digested food
- This builds up toxins (Ama) in our body
- Our blood becomes toxic
- Diseases are created

Ultimately, we end up waging a war against our own bodies. Sometimes, in our attempt to change course we become very harsh towards our bodies. This leads to extreme diet and exercise regimens that once again only disconnect you further from your body wisdom. We move away from awareness and focus too heavily on only willpower. Finally, all our willpower collapses, and we find ourselves going back to old patterns.

**Yogic Aahaar is gentle, nourishing and fires your spirit. For this reason, it is also enjoyable and sustainable.**





## Real life observation

How many of us have personally experienced, or know someone who has experienced any of these – (a) facing the challenge of cravings – uncontrollable desire to eat something even if we know it is not good for health? (b) dieting (c) a lot of exercising to lose weight

Was the experience enjoyable and relaxed or stressful? Were the results sustainable? Research has shown that diets are ineffective in the long-term. As per one study, over a 2-year period, 83 percent of dieters gained back more weight than they had lost!

## Repairing Damage

To cure is to remove symptoms while to heal is to transform. Yogic Aahaar offers not just a cure but overall health. Once we acknowledge the power of Yogic Aahaar to heal, we set ourselves on a journey towards self-discovery and the acknowledgement of our own intelligence. There are countless examples of people who have healed themselves from cancer and autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, and eliminated Heart diseases through changes in Aahaar. More importantly, patients don't just see their symptoms disappear but report an enhancement of their overall level of energy, happiness and zest for life. **Yogic Aahaar has the capacity to empower us to reclaim our own health!**

One might ask, how is it possible to reverse the damage inflicted on our body over several years? This reason goes back to one of the roles played by food – repair of cells.

The cells of body have limited life-spans –

Red Blood Cells (RBCs) live for 120 days

- Skin cells live about two or three weeks.
- Colon cells live for only about four days
- Bone cells live for 6-9 months.
- Our stomach recycles every 5 days
- Our skeleton recycles every 3 months.

As these cells die, they are replenished by new material – food. Even the DNA which stores memories of millions of years of evolutionary time - the actual raw material of our DNA changes every 6 weeks. So, in some ways, we reinvent our body once a year. If we re-invent it the same way over and over again, it retains the same patterns; it has the same illnesses; it has the same problems. But by feeding nourishing material to our body, we can enable the new cells to be healthier.

**So, instead of feeling guilty, sad or hopeless about the poor food choices we may have made in the past, let us accept with gratitude, the opportunity our body is giving us to heal ourselves!** It is not too late to start a Yogic Aahaar – let us channelize our desire for well-being and start now!

### **Adopting a Yogic Aahaar**

**To adopt a Yogic Aahaar is a lifestyle change that requires deep connection with ourselves, commitment, discipline as well as showing compassion to ourselves:**

- **Deepening connection with our inner wisdom:** We need to deepen our understanding of what Yogic Aahaar means. Instead of getting overwhelmed by excessive information



available on calories, nutrients and supplements, “superfoods”, we need to connect more and actively listen to our body.

- **Cultivating a routine:** “Din-charya” or routine is an important concept in Ayurved and it says that our body loves routine (e.g. fixed meal timings), even though our mind loves freedom. Change takes time, especially habits that have been with us for years. It takes a Mandala (cycle) of 21-40 days for a habit to settle. During this period, we need to be especially disciplined to avoid any lapses. Afterwards, the new routine gets integrated with the regular rhythm of the body, and following it becomes more effortless.
- **Consistent follow-through for impact:** To see the benefit of a Yogic Aahaar requires the discipline of following through consistently. We need to realize that the damage done to our body over the years, will take some time to reverse. Most people start seeing their body responding positively within 2 to 3 months of changes in Aahaar. Before rejecting this new lifestyle, we should ask ourselves - Have we been 100% disciplined in implementation? Have we given our body enough time to heal?
- **Compassion:** We will make mistakes, but let’s acknowledge them and continue our commitment, embracing this process with compassion. This does not mean that we excuse ourselves from constant changes, but means that we set realistic goals, take small steps and celebrate the tiniest of positive outcomes.



**Reflection**

Based on your reading so far, write down your understanding of the difference between Yogic and Non-Yogic Aahaar. Write at least 3 points.



### Reflection

What is 1 major shift you want to make, to “adopt” a Yogic Aahaar?



## Real life observation

Let us understand the healing process of the body through an analogy: If the road on a busy highway is broken, what steps will we take to repair it?

- Stop or divert Incoming vehicles
- Conduct repair activities and using resources such as budget, manpower, equipment etc
- Use material to re-build the road

Likewise, if organs of our body are damaged, we need to:

- Stop stressors aggravating the condition further – Stop consuming damaging food, give rest to our body, relax the mind, be protected from continuous exposure to emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, sadness
- Conduct repair activities – Yogic Aasans and Praanaayaam, tapping into our sources of joy, cultivating awareness, meditation, etc
- Provide material to re-build the body. This material is food, and the act of consumption is Yogic Aahaar.

**This journey is about staying true and revealing our most authentic selves. It will be enjoyable if we develop a passion for Yogic Aahaar and constantly cultivate awareness.**

 **Key Points**

We are what we consume - A living being is made up of the food he or she consumes

The meaning of consumption, i.e. Aahaar goes beyond what we eat

Food plays multiple roles in the body – growth, fuel for activities, repair

Food has high impact on the body – it can be medicine for the body, or poison

Yogic Aahaar is gentle, nourishing and fires your spirit. For this reason, it is also enjoyable and sustainable. It can repair the damage done to our body through years of incorrect eating.

To adopt a Yogic Aahaar is a lifestyle change that requires deep connection with and compassion to ourselves, commitment and discipline.

## ANNEXURE

### Differences between Yogic and Non-Yogic Aahaar

Yogic Aahaar	Non-Yogic Aahaar

**1 major shift I want to make,  
to “adopt” a Yogic Aahaar?**

## **Chapter 2**

# **Philosophy of Choices**

### **Introduction**

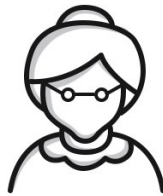
At a time where we are flooded with nutrition information from myriad sources, it is important for us to be aware of the paradigm on which we base our food choices.

## Too many opinions?

The last few years has seen a rise in the consciousness around eating healthy. Restaurants and grocery stores, nowadays have a “Healthy Menu” section. If you look closely though, you’ll notice that the concept of what’s healthy is as varied as there are opinions on the matter. There’s a spread of Sugar-Free, Fat-Free, Cholesterol-Free, Gluten-Free products. In urban areas in our country, there’s a rise of exotic foreign ingredients that are being propagated as healthy such as quinoa, chia seeds, smoothies and granola bars, to name a few.

Holistic practitioners, some medical professionals, nutritionists and common people have begun to recognize the impact of food choices on our health. However, now that **Food is a hot topic of debate and a lot of people have joined the discussion, this can make the decision-making process a little confusing.** Who or which source are we to believe? Let’s first look at where we get our information from:

### *Old sources*



This is the knowledge of Ayurved and Yog. Even though most of us haven't read these texts, we know of it through tips passed down through our family, from our parents, grandparents and from the wisdom of the village elders. This is why, within the same country there is so much variation in foods – In India, people from Tami Nadu eat steamed *idli or dosa* for breakfast while those from Punjab eat heavy *paranths* with *ghee*.

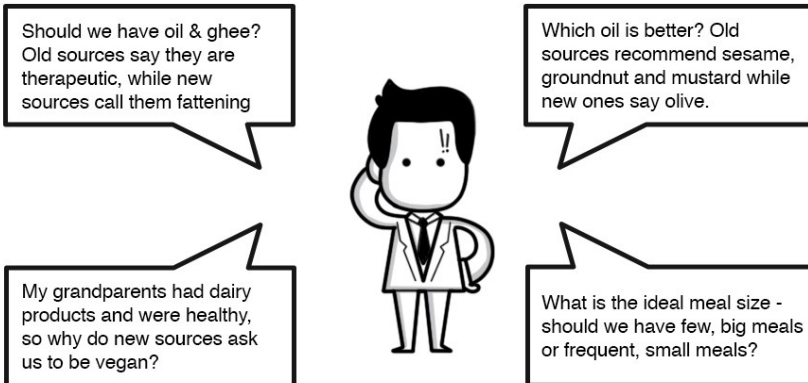
## New sources



These are tips passed on through science-backed articles in newspapers, health websites, blogs, movies, videos, books, online resources, workshops and even *Whatsapp!* Here the information is a mix of expert advice (from doctors, nutritionists and scientists) as well as the experience of enthusiasts!

**While these sources may agree upon recommendations, many times there are conflicting recommendations,** leaving us further confused and overwhelmed.

**Some of the common confusions arising in our minds are:**



**Further, much of the recommendations of new sources are changing constantly.** E.g.

- Coconut oil was considered very bad a decade ago and now it is being recommended



- Ghee was denounced, replaced by Vanaspati (remember “Dalda” in India?), and now upheld again
- Butter was replaced by margarine (think “Nutralite”), till it was found that margarine raises the risk of death by 34 per cent
- Rock salt was replaced by iodized table salt at a large scale for many years, and is now being brought back again
- Cholesterol was considered the “enemy” by nutritionists and doctors for the last 50 years, until a massive shift in recommendations in 2017.

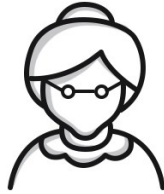
To add to the complexity, another source of information has been introduced by Yogic and Ayurvedic guidelines – our body and how it responds to food. This is what our body tells us, if we listen closely when we eat food. We react to everything that we eat. When we develop a felt sense of what is happening to us it can guide us to the sort of food we should be eating.

### **Why know how to make choices?**

Making choices about what to consume is much harder today, than any time in the past. Before deciding what to consume, we need to first build a philosophy for making choices. This will ensure we don't get confused as we get exposed to more information going forward, and feel empowered to take decisions for our well-being. **Having a philosophy empowers us to make aware choices, even when presented with a new set of facts. Once we know “how” to choose, “what” to choose becomes much easier.**

**No single source of information can be relied upon blindly. To build a philosophy, we need to understand the merits and demerits of all source of information.**

## ***Analysis of Old sources of information***



### **Positive Qualities: Generational Wisdom**

- They are practical, based on the advice of elders who have experienced this food and lived much healthier lives compared to our generation.
- They sustain across time and have worked over several generations who shared the same genes as us. Ancient texts were written 4,000-5,000 years ago, and were orally transmitted even before that.
- This knowledge has been successfully tested across a wide range of geographies in the Indian sub-continent – mountains, deserts, plains, coastal areas.
- This wisdom is based on a whole, holistic view of ourselves (Panch Kosh), of external matter, and the entire act of consumption, i.e. Aahaar

### **Drawbacks: Context has changed**

- We don't engage in the same kind of work anymore, so the needs and demands of the body have changed. Earlier it was farming heavy now we mostly have desk jobs
- We prepare food very differently. Earlier our ingredients came directly from the source, now we buy most of them in a shop. E.g. Milk today is very different from what was consumed 200 years ago.
  - Earlier obtained from cows often raised by families in a cowshed adjoining their house or in the same village. Now,

the source cow can be thousands of kms away from the place of consumption.

- Cows grazed on fresh pastures, took in the sunlight and fresh air, and were loved and revered. Now, cows are confined to sheds and raised by farm workers with little personal connection.
- The milk was first fed to the calf, and excess was used for consumption by humans. Today, almost all the milk is used directly for human consumption
- This milk was consumed fresh, within a short time span of the cow being milked. Now, milk is refrigerated, transported over long distances, pasteurized, packed in plastics or tetra-packs, and re-heated before use

### ***Analysis of New sources of information***



#### **Positive Qualities: Influenced by Research and Study**

- They include advice from experts who have researched the impact of the food items
- The information explains the mechanism of action of the recommendations, and hence seems more reliable
- The advice seems to be working for many people, especially those who follow the advice of nutritionists

#### **Drawbacks: Too diverse and sometimes conflicting**

- Some of the benefits of certain food items are pushed by lobbies with vested interest in the sale of these products- e.g.:

Monosaturated Fat Cooking oil. Often times, the research is funded by these companies trying to maximize profits.

- The research is mostly performed on animals and may not transfer to humans
- The approach is incomplete as it looks mostly at nutrients and calories instead of the holistic human experience, and only at food instead of consumption holistically.
- There can be regional differences so the diet of someone in Mediterranean or in Japan may not work for an Indian or Sri Lankan, but they all get promoted with equal enthusiasm
- Research is often concluded within a short time-span, making long-term changes difficult to understand

### ***Analysis of Body signals as a source of information***



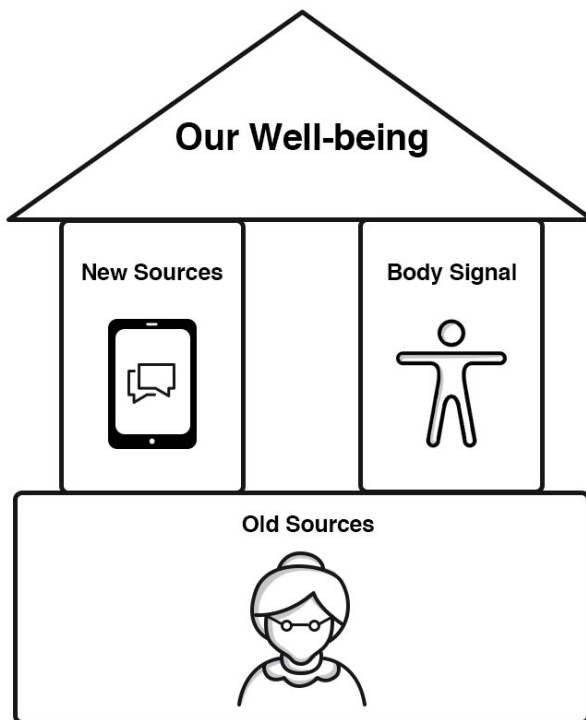
#### **Positive Qualities:**

They tell us what is suitable specifically for us at the present moment, factoring in all the complexities which are difficult for the mind to assimilate for decision making. Examples of complexities incorporated - our genetic make-up, body type, season, region, current status of the body and all other dimensions such as thoughts and emotions. This makes the resulting decision very specific to E.g. Peanuts may be good for health, but a specific individual may be allergic to them. Similarly, while watermelons give a cooling effect to most people, can increase bloating in some

#### **Drawbacks:**

New-age chemicals used as ingredients can sometimes fool the body into making incorrect choices. For instance, we are hard-wired to like sweet and salty foods, as traditionally, that signalled the presence of energy and minerals (in fruits and vegetables). This is now exploited by companies to “engineer” addictive foods. French fries and coke is one such addictive food combination which uses our affinity for salty and sweet foods.

### Philosophy at Swasth Yog Institute



Our focus is on listening to all sources but not believing them blindly. Instead, being discerning in our choices. The choice we have made, at Swasth Yog Institute is to:

- Stay as close as possible to the old sources of what our great-grandparents have suggested as these are based on ancient, time-tested, deep and holistic wisdom
- Reviewing the implications of these recommendations in today's context and making adjustments accordingly (e.g. understanding that our great-grandparents had rock/sea salt, not iodized Table salt made in a factory).
- Sifting carefully through the clutter of new sources to find research that helps us understand the mechanism of action in a language we understand (e.g. looking for research that explains why whole foods such as unrefined grains and oil are healthier than the “modern” refined variations)
- Developing our own intuition and ability to connect with our body to understand what works for us.

**Therefore, our approach is to follow our ancestral diet as much as possible, factoring in changes in context. And while doing so, to listen to our body signals to understand the impact, and to look for research to understand the mechanism of impact.** New sources of information are valuable and not to be dismissed, however when confused, stay as close to the old sources and trust your body to tell you if that decision doesn't suit you!

The above philosophy can be distilled into a simple recommendation, which leading journalist, Michael Pollan, describes as - **“Eat Food. Mostly Plants”**. We'll go into this in further detail later on. For now, let's remember this mantra!

### **Developing your own philosophy for choices**

We encourage experimentation with the above philosophy and seeing the impact on our body. Over time, as we understand food

and our own body better, we may even come up with our own philosophy, customized to the specific needs of our body, which only we know best! But the important thing is that we are aware of why we choose whatever we choose.



## Key Points

Food is now a hot topic of debate. While our sources of information may agree upon recommendations, many times there are conflicting recommendations. Further, much of the recommendations of new sources are changing constantly. This can make the decision-making process confusing.

Having a philosophy empowers us to make aware choices, even when presented with a new set of facts. Once we know “how” to choose, “what” to choose becomes much easier.

No single source of information can be relied upon blindly. To build a philosophy, we need to understand the merits and demerits of all source of information

Old sources are reliable as they share “Generational Wisdom” - are practical, based on experience of elders, sustained across time and a wide range of geographies in the Indian sub-continent, and based on a whole, holistic view of ourselves, external matter, and the entire act of consumption, i.e. Aahaar

Old sources can't be relied upon blindly as the context has changed – our lifestyle, how we prepare food

New sources are reliable as they are influenced by Research and Study - readily available and easy to understand information, advice from experts which seems to be working for many people

New sources can't be relied upon blindly as they are Too diverse and sometimes conflicting - some research and benefits are pushed by lobbies with vested interest, flaws in the research such as animal testing and not accounting for regional differences and drawing conclusions in a short time span. Further, the approach is nutrient-based and calorie-based and not holistic.



Body signals are reliable as they tell us what is suitable specifically for us at the present moment, factoring in the all the complexities, which are difficult for the mind to assimilate for decision making.

Body signals can't be relied upon blindly as new-age chemicals used as ingredients can sometimes fool the body into making incorrect choices.

Our approach is to follow our ancestral diet as much as possible, factoring in changes in context. And while doing so, to listen to our body signals to understand the impact, and to look for research to understand the mechanism of impact.

The key summary of our recommendations is “Eat Food. Mostly Plants”

# Chapter 3

## Eat

### Introduction

**How we eat is of great importance**, for it determines our ability to “digest” all change. Eating is the first part of the digestion process and it guides the transformation of food. Blood is the weather inside our body and good food choices maintain the quality of our blood. If we have lightness in our being and clarity of thought, our elimination is consistent, our eyes are bright and we have a good appetite, then we know our eating habits are beneficial to our digestion and health.

Ailment in the physical body first manifests in the digestive system. This has been explained by in Ayurved, as “Ama” or “Aam”, which causes illness. This is the result of undigested food getting stuck in our system and producing toxicity. Therefore, the purpose of Ayurvedic eating is to promote good digestion

## How can we bridge the gap between Health and Taste?

**Eating is a necessary function for us to stay alive.** Good eating habits contribute to health, while poor habits lead to disease. Along this this, **eating is also an experience that can give pleasure** – the sight of a beautifully served plate, smell of various spices, touch of food on our tongue and the resulting taste from many flavours.

But sometimes, these two functions of food – health and taste - seem to be in conflict. It is a common belief that healthy food isn't tasty, and tasty food isn't healthy. This requires us to go through a difficult journey of choosing one, and balancing the other need. This is the reason why most diets fail, as after a few weeks or months, the unmet need for taste takes over discipline for health, often taking us several steps backward.

However, it is possible to move from “Or” to “And”. **Aahaar can be healthy AND tasty! The secret to this lies in conscious eating.** By eating consciously, we no longer have to compromise health or taste, or radically change what we've been eating so far, or starve ourselves, or feel stressed about dieting or harshly discipline ourselves. Instead, we feel satiated and light, enjoy the process of eating without over-thinking, and feel increasingly guided by our body's wisdom into making correct choices for us, in a gentle manner.



### 3 Step-Process: Knowledge, Awareness, Listening

Eating right is not just about having the right knowledge, but also about developing our awareness and learning to listen to our body. Let us understand this through an example:

- How many of us know that fresh fruits and vegetables are good for health? How many of us know that processed foods such as fried snacks and street food are not good for health? Everyone! All of us have this **knowledge**. But is it enough to help us make the right eating choices?
  
- The next step is **awareness** of this knowledge, i.e. experience in real life. How many of us have experienced the impact on our body of eating unhealthy foods mentioned above? After the meal? The next day? After several days or weeks or months of doing so? What kinds of symptoms have we experienced in the body to know the impact?
  - Usually, immediately afterwards, there is a sense of fullness or drowsiness
  - A few hours later, we may experience acidity, acid reflux, bloating, flatulence or nausea, smelliness from the mouth, headache
  
  - The next day, we may feel tired on waking up in the morning, fatigue in our limbs. Our motions may be affected – either constipated or very loose, foul smelling
  - A few weeks or months of regularly consuming such food could lead to weight gain, chronic acidity, digestive and excretory issues
  - Years of such habits result in a range of chronic ailments, which may seem unrelated (e.g. PCOD)

- **Listening to our body:** Despite knowledge and awareness of the above, how many of us feel tempted or struggle to stop ourselves when unhealthy options are presented to us? Many of us! The main reason for this is TASTE. We often find unhealthy food tasty, and health food boring. But by listening to our body through the examples below, we can have both health and taste.

### **“Eat like a Baby”**

Babies who have not developed their teeth fully are given food in a mashed form, instead of solids. Why is that the case? The answer seems obvious to us – food needs to be chewed before it enters the stomach, and in the absence of teeth, we perform the function mechanically by mashing.

However, we often forget to apply the same rule for ourselves, and end up gulping down solid foods, such as rice! We have forgotten to chew our food enough that it becomes a paste, which one can send to the stomach by “drinking” instead of gulping down.

## **Guidelines for Conscious Eating**

The whole act of eating needs to be conscious and pleasurable, connecting us deeply to our felt-sense. Dr Vasant Lad, considered the Father of Modern Ayurved has listed a set of eating habits beneficial to our health. Vaidya Atreya Smith, propounds similarly in his book Ayurvedic Nutrition. Below is a summary:

### **'How' Guideline #1: Be present in the NOW (i.e. eating) and contemplate on the food**

We should be fully present, in the now, i.e. the “Ath”, which is the act of eating, instead of dividing attention with TV, reading, work, talking, music etc. Being fully present without distractions.



Eating is almost like an act of prayer because of the gratitude for the food that is willing to convert its energy into us. Focussing on the tastes, the sensations and the emotions that are coming up as we eat is a joyful, healing, meditative process. If we try closing our eyes the next time we are eating, we will become aware of newer flavours in the same food!

### **'How' Guideline #2: Eat Slowly**

This means having food slowly, savoring each bite before moving on to the next. As we change this habit, we will become aware of the habitual involuntary movement of our hands towards next

morsel before the current one has been chewed. This prevents us from being present.



**'How' Guideline #3: Drink food and chew liquids**

This means we must chew all our foods, including liquids till they are completely mixed with saliva. Especially difficult-to-digest foods such as beans need to be chewed with great care until the taste disappears. Saliva has digestive enzymes and bacteria that make it easier for the stomach to break down the food. 60% of our energy goes into digestion. Chewing well takes the load off the stomach.



