

Review on contemporary Dietary concepts and Pathya Kalpana mentioned in Ayurveda- A comparative analysis

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Abstract

Dietary concepts have undergone considerable transformation across different historical and cultural landscapes. Modern diets are predominantly shaped by nutritional science, focusing on aspects like macronutrient ratios, caloric intake, and the inclusion of processed foods. These approaches often prioritize weight control, disease prevention, and ease of access, typically applying a generalized model to diverse populations. On the other hand, *Pathya Kalpana*, a foundational element of ayurvedic practice, offers a personalized and holistic view of nutrition. It regards food as medicine, tailoring dietary choices to an individual's constitution (*Prakriti*), current imbalances (*Vikriti*), seasonal changes, and digestive strength. Foods are classified as *Pathya* (beneficial) or *Apathya* (harmful) based on their qualitative and energetic influences on physical and mental health, rather than just their nutrient profiles. This study seeks to draw a comparative analysis between modern dietary frameworks and *Pathya Kalpana*, examining key differences in principles, application, and outcomes. It also considers how Ayurvedic dietary insights might complement and enrich current nutritional strategies for enhanced long-term wellness.

Key words : *Pathya, Manda, Peya, Vilepi, Yavagu, Vegan diet.*

As per Ayurveda, the health status Ahara(diet) and Vihara. It has been given of an individual mainly depends on the profound importance to "Ahara" (diet) and is

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considered as an important factor for achieving a healthy and balanced life. Ayurveda emphasizes that while the digestive abilities of individuals vary, consuming proper quality and quantity of food is essential for maintaining good health. Consuming food in adequate quantity enhances vitality, promotes a healthy complexion, and supports the well-being of the body's tissues²⁰. The carefully prepared, well-balanced, and properly cooked food is considered *Pathya Ahara* (ideal food) for maintaining good health. From a Western perspective, where food is often assessed by portion size or calorie count, grasping the principles of ayurvedic nutrition can be quite complex. In 1992, the U.S. Department of Agriculture introduced the National Food Guide Pyramid as a guideline for maintaining good health. This guide was widely used by nutritionists, doctors, and healthcare providers across the country and was designed based on available data on cardiovascular and cancer risks. It emphasized reducing total fat intake while recommending 6-11 servings of complex carbohydrates, such as rice, pasta, vegetables, and fruits, along with two servings of meat or animal products. However, with time and further research, it became evident that the food pyramid failed to provide a truly balanced diet, as obesity rates continued to rise.⁴⁴

Literature Review :

In Ayurveda, *Aahar* is recognized as one of the three essential pillars of life (Trayoupstambh) and is honored as Brahma in ancient texts³¹. Acharya Kashyapa emphasized the significance of food, referring to it as Mahabheshaja, the supreme medicine⁴³. Among Ayurvedic principles, Pathya-Kalpana

plays a crucial role in disease prevention and management. A well-balanced diet, tailored to an individual's Tridosha, Deha Prakriti, Satmya, and the Panchabhautika composition of food, is essential for maintaining optimal health and well-being. Pathya Aahar, formulated according to Panchabhautic principles, influences health by aligning with the body's natural balance and physiological needs.

Pathya ahara in Ayurveda :

Nitukti :

Pathya originates from the sanskrit root word 'Patha,' signifying a path, route, or channel.

पथ्यं पथोऽनपेतं यद्यच्चोक्तं मनसः प्रियम्
यच्चाप्रियमपथ्यं च नियतं तन्न लक्षयेत् ॥

Pathya refers to Aahar-Vihar (diet and lifestyle) that nurtures the body, soothes the mind, and provides essential nutrients, while Apathya represents the opposite, leading to imbalance and health disturbances¹⁹.

Synonyms :

Pathya is synonymous with terms like *Satmya*, *Swasth-hitakara*, *Upshaya*, *Swavasthaparipaalaka*, and *Hita Ahara*, all of which emphasize its role in promoting health and well-being³².

