

Food as the Meeting Point of Healing Traditions: Perspectives from Indian Knowledge Systems, Naturopathy, and Modern Science

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Abstract: Food has long stood at the centre of human well-being. This study explores the place of food as the connecting principle among Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern nutrition. It examines how the ancient idea of Āhāra as the source of prāṇa aligns with clinical and scientific views on metabolism, circulation, and vitality. The research follows a qualitative and analytical method, drawing from classical texts such as the Caraka Saṃhitā, institutional reports, and peer-reviewed medical studies. The findings show four shared themes: food as the regulator of internal flow, obstruction and its removal through proper combinations, restoration through cleansing and moderation, and the convergence of traditional and scientific reasoning. Evidence from naturopathic practice and modern biomedicine demonstrates that natural, plant-based, and balanced diets improve vascular health, regulate metabolism, and support emotional stability. The study concludes that food is not merely a substance for survival but the living medium through which body, mind, and environment maintain harmony. The integration of these perspectives offers a sustainable and holistic model of preventive and restorative health.

Keywords: Āhāra; Prāṇa; Indian Knowledge Systems; Naturopathy; Food and Flow

1. Introduction

Nutrition is the essential necessity for human survival. It enhances physical fitness, sustains energy levels, and maintains equilibrium between internal and external environments. In Indian Knowledge Systems, Āhāra (food) is seen as a crucial pillar of health, alongside Nidrā (sleep) and Brahmacharya (self-restraint). The Caraka Saṃhitā theorizes that a nourishing diet strengthens all physical tissues, supports prāṇa, and preserves mental clarity (National Institute of Ayurveda, 2010). Gupta and Yadav (2021) observed that inadequacies in nutrition, behaviour, and cognition lead to disease. Maithani and Bhatt (2025) established that suitable food, ingested in the proper quantity and at the appropriate time, sustains the balance of doṣa and agni. Sabnis (2012) and Radheshyam et al. (2025) highlighted that incompatible combinations, referred to as Viruddha Āhāra, result in accumulation and obstructions in movement channels. These writings illustrate that consumption in Indian philosophy has both material and ethical-spiritual aspects.

Naturopathy upholds this principle in a clinical setting. The Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (2023) recorded that a natural diet, fasting, and lifestyle adjustments form the basis of treatment. Edla et al. (2016) found that integrated naturopathy and Edla et al. (2016) discovered that combined naturopathy and yoga interventions reduce blood pressure and decrease the need for medication. e diminishes cardiovascular risk and improves vitality. These results support the conventional belief that nutritional balance restores the fundamental rhythm of life. Modern nutrition supports this viewpoint. Gupta (2004) and the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative CVD Collaborators (2018) have noted that suboptimal dietary habits significantly

contribute to the rising incidence of lifestyle illnesses in India. Also, Wei et al. (2021) found that diets rich in fiber and antioxidants improve endothelial function and delay vascular deterioration, while processed foods and trans fats aggravate inflammation. These findings illustrate the conventional Indian classification of food into Sāttvika, Rājasika, and Tāmasika, linking nutrition to both physical and mental conditions. Modern clinical frameworks also adhere to these concepts.

Sane and Hanchate (2014) elucidated the Sampūrṇa Hṛdaya Śuddhikaraṇa technique, which amalgamates purification with a simplified food protocol for cardiovascular health. Subsequent researches (Sane et al., 2017; Sane et al., 2018; Sane et al., 2020) demonstrated that employing natural therapies to modify dietary habits can reduce cholesterol and enhance oxygen levels. The University of Patanjali (2025) affirmed that natural cuisine enhances physical health, mental tranquillity, and longevity. The message remains consistent across all systems. Culinary sustenance dictates the rhythm of existence. It facilitates the circulation of prāṇa, maintains equilibrium, and connects the body to the mind. This study, Food as the Convergence of Healing Traditions, examines the common ideas among Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and contemporary science. It seeks to illustrate that nutritional balance promotes life equilibrium and that a wholesome diet improves Vigor, cognition, and general health.

Scope of the Study

This study explores the relationship between food and health as viewed through three major frameworks: Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern nutrition. It

examines how each of these traditions explains the role of food in maintaining vitality, balance, and circulation.

The study covers classical Indian concepts such as *Āhāra*, *Agni*, and *Srotas*, which describe food as the carrier of energy and the regulator of internal flow. It also includes research from naturopathy that highlights the curative power of natural diet, fasting, and yoga-based routines. In addition, it reviews findings from modern scientific studies that analyse the biochemical and physiological effects of food on metabolism and vascular health.

The focus is on identifying the shared ideas that link these systems. The discussion connects philosophical insights from ancient texts with practical evidence from contemporary health research. Cardiovascular and metabolic health are considered as natural results of this balance.

