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# 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 कश्चिद्दुःभागभवेत् ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah  
Sarve Santu Niraamayaah |  
Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyant  
Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet |  
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.



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# Is this Book for me?

## *Is this what you want?*

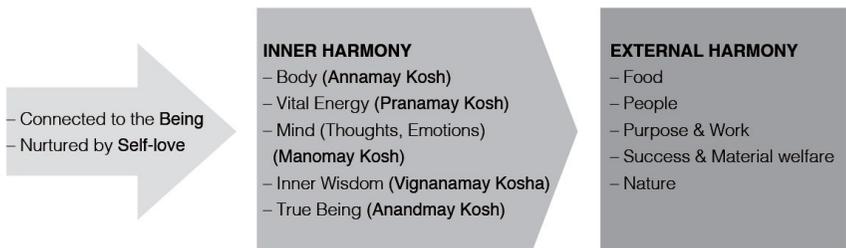
- Do you wish to enjoy true well-being – physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual and universal?
- Do you want your body and energy, mind and emotions, intuition and spirit to be in harmony? Do you want them to actively support you in living your potential?
- Do you want well-being to be your default state of being, and not a goal to chase frantically?
- Are you tired of chasing your health ‘goals’ through diet charts, calorie counters, supplements and superfoods?
- Do you want to cut through the clutter of conflicting dietary ‘tips’ you receive from myriad sources every day?
- 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 (calorie counting apps, Google search)
- 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. The importance of our mind is not addressed. Dieticians feed us fear and guilt. Gym instructors nurture strong bodies but 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 and energy, mind and emotions, intuition and spirit 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

## ***Our approach is to 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, intuition and spirit holistically
- Bridge the gap between the East & the West: Present ancient Yogic concepts adapted to today's context with modern tools
- Empower, instead of creating 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 (Swasthya): A tangible, measurable difference in health which YOU can perceive. A feeling of well-being.
- Independence (Swaraj): The knowledge and motivation to continue your journey to well-being independently.
- A healthy community (Sahparivaar): Tools to enable sustainable integration of changes in daily life, with your family and community.



## Reflection

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

### ***How to use Yogic tools for your journey?***

Like a mountain can be scaled through multiple routes, many tools can lead us to sustained well-being. This book is part of a series of books, each presenting a Yogic tool for your well-being. You may use one, or two or all tools. We suggest choosing the path that is most aligned to your temperament, and which you will be most committed to living in life. As without implementation, these ideas will only stay on paper and not translate into your physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual and universal well-being!

“Yog” means union, or harmony. All Yogic tools make the journey towards your well-being a harmonious experience by being joyful and therefore, sustainable. This is not a crash dieting or exercising or detox program to implement once and forget. This is a way of life! Always remember the Yogic essence, without which, Aahaar will become obsessive dieting, Vyaayaam will become 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.

**Special note on this book (From Obsessive Diets to Yogic Aahaar):** Nutrition is one of the most confusing topics due to a wide 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 complexity, we can keep our life simple, if we understand the principles for nutrition, which are universal in nature. Hence, we urge you to use 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 specifics may not be directly applicable, you can use the principles and your resourcefulness to find equivalents for your unique context and constitution.

## How to make the most of the book?

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. For you, this means that reading this book is only 10% of the impact. To get the other 90% of the impact, we suggest you do the following:

- Reflect: Reflect deeply after each paragraph before moving to the next. Compare the text with your past experiences, or your future experiences if you haven't been aware in the past. Maintain a journal to track your responses to reflections.
- Do and experience: Implement the learnings in your life! Do the activities or real-life experiments for experiencing concepts. More content is available on our YouTube channel. 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 3 months to start with. Using self-tracking formats and checklists given in the book and troubleshooting commonly faced issues.
- Enjoy: Most, most 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!**

## **Invocation**

*May I always receive abundance in Aahaar*

*May I approach the sacred process of consumption with peace,  
love and joy*

*May Aahaar nourish my body, mind and soul*

*May what is not nourishing be eliminated from me*

## **Chapter 1**

# **Preparing for our Journey**

### **Importance**

Any journey needs clarity on the destination and enablers to get there. Our intention is like a rudder to our boat moving towards health and joy. It helps us set direction and course correct where needed. The right enablers can make our journey smoother.

## Intention Setting

Food can be a slow poison and birth diseases or serve as a medicine and nourish us. The fact that you're here means that you wish to reach the latter state. Congratulations for embarking upon this journey! Let us start by setting an intention.



### **REFLECT & JOURNAL - 1.1** **Aspects of my health that can be improved**

**Body** (e.g., Sugar, BP, Cholesterol, Thyroid/Other Hormonal Imbalance, Weight, Skin, Reproductive issues, Respiratory, Musculo-skeletal or nervous or immune system)

**Vital energies** (e.g., Breathing, Digestion, Excretion, Menstruation, Hunger, Energy, Sleep)

**Mind** (e.g., Focus, Memory, Clarity, Creativity, Mental restfulness, Sharpness, Self-confidence)

**Emotions** (e.g., Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Expression)



## REFLECT & JOURNAL - 1.2

### Key shifts this year I intend in my relationship with food

What I eat (e.g., Foods to stop, reduce, replace or add)

When I eat (e.g., Timings for meals and snacks in-between)

Why I eat (e.g., Cravings, Family Habits, Social pressure)

How I eat (e.g., Mindfulness, chewing properly, Enjoying taste)

Where I eat (e.g., Dining Table, Cross legged on Floor, with TV)

How much I eat (e.g. Over/under, fixed quantity, as per appetite)

What emotions food evokes in me (e.g. Guilt, Joy, Anxiety)

 **REFLECT & JOURNAL - 1.3**  
**Letting go of our Intention**

Now, let us physically put the previous reflection aside while saying – ***“This or whatever else the universe has in store for me, I accept, and I embrace fully”***. Again, let’s let go of our intention while saying – ***“This or whatever else the universe has in store for me, I accept, and I embrace fully”***.

And take a deep breath out. Let it go. Let’s leave it to our inner wisdom and the outer wisdom of the universe - because they know, far more than us, what really is good for us. So, let us breathe out any tension of our body, any attachment to any of these intentions, any need to meet any of these goals. Just breath that out completely.

Let’s notice that after we breathe out, we breathe back in automatically. That is the nature of life. Life is going to find its way to us if we can just let go and allow it to. Breathing in is automatic, it’s the only way. We are designed to live life. So, let’s trust the process of life, and with this trust, cut any final cords attaching us to our goals.

What happens externally may not be in our hands, but how we feel about it internally is. So, as you turn the lens inwards, ask yourself this – “Behind all the goals that I have jotted down – How do I wish for my relationship with food to be? What shift do I really need, in the way I approach food?”.

**Note the first word that pops up. Hold on to that. Now, you can open your eyes – and write out this deeper intention by filling the blanks for yourself.**

**“The ingredient I wish to add in my relationship with food is  
\_\_\_\_\_”**

 **REFLECT & JOURNAL - 1.4**  
**Aahaar Habits Baseline**

**Name:**

**Date:**

Objective: You get to know your current food habits. This is for your use only, be honest 😊. First fill the first column for all questions. Then move to computing points. Calculate the total for each sub-section (greyed header) and then the overall total.

<b>EAT (Total _____ / 20 points)</b>	<b>0 point</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>2 points</b>
1. Ate food in the correct quantity, as per my appetite – neither less nor more ( _____ Times a week)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
2. Meals consumed mindfully: Without TV, phone, conversations- or laptop. At ease, chewed well, into a paste (Proportion of meals)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
3. Breakfast - Between 6 and 9am ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
4. Lunch - Between 11am and 2pm ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
5. Dinner - Between 6 to 9pm ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
6. Eating at approximately the same time every day (upto a deviation of +/- 1 hour) (Proportion of meals)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
7. Appropriate gap between meals from breakfast to dinner- Not eat anything for 3 hours post a meal with grains ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
8. Fruit - At least 2 hours post meal or 1 hour before meal ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
9. Sleep - At night maintain at least 1 hour gap post meal ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
10. Had liquids in the correct quantity, as per my thirst – neither less nor more ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7

<b>FOOD (Total _____ / 30 points)</b>	<b>0 point</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>2 points</b>
11. (including black) Tea /coffee/cold drinks _____ Times a day	$\geq 2$	1	0
12. Processed food - Namkeens, biscuits, chips, fried snacks, chocolates, etc (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 3$	1-2	0
13. Bread without natural yeast/ whole wheat or with any artificial substances (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 3$	1-2	0
14. Meals not cooked at home (restaurants, street food, etc) (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
15. Grains other than wheat/rice (e.g. ragi, jowar, corn, bajra) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
16. Fruits (1 serving) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
17. Vegetable Salad (1 serving) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
18. Quantity of cooked vegetable relative to grains (Proportion)	Less than grains	Almost same	Double or more
19. Type of oil (outside food, snacks, packed foods contain refined) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th refined	$\leq 1/4$ th refined	No refined
20. Type of salt (outside food, snacks contain refined, white salt) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th refined	$\leq 1/4$ th refined	No refined
21. Type of sweetener (outside sweets contain sugar) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th sugar	$\leq 1/4$ th sugar	No sugar
22. Type of rice (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th white	$\leq 1/4$ th white	No white rice
23. Alcohol (_____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
24. Tobacco in any form (_____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0

25. Stale ( $\geq$ 4 hours old) food ( _____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
<b>MOSTLY PLANTS (Total _____ / 50 points)</b>	<b>0 point</b>	<b>3 points</b>	<b>10 points</b>
26. Egg ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
27. Fish ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
28. Chicken/ pork / beef / any meats _____ Times a week	$\geq 2$	1	0
29. Milk (including in tea) ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
30. Dairy products - curd/ buttermilk/ butter/ ice cream/ paneer / cheese/chocolate & other items with dairy ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>_____ / 100</b>	

## Enablers for our journey

With power comes responsibility. For our health too! If we wish to merely get rid of pain, we can take painkillers or countless therapies available. But if we wish to restore our body's innate healing capacity, and get in the driver's seat of our journey to well-being, the 7 C's below will enable us:

1. **Cultivate a Routine:** Changing long-standing habits takes time (A mandala / cycle of 40 days for a new habit to settle). During this period, let us create 30 minutes a day. Further, as per Ayurved, our body loves routine (e.g., *Dincharya* with predictable meal timings), even though our mind loves to wander in the name of freedom. Let us calendar out key activities such as purchasing, cooking, meals and learning. Afterwards, the new routine gets effortlessly integrated in life.
2. **Community Support:** Aahaar is a social phenomenon and impacts people around us – family, work, friends. They will need to adjust with a “new” us. Let's ask them proactively for their support. Instead of trying to influence them to change, let us first “Be the Change”, and ask them to support us.
3. **Clear the Kitchen & Fill with Healthy Options:** To break out of old patterns, it helps to clear the existing stock of unhealthy snacks and ingredients for cooking. We may give them away or lock them if we wish to revert to them! It is critical to replace each item with a healthier alternative, to retain joy with health. Let us not wait for ingredients to get over and dump them into our body in the meantime. Let us treat ourselves with love
4. **Courageous Action:** It is far easier to stay in the comfort zone that our body, mind and people around are accustomed to. A part of us may resist due to fear, but change is the only way to evolve and grow. So let's be bold and try what we previously didn't think we could do!

5. **Curb fanaticism:** The topic of food is complex and can birth never-ending questions and research to find the best foods for our health, the most trusted sources to procure, the best time to eat, the best recipe to preserve nutrition, etc. The harsh reality is that in our busy lives and the way foods is grown and processed today, nothing can be perfect. Let's start somewhere, than waiting for impossible perfection. If we find ourselves delaying actions due to overwhelming questions, let us ask ourselves – what are we really feeding ourselves, through these obsessive thoughts? Food is only one lever for transformation, not the only one. For sustained wellbeing, let us also pay attention to how we move and relax our bodies, get sleep, handle our thoughts and emotions, heal through leisure and nature, and connect to our spiritual Self.
  
