

## Concept of Yogic Diet

“Anna vai brahma”, Food is considered as Brahma. All living beings are born out of food and are sustained by food. A Yogic diet is a balanced diet that ancient Yogis believed had a huge influence not only over our physical wellbeing, but also over our thoughts, and ultimately our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Hatha yoga Yogic diet does not take calories into account nor does it give to emphasis the amount of vitamin, minerals or protein obtained from food. Instead it lays emphasis on the type and quality of food eaten. A yogi can survive on a party and yet enjoy good health. The focus is on the nutrition obtained from food, and also source, seasonal, geographical considerations, individual constitution and not the taste. It recommends moderation in anything one eats and drinks. Self-discipline in the choice of one’s food is essential not only health but also for one’s spiritual journey. The principles of diet in Yoga are easy to understand but hard to follow.

This diet can also be called lacto-vegetarian, which means that it is made up of non-animal foods with the exceptions of dairy items and honey. With continued awareness about the body through yoga you may find that vegetarian foods become a natural choice. It can also help you maintain the same energized, light feeling that is achieved through yoga. Also, if you are going a more spiritual way you may decide that your love for every living being outweighs your need for animal foods. Non-animal foods can help you attain a higher level of spirituality by generating positive energy. You don’t need to be a 'Yogi' to establish this diet in your life, just a desire to live healthier and happier.

A proper diet is as beneficial as fasting, as it does not tax the body with too many toxins. Food strongly influences the mind. Impure food makes the mind impure. Hence one’s diet is very important. Sattvic food is the best for yoga practitioner. It should compromise cereals, fresh and dry food, raw or freshly

cooked vegetables like beans, ghee, pure and organic milk. Such foods are light and easy to digest and also increase one's vitality, strength, endurance and health. The diet should not only be healthy but also moderate as overeating results in disease. Food according to yogis is one's first interaction with outside world. If not eaten with sense of love, connection and peace, it can adversely affect the other aspect of life.

### **Mitahara:**

The food should be nutritious, sweet, lubricating and one's linking. It should be easily digestible and should not contain substances that are irritating. And moderate or abstemious diet is that which satisfies half  $\frac{1}{2}$  **part solid food**,  $\frac{1}{4}$  **part water**, and rest of  $\frac{1}{4}$  **part** should be kept empty for free movements of air. This is called **Balanced diet or Mitahara**. Neither over-eating nor under-eating called "**Yuktahara**" i.e. Moderation is to be followed with regards to food in Gita.

**Prescribed Foods in yogic diet (Pathya):** Good grains, wheat, rice, barley, milk, ghee, sugar, butter, honey, dry ginger, cucumber, vegetables and rain water (magha –10<sup>th</sup> bengali month) are considered to be wholesome food for the advanced yogi.

**Prohibited Foods in yogic diet (Apathya):** Eating food which is bitter, sour, pungent, saltyhot, alcohol, fish, meat, curds, berries, oil cakes are bad for yogi.