

TYPES OF FOOD AND THE VALUE OF HEALTHY EATING ON WELL BEING: A STUDY

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Abstract

A strong body means physical strength which has a positive impact on our personality and translates into a feeling of holistic well being. Man needs three basic things for survival: food, shelter and clothing. Nutrition is important. Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and well being. Food provides our body with energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals. These in turn help us to grow, live and function properly. **Health is wealth** goes a popular saying. We need a variety of food to provide the right amount of nutrients for gaining good physical and mental health (NHMRC). Food is the source of all our bodily functions and directly affects our body and mind functions in every stage of life. Healthy food helps in disease prevention, maintenance of healthy weight, provides energy and impacts our quality of life (Sushant, 2015). The purpose of the present study is to understand the importance of good values of eating such as good eating habits, avoidance of junk food, maintenance of personal and environmental cleanliness, regular exercise and safety and their direct impact on personality development and overall well being. A detailed study was done of various secondary sources of data available on importance of food and its impact on overall well being, including a study of the Bhagwat Gita, which mentions various types of food desired by individuals according to their inherent tendencies. The findings from the study indicate that imbibing values of healthy eating such as eating healthy and hygienic food, eating food on time, doing regular exercise, following safety and security measures all have a direct impact on holistic well being. The personality also gets enhanced and a person feels good about himself and the world. Hence, there is a felt need to create awareness about healthy eating habits, need for regular sacrifice, maintenance of cleanliness and following safety measures among learners especially at the primary and secondary level thereby promoting holistic development for the youth.

Keywords: values, food, Gita, well being



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Introduction

The human body is the best nature's gift. It is an instrument which can be used to realize higher truths and bring about the welfare of the entire human race. Swami Vivekananda stresses on the need for a perfect human body-*"Muscles of Iron and Nerves of Steel."* To be successful in life one needs a strong body and a strong mind as an old saying goes: *Health is Wealth* (Sw. Purushottamananda). A strong body means physical strength which has a positive impact on our personality and translates into a feeling of holistic well being. Values imparted through value oriented education can help achieve such a state. The four main

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values which can help us gain physical strength and achieve well being and help towards the development of a positive personality are:

1. Good food and good eating habits
2. Cleanliness: personal and surroundings
3. Regular exercise

Personality

Merriam Webster dictionary defines personality as the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional tendencies. According to Catell, personality refers to the set of habitual behaviors, cognitions, emotional patterns that distinguish individuals, predict behavior and evolve from interaction with biological and environmental factors. The complex mental, physical, social and emotional characteristics often help us to distinguish an individual in relation to others. Developing ones personality is a fundamental responsibility for today's youth (Sw. Purushottamananda). Personality development allows one to interact effectively and effortlessly with others. The very essence of the persons helps him/her to adjust easily in the social environs of the home or the workplace, thus making lasting impressions (Sushant, n.d).

A good personality means:

- Development of self confidence
- Boosts the morale
- Helps to form a good rapport with others
- Ability to self-control ones desires, emotions
- Outgoing personality and effective communication with others
- Have a positive outlook towards life

Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the state of health is defined as complete physical, social, emotional and mental well being. Health is wealth, goes an old saying.

Well being

It is the state of being comfortable and happy. It is also referred as wellness which means positive condition or satisfactory state of existence characterized by health, happiness, prosperity and welfare, of an individual or a group. The type and nature of food taken by us can play a major impact on our well being. Food which is good, healthy, pure, well cooked,

hygienically stored and packed helps us to gain strength and enhances our physical development. 'Health is Wealth' goes a common saying and it indeed is true, because when we feel healthy in body, we are healthy in mind. Good physical health ensures that we are active, energetic and enthusiastic in all our works which in turn leads to positive thinking and healthy thoughts conducive to mental well-being. Yet, we all love to eat spicy, fatty, junk food which is often unhealthy, fattening, makes us lazy and prone to various diseases like cancer, diabetes, cardiac problems. The mass media advertises easy to cook junk food to our youth who readily forgo the traditional healthy home-cooked food in favour of junk food such as cola, chips, cakes, and other such items.

Objective:

1. To study the various types of food according to biological sciences.
2. To understand the nature of food according to Bhagwat Gita.
3. To appreciate the role of healthy food and values of healthy eating in the maintenance of overall well being.

Research Questions

1. What are the various types of food according to biological science?
2. What is the nature of food according to Bhagwat Gita?
3. How does food impact our overall well being?

Analysis of objective-1

In order to find out the various types of food, a detailed study was done of various medical literature and science books.