Further, chewing adds to the pleasure of eating, and gives us the full taste, which gets lost in gulping down food, such as rice!

Again, we don't need to be obsessive about the number of times each morsel is to be chewed (*Fletcherism*). Simply checking that we should be swallowing a paste instead of solid helps.



## Practical Activity

To experience the impact of food on our senses and our ability to process the food we're going to perform an experiment. We'll start off with a pretty common snack - banana chips. First, we'll start off by observing what they really contain. Using a pair of tongs to hold 2 banana chips, we'll light a match and warm up the side of a banana chip, while holding it over a piece of paper on the floor. The chip doesn't melt, instead we'll see drops of oil falling to the floor.

Keep moving the banana chips over the piece of paper, so all drops don't gather into a single big blob, and can be counted distinctly.

- First there will be a singular, heavy, unctuous drop; then another. Quickly followed by another. We'll count the drops.
- We can also observe that the chips burn brightly, indicating a lot of oil being used in the burning.
- If we pay further attention, we can see drops of oil sliding down the tongs...

After having repeated this experiment at least a dozen time, the total count of the number of drops of oil in 2 banana chips has never been less than 40! How many of us knew that these chips contained so much oil? Does this change our perception of the food? Mentally we may be introduced to this aspect now, but our bodies have been experiencing this oiliness every time we consume the chips. It is just that we weren't paying attention. By learning to listen to our body through the experiment below, we will be able to know the "reality" of what we are consuming, in the moment, instead of experiencing symptoms afterwards. Hence, we can make better eating choices as we are eating.





## Practical Activity

We've all eaten banana chips at some point, right? It is a delicious food item made out of a really healthy fruit. Yellow as the sun, a fresh banana chip is crispy and crunchy, with a strong smell of coconut oil if you buy it from an authentic south Indian store. However generally, as with most foods but especially snacks, we tend to eat them really fast. Today we're going to really engage with this food item with our senses.

Now that we've seen what the chips are actually made of, we'll now allow ourselves to truly connect with the chips. We'll each take 2 banana chips and try to experience it deeply. We will eat them using the tips for conscious eating we learnt previously, and summarized below:

**Guideline** - Be present in the NOW (i.e. Eating) and Contemplate of the food

Keep eyes closed. Do a meditative activity for 2 minutes before starting to chew (e.g. breath awareness, humming, etc). Be fully attentive to the experience of tasting

**Guideline:** Eat Slowly

Keep in mouth for 2 minutes. Do NOT swallow till asked to, as per instructions

**Guideline:** Drink food and chew liquids

Keep chewing till it becomes like a paste

What does it look like? As we bite into it does it make a sound?  
How does it feel on our tongue? Does it have an effect on the

muscles in our jaw and around the eyes? What tastes do you notice? We'll notice it going down our throat and leaving an aftertaste. We'll take our time with the food and really savour it. We can also notice any memories or emotions that come up. We'll really allow the food to be consumed. We'll use lot of adjectives to summarize our experience.

Having experienced the banana chips, we'll now move to another common food item, eating jaggery with coconut. First let's look at coconut. What do we see? How does it feel on our hands? Let's bring it up to our noses and smell it. As we take our first bite coconut what sound does it make? How do our teeth feel against the coconut? As we 're grinding it how do the coconut shreds move in our mouth. What tastes do we notice? What quality does the coconut have? Light, heavy, oily, sticky, dry? As we swallow let's notice it going down our throat. Now let's smell the jaggery and take a bite. How does it melt with the coconut? Do we notice one more that the other? What quality do we observe now? What tastes? Is there any coating on our tongue? Anything left on our teeth?

As we slowly come to an end of this exercise let's try remembering the last time we had coconut and jaggery together. How much of it do we remember?

By truly engaging with our food items we can intuitively experience its freshness and health. Through the conscious eating, our body is able to signal problems that may arise from the consumption.



### **Post Activity Reflection**

- How was this experience different from your typical experience of eating?

- Based on this, how do you want to change your way of eating?
- Beyond this activity, how do you typically listen and respond to the signals of your body, such as feeling thirsty, hungry, sleepy, the urge to excrete, and the more socially unacceptable signals such as yawning, belching, flatulence?

Based on this experience, beyond eating, how else do you want to experiment with a different response to your body's signals?

To eat well and in tune with our body's rhythm is our basic responsibility towards our body. The changes don't have to be expensive and difficult. In fact, we are likely to find ourselves saving a lot of money spent not just on unhealthy food, but all the health problems we face thereafter! Old habits can be changed and new ways of eating can be learned. Once we understand the significance of eating right, we find the motivation to make the necessary shift. Eat well. Live well.

 **Key Points**

How we eat is of great importance

Eating is a necessary function for us to stay alive, and also an experience that can give pleasure. Sometimes, these two functions of food – health and taste - seem to be in conflict. However, Aahaar can be healthy AND tasty! The secret to this lies in conscious eating.

Tips for Conscious Eating / How to eat:

- Be present in the NOW (i.e. Eating) and Contemplate of the food
- Eat Slowly
- Drink food and chew liquids



# Chapter 4

# Food

## Introduction

Till a century ago, this question would have been laughed at. Whatever is edible, i.e. people consumed through eating and drinking was Food, as simple as that!

But today, in the name of food, we are consuming “**Food-Like substances**” which, unknown to us, are responsible for the poor state of our health.

Hence for the first time, our generation needs to learn how to distinguish between food and food-like substances.

**Note:** This chapter refers to various popular food brands. The intention is not to single out any specific brand, but to increase awareness about what we eat today, which cuts across brands.

Before we start, let us take a quiz. Which of the below is a “food”?

Packaged cookies	Tomato ketchup	Instant Noodles	Potato Chips	Brown Bread
Coke, Pepsi or any aerated beverage	French fries from any fast-food outlet	Packaged fruit juice	Cookies for diabetics with NO ADDED SUGAR	Microwavable Popcorn
Honey	Iodized Salt	Sugar	Fish	Vegetables
Fruits	Oil	Eggs	Meat	Chocolate

### **What are Food-Like Substances?**

Food has a long and interesting journey from nature to our plates. With home-made items, we buy produce from the market, cook it with spices and then eat. However, we also consume a lot of other types of “Food” that don’t go through this simple journey.

Nowadays, the Food industry has turned the act of eating into a purely pleasurable act where we are ruled by craving for food. Remember the Lays Potato Chips' ad campaign in India - “No one can eat just one”? How many of us find ourselves overcome by cravings and eating much more than our capacity, when we eat food in restaurants, or packaged food items?

When we go to a grocery store under just the “snacks” sections we will find hundreds of products. Each one tries to differentiate themselves by adding more colour, flavour, ingredients so that they look attractive enough for us to buy. We find drinks that are

bright blue in colour! Our home-made tomato sauce tastes very different from store-bought Ketchup. Even our home-made lemon-water is nothing like packaged lemon water. When we make Food at home from scratch, we notice that even after keeping it in our fridge it won't last more than a few days. However, now we buy packaged Food and snacks from the store that stay for weeks or sometimes even months. Earlier, only grandmother's pickles used to last that long. We even have 'long-life' milk these days!

Have we stopped to wonder why it is so? To make Food items last longer, seem tastier, look nicer, the Food industry adds synthetic chemicals, and strips the original Food of its true form.

Many decades ago before the World War, it used to take days to make bread, because the wheat was allowed to rise with the help of bacteria. That form of wheat was very close to the wheat plant. However, since then, factories have started mass producing "flour" by removing the outer casing of the wheat plant. While this makes bread much quicker, it removes most of the nutrition. Interestingly, a lot of people are becoming allergic to wheat today, but not to Sprouted Wheat which is the original form of the plant.

Although we now have plenty of variety in Food, the excess has actually led to deficiency. What we now consume is *Food-like substances*. These chemicals and additives lead to a lot of short and long-term health problems. They remove the Praan of the Food. We wouldn't buy chemicals and eat them, so why must we have them in our food?

Let's ask ourselves - is Food only that which is edible and can be eaten? Or is Food that which has vitality and gives us health?

### **What is Food?**

In Ayurved, food is the primary source of our energy. Food has positive Praan that can be transformed into us through our



digestive process and can fuel our activity. For this to happen Food needs to be as close to its original form as possible, so that the Praan or vitality isn't lost. True Food is unprocessed, nutritious and derived directly from nature.

To distinguish food from food-like substances, acclaimed food journalist Michael Pollan has provided a set of "Food Rules". As strange as it is to have to learn this, this is our current reality!

We have attempted to simplify the task of selecting "food" by shortlisting 4 key rules from Michael Pollan's seminal work, which can cover most of the cases. As you read below, remember it is important to understand these in spirit, instead of blindly following the exact letter.

Food is an edible item that meets all of the following 4 criteria:

1. Items that your great-grandparents would recognize



2. Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (ideally has 3-4 ingredients; No "added ingredients" like HFCS, added sugar, sweetener; no claims of being healthy like: low-fat, non-fat)



3. Items that have a short shelf life (no preservatives)



4. Items closest to their natural form (minimal processing)



Let us now understand each of these rules in depth!

**Rule #1: Items that your great-grandparents would recognize:**

**Not parents, not grandparents, but great-grandparents!** When in doubt, it is best to see what our great-grandparents ate, for the following reasons:



- **They didn't have massive grocery stores and factories churning out Food-like substances.** They would cook delicious, tasty food that was made out of what was available to them. Their diet wasn't heavily processed. Their milk came directly from the cows every morning. Their grains came from the fields unwashed and with the husks on!
- **Their diet was based on climate, geography and availability of crops in the region they were from.** This meant North Indians ate more chapaatis and South Indians ate more rice. Western Indians ate lot of garlic and onion to combat heat while coastal residents ate fish. Indians consumed cauliflower, instead of broccoli, millets instead of oats (Europe), etc.
- **As their recent descendants, our body too is prepped for eating that kind of food.**

In India, where a significant proportion of the population still lives in villages and follows ancestral rules, we can relax the definition to include grandparents, if they are still living in villages. But if the

grandparents are also now in cities, we do not include them in the rule, as they have been exposed to food-like substances!



## Practical Application

When we buy something from the store, let's ask ourselves would our great-grandparents recognize this? If not then we mustn't eat it. Almost all packaged, factory made foods would not pass this test. While applying this rule, **it is important to remember that many items that we think our great-grandparents used, were actually of a very different nature.** E.g.

### Sugar

#### Consumed today:

- Pearly-white sugar, or yellow colored jaggery
- Sulphur-treated
- Crystallized sugar
- Jaggery is yellowish or light brown

#### Consumed by great-grandparents

- Dark brown-coloured jaggery
- Non-chemical treated
- Solid or Powdered Jaggery

### Salt

#### Consumed today

- Flawlessly white
- Factory manufactured
- Pure sodium chloride
- Additional iodine
- Called Iodized salt

### **Consumed by great-grandparents**

- Slightly coloured (not due to impurity, but due to mineral content)
- Derived from natural sources such as rocks or sea.
- Many minerals in addition to today's salt (e.g. calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium)
- Iodine not added separately
- Rock/ sea salt called by local names such as *Sendha Namak* or *Jaadaa Namak* in India

### **Oil**

#### **Consumed today**

- Refined (heated to high temperatures)
- Thin and flowing
- Almost no smell, key ingredient unrecognizable
- Lighter colour

#### **Consumed by great-grandparents**

- Cold pressed
- Thick and viscous
- Strong smell (can know ingredient based on smell)
- Lesser quantity needed in cooking
- Darker colour

### **Honey**

#### **Consumed today**

- Light yellow coloured
- Heated to high temperatures (which renders it a slow poison, as per Ayurved)
- Relatively thin consistency
- Very sweet taste

#### **Consumed by great-grandparents**

- Dark coloured
- Raw, directly consumed from comb
- Thick
- Slightly pungent taste

**Rule #2: Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (ideally has 3-4 ingredients; No "added ingredients" like HFCS, added sugar, sweetener; no claims of being healthy like: low-fat, non-fat):**



The biscuits, snacks, bread and chips that we have today, may be recognized by our great-grandparents, if they were alive, but they are still not the same as what they had! This is because they were prepared using very different ingredients and processes. To know this, all we need to do is to read the labels behind the packaged foods we consume. We do not need to know the names of 1000s of Food-like substances appearing on food labels!

Simply following the guidelines below can help:

- 1) Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind – Does anyone need to label or advertise an apple? Or a Carrot? Or Lentils? No one mentions the dozens of nutrients present in these products because there aren't crores of rupees to be made by a company by selling this! Yet, we know, without labels, that they are healthy.

- 2) Anything with more than 3-4 ingredients is likely to have food-like substances added to it
- 3) Whenever see “added ingredients”, or names we cannot pronounce, or numbers, it is an indication of food-like substances.
- 4) **Almost as a rule, one can assume that foods that claim to be healthy, are most likely unhealthy!**

### **Why are products advertised as healthy like to not be?**

A quick examination of food labels such products reveals why the above statement is almost always true. Typical reasons:

- **The unhealthy ingredient is replaced with something even more unhealthy!** E.g. Diet Sodas and Sugar-free products replace processed sugar with artificial sweeteners, many of which have been linked with diseases such as cancer.
- **The labels are often misleading as the heavily advertised, added healthy ingredients are used in minimal quantities.** E.g. India’s brand Britannia NutriChoice Oats cookies have less than 10% oats, and almost 55% refined wheat flour
- **To compensate for this changed food composition, some additional chemicals are often added, to retain the same flavour, colour, or other attributes.** E.g. Brown breads require additional “conditioners” to keep the softness intact despite replacement of refined flour with flour.

The “healthier” variations are often several times more expensive than their counterparts.



## Real Life Application

Next time we're in the shop, we must try to pick up some of our favorite packaged drinks or snacks and try reading the labels. There will be plenty of terms there that we won't understand because they are not real food, but are food-like substances:

- Did you know that Kellogg's Chocos has synthetic Caramel colour INS 150d (that is used in aerated drinks like Coke) and whose manufacturing process results in a carcinogenic chemical?
- Did you know that a single slice of Britannia Cheese contains 285 mg of sodium? (The adequate intake (AI) of sodium for kids in the age bracket of 4-8 years is 300 - 600 mg/day)



## Practical Experiment

To investigate the misleading health claims made by food companies today, let us examine diabetic friendly cookies, which are a fad these days. We did this experiment with Nutri-choice Oats cookies available in India, but you can buy any brand and come to similar conclusions.

- First, note down the health claims made by the company, in an attempt to lure customers. These claims are evident on the packaging itself. E.g. Nutri-choice cookies claim – (a) No added Sugar (b) Diabetic Friendly (c) Oats (instead of refined flour) (d) High Dietary Fiber
- Now, do a closer examination of the food label to see the actual quantity of the "healthy" ingredients. In our case, oats turned out to be less than 10% and refined flour continued to be 55%, though the label only mentioned "Oats Cookies"



- Further, look for additional chemicals added to maintain the taste, softness and consistency of the original, “unhealthier” counterpart. Nutrichoice adds dough conditioners along with a host of other chemicals
- Now, find the chemical added as a replacement to sugar. The sucralose added in Nutrichoice is unhealthier than sugar itself! In fact, the box clearly warns of the possible laxative effect of added chemicals and states that these cookies are not recommended for children. We can’t help but ask - How is it safe for children, if not safe for adults?

Compare the label with that of “normal”, “unhealthy” cookies. You will find 90% of the ingredients are similar, though the price is at least 2 to 5 times more! In fact, we’re paying more, for a more harmful product branding itself as healthy.



### Practical Experiment

Go through the labels of the following commonly used packaged “food” items” and identify the “food-like substances” within. While doing this activity, remember rule #1. E.g. The “salt” mentioned in the labels is not rock salt, but processed salt, and hence food-like!

- Tomato Ketchup
- Bread
- Brown Bread
- Jam
- Cookies
- Breakfast cereals for children, such as Chocos
- Growth enhancing drinks for children, such as Bournvita, Malt drinks
- Fruit Juices
- Noodles

**Rule #3: Items that have a short shelf life (no preservatives):**



This is due to two reasons:

- If you look around, an item with “life”, i.e. *Praanis* are likely to decompose soon after death. This is why a leaf wilts, animal carcass smells after a few hours, fruits go bad if kept for long. One can also understand by extension, **that something that lasts very long, is likely to have very less Praan**. Think of non-living substances such as plastic, metal, nylon.
- **An item that has a short shelf life is also likely to indicate that it natural and does have any chemical preservatives**. This is why tomato chutney or mango juice extracted at home lasts much lesser compared to equivalent brands (such as “Kissan Tomato Ketchup” or “Mango Frooti” in India)

**Rule #4: Items closest to their natural form (minimal processing):**



Eating whole-food, that is items with as little processing as possible is another key practice. This doesn't mean we eat the rice directly as a plant but instead have the brown rice in place of the polished, white rice. For example, we must buy jaggery instead of white sugar.

**The further we move away from the natural form, more the item moves from food to “Food-like”. In this process, many key nutrients are lost, the natural ratio in which the nutrients are present in the food get distorted, and what may originally have been healthy, now becomes unhealthy.**

Examples of some “food chains”

- Sugarcane → Jaggery → Brown Sugar → White Sugar
- Fruit → Fruit juice → Fruit jam
- Chickpeas → Besan (chickpea or gram flour) → Fried Snacks
- Peanuts/Sesame/Coconut → Cold Pressed Oil → Refined Oil
- Wheat → Wheat Flour → Refined Wheat Flour → Biscuits

**Caution while applying the rules**

The rules above are meant to be followed in spirit, and not blindly.

**Like any other rule, there are exceptions to these rules too!**

For instance, some food items do have a relatively long shelf life, such as dry fruits, pickles and wild raw honey (*Note that even though the honey available in the market has a long shelf life, it does not follow the first rule, and is very different from what our great-grandparents consumed*).

### **Impact of consuming “Food-like substances”**

The process of refining removes key nutrients. No wonder we need so many supplements today – we have taken them out from our food! For e.g. the process of creating refined flour from whole wheat, leads to a massive reduction in nutrition content

- 95% fibre is destroyed
- 73 to 87% loss of various micronutrients in Vitamin-B family
- 84% Iron lost
- 56% Calcium lost
- 32-82% loss of essential elements such as phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, manganese and selenium.

No wonder, we're having to pop so many supplements for nutrient deficiencies, without realizing the additional damage these factory-manufactured are inflicting on our body!

Food-like substances such as preservatives, chemicals denoted by alphabets or numbers, emulsifiers, conditioners and artificial sweeteners alter the body's functioning and cause diseases.

Also, such items are very addictive, causing us to consume them in much greater quantities than is good for our body. The foods are addictive as they are specially designed to accentuate certain flavours and smells that we have evolved to like. Nature has designed us to naturally gravitate towards sweet and salt. Sweet flavours (e.g. in fruits) would denote the presence of energizing

foods, whereas salty flavours (such as in vegetables) would denote the presence of minerals. This was nature's way of ensuring we were able to select foods which would be most nourishing to us. Today, this "formula" is exploited through combinations such as pizza and coke or "Happy Meals" with burger, french fries and coke.

All this shows that we need to become more aware in our choices of Food to consume.

**The first guideline to Yogic Aahaar is to eat "Food", and not "Food-like" substances.**

## Application of Food Rules to make choices

Note: X denotes the item does NOT meet the conditions of the rule

*Denotes the item meets all rules*

*Means the item needs to be approached with caution – it is deceptively similar to Food*

Item	Grand-parents recognize	Labels: Added Ingredient	Short shelf life	Close to natural form	Real “Food” Replacement (In India)
Monaco biscuits	X	X	X	X	Cookies baked at home with “food” as ingredients / Naankhatai
Cookies for diabetics with NO ADDED SUGAR	X	X	X	X	
Microwave-able Popcorn	X	X	X		Corn popped at home
Meat					
Eggs					
Fish					
French fries from any fast-food outlet	X	X	X		Home-fried potato sticks
Instant Noodles	X	X	X	X	Sevai in India
Packaged fruit juice	X	X	X	X	Fresh, cold-pressed

Item	Grand-parents recognize	Labels: Added Ingredient	Short shelf life	Close to natural form	Real “Food” Replacement (In India)
					juice
Iodized Salt	X		X	X	Rock or sea (Sendha / Jaada) salt
Sugar	X		X	X	Powdered jaggery
Tomato ketchup	X	X	X		Tomato chutney
<b>Vegetables</b>					
Potato Chips	X	X	X		Papad (popaddum)
<b>Fruits</b>					
Oil	X		X	X	
Coke	X	X		X	Home-made beverages
Brown Bread	X	X			Home-made wheat flour bread
Chocolate	X	X			Home-made snack bars (Chikki in India)
Honey	X				Wild, raw honey



## Key Points

Today, in the name of food, we are consuming “Food-Like substances” which, unknown to us, are responsible for the poor state of our health. Hence for the first time, our generation needs to learn how to distinguish between food and food-like substances.

Food is an edible item that meets all of the following 4 criteria:

- Items that your great-grandparents would recognize
- Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (ideally has 3-4 ingredients; No "added ingredients" like HFCS, added sugar, sweetener; no claims of being healthy like: low-fat, non-fat)
- Items that have a short shelf life (no preservatives)
- Items closest to their natural form (minimal processing)

The first rule does not say parents, not grandparents, but great-grandparents! When in doubt, it is best to see what our great-grandparents ate, for the following reasons:

- They didn't have massive grocery stores and factories churning out Food-like substances.
- Their diet was based on climate, geography and availability of crops in the region they were from.
- As their recent descendants, our body too is prepped for eating that kind of food.

While applying this rule, it is important to remember that many items that we think our great-grandparents used, were actually of a very different nature, especially sugar, salt, oil and honey



Almost as a rule, one can assume that foods that claim to be healthy, are most likely unhealthy, because:

- The unhealthy ingredient is replaced with something even more unhealthy!
- The heavily advertised, added healthy ingredients are used in minimal quantities.
- To compensate for this changed food composition, some additional chemicals are often added, to retain the same flavour, colour, or other attributes.
- The “healthier” variations are often several times more expensive than their counterparts

Items that do not have a short shelf life (no preservatives) are likely to have very less Praan or be loaded with chemical preservatives.

The further we move away from the natural form, more the item moves from food to “Food-like”. In this process, many key nutrients are lost, the natural ratio in which the nutrients are present in the food get distorted, and what may originally have been healthy, now becomes unhealthy.

## Annexure - Food Processing

While the intent is to have minimally processed foods, it does not mean to say all processing is bad. If we think of it, **foods are subject to processing in many forms in our day-to-day life**, such as:

- Processes using water – Cleaning and Washing, Soaking, Steaming, Boiling, Blanching
- Processes using heat – roasting, boiling, grilling, frying, smoking
- Manually cleaning – such as sieving, washing with water, or adding some substances
- Others such as Fermentation (Korean *khimchi*, South Indian *idli*, Gujarati *dhokla*), utensils used for cooking (they react with food in a certain way)
- The process of digestion and assimilation itself is a form of processing!

