

Desirable Food for the Attainment of Yoga: An Analysis

Dr. A. G Jakkanagoudar

Physical Education Director, Shri Shankar Arts and Commerce College, Navalgund , Dist: Dharwad (Karnataka)

ABSTRACT

Practicing yoga and having right type of food influences and balances our body and makes us fit internally and externally. This paper highlights the yogic tradition, food is not merely nutrition it is culture, energy, vibration, and consciousness. Yoga prevents cartilage and joint breakdown, increases blood flow, and lowers blood sugar. This paper explores a sattvic or pure food diet. A balance of fresh fruit, vegetables, cooked whole grains, milk, legumes, nuts and seeds. The paper enhances eating a well-balanced diet with sufficient nutrients is essential for maintaining energy levels, building strength and endurance.

Keywords: Food, energy, strength, lubrication, body, yoga, balances and eating

INTRODUCTION

Food includes the taking into the bodily system through all the sense organs of all kinds of solids, liquids, gases, air, smoke, etc. The last and not the least food is that of imbibing thought currents from the external world, from the environment, and also factors which can be drawn upon through the science of morals and religion and through the science of health. Yoga aims to achieve self-actualization and peace, even when faced with the most difficult tasks. The yogic diet is based on the yoga principles of purity, nonviolence and balanced living.

Food taken through the organ of the mouth is of four kinds. These are liquids which are drunk: semi-solids which are dissolved by licking or sucking; solids pulverized by the teeth and eaten: soft substances swallowed without mastication. Each of these kinds should be properly masticated and liquified in the mouth before allowing them to be sent down the throat. "The application of sattva and tamas concepts to food is a later and relatively new extension to the Mitahara virtue in Yoga literature" (Svatmarama 2002:83)

All foods must be exceedingly pure. Certain prominent injunctions of Manu, the law giver of the Aryans, prohibited even such vegetables, fruit and nut food as are raised in the dark, and other kinds of refuse. Ayurveda, the Hindu science of medicine, prescribes the exclusion of all articles of food that are decomposed, fermented, and unclean, foul smelling, kept over-night, twice cooked, etc. Eschew food of unclean preparation and handling even to the extent of not taking it when prepared and handled by flesh eaters as their bodies are saturated with the fine particles of meat and frequently also of alcohol. Food goes a great way to determine one's character. "Living to eat." is a crime, while eating to live is the cure. Simplicity and small variety in diet should be followed, as this gives efficiency and strength, and avoids gastronomic troubles and difficulties. Appetite is often unnatural and eating becomes a habit. This habit leads to unnecessary expenditure of energy and to waste tissue in the body. The great variety of food so often eaten overworks the stomach and appetites become absolutely capricious. Capricious appetite makes a man or woman un-stable in character. One living on a simple diet is ever the same dependable person with neither caprice nor instability at any age, whether twenty-five or fifty. So be natural in eating. Eat to live and do not live to eat.

The articles of food that are forbidden are those that are procured through injuring or killing or through theft, breach of faith and hypocrisy. "K S Josh suggest that taste cravings should not drive one's eating habits; rather, the best diet is one that is tasty, nutritious and likable, as well as sufficient to meet the needs of one's body" Joshi, 65)

Please note especially that all should obtain food and drink through righteous means without injuring or killing any living creature. Such acquisition is permissible and pure and is a diet desirable in every respect. It is a heinous crime to kill a cow

or a goat which gives invaluable milk, butter and other products. Milk is a product on which humanity largely depends for its growth from the age of infancy. It is therefore a cold-blooded murder if a cow is killed, and it is tantamount to killing one's own mother who also suckles children for their growth with her own milk. Every animal in the arrangement of the Universe has its own part, an allotted mission to perform, as significant as that of any human animal. Slaughter of animals should be looked upon by the human race as not only inhuman but as an egregious act inimical to the human interest at large. So animal food of any kind and description should be avoided as the deadliest of poisons. No sooner is any animal taken for slaughter by the monstrosity of man than the animal is frightened and discharges through fright in its system venous blood, because it instinctively knows its destiny and writhes in agony.