The scope remains interpretive rather than experimental. It seeks to understand how food, when seen as both material and moral, becomes a meeting point where tradition and science converge for the preservation of health and harmony.

2. Literature Review

Food has long been recognised as both nourishment and medicine in nearly all civilisations. In Indian Knowledge Systems, *Āhāra* is described as the first foundation of health and the main source of vitality. Classical authorities such as the *Caraka Saṃhitā* and *Suśruta Saṃhitā* describe food as the very support of life, sustaining *doṣa*, *dhātu*, and *agni* (National Institute of Ayurveda, 2010). The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* states that purity of food leads to purity of mind, and thus connects eating with thought and conduct.

Gupta and Yadav (2021) discussed this relation through the idea of *Trividha Roga Āyatana*, explaining that faulty food, wrong actions, and disturbed cognition together create disease. Maithani and Bhatt (2025) observed that right food maintains the fire of digestion and sustains the smooth movement of internal channels. Sabnis (2012) and Radheshyam et al. (2025) wrote about *Viruddha Āhāra*, or incompatible food, showing how unsuitable mixtures may produce internal obstruction.

Naturopathic thought, recorded in the Annual Report of the Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (2023), holds diet therapy and fasting as the chief means of restoring the natural order of the body. Edla et al. (2016) reported that an integrated programme of natural diet and yoga reduced blood pressure and the need for medication among hypertensive patients. Shetty et al. (2025) also found that long-term adherence to a plant-based, low-salt diet improved metabolic markers. Seely et al. (2013) observed a notable fall in cardiovascular risk scores among those following a regulated naturopathic lifestyle.

Research by Sane and Hanchate (2014) on the *Sampūrṇa Hṛdaya Śuddhikaraṇa* method recorded better vitality and quality of life in patients with heart weakness. Later studies by Sane et al. (2017, 2018, 2020) showed improved oxygenation and lipid balance after heart-failure reversal therapy based on cleansing and simple food routines. Panda

and Kar (2025) described similar progress from diets that limited oil and salt and stressed natural freshness.

Modern nutrition research confirms many of these observations. Wei et al. (2021) found that diets rich in fibre and natural antioxidants preserve the inner lining of arteries and regulate lipid metabolism. Gupta (2004) and the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative CVD Collaborators (2018) warned that processed food and refined sugar are major causes of lifestyle disorders such as hypertension and obesity.

Across these writings a single principle stands clear: food governs the rhythm of life. It influences not only the circulation of blood but also the clarity of mind. Indian Knowledge Systems regard food as *prāṇa* in material form. Naturopathy treats it as the prime medicine that awakens the body's inner strength. Modern science recognises it as the regulator of metabolism and vascular health. Together they affirm that food remains the meeting ground where healing begins and balance is maintained.

Objectives

The present study has two main objectives:

- 1) To examine how food (*Āhāra*) functions as the foundation of vitality, balance, and circulation in Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern nutrition.
- 2) To explore the shared principles across these traditions that view food as the primary means of sustaining health, preventing disease, and restoring natural harmony

3. Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative and analytical method of enquiry. It seeks to interpret food as the foundation of vitality and circulation as understood in Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern nutrition. The work does not attempt measurement or statistical comparison. Instead, it traces conceptual and clinical continuities across these three bodies of knowledge.

Analytical Approach

The analysis followed a comparative framework. Each tradition was examined for its understanding of four recurring themes:

- 1) The role of food in sustaining flow and vitality.
- 2) The causes of obstruction and imbalance.
- 3) The means of natural cleansing and restoration.
- 4) The convergence between philosophical and physiological principles.

Limitations

The study depends on secondary sources and translations. Subtle meanings in Sanskrit terms such as *Āhāra*, *Prāṇa*, and *Agni* may lose precision when expressed in modern language. Variations in naturopathic practice across institutions restrict uniform interpretation. The inquiry remains interpretive and thematic rather than experimental.

Despite these boundaries, the method provides a coherent picture of how ancient and modern sciences together affirm

food as the central medium through which health, circulation, and consciousness are maintained.

4. Results and Discussion

The study brought together literary, clinical, and observational evidence from Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern science. Four recurring themes were identified through the synthesis of sources: (1) food as the regulator of flow, (2) obstruction and its removal, (3) restoration through natural cleansing and moderation, and (4) convergence of traditional and scientific thought.

1) Food as the Regulator of Flow

In Indian Knowledge Systems, the human body is viewed as a network of channels (srotas) through which rasa and prāṇa circulate. The Caraka Saṃhitā teaches that wholesome food alone preserves this internal movement, while excess or impurity disturbs it. Such obstruction is termed srotorodha or the blocking of natural passage. Gupta and Yadav (2021) related this to the three causes of disorder—food, behaviour, and thought—showing how imbalance in diet affects the whole system.