**The biggest form processing of that we do to food is cooking, which serves various purposes:**

- **Safety:** Kills food poisoning bacteria, especially in raw foods such as meat, fish and eggs
- **Digestibility:** Cooking makes certain foods easier to digest (e.g. pulses and grains)
- **Edibility:** Cooking causes changes in the colour, flavour and texture of foods through an intricate series of changes that occur when foods are heated. For example, roasting potatoes makes them crispy and tasty

**Hence, instead of believing all processing to be bad, we can consider the following, while making decisions:**

- **Extent of processing:** The number of steps of processing the item has undergone and how far removed it is from natural

state, what has been added or removed from it. For instance, whole wheat flour is healthier than refined wheat flour, which is healthier than biscuits made of refined wheat flour

- **Nature of processing:** Cooking can be done in various forms, each causing varying degrees of changes in the food. Steaming is better than pressure-cooking. Stir frying is better than shallow frying. Roasting is better than frying. Heating on the gas is better than microwaving.
- **Place of processing:** The same food can be different depending on whether it is made at home or outside. Factors to consider here are purity of material used, additions made for taste (e.g. extra oil and salt) or looks (e.g. food colours) and even the feeling with which the food is prepared (e.g. food at home is prepared with love, while food outside is impersonal or could be with a “negative” feeling). Food made outside may appear to be tastier, but if we eat mindfully, we can observe the truth by examining impact on the body.
- **Time-tested nature of processing:** Many new forms and utensils for processing have come out in the last few centuries, which have not stood the test of time, and for which there is increasing evidence about their dangers. This includes pressure cooking, grilling, barbecues, microwave cooking, air-frying, non-stick cook wares, plastic utensils for cooking, to name a few.

## Annexure – Oil

(An article from Krya - <http://krya.in>)

Traditionally cooking oil was made by manually crushing oil seeds or copra in a cattle-pulled, oil-press to extract the oil. At this time oil was just called “oil” and there was no need to call it “cold-pressed” oil. The same process is followed whether we bought sesame oil, coconut oil or mustard oil.

In the manual crushing process, the maximum efficiency possible is 40% - 60%, which means that the balance 60% -40% oil will be left behind in the oil seeds. This leftover “oil-cake” was used as nourishing, cattle fodder. This traditional cold-pressed oil had delightful aroma, great taste and true medicinal properties.

For an end-user, both this oil and the system was perfect. But there were 2 major problems for the oil manufacturers with the manual process: (a) Achieving 100% efficiency in extracting oil from oil seeds (b) The manual process is a small-scale cottage industry – it is not possible to scale it to build a brand to sell millions of bottles of cooking oil across the country. This search for scale and efficiency gave rise to the solvent-extraction method, which involves a lot of heating. As a reaction to this process, the manual-press products are labeled “cold-pressed “oil.

### Hexane in “modern oil”

Hexane, a common industrial solvent and paint thinner is the primary tool to extract oil efficiently from oil seeds. Hexane is a petroleum –derivative and is classified as a neuro-toxin by the center for disease control & prevention (CDC). In this method, the oil seeds are passed through Hexane, which is capable of extracting oil from the seeds. The resultant oil & hexane mixture is then evaporated and condensed to separate the oil & the hexane. This process extracts 99% of all the oil from the oil seeds and the manufacturers claim that all the hexane is removed from the mixture by the end of the distillation process. The key point to

note here is this: this process is willfully adding a highly toxic solvent like Hexane into our cooking oil and then separating it. Even if they did remove 100% of the hexane, this is a terrible process design, as is fraught with the risk of hexane contamination even if a small mistake is made in the process. If hexane – extraction wasn't bad enough, the further 3 processes of R, B & D make it really worse.

### **3 steps to modern oil extraction – R, B, D**

**REFINING:** A typical cold-pressed oil will contain some sediment and natural waxes – which are filtered at the oil mill and given to us. But in a large commercial oil extraction plant a number of bizarre methods are used to refine the oil. One of the very worst refining methods is to add lye (caustic soda or alkali) to the edible oil, in order to remove the fatty waxes. This process produces cheap laundry soap as by-product and a sediment-free oil. Now, do we really want a refining process for our cooking oil, where the by-product is a cheap laundry soap? Now there are alternatives to this chemical process like physical distillation, which are slightly better, but we can never find out what refining process was used by reading the label of the final oil product.

**BLEACHING:** Now for some strange reason, it is assumed that people do not like different shades and natural hues in their cooking oils. So the next step after Refining is Bleaching the oil to remove ALL colour. The refined oil is passed through clays like Bentonite to remove colour from the oil.

**DE-ODORISING:** The Refined, Bleached oil is passed through a high temperature, steam distillation process to remove all odours, especially the bad odours accumulated during the earlier steps like addition of hexane, introduction of Lye and usage of crude Bentonite. At the end of the hexane-extraction, Refining, Bleaching & De-odorizing (RBD), we get a strange colourless, odorless, tasteless oil that may have some traces of toxic hexane and which has NONE of the nutritional or medicinal properties of

traditional cold-pressed oil. All the common brands of cooking oil available in the market today are only RBD oils. This is also true of all pure coconut oils sold as hair oils - they are also hexane extracted, RBD oils.

### **3 Cooking Oils that are best Avoided & the 2-part Test**

We can apply 2 important rules to understand every ingredient in depth:

First - Insist on textual references from the authoritative and classical Ayurvedic or Siddha textbooks. The great teachers who have compiled these textbooks are only sources that completely understand an ingredient in every way possible and its impact on human health

Second - Look for long recorded history of safety and usage, going back hundreds or thousands of years. This is common sense – if a herb has been safely used by communities for hundreds of years, it guarantees that we too will not get any nasty surprises by using them. E.g., we won't get a Ayurvedic reference for olive oil, but at least Mediterranean folks have successfully used it for millennia. This is the main reason why today after 2 – 3 generations of mindless use of chemicals, like say anti-biotics, we are getting nasty shocks, like super-bugs. Safety for human use can only be established over many, many generations and not by studying 30 rats in a university lab for a few months.

Which brings us to the important point in this discussion on vegetable oils. We all know of groundnut oil, sesame oil, coconut oil and mustard oil as traditional Indian cooking media that have been used for hundreds of years now and with a well-documented history of usage.

Three types of vegetable oils commonly sold today in stores and widely advertised on TV as “healthy” choices – Safflower Oil (Kardi oil), Sunflower oil and Ricebran Oil are to be seriously re-

examined.

### Safflower Oil

Ayurvedic textbooks advise us NOT to use it. Here is the authoritative reference from Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Chapter 27, Slokas 284-285 - *“The Oil of Kusumba (Safflower or Kardi) is hot, Katuvipaka & Heavy. It particularly causes burning sensation with acidity and vitiates (aggravates) all 3 doshas“*

The above shloks should make it amply clear that among cooking oils, Safflower is one of the worst as it aggravates all 3 doshas. This has been clearly defined thousands of years ago by the Ayurvedic teachers and yet it is commonly sold today to us in stores.

Now let us apply our second rule, of common-sense – has Safflower oil been successfully used by Indian communities for hundreds or thousands of years like sesame oil or coconut oil? The answer is a clear NO. There is no definitive record of the production or use of Safflower oil in India or other countries for cooking use. In fact, how many of us have seen this oil being used by our grandparents? Safflower oil has been commercially produced for cooking use, only in the last 50 years. Traditionally safflower was used as a vegetable dye and around 50 years cheaper aniline-based chemical dyes wiped out this use. From that point onwards, safflower oil has been re-branded as a cooking medium.

### 2. Sunflower Oil & Rice-bran Oil

For the second group - Sunflower oil & Rice-bran oil, that are No classical textual references from Ayurvedic textbooks that give us assurance that they can be used. Yet these are traditional ingredients that are well known to us from ancient times – but they were never used as cooking oils and this should compel us to think many times before we use these oils. In fact, rice-bran is a

by-product of the rice-milling industry and we will commonly find that rice-mill companies are also selling this “by-product” as a commercial product instead of discarding it. Should we be consuming it daily?

Can we think of the Indian name, in our mother tongue, for coconut / mustard / sesame oil? Probably yes.

Can we immediately think of the Indian name, in our mother tongue for Safflower, Sunflower oil or Rice-Bran oil? Highly unlikely.

This should clearly tell us that these are not oils that have passed the scrutiny over many generations to be accepted for daily use.





## **Chapter 5**

# **Replacements – “Food” Part 1**

### **Introduction**

As we adopt a Yogic Aahaar, we may find ourselves craving certain “food-like substances” that are used to consuming.

We can make this journey smoother by planning their equivalent “food” replacements, which retain the taste we’re missing!

## Implications of Rule 1 – Eat Food

### **Stop consuming**

- Food-like substances such as snacks, bread, chips, chocolate, packed juices & other processed items
- Tea, coffee, aerated drinks
- Alcohol, Tobacco

### **Increase**

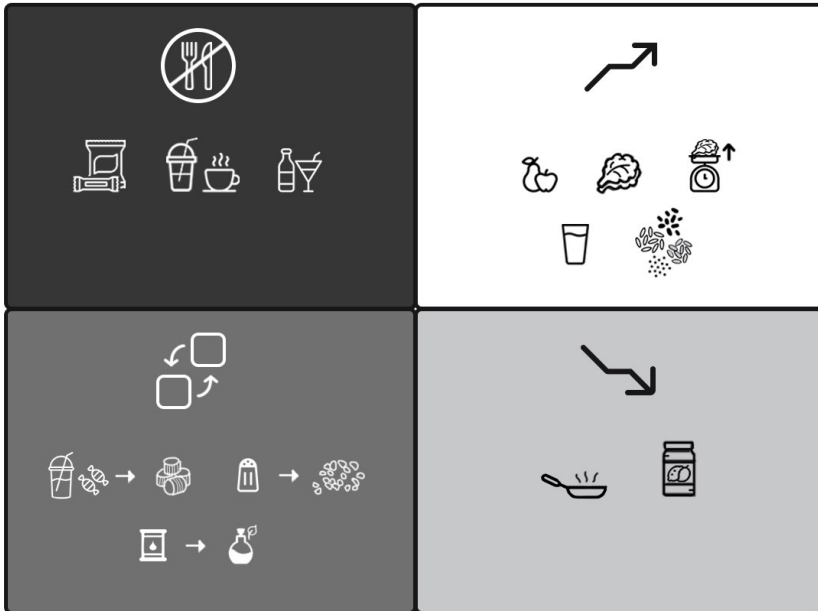
- Fruits
- Vegetable salad
- Quantity of vegetables in meals (relative to quantity of grains)
- Water
- Grains other than wheat and rice, millets such as sorghum (*jowar*), pearl millet (*bajra*) and finger millet (*ragi/ nachni*)

### **Replace**

- Sugar and drinks/sweets with sugar WITH Jaggery
- White iodized salt WITH Rock / Sea / Pink salt
- Refined oil WITH Cold-pressed oil
- White rice and flat rice WITH Brown or Red (rice and flat rice with a layer of skin)
- Honey WITH Wild Honey

### **Reduce**

- Fried items
- Pickles
- Green or red chilly (whether added for color or taste)



### Additional notes

- Grains – Stop Cookies, Refined flour and its products, bread (including market-made whole wheat bread)
- Quantity of vegetables in a meal should be double the quantity of grains!
- Raw fruits and vegetables
  - Choose according to your taste
  - 1 Bowl of Salad Daily
  - 1 Fruit daily
  - Don't mix Fruits & Vegetable Salad
  - Do not mix either of these meals - either have before, or 3 hours after meals
- Cold-pressed oil
  - Do not have rice bran oil, sunflower oil, canola oil
  - Indian cooking to not include olive oil (unsuitable)
  - Use Sesame, Groundnut, Coconut, or Mustard
- As far as possible, move to organic produce!

### Guidelines to retain taste

One of the initial concerns some of us may have, upon seeing the table above is – how will I enjoy eating now!? However, this is not something to worry about at all, when we are on the path of Yogic Aahaar!

We have seen earlier, that by “eating” correctly, i.e. being in the present, eating slowly and chewing properly – we get to understand the true nature of food, and find that healthy food is tasty, and unhealthy food-like substances aren’t really as tasty as we earlier found them to be.

**As we adopt a Yogic Aahaar, we may find ourselves craving certain “food-like substances” that have been our favourites since many years. However, the trick is in realizing that when we have craving for these items, it is not the food we’re missing, but... the Taste!**

Eating is not just designed to be a way to nourish ourselves, but also as an act of pleasure. For this reason, our tongue has taste buds, which detect various flavours – sweet, salt, bitter, astringent, sour. Hence, **the moment we learn replace food-like substances, while retaining and keeping the taste alive, life becomes easy!**

Using this principle, we have created a full list of replacements for common flavours/tastes and types of meals – e.g. breakfast, snacks, desserts, drinks etc. It is advisable to have a list of replacements handy, so that in moments of “weakness” we can remind ourselves that there are many options available to us!



## Real life example

One of our biggest guilty pleasures, which almost everyone around us is unable to leave, despite knowing about downsides, is tea. We yearn for tea at various times during the day – waking up in the morning, in the drowsy afternoon hours, or, with a biscuit or snack in the evening. The desire to consume it or offer it to others is further increased on some other occasions – when a guest comes home, during the rainy season (accompanied by a samosa), during winters, after consuming oily or heavy food, when we are travelling...

Though many people claim to not being addicted to tea, it is hard to imagine life without it! Replacing tea with a “food” is easy once we break it down into tastes/ flavours and textures:

*Tea = a drink + hot + strong flavoured + sweet*  
Tea makes us come alive, feel fresh and active

A wonderful replacement that gives the same tastes/textures and resulting impact on the body is herbal tea. It can be prepared easily, using ingredients and spices that are already present in our kitchen, without using any black/green tea leaves/granules.

This herbal tea known by various names in India – Kehva in Kashmir, Kadhaa in Maharashtra etc. Further, each region has personalized it into a unique flavour using the locally grown, regional spices and ingredients.

Not only can herbal tea replace tea, it can also add fun to our process of replacements – we can try a different flavour each day using various combinations and quantities of ingredients. We can fill it into a thermos in the morning and carry it, so that we are not tempted when people around us are having their cup of tea!

**Possible ingredients in “herbal tea”:** Ginger, Lemon, Mint, Cinnamon, Cardamom, Basil (Tulsi), Lemongrass, Cloves, Other herbs from your kitchen!

**Note:** Green tea with honey is a new fad these days. It is important to note that honey should NEVER be heated. Ayurvedic texts state very clearly that heating honey converts it to slow poison. Unfortunately, commercially and commonly available honey in the market has been heated and processed to give it a uniform consistency and flavour. It is better NOT to have honey, than consume this. Alternatively, one can look for Raw Honey. However, even that is not to be heated or added to hot tea. Instead, we can add jaggery (powdered or otherwise)

## A Note on Oil

These days, almost everyone uses, or thinks they use less oil in cooking. Firstly, this understanding is incorrect. “Less” is a subjective term. Let us measure how much oil we use, as a family, before leading ourselves to believe our consumption is less. Across many interactions with people from all walks of life, we have found that people consume anywhere between 0.5 litres to 1.5 litres per person per month – and all believe their consumption is low!

Secondly, and more importantly – let us understand – why is everyone trying to consume less oil these days? Isn’t this another contradiction between old and new sources of information?

**We believe that unlike popular belief, oil is NOT bad. The issue is with the quality of oil we consume, and not with oil itself. In fact, as per Ayurved, oil has many medicinal properties such as lubrication of joints, keeping our skin hydrated, any many more.**

As discussed earlier, the oil that we consume today is not a food but a food-like substance for many reasons – it is heated to high temperatures as part of the refining process, and subject to processes such as bleaching and de-odorizing, and chemicals such as hexane (a petrochemical) are used in the process. These processes transform this wonderful food into a slow poison.

For this reason, we recommend switching to cold-pressed oil, traditionally called “kachchi ghaani” oil in India. We will find that as we make this switch, the quantity of the oil we consume will automatically reduce due to the high thickness and viscosity of cold pressed oil.

However, if for any reason, you are unable to make this switch, we recommend stopping all consumption of refined oil altogether. There are many simple ways to cook without even a drop of such



poisonous refined oil – Please see our additional resources for videos and ideas on cooking without oil. By eliminating refined oil, we can still obtain our nutrient requirement by consuming non-processed foods which are the source of oil – e.g. peanuts, coconut, etc, in adequate quantity.

**Remember: Cold pressed oil is better than no oil. No oil is better than refined.**



### Reflection

We highly advise having a menu of tasty “food” ideas available for times when we’re craving “food-like” substances. Initially, while our habits are getting re-formed, in moments of weakness like this, we are unable to think of alternatives.

Keep the following criteria in mind while preparing this menu:

- The menu should adhere to the “food” guidelines (see Annexure)
- The items should be quick to prepare (15-20 minutes) OR if they take long to prepare, they should last for at least 3-4 days (so that we can prepare in advance)
- The items must be tasty, and something you look forward to eating!
- Try to remember traditional, regional recipes used by your grandparents. These recipes are time tested and much more likely to be aligned to Ayurvedic recipes (e.g. Kairi Panna – a drink made out of raw mangoes) unlike many new recipes which are tasty and appear healthy, but do not comply with Ayurvedic guidelines (e.g. milkshakes)

Prepare a list of at least 10 replacements for each of these:

- Breakfast items
- Snacks

- Drinks
- Sweets / Desserts

Menu ideas are also given later in the Annexure. Also, videos in Hindi for many recipes are available on our website. The Resources section refers to other websites for videos for these recipes can be found

### Key Points

As we adopt a Yogic Aahaar, we may find ourselves craving certain “food-like substances” that have been our favourites since many years. However, the trick is in realizing that when we have craving for these items, it is not the food we’re missing, but .... the Taste!!

The moment we learn replace food-like substances, while retaining and keeping the taste alive, life becomes easy!

We believe that unlike popular belief, oil is NOT bad. The issue is with the quality of oil we consume, and not with oil itself. In fact, as per Ayurved, oil has many medicinal properties. Remember: Cold pressed oil is better than no oil. No oil is better than refined oil.

## **Annexure**

### **Swasth Yog Institute- Recipe List (primarily Indian Recipes)**

#### **Drinks**

1. Nimbu Paani (Lemon Water)
2. Kokum Sharbat - Meetha/Khatta (Sweet / Mixed)
3. Kairi Panhe (Raw Mango Panna)
4. Herbal Tea
5. Lauki/duddhi ka Juice (Bottle Gourd Juice)
6. Sol kadhi (A recipe using a regional ingredient in coastal India)
7. Tomato kadhi
8. Mint Cooler
9. Nachni Sattu (using Chickpeas)
10. Imli Sharbat (using Tamarind)
11. Thandai-soy milk
12. Vegetable Juice
13. Watermelon Juice
14. Spinach Soup
15. Tomato Mint Soup
16. Mixed Vegetable Clear soup
17. Pumpkin and Fenugreek Soup
18. Tender Coconut Buttermilk
19. Jal Jeera (A spicy Indian drink)
20. Coconut Water cooler

#### **Sweets**

1. Date Laddu with Coconut
2. Sesame Laddu with Jaggery
3. Modak
4. Peanut Laddoo with Jaggery
5. Sheera
6. Mango Papad

7. Apple Murabba
8. Dry Fruit Chikki
9. Chanaa Dal chikki
10. Brown Puffed Rice chikki
11. Fig Barfi
12. Coconut Barfi
13. Nachni Sattu - Sweet
14. Gud Poha (Flattened rice with jiggery)
15. Aale pak
16. Puran Poli
17. Moong and chanaa dal pudding
18. Coconut milk kheer
19. Beetroot halwa
20. Frozen Popsicle
21. Cooker biscuit
22. Cooker cake

### **Nashta**

1. Roti Poha
2. Gajar koshimbir
3. Mix Vegetable Wrap
4. Rava Dosa
5. Upma
6. Fried Brown Rice
7. Brown Rice Poha
8. Suji Chilla
9. Moong Dal dosa
10. Carrot Chapatti
11. Kothimbir Vadi
12. Alu Vadi
13. Steamed Dal Dumplings/Nuchinunde
14. Maggi Sevai
15. Tomato Omlet
16. Dal Handvo
17. Bajra Muthiya
18. Akki Roti
19. Thalipeeth
20. Colourful Idlis

## 21. Makai Ka Kees

### **Chatpata**

1. Popcorn (homemade)
2. Makhaane Chat
3. Potato Chanaa Chat
4. Spicy Potato
5. Spicy Peas
6. Sprouts Chaat
7. Bhel
8. Chatpata Papad
9. Chatpata Makhanaa
10. Chapaati Pizza
11. Chatpata Moong dal
12. Hara Jowar Bhel
13. Khandvi
14. Mayonaise Salad

### **Chutney**

1. Tomato ketchup
2. Peanut butter
3. Apple and Pomegranate jam
4. Homemade maggi-type masala
5. Maharashtrian Garlic Chutney
6. Kashmiri Raddish Chutney
7. Zimikand Chutney
8. Ridge Gourd Peel Chutney
9. Cheesy Dip
10. Baba Ganoush
11. Khimchi

## “EAT FOOD” GUIDELINES FOR REPLACEMENTS

ITEM	REPLACED WITH	REMARKS
<b>REPLACEMENTS</b>		
Sugar (White/Brown) or Artificial sweeteners	Jaggery, Dates	Honey not included as it should NOT be heated as per Ayurved
Table Salt / Iodized Salt	Rock Salt (Rock Salt) OR Black Salt OR Sea Salt (non-iodised)	
Refined Oil	Cold-pressed Oil (Kachchi Ghaani)	
Refined/polished/“white” grains (Maida, White rice) and Bread	“Brown”, unpolished versions using whole grains	Most wheat breads in the market contain emulsifiers and fat
<b>REDUCE</b>		
Quantity of oil used	Instead of deep frying, roast or steam the food	Seasoning vegetables/dal, onion frying and making dosa/ crepes/ pancakes/ chilla is possible without oil too!
Oil	Nuts, seeds and legumes such as cashews, coconut, peanuts and sesame seeds	
<b>INCREASE</b>		
Quantity of vegetables	Consume in both forms - cooked as well as raw (salad)	
Grains other than wheat, preferably locally grown	Finger Millet (Ragi/Nachni) Pearl Millet (Bajra)	

	Foxtail Millet Proso Millet Kodo Millet Barnyard Millet Sorghum (Jowar) Barley (Jau)	
<b>STOP</b>		
Packaged, processed foods containing Artificial colours, flavours, sweeteners, Preservatives	Directly use the item which adds the flavour instead!	Labels claiming “natural” flavours are also not “food”
Products with added ingredients e.g. added sugars, HFCS	e.g. Don’t use Ketchups, instead use chutney made at home	
Fried food (includes chips, fried snacks)	Roasted	
Tea (Milk based or Green Tea) and Coffee	Herbal Tea using herbs and spices from the kitchen	
Cold Drinks	Water, Lime juice, coconut water, fruit or vegetable juice	Other options in the drinks section of recipes
Chocolate	Cocoa powder or dark chocolate	
Tobacco, Alcohol		
Ready-made cereals	Whole grain porridge such as wheat, maize, millet	

## COOKING GUIDELINES

Category	Avoid	Use Instead
Utensils	Aluminium Non-stick Microwave	Copper bottom/ Cast Iron Clay Stainless Steel Lead-free Ceramic
Mode of cooking/ processing	New methods such as: - Air-frying - Canned & Frozen foods - Instant Foods	Traditionally validated modes of cooking/processing. Using fresh alternatives wherever possible
Recipes/ Meals pattern	“Newer” meal patterns	Traditionally validated recipes & meal palettes (e.g. daal, grain, vegetables in India)
Flame		Close to fire (open gas flame)

## INCOMPATIBLE FOOD COMBINATIONS

Food	Not mixed with (reason)
Ice Cold Liquids	Anything. Say NO! (suppress digestive “Agni”, now understood as enzymes)
Melons	Anything. Even with other fruits
Fruits	Anything (Inhibited by more complex food, fruit moves slowly through the digestive tract and can cause fermentation, gas, and bloating. Also, the combination introduces conflicting qualities into the digestive tract at once, and can overwhelm/stifle Agni)
Vegetables	Fruit
Honey with heat	Heating honey, or adding it to something hot converts it into a slow poison for the body! So, be very careful when replacing sugar with honey.

