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## **The Alchemical Body: Nutritional Perspectives on Tantric Buddhist Practices**

*Elizabeth Lee*

Traditionally, the terms *Rasayana* in Indian yoga, *Duk Den* in Tibetan tantric practices, Outer Pill in Chinese Daoism, all refer to the path or an alchemy of extracting life-sustaining essence as a special food for the practitioner in the process of purifying, strengthening and transforming their physical and pranic (energetic) bodies towards a *yidam* body. These foods are often derived from pure metals, especially mercury and gold. We can trace metals such as silver, copper, lead etc., from the ancient alchemy records. We learnt from history that most human bodies are not strong enough to digest and absorb these heavy metal foods.

Today, we seldom see these ancient alchemy traditions being practiced. Instead these ancient wisdoms have been incorporated into Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Daoist medicine. However, a lot of these wisdoms are practiced in our everyday life unnoticed. For example, drinking water from gold, silver and copper containers not only provide the feeling of luxury but also serves an alchemy function because these metals are highest in electrical conductivities among the substances, and our body welcomes negative electro ions.



This article shares eight key concepts and knowledge that I have been practising, all of which were learnt from my great Indian, Chinese and Japanese teachers in the fields of Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Daoist medicine.

### **1. Definition of the word ‘food’**

Food here is defined as any nourishing substance that is taken into the body to sustain life, to provide energy, and to promote growth.

### **2. Food categories and channels to obtain a good quality food**

#### **a. Food for Mind – The Mind-Body Food**

We obtain food of our mind or consciousness from within ourselves. We can transform the quality of the Mind-Body Food through the means of renunciations, contemplations, surrender to higher purposes, meditations, compassion and philosophical (dharma) studies.

#### **b. Food for Life Force – The Pranic-Body Food**

We obtain from within ourselves—prana flows inside our body from the universe—air, sunshine, moonlight, and energy emitted from the other planets.

We can upgrade and increase the quality and amount of the Pranic-Body Food through various channels such as:

- Breathing practices to improve air intake quality and quantity. It improves the ability of inner prana circulations.

- Staying with positive and virtuous people to increase positive and higher frequency energies.
- Staying with great spiritual masters and practitioners to increase higher frequency and purer energies.
- Meditating to enhance and improves pranic flows.
- Creating favourable environments to obtain good and abundant fresh air by staying with a house with bigger windows, spending more time outdoor in nature and by wearing natural material clothes (skin is a large part of our physical body that intakes air and expels waste).
- Obtaining good sunshine since light is the most efficient energies for us to absorb. It is the cheapest and the most abundant good resources of light on the planet earth. The best time for absorbing sunshine is two hours right after the sunrise and two hours right before the sunset.

### **c. Food for Physical Body – The Physical Body Food**

Our physical body needs to take nutrition from outside of the body. We can improve the quality of our food by means of being,

- aware of the body needs.
- aware of food input in the mouth.
- aware of food applied on our skins and hairs (as form of shampoo, moisture, oils and lotions).
- aware of food inhaled through nostrils (as forms of smoke).

### **3. The three basic principles of food**

#### **Principle 1**

Mind, Pranic and Physical bodies are interdependent on one other. Junk food makes Physical body ill, and ill Physical body creates ill emotions, which weakens the Pranic body. Poorly-fed Mind body weakens the Pranic body and eventually manifests as illness in the Physical body.

## **Principle 2**

All wholesome foods are good for the physical body. However, not all good foods are suitable for us. Therefore, we need to be aware of our own body situation and choose the suitable food.

## **Principle 3**

Any intake taken repeatedly will become a medicine to our three bodies and bring significant impact to the bodies. Therefore, eating a greater variety of foods is the easiest way to avoid the physical bodies imbalances due to diet preference. The only food that human need to intake repeatedly and constantly to his/her physical body is Water.

