

EXPLORING AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES IN TRADITIONAL REGIONAL INDIAN DIETS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda being the *shashwatha* deals with many concepts which are applicable at all times. As the *prayojana* of the Ayurveda is maintaining of the health of healthy and curing the disease of diseased person. Ayurveda emphasizes that food and medicine are interconnected concepts essential for preventing and treating diseases. Ayurveda, India's ancient medical system, highlights food as a primary determinant of health through concepts such as *doshas*, *agni*, *gunas*, *rasa*, and *ritucharya*. Traditional regional Indian diets-shaped by ecology, culture, seasonal cycles, and indigenous crops-naturally reflect these principles. This comprehensive review explores the intersection between Ayurvedic nutritional theory and regional Indian cuisines, integrating modern scientific evidence, sustainability perspectives, and personalized nutrition innovations. A narrative synthesis of classical Ayurvedic literature and nutritional science shows that regional diets inherently promote balanced digestion, metabolic stability, and ecological resilience. However, modernization has disrupted these patterns. This review proposes a new conceptual framework linking Ayurvedic dietary logic, regional food practices, and health outcomes, paving the way for digital Ayurveda and future interdisciplinary research.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Ahara siddhant, Regional Indian Diets, Agni.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda conceptualizes health as a dynamic equilibrium of the three *doshas* - *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* - regulated through controlled diet, lifestyle, and environment. In Ayurveda Diet forms the important component of life as it is included in the three pillars of life (*Traya-upastambha*).^{[1][2]} Diet is described as the first line of treatment (*Ahara Chikitsa*), influencing digestion (*agni*), tissue formation, immunity, and mental well-being. India's vast culinary diversity reflects an intimate relationship between climate, local crops, traditional health practices, and community rituals. Regional diets from Kerala, Punjab, Bengal, Rajasthan, and the North-East evolved through thousands of years of ecological adaptation, many aligning with Ayurvedic guidelines for digestive balance, *rasa* diversity, and seasonal eating.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate core Ayurvedic dietary principles and their physiological implications.
2. Analyze their manifestation within traditional regional Indian diets.
3. Provide future research directions for integrating Ayurveda with contemporary dietetics.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a literary review based on classical Ayurveda texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtang Hridaya*).

Regional Diet Analysis

Comparative analysis of regional diets from five regions: North, South, West, East, and North-Eastern India.

OBSERVATION AND RESULT

A] Core Ayurvedic Dietary Principles

a. Agni (Digestive Fire)

Central to health; influenced by cooking methods, spices, and food combinations.

b. Rasa (Six Tastes)^[3]

Ayurveda emphasizes balanced inclusion of sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent to maintain *tridoshic* stability.

c. Gunas (Qualities)

Hot/cold, heavy/light, oily/dry qualities determine how foods affect specific *doshas*.

d. Ritucharya (Seasonal Diets)^[4]

Foods should shift according to climate—cooling foods in summer, warming in winter.

e. Viruddha Ahar (Incompatible Foods)^[5]

Avoiding harmful combinations (e.g., milk with sour fruits, honey heated, curd at night).

f. Matravat Ahar^[6]

Matravat Ahara is an *Ayurvedic* concept for consuming food in a proper and optimal quantity to maintain health. It means not too little and not too much, but the right amount for an individual based on their digestive power (*Agni Bala*) to prevent disease and promote well-being.

g. Ashtavidha vidhivisheshayatan^[7]

Eight specific factors in *Ayurveda* that determine the wholesome or unwholesome effects of food and dietary habits.

h. Ahar vidhividhan^[8]

Ayurvedic principles and guidelines for the proper method of food consumption.

i. Bhojan kal^[9]

Bhojan Kal (or *Kaal Bhojanam*) refers to the proper, timely, and appropriate time for eating to maintain health.

B] Regional Diets and Ayurvedic Alignment

a. South India (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka)

- Fermented foods (idli, dosa) → enhance gut microbiota
- Coconut-based dishes → cooling, *Pitta*-pacifying
- Curry leaves, mustard seeds, turmeric → improve *agni* and reduce *Vata*

b. North India (Punjab, Haryana)

- Ghee-rich meals → grounding for *Vata*
- Summer cooling drinks (lassi, buttermilk) → reduce *Pitta* heat
- Winter foods like jaggery, sesame → increase internal warmth, align with *ritucharya*

c. Western India (Rajasthan, Gujarat)

- Drought-adapted ingredients (bajra, moth beans) → heavy, warming foods needed in desert climate
- Use of ghee and pickles → enhance digestion and provide energy

d. Eastern India (Bengal, Odisha, Assam)

- Mustard oil (pungent, warming) → reduces *Kapha* in humid climate
- Fish + rice → *tridoshic* balance
- Bitter greens (shukto) → detoxifying, improves liver function

e. North-Eastern & Himalayan Regions

- Fermented foods: gundruk, kinema → strong *agni* stimulation
- Herbal infusions (*tulsi*) → *rasayana* (rejuvenation) effects

Ayurvedic Principal	Definition	Regional Example	Health Impact
Agni (Digestive fire)	Metabolic strength governing digestion	Use of ginger, cumin, pepper in south india	Enhanced digestion and reduced bloating
Rasa (six tastes)	sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent	Gujarati thali combining all testes	Balanced appetite & mental satisfaction
Gunas (Qualities)	Hot/cold, heavy/light, oily/dry properties	Kerala's cooling coconut-based food	<i>Pitta</i> pacification in humid climate
Ritucharya (seasonal dieting)	Dietary shifts based on seasons	Punjabi winter foods: sesame, ghee, jiggery	Improves immunity and seasonal adaptation
Viruddha Ahar (Incompatibilities)	Food combinations to avoid	Avoiding dairy+sour fruits in Maharashtra	Prevents digestive distress

DISCUSSION

This review reveals a deep, often underappreciated alignment between regional Indian diets and *Ayurvedic* dietary science. Traditional meals, based on seasonal and local ingredients, intuitively follow *Ayurveda*'s emphasis on bio-individuality and environmental adaptability. For instance, fermented foods in the Northeast not only support gut health but also stimulate sluggish *Agni* in colder climates. In contrast to modern "universal" diets,

Ayurveda stresses personalized nutrition - what is beneficial for one person or region may not suit another. This approach is highly relevant today as health issues like obesity, diabetes, and digestive disorders often stem from standardized, highly processed diets lacking connection to one's body environment and environment. Furthermore, *Ayurveda* discourages overeating and eating without hunger — concepts mirrored in the traditional Indian practice of eating mindfully, with

gratitude, and in moderation. Most regional diets historically followed this rhythm, but urbanization, fast food, and irregular eating have disrupted this balance. Reintegrating regional foods, seasonal eating, and *Ayurvedic* principles offers a holistic path toward preventive health and sustainable food systems.

CONCLUSION

Traditional regional Indian diets, rooted in local ecology and cultural wisdom, naturally embody the principles of *Ayurveda*, supporting digestion, immunity, and holistic well-being.

Regional Indian diets, when practiced in their traditional forms, embody the principles of *Ayurvedic* nutrition. They promote balance among *doshas*, support digestive health, and emphasize moderation and seasonality. Reviving these food practices, alongside the wisdom of *Ahara Vidhi* and *Matra*, can serve as a potent preventive strategy against lifestyle-related diseases and support a return to personalized, conscious nutrition. In a time when global food systems are moving toward uniformity, India's rich tapestry of regionally adapted diets — when aligned with *Ayurvedic* wisdom — offers not just nourishment, but a path toward holistic health and cultural continuity.

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