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HRANI YOGA

*The Alchemical
and Magical Meaning of Nutrition*



Complete Works – Volume 16

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Hrani Yoga

Today, I will say a few words about nutrition.

You don't think this interesting, important or useful, since you have been eating ever since you were born. I don't doubt that you've been eating since your arrival in this world, but I will present nutrition to you in a way that is as yet unknown to you and that will perhaps surprise you.

In the morning, at mid-day and in the evening, everyone is busy eating in order to stay healthy. But at mealtimes you are in the habit of talking, gesticulating and even arguing with others, and so, in the end, you make yourself ill. Everyone knows the importance of food, they also know that eating is necessary for their survival, and they start wars and revolutions because of it. But, at the same time, they don't know how to eat; so what are we to make of human beings? Only initiates, who have reflected for a long time on the highly important question of nutrition, know the right way to look at it, and, today, I will try to familiarize you with their point of view.

Supposing, due to particular circumstances, you have been deprived of food for several days and are so weak you can no longer walk or even move: you have fallen into a stupor and are fading away so quickly that you are close to death. Even if you are extremely well educated, a scholar, even if you possess magical powers, neither your knowledge nor your powers are of any value when compared with a piece of bread or fruit that

someone brings to revive you. Isn't that wonderful? Don't you see that this bread is an amazing magical element? Just one mouthful has set so many factories and forces going that a whole lifetime would not be enough to list them all.

But you haven't stopped to reflect on the elements contained in this food, nor on the fact that it was even stronger than your thoughts, your feelings or your will when it came to getting you back on your feet. You enjoy making a good meal, you prepare it with care, and then, as soon as you sit at the table, your attention is elsewhere; you don't think about what you are eating. And yet, it is this food and this food alone, to which you attach only instinctive importance, not conscious, intellectual importance, which can give you back your strength and health. Thanks to it you can again act, speak, feel and think. You eat foods which don't know how to speak, or express themselves, or write, and yet, thanks to them, look what's happening in you! You utter words, you give orders, you write books (good or bad), you compose symphonies, you obtain everything – power, wealth, glory – and all this thanks to food...

Initiates gave a place to nutritional research in their work. They found that food prepared in the divine laboratories with incredible wisdom contains magical elements capable of preserving or restoring physical and psychic health and giving us the greatest revelations. But we must know in what conditions and by what means we can extract these elements and that the most effective method is thought.

No words can express the din, the cacophony and the frightful noise that people make nowadays when they eat together. It's overwhelming being at these meals. Only prehistoric animals can feel well at them, because they're in their element, but all those who seek peace and harmony are completely exhausted. After such a meal, we have to go and rest or even sleep, for we feel sleepy and heavy, and those who have to work do it without any desire or enthusiasm. Whereas those who knew how to eat correctly are clear-headed and in a good mood.

If we eat mechanically, unconsciously, with quick, jerky movements, swallowing rather than chewing, harbouring chaotic thoughts and feelings in our minds and hearts, perhaps even arguing with someone, the entire functioning of our organism is disturbed: not one system will function properly anymore: not respiration, circulation and digestion, nor the secretions or the elimination of toxins. Thousands of people make themselves ill in this way without knowing that their ills stem from the way they feed themselves. Look what happens in families. Before a meal no one has anything to say to anyone else, each person is in their corner reading, listening to the radio, or sewing, etc. But as soon as they sit down to eat, everyone has their tales to tell or even accounts to settle, and they talk and argue and squabble. Such an attitude is extremely dangerous to health and, if you are intelligent, you must avoid cultivating it.

Now let's take a piece of fruit. Without dwelling on its taste, fragrance, colour or etheric substance (which is still another subject), let us consider this fruit, which is filled with the sun's rays; it is a letter written by the Creator that we must decipher. Everything depends on how we read this letter. If we do not know how to read it, we will derive no benefit from it.

You will say, 'But then, how should we eat?...'