Modern nutrition studies echo this logic. Wei et al. (2021) observed that diets rich in natural fibre, antioxidants, and plant matter maintain the elasticity of arteries and regulate lipids. In contrast, refined sugars and trans-fats induce oxidative stress and stiffness in the vascular walls. These findings parallel the classical claim that the purity of Āhāra ensures the free movement of energy and blood.

2) Obstruction and Its Removal

Texts such as those studied by Sabnis (2012) and Radheshyam et al. (2025) describe Viruddha Āhāra, or incompatible food, as the chief source of obstruction. When food is taken in the wrong quantity or combination, it produces residues that hinder flow. Maithani and Bhatt (2025) noted that when agni, the digestive fire, is weakened by unsuitable food, nutrients remain partly transformed, leading to congestion within the channels.

Contemporary reports confirm this connection between incompatibility and accumulation. The Eternal Hospital (2024) summary on non-invasive methods for artery care lists dietary reform, fasting, and gentle activity as primary corrective measures. These echo the śodhana practices of purification prescribed in Indian medicine, where removal of cause precedes any form of treatment.

3) Restoration through Natural Cleansing and Moderation

The naturopathic view gives practical shape to this idea. The Annual Report of the Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (2023) identified diet regulation, fasting, and rest as the central means of recovery. Edla et al. (2016) found that an integrated programme of natural food and yoga practice reduced blood pressure and medicine dependence. Seely et al. (2013) reported a decline in cardiovascular risk when participants adopted a diet based on plant sources and regular physical movement.

Clinical studies by Sane and Hanchate (2014) on the Sampūrṇa Hṛdaya Śuddhikarṇa therapy showed measurable improvement in well-being among patients with chronic heart weakness. Later research by Sane et al. (2017, 2018, 2020) recorded improved lipid levels and oxygen use following food-based cleansing and reversal programmes. These results support the ancient conviction that moderation and purification in food restore the body's natural rhythm.

4) Convergence of Traditional and Scientific Thought

Though their language differs, all three traditions affirm a single idea: the health of the arteries mirrors the purity of food and the order of living. Indian Knowledge Systems describe this as Āhāra-śuddhi, the moral and physical purity of diet. Naturopathy teaches the same principle through balance of rest, exercise, and natural food. Modern physiology defines it through improved endothelial function and reduced inflammation (Wei et al., 2021).

The University of Patanjali (2025) emphasised that a natural diet nourishes both body and mind, showing that circulation extends beyond the physical. The unity of these traditions lies in the belief that food governs vitality, clarity, and longevity. When food is taken with awareness and purity, flow remains unbroken and healing becomes natural.

The synthesis of textual, clinical, and experimental knowledge reveals food as the central medium of health. Wholesome and natural food maintains flow; incompatible food obstructs it; purification restores it; and balanced living preserves it. The unity of Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and scientific nutrition confirms that the regulation of diet remains the most natural way to sustain circulation, vitality, and emotional steadiness.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The study has shown that food remains the most enduring bridge between human vitality and the natural world. Across Indian Knowledge Systems, naturopathy, and modern nutrition, the idea of Āhāra as the foundation of health finds both textual reverence and scientific validation. Classical literature views food as prāṇa in material form, sustaining the circulation of life through purity and moderation. Naturopathy extends this belief into practice, where diet, fasting, and rest are not secondary aids but primary instruments of healing. Modern research adds a physiological dimension, confirming that balanced diets improve endothelial function, regulate metabolism, and prevent vascular degeneration (Wei et al., 2021; Seely et al., 2013; Edla et al., 2016).

The synthesis of these traditions reveals a unified understanding: that the flow of blood, energy, and awareness are interdependent. When food is wholesome and taken with restraint, internal order is preserved. When it is excessive, incompatible, or processed, both flow and consciousness become disturbed. Thus, every act of eating carries moral and biological consequence. The concept of Āhāra-śuddhi implies not only clean food but also clean thought and intention, anticipating what modern psychology describes as the link between nutrition and emotion.

For present society, this integrated vision holds practical and ethical meaning. The growing burden of lifestyle disorders calls for prevention that is neither mechanical nor merely clinical. The return to natural food, rhythmic living, and mindful intake can serve as the first step in restoring balance. Indian Knowledge Systems remind that health is a state of harmony among the inner and outer flows; naturopathy offers the means to reclaim this harmony through practice; and modern science affirms its measurable results.

The study concludes that food is not only a means of nourishment but a medium of order, awareness, and continuity of life. When traditions and sciences meet at this point, they reveal that the path to healing lies not in invention but in remembrance-of how simple, natural, and moderate living once sustained both heart and mind in equal rhythm.

Acknowledgements and Funding Disclosure:

This study was undertaken as part of the *Naturopathy Handbook Series: Food and Sleep Habits*, with funding support from the Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN), Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.

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