6. **Consistent follow-through:** The damage to our body over the years takes time to reverse. A plant won't grow at double the speed if given double the water. Likewise, the body has its own pace of self-healing and typically starts responding within 3 months. During this period, we need to maximize our implementation of recommendations and troubleshoot obstacles as they arise. If we're not seeing results, before rejecting this new lifestyle, let's ask ourselves – Did we consistently implement at least 90% of recommendations? Did we give ourselves enough time to heal?
  
7. **Compassion:** As humans, we will have lapses in implementation along the way. Instead of falling into a spiral of guilt, shame, sadness or anger, let us nourish ourselves with compassion. We don't excuse ourselves from constant changes, but set realistic goals, take small steps and celebrate the tiniest of positive outcomes.

**REFLECT & JOURNAL - 1.5**  
**Next Steps for my Commitments to my Journey**

Cultivate a routine (30 min/day, timetable to buy, cook, eat, learn)

Community support (conversations at home, work, friends)

Clear the Kitchen and Fill with Healthy Options (e.g., oil, sugar, salt, jaggery, rice, other grains, fruits, packaged snacks)

Courageous action (any bold goals I haven't set previously)

Curb fanaticism (perfectionist questions I will drop)

Consistent follow-through (troubleshooting problems, maximizing implementation)

Compassion (celebrating small successes, gentle when we lapse)

**A Courageous Leap I want to take!** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Chapter 2**

# **Yogic Aahaar**

### **Introduction**

**We are what we consume.**

## Meaning of Aahaar

According to Yogic sciences, Aahaar is beyond what we eat, i.e., our diet. It fuels and nourishes us physically, energetically, mentally and emotionally. It is wholesome and thus beyond the reductionist concept of calories and nutrients. Aahaar includes:

	<p><b><u>Ingredients:</u></b> Season, region and quality of inputs (e.g., soil) available for ingredient to grow</p>
	<p><b><u>Cooking:</u></b> Vessel used, mode of cooking, kind of heat used, the emotion with which food is cooked</p>
	<p><b><u>Before eating:</u></b> Environment, company, mood, time of eating, gap between cooking and eating</p>
	<p><b><u>Eating:</u></b> Food combinations, sequence of consumption, quantity consumed, pace of consumption, posture, our internal state</p>
	<p><b><u>After eating:</u></b> Activities post eating, gap between consecutive meals</p>

## Role of Aahaar

As per *Charak Samhita*, living beings are made up of food, and hence the first sheath of our existence is called *Annamay Kosh* (*Ann* means food). The digestive process (*Agni*) transforms what we eat into us. In the yogic culture, food is revered and consumed with gratitude as its intrinsic life energy (*Praan*) is transferred to us and fuels our desires and actions. Some roles of Aahaar are:

### Physical Well-being:

- 1) **Growth:** Food provides the material for a child's growth into an adult, and any subsequent physical weight gain.
- 2) **Energy:** Food is the fuel for our activities.
- 3) **Repair:** Even without physical or mental activity, we need food. This shows an additional function of food – internal repair. Our cells are constantly dying and re-generating, and the material for the new cells comes from food.

### Mental and Emotional Well-being:

- 1) **Pleasure:** Consuming food is a multi-sensory experience – we smell aromas, taste flavors, see colors, touch textures, and even hear sounds such as the crackle of a chip! This is pleasure beyond the functional aspects.
- 2) **Our thoughts and emotions** are impacted by food. Some foods cause depression, anxiety, violent thoughts and some alleviate these. The Yogic words *Tamasik*, *Rajasik*, *Satvik* describe both mental temperaments and types of food.

### Spiritual and Universal Well-being:

- 1) Traditionally, the entire process of engaging with food, from the farm to our stomach was seen as sacred. Every Aahaar choice we make is an opportunity to live as per the Yogic codes of behaviour (*Yamas*) Truth (*satya*), Non-violence (*ahimsa*), non-stealing (*asteya*), non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*), and restraint (*brahmacharya*).
- 2) Our reverence for, and compassion towards plants, animals and environment also impacts the ecosystem's well-being.

## Impact of Aahaar on Health

Traditional and modern philosophies concur that Food is Medicine. Aahaar is a major level for our well-being as we consume food in some form, at least 3 times a day, have been doing it since birth and will continue to do till we're alive. We may skip exercise, sleep, meditation, journalling or leisure time, but we rarely skip food!

**Whatever we eat, whether an apple or chicken, is assimilated and “becomes us” within 3 days.** So, Aahaar can either nourish us, or it can cause diseases. Today, we are facing many health concerns, as individuals and as a society, due to incorrect Aahaar:

- The USA, despite its prosperity and a massive health budget (5 times more than defense budget) faces a huge health crisis - 40% of Americans are obese, about half of them are taking some form of prescription drugs, and almost 25% of American 4-year-olds are considered obese. This could be the first generation of children that lives lesser than parents.
- In developing countries too, over 60% of deaths are due to non-infectious, lifestyle diseases. 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 deposits from incorrect food consumed.

As per Yogic science, a disease enters the physical body after crossing the mind and vital energy sheath. In the body, its first manifestation is in our digestive process (*Agni*), which transforms all that we consume. As per Ayurved, we are old as our *Agni*. Improper digestion due to poor *Agni* leads to accumulation of toxins (called “*Ama*” or “*Aam*”), which causes illness.

## Repairing Past Damage

Through the ages, there are countless examples of people who have healed themselves from diseases, be it cancer, heart ailments or diabetes through changes in Aahaar. The benefits range from better managed symptoms to reversal and even enhancement of energy and zest for life. **Aahaar can empower us to reclaim our own health!**

We might wonder how it is possible to reverse several years of damage. This is due one of the roles of food – repair of cells. The cells of our body have limited life spans

- Bone cells live for 6-9 months.
- Red Blood Cells (RBCs) live for 120 days
- Our skeleton recycles every 3 months.
- Skin cells live about two or three weeks.
- Our stomach recycles every 5 days

Even the raw material of our DNA which stores memories of millions of years of evolutionary time changes every 6 weeks. We recreate most of our body once a year. If we continue the same damaging food patterns, it retains the same illnesses. By feeding ourselves nourishing material, we can birth healthier new cells.

**So, instead of feeling guilty, sad or hopeless about our poor food choices in the past, let us embrace 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!



## Practical Example

Let us understand our healing process through an analogy. How does one repair the road of a busy highway?

- Stop or divert Incoming vehicles
- Gather resources for such as budget, manpower and equipment to repair activities.
- Use new material to re-build the road

Likewise, if our body is damaged, we need to:

- **Stop stressors aggravating the condition** – 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** – Use supporting resources such as Yogic Vyaayaam (Aasan, Breathing & Loosening, Relaxation, Grounding), Affirmations, Meditation, Prayer, Time in Nature, Connecting with our Joy etc.
- **Provide material to re-build.** Consume a Yogic Aahaar.



## REFLECT & JOURNAL - 2.1

### Repairing my Body

What aggravating stressors will I stop or reduce or cut-off? (foods, thoughts, relationships, media, etc)

What other repair activities can I do? (Yogic practices, meditation, affirmations, prayer, time in nature, connecting with joy)

## Yogic approach to Aahaar



### Real life observation

How many of us have experienced, or know someone who has gone through a stressful diet experience? 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!

“Yog” means union, or harmony. All Yogic tools make the journey towards well-being a harmonious experience. As we commence our journey, let us remember the Yogic essence, without which, Aahaar will become obsessive dieting.

- 1) **(W)holistic:** Yogic Aahaar does not take a reductionist or extremist approach. If food was only the sum of nutrients, we would've found a way to sustain life on pills by now! Yogic Aahaar recognizes the subtler dimensions of existence beyond the gross body, and hence picks Aahaar that also nourishes our vital energy and mind. It recognizes multiple factors that influence what we eat, such as our underlying emotional state, and attempts to address the root instead of superficial hacks. It also looks holistically at traditional and modern knowledge.
- 2) **Harmonious:** The road to Yogic Aahaar takes us out of our comfort zone without compromising harmony with our life circumstances – time and budget available, social context of family and community.
- 3) **Empowering:** Yogic Aahaar does not foster dependence on external information and specialist advice on diet charts, calories, nutrients, supplements, and superfoods. No other species on earth seeks diet advice! Yogic Aahaar empowers by deepening our connection with the wisdom of our body,

being aware of its response to various foods and eating intuitively with this connection. Our inner intelligence that birthed and sustains life is superior to any artificial intelligence.



### Real life observation

Children and babies have an inner knowledge of when they are hungry and when they must stop eating.

When animals are unwell, they retreat into a corner and stop or significantly reduce their food consumption until they get better.

In times of illness (cold, fever, diarrhea, etc.) our body gives us similar signals such as reduced hunger or not enjoying the taste or smell of food. This is for the digestive system to get rest and use the life energy (Praan) saved for the body's self-healing processes. On the other hand, driven by fear, at such times we often forcibly eat food or feed it to our loved ones.

- 4) Peaceful, Loving and Joyful:** Sometimes, in blind pursuit of our health goals and from a place of dislike for our present self, we end up waging a war against ourselves (*Rajasik* approach). We focus too heavily on willpower, which finally collapses, taking us back to old cravings and patterns. We may also do the opposite by not keeping awareness or taking any action, from a place of lack of trust in ourselves and external situations (*Tamasik* approach). The gentle, *Satvic* Yogic approach helps us stay aware, step into our power and take purposeful action with peace, love and joy. After all, in Aahaar these emotional states are what we nourish ourselves with!

For all these reasons, Yogic Aahaar is not crash dieting or detoxing to implement once a year. It is a **sustainable way of life that leads to health and joy!**





## Key Points

We are what we consume

The meaning of Aahaar goes beyond what we eat

Food plays multiple roles – growth, energy, repair, joy and mood

Food is a major lever for health – it can be a medicine, or poison

We can draw support from our intrinsic self-healing mechanisms to repair the damage done through years of non-Yogic Aahaar.

Yogic Aahaar is (w)holistic, harmonious, empowering, filled with peace, love and joy. It is a sustainable way to health and joy.

Adopting a Yogic Aahaar as a lifestyle requires commitment to Courageous Action, Community Support, Cultivating a routine, Consistent follow-through and Compassion.

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## **Chapter 3**

# **Food Philosophy**

### **Introduction**

At a time where we are flooded with dietary 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 awareness for Aahaar. Restaurants and grocery stores have “Healthy” options, but there are varied definitions for what is “healthy” (Sugar-Free, Fat-Free, Gluten-Free, Dairy-free, Preservative-free). To compound the complexity, new exotic ingredients and recipes (quinoa, chia seeds, smoothies, granola bars) are added to our menu of choices. However, now that **food is a hot topic, this makes our decision-making process confusing**. Who or which external source are we to believe? Let’s first look at where we get our information from.

