

11 FOOD

1. We have to take care what sort of food we eat at the beginning, and when we have got strength enough, when our practice is well advanced, we need not be so careful in this respect. While the plant is growing it must be hedged round, lest it be injured, but when it becomes a tree the hedges are taken away; it is strong enough to withstand all assaults.

2. Certain regulations as to food are necessary; we must use the food which brings the purest mind.

3. There are certain kinds of food that produce a certain change in the mind; we see it every day. There are other sorts which produce a change in the body, and in the long run have a tremendous effect on the mind. It is a great thing to learn; a good deal of the misery we suffer is occasioned by the food we take. You find that after a heavy and indigestible meal it is very hard to control the mind; it is running, running all the time. There are certain foods which are exciting; if you eat such food, you find that you cannot control the mind.

4. Are we to pass our lives discussing all the time about the purity and impurity of food only, or are we to practise the restraining of our senses? Surely, the restraining of the senses is the main object; and the discrimination of good and bad, pure and impure food, only helps one, to a certain extent, in getting that end.

5. There are according to our scriptures, three things which make food impure: Jati-dosha, or natural defects of a certain class of food, like onions, garlic, etc.; Nimitta-dosha, or defects arising from the presence of external impurities in it, such as dead insects, dust, etc., that attach to sweetmeats bought from shops; Ashraya-dosha, or defects that arise by the food coming from evil sources, as when it has been touched and handled by wicked persons. Special care should be taken to avoid the first and second classes of defects. But in this country men pay no regard to these very two, and go on fighting for the third alone, the very one that none but a Yogi could really discriminate!

6. The beginner must pay particular attention to all such dietetic rules as have come down from the line of his accredited teachers; but the extravagant, meaningless fanaticism, which has driven religion entirely to the kitchen, as may be noticed in the case of many of our sects, without any hope of the noble truth of that religion ever coming out to the sunlight of spirituality, is a peculiar sort of pure and simple materialism.

7. You speak of the meat-eating Kshatriya; meat or no meat, it is they who are the fathers of all that is noble and beautiful in Hinduism. Who wrote the Upanishads? Who was Rama? Who was Krishna? Who was Buddha? Who were the Tirthankaras of the Jains?.. Is God a nervous fool like you that the flow of His river of mercy would be dammed up by a piece of meat? If such be He, His value is not a pie!

8. The taking of life is undoubtedly sinful. But so long as vegetable food is not made suitable to the human system, through progress in Chemistry, there is no alternative but

meat- eating. So long as man shall have to live a Rajasika active life under circumstances like the present, there is no other way except through meat-eating. It is true that the Emperor Asoka saved the lives of millions of animals by the threat of the sword, but, is not the slavery of a thousand years more dreadful than that? Taking the life of a few goats against the inability to protect the honour of ones wife and daughter, and to save the morsels for one's children from robbing hands-which of these is more sinful? Rather let those belonging to the upper ten, who do not earn their livelihood by manual labour, not take meat; but the forcing of vegetarianism upon those who have to earn their bread by labouring day and night, is one of the causes of the loss of our national freedom.

9. More than ninety per cent of those whom you now take to be men with the Sattva quality are only steeped in the deepest Tamas. Enough if you find one-sixteenth of them to be really Sattvika? What we want now is an immense awakening of Rajasika energy, for the whole country is wrapped in the shroud of Tamas. The people of this land must be fed and clothed- must be awakened-must be made more fully active. Otherwise they will become inert, as inert as trees and stones. So, I say, eat large quantities of fish and meat, my boy!

10. To eat meat is surely barbarous and vegetable food is certainly purer-who can deny that? For him surely is a strict vegetarian diet, whose one end is to lead solely a spiritual life. But he who has to steer the boat of his life with strenuous labour through the constant life-and- death struggles and the competition of this world, must of necessity take meat. So long as there will be in human society such a thing as the triumph of the strong over the weak, animal food is required, or some other suitable substitute for it has to be discovered; otherwise, the weak will naturally be crushed under the feet of the strong. It will not do to quote solitary instances of the good effect of vegetable food on some particular person or persons; compare one nation with another, and then draw conclusions.