General Pathya ahara :

Acharya Charak emphasized the importance of certain foods for maintaining good health, recommending the regular consumption of Shashtika and Shali rice,

(1942)

Mudga (*Phaseolus radiatus* Linn.), Saindhav salt, Amlaka (*Emblca officinalis* Gaertn.), rainwater, ghee, and honey²⁷.

According to Yogaratnakara, understanding the cause of the disease, selecting the appropriate drug, and determining the right *pathya* are three crucial steps before initiating

treatment. He relates a progressing disease to an Ankura (seedling), which withers and perishes without water. Similarly, a disease can be eradicated if the patient follows *pathya* Ahara, as unhealthy dietary and lifestyle choices provide nourishment for the disease to thrive⁴¹.

Table-1. *Pathya Ahara* for different diseases

Diseases	Pathya Ahara
<i>Jwara</i>	Yavagu, Odana, and Lajaa ⁴² . Purana Jwara-Rakta Shali and Shashtika rice
<i>Raktapitta</i>	Shali, Shastika, Shyamaka, Nivara, Koradusa etc ³¹ .
<i>Gulma</i>	Old grains and cereals, animal meat soups, and legumes like Mudga and Kulattha. Vegetable dishes prepared with Pippali, Naagra, Bilva, and Chitraka, along with ingredients such as Bijapuraka, Hingu, Amlavetasa, Kshara, Dadima, buttermilk, oil, and ghee ²⁴
<i>Prameha</i>	Barley, Old shastika/ Shali rice with mudha soup, honey, sushka jangalamamsa, sarshapa taila, etc ⁶
<i>Kushta</i>	Shali, Yava, Godhuma, mudhga, masura, tiktashakha, etc ³⁹
<i>Rajayakshma</i>	Soup prepared with Mulaka and Kulattha Patients are advised to consume the supernatant layer of <i>Varuni</i> or water decocted with <i>Panchamula</i> ⁴⁰
<i>Unmada</i>	A person who avoids meat and alcohol, consumes only wholesome food, maintains discipline and purity, and possesses strong willpower remains unaffected by both endogenous and exogenous types of Unmada (mental disorders) ¹⁴
<i>Arsha</i>	Rakta Shali, Maha Shali, Sita, Sharada, and Shashtika are highly nutritious rice varieties recommended for a balanced and wholesome diet. ³⁵
<i>Visha</i>	Recommended foods include Shali, Shashtika, Koradusa, Priyangu, and Saindhava. Beneficial vegetables include Tanduliyaka, Jivanti, Vartaka, and Kulaka. Amladravyas such as Amalaki and Dadima are advised, while nourishing meat soups (Mansarasa) from Ena, Sikhi, Svavit, Lava, and Tittiri are also beneficial. ³⁷
<i>Vatarakta</i>	Cereals such as aged barley, wheat, Shali, and Shashtika rice are highly recommended. Nutrient-rich soups made from the meat of Viskira and Pratuda birds, as well as soups prepared from Adhaki, Chanka, Mudga, Masura, and Makustha, generously enriched with ghee, are also beneficial ²¹

Different Pathya Kalpana according to Ayurveda :

Manda, Peya, Yavagu, Anna, and Vilepi are five essential formulations made

using only two ingredients—rice and water. The varying ratios of rice to water determine the consistency and specific properties of each preparation, making them suitable for different therapeutic and dietary needs⁹.

Table-2. Preparatory methods of different Ahara kalpanas

Name of formulation	Rice: Water	Prepared formulation	Final constitution
<i>Manda</i> ²⁷	1:14	Until the rice is thoroughly cooked.	The supernatant fluid alone is collected for use.
<i>Peya</i> ¹⁶	1:14	Until the rice is thoroughly cooked.	Equal proportions of the solid and liquid components are used.
<i>Yavagu</i> ³	1:6	Until the rice is thoroughly cooked.	Exclusively the solid portion is taken.
<i>Vilepi</i> ⁴	1:4	Until the rice is thoroughly cooked.	Predominantly the solid part, accompanied by minimal fluid is taken.
<i>Anna</i> ¹⁹	1:5	Until the rice is thoroughly cooked.	solely the solid matter is utilized.