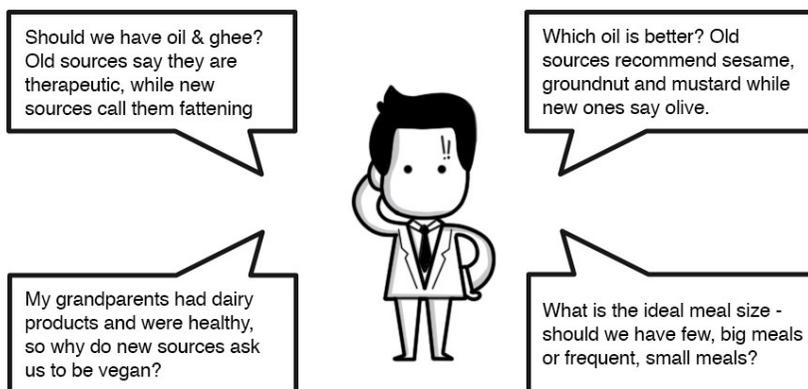
 <p><b>Old sources</b></p>	<p>This is the knowledge of Ayurved and Yog. Even though most of us haven't read these texts, we know of it through tips passed down through our family, from our parents, grandparents and from the wisdom of the village elders. Therefore in the same country there is so much variation in foods – In India, people from Tami Nadu eat steamed <i>idli</i> or <i>dosa</i> for breakfast while those from Punjab eat heavy <i>paranthas</i> with <i>ghee</i>.</p>
 <p><b>New sources</b></p>	<p>These are tips passed on through science-backed articles in newspapers, health websites, blogs, movies, videos, books, online resources, workshops and even <i>Whatsapp!</i> Here the information is a mix of expert advice (from doctors, nutritionists and scientists) as well as the experience of enthusiasts.</p>

**While these sources may agree, often there are conflicting recommendations,** leaving us confused and overwhelmed.

## Further, recommendations of new sources change constantly.

- Coconut oil was villainized a decade ago and now it is deified
- Ghee was replaced by Vanaspati (“Dalda”), and is back now

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



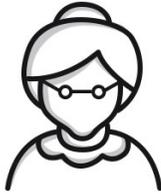
- Butter was replaced by margarine (think “Nutralite”), till it was found that margarine raises the risk of death by 34 per cent
- Rock salt was replaced by iodized table salt, and now revived

## Why know how to make choices?

Making choices on Aahaar is harder today than any time in the past. We need to first build a philosophy for making choices. **A food philosophy empowers us to make aware choices in the present, and not be overwhelmed in the face of new information in the future.** Once we know “how” to choose, “what” to choose becomes much easier.

Unfortunately, today, no single internal or external source of information can be relied upon blindly. **To build a philosophy, we need to be aware of the merits and de-merits of all sources of information.**

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



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

- They are practical, based on the experience of elders who have lived much healthier lives compared to our generation.
- They sustain across time and over several generations. Ancient texts were written about 5,000 years ago and were orally transmitted even before that.
- The knowledge has been successfully tested across a wide range of geographies (e.g., mountains, deserts, plains, coastal areas in in the Indian sub-continent)
- The wisdom is based on a holistic view of life (5 sheaths of existence called *PanchKosh*), and consumption (*Aahaar*)

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

- The needs of the body have changed now as we have moved from farming and intense work to sedentary lives.
- Often, we do not understand the rationale behind advice. Superstitious beliefs may get mixed with pure knowledge
- We prepare food very differently now, right from sourcing ingredients to processing methods. E.g. Milk today is very different from what was consumed 200 years ago.
  - Earlier obtained from cows raised by our own families or someone 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 sunlight and fresh air, and were loved and revered. Now, cows are confined to sheds and managed by workers without personal connection.
- Milk was first fed to the calf, and excess was for humans. Today, almost all the milk is used directly by humans
- Milk was consumed fresh. Now, it 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: Research-backed**

- The advice is from experts who have engaged in research
- The information explains the mechanism of action of the recommendations, and hence seems more reliable
- The advice seems to be working for many people

#### **Drawbacks: Flawed research methodology and incentives**

- The research is mostly performed on animals and may not transfer to humans
- The approach is reductionist and hence incomplete. It sees nutrients and calories instead of the holistic human experience, and only sees food instead of the holistic act of consumption.
- The recommendations from one context are promoted sweepingly as a panacea. E.g., Recommending Mediterranean diet in cold North American climate

- Often times, research studies are conflicting
- Research often does not look at long-term changes
- Empirically observed recommendations are made without a thorough understanding of the rationale
- The current modern understanding of the human body, food, the process of life is incomplete, and so is the research
- Certain food items are pushed by lobbies with vested commercial interests. Often, the research is funded by these companies trying to maximize profits.

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



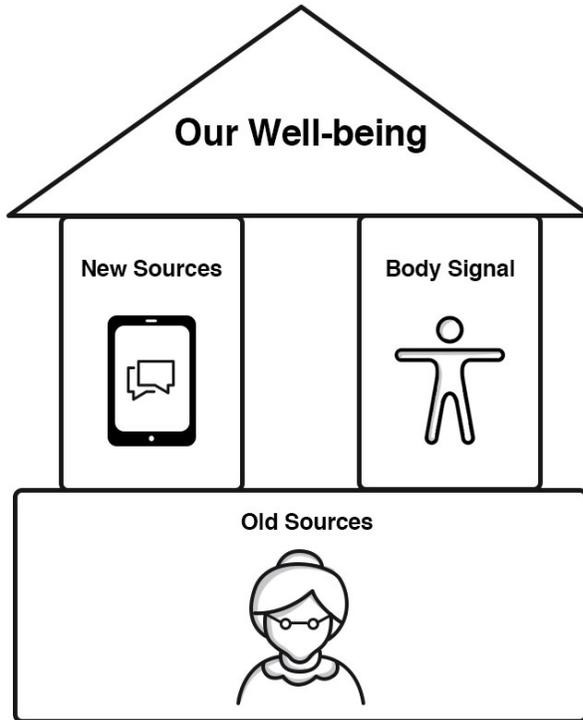
#### **Positive Qualities:**

They tell us what is specifically suitable for us now, factoring in the complexities which are difficult for the mind to assimilate for decision making e.g., our genetic make-up, body type, season, region, current status of body and mind. This makes the resulting decision very specific to us. E.g., Peanuts may be good for health, but an individual may be allergic to them. Watermelons give a cooling effect to most people but 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 signaled the presence of energy and minerals (in fruits and vegetables). This is now exploited by companies to “engineer” addictive foods. French fries and coke are one such addictive food combination which exploits our affinity for salty and sweet foods.

## Our Food Philosophy



In the spirit of listening to all sources, without believe them blindly, we use the following food philosophy at Swasth Yog Institute:

- Use the old sources of information as our foundation, as they come from ancient, time-tested, deep and holistic wisdom
- Adapt these recommendations as per today's context (e.g. understanding that our great-grandparents had rock or sea salt, not Iodized Table salt made in a factory).
- Use new sources of information to understand the mechanism of action of traditional recommendations in a language we understand (e.g. look for research to understand why traditional unrefined oil is healthier than modern refined one)
- Developing our own intuition and ability to connect with our body to understand what works for us.

**In summary, 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, let us stay as close to the old sources and trust our body to tell us if that decision doesn't suit us!

The above philosophy can be distilled into a simple recommendation, which leading journalist, Michael Pollan, describes as - **“Eat Food. Mostly Plants”**. This simple statement has been vetted by leading Ayurvedic experts such as Robert Svoboda. We'll examine each word in detail subsequently. For now, let's remember this mantra!

### **Developing our 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, with many conflicting and changing recommendations, birthing confusion in decision-making

Having a food 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. We need to understand the merits and de-merits of all sources

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

Old sources can't be relied upon blindly as the context has changed (lifestyle, ingredients, processing), sometimes the reason is not explained, and superstitions are mixed with wisdom.

New sources are reliable as they are Research-backed - easy to understand, advice from experts, seem to be working for many.

New sources can't be relied upon blindly as they have a flawed research methodology such as animal testing and not accounting for regional differences and drawing conclusions in a short time span, nutrient-based, calorie-based and not holistic. Finally, they are often pushed by lobbies with vested interest

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

# Chapter 4

# Eat

## Introduction

**How we eat** is as important as what we eat. By learning how to eat, we can tune into our body's wisdom. We will feel satiated and light, enjoy eating without over-thinking, and be able to listen to our body's signals to make correct choices.

Only humans need external support with various aspects of eating – what, when why and how much. In the hyperactivity of our minds, we have lost connection with our body’s inner wisdom. The key to re-tune into our body’s wisdom is to eat consciously.



### 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 chips over the piece of paper, so 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. We can't burn all foods, but by learning to listen to our body by learning how to eat, we will be able to know the truth of what we consume, in the moment, instead of experiencing symptoms afterwards. Hence, we can make better eating choices as we are eating.



## Real life observation

Why are babies given mashed foods, instead of solids? The answer seems obvious – food needs to be chewed before it enters the stomach, and in the absence of teeth, we mash mechanically.

But we often forget to apply the same rule for ourselves and end up gulping down solid foods! Chewing is the first part of digestion to transform food. 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. Let us “eat like a baby”!

## 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

### **#1: Be present in the NOW while eating**

We should be fully present, in the now (*Ath*), i.e., the act of eating, without distractions such as TV, reading, work, talking, music etc. We often overeat in a restaurant as the loud music, conversations and visual distractions disconnect us from our internal signals.

Eating is like praying with gratitude because of the sacred process of food lending its life energy to us. Focusing on our multi-sensorial experience and emotions as we eat is a joyful, healing, meditative process. If we close our eyes the next time we are eating, we will become aware of newer flavors in the same food!

- Keep all distractions aside
- Quieten mind through meditation, humming, breathing, etc.

- Prayer of Gratitude
- Eyes closed when possible
- Full attention to senses and emotions while eating

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

Let's savor each bite before moving to the next. As we attempt this, we may become aware of the habitual involuntary, hurried movement of our hands to the next morsel before the current one has been chewed. This provides time for the satiety signals to reach our brain, preventing over-eating. As we eat slowly and become open to listening to the signals of our body, we're likely to get a burp during a meal. This a wonderful sign from the body that we can stop eating! We may currently burp excessively (due to imbalance in our body), or not at all (as we've started suppressing it subconsciously). As we come back to balance, we will discover the beauty and power of this feedback mechanism!

- Don't be in a hurry to gulp
- Don't move to next morsel before chewing

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

We should chew all our foods, including liquids till they are completely mixed with saliva. Difficult-to-digest foods such as beans are to be chewed until the taste disappears. Easily swallowable foods such as rice need care to avoid gulping. Digestive enzymes and bacteria in saliva enable 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, as dividing the same quantity of food into many pieces increases the effective surface area which meets our taste buds. We get more taste per morsel, which gets lost in gulping down!

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

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)

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 than 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 that we had coconut and jaggery together. How much of it do we remember?



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

This principle of Listening to our Body can be applied to Aahaar, and beyond...Our body is much smarter than we think it is! It gives us many signals, which we can listen to, and honor, instead of suppressing.



## Consciousness Post Eating

Eating right is also about developing our awareness to how our body reacts to unhealthy foods after the meal – a few hours later, the next day, or after several days or weeks or months. What kinds of symptoms have we experienced in our body to know the impact of unhealthy foods?

- **Immediately afterwards**, we may feel full or drowsy
- **A few hours later**, we may experience acidity, 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 regular consumption could lead to weight gain, chronic acidity, digestive and excretory issues
- **Years of such habits** will result in a range of chronic ailments, which may seem unrelated (e.g. PCOD)

To eat well and in tune with our body's rhythm is our basic responsibility towards our body. Once we learn to eat right, we will find this responsibility is actually a joyful journey.



How we eat is as important as what we eat

Tips for Conscious Eating / How to eat:

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

# Chapter 5

# Food

## Introduction

Two centuries ago, the question of “what is food” would have been laughed at. Whatever was edible, whatever people consumed was Food, as simple as that!

But today, in the name of food, we are unknowingly consuming harmful “**Food-Like substances**”.

Hence, we need to learn how to distinguish between food and food-like substances.

## An Explosion of Food-Like Substances

Food has a long 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 many other types of products that don't go through this simple journey.

Online and physical grocery stores now have thousands of products. Each one tries to differentiate itself through colors, flavors, ingredients and attractive packaging. We find bright blue colored drinks. Our oil is so refined that we can't guess its ingredients without reading the label. Even our home-made lemon-water is nothing like packaged lemon water. Food made at home from scratch doesn't last more than a few days even when kept in the fridge. But packaged foods stay for months together. Earlier, only grandmother's pickles used to last that long!

Why is it so? To make food items look nicer, feel tastier, last longer and cost lesser, the Food industry replaces the original food and its life energy (*Praan*) with food-like substances instead.

Before the World War, it took days to make bread, because wheat (close to the wheat plant) was allowed to rise with the help of bacteria. Now, factories mass produce "flour" by removing the outer casing of the wheat plant and using synthetic yeast. No wonder gluten allergy is rising, particularly in the West.

