

Food Consumption Habits of Students of Ayurveda College with Respect to Incompatible diet and Its Impact on Their Health: A Cross Sectional Study

Research Article

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Abstract

Introduction: Because of urbanization and the easy availability of market food, such as junk food and fast food, societal eating patterns are rapidly changing. Fast food is defined as food that is ready to eat. Fast food culture is becoming increasingly popular among the younger generation, and it is quickly becoming a mainstay of their diet. **Aim & objective:** The study is aimed to have an in depth analysis of fast food consumption habits and attitudes of Ayurveda college students and its impact on their health. **Material & Methods:** Survey study was conducted on 283 students studying at MGACHRC between the age group of 18-27 years through a *Viruddha Aahara* Consumption Questionnaire (VACQ). **Observation & Results:** The findings of the research lead to the conclusions that all the participants of age group of 18-27 years consume fast foods. The research indicates that factors like service, taste, variety and convenience are having an influence in driving students towards food outlets. It was also found that majority of participants were consuming fast foods less than two times per week. Due to regular consumption of fast food students suffered with various health hazards like hyperacidity, abdominal disturbances, skin disorders, obesity and hair fall. **Conclusion:** Students must be aware about serious consequences of fast foods and their negative effects on health and to be encouraged to eat a nutritious, safe, and healthy balanced diet.

Key Words: *Viruddha Aahara*, Incompatible food, Fast food, Fast food habits, Impact.

Introduction

Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of incompatible foods. *Viruddha Aahara* (incompatible food) consumption has increased significantly in recent decades. The literal meaning of the word *Viruddha* is the inverse. It implies that the addition of certain types of food that are dissimilar in properties, such as wrong in combination, performed incorrect food preparation, consumed in incorrect sequence of eating, consumed in improper dose, ingested in inappropriate place, time of day, season, and so on, can result in incompatible food (1).

Incompatible food is always *Apathyakar* or *Ahitkar*, i.e. unwholesome, causing vitiation of the bodily *dhatu*s (tissue) (2). *Pathya* is derived from the root word 'Patha,' which meaning "a way or channel. *Pathya* (wholesome) and *Apathya* (unwholesome) are classified as essential or regimes that do not adversely

influence the body and mind being *pathya* (wholesome) and those that do are *apathya* (unwholesome). In the texts of Ayurveda these terms are predominantly used for food articles (3).

Aahara (food) is the best medicine of all and is one of the three distinct of Ayurveda (*thrayo-upasthambha*). The *aahara* (food) and *vihara* (lifestyle) that are beneficial to an individual's channels, constitution, and strength are referred to as *pathya* (wholesome), while those that are not are referred to as *apathya* (unwholesome). Ayurveda's preventive and curative aspects revolve around the central themes of *pathya aahara* and *vihara*. Ayurveda emphasizes basic diet plan such as appropriate food, food combinations, methods of preparation, storage, eating environment, hygiene, and etiquette (4-5).

Overweight and obesity are on the rise as a result of poor diet and an inactive lifestyle, as well as excessive calorie consumption, particularly of fast food, snacks, and soft drinks, which is leading to chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes mellitus, heart diseases, cancers and overall increase in morbidity and mortality in later life. Obesity rates among adolescents have increased significantly, ranging from 10% to 30% (6). This could be avoided through following daily regime (*Dincharya*), seasonal regime (*Ritucharya*) healthy diet, and regular physical activity (7). Ayurveda students are also not untouched with fast food and other changed dietary habits. Considering this fact,

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a survey study was planned to know their food consumption habits and its impact on their health.

Aim

A survey study on food consumption habits of students learning in Ayurveda College with respect to incompatible diet and its impact on their health.

Objectives

- To find out among the students different choices regarding fast food & drinks.
- To understand frequency of consuming fast foods.
- To study influence of fast/junk foods on their health.

Material & methods

In the present study *Viruddha Ahara* Consumption Questionnaire (VACQ) was used developed by Ginode *et al.*,(4) with minor modifications. The questionnaire was provided to the second year BAMS to Final BAMS students, Interns and Post graduate students (JR2 & JR3) of age 18-27 years currently studying at Mahatma Gandhi Ayurveda College Hospital & Research Centre Salod (Hirapur) Wardha (MGACHRC) to collect the data regarding their food habits. It took 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire as shown in annexure 1 & 2.

