

## "Ayurvedic Review of Stale Food (paryushit ahara) and Its Impact on Mind and Perception (Mano Drishti)"

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### ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, diet is a foundational aspect of health, influencing both physical and mental well-being. This article explores the concept of stale food (paryushit ahara) and its effects on mental perspective (mano drishti). According to Ayurveda, stale food is tamasic, impacting the mind by increasing inertia and mental dullness. This paper reviews Ayurvedic principles on diet, examining how stale food can disrupt mental clarity and emotional stability. Preventive and promotive measures, including dietary choices, daily routines, and Ayurvedic herbs, are also discussed. Findings highlight the relevance of fresh, sattvic food in promoting mental clarity and overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Stale food, Mano Drishti, Mental health, Mind clarity, Processed food, Emotional stability, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Dinacharya, Ritucharya

### I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, meaning "science of life," is an ancient holistic health system from India that emphasizes the interdependence of body, mind and spirit. Central to Ayurvedic philosophy is the belief that food is not merely sustenance; it is a potent influence on one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. According to Ayurvedic principles, food can be a primary driver of health or disease, depending on its quality, freshness, and energy. Unlike modern nutrition, which focuses mainly on macronutrients and caloric intake, Ayurveda categorizes food by its intrinsic qualities and energetic effects on the body and mind. This unique approach offers insights into how food choices can impact one's mental perspective (mano drishti), either promoting mental clarity and positivity or contributing to mental dullness and distress.

the ancient Indian system of medicine, places great emphasis on the role of diet in

maintaining physical and mental health. According to Ayurvedic teachings, food is not only a source of nourishment but also a key determinant of mental clarity, emotional stability, and cognitive function. The concept of stale food or "paryushit ahara," refers to any food that is old, preserved, or lacking prana (vital life force). Consuming stale food is believed to increase tamas guna (quality), which Ayurveda associates with lethargy, inertia, and confusion.

In modern times, with the rise of processed and preserved foods, the consumption of stale food has become common, making this an important area of inquiry. Ayurveda's principles suggest that stale food affects both the body and mind, contributing to poor digestion, toxin build-up (ama), and an imbalance in the doshas (bio-energies: vata, pitta, and kapha). This article aims to explore the Ayurvedic understanding of stale food, its effects on mental perspective, and preventive and promotive measures to counteract these effects.

Within Ayurveda, foods are classified into three primary categories based on their qualities (gunas): sattvic (pure, harmonious), rajasic (stimulating, active), and tamasic (inert, dulling). These classifications are deeply rooted in the concept that food possesses an inherent energy that affects the gunas in the human mind.

Sattvic foods—such as fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products—are considered beneficial for mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall wellness. They are believed to elevate the mind, fostering qualities like calmness, focus, and compassion.

Rajasic foods, like spicy, sour, or excessively stimulating foods, are thought to promote restlessness and excessive mental activity, which may lead to agitation and anxiety.

Tamasic foods, including stale, overcooked, processed, or preserved items, are

considered to promote lethargy, confusion, and mental dullness. In this light, Ayurveda discourages the consumption of tamasic foods, particularly those that have lost their natural prana or vital life force, as they are thought to impede mental clarity and spiritual growth.

The Ayurvedic concept of hetu, or causative factors of disease, includes dietary factors that contribute to imbalances in the doshas (vata, pitta, kapha) and the mind's qualities. Stale food, known as paryushit ahara, is categorized as a significant hetu affecting both body and mind. According to Ayurveda, stale food is low in nutritive value and contains little to no prana, making it difficult to digest and likely to generate ama, or toxins, in the body. These toxins are believed to accumulate over time, impairing not only physical health but also mental clarity, emotional balance, and cognitive function. This view is supported by the idea that tamasic foods can increase the tamas guna in the mind, contributing to qualities such as inertia, mental dullness, and negative thinking patterns. In essence, the Ayurvedic perspective views stale food as a barrier to optimal mental health and spiritual development.