Despite the variety available, we now have deficiencies and a host of short and long-term health problems, due to *Food-like substances*. We wouldn't buy chemicals and eat them, so why must we have them in our food?

Pause and reflect:

What guidelines do you use, to determine what is "Food" or not?

## What is Food?

To distinguish food from food-like substances, acclaimed food journalist Michael Pollan has provided a set of “Food Rules”. These have been vetted by leading modern Ayurvedic practitioners, such as Dr Robert Svoboda. As strange as it is to have to learn this, this is our current reality!

We have shortlisted 4 key guidelines from Michael Pollan’s seminal work, which can cover most of the cases. As we read below, let us remember to understand these in spirit, instead of blindly following the exact letter.

Before we start, let us take a quiz. If we go to an average grocery store to purchase the following, which of the below are “food”?

1. Cookies for diabetics with NO ADDED SUGAR	2. Tomato ketchup	3. Packaged fruit juice	4. Potato Chips	5. Brown Bread
6. French fries from any fast-food outlet	7. Chocolate	8. Honey	9. Iodized Salt	10. Microwaveable Popcorn
11. Fruits	12. Oil	13. Sugar	14. Vegetables	

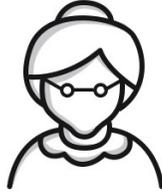
**Note:** We will refer to various popular food brands. The intention is not to single out a specific brand, but to increase awareness about what we eat today, which cuts across brands.

The answer: Fish, Vegetables, Fruits, Eggs, Meat

Not even Honey, Iodized Salt, Sugar and Oil! Let us see how

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

1. Items that our great-grandparents would recognize



2. Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (a) ideally 3-4 ingredients (b) No "added ingredients" like: HFCS, natural flavors or colors, added sweetener (c) No claims of being healthy like: low-fat, non-fat)



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



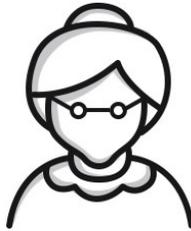
4. Items closest to their natural form (minimal processing)



Let us now understand each of these guidelines in depth!

**#1: Items that our great-grandparents would recognize:**

**Not parents, not grandparents, but great-grandparents!** When in doubt, it is best to see what our great-grandparents had, as:



- **They didn't have massive factories churning out Food-like substances.** They cooked delicious food using what was grown in farms. The processing was minimal. Their grains came from the fields unwashed and with the husks on!
- **Their diet was suited to the local climate and geography.** North Indians ate more rotis, South Indians ate more rice and Coastal residents ate fish. Indians consumed cauliflower, instead of broccoli, millets instead of European oats, etc.
- **As their recent descendants, our body too is prepped for 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!

When we buy something, let's ask ourselves if our great-grandparents recognize this? Almost all packaged, factory-made foods would not pass this test.



## Practical Application

**Many items that we think our great-grandparents used, were actually of a very different nature. E.g.**

### **Sugar**

#### **Consumed today:**

- Pearly-white sugar, even jaggery is yellow or light brown
- Sulphur-treated
- Crystallized sugar

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

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

### **Salt**

#### **Consumed today - Table Salt, Iodized Salt**

- Flawless white
- Factory manufactured
- Pure sodium chloride
- Additional iodine
- Mini granulated / powdered (dissolves easily)

#### **Consumed by great-grandparents - Rock Salt (*Sendha Namak*), Sea Salt (*Jaadaa Namak*)**

- Slightly colored (not due to impurities but mineral content)
- Derived from natural sources (rocks or sea).
- Many other minerals beyond NaCl (e.g., calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium)
- Iodine not added separately
- Roughly granulated or small rock like (takes time to dissolve)

## **Oil**

### **Consumed today**

- Refined (heated to high temperatures)
- Thin and flowing
- Almost no smell, key ingredient unrecognizable
- Lighter color
- Longer shelf life
- Higher quantity needed in cooking

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

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

## **Honey**

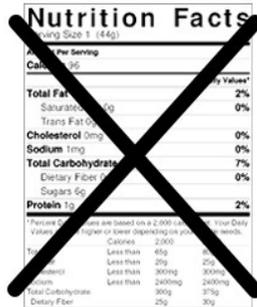
### **Consumed today**

- Light yellow colored
- Heated to high temperatures (which renders it a slow poison, as per Ayurved)
- Relatively thin consistency (doesn't crystallize)
- Very sweet taste

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

- Dark colored
- Raw, directly consumed from comb
- Thick (crystallizes when exposed to air over time)
- Slightly pungent taste

**Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (a) ideally 3-4 ingredients (b) No "added ingredients" like: HFCS, natural flavors or colors, added sweetener (c) 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. All we need to do is to read the labels behind the foods we consume.

We do not need to know the 1000s of Food-like substances appearing on food labels! The simple 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 millions in revenue to be made by companies selling them! 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) “Added ingredients” or names we cannot pronounce, or numbers are 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 likely to not be?

- **Unhealthy ingredients are replaced with something worse!**  
E.g., Diet or Sugar-free products replace sugar with artificial sweeteners which are linked with diseases like cancer.
- **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 new composition, chemicals are added to retain flavor, color or other attributes.** E.g., Brown breads require additional “conditioners” to keep the softness intact despite replacement of refined flour with flour.
- Further, the “healthier” variations are often several times more **expensive** than their counterparts.



### Real Life Application

- Did you know that Kelloggs Chocos has synthetic Caramel color INS 150d (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)

Let us remember that while reading labels is necessary, it is not sufficient for decision-making as it does provide vital information such as (a) Processing technique used (e.g., oil goes through many chemical processes) (b) Sourcing of ingredients (e.g. whether they are appropriate for our geography). Hence, we need to use all guidelines together.



## Practical Experiment

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

- First, note down the health claims made by the company, to lure customers. These claims are evident on the packaging itself. E.g., NutriChoice 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

Read 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
- Drinks for children, such as Bournvita, Malt drinks
- Fruit Juices
- Noodles

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



An item with “life”, i.e. *Praan* typically decomposes soon after death - A leaf wilts, animal carcass smells and fruits go bad if kept for long. By extension, **what lasts long is likely to have less Praan**. Think of substances such as plastic, metal, nylon.

**Short shelf life is also likely to indicate that the item is natural and does have any chemical preservatives.** This is why tomato chutney or mango juice extracted at home lasts lesser compared to equivalent packaged brands.

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



**The further we move away from the natural form, more the item moves from food to “Food-like”.** With processing, key nutrients are lost, the natural ratio of nutrients in the food gets distorted, and what was originally healthy becomes unhealthy.

Examples of multi-step processing (closer to natural form ideal)

- 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 guidelines**

These guidelines are meant to be applied in spirit, and not blindly.

**They are guidelines and not rules, as they too have exceptions!** E.g., some food items such as dry fruits, pickles and wild raw honey are an exception to guideline #3 as they naturally last longer (*Note that even though the honey available in the market has a long shelf life, it does not meet the first guideline of being similar to what our great-grandparents consumed*).

Further, we may need to adapt at times. Given the globalization of our palettes, we are exposed to cuisines our great-grandparents wouldn't recognize. Also, many foreign foods are now grown in India. While native foods are ideal, we can have foods traditionally grown in climates similar to ours. If the great-grandparents of the

respective country recognized the food, we could consume it. There are many nuances though. Locally grown produce is far better than imported produce, which has a high carbon footprint and low Praanic and nutrient value (produce is harvested very early to avoid spoilage due to ripening during transport).

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

Excess processing removes nutrients. No wonder supplements are a multi-billion-dollar industry today – we have taken them out from our food! For e.g., in creating refined flour from whole wheat

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

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.

Food-like substances are addictive, causing us to consume them in unhealthy quantities. They are specially designed to simulate flavors and smells we have evolved to like. Nature has designed us to naturally gravitate towards sweet and salt. Sweet flavors (as in fruits) indicated energizing foods, while salty flavors (as in vegetables) indicated minerals. This ensured our nourishment.

Today, this “formula” is exploited by the Food Industry through combinations such as pizza and coke or “Happy Meals” with burger, french fries and coke. Remember the Lays Potato Chips' ad campaign in India - “No one can eat just one”? How many of us have been overcome by cravings and eaten beyond our capacity at a restaurant, or with packaged items? Our body is being fooled by chemicals and we can no longer rely on its signals alone.

 REFLECT & JOURNAL - 5.1

**1. What is your key insight?**

**2. What do you want to start applying these guidelines to common foods?**

**3. What do you want to research, explore and experiment with more, to understand better?**

## Application of Food Rules to make choices

*X denotes the item does NOT meet the guideline*

*Denotes the item meets all guidelines*

*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)
Packaged cookies	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
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 juice
Iodized Salt	X		X	X	Rock or sea (Sendha / Jaada) salt
Sugar	X		X	X	Powdered

Item	Grand-parents recognize	Labels: Added Ingredient	Short shelf life	Close to natural form	Real “Food” Replacement (In India)
					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 unknowingly consuming unhealthy “Food-Like substances”. So for the first time, we need to learn to distinguish food from food-like substances.

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

- Items that your great-grandparents would recognize
- Items that do not need labels or advertising of any kind (a) ideally 3-4 ingredients (b) No "added ingredients" like: HFCS, natural flavors or colors, added sweetener (c) 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 guideline 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 factories churning out Food-like substances.
- Their diet was based on local climate and geography
- As their recent descendants, we are prepared for similar foods

While applying this guideline, let us 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 flavor, color, 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 life energy (*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 minimal processing, 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:

- Using water – Cleaning and Washing, Soaking, Steaming, Boiling, Blanching
- Using heat – roasting, boiling, grilling, frying, smoking
- Manual cleaning – such as sieving, washing with water, or adding some substances
- Others such as Fermentation (Korean *khimchi*, South Indian *idli*, Gujarati *dhokla*, breads), utensils for cooking (react with food in a certain way)
- The process of digestion and assimilation itself is 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 color, flavor 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 colors) 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 color. The refined oil is passed through clays like Bentonite to remove color 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 colorless, 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 6**

# **Replacements Part 1 ("Food")**

### **Introduction**

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

We can make this transition smoother through equivalent "food" replacements, which retain the taste with health!

## Implications of “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

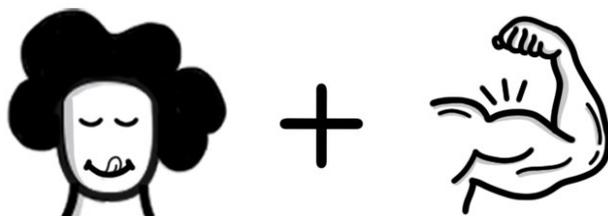
### **Reduce**

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

## Retaining Taste with Health

**We eat to live**, i.e., for our growth, sustenance and repair. Along with this, **eating also gives us pleasure**, which is why many of us may identify with the statement “We live to eat”. The sight of a beautifully served plate, smell of various spices, touch of food on our tongue, and the resulting taste from many flavors bring joy.

But sometimes, these two functions of food – health and joy - seem to be in conflict. The common belief that healthy food isn't tasty, and tasty food isn't healthy creates the difficulty of choosing one over the other. Most diets fail ultimately, as the unmet need for taste takes over the health goal. However, yog is not about conflict, but harmony. It is possible to move from “OR” to “AND”. **Aahaar can be healthy AND tasty!**



Let us first remember how by “eating” correctly, i.e., being in the present, eating slowly and chewing properly – we experience the true nature of food, and often find that healthy food is tasty, while food-like substances aren't as tasty as we earlier found them to be.

If we find ourselves still craving our favorite “food-like substances”, we can remember this simple trick: Our craving is often not for the specific food, but some specific attributes! Let us deconstruct what our mind really seems to want through our tongue:

- Flavors: salt, sweet, sour, bitter, astringent, pungent...
- Textures: crispy, soft, rough, creamy...
- Forms: liquid, paste, solid...
- Aromas and Colors...