### **4. Ten basic guidelines for taking in Physical Body Food are:**

- a. Eat less - always eat 70-80% full to avoid overworking the digestive system.
- b. Eat cooked food
  - Through correct method of cooking we can enjoy and take advantage of some properties in a particular food item while minimizing or eliminating other properties which is not suitable for our unique body situation.
  - Cooked food is easier for digestion.
  - Cooked food will kill most of the bacteria that stay inside or on the surface of the plant or meat so we can avoid food poisoning.

A raw food diet can maximize the intake of energy and nutrition from food item in most cases. This is not always the case as it is better to eat tomato, for example, by cooking since it is only suitable for very strong body. The food ingredients obtained is also very clean.

- a. c. Eat lukewarm
  - Our body temperature is between 36-37 degree centigrade, and eating cold food creates additional workload for the digestive system which may cause indigestion or difficulties in absorption, which in long term will speed up aging of the digestive system.
  - Hot food will cause damages to the teeth and gum, and speed up aging of the teeth, our first frontier of the digestion process.

d. Eat fresh – For example, according to Ayurveda milk must be consumed within 24 hours after production. Today many people get gastric reactions to milk if consumed 24 hours after production. Unclean environment of production site and improper packaging, transportation and storage of the milk through the whole supply chain system can further worsen the quality of milk. Today there are many voices in the western societies against the intake of animal milk. In these countries, almost all animal milks are produced far away from the consumers.

e. Eat food when in season – for example, taking tropical fruits like mangoes or berries in winter time is not a healthy choice since mother nature designed these fruits to be consumed in hot, wet and humid regions. Consuming these fruits in dry and cold season will antagonise the body.

f. Eat at the right time - eat when 90-100% hungry. Do not snack all day long or eat when over-hungry. Both will harm the digestive system.

g. Eat with right combination of food and drinks – do not antagonise the body which in the long-term will lead to severe diseases related to skin, blood, infertility or immunity.

h. Eat according to individual body needs.

i. Eat clean.

j. Eat with gratitude.

## **5. Why Not Meat?**

According to legend, the great Tibetan Vajrayana master Tilopa could take fish alive and vomit the fish alive.

Therefore, if we become enlightened we can take a diet based on non-duality. There are few Vajrayāna practices that suggest that the intake of meat is necessary. The majority of practitioners can benefit more from a vegetarian-based diet.

Animal based food provide faster energy

Plant based food provide purer energy

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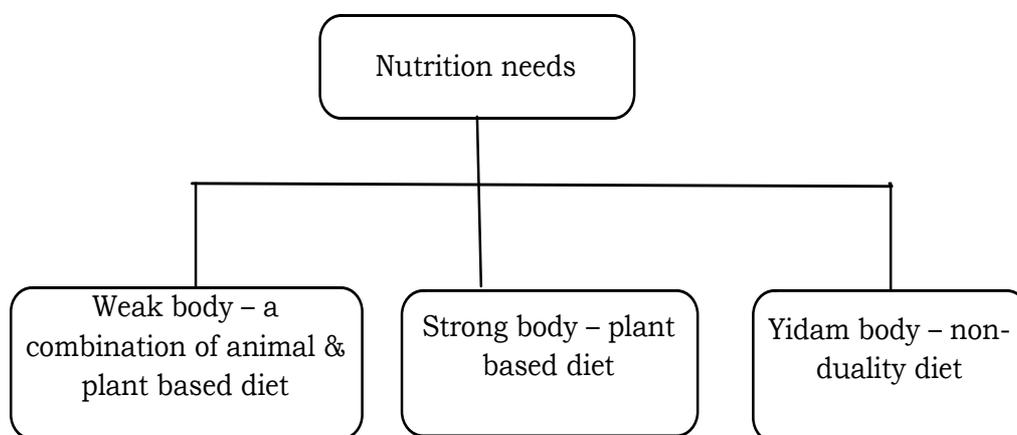
For example, shrimp feed on bacteria, faeces and dead bodies. Fish eat shrimp and human eats fish. Though both animal- and plant-based food may contain bad bacteria, meat consumers have higher chances of bacteria-poisoning.

