

“Yogic - Diet”

It is said that '**As you eat, so you become**'. Our level of development, mental and spiritual, is reflected in the kind of food we eat and our stage of consciousness is revealed in the nature of that chosen food. Diet occupies a dominant place in the Yoga system. Yoga advice on a **Sattvic** or a pure vegetarian diet. Such a diet, it is believed, encourages the development of the higher qualities of peace, love and spiritual awareness.

Unlike modern scientists, Yogis are not interested in the chemical content (protein, vitamins, etc...) of the food. Instead, food is traditionally classified according to its effect on the body and mind, using the three Gunas: **Sattva** (the quality of love, light and life), **Raja** (the quality of activity and passion, lacking stability) and **Tamas** (the quality of darkness and inertia, dragging us into ignorance and attachment):

- ◆ **Sattvic food:** Promotes clarity and calmness of mind and is favorable for spiritual growth. It is "sweet, fresh and agreeable" and includes most fruits, nuts, seeds, vegetables, particularly green leafy vegetables, whole grains, honey, pure water and milk. Given the amount of pesticides and chemical fertilizers used on commercial crops, only organic products still qualify as Sattvic, and tinned or frozen food certainly don't.
- ◆ **Rajasic food:** Feeds the body, but promotes activity and therefore induces restlessness of mind. Rajasic foods include most spicy foods, stimulants like coffee and tea, peppers, spices, condiments, sour, bitter things and chocolate, as well as most processed food. Eating too fast or with a disturbed mind is also considered Rajasic. This food should be avoided by those whose aim is peace of mind, but will benefit people with an active lifestyle.
- ◆ **Tamasic food:** Induces heaviness of the body and dullness of the mind, and ultimately benefits neither. It includes alcohol, stale foods, eggs, meat, fish, fowl, as well as food that are overcooked. Overeating is also **Tamasic**, the traditional advice is to fill the stomach half with food, one quarter with water, leaving the last quarter empty.

The nature of food can change and cooking is the most observable way to bring this change about.