

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

The Yoga of Nutrition



Izvor Collection



P R O S V E T A

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P R O S V E T A

Chapter One

Eating:
an act which concerns
the whole man

Today we are going to talk about nutrition, eating, and what I have to tell you is something of the utmost importance which very few people know, even the most learned and most highly evolved. It is more than likely that to begin with you will not find it particularly interesting, but as you listen to me, above all as you begin to put these truths into practice, you will be obliged to recognize that they are capable of transforming your whole existence, of making it far richer and more beautiful.

Suppose that for some reason you have had to go without food for several days. At the end of that time you have become so weak that you cannot walk; you are incapable of the slightest movement. If at this point someone gives you a piece of bread or some fruit, however rich and learned you may be, it will be worth far more to you than all your learning and all your wealth combined. With the very first mouthful you will begin to feel your

vitality coming back. It is really wonderful how fast this happens. That one mouthful sets in motion so many forces and mechanisms that it would take more than a lifetime to enumerate them all.

Have you ever stopped to think about the power of the elements contained in food, or about the fact that, when it comes to getting you back on your feet again, a meal is always far more effective than any thought, emotion or effort of the will? You consider food to be important because your instincts tell you that this is so, but on the level of your intellectual or conscious life you do not attach much importance to it, and yet it is the only thing capable of restoring health and energy. Thanks to the food you eat you can continue to act, to speak, to feel and to think.

Initiates have always devoted a considerable proportion of their time to researching the question of nutrition. They have found that food, which is prepared with unutterable wisdom in the laboratories of the Lord, contains magic elements capable not only of preserving or restoring both our physical and our psychic health, but also of revealing great wonders to us. But if we wish to benefit from these magic elements we must first know what conditions have to be fulfilled.

One cannot fail to recognize that the question of food is in the forefront of people's preoccupations. It is the very first problem that has to be taken care

of; this is what men and women work for every day of their lives. Indeed, it is what they fight for, many wars and revolutions have had no other cause than that of food. But this attitude toward food is simply an instinct that human beings have in common with animals. They have not yet understood the spiritual importance of the act of eating. In fact they have no notion of how they should eat. Watch people during a meal and you will see that they absorb their food mechanically, unconsciously. They swallow everything without chewing it. Their heads and their hearts are seething with chaotic ideas and emotions, and often enough they even quarrel among themselves while eating. No wonder they make themselves ill. All their functions are upset; nothing works as it should any more, neither digestion nor secretions nor the elimination of toxic wastes.

Thousands of people make themselves ill in this way without an inkling that their problems are caused by the way they eat. You need only observe what takes place in many families: before a meal no one has anything to say to the others; they are all busy reading or listening to the radio or doing their own little job. But as soon as it is time to eat, they all have some story to tell or some old score to settle, and the meal is spent in talking, arguing and quarrelling. After a meal of that kind they feel sluggish and sleepy and need a rest, or

even a nap, and those who have to go back to work do so reluctantly and without enthusiasm. Those, on the other hand, who know how to eat correctly are clear-headed and alert after a meal.

Perhaps you are now wondering how you should eat. Well, let me talk to you about how initiates consider this question of eating. As they wish to give themselves the best possible conditions in which to receive the elements that have been put into their food in nature's laboratories, they begin by meditating and tuning in to their Creator. Above all, they do not engage in conversation. They eat in silence.

You must not think that silence during meals is simply a monastic habit: sages and initiates also eat in silence. They chew their first mouthful consciously and for as long as possible until it disappears in the mouth without being swallowed. One's frame of mind when taking one's first mouthful is extremely important, because it is this first step which triggers the inner mechanism. You have to prepare yourself beforehand, therefore, and make sure of having the best possible conditions. Never forget that the most important moment in every procedure is the beginning, for it is the beginning which sets the tone and releases forces which continue to be operative throughout the activity. If you are in a harmonious frame of mind at the beginning, the remainder of your action will also be harmonious.

It is important to eat slowly and to chew your food well, because, as you know, this is good for the digestion. But there is another reason as well: the first organ to receive the food, is also the most important laboratory in the cycle of nutrition because it is the most spiritual. On a subtler level the mouth acts as a veritable stomach, absorbing the etheric particles and the finer, more powerful energies from food, while the coarser materials are sent on to the stomach.¹

The mouth contains some highly perfected devices in the form of glands on and under the tongue whose task is to extract the etheric particles from food. I am sure you have all had this experience many, many times: there you were, so hungry you were almost unconscious, and then you began to eat. With the first few bites, long before your food had been digested, you started to feel better and more energetic. How can it have happened so fast? It is thanks to the work that goes on in your mouth that your organism has already absorbed the energies and etheric elements needed to nourish the nervous system. Even before the stomach has received the food, the nervous system has been fed.

It should not surprise you to learn that etheric particles can be extracted from food. A fruit, for example, consists of solid, liquid, gaseous and etheric matter. Everyone is familiar with solid and

liquid matter. Fewer bother about the perfume, which is already subtler and belongs to the realm of air. But the etheric dimension of a fruit, which is related to its colour, and especially to its life, is something that is totally unknown and neglected. Yet it is of the utmost importance, for it is by means of the etheric particles in their food that human beings nourish their subtle bodies.