### Managing within time and budget



These recipes have been made keeping time and budget in mind! The general principle is that whatever is suggested can be made in under 30 minutes. If it takes longer, the recipe is included only if it lasts for at least a week, so that we can use the food prepared over a longer period of time.

Also, the ingredients used are those which are readily available in our kitchen and the market, and don't burn a hole in our pockets.

### **Notes on BREAKFAST Recipes**

- Deep frying recipes are avoided and healthier traditional recipes are opted, for example: steamed dal dumplings (nuchinunde), idli (with added vegetables)
- Recipe which traditionally involves deep frying, have been either roasted or steamed. For example, pearl millet (bajra) muthia, alu vadi are steamed instead of being fried.
- Previous night's chapaatis or rice (leftovers, which are usually thrown) can be used to avoid any wastage and reduce time for cooking, for example: Roti poha (made using leftover roti) and akki roti (made using leftover rice). Here, care should be taken to ensure leftovers are not preserved for a long time. The quality of food deteriorates over time. Fresh food consumed within 2-3 hours of cooking is the best. The longer we keep it, even in the fridge, the more it loses life nourishing properties.
- Spices like green chilli and red chilli powder are used in limited quantities and have been mentioned as optional in every recipe as it may not suit every body type.
- Kid friendly recipes are also included like maggi vermicelli (or maggi sevai, where vermicelli is flavoured with homemade maggi masala, a favourite among kids) and colourful idlis (using various vegetables)
- Regional specialties have also been included like Kande poha and Thalipeeth from Maharashtra, Makai Kees from Madhya

Pradesh, Akki Roti, and Steamed Dal Dumplings from Karnataka, Bajra Muthiya and Handvo from Gujarat.

### **Notes on ACCOMPANIMENTS (Chutneys, jams) Recipes**

- Alternatives are suggested for processed and packaged items like Tomato Ketchup, Fruit Jam, Peanut Butter and Nestle Maggi Masala
- Oil free Alternative is suggested for pickle( homemade or market purchased) as “Khimchi”
- Regional specialities have also been included like Garlic Chutney from Maharashtra, Radish chutney from Kashmir, Zimikand Chutney from Bihar and Baba Ganoush, from Middle Eastern cuisine.
- Vegetable waste like peels of ridge gourd have been used to make chutney

### **Notes on SNACKS Recipes**

- Snacks usually consumed in street stalls are included, like bhel, popcorn, Aaloo chaat. The chutneys used in the recipe are also included.
- Previous night chapaati is used to make roti pizza on pan, a favourite among children. The sauce and cheese used in the recipe are also included
- Foxnut (or makhana), often used during fasting times to make puddings(kheer) is flavoured with spices to make a substitute for chips, kurkure etc.
- Winter special green sorghum (called *Haraa jowar* in India) is also used to make healthy snack

## **Notes on SWEETS Recipes**

- Sugar is replaced with jaggery or dates for sweetening.
- Recipes for Sweets usually purchased are included, like chikki, laddu, barfi etc.
- Ice candy made using seasonal fruits is included as a substitute for packed ice candy

Regional specialities have also been included like Aale Paak, Modak and Puran Poli from Maharashtra, Coconut milk kheer and dal pudding from Southern India.



## **Chapter 6**

# **Mostly Plants**

### **Introduction**

The first rule - “Eat Food” – needs to be supplemented by a second rule as articulated by author Michael Pollan – “Mostly Plants”. Adhering to this “rule” can support management and reversal of many diseases

## Recap – “Eat Food”

So far, we understood that we need to consume not only what is edible, but that which meets the needs of our body –physically, emotionally and energetically.

We saw that consuming Food (and not “Food-like Substances”) is crucial for health.

We learnt how to become more aware of what we consume by reading food labels. But labels that is not sufficient to make a decision as it does provide vital information such as (a) Processing technique used (e.g. honey available in the market is heated, oil goes through many chemical processes) (b) Sourcing of ingredients (e.g. whether the ingredients are appropriate for our geography). This led us to a definition of “food”  
Further, we understood that the process of consumption of food is also very critical for assimilation in our Annmay Kosh. This led us to understanding the meaning of “Eat”

**The first rule - “Eat Food” – needs to be supplemented by a second rule as articulated by author Michael Pollan – “Mostly Plants”**

## Meaning of “Plants”

### Plants

- Fruits
- Vegetables (includes all parts such as roots, shoots, leaves, flowers)
- Pulses
- Grains
- Seeds
- Nuts & Dry Fruits

### Non-plants

- Fish
- Egg
- All meats (lean, red, etc)
- Milk
- Dairy products such as Yoghurt, Butter, Ghee, Buttermilk, Lassi, Paneer, sweets made of milk (and its forms such as “*khoya*”), cheese, milk solids (found in foods such as biscuits)

A large proportion of India's population is vegetarian, but they consume dairy. In many cultures in the West, egg and fish too are considered part of a vegetarian diet. The new “Vegan” movement refers to staying off all animal-based products, including non-food items such as leather, and items used for medicinal purposes such as honey.

**It is important to note that the definition of “plants” here is different from other common classifications - ALL animal-based food products mentioned above are excluded.**

### **“Mostly” Plants**

**“Mostly Plants” means ensuring that a majority of our food comes from plant sources. However, the meaning of this word as understood by us is very different.** Many Indian vegetarians may think that they consume mostly plants, as dairy consumption is limited. Non-vegetarians who consume animal products for a few meals each week may also assume that they are consuming “mostly plants”. This is because the interpretation of the word “mostly” has changed significantly in the last 50 years. Let’s understand with the help of a few examples:

## **Cultural practices**

- Animal-based products are traditionally on festive occasions (e.g. festivals such as Eid, occasions such as marriages). This could possibly be so because they were rare and expensive otherwise. These are times when we bring out our best assets (such as clothes we would normally not wear daily).
- In Ayurved, milk was recognized for nourishing properties and therefore used as a “medicine”, i.e. in limited quantities for some constitutions. Ghee was used as the base for medicines too. However, today, these are being used as a food instead of as a medicine.
- Most communities in India ate a predominantly vegetarian diet. It was heavy on vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds. Apart from dairy, other meat products were had very sparingly. World over, societies that have had people live the longest, like the Greeks, ate a diet that was mostly plant based.

## **Religious practices**

- The Hindu stories of Lord Krishna stealing butter as a child, even though he belonged to a family of cowherds may seem strange to us. Almost every family keeps a packet of butter at home, it is available so easily the last thing that any child would need to steal! What does this mean? That butter was a scarce, precious commodity in the earlier days, even amongst cowherds.
- The sacrificial ceremonies of some religions such as Islam and Hinduism use animal products (e.g. Ghee in Yagnaas / animal sacrifice in Eid). What we offer to the deity is something precious to us, not what is easily and cheaply available.
- It is said that Jain religion which evolved in the Indian sub-continent, was able to prescribe strict food practices with ease, as these could be easily followed in the Indian geography



- The very act of hunting by our ancestors meant that they would have it sparsely or infrequently for it took a toll, physically and emotionally.

### **Our daily observations**

- In our grandparents' time, and in some places, even now, cows are treated as members of the family. A cow would become pregnant once in 2 years (pregnancy duration of 9.5 months, lactation for 10 months, dry period for 2 months before next pregnancy). When calves were born, the first right of the milk was theirs. What was left after that, was consumed by the family. Milk production levels would peak at 1.5 – 2 months post delivery, and then steadily decline. Since milk would be available for a limited time, and in a limited quantity, it was converted into longer lasting products such as butter and ghee.
- Post the “White Revolution” in the 1970s, animal-based products became much more easily available and cheaper. As a consequence, we now consume eggs and dairy in many forms in our daily life – milk, curd, butter, ice-cream, biscuits, tea, sweets, buttermilk, pizza, paneer. Many of these products were not consumed, or consumed very rarely by our grandparents.
- Animal-products, especially meat was traditionally consumed as a part of a larger meal with many other constituents such as vegetables, gravy, rice etc. However, these days, it is common to observe consumption of only meat – e.g. grilled/fried starters, “KFC bucket”

Hence, **before we analyse our own consumption of animal-based products, let us remember that what we now consider “not much”, would have been considered “a lot” by our grandparents (50 years ago).** This is confirmed by surveys and research:

- As per one research, India's consumption of eggs, dairy and plant produce has increased more than two-fold from 1961 to 2011 (50 years)
- The growth is similar in Western countries too - the consumption of meat by an average American has almost doubled, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to 2007. The average consumption of dairy has more than doubled in the last 100 years in America.

Later, we will share one possible interpretation of the word "mostly".

### Why "Mostly Plants"?

We saw before how our philosophy for food choices is based on three key sources of information for decision making. We will now see how each of these sources of information supports the assertion of consuming "Mostly Plants":

**Old Sources of Information:** Multiple illustrations given above indicate that as per cultural and religious indicators and observations from daily life, we consumed mostly plant-based up until our grandparents' time.

### Body's Wisdom and signals

- **Natural instincts:** Since we have lost touch with our instincts, we should see the behaviour of children to understand this. If the cub of a lion sees a smaller animal – first instinct is to kill and eat it. If a child sees a chick on the road – what is the first instinct? To play with it, or kill and eat it?
- **Teeth and Jaw design:** Our teeth and jaw resemble those of plant eating animals more than carnivores like tigers, making

chewing meat harder. Cooking makes consumption of meat easier for us.



Cow Jaw



Human Jaw



Dog Jaw

- **Digestive system design:** Carnivorous animals have intestinal tracts that are 3-6x their body length, while herbivores have intestinal tracts 10-12x their body length. Human beings have the same intestinal tract ratio as herbivores. What would happen if meat stays in our digestive tract for so long, up to 48 hours. If we left that meat outside for the same amount of time, it would rot. The same happens in our body because the inside of our body is equally warm and has lots of bacteria.
- **Ability to digest:** The bacteria needed to digest milk, mostly exists in breast-feeding babies. As we grow older we lose the ability to break down the components of milk. Except in a few regions in the globe, milk is mostly indigestible for a majority of adults worldwide. But people don't realize it because symptoms are gas, bloating and tiredness which seem too common. Very few communities for example those in Northern Europe have over multiple generations genetically adapted to digesting milk. However, the Indian subcontinent is different. Only young children would have milk and the adults would have ghee (clarified butter), where most of the milk components are removed. Let's think back to where and how our ancestors used dairy.

- **Impact on our body:** If we are aware, we can observe the impact of animal-based products on our body. We are likely to feel bloated and heavy, be lethargic and sleepy, get acidity, have constipation. On the other hand, consuming fruits and vegetables increases our vitality

## **New Sources of Information**

- **Global level analysis:** An analysis of the animal food production in various countries (linked closely to consumption) and the associated mortality rate (number of deaths) due to heart disease and cancer shows a high correlation between the two.
- **Historical country-level analysis:** During the World War II, the German occupation of Norway, and subsequent retreat provided an un-imaginable insight. The death rate from circulatory diseases in Norway had been increasing steadily (25% increase over a 12-year period from 1927 to 1939), until the German occupation in 1939. The Germans, they confiscated all livestock and farm animals to provide supplies for their own troops. This forced the local people to consume mainly plant-based foods. In the 6 years of German occupation, the death rates came down to the same levels as 1927 (in half the number of years!). Sadly, when the occupation ended in 1945, as meat and dairy were introduced back into the diet, the death rates rose to earlier levels in less than 3 years!
- **Animal Experiments:** In an experiment conducted by Dr Colin Campbell in the US, two groups of rats were used, and fed varying amounts of casein – the main protein found in dairy products. 1 group was fed 20% casein, and the other fed 5% casein. Over the 12 weeks of the study, the rats eating the higher casein diet had a greatly enhanced level of early liver

cancer tumour growth. On the other hand, all rats eating 5% casein has no evidence of cancer whatsoever. Going a step further, in another experiment, it was found that as the % casein fed to a group of rats was changed over 3-week intervals and the results were astonishing. The tumor growth increased or decreased, as the % casein increased (from 5% to 20%) or decreased (from 20% to 5%).

This information was very revealing – as it provided insights on the harmful effects of excessive dairy, and indicated that interpreting word “mostly” was very important. A 20% casein-diet is also a mostly plant-based diet, and so is a 5% casein-diet. But the two have a drastically different impact on our body.

Further, the study also gave hope of reversal by changing food habits later on. This has been practically used by **thousands of people across the world, who by consuming “mostly plants” have better control of their existing chronic disease conditions, and in many cases, have reversed them successfully as well.**



## Key Points

The first rule - “*Eat Food*” – needs to be supplemented by a second rule as articulated by author Michael Pollan – “*Mostly Plants*”. It is important to note that the definition of “plants” here is different from other common classifications - ALL animal-based food products mentioned above are excluded.

“Mostly Plants” means ensuring that a majority of our food comes from plant sources. However, the meaning of this word as understood by us is very different. Before we analyse our own consumption of animal-based products, let us remember that what we now consider “not much”, would have been considered “a lot” by our grandparents (50 years ago).

Each of the three sources of information supports the assertion of consuming “Mostly Plants”:

- Old sources of information: Cultural practices, Religious practices, Our daily observations
- Our body’s signals: Natural instincts, Teeth and Jaw design, Digestive system design, Ability to digest, Impact on our body:
- New Sources of Information: Global level analysis, Historical country-level analysis, Animal Experiments:

This has been practiced by thousands of people across the world, who by consuming “mostly plants” have better control of their existing chronic disease conditions, and in many cases, have reversed them successfully as well.

## **Chapter 7**

# **Behind the Animal Food Revolution**

### **Introduction**

Understanding the behind-the-scenes truth of animal products will help us understand why a plant-based diet is much more relevant and needed in today's context

## The Context

*Meat and dairy is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Nowadays animals are reared specifically for their meat. These farms are like factories where the product is the animal. Large patches of land have been converted into farms for cows so much so that scientists say the amount of methane released by these cows is a major contributor to greenhouse gases. It has made the rearing and killing incredibly efficient so large quantities of meat and dairy can be produced.*

*According to an article in First Post, 4.5m tons of poultry was produced in India in 2017 which is approximately 238 crore chickens! This scale is managed because massive companies run these farms and they have invested a lot of money. In Indian households, the ability to buy and eat meat is considered a status symbol because earlier Raja-Maharajas would have them. This has pushed up demand and the meat companies capitalize on it.*

As per the documentary “Food Inc.” - Tyson is the biggest meat packing company in the history of the world. **The industry raised the entire way that chicken are raised.** In 1950, birds were raised and slaughtered in 70 days, whereas in 2008, the figure became 48 days. **Birds are now raised and slaughtered in half the time they were, 50 years ago, but now they’re twice as big. Based on the taste and eating preferences of people, they re-designed the breasts of chicken.**

**This is not very different from what happened in India, during the white revolution.** As the production of animal products increased, so did advertisements to promote their sale. We might remember the familiar jingles on TV and Print. The US has seen campaigns such as “Got Milk” and “Milk Life”. In India, some household jingles are “दूध दूध दूध दूध, पियो ग्लास्सफुल (Milk, Milk, Milk, Milk – consume a glassful) and संडे के संडे, रोज़ खाओ अंडे



(Have an egg a day). Without realizing, as we sang these catchy jingles, our beliefs on what we should consume were getting altered.

**To achieve such drastic jumps in production, many changes were made. One of the changes in the Western countries is automation and mechanization.** As per the documentary “Food Inc.” – *In a way we’re not producing chicken, we’re producing food. It is all highly mechanized, so that all the birds coming off the farm are exactly the same size. What these systems of intensive production accomplish is to produce a lot of food in a small amount of land, at a very affordable price”.*

This is happening in India, with dairy and animal farming becoming increasingly organized – through co-operatives (such as Amul) and companies (such as Godrej). **A visit to such factories may create an impression of high standards of hygiene and systematic production. But we need to dig deeper to uncover the truth behind this “revolution”**

### **Behind the Scenes of this Animal Food “Revolution”**

In the “modern” factory farms (large dark sheds), chickens never see sunlight, get fresh air or space to move. The common public is unfortunately not allowed to visit these farms, to really know where their food comes from.

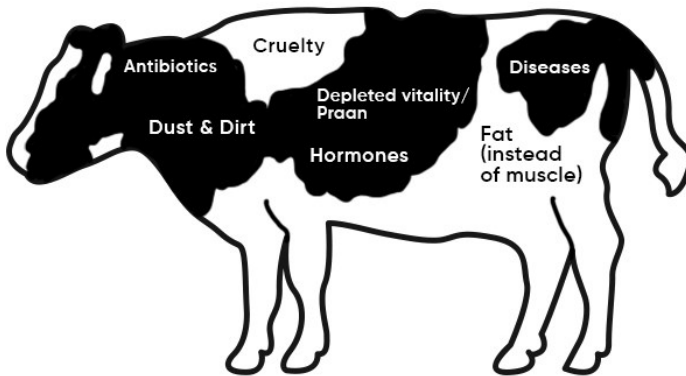
The few remaining old-style farms with open windows have ventilation that allows more sunlight and air. What is called “farming” is really mass production in an assembly line right in a factory. The documentary “Food Inc” shows the precarious and nasty conditions inside the farms

- **Dust** flying everywhere

- **Feces** everywhere. Chickens defecate at the same place where they eat. This means their waste products are often consumed by them
- The feed used in the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) is **grain-rich** as it is cheap and increases weight quickly (given products are sold by weight).
- Animals are loaded with **hormones** that is meant to make them bigger and their meat more tender. The diet result in chickens gaining twice the weight in a short time as compared to earlier. Their bones and internal organs can't keep up with the rapid growth, and the chickens can't take more than a few steps without falling, due to the weight they're carrying. The fat content is much higher than the chicken raised by families in villages in real farms.
- No place to move, worsening the **fat** to muscle ratio.
- Given the high incidence of diseases in these unhygienic conditions, the feed of the chicken contains **antibiotics**, which in turn pass into their bodies. What is a medicine is now consumed as "food", and hence the bacteria become resistant to drugs. We end up consuming these hormones and antibiotics, which leads to thyroid problems as well as menstrual issues among many others. No wonder by consuming these chicken or eggs, we are becoming also resistant to antibiotics
- Their **carcasses** may lie for days in the same area, without being removed as the huge number of chickens makes it virtually impossible to spot dead bodies.
- The pick-up and handling of chickens happens by undocumented workers, and **not treated humanely**. They are transported in big trucks with cages (a common sight in India as well) before they reach the place where they are slaughtered. Ayurved says that we take in the emotions and praan of that which we eat. How the animal was killed therefore plays an important role. Animals in these farms are

so disrespected that they live horrible lives. Their vitality is strongly depleted.

**If we could put a “label” on an egg or meat,  
what would it say?**



The life of cows in the US is no different. They are fed corn instead of grass. Their diet has led to mutations of E. Coli which are hard to treat. Female cows are meant to produce milk only when they are breastfeeding but now they produce it through the year with the help of hormones. No place to move, cattle standing ankle deep in their manure all day long. So, if one cow is infected, the other too gets it. Given the slaughterhouses slaughter 400 animals an hour, how can one prevent manure from getting onto those parts, and into the meat?

The situation in India's dairy farms is probably worse. A video by PETA shows the abuse of cows and buffaloes for Milk, a booming industry. In 2007, India produced 100 million tonnes of milk. 15% more than the US and 3 times more than China. This is possible due to unregulated practices to increase milk production:

- Cows are treated as reproduction machines and impregnated every year, resulting in them being pregnant for roughly 7

months each year. Within 3 months of giving birth, they are impregnated again

- Sometimes, the impregnation is done artificially by untrained people using unsterilized instruments, putting naked hands inside the genitals of animals and by hitting cows during this process so that they remain still. This leads to diseases
- The milk is extracted using automated machines, which sometimes go on working even after the udder has been emptied, resulting in pain and bleeding – which again, may get mixed in the milk.
- Cows don't get an opportunity to take care of their calves as a mother would.
- Cows are bound, without any space to move or even spread their legs. This results in many prevalent ailments.
- Many times, there is no space or provision to dispose off the waste, due to which cows often lie in their own waste. TB, skin ailments, etc are common
- Milk containers are lying open to infections, dust and houseflies
- Male calves are often sold to abattoirs where they are inhumanly treated and used for leather.
- Oxytocin, a schedule H drug (which can't be used without the prescription of the doctor) is illegally used to increase the milk production.

Such cows live for only 6-7 years compared to the 18 years in natural circumstances.

Many children assume chicken comes from the grocery store aisle! Or that milk comes from a shop in a packet! In essence, we as end consumers have become very disconnected from the source of food, which in this case is the animal

Many documentaries are available today, to give us a glimpse into the what happens in these industries. We highly recommend that you watch at least one of these (mentioned in Resources) before proceeding with the following chapter.