The question number 1,2,5,6,7,8,9 and 10 included closed-ended answers of multiple choices and participants were asked to choose any one option. The question number 3 & 4 were open ended questions and participants were asked to choose the options provided in the annexure no. 2. Prior permission was taken from Institutional Ethical Committee (Ref no. MGACHRC/IEC/January-2022/432) for the conduction of the study.

Inclusion Criteria

All the students of BAMS Second year to Final Year, interns and post graduate students (JR2 & JR3) studying at MGACHRC between the age group of 18-27 years and willing to participate were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Students who were posted at other places or absent on the day of survey or consuming home-food were excluded from the study.

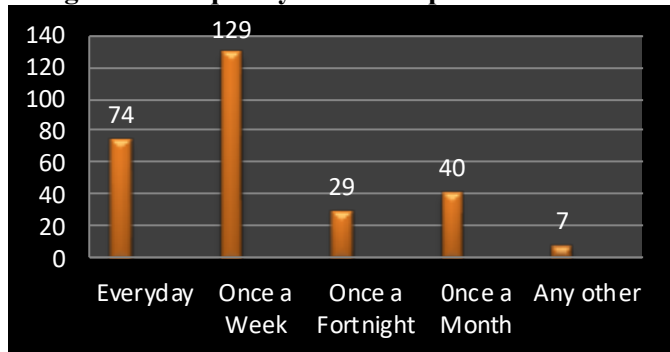
Observation and Results

Total 283 students of MGACHRC participated in the study. Participants were 34.6% (N = 98) male and 65.4% (N = 185) female students (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of Participants

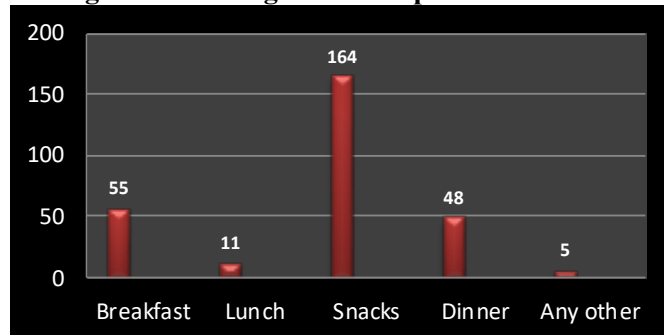
Divisions	Strength	Posted to other places/ Absent	Consuming home food	Participated in study	Male	Female
JR 2	34	0	2	32	12	20
JR 3	19	0	4	15	6	9
Interns	55	5	5	45	14	31
BAMS 2 nd year	100	15	10	75	26	49
BAMS 3 rd year	64	0	3	61	21	40
BAMS 4 th year	60	0	5	55	19	36
Total	332	20	29	283	98	185

Figure 1: Frequency of consumption of fast food



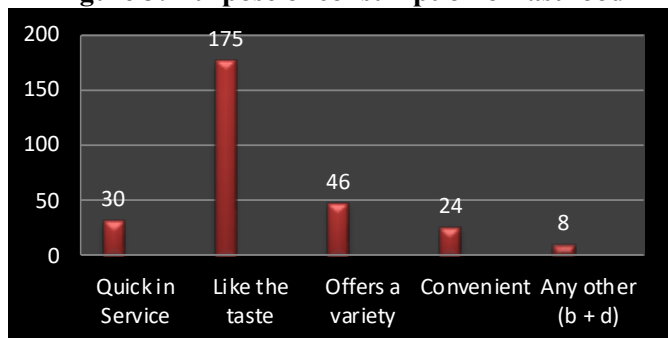
Fast food consumption among students 26.52 percent of students were found to consume fast food/junk food on a daily basis, 46.23 percent consumed once a week, 10.39 percent once a fortnight, 14.33 percent once a month, and 2.53 percent students chose another option.

Figure 2: Timing of consumption of fast food



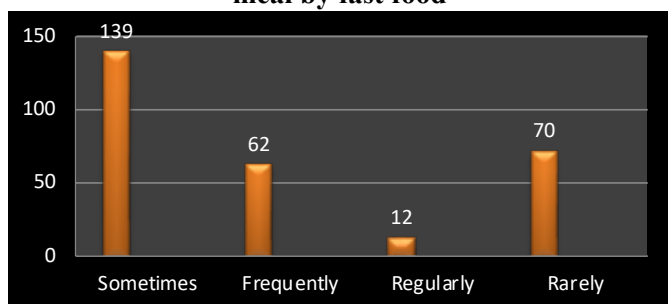
Occasion of fast food consumption among students 19.43 percent of students preferred consuming fast food/junk food for breakfast, 3.9 percent for lunch, 58.1 percent for snacks, 15.88 percent for dinner, and only 2.69 percent for any other option.

