



Review Article

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## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF *KSHUDHA VEGA DHARANA* AND EATING DISORDERS: BRIDGING *AYURVEDA* AND MODERN SCIENCE

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### Abstract

### Background

The suppression of hunger (*Kshudha Vega Dharana*) is addressed as a significant health concern in both Ayurvedic and modern medical traditions. In *Ayurveda*, *Kshudha* (hunger) is considered an *Adharaniya Vega*—a natural urge that should never be suppressed—due to its vital role in sustaining *Agni* (digestive fire), maintaining *Dosha* balance, and preserving mental well-being. In contrast, contemporary medical science identifies hunger suppression as a key contributing factor to the development of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

### Objectives

To explore and compare Ayurvedic and modern biomedical perspectives on hunger suppression and its psychosomatic consequences, with the goal of fostering a holistic understanding of eating disorders.

### Methods

A conceptual review was conducted by analyzing classical Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Sushruta Samhita*, focusing on the concept of *Kshudha Vega Dharana*. This was supplemented with a review of contemporary scientific literature related to hunger physiology, neuropsychology, and the etiology of eating disorders.

## Results

Both Ayurvedic and modern frameworks identify hunger suppression as a disruptor of physiological and psychological homeostasis. *Ayurveda* attributes this to *Vata* aggravation, *Agni Dushti*, and disturbance of *Manovaha Srotas*, leading to symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, emotional instability, and cognitive impairment. Similarly, modern science links hunger suppression to hypoglycemia, neurotransmitter imbalances, emotional dysregulation, and the onset of clinical eating disorders.

## Conclusion

There is a significant convergence between Ayurvedic and scientific understandings of the consequences of hunger suppression. Both systems highlight the interconnectedness of physical and mental health and emphasize the importance of respecting natural hunger cues. Integrating these perspectives supports a holistic, mind-body approach to preventing and managing eating disorders.

## Keywords

*Ayurveda*, *Kshudha Vega* (Hunger Suppression), *Vata Dosha*, *Agni Dushti*, Eating Disorders, Mental Health, Psychosomatic Disorders, Neurophysiology

## Introduction

*Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes balance in all aspects of life. The human body is believed to function in harmony with natural biological signals, referred to as *Vega*. These are categorized into two types: *Dharaniya Vega* (to be controlled) and *Adharaniya Vega* (not to be suppressed).<sup>1</sup> This is a natural detoxification process by which the body is trying to preserve itself. *Vegas* not only keep the body but also the mind in a healthy status when addressed in proper time. Among these, *Kshudha Vega*, or the natural urge for hunger, is considered essential for sustaining life and maintaining homeostasis. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* categorize hunger as an *Adharaniya Vega*—an urge that should not be suppressed. *Kshudha* (Hunger) is governed by *Jatharagni* (digestive fire), which plays a key role in both physical health and mental equilibrium. Suppressing this natural urge is believed to cause imbalances not only in the body (*Sharira*) but also in the mind (*Manas*).<sup>2,3</sup>

In contrast, modern medicine highlights the suppression of hunger, often due to dieting, stress, or unhealthy eating habits, as a major contributing factor to psychiatric

conditions known as eating disorders. These include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder, each characterized by disturbed eating behaviors and substantial psychological distress.<sup>4</sup> This article explains the psychophysiological consequences of hunger suppression from both Ayurvedic and scientific perspectives.

### Need of Study

The suppression of hunger (*Kshudha Vega Dharana*) is a significant concern in both Ayurvedic and contemporary medical systems, yet its full impact on physical and mental health remains underexplored. In *Ayurveda*, hunger suppression disrupts the balance of *Agni* (digestive fire) and mental equilibrium, while modern science connects this suppression to eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating. This study aims to integrate both Ayurvedic and modern scientific perspectives to better understand the psychosomatic impact of hunger suppression.

### Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the consequences of hunger suppression (*Kshudha Vega Dharana*) by integrating Ayurvedic principles and modern scientific understanding, with a focus on its impact on physical and mental health, particularly in relation to eating disorders.

### Objectives

- To examine the Ayurvedic understanding of *Kshudha Vega Dharana* and its implications.
- To explore the scientific basis and consequences of hunger suppression in the context of eating disorders.
- To integrate Ayurvedic and modern insights for a holistic understanding of psychosomatic health.