Ancient alchemists proved that food provide purer energy which helps to open the chakras (energy centers in our pranic body) and lays the foundation to stronger inner recitation practices such as Kundalini or Tummo. Inner recitation practices generate great heat to burn off toxicities inside the body and speed up the transformation into a yidam body.



However, a pure plant-based consumer needs to have more knowledge of his/her food choice and eat more varieties to cover all the essential nutrition. A very weak body is at the risk of practising pure plant-based diet because the person requires an easy access to energy supply from the daily food intake. Such a body is not recommended to practise strong inner recitation practices.

It is therefore always most beneficial for the practitioner to practise consciousness and clear understanding of his/her own body conditions – both on food and their level of tantric practices.



## **6. The five problems**

### a. Food prepared without good energy:

- In Japan, it is very important that mother cooks and packs the food for the family members herself because mother possesses the most love for her husband and children.
- In eastern Bhutan, it is believed that there are “poison servers” who can poison others just by serving ordinary food.
- In general food prepared and served with loving kindness is good for digestion and absorption. Therefore, cook yourself or eat at home, which is always the best dining options.

### b. Too much intake of chili or spicy food:

- Must be taken in moderation and not during every meal.
- Intake of proper quantity can help remove excess vata (winds) from body and stimulate our appetite.
- Overeating causes depletion of energy.
- Red chili stimulates/attacks stomach and lung systems.
- Green chili stimulates/attacks liver system.

### c. Too much intake of six kinds of pungent vegetables - Garlic, Onion, Spring Onion, Shallot, Chives, Leeks:

- Smelly mouth skin faeces.
- Stimulates heart and brain too much and causes difficulties to concentrate at practices.
- When cooked they increase sexual desires.
- When raw they increase liver fire.

### d. Processed food – white sugar, white salt, packaged and canned food:

- Low or zero value in nutrition will only cause body to feel heavy and there are no benefits.

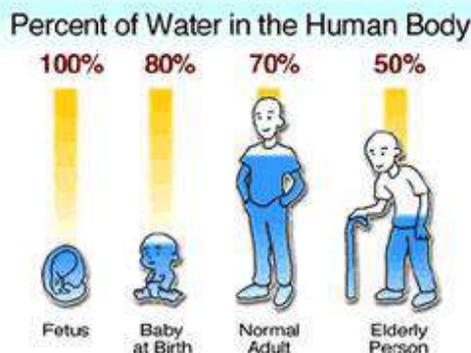
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- The chemicals added and the mechanical process to produce these items already turned these items into chemicals and are no longer real food.
- White rice and white flour are real food but do not have much nutrition value due to over processing.

### e. GMO (genetically modified organism) food

- There is no scientific proof telling us whether the GMO food is safe or not. However, mixing the animal DNA into vegetables implies that the energy absorbed from these foods are not so pure.

## **7. The single most important and basic food for Physical Body is: Water**



Water is the most important food for our physical body. Therefore, we need to learn and practice a healthy water intake routine in our daily life. The best quality of water is “no-root water” which includes dew, rain and snow in a clean atmosphere and environment.

During a warm day, keep the room temperature water (23-30c) in a copper, silver or gold container over night or for the minimum of 10 minutes. Drink this water since it can help to intake more negative ions which helps to detox the free wandering positive ion radicals from the body.

Positive ions are usually carbon dioxide molecules that have been stripped off an electron. They have been demonstrated to have harmful effects to our physical body when exposed to them in excess. This is particularly the case with lungs, respiratory tract and immune system.

The best medicine for our physical body is good quality water taken efficiently.

## **8. Super Food**

Super Food here is defined as, mild food which can be taken regularly (3-4 times a week), food that can bring special strong effect(s) to certain area(s) of the body, or can bring overall benefits to the health; and foods which are affordable and available.

### **Eight common Super Food:**

1. Best grain – e.g., one harvest per year semi-polished round-grained red rice
2. Ginger
3. Medicine for all disease – pesticide-free tea leaves
4. King of full nutrition food – e.g., walnuts
5. Queen of full nutrition food – e.g., jujubes and other black and red dates
6. Brown gold – e.g., cinnamon
7. High concentration and full proteins food – e.g., eggs from non-GMO, free ranch, healthy fed hen and common quails
8. Oil/fat fit for all body types – free from non-GMO, healthy fed cows.