**Aahaar becomes joyful when we learn “Mindful Substitution” to retain attributes of flavours, textures, aromas and colors!**



## Practical Application of Mindful Substitution

One of our biggest guilty pleasures as a society, which almost everyone is unable to leave, despite knowing about ill effects is tea. We yearn for tea at various times during the day – waking up in the morning, in the drowsy afternoon hours, with a snack in the evening or even when bored! The desire to have it and offer to others increases on some occasions such as a guest coming home, during the rainy season (accompanied by a fried savory), during winters, after consuming oily or heavy food, after a late night, when we are travelling, the list goes on... 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 its attributes:

*Tea = hot + strong flavored + sweet + drink*

Impact of Tea on us: We come alive, feel fresh and active

A wonderful replacement with similar attributes and impact is home-made herbal tea. Not green tea, black tea, or imported tea. Simply prepared using items already at home (1) Fresh Ginger (2) Lemon (3) Mint (4) Cinnamon (5) Cardamom (6) Tulsi (7) Lemongrass (8) Clove (9) Dry Ginger (10) Turmeric....

This herbal tea known by various names in India (*Kehva* in Kashmir, *Kaadhaa* in Maharashtra). Each region has a unique flavor using the locally grown, regional spices and ingredients.

The replacement process is fun – we can try a different flavor each day using various combinations and quantities of ingredients. We can try different ways of preparing (a) Ready, ground spices (b) Fresh ingredients (c) Boiled in water (d) Put in a thermos with hot water as an infusion. We can carry it in a thermos, joining people having their tea or offering ours!

**Note:** Green tea with honey is a new fad. It is important to note than 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 flavor. 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)

Similar to tea, many replacements exist for coffee too (using Chickpeas, Sukku coffee)!

### **Create your Healthy and Tasty Menu of “Food”**

We highly advise having a ready menu and stock of tasty “foods” for times when we’re craving “food-like” substances. Keep the following criteria in mind while preparing this menu:

- Based on the “Food” guidelines (see Annexure)
- Items are either 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 are tasty, and something we 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*)

It is highly advisable to have a list and stock of replacements handy, so that in moments of “weakness”, we can remind ourselves that there are many options available to us!



## REFLECT & JOURNAL – 5.1

### Healthy and Tasty Menu – At least 10 options per category

Breakfast	Drinks
Snacks	Sweets / Desserts

## KEY 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 ( <i>Sendha Namak</i> ) OR Black Salt ( <i>Kala Namak</i> ) OR Sea Salt (non-iodised)	
Refined Oil	Cold-pressed Oil ( <i>Kachchi Ghaani</i> )	
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	

ITEM	REPLACED WITH	REMARKS
	Proso Millet Kodo Millet Barnyard Millet Sorghum (Jowar) Barley (Jau)	
<b>STOP</b>		
Packaged, processed foods containing Artificial colors, flavors, sweeteners, Preservatives	Directly use the item which adds the flavor instead!	Labels claiming “natural” flavors are also not “food”
Products with added ingredients e.g. added sugars, HFCS	Replace with home-made products (e.g ketchup with chutney)	
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	

## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON REPLACEMENTS

- Grains – Stop Cookies, Refined flour and its products such as bread (including market-made whole wheat bread)
- Quantity of vegetables in a meal 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!

## 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.

## 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)

### NOTE ON OIL

Almost everyone thinks they use less oil in cooking. Firstly, this understanding is incorrect. “Less” is a subjective term. Across hundreds of interactions with people from all walks of life, we have found that people consume 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 we are trying to consume less oil these days. Isn't this another contradiction between old and new sources of information?

**Unlike popular belief, oil is NOT bad. The issue is with the quality of oil and not 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, today's oil is a food-like substance for many reasons – it is heated to high temperatures as part of refining, and subject to processes such as bleaching and de-odorizing using

chemicals such as hexane (a petrochemical). These processes transform this wonderful food into a slow poison.

We recommend switching to cold-pressed oil, traditionally called *Kachchi Ghaani* oil in India. The quantity of the oil consumed will automatically reduce due to the high thickness of this oil.

However, if we are unable to make this switch for any reason, it is better to stop consuming refined oil altogether. There are many simple ways to cook without even a drop of such poisonous oil. We can still complete 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.**



## Key Points

As we adopt a Yogic Aahaar, we may find ourselves craving our favourite “food-like substances”. However, the trick is in realizing that when we have craving for these items, it is not the food we’re missing, but .... some specific attributes! Let us deconstruct what our mind really seems to want through our tongue:

- Flavors: salt, sweet, sour, bitter, astringent, pungent...
- Textures: crispy, soft, rough, creamy...
- Forms: liquid, paste, solid...
- Aromas and Colors...

Aahaar becomes joyful when we learn “Mindful Substitution” to retain attributes of flavours, textures, aromas and colors!

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.

## **Chapter 7**

# **Mostly Plants**

### **Introduction**

The first statement “Eat Food” – needs to be supplemented by a second one “Mostly Plants”.

## Meaning of “Plants” and “Animal” Products

Many definitions exist today. A large proportion of India's population is vegetarian, but consumes dairy. In many cultures in the West, egg and fish too are considered part of a vegetarian diet. The Vegan movement stays off all animal products, including non-foods (leather), and those used for medicinal purposes (honey).

**As per our definition of “plants” here, ALL animal-based food products are excluded.**

### Plants

- Fruits
- Vegetables (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)

## Subjectivity in “Mostly” Plants

**The meaning of “mostly” is subjective.** Many Indian vegetarians may think that they consume mostly plants. Non-vegetarians who consume animal products for a few meals each week may also assume that they are consuming “mostly plants”.

Further, the interpretation of “mostly” has changed significantly in the last 100 years. This is confirmed by surveys and research:

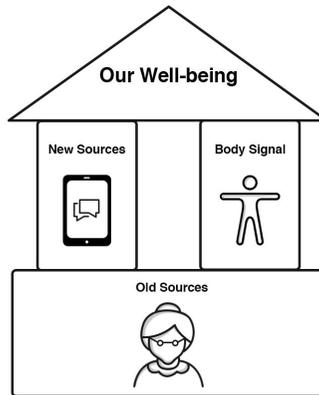
- India’s consumption of eggs, dairy and plant produce has increased more than two-fold from 1961 to 2011 (50 years). Post the “White Revolution” in India, animal-based products became much more easily available and cheaper. As a consequence, we now consume eggs and dairy in many forms in our daily life – 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.
- 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.

Let us remember that **what we now consider “not much”, would have been considered “a lot” by our great-grandparents.** Based on this interpretation itself, we need to reduce the quantity of animal products consumed by at least half!

## Evidence for “Mostly” Plants

### Why “Mostly Plants”?

We saw before how our food philosophy 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”:



### Source #1: Old Source of Information

Multiple illustrations indicate that as per cultural and religious practices and lives of our ancestors, we consumed mostly plant-based food up until our great-grandparents’ time.

- **Animal-based products are traditionally used on festive occasions** (e.g., Eid, 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).
- **Most long-standing civilizations such as India, China, Greece** had a predominantly plant-based diet, heavy on vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds. Apart from dairy, meat was had sparingly. Even coastal communities in India traditionally didn’t have fish every day. Animal-products (especially meat) were traditionally consumed as a part of a larger meal with

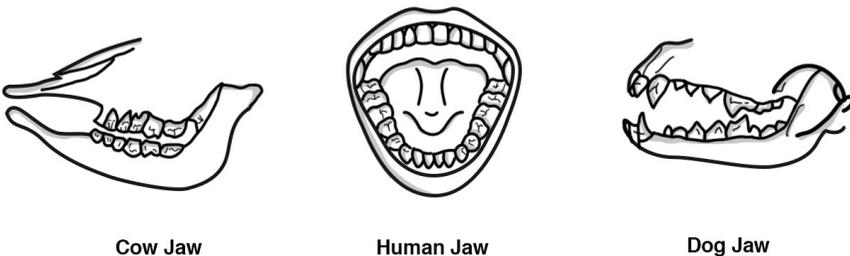
many other constituents such as vegetables, gravy, rice etc. This is contrary to our modern “KFC buckets”

- **Animal-product based communities living in extreme situations** such as in Alaska and some tribes have been found to have a significantly higher incidence of deaths due to cardiovascular diseases.
- The Hindu stories of Lord Krishna stealing butter as a child, though he belonged to a family of cowherds seem strange to us today as almost every family keeps a packet of butter at home. If it is available so easily, it's the last thing a child would need to steal! This indicates 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 *Yagya*, 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
- **Traditionally, we did not take milk in large quantities from cows.** 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). The first right of the milk was of the calf. What was left was consumed by the family. Milk production levels peaked at 1.5 – 2 months post-delivery and then steadily decline. Since milk would be available for a limited time and quantity, it was converted into longer lasting products such as butter and ghee.

**A word of caution:** While traditional sciences such as Ayurved recommended dairy products for their health and medicinal properties, we need to acknowledge the huge change in context of how these products are produced today.

## Source #2: 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 herbivores more than carnivores, making chewing meat harder. We can consume meat only because we cook it.



- **Digestive system design:** Carnivores have intestinal tracts that are 3-6x their body length, while herbivores have intestinal tracts 10-12x their body length. We have the same intestinal tract ratio as herbivores. What would happen if meat stayed in our long digestive tract for up to 48 hours, as it's harder to digest than plants due to its complexity? 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.
- **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
- **Animals are “denser” sources of nutrients than plants**, as they are higher up on the food chain and evolutionary

complexity. Due to this, we need not consume a high quantity of animal products. Little will suffice

- **Complexity of animal foods does not make them efficient sources of nutrition.** Simple sources of nutrients make digestion easier as the human body finally has to break down all food. Animals synthesize plant proteins into animal proteins. While plants have proteins in their simplified form (amino acids) which our body can assimilate more easily. When we consume animal proteins, our body has to work hard to break them down into plant proteins again, before assimilation. Thus, while animals are nutritionally efficient, their assimilation requires a lot of work by our body, in addition to wasting precious resources of the planet spent in raising the animal.

### Source #3: New Sources of Information

- **Global 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 since 1927), until the German occupation in 1939. Germans confiscated all livestock and farm animals for their own troops. This forced locals to consume plant-based foods. In the 6 years of German occupation, death rates came down to the same levels as 1927 (in half the number of years!). When the occupation ended in 1945, meat and dairy were introduced back into the diet and death rates rose to earlier levels in less than 3 years!

- **Animal Experiments:** In an experiment conducted by Dr Colin Campbell in the US, 2 groups of rats were fed varying amounts of casein – the main protein found in dairy products. 1 group was fed 20% casein, and the other 5%. Over the 12 week study, rats eating the higher casein diet had a greatly enhanced level of early liver cancer tumor growth, while all rats eating 5% casein has no evidence of cancer whatsoever. As a step further, in another experiment, astonishing results were found that as the % casein fed to a group of rats was changed over 3-week intervals. Tumor growth in the same rats increased as % casein increased (5% to 20%) and decreased as % casein decreased (from 20% to 5%).

This information was revealed 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.

- **Several recent studies** have documented the reversal of a vast range of health issues through a plant-based diet. The *Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine* is one such body that is supporting hundreds of thousands of people across the world to manage and reverse diseases.

**A word of caution:** Most research studies and doctors still support animal-based products for nutrients such as protein and calcium. Before getting confused by this information, let us remember the vested commercial interests at play, which are funding the research and government policies across the globe.



## 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 (100 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, Complexity of Animals over Plants, Assimilation Complexity
- 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 8**

# **Behind the Animal Food Revolution**

### **Introduction**

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

## Animal Food Production – A Revolution

Traditionally in India, meat was considered a status symbol because earlier only Raja-Maharajas could have it regularly. But today, almost everyone has access to affordable animal products, in a large part, due to the White Revolution. In the West too, meat and dairy are now multi-billion-dollar industries, and their scale makes animal products far cheaper than fruits and vegetables.

**Such a drastic jump in production and reduction in cost have been enabled through automation, mechanization and aggregation.** Animals are now reared specifically for their meat and dairy. These large farms are like factories where the product is the animal, through an incredibly efficient process. A factory supervisor in the US shared proudly in 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 of 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”*. In India too, dairy and animal farming are now highly organized – through co-operatives (such as Amul) and companies (such as Godrej, Patanjali).