**A lot happens in the journey of animal products from their source to our plate, as a result of which what we consume today is not what our grandparents had. In addition to us consuming a much larger “quantity” of animal products, the fundamental “quality” of these products has degraded massively. The milk, eggs, meat and fish we consume today is not what our grandparents ate - it is a toxic chemical.**

In addition to what goes inside animals, and therefore into us, there are major issues:

- Fundamental difference between animal and plant products: Animals, being higher up on the food chain are “denser” sources of nutrients as compared to plants. Due to this, we need not consume a high quantity of animal products. Little will suffice
- One view is to interpret this to mean animals are more efficient sources of nutrition. However, we should know that the human body finally breaks down all food, and therefore, having simple sources of nutrients makes work easier. E.g. Animals synthesize plant proteins into animal proteins. When we consume animal proteins, our body needs to break it down into plant proteins again, before assimilation. In plants, proteins are present in their simplified form – amino acids – which our body can assimilate more easily. Thus, while animals can provide efficient nutrition, assimilating them in our body requires a lot

of work, in addition to wasting precious resources of the planet spent in raising the animal.

- As an extension of the above, given that animals are more “dense”, toxins and chemicals also accumulate within their bodies, and are then passed on to us. One may wonder – *In today’s world, chemicals are used everywhere – plants are fed artificial fertilizers and pesticides, fruits are ripened with chemicals, vegetables grow from polluted soil, air and water. So, what is the benefit of not consuming animal products?* The answer to this question lies in the point above. Animals consume vast amounts of plants, in their growth. Thus, by consuming even a small amount of animal products, we are indirectly consuming a large amount of toxins in the plants consumed by them, over and above the chemicals animals were fed.
- Additionally, animal and their products go through many processes changing the fundamental nature of what we consume:
  - Pasteurization: Heating milk to very high temperatures and doing so twice (once in the factory, once at home) destroys many properties of the milk.
  - Mixing milk from many cows, buffaloes and even goats together, while packaging milk and products.
  - Degradation during transportation, given the poor cold storage facilities and unhygienic handling along the way.
  - Homogenization - Large fat globules are broken up to keep the cream from separating from the rest of the milk. Raw milk, on the other hand, is not processed in any way -- you drink it just as it comes from the cow.
  - Usage of foreign, hybrid cows instead of desi cows, whose milk we’ve evolved to consume.

This is not accounting for adulteration and chemically manufactured milk available in the market. But this is referring to what's available from reliable, branded sources, or the friendly milkman next door

### **Impact of Consuming Animal Products**

- **Health:** The increased consumption of these “impure” animal products is leading to many diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, PCOD/menstrual irregularities, acne, obesity, digestive issues, skin issues, osteoporosis, to name a few
- **Ethics:** These animals are kept in cramped conditions and many are tortured through their lives. To see them would bring tears to our eyes but the meat and dairy industry keeps this away from the public. When our ancestors would kill and eat they would show respect to the food that had given its life.
- **Environmental cost** of rearing these animals: For example, Birds consume grains and millets which use up lot of water for irrigation. It is possible that in the next 25 years India and China may run out of water. The animal industry uses large quantities of water to grow, feed and kill the animal. The methane released in the digestive tract of cattle is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emission.

### **A note on veganism – especially for dairy products**

At this point, we might be asking ourselves that drinking milk has been an unquestioned practice for hundreds of years, up until 20-30 years ago when the vegan or plant-based diet movement starting gathering momentum. Further, Indians have consumed ghee, curd and buttermilk for centuries with ANY problem!

Now, we suddenly have moral, environmental and health-based reasons for shunning milk altogether. How does this align with our traditional wisdom and cultural practices? It is important to note that Ayurvedic wisdom is aligned to drinking small amounts of milk native to our region, directly from the farm.

The reason for these movements gaining credibility with results, and for our recommendation of “Mostly Plants” is NOT because milk is harmful, but because the milk we consume TODAY is harmful. It is a result of selective breeding of high-yield varieties bred in large numbers, fed un-natural fattening feeds, pumped with hormones and milked dry. Then subjecting the resulting “white fluid” to homogenization, pasteurization, toning, flash-heating, treated with preservatives and being delivered to supermarkets or to our homes stale, few days later. Every single thing about this process is wrong – both for the poor cow as well as the end consumers of the milk. No wonder that lactose intolerance is such a big problem today and going lactose-free is such a big trend. However, a narrow view of this problem leads to sweeping recommendations such as veganism, which essentially creates fear and anger in our minds with respect to what in pure form is considered an elixir for health! We find the same fear creeping in for other foods as well, such as wheat being blamed for gluten. This reductionist view is no different from the same approach we have adopted and rejected for proteins, carbohydrates and fats in the past!

As per the Ayurved, for Indians, fresh cow milk, from an indigenous cow with the characteristic hump, boiled with 25% volume water before consumption is an elixir. Ghee from such a cow is a sacred food that is considered fit to offer to the gods during religious rituals. Ayurved has prescribed an exact science for ethical treatment of the cow and her calf, how to identify a cow whose milk is suitable for us based on her colour, the hump and shape of her horns, and more! Unfortunately, the Ayurvedic textbooks do not give guidelines for Indians who now live abroad,



or for other people from other nationalities. The following section shares some guidelines on what people can do, in general.

While veganism, simply described as “Only Plants” here, leads to many health benefits, due to the elimination of a toxic chemical from our diet, long-term veganism has also led to health issues in some cases, especially for people with a high “Vata” disposition as per Ayurved.

### **What can we do?**

The above discussion shows that there are plenty of reasons for us to switch to a Plant-based diet. **Ayurved isn't asking us to become vegans, instead it is pushing us to become more aware of what we are consuming and not assume that it has no negative impact.** It might be helpful if we go to our local dairy farm and see the conditions for ourselves.

Since a lot of money is invested in the animal industry, researchers and agencies don't want us to know the truth. We have to educate ourselves. The information is out there, we only need to look for it. If we are educated about the reasons behind the growth in the animal industry, we can eat food that is whole, pure and full of vitality.

**The best way to experiment for ourselves is to move to “Only Plants” for at least a month. Note that this says “Only” and not “Mostly” plants. This is important as our body needs time to repair the damage caused. If we are alert, within a month, we will be able to observe some positive changes in our body, energy, mind and emotions. Over 6 months, we will observe reduction in many symptoms, and in 2-3 years, many ailments can be reversed, as has been experienced across the world.**

We recommend first adopting “Only Plants”, to enable our body to repair the damage caused so far. After that, we can move to

“Mostly Plants”, consuming 90-95% plant-based products and supplementing with some animal products.

Specifically, if we choose to consume milk in small amounts or dairy products for their medicinal properties, we should look for the following criteria, which was the case at when Ayurvedic texts were written:

- For Indians, milk of an indigenous cow is much better than a foreign one. In general, we can drink milk native to our region, directly from the farm
- Cows should be living in a healthy environment of fresh air, sunshine, clean water, grass, exercises through grazing in the open, love and care, hygienic waste disposal and living conditions. Instead of being fed grains, anti-biotics, hormones and cruelty.
- Cows go through a natural pregnancy cycle, and get to nurse their calves, and what remains is consumed by us.
- The raw milk is available to us fresh, directly and locally. The process does not involve pasteurization, homogenization, long transportation, mixing with milk from other cows, or worse still, other species such as goats and buffaloes. This requires the farm to be local.
- We add 25% water by volume to the milk, boil it till all water evaporates and the milk boils over. We drink it warm

Unfortunately, for most of us, this is not possible! But we can try to create these alternate channels.

We can also move to ghee as the medium for cooking some meals. Again, the label should be read carefully and care taken to ensure that the ghee is:

- Sourced from indigenous cows (called “A2” these days, though A2 milk can also be from buffaloes and goats, which are less suited for human consumption than cow

- Prepared by the Vedic method, which is different from how most ghee is factory manufactured these days.
- Organic and free from chemicals and hormones

Such ghee is increasingly becoming available through online portals, though the number of producers is less as of now. We will find that ghee meeting these specifications is 2 to 4 times more expensive than the “regular” ghee. At such times, it is important to remind ourselves, that the regular ghee is not ghee, but a chemical concoction! Further, we can compare the short-term of good ghee with the long-term costs of a chemical concoction. At moments like this, it also helps to put in perspective how the cost of one litre of ghee is less than what an average family of four spends on a simple outing such as a movie or meal outside these days! Such self-awareness can help us alter our patterns of thinking and make healthier choices for ourselves and our family.



### Key Points

The industry raised the entire way that chickens are raised. Birds are now raised and slaughtered in half the time they were, 50 years ago, but now they’re twice as big. Based on the taste and eating preferences of people, they re-designed the breasts of chicken. This is not very different from what happened in India, during the white revolution.

To achieve such drastic jumps in production, many changes were made. One of the changes in the Western countries is automation and mechanization. A visit to such factories may create an impression of high standards of hygiene and systematic production. But we need to dig deeper to uncover the truth behind this “revolution”

If we could put a “label” on an egg or meat, what would it say?

- Dust and dirt
- Feces      Fat (instead of muscle)

- Hormones
- Diseases
- Antibiotics
- Depleted vitality/Praan
- Cruelty!

The situation in India's dairy farms is probably worse. A video by PETA shows the abuse of cows and buffaloes for Milk, a booming industry. In 2007, India produced 100 million tons of milk. 15% more than the US and 3 times more than China. This is possible due to unregulated practices to increase milk production

A lot happens in the journey of animal products from their source to our plate, as a result of which what we consume today is not what our grandparents had. In addition to us consuming a much larger "quantity" of animal products, the fundamental "quality" of these products has degraded massively. The milk, eggs, meat and fish we consume today is not what our grandparents ate - a toxic chemical.

Health: The increased consumption of these "impure" animal products is leading to many diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, PCOD/menstrual irregularities, acne, obesity, digestive issues, skin issues, osteoporosis, to name a few

Ayurved isn't asking us to become vegans, instead it is pushing us to become more aware of what we are consuming and not assume that it has no negative impact. The best way to experiment for ourselves is to move to "Only Plants" for at least a month. Note that this says "Only" and not "Mostly" plants. This is important as our body needs time to repair the damage caused. If we are alert, within a month, we will be able to observe some positive changes in our body, energy, mind and emotions. Over 6 months, we will observe reduction in many symptoms, and in 2-3 years, many ailments can be reversed, as has been experienced across the world.



## Chapter 8

# Replacements – “Plants” Part 2

### Introduction

In order to be confident that switching to “Mostly plants” will not lead to nutrient deficiency, we should have all nutrition related concerns about a plant-based diet answered.

## Typical “nutrition-ism” questions likely to be asked

As we make the switch to “Mostly Plants”, we are likely to be posed many questions by enthusiastic and concerned family, friends, and sometimes even medical practitioners! This is because the **advertisements and popular sayings on the importance of animal products have led us to believe that in order to be strong and healthy, animal products are a must. Even the medical education of doctors includes this, because most of the research on this topic has been funded by vested interests - animal product lobbies – wishing to increase their revenues.** Hence, in order to be able to tackle such queries, and also feel confident in our choices, we should understand the nutrient content of animal and plant foods.

Further, so far, our exploration has been based on understanding the disadvantages of animal products, especially those of today. **Animal products have been consumed for some perceived benefits, and so by evaluating those fully, we can make a truly informed and balanced choice.**

## Typical “nutrition-ism” questions likely to be asked

Animal products are mostly consumed as a source of the following nutrients, which it is believed, are not available in plant products in as much quantity:

- Calcium
- Protein
- Iron
- Vitamin B-12
- Vitamin D

Let us take each of these nutrients, one by one, examine facts to bust “myths” around these, and understand how to ensure presence of these nutrients in our Yogic Aahaar.

### **Nutrient # 1- Calcium**

**Facts to bust myths:** We can look at the world age standardized hip fracture rates for women per 100,000 in countries across the world. This is a good proxy for osteoporosis, which is caused to calcium deficiency. A glance at this comparison reveals a startling co-relation – that countries with the highest animal product consumption (e.g. in Europe) have much higher fracture rates as compared to African and Asian countries, where, for various reasons (cultural or poverty), the consumption of animal products is less.

**Explanation:** It is true that animal products are rich in calcium. However, one fact that is not considered is the acidity of such foods - Non-vegetarian Food – Eggs, Fish, Meat, Milk & milk products, Sugar, Salt, Tea, Coffee, Cold drinks, Alcohol. Such products due to their acidic nature and high protein content, leech the calcium reserves in the body. In order to neutralize the acid, the body needs to draw from buffer of calcium in the bones. In the process, we end up losing more calcium from our bones that we obtain!

**Tips to supplement:**

- Exercise, Praanaayaam, Aasan
- Exposure to sunlight
- VARIETY of fruits, vegetables, beans, jaggery
- Some plant sources of with more calcium content per 100-gm than cow's milk – sesame seeds, almonds, chickpeas, figs, mustard green, pista nuts, tofu, sunflower seeds



## **Nutrient # 2 – Protein**

**Facts to bust myths:** Protein rich food has become a big fad. But have we heard of anyone having protein deficiency? What is it even called?! Answer – Kwarshiokar. And the reason we haven't heard of it before is that it is only prevalent in countries with severe malnourishment such as Africa. Which is certainly not the case with us!

**Explanation:** If anything, excessive protein consumption is leading to diseases such as Kidney disease (due to Nitrogen in proteins), Cancer, Calcium deficiency, Kidney stones. Further, all proteins aren't the same! Plants contain them in their simpler form (amino acids), while animal foods have them in a denser form, which our body needs to work hard to first break into amino acids and then synthesize for use.

### **Tips to supplement:**

- 51% of calories of spinach come from proteins! Almost as much as chicken and fish. On an average, 14% of calories from plants come from proteins. (tomato – 14%, cucumber – 24%, mushroom – 38%, Cauliflower – 40% - proteins are present everywhere!)
- Other sources – pumpkin seeds, peanut, almonds, pistachio, flaxseed, cashew nuts, soybean, lentils (*daals*)

## **Nutrient # 3 – Iron**

**Facts to bust myths:** The absorption of iron in our body has got reduced due to other foods we consume - Tea, Coffee, Calcium medicines, milk

**Tips to supplement:** Green vegetables, cooking in iron vessels, jaggery

## **Nutrient # 4 - Vitamin B-12**

**Facts to bust myths:** This is made by bacteria, which is only present in animal foods, as per some. But, that is not the case!

**Explanation:** The reason for increased deficiency of Vitamin B-12 is our very high level of sanitation – these days everything is ultra-clean – pesticides in food, chlorine in water, food is microwaved, too much hand-sanitization

**Tips to supplement:** Fermented food such as Korean *kimchi*, South Indian *idli and dosa*, Gujarati *dhokla*, finger millet malt, etc

### **Nutrient # 5 – Vitamin D**

**Facts to bust myths:** No direct source of it! Only possible to get through sunlight

**Explanation:** This is important for the health of our bones. Vitamin D is required for our body to absorb Calcium, and prevent deficiency

**Tips to supplement:** Exposure to light sunlight (9-11am, 4-6pm) for 15-25 minutes when the sun is not directly overhead. Also, sunlight should fall directly on skin - face, neck, arms, hands, feet. Hence, these body parts should not be covered by clothes or sunscreens

To satisfy our worries, we can read additional dietary charts on sources of nutrients. **We will find that we don't need to alter our consumption pattern significantly in order to get all the nutrients. As long as we are consuming the full variety of plants available in our surroundings, our body will thrive!**

### **“But the vegetarians aren’t healthy either”....**

This is likely to be a common comment made by others. And it is true! Let us understand why

- Because they are NOT on “mostly plants”. They consume milk and milk products, sometimes more than non-vegetarians, as they want to make sure they get the same nutrients!
- Because they are consuming food-like substances
- Because even if they “eat food”, many times, their food basket is very narrow and does not cover all food families. They are not consuming a rich, diverse Yogic Aahaar

### **What a rich, diverse Yogic Aahaar looks like**

- All types – Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Beans & Dal, Nuts & seeds, Spices
- Various parts – leaves, roots, seeds, fruits, flowers, seeds
- In various forms – raw (salad), cooked or steamed, dried (e.g. dry fruits)
- There are many colours in what we eat – a full rainbow – blues, yellows, reds, greens, browns... The various colours are due to the presence of different nutrients.

Note: This does NOT mean that in our over-enthusiasm, we consume all these types, parts, forms and colours every day. Or obsessively track how diverse our food basket is. The body does not need all nutrients everyday – it has enough reserves! If we are conscious about this, we will end up consuming all types over a week or month, which is enough for our body.



### **Reflection activity**

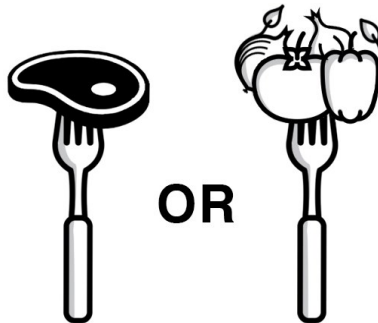
Using the pointers above, we can reflect on the above indicators of diversity in Yogic Aahaar. Which types, parts, forms or colours are missing or lesser in what we consume?

### **If still in doubt...**

If we still have doubts about moving to “only” or “mostly plants”, let us remember

- Who is giving us this information on the importance of animal products? What is their source of information? Is the source to be trusted? What is their interest?
- How did this work earlier? Our grandparents had mostly plants, and were healthy. What are we designed to eat – plants or animals – based on our body, earlier traditions?
- Let us experiment with only plants for 3 months and see the difference in our own body. In this much time, we won't get deficiency!
- After a few months, we can re-introduce animal products slowly in what we eat, in amounts & form appropriate for us

**We suggest that instead of relying on anyone (even the authors of this text or our trainers), you rely on your body. See how it responds.**



**WORST case, even if you get a deficiency as a result of our experiment, you can always get tested, take supplements and revert to back to animal products as you desire!**

**Maintaining enthusiasm by replacing the taste from Animal Food products**

Some people may miss the taste of their favorite animal foods. But worry not, there are lots of ideas on how to retain the flavour while replacing the foods with plants! The Annexure lists guidelines to keep in mind while replacing animal foods and replacement ideas. Many ideas for recipes can be accessed through the resources mentioned at the end, and on the internet, if we search.

However, care should be taken to stick to traditional and regional recipes, wherever possible. Eg. Soymilk has gained popularity these days and is consumed in large amounts as a replacement to cow milk. However, we will note that soy is traditional to South East Asia. There too, it is mostly processed and consumed as Tofu. This processing has been done traditionally for a reason! Modern science is also finding that an excess of soy leads to excessive consumption of “soy isoflavones” in our body, which is linked to higher rates of cancer. Instead, traditionally, coconut milk has been used in coastal regions, indicating it is much safer to use.



## Key Points

Advertisements and popular sayings on the importance of animal products have led us to believe that in order to be strong and healthy, animal products are a must. Even the medical education of doctors includes this, because most of the research on this topic has been funded by vested interests - animal product lobbies – wishing to increase their revenues

Animal products have been consumed for some perceived benefits, and a close evaluation of these facts easily enables an informed and balanced choice in favour of mostly plant based products.

We don't need to alter our consumption pattern significantly in order to get all the nutrients. As long as we are consuming the full variety of plants available in our surroundings, our body will thrive

We suggest that instead of relying on anyone (even the authors of this text or our trainers), we rely on our body. See how it responds.

WORST case, even if we get a deficiency as a result of our experiment, we can always get ourselves tested and take a supplement to bring it back! And we can move back to consuming as many animal products as we desire!

## Annexure

### “MOSTLY PLANTS”

#### GUIDELINES FOR REPLACEMENTS

ITEM	REPLACED WITH
Butter	cashew butter, peanut butter, Almond butter, coconut butter and sesame butter (as a spread)
Buttermilk	Buttermilk made from plant-based curd/yoghurt, tender coconut
Cheese	Cheese made from plant-based sources such as nuts, seeds, and legumes
Cream	Cashew or other nut butters mixed with water and ground
Curd/ yoghurt	Curd/yoghurt made from plant-based milks such as soy and peanut
Ghee	Nuts, seeds, and legumes such as cashews, coconut, peanuts, and sesame seeds
Ice cream	Plant-based milk or fruit ice creams with no sugar Banana ice-cream
Mayonnaise	Oil-free cashew mayonnaise, tofu mayonnaise
Meat and seafood	Soy nuggets and flakes, tofu, beans, ready-made meat replacers, yam and raw jackfruit
Milk	Plant-based milks including soy, coconut, almond,

	cashew, corn, oat, peanut, rice, sesame
Milk powder	Almond milk powder
Paneer	Tofu or “soy paneer” and tofu marinated in cashew cream

### **Note**

When preparing plant based animal replacement, one needs to stick to the principle of choosing traditional recipes, identify modes of cooking and Ayurvedic food combinations. For example, one may notice, soybean being traditionally consumed in limited quantities and was even not available in most shops. Even in south-east Asia, soy is used mostly as Tofu, which makes it more suitable for human consumption. This suggests that, it should be consumed in limited quantities.

### **References**

- Timeless Recipes for Healthy Living by SHARAN ( [www.sharan-india.org](http://www.sharan-india.org) )
- Ayurvedic Nutrition by Vaidya Atreya Smith

## Chapter 9

# **From “Diet” to “Yogic Aahaar” ... From “Nutrition” to “Nourishment”**



## Introduction

Vaidya Atreya Smith introduces the paradigm of Ayurved beautifully, in his text on Ayurvedic Nutrition –

*“Ayurved is not a system of magic pills or fads. It is a real system that has been continuously used for thousands of years. But it is a system that you have to do yourself.*

*You have to take control of your own life and not buy into anyone’s belief system. You have to make the effort for your own health – no, you do not have to run 10 miles every day or be a supermodel that starves herself to death.*

*You do need to take responsibility for yourself and what you put into your mouth. If you are willing to try, and to proceed patiently, the system will work for you, an individual, as it has worked for millions of others over thousands and thousands of years!”*

## **How to avoid the dangers of dieting and “food fads”**

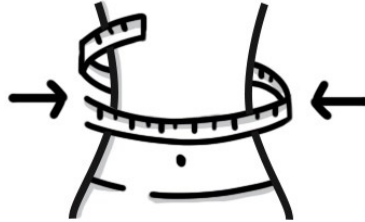
**Remember, over the last 50-100 years of “modern” nutritionism, many food fads have come and gone...**

- “Essential” Macro-nutrients - Carbohydrates, Proteins, Fats, Minerals & Vitamins (latest being B-12, D3)
- “Essential” Mico-nutrients – Omega 3 fatty acids, Anti-oxidants, Fibre,
- “Bad” Nutrients – Cholesterol, Gluten,
- Bad foods - Oil, Ghee (Dalda), Butter (Margarine), Dairy (e.g. soy-milk), Sugar (e.g. Aspartame)
- Diets – Paleo, Keto, High-protein, Low-carb, High fibre, Mediterranean, Raw, Vegan, Atkins, Meals every 2-3 hours (grazing like animals), Salads, Eating as per your Blood Type, Counting Calories
- Exotic, foreign produce - Avocado, Quinoa, Dragon fruit, Oats...
- New ways to cook or process – Microwave, Air-fry, Freezing, Canning, “Instant” foods
- New recipes – milk shakes, soy milk for daily consumption,

### **So, say NO! to “diets” and “dieting”**

Studies show that most people have tried more than one diet – the average number for dieters is 5. But dieters statistically fail 80% of the time. Further, diets create problems after some time (e.g. sensitivities to some foods, constipation, poor skin quality, lack of lustre in hair & eyes, bloating or intestinal gas after 6 weeks). They also often damage the Agni (enzyme function, in a simplified sense) and lead to diseases in the long-term. The starve-binge

syndrome is also extremely unbalancing to proper metabolic function.