With the advent of modernization and changes in food preservation, the consumption of stale or processed foods has increased significantly. Modern diets frequently include foods that are preserved, refrigerated, or packed with artificial additives to extend shelf life. While these methods provide convenience, Ayurvedic teachings suggest that they come at the cost of vitality and mental well-being. Stale and processed foods, much like the Ayurvedic classification of tamasic foods, have been linked in contemporary research to a range of adverse health outcomes, including mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairment. Studies show that diets high in ultra-processed foods, which include preservatives, refined sugars, and artificial ingredients, can have detrimental effects on mood, energy levels, and mental clarity. This growing body of evidence aligns with Ayurveda's ancient understanding of stale food's impact on mental balance, further underscoring the relevance of Ayurvedic dietary principles in today's world.

Another vital aspect of Ayurvedic dietary guidelines is the concept of digestion, or agni (digestive fire). Ayurveda posits that maintaining a balanced agni is essential for good health, as it governs the body's ability to assimilate nutrients, eliminate waste, and sustain energy. Stale and

tamasic foods are thought to weaken agni, impairing digestion and contributing to the formation of ama in the body. Ama is seen as a root cause of many physical and mental ailments, blocking the body's natural channels and disrupting the harmony of the mind. Poor digestion and toxin accumulation due to tamasic foods can directly affect mental clarity, causing mental sluggishness, emotional imbalances, and decreased resilience to stress. This concept forms a cornerstone of Ayurvedic dietary advice: to avoid stale or tamasic foods that may disturb the body's natural harmony and affect mental stability.

In Ayurveda, mental well-being is not simply the absence of mental illness but a state of optimal balance and clarity. Mano drishti or mental perspective, refers to the way an individual perceives and interacts with the world. A balanced mental perspective is believed to be cultivated through a lifestyle that honors the mind's need for calm, clarity, and vitality. Diet is one of the primary factors that can either enhance or inhibit mano drishti. By adhering to a diet rich in sattvic foods and avoiding tamasic items such as stale food, Ayurveda provides a holistic approach to cultivating a clear, positive, and balanced mental state. This philosophy suggests that by consciously choosing fresh, nutritious, and energetically pure foods, individuals can foster a mental state that is more resilient to stress and less susceptible to negative emotions.

This article seeks to explore the Ayurvedic view on stale food and its potential to impact mental clarity, emotional balance, and psychological health. By examining both classical Ayurvedic texts and modern research findings, this paper aims to deepen our understanding of how diet, particularly the consumption of tamasic or stale foods, affects mental perspective and cognitive function. Additionally, preventive and promotive measures rooted in Ayurveda, including dietary recommendations, lifestyle practices, and the use of certain herbs, will be reviewed. These insights are especially relevant in our contemporary context, where processed and preserved foods have become dietary norms, often at the expense of mental and emotional health. By incorporating Ayurvedic principles into daily life, individuals may find a practical path toward improved mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall well-being.

### **Understanding Stale Food According to Ayurveda :-**

In Ayurveda, food is classified based on its freshness, preparation, and energy. Fresh foods are considered sattvic, meaning they promote clarity, harmony, and vitality. Stale food, however, falls under the tamasic category, which is thought to dull the mind and increase mental lethargy. Tamasic foods lack vitality and are often processed, refrigerated, or preserved, meaning they are no longer in their natural, energetic state.

The consumption of tamasic foods can disrupt the mind's balance of sattva (clarity), rajas (activity), and tamas (inertia). Sattva is associated with mental clarity, rajas with dynamism, and tamas with dullness. Stale food elevates tamas, leading to feelings of sluggishness, negative emotions, and reduced mental clarity. Ayurveda suggests that tamasic foods are difficult to digest, producing ama (toxins) that impair both physical health and mental acuity.

### **Method and Materials :-**

This study involves an extensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, which discuss the effects of diet on the mind. Research articles in modern journals exploring the link between diet, especially stale and processed foods, and mental health are also referenced. Observational studies that examine the lifestyle and dietary habits aligned with Ayurvedic principles provide additional context.

