

### 31. Food and health

EVERY activity of man is dependent on the energy he derives from the intake of food. The spiritual *saadhana*s he ventures upon depend for their success on the quantity and quality of the food taken by the *saadhak* (spiritual aspirant), even during the preliminary preparations recommended by Pathanjali. The most external of the five sheaths that enclose the *Aathmic* core, namely the *Annamaya kosha* (physical sheath), has impact on all the remaining four--the *Praanamaya*, the *Manomaya*, the *Vijnaanamaya* and the *Aanandhamaya* (the vital, mental, wisdom and bliss sheaths or coverings). The *Annamaya Kosha* is the sheath, consisting of the material, flesh and bone, built by the food that is consumed by the individual.

Food is generally looked down upon by ascetically minded *saadhaks* and seekers and treated as something which does not deserve attention. But, since the body and the mind are mightily interdependent, no one can afford to neglect it. As the food, so the mind, as the mind so the thought; as the thought, so the act. Food is an important factor which determines the alertness and sloth, the worry and calm, the brightness and dullness. The scriptures classify food as *Saathwik*, *Raajasik* and *Thaamasik* and relate these types to the three mental modes (*gunas*) of the same names.

#### **Avoid *Raajasik* and *Thaamasik* food**

Man is the only living being which dislikes raw food found in the natural state. All other animals eat things as they are--grain, grass, leaves, shoots, fruits. Man boils, fries, melts, mixes and adopts various methods of cooking in order to satisfy the cravings of the tongue, the eye and the nose. As a consequence, the food value of these articles are either reduced or destroyed. When the seeds are fried, they do not sprout; that is clear proof that the 'life-force' is eliminated. Therefore, uncooked raw pulses just sprouting, are to be preferred. Also nuts and fruits. The coconut, offered to the Gods, is a good *Saathwik* (pure) food, having good percentage of protein besides fat, starch and minerals. Food having too much salt or pepper is *Raajasik* (passion-rousing) and should be avoided; so also too much fat and starch, which are *Thaamasik* (disposed to inactivity) in their effects on the body, should be avoided.

An intake of too much food is also harmful. Simply because tasty food is available and is being offered, one is tempted to overeat. We have air all around us but we do not breathe in more than we need. The lake is full but we drink only as much as the thirst craves for. But overeating has become a social evil, fashionable habit. The stomach cries out, 'Enough,' but the tongue insists on more, and man becomes the helpless target of disease. He suffers from corpulence, high blood pressure and diabetes. Moderate food is the best medicine to avoid bodily life. Do not rush to the hospital for every little upset. Too much drugging is also bad. Allow nature full scope to fight the disease and set you right. Adopt more and more the principles of naturopathy, and give up running around for doctors.

The type of food that you consume decides the degree of concentration you can command; its quality and quantity decide how much your self-control is lessened or heightened. Polluted air and water are full of maleficent viruses and germs and have to be avoided at all costs. There are four pollutions against which man has to be vigilant--of the body (removable by water); of the mind (removable by truthfulness), of reason (removable by correct knowledge) and of the self (removable by yearning for God). "*Vaidhyo Naaraayano Harih*", the *Shruthis* declare. God is the Doctor. Seek Him, rely on Him, you will be free from Disease.

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*Some say that since this is Kali Yuga, falsehood alone can succeed. But, in spite of all appearances, honesty is still the best policy. One lie has to be buttressed by a hundred others; whereas truth is the easiest, simplest and safest line of behaviour. Be what you profess to be; speak what you intend to do; utter what you have experienced; no more, no less.*

***Sri Sathya Sai***