Figure 3: Purpose of consumption of fast food



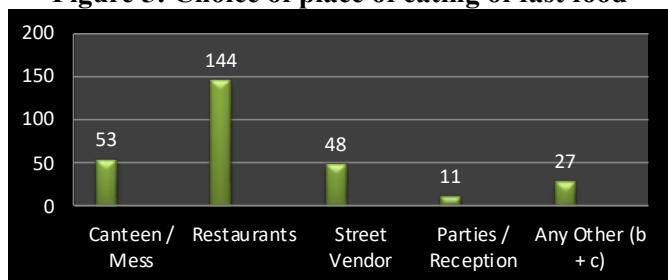
10.6% students were of the opinion that consuming fast food/junk food because they are quick in service, while 61.83% consuming as they like the taste, 16.25% consuming because it offers a variety, 8.5% students likes fast food because they are convenient and 2.82% chosen other option.

Figure 4: Frequency of the practice of replacing meal by fast food



49.11% students were found to be replacing food sometimes, while 21.90 % were found to be replacing frequently, 4.24% regularly and 24.75% found to be replacing the food rarely.

Figure 5: Choice of place of eating of fast food



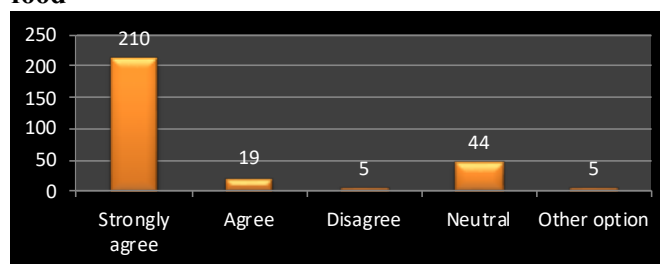
Place of eating of fast food – 18.72 % students were found preferring canteen/ mess, while 50.88% consuming at restaurants, 16.96% consuming at street vendor, 3.88 % in parties or receptions, 9.56% students taking fast food at some other places.

Choice of food items and beverages

Table 2: Showing the students choices of fast food and drinks

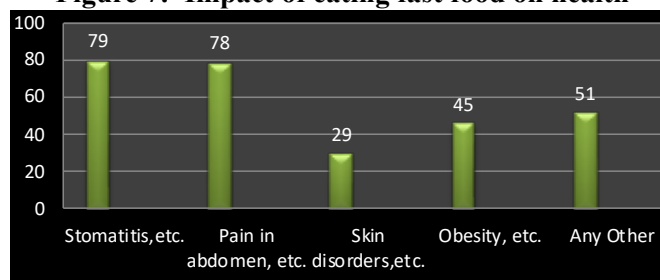
Food category	Students choices of fast food & drinks			
Plain flour (Maida) based food items	<i>Pav bhaji, Vada Pav & Dabeli</i> 72.02%	Sandwiches 11.06%	<i>Tandoori Roti, Naan</i> (10.80%)	Other 8%
Bakery products	Biscuits, <i>Khaari</i> , Cookies (48.72%)	Cakes, Pastries (51.28%)		
Deep Fried Items	<i>Kachori & Samosa</i> (52.33%)	<i>Manchurian</i> (22.53 %)	Potato chips (16.83 %)	Other items
Snacks	<i>Paani Puri</i> 43.66 %	Noodles 21.73 %	Pizza 13.98%	<i>Bhel</i> 3.40 %
Rice preparations	<i>Biryani</i> 61.76 %	Fried Rice 38.23%		

Figure 6: Knowledge of consequence of eating of fast food



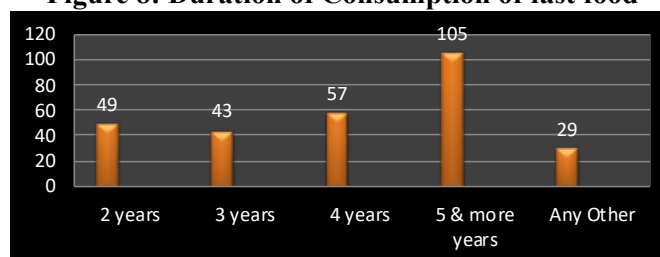
74.20 % students strongly agreed that consuming fast food/junk food is bad for their health, while 6.71 % were of the opinion that it is unwholesome, 1.76% were found to be disagree about its effect on health & 15.54 % were neutral about its any bad effect on health.

