

## DIET AND DISPOSITION

*Swami Yogananda*



**Question:** Does our diet affect our disposition?

**Answer:** Our diet affects our disposition to a great extent. It affects our state of mind either favorably or unfavorably, and whatever affects our state of mind affects our disposition. It is necessary to eat the proper food in order to make a proper brain as well as a proper body. All food has some relation to the mind.

The human machine is not unlike an automobile or a steam engine. The efficiency and general behavior of mechanical engines are largely dependent upon the fuel supplied to them; similarly, the condition of the human machine is largely dependent upon the food that a person eats. Food has much to do with developing character, ability, social habits, and so forth.

### *Mental Food Habits*

The quality of a food's taste and color is reported to the brain through the nerves of taste and sight, and is experienced as a specific pleasant or unpleasant sensation. All these sensations are elaborated into perceptions and conceptions. Repeated conceptions about foods form definite mental habits, and manifest themselves as material, active, or spiritual qualities.

Habits have to be recognized also. You must gradually change yourself. Remember, you must eat to live, not live to eat. Greed is a servant of the palate and is an enemy of digestion, good disposition, and general health. Greed wants to please the sense of taste at the cost of the happiness of the possessor of the sense of taste.

Eat to nourish the body, not for greed or to please the palate only. Think of your health and digestion and do not concentrate on your palate if you want to conquer greed. Self-control, frugal eating, good mastication, plain food, eating only when you are very hungry, develop right habits of eating.

The one chemical element most likely to be lacking in the average diet is calcium, the chemical element of lime. Two great calcium foods are milk and cheese. Calcium is needed for the making of bones; but if it is lacking, the most serious effect is upon the nervous system, causing much illness as well as certain changes in our mental characteristics. Too little calcium makes people changeable, violent, and ill-balanced. Plenty of calcium makes one temperate and well-balanced.

While we know that material foods supply the body with energy, we must also remember that good thoughts are nourishing food for the mind, and thoughts of any other nature are poisonous to the health of body and mind. Since the expression of the soul is dependent upon the body, and the body is dependent upon food, it is desirable to know not only the physical but also the spiritual and psychical effects of food.

### *Spiritualize the Body*

Food should not be eaten with the consciousness that it will produce physical health only, but rather that it will spiritualize the body.

Food values are not a delusion, but follow natural law. Diseases are not due to "fate" but to wrong eating and over-eating and transgression of God's laws. Over-eating, lack of exercise, immoderation in sex life, and eating wrong things—these are the physical causes of disease. Diseases are nothing but poisons trying to get out of the system.

Preserve the body temple for the Spirit to dwell in and deliver sermons of Truth and perfect health to all.