### Materials and Method

This conceptual review was conducted through an in-depth analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts, including *Charaka Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, and *Sushruta Samhita*, focusing on the concept of *Adharaniya Vega*, particularly *Kshudha Vega*. Additionally, a literature search of modern scientific databases was performed to gather contemporary research on hunger suppression, eating disorder, neurophysiology, and mental health.

### Literary review

## Understanding *Kshudha Vega Dharana* in *Ayurveda*

*Kshudha*, or hunger, is a signal from the body indicating the need for nourishment. According to *Ayurveda*, this urge is governed by *Agni* (digestive fire), the central digestive fire responsible for digestion, assimilation, and mental clarity. Suppressing hunger, either intentionally or due to lifestyle factors, is considered a violation of the Suppressing hunger leads to *Vata* vitiation, improper digestion (*Agni Dushti* - *Aama* formation), and mental imbalance through the disturbance of *Manovaha Srotas* (channels of the mind).<sup>2,5</sup>

कार्श्यदौर्बल्यवैतर्प्यमङ्गमर्दोऽरुचिर्भ्रमः ।

क्षुद्देगनिग्रहात्तत्र स्निग्धोष्णं लघु भोजनम् ॥ (च.सू.7/20)<sup>2</sup>

तन्द्राङ्गमर्दरुचिविभ्रमाः स्युः क्षुधोऽभिघातात् कृशता च दृष्टेः ॥ (सु.उ.55/15)

अङ्गभङ्गारुचिग्लानिकाश्च शूलभ्रमाः क्षुधः ।

तत्र योज्यं लघु स्निग्धमुष्णमल्पं च भोजनम् ॥ (अ.ह.सू.4/16)<sup>3</sup>

➤ There are following symptoms of *Kshudha Vegadharana*;

1. **Karsharya:** It is a one of the symptoms. Vitiated *Vata* dosha plays important role in pathogenesis along with vitiated *Pitta*. *Pachaka Pitta* leads to *Agni Dushti* as a result of which the *Dhatus* are not nourished properly leading to *Anuloma Kshaya* (depletion of body tissue).
2. **Daurbalya:** *Ojas* is the essence of seven *Dhatus* and is responsible for the strength of an individual. *Daurbalya* can occur due to *Ojo kshaya*.
3. **Vaivarnya:** It means discoloration i.e. not like the normal colour of *Twacha*. *Acharya Charaka* mentioned it under *Raktadatu Dushti*.
4. **Angamarda:** Due to *Rasadhatu Dushti* *Vedana Vishesh* is termed as *Angamarda*.
5. **Aruchi:** According to *Bhavaprakasha* *Aruchi* is not finding proper taste in tasteful and good food even if one is hungry. Impaired *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha* due to *Vegadharana* leads to tastelessness in tongue and hatred toward food.
6. **Bhrama:** *Madhavakara* explains the clinical feature of *Bhrama* as *Chakravat Bhramate* i.e. spinning movement of head. So, it is due to *Majjadhatu Dushti*.
7. **Angabhanga-** Whole body ache
8. **Glani** - Fatigue

## 9. *Shula*- Abdominal pain

These conditions are psychosomatic in nature, where bodily disorders lead to mental disturbances, and vice versa. Ayurveda emphasizes *Samadosha* (dosha balance), *Samagni*, and *Prasanna Atmendriya Manas* (mental clarity) as signs of health.<sup>6</sup>

### Hunger suppression in modern medicine

In modern medicine, hunger suppression, often caused by dieting, stress, or eating disorders, disrupts both physical and mental health. When the body's natural hunger signals are ignored or suppressed, it can lead to physiological consequences like metabolic imbalances, nutrient deficiencies, and digestive issues. From a psychological perspective, hunger suppression is linked to the development of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.<sup>7</sup>

In these conditions, hunger suppression can cause emotional distress, anxiety, and altered eating behaviors. Furthermore, prolonged hunger suppression is associated with disruptions in the brain's neurochemicals such as serotonin and dopamine which regulate appetite and mood, contributing to feelings of irritability, depression, and poor mental health.

### Eating disorders<sup>7</sup>

Eating disorders are significant mental health conditions characterized by distorted thoughts about food and problematic eating behaviors. This may involve eating much less or much more than necessary. They affect your body's ability to get proper nutrition. This can lead to health issues, such as heart and kidney problems, or sometimes even death.