Figure 7: Impact of eating fast food on health



After consuming fast food/junk food, 27.91 percent of students were found to be suffering from diseases such as stomatitis, hyper acidity, etc., while 27.56 percent agreed to be suffering from disturbances of digestion, pain in abdomen, constipation, diarrhoea, etc., 10.24 percent faces skin disorders (acne, urticaria, etc.), cough, cold, allergy, etc., 15.90 percent observed obesity, weight gain, etc., and 18.02 percent reported no any health problem after having fast food/junk food.

Figure 8: Duration of Consumption of fast food



17.31 percent students were found to be consuming fast food/junk food since 2 years, while 15.19 percent consuming from more than 3 years, 20.14 percent from 4 years, 37.10 percent from 5 years and more & 10.26 percent chosen other option.

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Fermented food	<i>Idli & Dosa</i> 69.23 %	<i>Medu wada & Uttappa</i>		
Desserts	<i>Gulabjamun & Jalebi</i> 53.28	Ice cream 46.71 %		
Non-Vegetarian	Fried Chicken 62.85%	Eggs 37.14 %		
Cold drinks	Frooti - Maaza 38 %			
Soft drinks	Pepsi, Coco Cola, Thumsup etc 34.54 %	Milk shake 27.45 %		
Other drinks	Tea 63.29 %	Coffee 16.70 %	Fruit salad (Custard)	Fruit juice 12.36%

Discussion

As a result of urbanization and the ready availability of market food, such as junk and fast food, societal eating patterns are changing rapidly. Food that is ready to eat is referred to as fast food. Fast food culture is a growing trend among the younger generation, and it is quickly becoming a staple of their diet. Present study is conducted on food habits of the Ayurveda college students mostly representing the age group of 18 to 27 which is the major consumer age group of fast food. Out of the total 332 Ayurveda college students, 283 participated in the study of which 34.62 % (n=98) and 55.38 % (n=185) were male and female respectively. 20 students were posted to other places and 29 were consuming home food hence deleted from the study (Table 1).

The majority of participants stated (figure 3) that taste or flavor was the most important factor in their decision to eat fast food (61.83 %) while the least number of participants agreed on rapid service and convenience (10.6 & 8.5 % respectively). Taste preferences influence eating behavior (8-9) and may well be influenced by sense of taste (10-12). Despite the fact that our brains are designed to demand a wide variety of foods, it has been proven that *Viruddha Aahara* (incompatible food) suppresses this urge. The more *Viruddha Aahara* is consumed, the more it is desired. This could start a self-fulfilling cycle of bad eating. Various studies have shown that fast food and junk food are especially appealing to the young generation (3).

According to the findings, the majority of participants eat fast food once a week, with the smallest number eating once every two weeks (Figure 1) and preferred snacks time for consumption of fast food (Figure 2). Majority of the participants began eating fast food since 4 years and more (57.24%) and the least number of participants began eating fast food since 2 years (Figure 8). According to the findings, everyone in the 18-27 year old age group eats fast food. Results are congruent with the findings by Verma R. *et al.*, where 76 % participants were found consuming fast food since 3-6 years (13). Rouhani *et al.*, also observed that rate among children and adolescents is increased with respect to fast food consumption in recent years (14).

When asked about the favorite spot to have fast food, the majority of respondents' choice was restaurants and canteen / mess (Figure 5). Restaurants keep their facilities clean and their menus are kept short in order to serve clients as quickly as possible so that they can eat and depart. During the college hours students preferred cafeteria in the campus as it serves the chips and other ready to eat packed food items (15).

In the study majority of the students were aware about the consequences of consuming fast food. (Figure 6). These findings are congruent with a study conducted by Vijaypushpam T *et al.*, in Hyderabad found that despite their better nutritional awareness, students from rich family background preferred fast food to traditional cuisine (16).