The modern apparatus of killing such animals instantaneously makes not a whit of difference. With their strong instinctive life the animals recognize their doom and are angered, then pained, and then fear stricken. These emotions cause the animals to become fully saturated with a discharge of poisonous blood, and after the killing the flesh that remains is permeated with venous blood poison. Eating such fresh by civilized human beings has to be looked upon with great alarm, for they forget that there is a soul vibrating in every animal. May humanity act not as human vultures to prey upon the less evolved souls! Modern science also testifies to these un-mistakable facts, and therefore there has been a wholesome awakening in the western world, and the number of advocates of vegetarianism is growing fast.

Vegetarian diet alone is permissible, and it gives health and strength. It destroys disease, promotes intellectual powers and energy and prolongs life. The articles of food such as rice, wheat, sugar, milk, butter, fruits, roots, tubers, nuts, etc., when properly and proportionately mixed, both cooked and uncooked, should be eaten in moderation at regular intervals punctually, and certainly out do the flesh, fish and such foods of animal nature in ensuring healthier physical activity as well as stronger mental activity. The chemical constituents in food needed for physical activity and for mental activity are invariably different in character. "They link the food one eats and one's eating habits to balancing the body and gaining most benefits from the practice of Haṭha yoga. Eating, states the Gheranda Samhita, is a form of a devotional act to the temple of body, as if one is expressing affection for the gods" (Rosen 2012: 25–26)

Human food supplies five needs and falls into the following classes: (1) Energy (2) Strength (3) Body rebuilding (4) Lubrication (5) Supply of chemicals to the glandular system. Energy is a product of albuminous foods. The casein in milk supplies energy. Cereals also to some extent supply it. Starch is also good provided it is turned completely into glucose or sugar by the process of thorough mastication. Starch is converted into sugar only by the saliva in the mouth. So masticate food till it tastes sweet in the mouth and becomes as liquid as saliva. White raised bread and potatoes ferment in the stomach, being very starchy, and cause asthma. Avoid starch completely or turn it to liquid like saliva in the mouth. Unmasticated food is absorbed in the small intestines and undigested enters into the blood supply. This ultimately hardens the arteries and youthfulness is lost and haggard old age creeps in. The golden rule to be followed by every living human being is to eat the liquids and drink the solids. Note especially as to milk when eaten like this, that a glassful is sufficient for sustaining any adult as it contains all the chemicals essential to life.

Strength: Eating is necessary for muscular strength. This strength is important in the use of the nervous energy produced by albumen and sugar for the human body as these produce power. Sugar is first stored in the liver in its crude state and then is converted into human fuel through process of metabolism which is made possible by insulin, which is in the pancreas. When metabolism is complete sugar is carried by the blood of the body. Physical workers alone need much sugar: others taking excessive sugar may be over-taken by diabetes. The natural sugar in the milk is the most natural food for the human being. Sugar is obtained from fruits and is good for adults. A fine quality of sugar is honey. Vegetables contain a good quality of sugar. Refined sugars are not healthy, but white sugar is poisonous.

Body rebuilding is done by proteid food. Every vegetable has proteid in it, so also milk. Proteid is a compound of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and sulphur. Good quantity and quality of vegetables and milk if rightly eaten by thorough mastication cause the exhausted portions of the body to be rebuilt.

Lubrication: The human machine of the body necessarily needs lubrication. This machine has more than two hundred bones, and to ply them and move the joints with ease, lubricants, that are fats, are essential. The fat of milk, such as butter, cream, cheese and buttermilk, is the best lubricant. So also vegetable oils, such as coconut oil, sweet oil, olive oil, and other oils from fruits, nuts and seeds are good for lubrication. Animal fat should be avoided as it is poisonous.

About sixteen chemicals are needed as food for the above purposes, and to supply the glandular system with needed chemical material Change of diet is essential to supplement and supply the want of one or the other chemical. Two square meals a day, one at midday and the other in the evening about seven are more than enough. Two or three varieties of vegetables with milk is all that is needed, with a limited variety of fruit for the health of the glands.

