

Basic conducts before meals

Preface

Four to five decades ago, all family members would sit together for meals after washing their hands, legs and mouth, legs folded on a wooden seat and would commence their meals by reciting God's Name. They would be served by the women in the family. Boys and girls in the family would be taught to arrange wooden seats and drinking water, to serve each food item in the plate, to clear the left-overs after meals and to clean the place with cow dung upon finishing the meals. Today, due to the decline in joint family system, influence of modernism and hectic lifestyle, these aspects are neglected. Following the *āchārs* (Conducts conforming to Shruti and Smruti) associated with meals and teaching them to the next generation has almost ceased.

Why is it essential to follow these *āchārs* ? It is said that 'your diet defines your thoughts, and your thoughts define your actions'. Only good actions can lead to spiritual progress. Hence, the root of spiritual *sanskārs* (subconscious impressions) is in *sāttvik* (Spiritually pure) diet. Along with *sāttvik* diet, *bhāv* (Spiritual emotion) associated while consuming food is also important. Understanding that 'food is a form of *Brahman*', considering it as *Prasād* (Holy sacrament) and consuming it while praying and chanting God's Name will make the act of consuming food a sacred *Yajñakarma* (A sacred act). This also is a part of spiritual practice.

Today, due to predominance of *Raja-Tama* (Spiritually impure) components in the environment, the danger of attacks by negative energies through food is also high. Along with *sāttvik bhāv* associated while eating food, if the actual act of eating food is as per the science of Spirituality, then it protects the food and the individual eating food from attacks by negative energies. Such sacred food devoid of *Raja-Tama* components is easy to digest and assimilate.

The *āchārs* associated with eating food are divided into three parts, namely *āchārs* before eating a meal, *āchārs* during the meal and those after the meals. These three parts include several *āchārs* such as offering *Naivēdya* (Food offered to the Deity as part of ritualistic worship) to God after preparing food, sitting cross legged to eat a meal, eating lentil-rice first, taking a short walk after finishing the meals etc. The science underlying all these *āchārs* has been elucidated in Texts 'Basic conducts before meals' & 'Conducts during and after meals'. Inappropriate acts such as using a dining table and chair for having a meal, eating with spoon and fork, talking while eating, eating or drinking while standing etc. have been explained with proper reasoning as per the science of Spirituality.

Once we know the spiritual science underlying eating a meal, we will not feel shy to follow these *āchārs* (For example - Praying to the Deity of worship by joining the hands before eating, making a protective sheath around the plate with water) while eating food at home and outside.

We pray at the Holy feet of Shrī Guru that by following the *āchārs* mentioned in this Text, may the *sāttviktā* in everyone be enhanced through food and may all gain strength from the food to serve the Nation and *Dharma* (Righteousness). - **Compilers**

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(An asterisk (*) sign has been placed alongside important points)

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