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UNANI DIETOTHERAPY (*ILAJ BILGHIZA*) AND YOGIC DIET: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND INTEGRATION FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH

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Abstract

Nutrition plays a critical role in maintaining health and preventing disease. Both Unani medicine and Yoga emphasize the importance of diet as a foundational aspect of well-being, albeit with different philosophical underpinnings and practical applications. Unani nutrition is rooted in the balance of humors and emphasizes the qualities of food in terms of temperament, while the Yogic diet focuses on the purity of food and its impact on the mind and body. This paper aims to compare the dietary principles of Unani medicine and Yogic practices, exploring their commonalities and differences. We also propose an integrated dietary plan that combines the strengths of both systems to optimize health and well-being. Through this comparative analysis, we seek to provide a holistic approach to nutrition that aligns with both physical health and mental clarity.

Keywords: Unani nutrition, Yogic diet, Humoral balance, Sattvic diet, Temperament, Holistic Health, Integrative diet, *Ilaj bilGhiza*

Introduction

Diet is a cornerstone of health and wellness, influencing not only physical vitality but also mental clarity and emotional balance. Both Unani medicine and Yoga, two ancient systems of health care, place significant emphasis on dietary practices as essential components of a holistic approach to well-being.

Unani medicine, , approaches nutrition through the lens of humoral theory, which posits that health is maintained through the balance of the body's four humors: blood (sanguine), phlegm (phlegmatic), yellow bile (choleric), and black bile (melancholic) (Razi, 1998; Khan, 2011). The Unani system classifies foods based on their temperament (mizaj) and their effects on these humors, prescribing diets tailored to an individual's specific needs (Khan, 2011; Singh et al., 2015). This branch of Unani medicine dealing with the treatment and prevention of diseases through modification in diet is referred to as *Ilaj bilGhiza*, commonly known as Dietotherapy.

In contrast, the Yogic diet, which originates from the ancient Indian tradition of Yoga, is deeply connected to the concept of sattva—purity and harmony (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017; Reddy, 2018). The Yogic diet emphasizes the consumption of sattvic foods, which are believed to promote clarity of mind, balance, and spiritual growth. This diet typically includes fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and dairy, while avoiding foods that are considered tamasic (dull and lethargic) or rajasic (stimulating and restless) (Jain, 2015; Gupta et al., 2019).

This paper seeks to compare and contrast the dietary principles of Unani medicine and the Yogic tradition, examining how they can be integrated to create a comprehensive dietary plan that supports optimal health and well-being. By understanding the unique contributions of each system, we can develop an integrative approach that addresses the nutritional needs of the body while also fostering mental and spiritual health.

Unani Nutrition: Principles and Practices

Unani medicine is based on the humoral theory, which holds that the balance of the body's four humors is essential for maintaining health. Each humor is associated with specific qualities—hot, cold, moist, and dry—and the balance or imbalance of these qualities determines an individual's temperament (mizaj) (Razi, 1998; Khan, 2011).

1. Dietary Classification in Unani Medicine

Unani nutrition classifies foods based on their effects on the body's humors and temperament. Foods are categorized as hot or cold, and moist or dry, and are prescribed according to the individual's unique Mizaj. For example:

Food Type	Examples	Effects on Body	Recommended for
Hot and Moist	Meat, milk, butter	Increases warmth and moisture	Cold and dry temperament (melancholic)
Cold and Dry	Barley, lettuce, fruits	Decreases warmth and moisture	Hot and moist temperament (sanguine)
Balanced	Various combinations	Maintains balance of humors	General health balance

- **Balanced Diet:** A balanced Unani diet aims to maintain the harmony of the humors by combining foods that complement each other, such as pairing hot foods with cold foods to balance their effects (Khan, 2011).

2. Therapeutic Role of Diet in Unani Medicine

Diet is not only seen as a means of sustenance but also as a therapeutic tool in Unani medicine, known as *Ilaj bilGhiza*. Specific dietary regimens are prescribed for the prevention and treatment of diseases. For example:

Therapeutic Tool	Description	Examples
Ghazala (Herbal Drinks)	Herbal infusions and decoctions used to balance the humors and treat conditions	Shatavari, Chamomile
Dietary Modifications	Specific diets to manage chronic conditions and support health	Diets for diabetes, hypertension etc.

Ilaj bilGhiza emphasizes moderation and the avoidance of excesses, which aligns with the broader Unani principle of maintaining balance in all aspects of life (Khan, 2011).

