SATTVIC FOOD FOR HEALTH AND HARMONY

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Abstract:

Man is in search of happiness, but has no peace of mind. He took a birth, lived a life of doing good and bad things and one day his journey will come to an end on this planet. Man has no control on taking birth and dying, he can do something productive with the phase that lies-in-between. The purpose of life is to do good things. Yes! "To do good things..." to yourself and to others. Man has been killing animals for food and other products very early on their emergence as a species. If one single animal is killed, it creates a big problem in the whole of the ecosystem and food chain, which cannot replaced by man. Therefore animals are important for nature. Other than animals man has healthy vegetarian food for sustenance. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna "The food which is dear to each is threefold. Hear the distinctions of these. The foods which increase vitality, energy, vigour, health and joy and which are delicious, bland, substantial and agreeable is dear to the Sattvic. The passionate desire foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning and which produce pain, grief and disease is dear to the Rajasic. The food which is stale, tasteless, putrid and rotten, and impure is dear to the Tamasic." (Bhagavad-Gita. Ch. XVII-8, 9, 10). Thus by consuming sattvic food one can lead a happy, healthy and harmonious life.

Keywords: Happiness, peace, good, killing, sattvic, rajasic, tamasic, healthy, harmonious

Introduction:

Man requires food as one of his basic needs in day to day life for his sustenance. Food is the basic foundation for the physical body. Carbohydrates, proteins and fats are directly provided through food directly. Many people continue to believe that God created animals to provide food for man. In today's modern world, man is living in an age, where eating non-vegetarian food is considered to be ultimate gastronomic delight; many misguided youngsters think that

red meat, fish and chicken are trendy, exotic and energising. In this kalyuga, pampering the palate has become everyone's supreme indulgence. We live to eat rather than eat to live. No one who delights in non-vegetarian food is ready to accept that their choice of diet entails a lot of cruelty to our animal brethren.

Every human being has come on this earth with a purpose and the purpose of human life is to realise the Divine. Through realisation, we can live a simple, good and happy life without misery. Vethathiri Maharishi says "To attain salvation and to get exonerated from all sins one has to get rid of his bad qualities and try to acquire moralized character". Human nature is unique, where having the sixth sense he is able to analyse the right and the wrong. Through good thinking, good action, and good words one can contribute to the peace and prosperity of humanity. With love and affection the same man acquires divine power and becomes one with nature; this entire process is called 'Yoga'. Yoga will help man achieve the purpose of his life.

Vegetarian Diet - a better choice

Fresh vegetarian diet includes plant based diet like fruits, vegetables etc. As meat is obtained from dead animals, consuming meat always enhances the chances of violence and decay. It is said that basically all human beings are vegetarians and fruitarians. Vegetarian foods have high roughage contents, all nutritional elements in sufficient quantity, are very cheap and increase body resistance quickly.

Roughage contents

The fiber content in vegetarian food prevents synthesis of VLDL – very low-density lipoproteins, which are bad and can lead to heart diseases. Especially red meat contains high amount of saturated fats, which are bound to increase cholesterol levels leading to heart attacks. This roughage also helps to eliminate faecal matter from large intestine easily. Meat eaters usually suffer from constipation, as it does not contain fibre. This is the reason why diseases like ulcerative colitis and colon cancer are more common in meat eaters.

Food also heals

Raw and uncooked vegetables and fruits have many qualities for curing ailments. Incidence of heart disease, cancer and chronic degenerative diseases is low in persons who are pure vegetarians. Meat also contains more number of bacteria and parasites that can prove harmful to the health of human beings. Majority of the victims suffer from food poisoning due to salmonella as it is found in meat and fish eaters.

Anatomy and physiology of herbivorous and carnivorous animals

Teeth and intestines of human beings are different from that of carnivorous animals. Carnivorous animals have powerful jaws and long fangs – the sharp, elongated canine teeth which is meant for spearing and tearing flesh. Meat eating animals secrete more hydrochloric acid, which is required for digestion of proteins. They also have a proportionately larger liver, which can neutralize 10 to 15% more uric acid than humans. The intestinal tract of these animals is only 3 times the length of the animal's body which are meant to eliminate rapidly, decaying substances such as meat in a very short time. We humans have an extremely long intestinal canal which is actually ten to twelve times the length of the body, forming a winding, intricate route, which is poorly adapted for flesh food.

Environment and Ecology

Eating meat is against environment. Because to produce one pound of meat lot of grass, cereals and water is used for feeding livestock. One acre of land, which will produce one ton of beef, will produce 10 to 20 tons of highly nutritious food. Meat producing industries disturb ecology by throwing lot of waste and washing them into rivers. For e.g. to produce 1 kg of beef 16 kg grain is required for feeding it, whereas the 16 kg grain can be consumed by 20 people and the 1kg beef can be consumed by 2 people. Meat contains steroids, pesticides, antibiotics and hormones. It contains on an average 13% more pesticides than vegetables.

Protein myth

There is a misconception that, meat has a monopoly on protein, and larger amounts of protein are required for strength and energy, which is not correct. Many people start eating meat because of fear of protein deficiency. But the truth is, legumes and beans contain lot of proteins, which is lighter for digestion. Various studies have shown that a proper balanced vegetarian diet provides more nutritional energy than meat. Animal flesh contains high amount proteins, which can tax kidneys and can cause diseases of kidney resulting in high blood urea.

Can we be at peace when we are creating negative karma?