Common types of eating disorders include:

- 1) **Binge-eating disorder** involves uncontrollable overeating, where individuals continue eating even after they are full, often until they feel uncomfortable. Afterward, they experience feelings of guilt, shame, and distress. It can result in weight gain and obesity.
- 2) **Bulimia nervosa** includes binge-eating followed by purging behaviors such as vomiting, using laxatives, excessive exercise, or fasting. Individuals may be underweight, normal weight, or overweight.
- 3) **Anorexia nervosa** is characterized by extreme food restriction, avoiding eating, or consuming very small amounts of specific foods. Often resulting in dangerous weight loss. It has the highest mortality rate of any mental health disorder.

## Psychosomatic and Neurological Impact

Hunger suppression in these disorders leads to:

- **Hypoglycemia**, impairing cognition and mood regulation.
- **Neurotransmitter imbalance**, especially serotonin and dopamine, affecting emotional stability.<sup>8</sup>
- **Cortisol elevation**, contributing to anxiety, depression, and insomnia.<sup>9</sup>

These clinical outcomes align with the Ayurvedic concepts of *Vata vitiation* and *Agni Dushti* causing mental distress.

## Discussion

### 1. Ayurvedic Perspective on *Kshudha Vega*

*Kshudha Vega*, the natural urge to eat, is governed by *Agni*. Suppressing hunger causes *Vata vitiation*, leading to *Chittodvega* (mental agitation), anxiety, and depression. It also impairs *Agni*, causing toxin buildup, which disrupts *Manovaha Srotas* and contributes to psychological disorders. This suppression is considered a factor in eating disorders.

### 2. Modern Understanding of Hunger and Eating Disorders

Modern physiology supports the role of regular nutrition in maintaining mental health. Hunger suppression leads to hypoglycemia, irritability, mood swings, and poor concentration, all of which are linked to eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. Chronic suppression impairs neurotransmitter function (serotonin, dopamine), leading to mental health issues.

### 3. Psychosomatic Interconnection

*Ayurveda* emphasizes the mind-body connection, with *Sharirika Doshas* influencing *Manasika Doshas* (*Rajas* and *Tamas*). Suppression of hunger increases *Rajas* (agitation) and *Tamas* (lethargy), disturbing the balance with *Sattva* (clarity and calmness) and causing emotional disturbances such as impulsivity, anxiety, and depression.

### 4. Lifestyle and Social Factors

Modern fast-paced routines, sedentary lifestyles, and societal pressures to conform to certain body ideals contribute to the suppression of hunger. This leads not only to physical

imbalances but also to emotional and psychological distress, often manifesting as eating disorders.

### Comparative Analysis: Ayurveda and Science

**Table no. 1:** The following table shows the comparative analysis of Ayurveda and modern scientific view of *Kshudha Vega dharana*;

Concept	Ayurvedic View	Modern Scientific View
Hunger Suppression	<i>Kshudha Vega Dharana</i> – causes <i>Vata</i> aggravation	Leads to neuroendocrine imbalance and mood issues
Digestive Impairment	<i>Agni Dushti</i> , formation of <i>Ama</i>	Malnutrition, impaired metabolism
Mental Disturbances	<i>Manovaha Srotas Dushti</i> , rise in <i>Rajas/Tamas</i>	Anxiety, depression, eating disorders
Systemic Weakness	<i>Ojas Kshaya</i> , <i>Daurbalya</i>	Fatigue, weakness, immune dysfunction
Behavioral Changes	<i>Aruchi</i> , <i>Glani</i> , <i>Bhrama</i>	Loss of appetite, guilt, obsessive thoughts

### Conclusion

*Kshudha* (hunger) is a vital natural urge essential for maintaining physical and mental balance. Its suppression (*Kshudha Vega Dharana*) disrupts *Agni*, aggravates and vitiates *Doshas* (especially *Vata*), and impairs *Manovaha Srotas*, contributing to psychosomatic disorders. Both Ayurveda and modern science recognize that chronic hunger suppression is a central factor in the development and progression of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. These conditions reflect deep imbalances in the mind-body connection, characterized by emotional distress, disordered behavior, and cognitive dysfunction.

*Ayurveda* emphasizes the importance of honoring natural urges to sustain harmony between *Sharira* (body) and *Manas* (mind). Psychosomatic health depends largely on food, the fundamental sustainer of life. Food enhances vitality, strength, memory, *Agni* (digestive fire), life span, *Ojas* (vital energy), mental clarity, and emotional stability. When consumed mindfully and timely, it promotes health; when denied, it leads to imbalance and disease.

Recognizing hunger as a sacred signal is essential for maintaining physical and mental harmony.

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