Yogic Diet: Concepts and Applications

The Yogic diet is rooted in the principles of sattva (purity and harmony) and aims to support both physical health and spiritual growth (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017; Reddy, 2018). It is designed to purify the body and mind, promoting clarity, vitality, and peace.

1. The Sattvic Diet

The Sattvic diet is central to Yogic nutrition and is believed to cultivate a calm and peaceful mind, which is essential for spiritual practice. Key components of the Sattvic diet include:

Food Category	Examples	Benefits
Fresh Fruits and Vegetables	Apples, carrots, spinach	Provides essential nutrients and promotes mental clarity
Whole Grains and Legumes	Brown rice, oats, lentils	Provides sustained energy and grounding
Nuts and Seeds	Almonds, flaxseeds	Supports brain health and physical strength
Dairy	Milk, ghee	Nourishes the body and calms the mind

2. The Role of Diet in Yoga Practice

In the Yogic tradition, diet is seen as an essential aspect of a holistic lifestyle that supports the practice of Yoga. The food consumed is believed to influence not only physical health but also the mind and emotions:

Dietary Aspect	Description	Examples
Purity and Digestion	Easy-to-digest foods that support physical health and mental clarity	Steamed vegetables, soups
Mind-Body Connection	Foods that enhance vitality and focus for meditation and Yoga practice	Fresh fruits, whole grains
Ethical Considerations	Emphasis on vegetarianism and foods that cause minimal harm	Plant-based meals, non-violent food practices

Comparative Analysis of Unani and Yogic Diets

While Unani and Yogic dietary principles differ in their philosophical foundations and classifications, they share common goals in promoting health and balance. This section compares key aspects of both dietary systems.

1. Philosophical Foundations

Aspect	Unani Medicine	Yogic Diet
Focus	Balance of humors and individual temperament (Razi, 1998; Khan, 2011)	Purity of food and its impact on the mind (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017; Gupta et al., 2019)

2. Food Classification

Aspect	Unani Medicine	Yogic Diet
Classification	Hot, cold, moist, dry (Khan, 2011)	Sattvic, Rajasic, Tamasic (Jain, 2015; Gupta et al., 2019)

3. Dietary Practices

Aspect	Unani Medicine	Yogic Diet
Emphasis	Moderation, balance, therapeutic use of food (Zulkifle et al., 2012)	Foods that support Yoga practice, light and easily digestible (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017)

4. Integration Potential

Both systems value the importance of diet in maintaining health and well-being, offering complementary approaches that can be integrated to provide a more holistic dietary plan. The combination of Unani's focus on individual temperament with Yoga's emphasis on

mental clarity can create a diet that is both personalized and spiritually enriching (Khan, 2011; Mishra & Tiwari, 2017).

Proposed Integrated Diet Plan

Based on the comparative analysis, we propose an integrated diet plan that combines the principles of Unani nutrition and the Yogic diet. This plan aims to optimize both physical health and mental well-being.

1. Dietary Guidelines

- **Morning:** Begin the day with a light, Sattvic breakfast that includes fresh fruits, whole grains, and herbal tea. This supports digestion and mental clarity (Jain, 2015; Gupta et al., 2019).
- **Midday:** For lunch, incorporate Unani principles by balancing hot and cold foods according to the individual's temperament. Include a variety of vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, complemented by a small portion of dairy or plant-based protein (Khan, 2011; Singh et al., 2015).
- **Evening:** Dinner should be light and Sattvic, consisting of easily digestible foods such as steamed vegetables, soups, and light grains like quinoa or millet (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017).
- **Snacks:** Opt for nuts, seeds, and fresh fruits that align with both Unani and Yogic principles, providing sustained energy and mental focus (Jain, 2015).

2. Herbal and Supplement Recommendations

- **Unani Herbal Infusions:** Incorporate herbal teas made from *Asparagus racemosus* (*Shatavari*) or Chamomile, which can support digestion, balance the humors, and promote relaxation (Murtaza et al., 2020).
- **Yogic Supplements:** Consider supplements like spirulina or chlorella for their nutritional density and detoxifying properties, aligning with the Sattvic principles of purity and vitality (Mishra & Tiwari, 2017; Gupta et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Integrating Unani principle of *Ilaj bilGhiza* and Yogic dietary practices provides a comprehensive approach to health that addresses both physical and mental well-being. By combining the Unani focus on temperamental balance with the Yogic emphasis on purity and clarity, individuals can benefit from a holistic dietary plan that supports overall health and spiritual growth. This integrated approach offers a valuable framework for achieving optimal health in a balanced and harmonious way.

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