When they sit down for a meal, having first washed their hands, initiates set about putting themselves in the best conditions to receive the elements prepared in nature's laboratories. They go within, link themselves to the Creator, say a short or long prayer, and in silence and peace they begin this process of the highest white magic: nutrition. They take the first mouthful, which they try to chew for as long as possible until it disappears in their mouth without their even having to swallow it. The frame of mind with which we take the first mouthful is extremely important. So you must prepare yourself to do it in the best possible state, because this first mouthful releases all the inner processes. If you begin eating in a harmonious state, all the rest will follow harmoniously.

It is also very important to chew well. Not only because this helps digestion, of course, but also for another very important reason: the mouth, which is the first to receive the food, is the main laboratory, because it is the most spiritual. The mouth plays the role of a real stomach on another level; it absorbs the food's etheric particles, which are the finest and most powerful energies, and the grosser materials are then sent to the stomach. The mouth contains highly perfected apparatus, glands situated both on and under the tongue which are charged with the special work of capturing the etheric particles of the food. You've already experienced this many, many times! There you were, almost dying of hunger, lifeless, and you began to eat... From the first mouthfuls, even before the food had been digested, you already felt restored, had already perked up. How could this happen so quickly? Thanks to the mouth, your organism had already absorbed extraordinary energies. It had absorbed the etheric elements, which immediately fed the nervous system. Before the stomach receives the food, the nervous system is already nourished. We must divest the food of its divine energies, and only the mouth does this.

Initiates eat their meals in such a way that they draw from the food the nutritious elements that will make up the building materials not only for their physical organism but for their spiritual organism. Given that humans possess not only a physical body but other more subtle bodies (the etheric, astral, mental, causal, buddhic, and atmic bodies), they must know how to nourish these subtle bodies, which are often undernourished due to ignorance.¹ They know more or less what food they must give to their physical body (I say more or less, for the majority of humans eat meat, which is harmful for their physical and psychic health), but they do not know how to feed the other bodies: the etheric body (or vital body), the astral body (seat of the emotions), the mental body (seat of thought), etc.

I have told you that we must chew food well, but chewing is for the physical body. For the etheric body we must add respiration. You know that air kindles flames: you breathe on

fire to bring it to life. Similarly, when you breathe while eating, this intensifies the combustion. Digestion is just combustion, just as breathing and thinking are. Only, the degree of heat supplied and the purity of the matter differ from one process to another. So, when you eat, you must stop from time to time and breathe deeply so that this combustion allows the etheric body to draw subtler particles from the food.

When I talk about the subtler particles we must try to draw out of the food, you mustn't be surprised. For example, a piece of fruit is made of solid, liquid, gaseous and etheric matter. Everyone knows all about its solid and liquid matter. Far fewer care about its fragrance, which is already subtler and found in the realm of air. As for the etheric side, linked to the colours of the fruit and to its life, which again cannot be quantified but emanates from the fruit and spreads into the atmosphere, this is totally unknown and neglected. This etheric side is however of the greatest importance in nutrition; and in silence, through our breath, we can make contact with it.²

Nowadays, due to social conventions, which are often born of human ignorance, when people invite one another to their house, they start talking and gesticulating, and they don't breathe deeply and rhythmically during meals, so it's hardly surprising that so many medicines have had to be manufactured for the treatment of digestive problems. The Orientals are wiser: they put all the dishes on the table, and they leave their guests to eat calmly in silence. They do not talk, they do not plague them with questions on the pretext of politeness, kindness and benevolence, as we do in the West, and so, yes, they can nourish themselves properly. As for myself, if I happen to talk during a meal, even if it is a very friendly conversation, when I get up from the table, I feel an emptiness, a dissatisfaction, a sort of nervous tension... Something is missing, I have not eaten as I should. I have noticed this so many times!

When you have eaten in silence and peace, you then retain this state throughout the day. Even if you have to rush here and

there, you only have to stop for just a second to feel that you are still at peace – because you have eaten correctly. Otherwise, whatever you do, whether you are resting or talking quietly, you are agitated, troubled and shaky.