Every human is born with his past karmas from generations. Killing an animal for satisfaction and taste will only add on to karmas and not the purpose of one's birth. The law of karma, simply stated, is the law of cause and effect. It is a scientific law. As you sow, so shall you reap! He who inflicts suffering upon another brings suffering upon himself. Such is the law!

If a man kills an animal for food, he will not hesitate in killing his fellow men, whom he considers as his enemy. The root cause of the world is Irreverence for Life. When we kill an animal, the animal experiences fear, death, violence, struggle, despair and anguish. The body of the animal is filled with toxins and poisons. We then consume this meat which carries all this toxins, which increases one's karmas, thereby having no love and compassion for all life. Killing animals and consuming them not only destroys individuals, but also society, it robs the natural system of the earth and destroys nature. "A man can live and be healthy without killing animals for food; therefore, if he eats meat, he participates in taking animal life for the sake of his appetite. And to act is so immoral." – Leo Tolstoy

Effect of Food on Temperament – The Three Gunas (Qualities)

Yoga is a lot more than a workout. Yoga makes use of the different movements, breathing exercises, relaxation technique, kaya kalpa and meditation. It is associated with a healthy lifestyle and a balanced approached to life. In fact yogic diet is one of the five main principles of yoga. According to the principles of yoga, eating healthy a diet will make one feel healthy and clean, and will also look after your complete wellbeing. Sages believed in a philosophy, and they always say that energy has three basic qualities —

- Guna is one of the three tendencies of mind, body and consciousness
- Sattva means purity / holiness
- Rajas means passion /drive
- Tamas means laziness / inertia

Food and diet can be categorized into three groups:

Sattvic Food: The following are the characteristics of Sattvic diet.

- Sattvic food includes cereals, honey, herbs, sprouts, seeds, nuts, legumes, butter, milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh juices, and whole meal bread.
- It is the purest form of food.
- It brings peace to the mind and is nourishing for the body.
- Sattvic food is great for overall fitness and for a balanced energy flow.

Rajasic Food: The following are the characteristics of Rajasic diet.

- Rajasic food includes chocolate, salt, eggs, meat, fish, onions, garlic, tea and coffee, sharp spices.
- This food is oily, sweet, salty, dry, sour, hot and bitter.

• It manifests negative qualities such as restless activity, uncontrolled desires, lust, pride, selfish activity, rigidity, stubbornness, excessive attachment and craving.

Tamasic Food: The following are the characteristics of Tamasic diet.

- Tamasic foods are foods that are old and stale, it includes meat, alcohol, tobacco, fermented foods and over ripe foods.
- It manifests negative qualities such as anger, greed, falsehood, violence, deception, grief, delusion, gloom, sleep negative expectation, fear, laziness and inactivity.
- It destroys the body's resistance to diseases and lower the energy
- Overeating is a Tamasic behaviour.

Yoga and diet:

"You are what you eat" – a commonly used phrase in yoga, has a powerful meaning. Yoga believes that food not only influences one's body in the physical sense but is also known to influence emotions and feelings. Sattvic diet is best for yoga practitioners. But Tamasic and Rajasic foods are not good for the body and mind, and are best avoided.

A sattvic diet is one that gives life, strength, energy, courage and self-determination. In other words sattvic diet gives us more than the gross physical requirements of a proper mix of proteins, carbohydrates and fats. It also gives the subtle nourishment necessary for vitality and consciousness. One should also cut down on meat products as the proteins in meat take too much time to digest, which aren't good for the liver and kidneys. One can gradually stop eating poultry products and fish and must include whole grains, fresh vegetables and fruits in one's diet.

According to the Population Reference Bureau "If everyone adopted a vegetarian diet, current food production would theatrically feed 10 billion people, more than the projected population for the year 2050". (From: *Population Reference Bureau, Washington, DC. Copyright* 1997)

Ethics and Morality

It is the birth right of every individual to live without fear, a secured life. There should not be any interference in these individual actions. This is called "Freedom of Life." While enjoying the birth rights and freedom it becomes essential on his part to follow morality throughout life. Morality literally means the extent to which an action is right or wrong.

Morality basically involves a human being behaving like a man and presenting him as an animal. Morality speaks of an acceptable way of living where in human values are preserved, protected and promoted.

Two Fold Culture

- 1) I during my life time, will not harm anyone in any form.
- 2) I will also try to help the needy and remove their worries and protect them.

The above two principles has been advocated by Vethathiri Maharishi for the society to understand and follow, so that one can lead a life without creating more karmas and will help one to eliminate their karmas. If one follows this principle in life one can moralize character. As all the animal instincts which has come as a continuum from numerous births need to be eradicated.

Conclusion:

To achieve the purpose of birth one should follow a sattvic diet and also the above principles of ethics and morality, which would help one to lead a healthy and a happy life. In the Gita, "Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to adhere to a sattvic diet." Sattvic food not only appeals to the tongue, it is also a source of nutrition to the mind and body. It is wholesome and non-toxic. A simple and nutritious diet, which gives adequate energy, and is easily digested. Sattva is the principle of truth, beauty and harmony, it manifests itself in the quality of serenity, self-control, truthfulness, compassion, pure memory, and repugnance for sin. By adapting to sattvic diet one will have reverence for all life and following the principle of Ahimsa.

Eating Right means: Eating Vegetarian, All of Most of the time, for Environmental Sustainability, for Moral and Social Reasons and for Optimal Health.

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