To understand Ayurveda's dietary recommendations, a qualitative analysis of Ayurvedic dietary guidelines and mental health recommendations was conducted. This approach allowed for a comparison between Ayurvedic insights on stale food and modern dietary practices, particularly the consumption of preserved foods and their effects on mental well-being.

### **Preventive Measures :-**

Preventive measures in Ayurveda aim to avoid tamasic food consumption, thereby protecting mental health. Ayurveda strongly advocates a diet rich in fresh, sattvic foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and milk, which enhance mental clarity and stability. By adhering to a sattvic diet, one can cultivate a balanced mental outlook and avoid the lethargy and negative emotions linked to tamasic foods.

The Ayurvedic routine, or dinacharya, also plays a critical role in mental health. Regular

meal times, avoidance of overeating, and prioritizing fresh meals are encouraged to maintain optimal digestion and mental clarity. Ayurveda also emphasizes seasonal regimens, or ritucharya, recommending specific foods during each season to align with natural changes. For instance, warm, light foods are favored in winter to counterbalance the heavy, kapha-inducing environment.

### **Promotive Measures :-**

To promote mental clarity and mitigate the effects of tamasic food, Ayurveda recommends incorporating sattvic foods and practices. A sattvic diet, which is rich in fresh, whole foods, has been shown to support not only physical vitality but also mental resilience and emotional stability. Sattvic foods include fresh fruits, leafy greens, legumes, whole grains, and dairy products that are unprocessed and consumed shortly after preparation.

Ayurvedic herbs such as Brahmi, Ashwagandha, and Shankhapushpi have been used for centuries to promote cognitive health and reduce stress. Brahmi is known for enhancing memory and concentration, while Ashwagandha supports mental resilience by reducing stress and fatigue. Shankhapushpi is regarded as a brain tonic that can improve mental clarity and focus, counteracting the tamasic effects of stale food.

In addition to diet, Ayurveda encourages mindfulness practices, such as meditation and yoga, to enhance mental clarity and promote emotional balance. These practices cultivate a calm and focused mind, making it less susceptible to the negative effects of tamasic foods

## **II. DISCUSSION :-**

The Ayurvedic perspective on stale food and mental health highlights the deep interconnection between diet and mental well-being. Stale or tamasic foods are believed to promote inertia, making the mind sluggish and impairing decision-making abilities. This aligns with modern research suggesting that processed foods, often low in nutrients and high in preservatives, are associated with mood disorders, fatigue, and mental fog.

From a doshic perspective, tamasic foods increase kapha, leading to lethargy, while aggravating vata, which can cause mental instability. This interaction between food and mental health reflects a unique approach to holistic wellness, where diet is as important to mental health as it is to physical health. By focusing on

fresh, sattvic food, Ayurveda offers a pathway for improving mental clarity and emotional balance, particularly relevant in today's world where processed foods are prevalent.

The inclusion of mindfulness and herbal remedies further supports mental health by enhancing cognitive function and resilience. This combination of dietary and lifestyle practices makes Ayurveda a holistic system for mental well-being, addressing not just physical but also psychological needs.

### III. CONCLUSION :-

In conclusion, Ayurveda offers a comprehensive understanding of how diet affects mental health, especially through the lens of stale, tamasic foods. Stale food is associated with tamas guna, which promotes mental dullness and negative emotions. The Ayurvedic approach emphasizes the consumption of fresh, sattvic foods to promote mental clarity, emotional balance, and resilience.

The preventive and promotive measures suggested in Ayurveda—including a sattvic diet, regular routines, seasonal eating, and the use of specific herbs—provide effective tools for enhancing mental well-being. By recognizing the effects of stale food on the mind and adopting Ayurvedic practices, individuals can improve both physical health and mental outlook. This article contributes to a growing awareness of the role diet plays in mental health, with Ayurveda offering time-tested strategies for achieving holistic wellness.

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