

Ayurvedic and Spiritual perspectives on Diet

Preface

Modern medicine has conducted an in-depth study of the composition of practically all food items and has derived the amount and percentage of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, Vitamins and minerals in them. It describes in detail, the functions of these components and the effects of their being deficient or in excess. It also gives guidelines to make one's diet a balanced one.

Ayurveda describes the effects of various biological properties of food such as cold, hot, warm, heavy and light and their action on the human body. It elucidates the effect of the taste of food on the body and the mind. It gives guidelines to adjust one's diet as per one's constitution, season, age, etc. It gives in detail the effect of every food item on various tissues and organs of the body and describes dietetic incompatibilities. It also enlists in detail, food items which are beneficial or harmful in various diseases and how one should vary the diet in the different stages of the disease. Ayurveda emphasises on the importance of following the recommendations and restrictions of diet, as advised by the physician in various diseases. Ayurveda gives details of the arrangement in the kitchen, the arrangement of food items in a dish and emphasises on the importance of hygiene. It also describes how one should serve the courses of food and the rituals one should follow before, during and after meals.

Ayurveda states that one should not indulge in eating tasty dishes. Food should be selected after considering its qualities and considering one's age, constitution, digestive power, the season, etc. Based on the effects of food on the mind, Ayurveda classifies food into three types - sattvik (Sattva-predominant) food, which promotes good qualities, rajasik (Raja-predominant) food, which stimulates emotions and tamasik (Tama-predominant) food, which results in laziness and lethargy.

Ayurveda emphasises that one should never criticize food and should eat it with respect by giving due attention to its taste and aroma. Our life activities, as well as our energy, strength, intelligence, memory, lustre of the skin, etc. depend on food. It is important to maintain the body strong and healthy by consuming an appropriate diet, so that one can enjoy worldly pleasures by following the rules of Dharma (Righteousness) and undertake spiritual practice to attain Moksha (Final Liberation), which is the state of eternal Bliss. As food helps one attain eternal Bliss, food itself is considered to be 'Brahman'. This Text will prove useful to everyone including students and physicians. By studying and following the guidelines given in this Text, everyone can enjoy a long, healthy, useful and happy life.

Shri Vishnu is the Deity who controls the production, digestion and utilisation of food. We pray unto Shri Vishnu to bless everyone with a Divine life. – **Authors**

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