Types of Food

Food is any substance normally eaten or drunk by living organisms for the purpose of survival. Food is also the main source of energy, Food can be divided medically into three major categories:

- Foods rich in carbohydrates (sugars) such as potatoes, rice etc
- Foods rich in fatty acids (fats) such as butter, ghee etc
- Foods rich in proteins (amino acids), such as milk, soya, egg etc

For good health we need to take a balanced diet which is a combination of all the above mentioned types of foods in the right proportions and quantities.

Table 1: types of food according to biological science

s.n	Type of food	Use	Example
1	Carbohydrates	Provides energy	Rice, grain, sweets
2	Fats	Known as lipids, secondary sources of energy	Oil, butter, ghee
3	Proteins	Formation of proteins	Milk,

Analysis of objective-2

Types of food according to Bhagwad Gita

आहारस्तवपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः।

यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥७॥

Srimad Bhagwad Gita (The Celestial Song) mentions that foods are also agreeable to men according to their innate disposition (Satva, Raja, Tamas) [Ch.-17. Shloka-7]. Thus food is of three kinds.

- Sattvik food
- Rajasik food
- Tamasik food

1. Sattvik food

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रतिविवर्धनाः ।

रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्य आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥८॥

Food which promote longevity, increase vigour, health, happiness, cheerfulness, are said to be sattvik in nature. These are juicy, succulent, substantial and naturally agreeable, good for overall health and well being. [Ch.-17. Shloka-8]

2. Rajasika food

कट्वभल्लवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरुक्षविदाहिनः ।

आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः॥९॥

Foods which are pungent, bitter, sour, salty, dry, excessively heating and burning are said to be dear to persons with Rajasika quality. These foods cause suffering, grief and sickness. [Ch.-17. Shloka-8]

3. Tamasik food

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्यषितं च यत् ।

उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥१०॥

Food which are dear to men of Tamasik disposition are stale, unclean, ill-cooked, not fully ripe, putrid, stale, polluted and impure, often constitute the leavings of others. [Ch.-17, shloka-10]

Digestion of Food

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।

प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥१४॥

The Lord also says, Taking the form of fire, as Vaisvanara, lodged in the body of all creatures and united with Prana (exhalation) and Apana (inhalation) breaths, it is I who digest and assimilate the four kinds of foods. [Ch.15, Sholka-14]

Table 1: Types of food according to the Gita

S.N	Type of food	Inherent nature	Nature of the food	Impact of food
1	Sattvik	Sattva	succulent and juicy, agreeable	promotes longevity, increase vigour, health, happiness, cheerfulness, succulent and juicy. Lead to overall well being
2	Rajasik	Rajas	pungent, bitter, sour, salty, dry, excessively heating and burning stale, unclean, ill-cooked, not fully ripe, putrid, stale, polluted and impure, often constitute the leavings of others.	Cause misery, suffering and sickness
3	Tamasik	Tamas		Cause grief

The table 1 shows the nature of food according to the Gita and their respective nature. The table also shows which food is desired by which kind of people.

Analysis of objective-3

Foods provide nutrients to the body which helps in growth and development. Foods can be further grouped according to the type of nutrients provided:

Five food groups are (assessed from molecules of life):

1. Fibre rich: Vegetables and legumes
2. Fructose rich: Fruit
3. Protein rich: Lean meat such as fish, egg, tofu
4. Carbohydrate rich: Grains (cereals)
5. Protein and fact rich; Milk, yoghurt, cheese, oil, butter

Eating good, clean, fresh, hygienically cooked and stored food, along with regular exercise and maintenance of personal and surrounding cleanliness helps us to maintain good health.

Conclusion

Nutrition is important. Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Food provides our bodies with the energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals to live, grow and function properly. We need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health (according to the national health and medical research council). Good nutritive food helps in the development of brain and body. Protein rich food is needed for the building, maintenance and repair of bones, muscles, blood, skin and other tissues of the body. Carbohydrate rich food is the main source of energy to the body, while fats are secondary sources of energy. Vitamins and minerals needs in small quantities are called micronutrients. To remain healthy in body and mind, Youth should take a balanced diet comprising of all these elements. Traditionally Indian Food has always been nutritious and sumptuous. India is a land of many cultures, religions, languages and hence the food platter differs from region to region, yet the health benefits of traditional Indian home cooked food remains the same. Whether we go towards northern, southern, eastern or western India, the traditional Indian food is always found to be healthy, nutritious and delicious. Finally, the major findings of the study support the following (better health.com):

- Eating a wide variety of food promotes good health and protects against diseases
- Eating a well balanced diet means eating a variety of food from each group.
- We should also eat a variety of food from within each group.

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