Answering to the question on the most popular fast food to eat, the majority of students preferred *Pav bhaji, Vada Pav, Biscuits, Cookies, Kachori, Samosa, Paani Puri, Idli, Dosa, Biryani, Gulabjamun & Jalebi* ect (Table 2). All of the foods listed above are part of India's rich culinary tradition. The majority of Indian fast foods is deep fried in fats, particularly trans fat and saturated fats (17). Indian fast food has considerably more transfat than western fast food. In comparison to the 4.2 percent found in French fries, transfat level in *puri, paratha, and bhatura* is 7.65 percent, 7.85 percent, and 9.5 percent, respectively (18). Oil and food should not be warmed, according to Ayurvedic texts. Reheating oil increases oxidation, which can lead to higher oxidative stress and raise the risk of degenerative diseases, such as atherosclerosis and heart disease, if eaten (19). When oils including corn, soya bean, and sunflower oils are reheated, a toxin called 4-hydroxy-trans-2-nonenal (HNE) develops, according to a recent study. Foods high in HNE from cooking oils have been linked to an increased risk of stroke, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, hepatic illness, and cancer (20). According to studies, mortality in children and teenagers due to cardiac arrest has been on the rise in recent years (21).

The majority of participants had Frooti and Maaza as their favourite drink, while some had Pepsi, Coco Cola, and other similar beverages, and a few had milkshake. In terms of other things, the majority of students chose tea, with the least number of students choosing coffee, fruit salad, and other food items. A number of studies suggest links between soft drink intake and medical problems. The issues of greatest concern are elevations in blood pressure and increased risk of diabetes (22).

Impact of fast food on health

When the survey was evaluated for the subject response on the statement that whether consumption of fast food causes which kind of trouble to their health, majority of respondents revealed that they suffered from stomatitis, hyper acidity (27.91%), digestive disturbances (27.56%), skin disorders, allergies (10.24%), observed gaining of the weight or obesity (15.90%) and in any other problems complained hair fall (18.02%) as shown in figure 7 & table no 3. A study conducted by Niemeier HM observed a positive correlation of fast food consumption and increased body mass index among adolescents (23).

Table no 3: Impact of fast food consumption on health of the students

Health problem	Male (n=98)	Female(n=185)	Total(n=283)
Stomatitis/ Hyper Acidity	42(53.16%)	37(46.83)	79 (27.91%)
Pain in Abdomen/ Constipation / Diarrhea / disturbance	31(39.74%)	47(60.25%)	78 (27.56%)
Skin disorders (Acne/ Urticaria / Itching) Cough/ Cold/	7(24.13%)	22(75.86%)	29(10.24%)
Obesity/ gaining of the weight etc.	8(17.77%)	37(82.22%)	45(15.90%)
Any other (Hairfall)	7 (13.72%)	44(86.27%)	51(18.02%)

Viruddha literary means contrast or opposition in particular. *Viruddha Aaharaa* is defined by Charaka as a specific food product or its combination that impedes the metabolism of tissues, i.e. *Sharira Dhatus*, inhibits the process of tissue formation, and has the opposite property to the tissue. Charakacharya has explained total 18 types of *Viruddha Aaharaa* and their adverse effects in detail. He also warned that consuming any type of *Viruddha Aaharaa* on a regular basis could result in a variety of immune, endocrine, digestive, nervous, and circulatory system disorders. According to Charaka, such incorrect combinations can even result in death (24). If we correlates the food habits of students with respects to *Viruddha Aahara* (food incompatibilities) in present perspective it is found that eating of Icescreams in winter season is *Kaal virudhha*, preferring Chinese food is *Satmya virudhha*, Curd eating with rice is *dosha virudhha*, Eating French fries, Manchurian, potato chips regularly is *Sanskara virudhha*, eating sweet items after food is *karma virudhha*, Cold drinks after *Samosa, vada pav* or *Aalu vada* is *Parihar virudhha*, consuming milk shakes or fruit salads is *Samyoga virudhha*. Thus all the food items which included under fast food can be considered as *virudhha Aahara*. As per the opinion of Charakacharya, eating incompatible foods regularly vitiates *Sharirastha Prakruta doshas* but does not completely eradicate them from the body. According to Chakrapani, this is one of the *Viruddha Aahara's* distinguishing features. In general, consuming *viruddha aahara* causes vitiation in *Dosha & Dhatu* (25) and *Agni* (26), which is the root cause of all disease development. Because *Jatharagni* vitiation causes *Dhatvagni* and *Bhutagni* vitiation. This disparity in *Agni* can cause *Ama* in the body, which can disrupt the immune system and vitiate all the *doshas* and *srotasas*, causing various dangerous diseases by obstructing these *srotasas*. Considering the serious health hazards of fast food, it is the right time for college students to switch on the nutritious food such as fresh vegetables, fruit juices, and fresh fruits and so on to remain healthy and happy.