Another essential rule is not to eat out of the same dish with anyone else, because each human being is different in nature and constitution. Manu says, "Let no man give the leavings of his food to another, nor eat of the same dish with another, nor eat too much, nor after finishing his meal, leave his seat without washing his hands and rinsing out his mouth." This injunction is very wholesome, as one never knows what another person is suffering from, and also it tends to great cleanliness. Contagion is thereby avoided. Eating food prepared by cooks and served by waiters needs great vigilance. What guarantee is there that they are healthy and clean and not a prey to disease? It is advisable to take food prepared by a good class of people above suspicion in all these specified disabilities. Kitchens should be scrupulously clean. Leavings and crumbs of any food should not be allowed to ferment and create foul smell such as good actions of every sort Sacrifices are and bring injury to other food stuffs. The human kingdom is the product of food. Food is the Rains emanate from sacrifices product of rain produced by actions. If food is pure and simple, noble beings are born of the pure reproductive element. So purity of food is profoundly essential for bodily health, mental illumination and spiritual uplift. Moderation and temperance in food and drink bring about the perfect control. To sacrifice the self for the Self-this is the greatest sacrifice on earth.

The Bhagavad Gita (6: 16-17) proclaims that one who gormandizes on food, or the one who takes practically nothing, does not acquire yogic culture. But he, whose food is moderate in all respects, attains yogic power. "A sattvic diet shares the qualities of sattva, some of which include "pure, essential, natural, vital, energy-containing, clean, conscious, true, honest, wise"(Scott Gerson 2002:107)

Human beings like three types of food according to their natures. (1) Noble and pure people (sattvic) like such foods and drinks as would increase longevity, nobility, simplicity and strength, and insure health, happiness and love. The essence of such diet is juicy, sweet by nature and natural to health always, and conducive to both the satisfaction of the bodily needs and contentedness of mind. (2) People of active nature (rajasic) prefer food and drink which are bitter, spicy, sour, salty, very hot, very sharp, dry, thirst-promoting, pain giving and disease producing. (3) People of inertia or ignorance (tamasic) like food and drink that have been kept overnight, over-ripe, not juicy, foul smelling, half done, uncooked altogether, already tasted by someone, and impure to all intents and purposes. "Where food is divided into three yogic qualities (guna) known as sattva" (Steven Rosen 2011: 25)

This is a summary of the couplets 9-11 of chapter 17 of the Bhagavad Gita, which is the divine song of the Aryans. It is evident from this celestial song that food and drink of purity are of the first category and these only are recommended for students of yoga. "A sattvic diet is a regimen that places emphasis on seasonal foods, fruits if one has no sugar problems, nuts, seeds, oils, ripe vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and non-meat based proteins. Dairy products are recommended when the cow is fed and milked appropriately" (Paul Turner 2013:127)

CONCLUSION

it is most important and needs to be emphasized that for the awakening of the true nature of the soul only such foods and drinks should be taken as are simple, natural, normal, non-stimulant, energizing, body-building, non-animal, non-alcoholic, non-lethargic and non-poisonous in every respect. Such foods-to summarize them again-include vegetables, milk and its derivatives, fruits, roots, nuts and tubers; and drinks are those that include pure uniced water, unfermented fruit juices and the like. These desirable foods and drinks having been taken, the inner being will luminously shine as pure consciousness, the mind being perfectly equipoised in all matters, physical, mental and spiritual. Efforts to attain the ultimate results of yoga, of communing with God, with the other attendant powers of health, wealth, youth, longevity and vitality, will be crowned with success in life here, making it sweet beyond description, and life hereafter will be natural and pure to enjoy the emancipation from the fetters of the flesh.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Desai, B. P. (1990) *Place of Nutrition in Yoga*". Ancient Science of Life. 9
- [2]. Joshi KS (2011) *Speaking of Yoga and Nature-Cure Therapy*, Sterling Publishers,
- [3]. Paul Turner (2013), *FOOD YOGA – Nourishing Body, Mind & Soul*, 2nd Edition,
- [4]. Rosen, Richard (2012) *Original Yoga: Rediscovering Traditional Practices of Hatha yoga*. Shambhala Publications.
- [5]. Steven Rosen (2011) *Food for the Soul: Vegetarianism and Yoga Traditions*, Praeger,
- [6]. Svatamarama. (2002) *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (Translated). Akers, Brian Dana. Cork: BookBaby.
- [7]. Scott Gerson (2002), *The Ayurvedic Guide to Diet*, Chapter 8: The Sattvic Diet,