Manda :

This formulation is prepared by cooking rice and water in a 1:14 ratio. After cooking, the liquid portion separated from the rice is collected as Manda, the watery extract of rice gruel.

It is *laghu* (easily digestible) and *shita* (cold) in *guna*.

Physiological functions:

- Deepana (elevates digestive fire)
- Pachana (increase digestive capacity)
- Grahi (helps to bind stools)
- Vatanulomana (aids in the normal passage of vata)
- Kaphaghna (pacifies kapha dosha).

Indications:

➤ This formulation is recommended after Vamana and Virechana (as part of Samsarjan Krama), following physical exertion, and after periods of fasting to aid in recovery and restore digestive balance.

- Jwara (fever)
- Atisara (diarrhoea)
- Trishna (thirst)

Peya :

Peya is a rice gruel prepared by cooking rice and water in a 1:14 ratio. In this formulation, the maximum watery content is collected along with a few softened rice.

Physiological functions^{16,28}

(1944)

- Laghu(light)
- Deepana (elevates digestive fire)
- Pachana (increase digestive capacity)
- Vatanulomana (aids in the normal passage of vata)
- Dhatupushtikara (nourishes the body tissues)

Indications:¹¹

- Jwara
- Atisara
- Kaphodara
- This formulation is also recommended after Vamana and Virechana (as part of Samsarjan Krama), following physical exertion, and after periods of fasting to aid in recovery and restore digestive balance.¹³

Vilepi :

Vilepi is a thick, paste-like rice gruel made by boiling rice with four times the amount of water, resulting in a denser and more nourishing consistency.

Physiological functions²⁵

- Pathya
- Deepana
- Pachana
- Bastishodhan
- Tarpana
- Vrushya

Yavagu :

Yavagu is a light, easily digestible gruel formed by cooking rice in six times its quantity of water, resulting in a smooth, semi-liquid consistency that is slightly less thick than Vilepi while still being nourishing.

In ayurvedic classics, yavagu is classified into three distinct types:³⁴

- ❖ Kwadha siddha yavagu(gruel prepared with decoction of medicines)
- ❖ Kalka siddha yavagu(gruel prepared with paste of medicines)

- ❖ Mamsarasa siddha yavagu(gruel prepared with meat soup)

Indications:

- Before siravyadha
- Garbhini
- Trushna
- Mandagni

Contemporary Diets :

The concept of a contemporary diet has evolved significantly due to changes in food production, consumption patterns, and lifestyle habits. Numerous studies highlight the impact of modern dietary choices on overall health, emphasizing both the benefits and risks associated with contemporary eating habits.

1. *Mediterranean Diet :*

- The Mediterranean diet is inspired by the traditional dietary patterns of Euro-Mediterranean countries, emphasizing not only the types and proportions of foods consumed but also a holistic approach to eating.²
- It considers factors such as sustainable and eco-friendly food sourcing, cooking methods, mindful eating, regular physical activity, sufficient rest, and the social aspect of sharing meals.
- The Mediterranean diet primarily consists of whole grains such as whole-grain bread, pasta, couscous, and other unrefined cereals, olive oil, low-fat yogurt, cheese, complemented by a diverse range of fruits and vegetables that are rich in fiber, micronutrients, and phytochemicals, promoting overall health and well-being.¹
- Being rich in antioxidants, it has potential

benefits including reducing inflammation, maintaining heart health, and preventing non-communicable diseases.