A visit to the factories gives an impression of high standards of hygiene and systematic production. **But we need to go behind the scenes to uncover the sad truth behind this “revolution”**.

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

**The industry has transformed the way animals are raised.** In 1950, chickens were raised and slaughtered in 70 days, but it became only 48 days by 2008. In the last 50 years, they are now raised and slaughtered in half the time but are twice as big. This is not a miracle to applaud, but a cause of grave concern.

“Modern” factory farms are no different from torture chambers. The industry’s political lobbying has got legislation passed to ban the common public from seeing these farms, to hide the truth. Thanks to investigative journalism of social workers, we have a glimpse into the nasty conditions inside all animal farms, be they for chicken, pigs, cows, poultry or any other animals

1. **Dust** flying everywhere
2. **Indoor farms** with no sunlight or fresh air, reducing vitality
3. **Cramped conditions** with no place to move, worsen the fat to muscle ratio and accelerate disease transmission. Cows are tethered tightly, leading to many ailments.
4. **Feces** everywhere. Chickens defecate where they eat and hence end up consuming their own waste. With no place to move, cattle standing ankle deep in their manure all day long.
5. Milk is extracted using automated machines, which often stays on even after the udder has been emptied, leading to **bleeding**, which too, may get mixed in the milk.
6. Their **rotting carcasses** may lie unnoticed for days as the huge numbers make it virtually impossible to spot dead bodies.
7. Feed in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) is **grain rich** (e.g., corn), hence cheap and increases weight fast (produce is sold by weight). The diet of cows has led to **mutations of E. Coli** which are hard to treat.
8. The feed contains **antibiotics** to counter the diseases birthed in unhygienic conditions. When a medicine is consumed daily

as “food”, bacteria become drug resistant. No wonder our consumption is increasingly making us antibiotic-resistant.

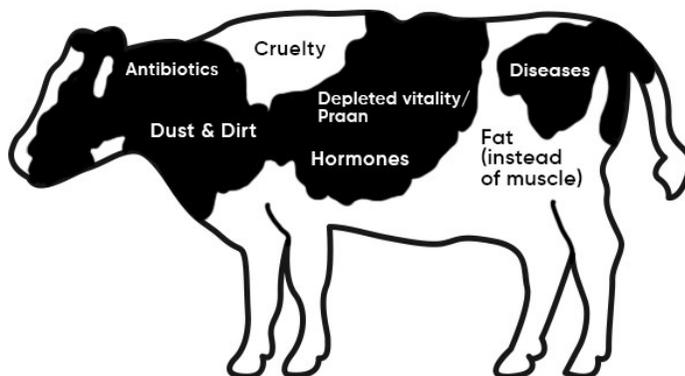
9. Animals are loaded with **hormones** to make them bigger and their meat more tender. The fat content of factory farmed chickens is much higher than those previously raised in real farms. Their bones and internal organs can't keep up with the rapid growth, or carry their own weight, and hence they can't take more than a few steps without falling. Female cows are meant to produce milk only when they are breastfeeding, but now they produce it through the year through hormones.
10. **Genetic modification** based on taste and eating preferences of people (e.g., re-designed breasts of chicken).
11. In **fast-paced** factory lines (400 animals an hour slaughtered mechanically), how can one ensure all residue is cleaned off?

We've only covered physical aspects so far. As per Ayurved, we take in the emotions and vital energy (*Praan*) of that which we eat. Animals in these farms are so disrespected that they live horrible lives. Their vitality is strongly depleted. Such cows live for only 6-7 years compared to the 18 years in natural circumstances.

1. Cows are treated as reproduction machines and **impregnated every year**, keeping them pregnant for ~7 months each year. Within 3 months of giving birth, they are impregnated again
2. Cows **don't get to care for their calves** as a mother would. The calf is separated from the mother at birth, but kept at a viewing distance so that the cow continues to produce milk
3. Animals are handled by undocumented or low-paid workers, **without a connection** or compassion. They are transported in big trucks with cages before they reach the place of slaughter, a reminder of human right violations by dictatorial regimes.
4. Animals are slaughtered or milked **brutally and mechanically**, without a hint of gentleness and gratitude.

The stress hormones produced in their bodies in this state impact the quality of the eggs, milk and meat that we consume.

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



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

1. Milk lies in **open containers**, exposed to infections and dirt
2. **Male calves** are often sold to abattoirs where they are inhumanly treated and used for leather.
3. **Oxytocin**, a schedule H drug (which can't be used without the prescription of the doctor) is rampantly used to increase the milk production, including in all leading co-operatives.
4. **Artificial impregnation** is done by untrained people using unsterilized instruments, putting naked hands inside animal genitals and by hitting them so they remain still.
5. Degradation during **transportation**, given the poor cold storage facilities and unhygienic handling along the way.

Today, most children and even us adults see how chicken comes in a neat package, or that milk comes from a shop in a packet. We as end consumers have become very disconnected from the source of our food. Let us go behind the scenes and see the truth.

### **Further degradation happens during the journey of animal products from the source to our plate**

- Usage of **foreign, hybrid** cows instead of regional, desi cows, whose milk we've evolved to consume.
- **Mixing** milk from many cows, buffaloes and even goats together, across dairy products. Mixing of produce across animals, breeds and species is a byproduct of scale, and may seem normal to us, but not recommended in Yogic wisdom
- **Pasteurization:** Heating milk to very high temperatures and doing so twice (once in the factory, once at home) destroys many properties of the milk.
- **Homogenization** where large fat globules are broken up to keep the cream from separating from the rest of the milk.
- **Low-fat** versions of milk available widely are far healthier, and possibly carcinogenic, as per Ayurved
- Milk **reaches us after several days** of milking, while as per Ayurved, it should be consumed within one day.
- **Packaging** in tetrapacks and plastic pouches leads to microplastics leaching into our food

This is not accounting for adulterated and chemically manufactured milk in the market. This is referring to the “fresh and pure” milk sold by reliable brands or the friendly milkman.

**To summarize, animal products that we consume today are not what our great-grandparents had. Not only are we consuming a much larger “quantity”, their “quality” is much**

**worse. The milk, eggs, meat and fish we consume today is not food, but food-like substances filled with toxic chemicals.**

### **Why Stop Animal Products only?**

*We may wonder – In today's world, chemicals are used everywhere. Plants are fed artificial fertilizers and pesticides, fruits are ripened with chemicals, vegetables grow in polluted soil, air and water. So, why only stop consuming animal products?*

We can remind ourselves of some key facts here:

- 1) Far greater physical damage - dust, feces, cramped conditions, indoor facilities without sunlight or fresh air, blood, rotting carcasses, unbalanced grain-rich feed with antibiotics, hormones, genetic modification, fast but ineffective processing.
- 2) Far greater mental and emotional damage through frequent impregnation, depriving animals of motherly instincts, inhumane and impersonal treatment, brutal slaughter
- 3) Further pre or post harvesting damage through foreign breeds, mixing produce, pasteurization, homogenization, low-fat versions, time from harvest to consumption, plastic packaging
- 4) As per natural design, animals are further up in the food and evolutionary chain. Just like they are “denser” sources of nutrients, they are also denser sources of toxins accumulating in their bodies over decades. Animals consumes vast amounts of plants for their growth, and thus, even small quantity of animal products feeds us a large amount of toxins from two sources – plants consumed and fed to animals themselves.

This is backed by research studies that have found that meat, poultry and dairy products contain the major source of pesticide residues in the Western diet.

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

We might be wondering - Drinking milk has been an unquestioned practice for hundreds of years, until 20-30 years ago when the vegan or plant-based diet movement started gathering momentum. We have consumed ghee, curd and buttermilk for centuries with ANY problem! How does this align with our traditional wisdom and cultural practices? In fact, Ayurved recommends dairy for health!

Our reason for recommending a plant-based diet is NOT because milk is bad, but because **what we are having today is NOT milk.**

It is a result of selective breeding of high-yield varieties in large numbers, fed unnatural fattening feeds, pumped with antibiotics and hormones and milked dry. Then subjecting the "white fluid" to homogenization, pasteurization, toning, preservatives and being delivered to our homes stale. Everything about this process is wrong for the poor cow and for us, the end consumers.

No wonder that lactose intolerance is becoming a big problem today! However, a narrow view of this problem leads to sweeping recommendations such as milk itself is unhealthy and unethical. We find the same fear creeping in for other foods as well, such as wheat being blamed for gluten. If we get 'real milk', let's have it!

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 considered fit to offer to the gods during 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 color, 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 chapter shares some guidelines on what people can do, in general.

## Impact of Consuming Animal Products

- **Physical Health:** “Food-like” animal products are causing a wide range of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, PCOD/menstrual issues, hormonal imbalance, obesity, digestive issues, skin issues, auto-immune disorders, osteoporosis, cancer to name a few
- **Mental & Emotional Health:** The disturbed thoughts and emotions of animals being tortured impact our own wellbeing. Wide ranging studies (such as with criminals in prisons and with children in schools) have shown higher levels of violent thoughts and actions in those consuming animal products.
- **Spiritual Health:** The industry is hiding the truth (*satya*), engaging in violence (*ahimsa*), stealing from calves (*asteya*), making money that doesn't belong to them (*aparigraha*), and encouraging us through advertising to give in to our cravings and conditioning (*brahmacharya*). Supporting the industry by purchasing and consuming their products makes us complicit.
- **Universal Health:** The animal industry uses large quantities of water to grow, feed and use the animal. The methane released in the digestive tract of cattle is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emission. Large-scale operations such as CAFOs are destroying the balance of natural ecosystems.

### What can we do?

Given the money involved, the animal industry is incentivized to lie. But the truth is out there, we only need to look for it. We need to break out of our past conditioning. There are many reasons for a plant-based diet. If we are still unsure, this is a good time to ask, what is at the root of our hesitation?

**If we are still in doubt, let us ask ourselves...**

- What source are we basing this one? What is their source of? Can the ultimate sources be trusted? What is their interest?
- How did this work traditionally? Our great-grandparents had lesser quantities, and of a much better quality.
- How is our body designed?
- What is the new research saying?

It's okay to have many questions and doubts – doubts on the content presented, challenge finding tasty replacements for old habits, ensuring nutrition, getting the family's acceptance, memories attached to certain foods. Behind every question and doubt is a resistance to change. Change can be scary, and it's okay to have fears. But let us not give in to our fears. The power to choose is ours. Our choices will define us.

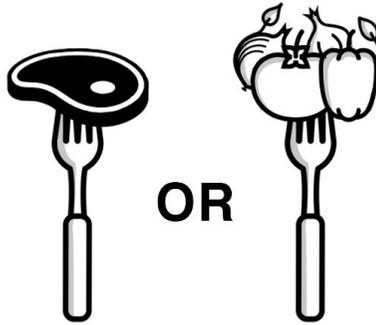
**Our recommendation is for all of us experiment, experience and then decide. We suggest being on “Only Plants” for 6 months.** Note that this says “Only” and not “Mostly” plants. Our body needs time to repair the damage caused. Further, we can't get harmed or get a deficiency in this short a time span!

If we are aware and consistent

- Within 6 weeks, we will observe positive changes in our body, energy, mind and emotions.
- Over 6 months, we will observe reduction in many symptoms
- In 2-3 years, many ailments can be reversed, as has been experienced across the world.

After a few months, we can re-introduce animal products slowly in what we eat, in amounts & form appropriate for us (90-95% plant-based products and supplementing with some animal products).

**Instead of relying on anyone (even the authors of this text or our trainers), let's rely on ourselves. See how our body, energy, mind and emotions respond.**





## Key Points

The industry has changed the entire way that animals are raised. There is drastic jump in production and reduction in costs. 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 unregulated dairy farms is probably worse.

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. They are food-like toxin cocktails

Animal product impact all aspects of our well-being – physical, mental and emotional, spiritual, universal

The best way to experiment for ourselves is to move to “Only Plants” for 6 months. Note that this says “Only” and not “Mostly” plants. Our body needs time to repair the damage caused.

