YOGIC DIET BY SRI SWAMI SATCHIDĀNANDA

A normal diet should give us physical energy and all that is necessary for the body, but the benefit of the diet doesn't end there. Today, we do not think very much about the different qualities of food and its effect on the mind. In Eastern thinking, food is divided into three groups according to the three gunas: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Sattva is the tranquil state, Rajas the very active state, and Tamas the state of inertia or dullness. Diets also give us these qualities. That is why Bhagavad Gītā devotes so much time to the qualities of different diets. There are three conditions that food should meet: it should help your mind maintain its tranquility; it should not stiffen the body with toxins; and it should be able to be digested without wasting a lot of energy.

Foods that are natural, not very spicy, sour or hot are considered to be Sattvic. This includes fruits, nuts, milk and milk products, raw or steamed vegetables, cooked grains, beans, cereals. When the same products are mixed with a lot of spices and become sour or hot, they become Rajasic. That means they create a restlessness in the mind. Our main object is to keep the mind in a tranquil condition. Therefore, our food must be taken into serious consideration. Rajasic food also includes meat and flesh. Animal food or flesh is already dead matter, whereas a vegetable is still a living organism. Take a potato, eat half and cut the other half into ten pieces. If you plant the pieces, you get ten potato plants. And vegetables, while they may get dehydrated, never decompose. Also, as doctors agree, animal fat leaves more toxins in the system than vegetables and a lot of purine which gives rise to cholesterol.

All foods that are old and cold come under the Tamasic category, that is foods that have been cooked and kept for a long time. Anything that is kept for a considerable time loses its Sattvic quality and becomes Tamasic. The manner of eating can also make a food Sattvic, Rajasic, or Tamasic. If we do not chew well, it gets fermented within the system and can cause Tamas or the quality of inertia.

To see the difference between the mental qualities of the different foods, go to the zoo and look at the animals. The animals who eat flesh are more wild and restless. It is mainly because of their diet. And while the vegetarian animals (like goats, cows, bulls, and elephants) never smell bad, the non-vegetarian animals do.

Above all things is the feeling that you are not killing anything, any developed conscious life, for your sake. Every time you eat something, you kill something, no doubt. But it is the violence, the pain that you cause to animals that is felt more than the pain you cause to vegetables.

From all these points, we should find out which diet is good for us both physically and mentally. The quality of food, the quantity, the way of eating it, all should be considered in order to get the maximum benefit for our daily use. The aim of Yoga is to go back to nature, to lead a very natural life. Yoga is not for the person who eats too much or fasts excessively. Have simple foods, simple dress, simple living. Just as we should think in a Yogic way, we should eat in a Yogic way. All our actions, thoughts, and words should be Yogic. Then you will see that your life is completely transformed.

The Yogic Diet in Practice

1. Try to avoid chemicals, white sugar, and processed, refined, packaged foods. This will help prevent disease.
2. Besides eating wholesome, natural foods, try to masticate well; digestion begins in the mouth. Food should be chewed carefully and slowly and should almost be in liquid

form before swallowing.

3. It is better to fast than to eat fast.

4. Eat moderately. Most of us eat two or three times more than we daily require. All diseases have their origin in the overloading of the stomach.

5. Drink liquids before or after eating. Avoid drinking during the meal.

6. It is good practice to avoid serving cooked and raw foods at the same meal.