2. *Vegan Diet* :

- The term “veganism” was introduced in 1944 by Donald Watson and Dorothy Morgan, drawing inspiration from the age-old Indian vegetarian tradition grounded in the principle of ahimsa, or nonviolence. Today, around 5% of the U.S. population follows a plant-based diet, with 16 million identifying as vegan.
- Veganism excludes all forms of animal-derived ingredients, emphasizing a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds¹⁷.
- It is rich in fiber, vitamins, antioxidants, and healthy fats but may lead to deficiencies in protein, omega-3, iron, calcium, and vitamin B12.
- A well-balanced vegan diet can lower risks of obesity, hypertension, heart disease, and certain cancers but may also cause energy imbalances and hormone disruptions if not properly managed.³³
- The environmental impact of veganism is generally lower than other diets, though the rise of processed plant-based meat alternatives may increase its carbon footprint.

3. *Paleo Diet/Paleolithic Diet/Old Stone Age Diet* :

- The Paleo diet, introduced in the 1970s and popularized in 2001, is followed by about 3% of Americans.
- It replicates the pre-agriculture diet of early humans, focusing on lean meats, seeds, fruits, eggs and vegetables.

- It emphasizes a high intake of protein, cholesterol, and healthy fats, while strictly excluding processed foods, refined sugars, grains, legumes, and most dairy products^{12,23}.
- Studies suggest it may reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors, improve lipid profiles, and aid in weight loss.¹⁰
- It is rich in fiber, vitamins C and E, and carotenes but may lead to deficiencies in iodine, calcium, Vitamin D, and iron.
- The diet’s lower sodium content may help reduce blood pressure but also poses a risk of iodine deficiency.
- By prioritizing lean meats and unprocessed whole foods, the Paleo diet tends to produce a moderate carbon footprint when compared to the higher environmental impact of the Standard American Diet.

4. *Keto Diet/Ketogenic Diet* :

- The ketogenic (keto) diet was initially developed in the early 20th century to manage epilepsy and is now used for conditions like brain injuries and Alzheimer’s.^{21,45}
- Around 5% of Americans follow the high-fat, low-carbohydrate diet.
- The diet promotes ketosis, where the body burns fat for fuel instead of carbohydrates.
- Keto includes high-fat and protein-rich foods while limiting sugars, grains, and most fruits and vegetables.⁸
- Benefits may include weight loss, improved lipid markers, reduced sugar intake, and potential diabetes reversal.³⁸
- Risks involve liver and kidney strain, constipation, mood swings, increased LDL cholesterol, atherosclerosis and nutritional deficiencies.^{21,36}
- The diet does not restrict unhealthy

saturated fats, making its long-term sustainability and health impact uncertain.

- Keto's reliance on animal products leads to a high environmental footprint, though modifications can make it more eco-friendly.

5. *Gluten-Free Diet* :

- A gluten-free diet (GFD) eliminates foods containing gluten, a protein that helps foods maintain their shape.
- Gluten is naturally found in grains like wheat, barley, and rye, as well as hybrids like triticale (a wheat-rye mix).

➤ Potential Benefits for Certain Individuals

- People with celiac disease must follow a GFD to prevent immune system damage to the small intestine.⁵
- Those with non-celiac gluten sensitivities or other gluten-related conditions may also benefit from reducing or eliminating gluten.

➤ Potential Risks and Harms of a GFD.

- Nutritional deficiencies due to the elimination

of gluten-containing grains.

- Increased financial burden, as gluten-free products are often more expensive.
- Negative psychosocial effects, including dietary restrictions affecting social interactions and quality of life.
- The topic of gluten-free diets is rapidly evolving, requiring further scientific research.

