

# 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 utilization of food. We pray unto Shri Vishnu to bless everyone with a Divine life. – **Authors**

## Index

<b>1. Food itself is Brahman (Anna Brahman)</b>	<b>15</b>
1. Definition of food	17
2. Properties of food	18
3. Importance of a beneficial diet	18
<b>2. Constituents and classification of food</b>	<b>20</b>
1. What is the composition of the human body ?	20
2. What are the functions of these basic elements ?	20
3. How are these basic elements available ?	21
4. What are the basic elements and the biological elements of the human body according to Ayurveda ?	21
5. Constituents of food	22
6. Basic constituents of the human body	22
7. What are the differences in the nutritive value of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food ?	23
8. Best food items from various categories	24
9. Important functions and effect of various food items commonly used in our diet	25
<b>3. Food processing</b>	<b>26</b>
1. What are the various methods of processing food ?	26
2. How can one preserve food ?	29
<b>4. Eating</b>	<b>30</b>
1. Vastushastra and the arrangement in the kitchen	30
2. Dining room	31
3. Utensils used for serving food	32

4. Arrangement of food items in a plate	33
5. When should a person dine ?	33
6. Is it advisable to take an appetizer before meals ?	34
7. Is it advisable to have an alcoholic drink before meals ?	35
8. Selection of food and how should one serve the courses of food ?	36
9. Anupana	39
10. Should one eat meals in solitude or in the company of family or friends ?	43
11. After meal	44
12. Mantra to chant after eating food, so as to facilitate digestion	45
<b>5. Diet and the mind</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Sattvik, rajasik and tamasik food	46
2. Respect for food	49
3. Diet with sanskars	49
4. Evil eye and food	50
<b>6. Qualities of food</b>	<b>52</b>
1. What is the scientific meaning of the words 'hot' and 'cold' with respect to food items and medicines ?	54
2. On what do the cold and hot properties of a substance depend?	54
3. Hot and cold food items	55
4. Who should eat hot food items and who should avoid them ?	57
5. Who should eat cold food items and who should avoid them ?	57
6. Heavy and light food items	57
7. What is meant by oily and dry food items ?	61
8. Who should eat dry food items and who should avoid them ?	63

<b>7. Taste</b>	
1. Action of various types of taste and the harmful effects of consuming them in excess	65
2. Exceptional qualities of taste (Rasa)	71
<b>8. Constitution and the Diet</b>	<b>72</b>
1. Taste of food items and the doshas	72
2. Beneficial and harmful diet and activity for vata constitution and vataja (Vata induced) diseases	73
3. Tonics for vata constitution and Vataja diseases	74
4. Beneficial and harmful diet and activity for pitta constitution and pittaja (pitta induced) diseases	75
5. Tonics for pitta constitution and pittaja diseases	76
6. Beneficial and harmful diet and activity for kapha constitution and kaphaja (kapha induced) diseases	76
7. Tonics for kapha constitution and kaphaja diseases	77
<b>9. Season and the diet</b>	
1. Effect of seasons on man	78
2. Seasons and the three doshas	78
3. Seasons in North and South India	81
4. Modification of diet in different seasons	82
5. Spring season (Vasant rutu)	83
6. Summer season (Grishma rutu)	85
7. Pre-monsoon season (Pravrut rutu)	87
8. Monsoon season (Varsha rutu)	89
9. Autumn season (Sharad rutu)	91
10. Early winter season (Hemant rutu)	93

11. Late winter season (Shishir rutu)	95
12. Different seasons and diet	97
13. Panchakarma treatment	98
14. Exercise	98
15. Afternoon nap	98
16. Healthy individual	98
<b>10. Dietetic incompatibility (Viruddha Anna)</b>	<b>99</b>
A. Incompatibility of food items with one another and their types	99
B. Incompatibility due to various conditioning factors	101
<b>11. Place and food</b>	
1. Effect of place on the quality & digestibility of food	105
2. Time (Kal) and food	105
3. Tolerance and intolerance (Satmya and Asatmya)	108