**Be aware of how to measure – inputs, lead indicators, impact:**

The body is a complex ecosystem – 37+ trillion cells (and counting...!) each with individual intelligence, interaction between cells & systems, Panch Kosh that go beyond the physical, organisms that live within the body, different for each individual...Many times, the units of measurement, and their “normal” values are not relevant outside their limited context.

E.g. Calories are NOT a valid unit of measurement for human nutrition! Calorie is a unit of measurement of heat – the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of a litre of water by 1 degree centigrade. The body does not function like a furnace or a laboratory! A calorie may have little or no bearing on nourishing the body.

On the other hand, the body gives us a ton of signals, all the time, to tell us whether or not we’re on the right track. This is what our ancestors were doing for thousands of years!

*Our constitutional differences are deeper than genetics! Our body is unique, so observe & understand it, instead of comparing with others and trying to fit into a “Normal”*

**Tips BEFORE you make a choice on your “food philosophy”**

*Your health and personal power, your personal freedom, begins with a choice to go beyond your destructive social conditionings. Your empowerment can only come through choice, not through unconscious habits that are manipulated by large companies for their profit.*

Choose something...

...that can be used for long periods of time, like your whole life!

...with a historical basis, or at least a generation of study (not just use)

...which increases your intelligence and personal power, as opposed to taking pills

### **Tips AFTER you make a choice on your “food philosophy”**

Stick to the chosen plan for a period of six months – not less. This is because the body needs that much time to heal and recover from the damage caused by incorrect habits over several years. The cells of our body are continuously dying and re-generating, and six months provides space for a tangible difference.

Weight is not the only metric for success! Look out for other signals the body gives. Each of us has a different constitution, e.g. height, bony-ness in structure. Hence the weight appropriate for one person may not be the same for another. Yogic Aahaar takes our body to the appropriate weight for it, as per our constitution.

For permanent weight loss - The body can lose water, but not lose fat at more than one pound per week. Many diets lead to massive and quick weight loss, but it is neither good for the body, nor

sustainable, and are often gained back after the diet. Our body generally accumulates fat over time (0.5 – 1kg weight gain per month), and a Yogic Aahaar leads to weight loss at a similar, natural rate.

Approach food (“ann”) and your body (“annmay kosh”) with love. Not fear, anger, guilt, sadness...

Be gentle on yourself! Anushaasan is mastery over self, not punishment. Allow yourself to make “mistakes”! In fact, feeling guilty, upset or angry causes further damage to our body, as we are end up consuming these emotions!

***Good nutrition is not based on the latest fashions! Eat in sync with the body, not the mind!***

***The body wants to have regular meals without too many conflicting tastes, at regular times of the day, every day year after year. Its internal clock's function goes far beyond allowing us to wake up regularly at the same hour.***

## **Chapter 10**

# **Deepening understanding of Yogic Aahaar**

## Introduction

As we start making changes in what we consume, we're likely to face a barrage of questions and comments from anyone and everyone – family, friends, co-workers, relatives, possibly even strangers who see us making different food choices!

Furthermore, we're likely to keep coming across a lot of information in newspapers, social media, Whatsapp, email forwards on new diets as per the latest research. All of this may get us to question the choice we've made.

We may fear losing out on nutrients, or developing unanticipated side-effects as a result of our choices.

In moments like these, having a deeper understanding of Yogic Aahaar will enable us to address doubts in our own minds, and hence have more conviction in our choices.

## Why should we choose Yogic & Ayurvedic principles over modern western science?

### 1) Whole, Holistic view instead of mechanical, reductionist/fragmented, biochemical view

- Considers inter-relationships of matter, instead of treating them in isolation. Ayurved considers **food as a whole**, instead of the sum of constituent nutrients. By extension, it considers **meals as a whole**, not as the sum of foods.
- Considers the **source of raw materials** and “**Praan**” to be important, instead of only considering the chemical structure of food. As an illustration, modern western science treats all sugar as sugar – whether refined or unrefined. It is well known that sugar causes tooth decay, yet studies have found that South Africans who chew 4 stalks of sugarcane a day have better than average teeth and a low percentage of calories! This proves that there is a distinction between different ‘sugars’. Refined sugar lacks “praan” (vital life force) which leads to various health issues. Based on this principle, many diabetics have reversed their condition by eliminating refined sugar, while having all the mangoes and bananas that they want!



- Considers **impact on body as a whole**, instead of on individual parts
- Considers **all steps in constitutional nutrition**, how constitutional nature impacts digestive capacity, which impacts



our assimilation capacity as reflected by signs of incomplete digestion or assimilation. This is in sharp contrast to the biochemical view that each molecule is a molecule and will be treated the same by everyone

- Acknowledges the ***inherent principle of intelligence*** from a cosmic level down to a cellular level, instead of reducing the body to a factory and food as a fuel that feeds the factory. A popular belief of western science is that the body cannot produce nutrients and that they need to be consumed through dietary intake or supplements. This has fueled a 100-billion-dollar supplement industry in USA alone! But this theory does not support findings from many other studies. A study found pregnant women to be urinating more of an essential nutrient than they had consumed through diet. This is only possible if the body itself can manufacture that nutrient. Similarly, the Vitamin theory was fueled by a study of English navy sailors developing scurvy as they were missing fresh foods and fruit from their diet. But the same study found that 25 to 33% of the sailors did not get scurvy! This is because our body is intelligent, and if it has the capacity to create life, it can also produce nutrients on own!
- Considers ***impact on PanchKosh***, instead of on the body alone. Western research subjects are often questioned only about the impact on their body, and not questioned if a therapy that zaps their body with unseen radiation is disturbing or frightening for them.
- Considers ***individual constitution***, instead of sweeping recommendations across geographies, climates, genetics, lifestyles, stress levels and medical history
- Considers ***Praan***, and treats organic (alive source) and inorganic (manufactured or dead source) as different. The Vitamin C in an orange goes to the right receptors in the right cells, unlike the “dead” factory made tablet, which lacks intelligence, and therefore creates confusion inside the body.



- Considers the ***physical residue left in the body*** from man-made chemicals or highly refined food, instead of ignoring the filtration of toxins by liver and kidneys and accumulation in the reproductive systems. Again, the supplement industry ignores how bombarding the body with supplements blocks it from receiving other nutrients or hormones, and increases menstrual irregularities, infertility and impotence.

## 2) Appropriate “research” methodology

- Ancient sciences were ***developed over thousands of years***, instead of short-term studies
- These were created in the ***interest of human well-being***, instead of vested, commercial interests. Few of us know that research and policy making is dictated by the industry. If the American Dietetics Association (ADA) is funded by the sugar lobby, how can we expect it to share guidelines for the wellbeing of diabetics!
- The research was based on ***internal*** knowledge (Vigyaanamay Kosh), instead of reliance on external instruments with limitations
- It was practically ***tested on human body***, instead of on animals
- It was developed ***across a range of climates*** in India, instead of a homogenous testing ground

- This knowledge originated from a system which had **insights on all aspects of existence** and a multitude of subjects – Math (concept of Zero), Geography (earth is round), Astronomy (Twin stars), any many, many more insights!

### 3) Proven research that has withstood the test of time

- Through thousands of years, Ayurved presents **consistent** information, instead of rapidly changing recommendations and conflicting studies being churned out by modern science
- It was actually in practice for **3000-6000 years**, instead of based on speculation on what prehistoric man ate, such as paleo diets
- Practitioners of ancient recommendations are **visibly healthier than us!** Consider your great-grandparents, or most grandparents...

*Modern science is a belief system, like religion was to us, earlier. 2/3rds of modern medical practices don't have any scientific proof to support them. Unfortunately, even "holistic" systems are being practiced or applied through a mechanical/biochemical model of the universe – which tries to reduce everything in the universe to a "physical" component and views things as a sum of their parts/chemicals – Vaidya CAtreya Smith, Ayurvedic Nutrition Expert*

## Chapter 11

# Deepening Understanding - Eat

### Introduction

The root cause of ailments as per Ayurved is “Aam” – a result of imbalanced digestion (non, excessive or poor digestion). These can be overcome by learning how to eat.

The whole act of eating should be a pleasure in one’s life that is consciously enjoyed and participated in. If you trust your body and learn how to eat, old habits can be unlearned, tastes can change and healthy food can feel tasty!

## Tips for Conscious Eating

### When

- **Wait for true sign of hunger** - When we are hungry! i.e. When the body feels light and stomach growls, is when we should eat! Not as per time/habit, or the dietician's recommendation of meals after a fixed interval, or in order to avoid having leftovers...
- **Eat at the same time every day** - Our body likes routine, to make resources available at the right time
- **3 Major meals** - Our body needs no more than 3 meals in a day, with some variations for type of person. This is in contrast to a prevailing fad of eating many small meals, and munching every 2 hours. Eating between meals (other than occasional fruit) is fatiguing for digestive system, as it doesn't fully allow stomach to digest meals before moving to the next stage – leading to premature aging (of digestive organs, and therefore us) and poor assimilation of nutrients. Constant intake of food breaks down body's ability to metabolize, and leads to weight gain, chronic ailments, menstrual difficulties, digestive problems!

### How Much

- **Eat as per hunger, Drink as per thirst** - No to too little, or too much! Our body tells us when we have had enough.
- **Say no to eating as per size of the plate or serving** - If the food on the plate exceeds our appetite, we don't need to forcefully eat it. After all, our stomach is not a dumping ground! Instead, we can prevent this situation of dumping food (into the dustbin, or our stomach) by taking small servings, and additional helpings based on our appetite.

- **Also, no to eating as per “research” or calorific or nutrient requirements!** This is an over-simplified approach as food is beyond these narrow concepts. Additionally, this approach is difficult to track and execute.
- **Stomach should be 1/3rd water, 1/3rd food and 1/3rd empty** - Actually, we don't need that much food! It is more important to retain the nutritional value, digest well and assimilate well. Also, we don't need to calculate these ratios – our body gives a signal of to the mind for us to respond to, if we are eating slowly, and are aware :) Usually, this means stopping just a little bit before we feel completely full.
- **Breakfast is a spiritual meal, lunch joyful and dinner light** - We start our day by waking up digestion with light stretching or Yogasans. Lunch should be largest meal of the day because that's when agni is highest. Dinner should be gentle, where we baby the stomach, especially after 5pm. The “agni” in our body mirrors that outside, Sun. The sun is gentle in the morning, brightest at lunch-time, and recedes in evening.

### **What:**

- Avoid cold (drinks or food) - This restricts blood flow and the digestive fire “Agni”.
- Be gentle after a tough day - Eat easy to digest, soupy foods
- Eat Simple food combinations – Not following this is a fundamental mistake with big repercussions, that we end up making in our modern diets. We'll talk about this in the next chapter



### **Real life application of listening to out body signals**

What are some conditions needed to receive and listen to the signal from your body to stop eating food?

- (a) Sitting Position – On ground, Sukhaasan
- (b) Eating Speed – Slow
- (c) Proper Chewing – Solid to Liquid
- (d) Mind attention – Focused
- (e) Emotion – not negative, ideally positive

What are some reasons due to which we end up eating less than what our body needs?

- (a) Foods reducing metabolism – e.g. Tea/Coffee
- (b) The attention or our mind is on other things, e.g. worries about work or home
- (c) Fear of becoming Fat
- (d) Starving ourselves and not having enough food also reduces body's metabolism over time



### **Real life application of listening to out body signals**

What are some reasons due to which we end up eating more than what our body needs?

- (a) Eating too fast without proper chewing
- (b) Eating out of stress, to feel happy etc
- (c) Talking while eating
- (d) Mistakenly identifying thirst to be hunger
- (e) Giving a big gap between meals, by which time the body is extremely hungry (e.g. late night dinner without any light snack post lunch)
- (g) Dieting and starving ourselves for a few days, till we can no longer control it

## Tips for Conscious “Drinking” (Especially water!)

- **How Much - Drink as per thirst. Not too little, not too much** - All of us do not need to drinking “8 glasses, or some amount of litres of water” per day as told by some research. Neither do we need to continuously sip water. Continuous bombardment with water dilutes the medium in which various reactions take place in the body. It is said this fad was propagated by bottled water companies, in order to increase sales :) Given we are so tuned out of our body signal of thirst, especially when working in air-conditioned offices in desk jobs, engrossed in our work, that sometimes we completely forget to drink water ! This needs to be corrected as well. With increasing awareness of our body signals, we will see how sometimes we mistake thirst for hunger, and therefore, end up over-eating and under-drinking
- **What - Avoid cold (drinks or food):** Cold water suppress digestive “Agni”, now understood as enzymes. It is like pouring a liquid onto a fire, and extinguishing it. In summers, instead of ice cold water from the fridge, we can either mix it with water at room temperature, or have cool water from an earthen pot
- **What - Hot water supports digestion, but consume with caution:** Hot and warm water supports digestion, except when food itself generates heat (such as animal-based products, spices), or the person's body type is Pitta, i.e. fire/heat.
- **When - No liquids with meals:** Liquid with meals suppresses the digestive “Agni”, now understood as enzymes. We can have liquids before meals. After meals, we should give a gap of at least 30 minutes before consuming water.
- **How - Chew liquids** - This means we must chew all our foods, including liquids till they are completely mixed with saliva. The habit of standing up and gulping down water continuously is a no, no!





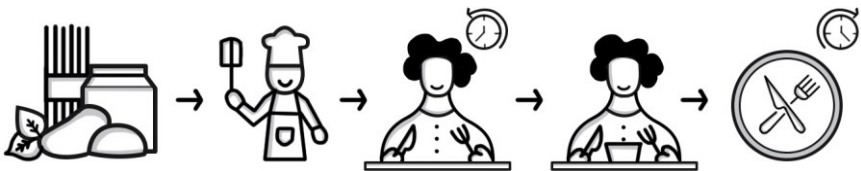
## Real life example

Animals in the wild, with a very active life too have a few times in the day to drink water from a water body. They do not have water bottles to carry around like us, and still thrive!

We too, do not need to be continuously sipping water. Instead, wait for the signal of thirst, and then drink as much water (slowly, chewing it) as we need to, at that point of time.

## The Full Cycle of Eating

Taking right care in the whole journey of food from source to our stomach - purchasing, cooking, preparing to eat, and post eating, – can transform the action of foods from harmful to rejuvenating and healing.



### Purchase

- Seasonal = As per season, and grown in the natural season : Nature grows what is the needs of the season. Hence, say No apples in summer, No melons in monsoons, citric fruits in winter
- Regional: Eat as per climate you live in – e.g. Mumbai conducive for Konkani or Malvani foods such as coconut,

kokam, nachni/ragi, and not Kolhapur-Nagpur or Rajasthani or North-Indian foods rich in chillies or wheat

- Locally grown: Your body (and your wallet) doesn't need exotic produce! Have spinach instead of Kale, Millets instead of Quinoa, Poha instead of Oats...Imported foods are also harvested long before they reach their full nutrient content.
- As far as possible, eat Organic: No need to explain why!
- Eat food as per your tendencies, not as per the nutrient content!

### Cooking

- With Love: Cooking is related to transforming matter, best done with love as part of the transformation. Where's the love in fast food, restaurants, street foods?
- In Correct Vessel: Say No to Aluminium (leading cause of Alzheimers), Non-sticks (Carcinogenic), Microwave (leads to molecular structure alteration in our body, our cells switch from aerobic to anaerobic respiration, their electrical potential neutralized and cells are impaired, and our blood chemistry is altered). Instead say Yes to vessels that are Copper bottomed, or made of Cast Iron, Clay, Stainless Steel or Lead-free Ceramic
- Cook close to fire (open gas flame)
- Fresh: Stale food creates toxins in the body. Avoid freezing, refrigeration, re-heating multiple times.

### Preparation to Eat

- Place of eating should be comfortable, clean.

- Good company: Eat with people you're in harmony with
- Mental Attitude should be of enjoyment in the balanced, happy sense: Eating is one of life's pleasures and is not meant to be either too important (obsessive) or ignored (disregarded). Eating the best, "healthy" food – because it is healthy – and not liking it, is disruptive to digestion and metabolism. Eat when in a balanced state of mind. Chanting prepares the body-mind-breath complex for eating.
- Seating: On floor ideally, Sukhasan/Padmasan – No to the dining table or couch in the living room!

### After Eating

Give appropriate gaps after a full meal:

- Rest 15 minutes after eating but do not lie down: Once you feel the energy return then resume activity. This is to make sure blood flow is directed to the digestive tract.
- Short walk – A casual, short walk of 10-15 minutes can stimulate digestion, especially if you are a Kapha type as per Ayurved or if don't feel like moving after eating.
- Drinking water – Minimum 30 minutes after meal
- Lying down - Minimum 1 hour after meal. Note that lying down is different from sleeping! Vama Kukshi (lying down on left side) stimulates digestion. Afternoon naps are to be avoided, except in summers
- Eating fruit – Minimum 2 hours after meal
- Exercise – Minimum 2 hours after meal

### **A Practical Time-table**

In urban cities, due to our work hours, long commutes and lifestyle, it is often not possible to stick to the ideal meal patterns.

However, even small steps in the right direction can make a big impact!

Below is a practical, bare minimum routine, that all of us should definitely adhere to:

- Breakfast: Between 7am and 10am
- Lunch: Between 12 and 2:30pm
- Dinner: Between 7 and 10pm
- Sleep: Before 11:45pm
- Maximum gap of 6 hours between meals (can have fruits / salad / light snack or drink in the middle)
- Approximately same meal timings everyday (maximum 1 hour deviation)
- Approximately same time to sleep and wake up everyday (maximum 1 hour deviation)



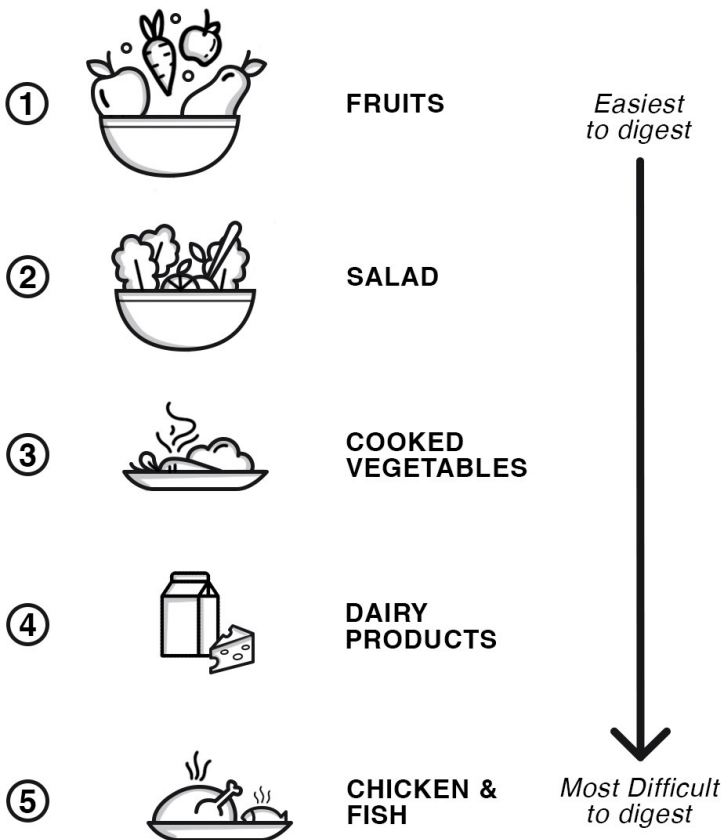
## **Chapter 12**

# **Deepening Understanding of “Food”, “Mostly Plants”**

## Order of eating

This is the order in which our body digests them, so that other digestion of other foods not blocked. Some minor variations are needed for different body types, e.g. *Vaata* constitutions as per Ayurved should consume cooked before raw:

**Fruit → Vegetable salad → Cooked vegetables & Grains → Dairy → Fish & Poultry → Red Meat**



The order in which food is traditionally served in South Indian Thali mirrors the order in which it should be eaten.

Nowadays, it is a common practice to have fruit juice along with meals or have fruits post meals as a “healthy” dessert.

This is actually a cause of 42 health problems as per Ayurved! Let's see what happens when the ideal order of consumption is reversed:

Fruits get digested the fastest by our digestive system, which is why we feel hungry within 1-2 hours of eating them. On the other hand, grains and pulses take much longer to digest, which is why we don't feel hungry for 3-4 hours post a full meal. If fruits were to be eaten after a meal, they would end up staying in the stomach for much longer, waiting for grains to be digested. The few extra hours cause them get over- cooked, to rot (ferment), and release gases, which cause bloating. This is also associated with many long- term problems such as dry skin and hair, dark circles.

An analogy from our daily life is what happens when a slow, heavy vehicle like a truck or a bus is in front of lighter vehicles – a traffic jam gets caused! On the other hand, when the lighter, faster vehicles are in front, everyone gets their own time and space. Dairy and meats are like heavy vehicles, grains are the medium sized vehicles and fruits and vegetables are the light vehicles.

### **Incompatible food combinations to avoid**

As an extension to the above, Ayurvedic guidelines clearly suggest avoiding certain food combinations. This comes from the deeper understanding that a meal is not just the sum of constituent foods, just like a food is not just the sum of constituent nutrients. Nutrients within a food and foods within a meal interact with each other in complex ways leading to different results, just like mixing various chemicals in a laboratory leads to different results, sometimes even an explosion!