So, I repeat, in order to feed the etheric body, you must breathe deeply. As the etheric body carries vitality, memory and sensitivity, you benefit when it develops properly.

But it's not enough to have fed the physical and etheric bodies; we must also feed the astral body. Given that the astral body is nourished with feelings and emotions, which are made of finer and subtler matter than the etheric particles, we can nourish it by loving the food, by thinking that it has been prepared in the Lord's workshops and that it is a gift, a blessing. As they pause a few moments to send love to the food, initiates prepare their astral body to extract particles from the food even more precious than the etheric particles. When the astral body has absorbed these elements, it can arouse feelings of an extremely high order: love for the whole world, feelings of happiness and peace, of living in harmony with nature.

When the astral body has been nourished during the meal, you have an indescribable sensation of wellbeing; you feel generous, kind and indulgent. If you have urgent questions to resolve, you are broad-minded, patient, and you know how to compromise. Conversely, if the astral body has not been nourished, if you have eaten while grumbling, criticizing others or becoming angry, you then display bitterness, agitation and prejudice, and, if you have difficult problems to resolve, the negative or unjust side always tips the balance. You then try to justify yourself by saying, 'What do you expect, my friend, there's nothing I can do about it, I'm stressed!' Then, to calm yourself down, you take medicines, but you will continue to feel stressed as long as no one has taught you how to eat and you are ignorant of the fact that you can improve the state of your nervous system during mealtimes.

That is why, when we are sitting in front of food, we must put everything else to one side, even the most important business

matters, knowing that the most important thing is to nourish ourselves well according to divine rules, because everything depends on that. If we have eaten correctly, everything else will then rapidly be resolved. So, eating correctly allows us to save a lot of time and energy. We should not imagine that we can resolve problems more easily or more quickly by being in a state of feverishness and tension; on the contrary, we drop things, we make tactless remarks, we bump into people, and we create a lot of damage we then have to spend days repairing. Disciples, knowing they must take time and satisfy divine laws, can resolve in a few minutes what would have taken twenty-four hours or more to resolve, because in clarity and light problems can be resolved clearly and correctly.

In order to nourish their mental body, initiates concentrate on the food and even close their eyes so as to concentrate better. For them food represents a manifestation of the Divinity, and they try to study it in all its aspects: where it comes from, what it contains, which qualities correspond to it, which entities have taken care of it, for there are invisible beings working on each vegetable, each plant, each fruit. While their mind is absorbed in these reflections, initiates meditate deeply and receive revelations. In this way they feed their mental body, and they extract from the food elements superior to the ones of the astral plane. As a result of this, clarity and a deep understanding of life and of the world are born. After eating a meal in such conditions, they get up from the table with such clear understanding that they are able to undertake the greatest mental work. The majority of people, even intellectuals, imagine that, to be intellectually competent, they have only to read, study and reflect. Of course, this is necessary, but it is also important to feed the mental body to make it resistant and capable of prolonged effort.

We must understand that the astral and mental bodies are supports, the one of feelings, the other of thought, and that these two bodies must receive the appropriate food that will allow us to fulfill our task in the emotional and intellectual domains.

‘The whole world gives priority to the question of food: everyone tries to deal with it before anything else; they work for food and even fight for it. But this attitude with regard to food is still only an impulse, an instinctive tendency, which has not entered the realm of enlightened consciousness. Only initiatic Science teaches us that food prepared in the divine laboratories with incredible wisdom contains magical elements capable of preserving or restoring physical and psychic health. For that to happen, we have to know in what conditions these elements can be captured and that the most effective method for doing so is thought. Yes, human thought is capable of drawing subtle, luminous particles from the food, which take part in the construction of our entire being, and in this way we are gradually transformed.

When you understand this, nutrition will become a source of benefit and wonder for you, because beyond the simple fact of eating to keep yourself alive will be added greater meaning and greater knowledge; there will be other work to do, other goals to achieve. Superficially, you will eat like everybody else and the whole world will eat like you, but in fact there will be a difference as great as that between earth and heaven.’

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