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## Values Of Sattvic Diet In Yogic Practices

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**Abstract:** Yoga as a science and system of health and wellness management has gained immense popularity and promotion in recent past. Yoga literally means "union". It is a union of breath and the body, the mind and muscles and most importantly, union of the self to the divine. Yoga is a scientific system of physical and mental practices that originated in India more than three thousand years ago. Its purpose is to help each one of us achieve our highest potential and to experience enduring health and happiness. Yoga is a 5000-year-old Indian philosophy that combines exercise, breathing, diet, relaxation and meditation. It is a combination of physical and mental disciplines which make the body stronger and healthier and the mind calmer and more controlled, helping towards self-realisation.

**Index Terms – Yogic, Diet, Sattvic, Tamas, Mitahara**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It emphasizes the relationship of body, mind and breath, the synchronization of the breath and movement, the use of preparation, counter pose, sequences of linked postures and modification of postures to suit individual needs. Components of yoga, like Yogasana, Pranayama, Kriya and meditation have been and are being practiced and studied upon, in order to derive and describe the best of its benefits. Parallel to this, food and diet has also been described in various traditional, contemporary and classic yoga texts. A complete explanation of this ancient discipline was given by Eliade[1] in his treatise "Yoga, immortality and freedom," and defined as a collection of specific techniques to seek a truth hidden in the silence and in the inner calm of people, a fundamental truth which enables one to free the soul from false reality, a state of liberation of the waves of thought or ecstasy ("Samadhi"; Sanskrit, Sam o Samialk [complete] and ādhi [mentally absorbed])." The aims are at extrapolating the philosophical and practical aspects of diet as per various yoga texts and its relevance and role in maintaining a healthy life. Nutrition is the sum total of the process by which the living organism receives and utilizes the materials necessary for survival, growth and repair of worn-out tissues.

Food is the source of the fuel, which is converted by the metabolic process of the body into the energy for vital activities. In Yoga diet context, the virtue of Mitahara is one where the yogi is aware of the quantity and quality of food and drinks he or she consumes, takes neither too much nor too little, and suits it to one's health condition and needs. The application of sattva and tamas concepts to food is a later and relatively new extension to the Mitahara virtue in Yoga literature. Currently, there are several categories of Yoga. The one practiced in Western societies is an integral Yoga described by Patañjali (II century B.C.).[2] He condenses in his Yoga sūtras, a collection of aphorisms in a Buddhist/Hindi text or manual, the traditions and practices of ancient and contemporary practitioners (yogis).

### 2. UNDERSTANDING THE SATTVIC DIET:

The Sattvic diet, a cornerstone of Ayurveda, is rooted in the belief that food influences not only our physical health but also our mental and emotional state. In Ayurvedic philosophy, all food is categorized into three gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—each of which affects our overall well-being. Sattvic foods are pure, clean, and balanced, and are known to promote a calm mind, emotional stability, and a peaceful state of being.

Sattvic foods nourish both the body and the mind, fostering harmony and clarity. These foods help reduce stress, enhance focus, and cultivate compassion, making them ideal for those seeking a balanced lifestyle. In contrast, Rajasic foods tend to be stimulating and can lead to restlessness, while Tamasic foods, often processed or overly rich, may cause sluggishness and mental fog. By embracing a Sattvic diet, you support both physical health and mental clarity, aligning your food choices with your body's natural rhythms.

## 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF SATTVIC FOODS:

Sattvic foods are defined by their natural purity, focusing on ingredients that promote balance and harmony. These foods are carefully selected to support physical health, mental clarity, and emotional stability.

### **Purity and Naturalness as Key Attributes:**

Sattvic foods are pure and natural, free from artificial additives, preservatives, or harmful chemicals. These foods maintain their inherent vitality and promote optimal health by nourishing the body with whole, unprocessed ingredients. They are chosen for their ability to support mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall well-being.

### **Focus on Fresh, Whole, and Unprocessed Ingredients:**

Freshness is a cornerstone of the Sattvic diet. Foods should be in their natural, unprocessed state. Seasonal, locally grown produce is preferred to ensure alignment with the body's natural cycles. Whole grains (such as brown rice, quinoa, and oats), fresh fruits, and vegetables are prioritized, as they retain their full nutritional value. Organic and unrefined foods are key to maintaining the balance and purity that the Sattvic diet promotes.

## 4. PRINCIPLES OF AHIMSA (NON - HARM) IN CHOOSING FOODS:

Ahimsa, or non-harm, is central to the Sattvic diet, encouraging the consumption of foods that cause minimal harm to the body, environment, and other living beings. This principle guides the avoidance of processed foods, factory-farmed animal products, and foods with unethical or non-sustainable sourcing. It also involves choosing food that promotes peace, compassion, and harmony, both internally and externally.

Next, let's explore the different categories of Sattvic foods and how they contribute to a balanced, nourishing diet.

## 5. CATEGORIES OF SATTVIC FOODS:

### **Fruits:**

Fresh, organic fruits are a key component of the Sattvic diet. They provide natural sweetness and are rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, supporting digestive health and overall well-being. Seasonal options such as apples, pears, berries, and melons are particularly recommended for their freshness and nutritional value.

### **Vegetables:**

Vegetables in a Sattvic diet should be mild, non-stimulating, and seasonal. Varieties like leafy greens, carrots, zucchini, cucumbers, and spinach are ideal. These vegetables support healthy digestion and provide essential nutrients without placing excess strain on the digestive system.

### **Grains:**

Whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, barley, and oats are integral to the Sattvic diet. They offer slow-burning energy, which contributes to both physical stability and mental clarity. These grains provide nourishment without causing excess heat or stagnation in the body.