- Ice Cold Liquids with Anything. Say NO to ice cold liquids as they suppress the digestive “Agni”



- Melons with anything, even with other fruits
- Fruits with anything. Inhibited by more complex food, fruit moves slowly through the digestive tract and can cause fermentation, gas, and bloating. Also, the combination introduces conflicting qualities into the digestive tract at once, and can overwhelm or stifle Agni.
- Vegetables with Fruit
- Honey with heat. Heating honey, or adding it to something hot converts it into a slow poison for the body! So, be very careful when replacing sugar with honey.
- Hot liquids with food that generates heat such as meat, fish and dairy as this over-activates digestive Agni. We can note here that hot and warm water supports digestion, except when food itself generates heat (such as above), or the person's body type is Pitta, i.e. has high internal fire or heat.
- Proteins with different proteins – e.g. meat, fish, eggs, milk.
- As an extension to this, Dairy with Other proteins such as meat, fish and eggs should be avoided.
- Dairy with salt or salty food (don't have milk or tea with paranthas or chapaati !)
- Dairy with sour foods or fruits, many other fruits e.g. banana, melon, cherry, yogurts!)
- Dairy with yeast breads and complex carbohydrates (whole grains)
- Dairy with nightshades (potato, eggplant, tomato, etc) or leafy vegetables



## Real Life Application

Based on the above guidelines, we can identify many incorrect choices we make commonly with respect of order of consuming foods and compatible combinations:

- Consuming fruits post meals as a health replacement to dessert
- Milkshakes!
- Smoothies with a mixture of vegetables, fruits, nuts
- “Protein” shakes, such as banana, egg and milk to build body mass
- Frozen yoghurts with fruits
- Adopting protein rich or only protein diets
- Salads combining fruits and vegetables for that sweet, tangy and salty taste
- The habit of gulping down refrigerated cold water during summers
- The entire concept of “cold drinks” – aerated or not
- Lemon tea or Green tea with honey

While these are delicious and seem to support our short-term health goals such as losing weight or building muscle mass, we fail to see the contribution to long-term adverse consequences ranging from dark circles under eyes and dry skin to kidney stones and cancer.

## **Ayurvedic understanding of “Mostly Plants”**

The modern emphasis on an animal product based, high-protein diet has many fallacies

Keto diets prevalent these days rely on high-protein use to fuel weight-loss, but do not take long-term consequences into account. Protein is not a good fuel for the body, as it is used to make the structure in tissues & cells. Diets high in protein actually starve the body that begins to burn fat tissues, creating the “illusion” of health due to weight loss. Unfortunately, some protein is also used as fuel, which, when burned, leaves toxic acids in blood & plasma. These acids have a very negative effect on the acidity level (pH) of the body and kidneys, and have now been linked to various ailments, ranging from kidney stones to allergies to cancer.

Further, we often live in a mind-set of protein scarcity, wondering if we are getting enough protein. According to the WHO, the actual protein need of the body is only 4.5% of the total calorie intake. This is easily achieved by eating a few fruits and vegetables every day!

There is a wide range of evidence in favor of plant-based foods as effective sources of proteins. We may wonder why our medical care providers or fitness instructors do not share such information with us. Here, it is important to remember that most of the research we see, and on which the medical curriculum of doctors and nutritionists is created, is funded by organizations with vested interests. For instance, ageing women are often suggested to have meat and dairy for calcium. But calcium supplementation has never been shown to increase bone mass – because excess protein is the main cause of bone density loss. So animal products remove far more calcium from the bones than they add!

In the Ayurvedic view, ancient Indian culture was NOT all vegetarian – there were warriors, hunters and very poor populations who consumed animal products. Ayurved has never

made moralistic ground for conversion to vegetarian-ism. Rather, Ayurved is based on the simple the understanding of the effects of eating any substance. According to it, meat is a quick way to build tissues, but ultimately it is of an inferior quality nutritionally. All animal issues are considered problematic as they promote toxins in the body – the substance itself is toxic over long term use, the process of digestion breeds toxic bacteria, and the 36-48 hours taken to pass through the digestive system leads to rotting before elimination

***Nothing will benefit human health or increase the chances for survival of life on earth as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.***

***- Albert Einstein***



## **Chapter 13**

# **A Change Plan**

### **Introduction**

A well-structured, practical time to change our Aahaar can support us to break down what may seem like a giant task, into small do-able steps

## **Week 1: Set Intention, Practice implementing “Eat” and Prepare for “Food” (Chapter 1-5)**

Before implementing a change, it is important to have all made all replacements in the kitchen, by removing what is not needed, and adding substitutes. This will help us in moments of “weakness” where we’re likely to resort to old, established patterns of eating food-like substances.

- Conduct a Baseline Assessment to understand your starting level of health - Blood Tests for your specific health issue (e.g. Diabetes, Cholesterol) or other Measurement (e.g Blood Pressure, Weight) and the comprehensive Swasth-Scale (Book 1)
- Set an intention to adopt a Yogic Aahaar and listen to your body (support from Book 1)
- Share your intention with your family to get their support (with support from Book 1)
- Set aside an undisturbed time to eat (avoiding TV, work, conversations, etc)
- Practice eating food mindfully as per “eat guidelines” (Chapter 3)
- Remove: All items that do not adhere to Food such as packaged food (Chapter 4)
- Replace: Refined oil, Sugar, White Salt and Polished grains, Bread of any kind (Chapter 5)
- Increase: Fruits, Vegetables, Variety in grains (such as millets)
- Create a menu of options for breakfast, sweets, snacks, drinks (Chapter 6)
- Purchase or prepare and keep some options for sweets and snacks handy

### **Week 2 to 3: Implement “Eat Food” (Chapter 5)**

- Add at least 2 servings of fruits – ideally one at breakfast, and one as evening snack
- Add 2 serving of vegetable salad – before lunch and dinner
- Keep a water bottle handy, and drink water whenever thirsty
- Reduce: Deep fried items
- Stop: Meals not cooked at home
- Stop: Alcohol, Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, Cold drinks
- Add: Herbal Tea as a replacement to above
- Ensure you try 1-2 new recipes in a week, to add variety and joy to eating
- Maintain a daily health diary to track what you eat, and impact on your body (Book 1)

### **Week 2 to 3: Stabilize “Eat Food” and Prepare for “Only Plants” (Chapter 6-7)**

- Set your intention for the next round of work
- Watch at least 1 documentary on plant-based food (refer to Resources)
- Read recipes or watch videos and gather ingredients for dairy replacements
- Remove: Animal-based products including dairy in any form
- Start filling daily checklist given in the Annexure for ease of tracking



### **Week 4 to 8: Implement “Eat Food. Only Plants” (Chapter 8)**

- Replace Animal-based products including dairy with plant-based alternatives.
- Ensure you try 1 new recipes in a week, to add variety and joy to eating
- Read Book 3 to stay motivated and find solutions to common challenges
- Continue filling daily checklist given in the Annexure for ease of tracking
- At the end of Week 8, conduct a Midline Assessment using the comprehensive Swasth-Scale (Book 1). Note the various changes that have come about in your sleep pattern, energy levels, mental clarity and other parameters as indicators of the shift in your well-being
- Based on the above results, strengthen your resolve to experiment for another 7 weeks!

### **Week 9 to 16: Stabilize “Eat Food. Only Plants” and Implement Deeper changes (Chapter 9-12)**

- Decide and implement a new time-table for your meals
- Decide and implement changes to food ordering and food combinations in a meal
- Re-read Chapters 9-12 and identify other changes you need to make
- Read Book 3 to stay motivated and find solutions to common challenges
- Continue filling daily checklist given in the Annexure for ease of tracking
- At the end of Week 16, conduct a Midline assessment through blood Tests for your specific health issue (e.g. Diabetes,

Cholesterol) or other Measurement (e.g Blood Pressure, Weight). By now, some differences are likely to show up in the results, depending on the extent of previous damage in your body

### **Week 17 to 25**

Adjust course based on results from the blood-work results. If the condition is not yet fully reversed, continue with the routine. Otherwise, you can re-introduce food-like substances, animal foods including dairy once a week – such as if going out or ordering in.

### **Week 26**

Conduct an End-line Assessment to understand the impact on your level of health - Blood Tests for your specific health issue (e.g. Diabetes, Cholesterol) or other Measurement (e.g Blood Pressure, Weight) and the comprehensive Swasth-Scale (Book 1). Based on this, take a decision on whether to continue with this, or switch back to your earlier habits!

## Annexure

### DAILY HEALTH CHECKLIST

#### What are the essentials to start the journey of Yogic Aahar?

Baseline health assessment – Blood Tests & other Measurement		Baseline health assessment – fill Swasth Scale (Book 1)	
Set intention to switch to Yogic Aahar and listen to your body		Obtain support of family	
Set aside an undisturbed time to eat		Remove: All items that do not adhere to Food such as packaged food (Chapter 4)	
Replace: Refined oil, Sugar, White Salt and Polished grains, Bread of any kind (Chapter 5)		Increase: Fruits, Vegetables, Variety in grains (such as millets)	
Purchase or prepare and keep some options for sweets and snacks handy		Create a menu of options for breakfast, sweets, snacks, drinks (Chapter 6)	

### How am I moving towards well-being through Yogic Aahar?

Guideline – Whether it was followed each day of the week	Point	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Sum
<b>How to Eat</b>	<b>Total: _____ / 77 pts</b>								
Ate food <b>mindfully</b> at least once in the day - Without TV, phone, laptop or conversations - With ease, slowly, chewing well till you can “drink”	2 pts								/14
<b>Quantity of food</b> as per appetite – neither less not more	1 pts								/7
<b>Water</b> consumed as per thirst – neither less not more	1 pts								/7
<b>Breakfast:</b> Between 7 to 10am	1 pts								/7
<b>Lunch:</b> Between 12 to 2:30pm	1 pts								/7
<b>Dinner:</b> Between 7 to 10pm	1 pts								/7
<b>Fruit</b> - At least 2 hours post or 1 hour before meal	1 pts								/7
<b>Sleep</b> - At least 1 hour post meal	1 pts								/7
Maximum 6 hour	1 pts								/7

<b>Guideline – Whether it was followed each day of the week</b>	<b>Point</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Th</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sa</b>	<b>Sum</b>
<b>gap between meals</b> when awake (not hungry for more than 6 hours)									
Eating and approximately the <b>same time</b> everyday (maximum within 1 hour of your set schedule)	1 pts								/7
<b>Eat FOOD</b>	<b>Total: _____ / 133 pts</b>								
<b>Not eaten –</b> Snacks, Bread, Cookies, Chips, Chocolate, Noodles, Ketchup, other food-like substances	3 pts								/21
<b>Food:</b> NO Tea/Coffee/Cold Drinks	3 pts								/21
<b>Food:</b> NO Sugar, artificial sweetener or any sweets, drink, tea etc made using these	2 pts								/14
<b>Food: No refined oil</b>	1 pts								/7
<b>No Alcohol</b> or Tobacco	2 pts								/14
No <b>white rice</b> or products of it (e.g. Idli, Poha)	1 pts								/7

<b>Guideline – Whether it was followed each day of the week</b>	<b>Point</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Th</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sa</b>	<b>Sum</b>
No <b>white salt</b> or products with it	1 pts								/7
No deep fried foods	1 pts								/7
At least 2 servings of fruits	2 pts								/14
At least 1 serving of vegetable salad before meals	1 pts								/7
Big helping of vegetables, lesser grains in meals	1 pts								/7
Variety of grains beyond wheat and rice (eg. Millets)	1 pts								/7
<b>Only Plants</b>	<b>Total: _____ / 140 pts</b>								
<b>Plants:</b> NO Milk or Dairy products (e.g. Butter, Ghee, Buttermilk, Cheese, Yoghurt)	10pts								/70
<b>Plants:</b> NO Egg/Fish/Chicken/Mutton/Beef/Meat	10pts								/70

<b>Moving Forward with Awareness</b>		<b>Total: _____ / 90 pts</b>						
Filled health diary (takes 5 minutes)	5 pts							/35
<b><u>Making a deeper connection with your body &amp; well-being</u></b> - Trying to listen to and follow the signals of your body - Drawing inspiration from and staying grounded in your intention - Taking decisions as per your well-being - A feeling of love and care for your body								/35
How many points would you like to give yourself, for your efforts towards Yogic Aahar?								/30
<b>Total : _____ / 450 pts</b>								
Need deeper reflection about your intention and commitment for well-being, external support needed (< 30%)  134 points or less	Good start, need to consolidate and move forward now! (30% - 50%)  135 to 224 points	Congratulations, you've come more than half the way, a few more steps to go! (50 – 80%)  225 to 359 points		Excellent! (80% +)  360 points or more				

**Success:** What did you do well? What makes you proud of yourself?

**Planning for future:** What do you want to do differently from next week?



**What challenges are preventing you from moving towards your Yogic Aahar? How will you address them?**

**What is the positive impact in the state of your body, energy, mind and emotions as a result of your effort so far?**

## **Additional Resources and About Us**

# About Swasth Yog Institute

## Our Vision:

For all to live fully and freely

## Our Mission:

To create an ecosystem  
which enables a state of internal harmony (Yog)  
within each individual's body, vital energies, mind and emotions,  
thus freeing them to be their true, full Self,  
and reach their potential.

## **Current reality**

A state of internal harmony within our body, vital energies, mind and emotions, enables us to be our true self, and reach our potential. Today, one or more of these are misaligned, within many of us. e.g. we are great problem solvers, but our ability to deal with emotions is limited. We are focused on creating a conducive external environment for us, but our inner landscape gets lesser attention. The result of this widespread internal misalignment is visible in the form of “dis-eases” across individuals, families, organizations and society.

Some indicators of “dis-eases”, i.e. absence of natural ease are: Increasing incidence of mental and psychosomatic (“stress-born”) chronic ailments in *individuals*, strain in relations in *families*, *depression* amongst youth resulting in suicides, disengagement and attrition in *organizations*, damage to the *environment*, and increasing *crimes rates* and *inequities in society* (such as income and gender)

## **What makes the situation persist?**

An individual is directly touched by a range of other individuals and institutions across one's lifecycle – parents, school, college, employers, media, healthcare and wellness providers, to name a few. A conducive ecosystem with many pieces in the puzzle – education, professional growth, organizational development, healthcare and wellness – can enable harmony over the entire lifecycle of an individual.

Sadly, the ecosystem today is far from its potential. Our education includes language, science and math, but does not teach us how to handle ourselves. Employers invest more resources on strategies and skill-building than culture building, role-modeling and supporting staff to be their best. Incentives of healthcare providers are not aligned to health. There is limited formal support for life changing transitions such as starting work, getting married, becoming a parent, and retiring.

Many issues prevent stakeholders in the ecosystem from contributing effectively – settling to address symptoms rather than the root cause, silo-ed approach with little cross-sectoral collaboration, misaligned incentives, to name a few.

### **How will we create a new ecosystem?**

We will build and nurture a community of leaders, who can support a range of individuals, institutions and communities to reach their potential, living their own potential in the process.

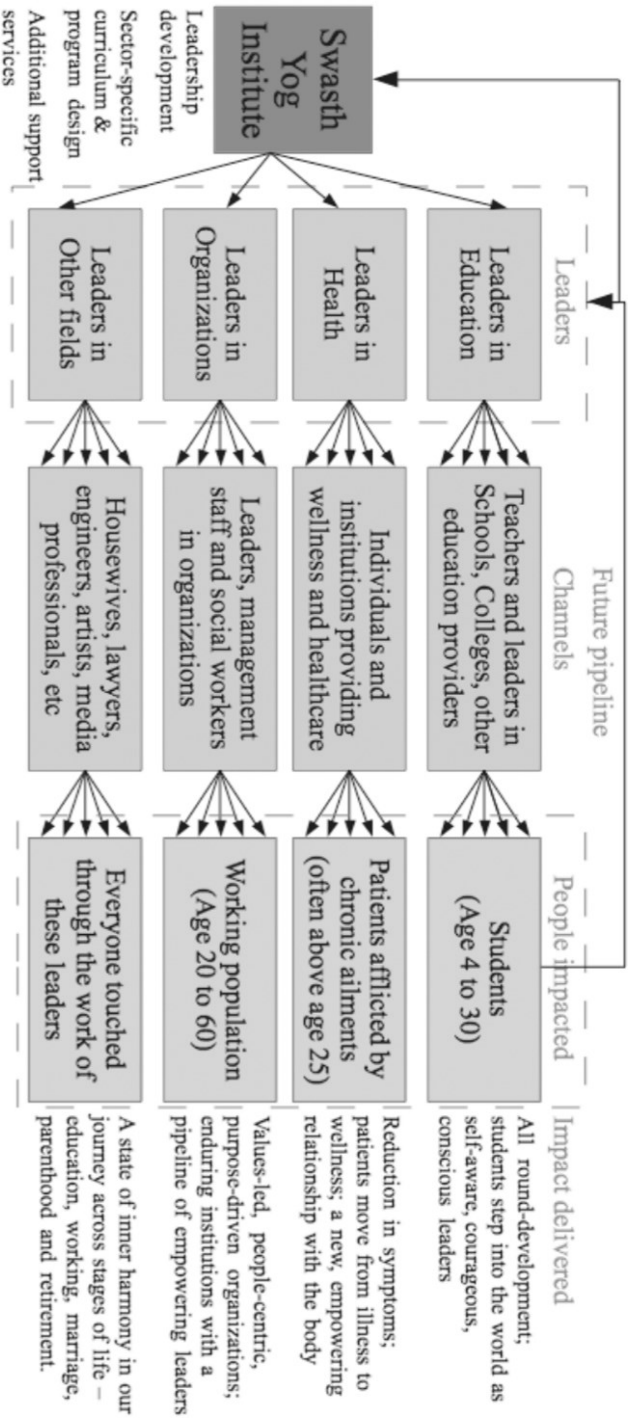
Based on a harmony-centered approach (Yog), the leaders will operate with

- Internal harmony (with our true 'self' by aligning all dimensions of our being)
- External harmony: Driving social transformation in a way that allows us to stay true to ourselves while also bringing forth the

potential in others

This will be achieved through

- **Leadership Development programs** to build self-led leaders who embody being the change they wish to see in the world. We will focus primarily for 3 sectors – health and wellness, education and running organizations especially in the development sector. The programs will be customized to meet leaders of leaders with varying contexts and skill-level, catering to management as well as grassroots leaders.
- **Sector-specific Curriculum & Program design** to enable leaders to tangibly integrate the learnings in the sector of their work. The in-house curriculum will support practical application of Yog in the above sectors. Leaders will be certified to conduct these programs for social transformation
- **Additional support services** such as consulting, research, quality monitoring and entrepreneur incubation to establish new enterprises.



## **Key principles behind program design and resulting decisions**

**Affordable:** Developing our Intellectual Property (IP) instead of using expensive existing IPs; disruptively affordable pricing; range of price points to meet the needs of various segments

**Accessible:** Offered in regional languages; usable across sectors (e.g. organization development, education, wellness); Open source model for IP; modular programs to suit participant need

**Sustainable:** Fee-based delivery; cross subsidization models; remuneration for staff; expanding internal talent pipeline; based on time-tested Yogic wisdom of inside-out transformation

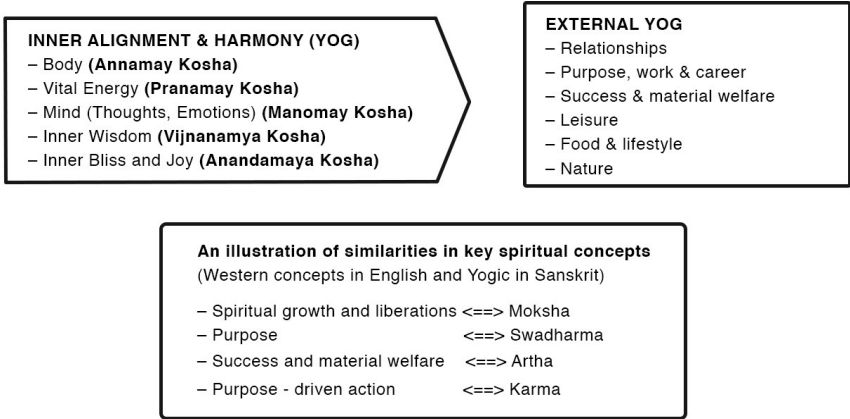
## **Our Secret Sauce – Yog**

**The Potential:** History is replete with examples of luminaries realizing their potential as individuals and as leaders of social transformation - Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekaananda, Albert Einstein, Maya Angelou...We believe this potential lies in people from all walks of life - managers and entrepreneurs, teachers, social workers, doctors, housewives, artists, media professionals, lawyers and engineers.

The “secret sauce” to build stronger ecosystems enabling us to thrive and reach our potential is Yog. Yog is the science to restore internal harmony within all dimension of existence – our Body, Vital Energy, Mind & Emotions, Inner Wisdom and Joy. Yog is a system for living. Its power can be compounded with aligned modern tools such as mindfulness, life coaching, body wisdom, somatics, affirmations, art-based therapy, non-violent communication, to name a few.

Adapted to today's context with aligned modern tools, Yog can make us achieve far more than reversal of dis-eases. Yog can

bring us closer to our true potential – as individuals, organizations, and societies. This is a universally applicable approach needing minor local customizations.



### First area of focus – health and wellness

Our focus post conception in 2017 has been to establish a solid proof of concept in one sector – health and wellness. We are building Swasth Yog Institute as an action research center focused on building a community empowering health eco-system that integrates the knowledge of the west and the wisdom of the east.

This is enabled through the following key activities:

- Knowledge building and research
- Integration of knowledge into standards & processes (SOPs)
- Conducting training
- Monitoring quality of health and healthcare services and service providers to build accountability
- Providing Certifications

### Highlights of first two years

- **Well-being Curriculum Design:** We designed “*Sanjeevani*”,



a 55-hour course for patients suffering from various chronic conditions. ~100 participants across 8 cohorts underwent the program and experienced an average 67% reduction in symptoms over an 8-week period. The multi-disciplinary research resulted in a documented standardized curriculum and program design which is modular, customized and scalable with quality audio-visual content.

- **Clinic-in-a-box Design:** Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) to deliver accountable primary care services, piloted through our network of 24+ Swasth India Medical Centers.
- **Training of Health Professionals:** Primary care physicians certified to treat key non-communicable diseases – hypertension and diabetes. A pilot undertaken to develop a new cadre of health coaches who can deliver the Wellness Curriculum, enabling communities to take charge of their well-being.
- **Early pilots of Leadership building:** Emotional intelligence workshops facilitated and personal coaching delivered to ~75 leaders across levels in Swasth with a panel of 20 life coaches over a 3-6-month period. The program received satisfaction ratings of 88%, and 92% of leaders reported an increased sense of their leadership potential – increase in confidence, better interpersonal relationships and clarity on vision for themselves.
- **Quality Monitoring:** An accountability system designed for ongoing measurement of quality of service delivery by a health system. The system was piloted with over 200 staff members of Swasth Foundation, simulating a range of players in the health ecosystem – medical professionals, clinical assistants, health coaches, warehouse, pathology lab, back-end services.
- **Certification and Key partnerships:** Affiliation from VYASA (mother organization of India's only Yoga University) to offer

Yoga Instructor Certification courses.