In conclusion, a proper view of tantric practitioners to use food to power up our bodies for practice is to be authentic to ourselves and be wise to constantly absorb necessary knowledge to take care of the body. We are the best and most qualified doctors for ourselves. And we know that death does not take our lies but our life.

### **Appendix 1 - Ten super food from Daoist and Chinese medicine systems**



a. Mind Calming Treasure – Poria 茯苓



b. Top Longevity Treasure - Reishi mushrooms 靈芝

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c. Essence of samsara – goggie 枸杞



d. Detox and antioxidant king in vegetables - Chinese cabbage



e. Detox queen – Job'd tears 薏仁 (Do not mistake I for pearl barley)



f. Key medicines to a weak body - Chinese Yarm 山藥



g. Food from thousand years old tree - Ginko seeds 白果



h. Hormone balance king - Huangjing 黄精

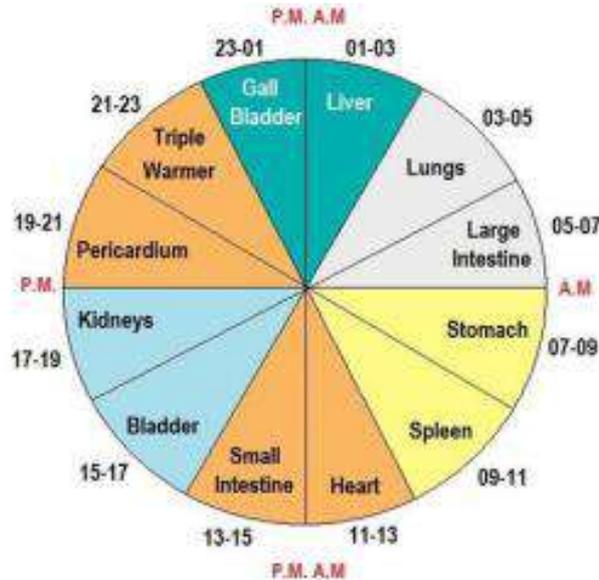


i. Hormone balance queen - Lily buds 百合花



j. Lotus family - seeds, core of seeds, root, leaves, flower

**Appendix 2 - Chinese Human Body Meridian System**  
**Daily energy flow in body according to time of passing organs**



**Note:**

- Liver meridian most active 1-3 am, it is the best time to sleep so the liver system can detox blood more efficiently.
- Lung meridian most active during 3-5 am, it is the best time to practice breathing to absorb air.
- 5-7 am is the best time for defecation
- 7-11 am is the best time for digestion of heavier food

**Appendix 3 - Food strengthen Body Chakras**

According to the Tibetan Vajrayana, 5-Chakra System Monthly energy flows (lung) in the body according to dates of passing chakras.

		(Black month)		
Upward	Sacral	kidneys, bladders, sex organs, adrenal gland	Black, Purple	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Upward	Solar Plexus	spleen, stomachs, pancreas, livers, gallbladder, gland	Yellow, Green	4 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup>
Upward	Heart	heart, small intestines, thymus gland	Red	7 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup>

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Upward	Throat	lungs, large intestines, thyroid gland	White	10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>
Upward	3 <sup>rd</sup> eye	autonomic nervous system, pituitary gland		13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>
		(White month)		
Downward	3 <sup>rd</sup> eye	autonomic nervous system, pituitary gland		16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup>
Downward	Throat	lungs, large intestines, thyroid gland	White	19 <sup>th</sup> - 21 <sup>th</sup>
Downward	Heart	heart, small intestines, thymus gland	Red	22 <sup>nd</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup>
Downward	Solar Plexus	spleen, stomachs, pancreas, livers, gallbladder, pancreas gland	Yellow, Green	25 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup>
Downward	Sacral	kidneys, bladders, sex organs, adrenal gland	Black, Purple	28 <sup>th</sup> - 31 <sup>th</sup>