Aahara Kalpana is an integral aspect of Ayurveda, emphasized in Swasthavrutta (daily health routines) and incorporated into Dinacharya (daily regimen) and Rutucharya (seasonal practices). It plays a crucial role in maintaining balanced Dhatus (body tissues) and preventing further aggravation of Doshas (imbalanced humors).¹² Patients are advised to follow Pathya (healthy food consumption) to support overall well-being. Additionally, Aahara Kalpana is essential in Panchakarma therapy, particularly in Samsarjana Krama, to restore Jatharagni (digestive fire) and rejuvenate the Annavaha Srotas (digestive system) and Purishavaha Srotas (excretory system) after purification treatments.^{7,29}

Table-3. Comparison between Ayurvedic *Pathya Kalpana* and Contemporary Diets

Ayurvedic <i>Pathya Ahara Kalpana</i>	Contemporary Diets
Holistic Approach- Ayurvedic <i>Pathya Ahara Kalpana</i> follows a holistic approach that recognizes the deep connection between the body, mind, and spirit, with diet playing a vital role in maintaining overall balance and well-being.	Modern dietary guidelines are more or less nutrient focussed and emphasize achieving adequate intake of essential macronutrients and micronutrients to support overall health. often relying on standardized recommendations.
Personalized Diet-It emphasizes individualized nutrition, tailoring dietary recommendations based on an individual's Prakriti (constitution) and Vikriti (disease state) while considering	Modern diet guidelines are generally designed for the broader population and may not always address the personalized dietary needs of individuals with specific health

key factors such as Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), Dhatus (tissues), and Agni (digestive fire).	conditions or unique physiological requirements.
Ayurveda places significant importance on the quality and preparation of food, ensuring that factors like freshness, ripeness, and appropriate cooking methods enhance both the nutritional value and digestibility of meals.	Modern dietary patterns encourage diversity in food choices to ensure a broad spectrum of nutrients; however, they often lack strict guidelines on optimal food combinations or preparation methods. This approach, while promoting variety, can sometimes result in imbalanced nutrient intake, leading to health concerns such as excessive sugar consumption, unhealthy fat intake, or inadequate fiber levels
Importance to Pathya and Apathya- Ayurveda places great emphasis on the concept of Pathya and Apathya, where Pathya includes wholesome foods and lifestyle practices that support health, while Apathya consists of dietary and lifestyle choices that may contribute to imbalances and diseases.	Modern dietary patterns emphasize more on disease prevention by encouraging the consumption of nutrient-dense foods, reducing processed food intake, and promoting overall wellness through balanced nutrition.
Since Ayurvedic diets are based on several factors like agni, prakriti, seasons etc it has less chance to cause any deteriorating effects to the body of the individual.	Modern dietary patterns, if not well-balanced, may result in nutritional imbalances, which may increase the risk of chronic diseases in the long run.

Pathya Kalpana serves as a cornerstone of Ayurvedic dietary principles, integrating the wisdom of traditional healing with modern nutritional insights to support overall health and disease management. By formulating food preparations tailored to an individual's specific constitution (Prakriti) and imbalances (Vikriti), this approach ensures that the body receives nourishment in a way that aligns with its natural rhythms and physiological needs. Ayurveda acknowledges that digestion, metabolism, and nutrient assimilation vary among individuals, making it essential to consider factors such as digestive fire (Agni), Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), and tissue health (Dhatus) when

designing dietary recommendations. Through the incorporation of *Pathya Kalpana* into daily life, individuals can not only prevent the aggravation of Doshas but also strengthen their immune system, enhance digestion, and maintain equilibrium in bodily functions. This holistic dietary approach underscores the profound link between food, overall well-being, and the promotion of a balanced, disease-free life.

Modern dietary approaches reflect a diverse spectrum of eating patterns, each designed to cater to specific health goals, lifestyle preferences, or cultural influences. Some diets, such as low-carb or high-protein

regimens, focus on altering macronutrient intake to support weight management, metabolic health, or athletic performance. Others, like plant-based, vegan, or paleo diets, emphasize whole foods while either including or excluding certain food groups based on perceived health benefits or ethical considerations. Additionally, time-restricted eating patterns, such as intermittent fasting, have gained popularity for their potential benefits in metabolic regulation, cellular repair, and weight control. While these contemporary diets offer flexibility and personalization, their effectiveness depends on factors such as individual health status, nutritional adequacy, and long-term sustainability

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