### **Journey ahead**

From 2019 onwards, we intend to build on the foundation in health through the following areas of focus:

- **Research & Knowledge Building:** A Randomized Control Trial (RCT) to assess and establish impact of the wellness program “Sanjeevani” on chronic ailments. Knowledge Building in additional domains such as women’s health, dentistry, acute diseases, child health, other chronic diseases, cancer.
- **Development of Integrated standards:** Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) integrating Allopathic & Ayurvedic drugs. Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for various players of a health system (simulated internally at the mother organization, Swasth Foundation)
- **Community Empowerment:** Development of additional consumer warranty products and designing other interventions to enable communities to hold healthcare providers accountable
- **Training a wide range of leaders:** Building self-led leaders equipped with key skills to Lead from the Self - coaching, training, partnering and management. This will maximize their potential and enable them to create a multiplier effect at their workplace. Various programs will be designed and offered, such as building the first cadre of Health Coaches with women from low-income communities, and training doctors on self-leadership and prevention modalities
- **Quality Monitoring:** Develop a comprehensive accountability system to measure quality of processes and medical protocols
- **Additional Partnerships to offer certifications** to Life

## Coaches, Trainers and in Nutrition

Additionally, we will take our first steps in education and organization building by

- Training middle level managers and supervisory staff in a non-profit
- Piloting a leadership building intervention with school leaders in education

**The Dream:** As Vivekaananda said, each soul is potentially divine. We believe these seekers are everywhere – as teachers, housewives, social workers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, artists, media professionals, managers and entrepreneurs. We aim to ultimately be accessible to anyone who wishes to access their divinity to reach their potential, and enable others to do the same.

# About our Well-being Programs

## Programs to support our journey to Well-being

The flagship program conducted by Swasth Yog Institute is “Sanjeevani” - a 55-hour course over a 7 week period for anyone suffering from conditions such as Diabetes, HTN, Arthritis, PCOD, Thyroid, Back pain, Chronic Acidity. Well-being is addressed through a group course and personalized health coaching.

## SOME TOOLS USED

- Ayurvedic & Yogic Food
- Body Wisdom & Awareness
- Mindfulness & Self-awareness
- Aasans & Praanaayaam
- Creative / Art based therapy
- Life & Health Coaching
- Sound Resonance
- Affirmations & Mirror Work
- Emotional release & handling

## RANGE OF INTERVENTIONS

- Group Sessions
- Health level measurement
- Self-learning resources
- Personal consultation
- Diet & Lifestyle assessment
- Assessment of Learning
- Whatsapp Support Group
- Cooking demos & pot-lucks
- Participant-led celebrations at end!

## What does the course offer?

- **“Swaasthya” (Wellness):** A tangible, measurable difference in health which YOU can perceive. A feeling of well-being, being active and energetic.
- **“Swaraaj” (Independence):** All the knowledge, motivation and skills you need to be able to continue on your journey to reversing your ailment independently, over time
- **“Sah-Parivaar” (With family):** Tools to impact and influence the health of your family, friends and larger community

## Impact of intervention

Batches covering a wide range of participants – age groups, ailments, levels of severity, geography and cultural backgrounds have undergone the course and experienced the following results:

- **High engagement** - 98% satisfaction, 85% attendance, 85% successful completion rate ( $\geq 70\%$  marks in theory & practical assessments).
- 60% **reduction in symptoms** on a self-reported scale covering over 50 parameters.
- 95% of the participants reported **feeling empowered** to take charge of their health.
- **Reversal of many ailments** such as PCOD, Infertility and Hypertension post the course.
- In a **long-term impact** survey administered 6-12 months post course completion, 95% participants reported to be in a better state of well-being than a year ago, and 56% felt that the course had made a significant impact on their life.

## What makes the program unique

- **Sustainable solution** for long-term health – addresses the root cause of ailments
- Interventions at **multiple levels** – body, mind, vital energy, inner wisdom & being
- Grounded in a **holistic understanding** of Yog & Ayurved, but adapted to today's context, using relevant modern tools
- Meets the needs of a **wide range** of participants – age groups and background, type of ailments and levels of severity
- In-depth understanding of concepts through a **combination of theoretical and experiential learning** and practice
- Extended course duration, so that participants can **experience measurable changes** in state of health (previous batches of participants have experienced a 30-50% reduction in their symptoms)
- **Empowers participants** to take health in their hands, and walk their path independently after program completion
- A **joyful journey!** Participants discover their inner child, hidden talents, and dreams in the process...

## Innovations in the delivery of program

- **Use of a Wellness curriculum:** The curriculum is **holistic, modular** (deliverable in a range of formats, levels and modules), **customized** (to target conditions) and **scalable** with quality (audio-visual content).
- **Financially sustainable model for course delivery:** The program has been primarily delivered to low-income communities served by Swasth Foundation. A user-fee based model can ensure recover ongoing operating costs of conducting courses (rent, trainer salaries, marketing, learning material)
- **Course Delivery:** Multiple formats can be created to suit the

needs and interests of participants. People can choose from a variety of **modules** as per interest or relevance for their health **condition**. Each Module can be broken down into **levels**, making it easier to integrate changes gradually, and also building motivation to move up levels over time.

### **Illustrative formats of modular courses which can be derived from the main course**

- **Module-wise**: E.g. Nutrition, Healthy Cooking Alternatives, Understanding Diabetes, Yogic Aasan and Praanaayaam, Emotional release techniques, Art-based therapy (e.g. Performing arts)
- **Condition-wise**: Diabetes, Child Nutrition, Hypertension
- **Timing formats**: Daily, Bi-weekly, Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly
- **Duration of engagement**: 1 Day, 1 week, 6-8 week, ongoing wellness journey

**Note**: These are “courses”, not workshops. Courses follow best practices of teaching to maximize engagement and learning outcomes for the participants, facilitate in-depth understanding of concepts through theoretical and experiential learning, consist of rigorous theoretical and practical assessments, and ultimately equip participants to continue walking their path independently post the intervention.

## **Why does this approach work?**

1. **Multi-dimensional** approach to well-being
2. **Addresses root cause of ailments**
3. **Measurable** impact on health outcomes
4. **Cuts through the clutter of conflicting “tips”** by integrating traditional and modern sciences
5. **Participant-centric** intervention design

### **Key success factors and how they manifest in program design**

#### **Multi-dimensional** approach to well-being –

The program integrates interventions for the PanchaKoshas, the 5 Yogic sheaths of existence - Body (Annamay Kosh), Vital Energy (Pranaamay Kosh), Mind (Thoughts, Emotions) (Manomay Kosh), Inner Wisdom (Vignanamay Kosha), Inner Bliss and Joy (Aaanandmay Kosh)

#### Addresses **root cause** of ailments –

Takes an “inside out” approach by addressing underlying stress/emotions, which are the root cause of ailments. This has been established by Yogic sciences. The field of Psycho-endo-neuro-immunology too, has established the link between emotions and health, for chronic ailments.

#### **Measurable impact** on health –

Over 50 parameters are tracked regularly, enabling participants and health coaches to see progress, and course correct accordingly.

#### **Cuts through the clutter** of “tips” –



Integrates time-tested traditional wisdom (such as Yog, Ayurved) with modern sciences (such as Allopathy, Psychology, Mindfulness, Nutrition)

**Participant-centric design –**

- Focus on simplification and practical application of knowledge
- Participants empowered to take health in their hands, and walk their path independently
- Wide variety of offerings and formats available
- Personalized lifestyle modification planning, individual prescriptions for Aasan/ Praanaayaam
- A joyful journey! Participants discover their inner child, hidden talents and dreams along the way...

# About our mother organization – Swasth Foundation

Swasth Foundation ([www.swasth.org](http://www.swasth.org)) is a not-for-profit social enterprise founded in 2009 and committed to health and joy for all. Swasth's mission is to build and demonstrate a sustainable and accountable health eco-system with joy. Towards this mission, Swasth Foundation operates 2 programs in addition to Swasth Yog Institute:

**Swasth India Medical Center:** India's largest non-governmental clinic network comprising 24 neighborhood one-stop-shop primary health centers offering comprehensive health services in 2 departments – family medicine and dentistry. Each as a one-stop-shop, each clinic treats infectious diseases like fever, malaria, dengue and also manages chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. The clinic also performs dental procedures from extractions and root canal, to oral surgeries and dentures. Swasth's clinics offer innovations, the first of the kind in the healthcare space - like the lowest price guarantee and reporting time guarantee on Pathology Lab Services; 3-year warranty on dental treatment and a safety warranty on family health treatments. Each of these, is an enforceable quality assurance, designed to deliver a patient-centric experience.

**Aanand Aalaya (“Abode of Joy”):** A wellness center operated by a health coach – a new cadre of health professionals who harmonise the wellness disciplines of Yog and Life Coaching, thus empowering the community to take charge of their own health. The center conducts various workshops and screening camps in the community and offers wellness services like yoga classes, yoga courses, nutrition courses, etc at the center. At Swasth, our impact and outcome metrics reflect our commitment to delivering high-quality, patient-centric, affordable

services at scale to the urban poor. Our programs are designed to deliver high-quality at low cost (half of market rates), in a scalable and self-sustaining manner. As of 2019, Swasth has served 800,000+ patient visits, delivering direct savings of ~INR 10 crore of patients, with a 4.2-star rating.

*At Swasth Foundation, we aim for all to be in Self and experience health and joy. This is reflected in our motto - 'Swasth Raho, Aaanandit Raho' (Be in Self, Be in Joy)*

# My Journey

by **Garima Gupta Kapila, Founder of Swasth Yog Institute**

*Garima graduated from IIT Delhi in 2005 and started her career as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company's India practice. She joined Teach For India (TFI)'s core start-up team in October 2008 and setup operations in Mumbai and managed its subsequent scale-up. She moved to Swasth in 2012, heading multiple verticals over the next 3 years focusing on improving performance & productivity, institutionalizing systems & processes as well as training staff for scale. In 2015, she took up the role as the COO of Swasth, overseeing Operations & Quality Improvement.*

*Garima has an avid interest in Yoga, and established the Swasth Yog Institute, after obtaining a Post Graduate Diploma in Yoga Therapy (and Yoga Instructor's course) from S-VYASA, India's only Yoga University. She is also a Certified Professional Coach from the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and completed her ACC accreditation from ICF in 2018. Additionally, she obtained a Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate with a scholarship from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies in 2019.*

I have a deep desire for seeing a world where we can all live fully and freely, where each of us can feel – “I’m free to be me”. A world where all of us can reach our highest potential, with the full support of our body, in our endeavors.

*This is my belief:* The human body is an advanced machine, designed to last for over a hundred years, and support us in our

quest to achieve our highest potential, to be the best we can be. The miracle of life has given our body the ability to recover and heal itself. Ailments can be reversed, health restored, immunity built for future well-being. It IS possible to reverse the effects of aging, and to be healthier than we were 10 years ago!

This belief is not born out of reading books and having intellectual conversations, but by living this truth. As I look back, I see three distinct chapters unfolding simultaneously in my life.

### **Chapter one – From Yoga to Yog**

At the age of 23, while living my professional dream, as a consultant in India's premier management consultant firm, I had to reluctantly go to a Yoga ashram for a month, due to a debilitating back-pain, not solvable through any form of western or a range of alternative treatments including Ayurvedic massages, Yoga Aasanas and even Hypnotherapy. It was here that I discovered "Yog" (now known as Yoga) preserved in its true form. I learnt that Yog (literally meaning "union" or "harmony") is not bodily postures & contortions – but being connected to the body, vital energies, emotions, thoughts and inner joy. This connection took me to the root cause of my ailment – misalignment between my corporate work and my interest in the social sector. The way my body responded as I connected with this underlying cause was nothing short of miraculous. Since that time in 2007, my backpain has never returned, whether I'm swimming, running, trekking or working late. In the process, I also discovered a way to dissolve the conflict between my skills and interests – becoming a consultant in the social sector practice of the Firm where I worked.

I also got to know of thousands of cases of successful disease reversal through Yogic practices, documented & validated by modern scientific research. Over the next 10 years, this interest in well-being led me to dozens of explorations and readings. I also got trained formally and completed my Yoga Instructor's Course,

followed by a Post Graduate Diploma in Yoga Therapy from S-VYASA, India's only Yoga University.

## **Chapter two – From Diets to Ayurvedic & Yogic Aahaar**

Along the way, I also discovered the importance of *Yogic Aahaar* (food) in today's context. All around – there were so many diets being proposed – high-carb, low-card, high-protein, low-protein, paleo, keto, fruit, vegan... While these diets looked at the body's need for nutrients, it was rare to find practitioners who saw *Aahaar* in a yogic manner – i.e. considering the food's vital energies, the effect of combining foods in a meal, the role of our mind and emotions in Aahaar. I found the answer in Ayurvedic principles, with some tweaks in application, given our context today.

Applying these in my life led to gradually shedding the excess weight I had put on, my skin clearing up, and a feeling of freshness and lightness through the day. The result - today, I feel 10 years younger and 10 times happier! My belief became rock solid when I found my family members also reversing many health issues they had come to accepted as part of life, by applying the learnings. There was a gradual reduction in medications for hypothyroid, high blood pressure, diabetes and nutrient deficiencies which being taken for several years by my mother-in-law (our first patient, who whom I'm forever grateful!).

Also, I understood the failures of prevalent approaches towards well-being - traditional sciences have been oversimplified today – yog has become “yoga” and Ayurved has become “Ayurveda”. Yoga is understood as a series of asanas and praanaayaams, and Ayurveda is associated with Panchakarma massages and medications. Further, pure practitioners of these sciences have sometimes failed to adapt their “language” and practices to the modern context, or have retreated into secrecy to preserve the purity of their practice. On the other hand, “modern” western science suffers from an overload of information, conflicting

research, mounting evidence on the damaging “side” effects of medications and surgical interventions and multiple retractions of widely accepted “modern” research after being disproved by long-term studies.

### **Chapter three – Harmony within Mind and Emotions**

One more piece in my journey needed to be aligned – my personality led by my mind and emotions

The story of the first 33 years of my life had been a struggle of finding, and trying to attain my highest potential. For the longest time, I believed the way to do that was to become **free and perfect**. This quest for perfection drove me to become an over achiever at a young age – top 100 All India Rank in IIT, get the dream job as a management consultant, and head teams of 100+ people in my 20s. At a personal level, my desire was always to be “strong, confident, independent”, unlike the stereotypical women. This made me rise above “feminine” looks and emotions, take charge of my life, live life at my own terms and not as per societal norms.

Until I realized, that even after doing and getting all the above, I wasn't happy. The more I achieved, the more worthless I felt. The more I fought norms, the more I felt imprisoned. Externally, I had all the freedom and validations I needed – supportive parents, spouse, in-laws, friends, colleagues as well as resume value achievements to die for. But none of it made me feel perfect and free. As I cut needs, desires, relationships and external measures of success, by giving up the corporate sector and transitioning to a simpler life in the development sector, I was healthier and happier, but still felt imprisoned and unworthy. Until I realized the person holding myself back was me. And then I started fighting myself. Trying to change myself. Become a better human being. I meditated, travelled, attended workshops, read, tried to give importance to relationships, did whatever I could to “find myself”.

The process was tough! It was so hard to become a yogi – the more I tried, the harder it seemed!

And then I realized, where these 2 intense needs were coming from:

- The need for freedom, was actually the need to be free from my self-limiting beliefs, and to step into my Being, like a child. But I did not recognize that my need for freedom had become so intense, that I had become bound by it!
- The need to achieve my highest potential, which often manifested in a manic drive for perfection, stemmed from the insecurities I had developed myself, in my early childhood years and reinforced to myself throughout life.

I realized that to break this vicious cycle of wanting freedom and to be perfect – I had to step away from “wanting” to “being”. I am, right here, right **now**, free and the best I can be. I have that choice at every instant. The free child I want to find again, lives inside me. To access it, the place to start is **LOVE**. Love and acceptance for myself – my mistakes, wrong-doings, shortcomings, life choices, past, present, future.

#### **Chapter four - Domino effect**

Suddenly, the pieces started fitting together. I was doing the same activities, but the feeling and therefore the outcome changed. Writing became a way to facilitate a dialogue between my inner child and critic, workshops became an avenue to test out small changes in my being, work became a means to be connected to my fellow human beings, meeting family and friends became an avenue to share and exchange ideas, music a means to access and express the whole range of my emotions, reading a way to receive messages from the universe.



And then small changes in **outcomes** began to emerge – prose changed to poetry, restricted movements to freely dancing, doing to being, later to now. In the process, I re-discovered many **parts** inside me – the innocent inner child, my feminine part, my masculine strength, the parental critic who actually wants the best for me.

I began to **feel** things I had forgotten –

- Love for all parts of me, and others
- Joy at the lightness of being, externalized through creative expression
- Harmony within (mind, body, soul, emotions, masculine-feminine) and outside (relationships, nature)
- Freedom from myself
- Gratitude

Most of all, I learnt to get truly connected to the source of answers to all questions – my inner self / voice / wisdom / intuition. I was no longer alone, I always had a companion inside!

## **Chapter five - Unravelling the mystery**

With this being, I could unlock the secret which I had almost given up on being able to understand! Yes, I found the purpose of my life. Ma raison-d-etre. The reason for the birth of this earth-bound visitor, I. The most liberating part of this knowledge, was that I was but an instrument in the hands of God.

It started as designing a well-being program based on the principles of Yog and Ayurved, but adapted correctly in today's context, combined with relevant modern tools & research. In doing so, I feel blessed to have been able to combine all the skills in my

palette – engineering a well-being program, delivering measurable impact through management principles, incorporating best practices in adult learning techniques, knowledge of yog therapy, nutrition and life coaching. This led me to Swasth Yog Institute.

Now the goal for me has shifted. I'm no longer looking to be perfect, and free. Because I AM perfect. I am a child of God. And knowing that has made me free. Knowing my purpose, which seemed burdensome for a while, doesn't seem so anymore. My purpose exists, with or without me knowing it. My purpose, like my life, is not mine! I am an instrument of God or whatever other name we wish to give to the universal force that creates, sustains and destroys us. if I can enable the universe to meet its will through me, then I will have lived fully and freely, and also reached my highest potential.

# Resource People and Institutions

Sharing, not hoarding is the spirit of yog, of union. In this spirit, we have created the following YouTube channel with resources for well-being: <https://tinyurl.com/swasth-yog-institute>  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzP\\_q2xogzk4Zf7J56Mkn\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzP_q2xogzk4Zf7J56Mkn_g)

The channel contains videos of recipes as per Yogic Aahaar guidelines, Yogic practices (such as Praanaayaam, Aasan, Loosening Practices, Dynamic Practices), Guided Audios for Meditations, Talks on Spirituality, to name a few. All are welcome to use and refer these resources. Also, feel free to email us to get access to the templates and checklists used in the book.

Following organizations and people could be potential resources for you, as you chart out your journey. Their work has been a great support to us in re-discovering Yog, and we are forever indebted to them.

## **Yog, Ayurved & Body Wisdom**

- Isha Foundation
- Kaivalyadhama (Lonavala)
- The Yoga Institute (Santacruz, Mumbai)
- Swami Vivekaananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana
- Dr Robert Svoboda
- Dr Claudia Welch
- Suzanne Scurlock-Durana

## **Life Purpose Work**

- Mission Impossible Leadership Program

## **Emotional development**

- Leadership That Works (LTW)
- Indian Society for Applied Sciences & Behaviour (ISABS)
- Dr Wasundhara Joshi (*Changeworks*)
- Louise Hay
- Manav Sadhana
- Sukhvinder Sircar (Joyous Woman)
- Vikram Bhatt (Leadership That Works)

## **Yogic Aahaar - Food, Nutrition**

- Vaidya Atreya Smith
- Dr Vasant Lad
- PHC Clinic and Nutrition Science (*Bengaluru*)
- Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (*PCRM*)
- Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature (*SHARAN*)
- The Health Awareness Center (*THAC*)
- T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies

## **Spirituality**

- Art of Living
- Chinmaya Mission
- Isha Foundation
- Mukeshaaanand (<http://www.mukeshaanand.org/>)
- Ramana Maharshi Ashram
- Vipassana

# References

## Additional Reading – Books

- Textbook of Ayurveda Volume 1: Fundamental Principles by Vasant Lad
- Reinventing The Body, Resurrecting the Soul, by Deepak Chopra
- Food Rules, by Michael Pollan
- In Defense of Food, by Michael Pollan
- Ayurvedic Nutrition, by Vaidya Atreya Smith
- Cancer: A yogic perspective, by Sadhguru
- Food Revolution, by John Robbins

## Useful Websites

- Joyful Belly Website
- SHARAN website and programs
- <https://www.nutritionscience.in/>

## Additional Reading

- <https://krya.in/blogk/2019/05/a2-cows-milk-ayurveda/?fbclid=IwAR36RbdCcgI4kG8cGII8l-BjTOIsyMxNyTSFB6ykYZKbXtR0BtZqSiLChKs>
- <http://isha.sadhguru.org/blog/lifestyle/food/what-to-eat-making-right-food-choices/>
- <http://sacredseedyoga.com/ayurvedic-nutrition-the-importance-of-food-in-Ayurved/>

- <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/ayurvedic-concept-of-food-and-nutrition-2155-9600-1000530.php?aid=76428>
- <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-33-die-of-heart-attacks-every-day-in-mumbai-2042944>
- <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/Dieting-Does-Not-Work-UCLA-Researchers-7832>
- <https://food.ndtv.com/food-drinks/why-ayurveda-doesn-t-recommend-drinking-fruit-juices-with-meals-1800645>
- <https://www.thebetterindia.com/98604/india-eating-habits-food-50-years-culture/>
- <http://www.theyog.com/ayurveda-2/dairy/>
- <https://www.firstpost.com/india/indias-meat-industry-growing-rapidly-but-depleting-a-third-of-worlds-fresh-water-reserves-4360065.html>
- <https://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/vsk/vegetarian-starter-kit-calcium>
- <https://www.vivahealth.org.uk/bones/calcium-fact-sheet>
- A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SAMSKARA ON DIET WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MODERN PROCESSING TECHNIQUES, by Kulkarni and Indulkar UJAHM 2015, 03 (03): Page 46-49 (<http://ujconline.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/11-UJAHM-15194-Rv.pdf>)
- <https://www.banyanbotanicals.com/info/ayurvedic-living/living-ayurveda/diet/ayurvedic-food-combining/>

## Documentaries and Video Links

- How the world eats - Nutrition-ism -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47tChupPfmk>
- Result of it is Food Fads --  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZ75TbJnLDg>
- Nutrition-ism pitfalls –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO6466GX5TM&t=307s>
- Listening to the body –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4NUIfqgT9I>
- Documentary Film - Forks Over Knives  
(<https://www.forksoverknives.com/> )
- Documentary Film – “Food Inc”
- Documentary Film by PETA (Hindi)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVBsw43VZGM>
- Documentary Film on the state in India – by Bengaluru  
Brigade For Animal Liberation (English)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30bClsh3oh8>
- Re-birth of an Eagle -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQGHNr5fEeU&t=42s>