Conclusion

Viruddha Aaharaa consumption causes several diseases by aggravating *Sharirastha Prakruta Doshas* and deteriorating *Prakruta Dhatus*. A healthy diet and exercise routine are essential components of a healthy lifestyle. Food is regarded as the fuel for the upkeep of *Agni* in Ayurveda. When used correctly, it can help to increase an individual's *Bala*, *Varna*, and *Oja*. *Viruddha Aaharaa* (fast food) consumption has a significant negative impact on students' physical health. According

to the study, there is a strong need for the younger generation to understand the serious consequences of fast foods and their negative effects on health. They should also be encouraged to eat a nutritious, safe, and healthy balanced diet. If college students are well nourished, they can make optimal use of their skills, talents and energies today and be healthy and responsible citizens

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Conflict of Interest:

None

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Viruddha Aahara Consumption Questionnaire (VACQ)
Annexure 1: Questionnaire with respect to Incompetent food consumption

S. N.	Questions	Answers				Any other option
		Everyday	Once a Week	Once a Fortnight	Once a Month	
1	How often do you have fast food in a month?	Everyday	Once a Week	Once a Fortnight	Once a Month	
2	At what time do you eat fast food ?	Breakfast	Lunch	Snacks	Dinner	
3	Which fast food do you usually order ? (list attached)	Covered in Table 2.				
4	Which soft drink do you prefer when at fast food restaurant? (list attached)	Covered in Table 2.				
5	What is the main reason for choosing to eat at a fast food restaurant?	Quick in service	Like the taste	Offers a variety	Convenient	
6	Frequency of replacing Breakfast/ Lunch/ Snacks/ Dinner by Fast food.	Sometimes (once or twice a week)	Frequently (3 to 5 times/ week)	Regularly (5 to 7 times/ week)	Rarely (once in month or less than that)	
7	Which Place do you prefer to eat fast food?	Canteen/ Mess	Restaurants	Street Vendor	Parties/ Receptions	
8	Do you think fast food is good for health?	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	

9	Have you experienced any illness due to consumption of Fast food ?	Stomatitis/ Hyper Acidity etc.	Pain in Abdomen/ Constipation / Diarrhea / disturbance in digestion etc.	Skin disorders (Acne/ Urticaria / Itching) Cough/ Cold/ Allergy etc.	Obesity/ gaining of the weight etc.	Any other
10	Since how many years you are eating Fast food?	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years & more	

Annexure 2: List of food items and beverages

Food items	Indian food items	Non Indian food items
Plain flour (Maida) based food items	Pav (Vada Pav), Pav bhaji, Dabeli Tandoori Roti, Naan	White bread, Sandwiches
Bakery products	-	Biscuits, Toast, Khaari, Cookies, Cakes, Pastries
Deep Fried Items	Poories, Parathas, Kulcha, Bhature, Pakora, Kachori, Samosa, Aloo Vada, Potato chips	French fries, Manchurian
Snacks	Korma, Kofta, Cutlet, Patis, Bhel, Khasta, Paani Puri, Namkeen (Bhujia, Sev, Chivda)	Pizza, Burgers, Noodles, Maggi, Pasta, Hot-dogs, Popcorn.
	Papad, Pickles	Sausages, Cheese, Butter
Rice preparations	Biryani	Fried Rice
Desserts	Gulabjamun, Rasgulla, Pedha, Barfi, Imriti, Jalebi, Ladoo, Halwa, Shrikhanda	Ice-cream
Cold Drinks, Soft drinks (Carbonated Beverages)	Hot chocolate, Milkshake, Cold Coffee, Lassi, Nimbu sharbat	Pepsi, Coco Cola, Miranda, Fanta, Thumps Up, Coke, Sprite, Limca, 7UP, Frooti, Maaza
Non vegetarian items	Chicken, Meat, Fish, Eggs	
Others	Tea, Coffee, Fruit salad (Custard), Paneer Chilli, Momos, Burrito, Fruit Juices, Fryums, Aloo ponga, Bread pakoda etc.	

* Tick the right answer