## **Chapter 9**

# **Replacements Part 2 (“Plants”)**

### **Introduction**

Having our nutrition, replacement and sustainability concerns answered can enable a smooth switch to a plant-based diet.

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

As switch to “Only Plants”, we are likely to be asked questions by enthusiastic and concerned family, friends, and sometimes even medical practitioners! This is because our conditioning based on **advertisements, popular sayings, our education and even that of doctors have led us to believe that animal products are a must for health.** The US saw ad campaigns such as “Got Milk” and “Milk Life”. Indians growing up post the White Revolution may remember the jingle “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). As we sang these catchy jingles and read textbooks extolling the importance of nutrients from animal sources, our beliefs on what we should consume were getting altered.

Most research and advertisements have been funded by vested commercial interests of animal product lobbies, with high political clout (e.g., strong presence on USFDA Board).

Being able to address the common concerns of people around us will help us be more confident in our choices. Further, by evaluating the perceived benefits of animal products, we can make an informed 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: (a) Calcium (b) Protein (c) Iron (d) Vitamin B-12 (e) Vitamin D-3

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 see the world age standardized hip fracture rates for women per 100,000 in countries across the world, as a good proxy for osteoporosis, caused to calcium deficiency. There is a startling co-relation – countries with the highest animal product consumption (e.g., in Europe) have much higher fracture rates than 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, a fact that is not considered in the reductionist nutrient view is the acidity of such foods - eggs, fish, meat, milk & milk products, sugar, salt, tea, coffee, cold drinks and alcohol. Their acidic nature and high protein content leeches calcium reserves in the body. To neutralize the acid, the body needs to draw from the 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 100gm than cow's milk – sesame seeds, almonds, chickpeas, figs, mustard green, pistachio, tofu, sunflower seed

## **Nutrient # 2 – Protein**

**Facts to bust myths:** Have we heard of anyone having protein deficiency? What is it even called?! Answer – Kwashiorkor and Marasmus. The reason we haven't heard of these before is that they are prevalent in countries with severe malnourishment such as Africa. Which is certainly not the case with us!

**Explanation:** In fact, 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! Compared to 26% from beef, 23% from chicken and 12% from eggs. On an average, 14% of calories from plants come from proteins. (tomato 14%, cucumber 24%, mushroom 38%, Cauliflower 40%). Protein are everywhere! Plant-proteins are non-acidic, and easier to synthesize
- Other sources – pumpkin seeds, peanut, almonds, pistachio, flaxseed, cashew nuts, soybean, lentils (*daals*)

Due to our conditioning, we may still be worried about not getting enough proteins. A powerful reminder by Vaidya Atreya Smith – *“Several studies and researchers have tried to construct a diet deficient of protein. They have failed on every occasion except one, that of basing a diet primarily on refined sweets like cakes, donuts, jams and jellies. If a person is eating a whole-food diet or a diet based primarily on whole foods, it is IMPOSSIBLE not to get enough protein.”*

### **Nutrient # 3 – Iron**

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 leafy vegetables, jaggery, cooking in iron vessels (never add lemon or other citric acid, and take other precautions for maintenance and to avoid rusting)

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

B12 is manufactured by bacteria and yeast. The reason for meat and milk to have plenty of B12 is because they are full of bacteria because they are decaying substances. It is also present in organic fruits and vegetables. However, our extreme sanitation these days is leading to increased deficiency of Vitamin B-12 – pesticides in food, chlorine in water, food is microwaved, lack of contact with earth. Due to the far-reaching consequences of Vitamin B12 deficiency, annual testing is highly recommended.

**Tips to supplement:** B12 supplements (oral or injected) along with Fermented food such as Korean *khimchi*, South Indian *idli and dosa*, Gujarati *dhokla*, finger millet malt, etc

### **Nutrient # 5 – Vitamin D**

Like B12, D3 is the other important micronutrient to not ignore. It is difficult to get enough Vitamin D through food sources (unless fortified). Its main source is sunlight and the key reason for the prevalent deficiency whether or not on a yogic aahaar is staying indoors or blocking sun exposure by clothes or sunscreen.

**Tips to supplement:** Vitamin D3 supplements. Exposure to sunlight, not necessary sun's heat. The guidelines (duration, time of the day) vary based on the region, weather and our skin color (level of melanin).

- In India's tropical weather, the advice is from 9-11am or 4-6pm for 15-25 minutes when the sun is not directly overhead.
- In California, the advice is 11-2pm, 3 times per week

The sunlight should fall directly on our skin - face, neck, arms, hands, feet. Hence, these body parts should not be covered by clothes or sunscreens. We wait till our skin feels warm and has a pleasant tingle. We ensure we don't stay long enough to burn!

To satisfy ourselves, we can search for dietary charts on sources of nutrients. **We will find that as long as we consume the full variety of plants available, we will thrive!**

**“But the vegetarians aren't healthy either”...**

Yes, it's 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 consume food-like substances
- Because even if they “eat food”, their food basket is often very narrow. They do not consume a rich, diverse Yogic Aahaar

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

- Various types – Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Beans & Dal, Nuts & seeds, Spices
- Various parts – leaves, roots, seeds, fruits, flowers, seeds
- Various forms – raw (salad), cooked or steamed, dried (e.g. dry fruits)
- Many colors – a rainbow of blues, yellows, reds, greens, browns due to the presence of different nutrients.

This does NOT mean that in our over-enthusiasm, we consume all these types, parts, forms and colors every day. Or obsessively track the diversity of our food basket is. We do not need all nutrients daily – we have reserves! We can keep awareness to consume all types over a week or month, which is enough.



## REFLECT & JOURNAL – 9.1

### What can we add to diversify our Aahaar?

Types – Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Beans & Dal, Nuts & seeds, Spices	Parts – leaves, roots, seeds, fruits, flowers, seeds
Forms – raw (salad), cooked or steamed, dried (e.g. dry fruits)	Colors – a rainbow of blues, yellows, reds, greens, browns

### Retaining the taste of Animal Foods

The internet and resources at the end are full of ideas to recreate the taste of our favorite animal foods with plants!

However, care should be taken to stick to traditional and regional recipes, modes of cooking and food combinations as far as possible. Eg., Soymilk has become popular these days as a replacement to cow milk. Soy is traditional to South-East Asia, but it is mostly processed and consumed as Tofu, very rarely directly. This traditional processing was for a reason! Research is now finding that excess of soy leads to excessive consumption of “soy isoflavones”, linked to cancer. But coconut milk has traditionally been used in coastal regions, indicating it is much safer to use.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Possible New Sources</b>
Butter	Cashew, Peanut, Almond, Coconut, Sesame
Milk	Plant-based milks including soy, coconut, almond, cashew, corn, oat, peanut, rice, sesame
Buttermilk	Above sources, especially tender coconut
Paneer	Tofu
Cheese	Nuts, seeds, and legumes
Cream	Cashew, other nut butters
Yoghurt	Plant-based sources
Ghee	Nuts, seeds, and legumes such as cashews, coconut, peanuts, and sesame seeds
Ice cream	Plant-based milk, 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 powder	Almond milk powder

## Yogic Dairy Products after 6 months

We do NOT promote long-term “veganism”, as it comes with its own health issues. After 6 months, small amounts of milk and buttermilk and a good amount of ghee as recommended. The following criteria based on Ayurvedic texts are ideal:

- Milk of an indigenous cow
- Cows 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. Not being fed grains, antibiotics, hormones and cruelty.
- Cows going through a natural pregnancy cycle, getting to nurse their calves, and what remains is consumed by us.
- Raw milk available to us fresh (same day), directly and locally without 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

Since the above is almost impossible to find, we can find good ghee as the medium to cook some meals. The advantage of ghee is that since it is typically made directly at the source farm, it would not have gone through additional processes like milk, would last longer, and would also be free of casein:

- Sourced from indigenous cows ( “A2” in India, though it can be from buffaloes and goats, which are less suited 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 2 to 4 times more expensive than the “normal, regular” ghee. At such times, let us remind ourselves that there is nothing normal about the regular ghee! We can compare the short-term of good ghee with the long-term costs of a chemical concoction. Also, the cost of one litre of real ghee is still less than

what a family of four spends on a movie or meal! Thus, we can be free of our conditioning and make healthier choices for our family.



## 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 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!

After 6 months, we recommend consuming dairy products in small amounts. We should look for key criteria based on Ayurvedic texts.



## Chapter 10

# 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!”*

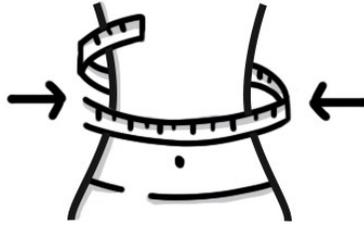
## **How to avoid the dangers of dieting and “food fads”**

**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 11**

# **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 Atreya Smith, Ayurvedic Nutrition Expert*

## Chapter 12

# 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 or 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 Yogaasans. 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!



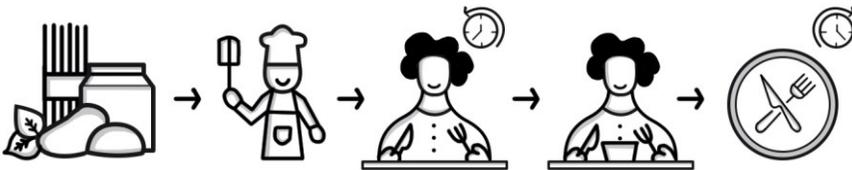
## Real life example

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 to rejuvenating and healing.



### Purchase

- Seasonal = As per 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 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: Stop Aluminium (leading cause of Alzheimers), Non-sticks (Carcinogenic), Microwave (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, Sukhaasan/ Padmaasan – 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. But even small steps in the right direction can make a big impact! Below is a practical, bare minimum routine to 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)

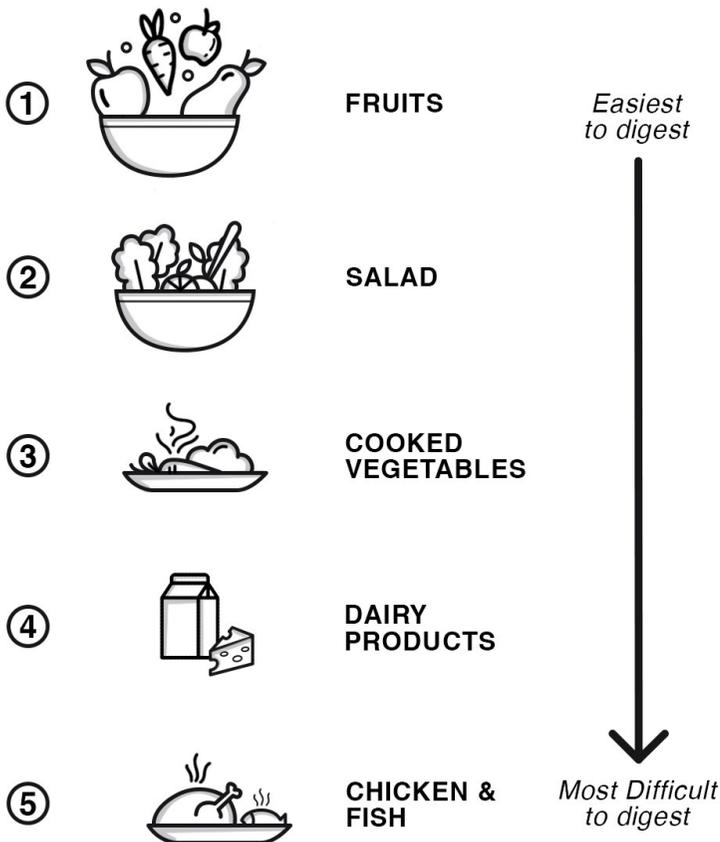
## **Chapter 13**

# **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 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 to replace dessert
- Milkshakes!
- Smoothies with a mixture of vegetables, fruits, nuts
- “Protein” shakes (banana, egg, 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
- 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 live in a mind-set of fearing protein scarcity. 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!