### **Nuts and Seeds:**

Raw, unsalted nuts and seeds, including almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, and sunflower seeds, are excellent sources of healthy fats and protein. These foods support brain function and overall vitality. Consuming them in moderation helps maintain balance and prevent excess.

### **Dairy:**

Fresh dairy products, especially milk and ghee (clarified butter), are valued in the Sattvic diet. Ghee is particularly known for enhancing digestion, promoting clarity, and offering nourishment to the body. It is also believed to have spiritual benefits, contributing to a sense of calm.

### **Herbs and Spices:**

Herbs and spices in a Sattvic diet are used in moderation, focusing on mild and natural varieties. Spices such as turmeric, cumin, coriander, and fennel are chosen for their digestive and anti-inflammatory

properties. Strong or pungent spices, like chili and garlic, are typically avoided, as they can disrupt balance and overstimulate the body and mind.

## 6. ALONG WITH THE SATTVIC DIET, THERE ARE A FEW OTHER CONDITIONS THAT YOGIS FOLLOW WITH THEIR DIET.

- Yoga is mindfulness and awareness, and being present in the now. So even when you eat, you have to be completely aware of the nature of the food you eat, the amount of food you eat, and the emotion with which the food was prepared and consumed. Cooking the food is an activity that requires complete awareness of the body and mind, as the thoughts and emotions going through the person cooking are poured into the food.
- One should completely concentrate on chewing the food until it is broken down into a liquid form – it is often said that you should drink your food and chew your drink. This means that no other activity should be done when eating food, including talking, texting, surfing, etc. Even after consuming the food, dedicate a few minutes of silence to observe digestion.
- Yogis eat meals only if and when they are hungry. At the same time, householders are recommended to eat three to four times a day with a gap of 3-4 hours – breakfast, lunch, snack (usually a fruit), and dinner, as food should be consumed as per our age and the activity we do during the day.
- Yoga and Ayurveda believe in Mitahar – one should not fill the stomach fully. Half of the stomach should be filled with solid food, one-fourth of it should be filled with liquid that is not pure water (it can be dal, soup, buttermilk, etc.), and one-fourth of the stomach should be left empty. This will allow the stomach to digest the food properly.
- Hatha Yoga describes a Yogic Sattvic Diet as fit to be offered to Lord Shiva as prasad prior to consumption. It should be naturally sweet and nourishing and should be able to sustain all the basic body constituents (dhatus).
- Yogis pray in gratitude for the food they eat before they begin. This will help you gauge your hunger and will also affect the emotion in which the food is consumed.
- Yogis do not drink water 1 hour prior to or after meals. Water is to be avoided during meals as well, as it weakens the digestive fire (Jatharagni) required for digestion.
- Yogis do not have cold foods and drinks, even water, as they weaken the digestive fire.
- Bathing after having food is not recommended as the blood flow is diverted away from the process of digestion.
- Yogis observe fasts once a week for 12-24 hours as a way of detoxing the system. This can either mean a complete fast, a fast with light sattvic food, or a fruit diet.
- Yogis eat local and seasonal food. Seasonal food provides the body what it needs during that season. Foods that produce heat, such as sesame and bajra, are consumed only during winter. However, due to global warming, the seasons are not what they used to be. So it is recommended to eat heat-producing food during cold weather and cool foods such as watermelon during hot weather.
- Yogis practice Asanas, Pranayama, and Meditation regularly. These aid in the health of the body. Yogendra Sukhasana or the Pleasant pose and Yogendra Vajrasana or the Thunderbolt pose are recommended when having food as they aid digestion. However, other Asanas and Pranayamas should not be practiced for 1 hour before and 3 hours after a meal.

Following this diet of Yogis, we can get in touch with our bodies and understand the science of food as prescribed by our scriptures for a balanced body and mind.

## 7. HEALTH BENEFITS OF SATTVIC DIET:

- A Sattvic diet nourishes the brain with pure, nutrient-dense foods, enhancing mental clarity and focus, which is especially beneficial for yoga, meditation, and concentration.
- Focusing on pure, wholesome foods while reducing distractions supports spiritual growth, enhances contentment, and cultivates inner peace, leading to a tranquil and balanced state of mind.
- The focus on whole, unprocessed foods improves digestion, reduces inflammation, and increases energy levels, contributing to greater physical vitality and well-being.
- A Sattvic diet promotes emotional stability by reducing mood swings and fostering a peaceful mind.
- It helps maintain a balanced weight by supporting healthy metabolism and digestion.
- The emphasis on fresh, natural foods strengthens the immune system, improving overall health and resilience.

- A Sattvic diet supports better sleep quality by calming the nervous system and promoting relaxation.
- It enhances skin health by providing essential nutrients and reducing toxins in the body.
- Regular consumption of Sattvic foods can improve hormonal balance and overall vitality.

## 8. CONCLUSION:

One problem of the vegetarian diet is that it can become too cooling. One can learn to promote bodily warmth through yoga practices centered on the navel region. An ayurvedic approach is to include warming and strengthening herbs in the diet like ashwagandha, astragalus or ginseng. Special combinations include masalas (based on cumin seed, coriander seed, and turmeric root). Adopting the Sattvic diet goes beyond simply nourishing your body with wholesome foods; it lays the groundwork for enhanced mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual development. With its focus on purity, balance, and mindfulness, this diet offers a pathway to greater well-being and a peaceful mind. The simplicity and nourishment of a Sattvic lifestyle can make a world of difference in your daily life, from improving digestion to enhancing your overall vitality.

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