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 anything. 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 14**

# **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 1-6)**

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) (Chapter 1)
- Set an intention to adopt a Yogic Aahaar (Chapter 1)
- Share your intention and get support of your family (Chapter 1)
- Set aside time and create a routine (Chapter 1)
- Clear the clutter of junk foods from your kitchen (Chapter 1)
- Eat food mindfully as per “eat guidelines” (Chapter 4)
- Remove: All “food-like substances” (Chapter 5)
- Replace: Refined oil, Sugar, White Salt and Polished grains, Bread of any kind (Chapter 5)
- Increase: Fruits, Vegetables, Variety in grains (Chapter 6)
- Create a menu of options for breakfast, sweets, snacks, drinks (Chapter 6)
- Purchase or prepare and keep some options for sweets and snacks handy (Chapter 6)

### **Week 2 to 3: Implement “Eat Food” (Chapter 5, 6)**

- 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 7-8)**

- 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 9)**

- Replace Animal-based products including dairy with plant-based alternatives.
- Try 1 new recipes in a week, to add variety and joy to eating
- 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!



## REFLECT & JOURNAL – 14.1

### Aahaar Habits Endline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective: You get to know your current food habits. This is for your use only, be honest 😊. First fill the first column for all questions. Then move to computing points. Calculate the total for each sub-section (greyed header) and then the overall total.

EAT (Total _____ / 20 points)	0 point	1 point	2 points
1. Ate food in the correct quantity, as per my appetite – neither less nor more ( _____ Times a week)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
2. Meals consumed mindfully: Without TV, phone, conversations- or laptop. At ease, chewed well, into a paste (Proportion of meals)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
3. Breakfast - Between 6 and 9am ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
4. Lunch - Between 11am and 2pm ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
5. Dinner - Between 6 to 9pm ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
6. Eating at approximately the same time every day (upto a deviation of +/- 1 hour) (Proportion of meals)	<=1 of 3 meals	2 of 3 meals	All
7. Appropriate gap between meals from breakfast to dinner- Not eat anything for 3 hours post a meal with grains ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
8. Fruit - At least 2 hours post meal or 1 hour before meal ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
9. Sleep - At night maintain at least 1 hour gap post meal ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7
10. Had liquids in the correct quantity, as per my thirst – neither less nor more ( _____ Times a week)	<=2	3-6	7

<b>FOOD (Total _____ / 30 points)</b>	<b>0 point</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>2 points</b>
11. (including black) Tea /coffee/cold drinks _____ Times a day	$\geq 2$	1	0
12. Processed food - Namkeens, biscuits, chips, fried snacks, chocolates, etc (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 3$	1-2	0
13. Bread without natural yeast/ whole wheat or with any artificial substances (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 3$	1-2	0
14. Meals not cooked at home (restaurants, street food, etc) (_____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
15. Grains other than wheat/rice (e.g. ragi, jowar, corn, bajra) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
16. Fruits (1 serving) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
17. Vegetable Salad (1 serving) (_____ Times a week)	$\leq 2$	3-6	$\geq 7$
18. Quantity of cooked vegetable relative to grains (Proportion)	Less than grains	Almost same	Double or more
19. Type of oil (outside food, snacks, packed foods contain refined) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th refined	$\leq 1/4$ th refined	No refined
20. Type of salt (outside food, snacks contain refined, white salt) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th refined	$\leq 1/4$ th refined	No refined
21. Type of sweetener (outside sweets contain sugar) (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th sugar	$\leq 1/4$ th sugar	No sugar
22. Type of rice (Proportion of usage)	$> 1/4$ th white	$\leq 1/4$ th white	No white rice
23. Alcohol (_____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
24. Tobacco in any form (_____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0

25. Stale ( $\geq 4$ hours old) food ( _____ times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
<b>MOSTLY PLANTS (Total _____ / 50 points)</b>	<b>0 point</b>	<b>3 points</b>	<b>10 points</b>
26. Egg ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
27. Fish ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
28. Chicken/ pork / beef / any meats _____ Times a week	$\geq 2$	1	0
29. Milk (including in tea) ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
30. Dairy products - curd/ buttermilk/ butter/ ice cream/ paneer / cheese/chocolate & other items with dairy ( _____ Times a week)	$\geq 2$	1	0
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>_____ / 100</b>	

## 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**

# About Us

Swasth Foundation ([www.swasth.org](http://www.swasth.org)), founded in 2007, is a non-profit social enterprise working towards health and joy for all. SWASTH stands for Sustained Wellbeing through Analysis, Service & Training with Harmony.

As of 2022, through its two programs – Swasth India Medical Center (SIMC) and Swasth Yog Institute (SYI, [www.swasthyog.org](http://www.swasthyog.org)), Swasth has served over 1.5 million health interactions and delivered over 65,000 person-hours of health education services.

The colloquial meaning of the Sanskrit word “Swasth” is healthy. Etymologically, it means to be established in one’s own self. When our body and energy, mind and emotions, intuition and spirit are in harmony within, there is harmony in our external environment too – our health, relationships, work, leisure and growth aspirations are all met seamlessly.

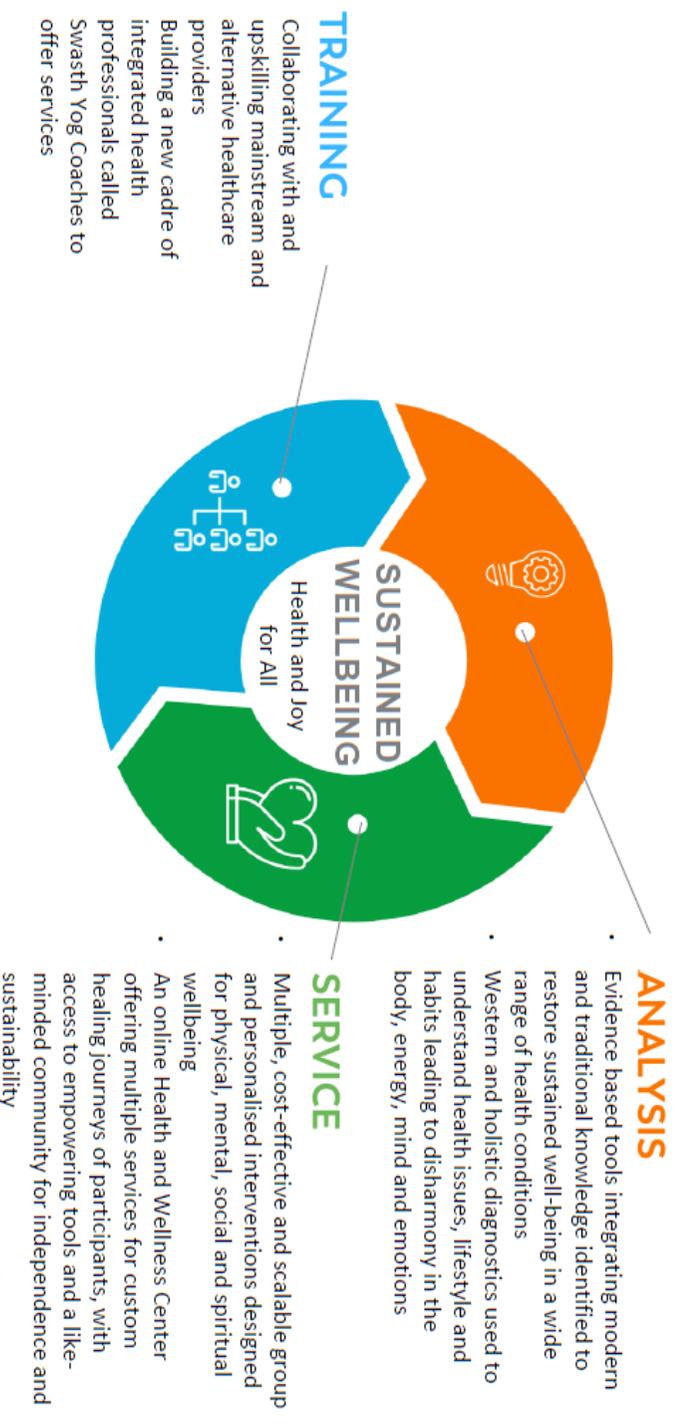
Swasth Yog Institute is creating an ecosystem to enable this sustained, holistic well-being through an integrated approach. Integration runs across the dimensions of Self that are impacted, across multiple aspects (modalities, approaches, functions, delivery mechanisms) and at different levels (macro to micro).

Through its Health & Wellness Center, participants across the world design customized journeys towards their well-being. A range of tools for transformation are available:

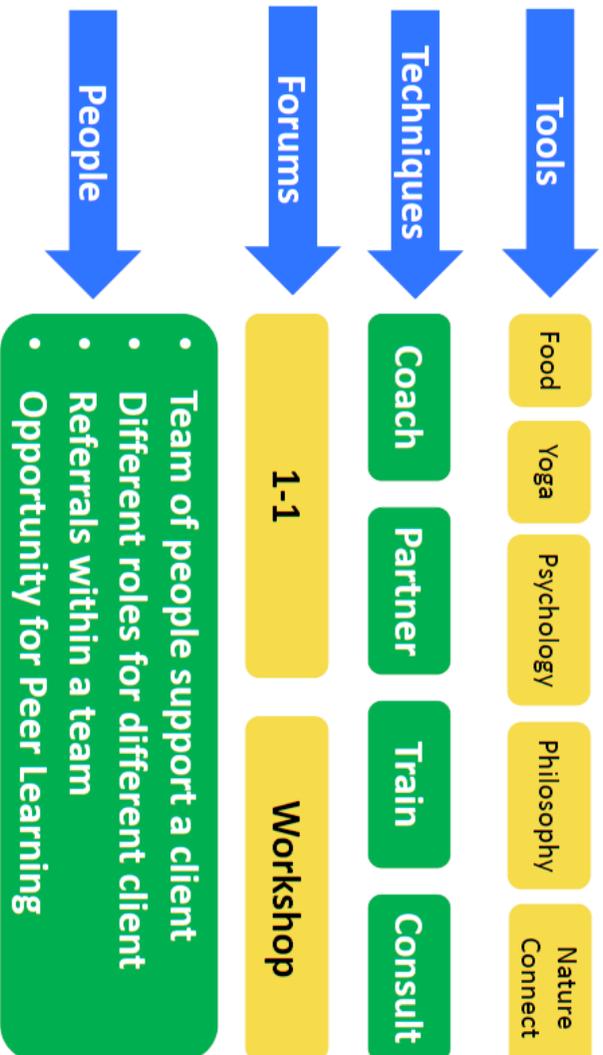
- Aahaar (Nutrition)
- Vigyaan (Philosophy to understand self & life)
- Vichaar (Channelizing the Mind & Emotions)
- Vyaayaam (Somatic Movement & Relaxation to Channelize Energy)
- Vihaar (Being one with Nature, Leisure)

These services are delivered by Swasth Yog Coaches – a new cadre of integrated care professionals trained at the Institute to deliver the highest quality services with the spirit of Peace, Love and Joy.

# Integrated functions at the back-end



## Integrated services at the Front-end...



# Resource People and Institutions

Sharing, not hoarding is the spirit of yog, of union. In this spirit, we have created a YouTube channel with a range of resources for well-being. 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. Additionally, the 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**

- Swami Vivekaananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana
- Indian Yoga Association (IYA)
- Isha Foundation
- Kaivalyadhama (Lonavala)
- The Yoga Institute (Santacruz, Mumbai)
- Dr Robert Svoboda
- Dr Claudia Welch
- Dr Scott Blossom
- Yoga Anatomy

## **Life Purpose Work and 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)
- Mission Impossible Leadership Program

## **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

## **Spiritual Growth**

- Art of Living
- Chinmaya Mission
- Isha Foundation
- Mukeshaanand (<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=IwAR36RbdCcgl4kG8cGI18l-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=k4NUlfqgT9I>
- 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>