Since human beings possess not only a physical body but also other, subtler bodies (etheric, astral, mental, causal, buddhic and atmic)² in which reside their psychic and spiritual functions, the question arises of how to nourish these subtle bodies. Due to ignorance, they are often left without food. People know more or less what they should give their physical body (I say more or less because most people eat meat, which is very injurious to physical and psychic health), but they have no idea what they should give their other bodies: the etheric or vital body, the astral body which is the seat of feelings and emotions, the mental body, which is the seat of the intellect, and even more remote, the bodies of the higher self.

As I mentioned, you have to chew your food well, but chewing benefits principally the physical body. For the benefit of the etheric body you must also breathe correctly. Just as air revives a flame (you all know that if you blow on glowing embers you can get a flame), a few deep breaths during

your meal will improve combustion. Digestion after all, like breathing and thinking, is a question of combustion. The only difference is in the degree of heat and the purity of the matter being burned in each case. While you are eating, therefore, you should pause from time to time to take a deep breath, and the better combustion which results will enable the etheric body to extract the subtler particles from your food. As the etheric body is the vehicle of vitality, memory and sensory perception, you can only benefit from its development.

The astral body, on the other hand, feeds on emotions, elements of still subtler matter than etheric particles. If you pause for a few moments to consider your food with love, your astral body will be ready to extract from it something even more precious than etheric particles. When the astral body is nourished by these elements it is capable of kindling very elevated feelings in you, feelings of love for the whole world and a deep sense of happiness, peace and harmony with nature.

Unfortunately, human beings are losing this sense of oneness with nature more and more: they no longer feel the protection, the solicitude, love and friendship of the objects around them, of trees, mountains or the stars. They are anxious and troubled. Even when they are safely at home and asleep at night, they have a vague sense of being threatened. This is a purely subjective impression,

for in fact, they are in no particular danger, but something within them is disintegrating. They no longer feel the protection of mother nature because their astral bodies do not receive the nourishment they need.

Give your astral body the food it needs and you will experience an indescribable sensation of well-being which will inspire you to manifest yourself in generosity and good will, and when something important has to be settled, you will find that you can deal with it in a conciliatory spirit, with understanding and generosity.

In order to nourish their mental body, initiates fix their mind on their food; often, they will close their eyes so as to concentrate more deeply. And since they envisage food as a manifestation of the Godhead, they endeavour to study every aspect of it: where it comes from, what it contains, the qualities and virtues that correspond to particular types of food, and the entities that have had a part in preparing it (for invisible entities are constantly at work in every plant and every tree). With their mind absorbed in these thoughts, their food provides them with elements superior even to those of the astral plane. Clarity of thought and a profound understanding of life and of the world are born of meals taken in these conditions. When an initiate leaves the table after such a meal, his powers of comprehension are so enhanced, so

luminous, that he is capable of undertaking the most demanding mental tasks.

Most people imagine that it is sufficient to read, study and think in order to develop one's mental capacities. But that is not so: study and reflection are indispensable, but they are not enough. If the mental body is to become strong and capable of prolonged effort, it too must be nourished by our meals.

We have to be quite clear about this: as the astral and mental bodies are respectively the vehicles of emotion and thought, we must give them the kind of nourishment they need if we are to be capable of assuming our responsibilities in the emotional and intellectual domains.

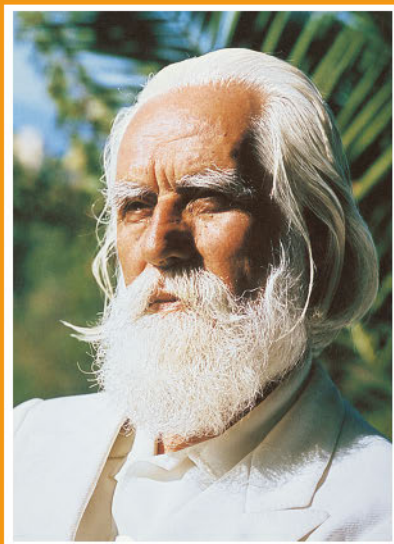
Over and above their etheric, astral and mental bodies, human beings possess other even more spiritual bodies: the causal, buddhic, and atmic bodies, the seats of reason, the soul, and the spirit, respectively. These three bodies also need nourishment, and you give them the food they need when you let feelings of gratitude toward the Creator flood your heart. A grateful heart – which is also becoming more and more rare among human beings – will open the gates of heaven, releasing a shower of blessings upon you. When this happens, the whole of creation will be unveiled before your eyes: you will see, you will feel, you will live.

Gratitude is capable of changing crude matter into light and joy, and you must learn to use it.

Once you have learned to nourish your three higher bodies, the subtle particles that you extract from food will be distributed throughout your being: to the brain, the solar plexus and all your organs.³ Then you will begin to realize that you have other needs and other joys of a higher nature, and you will see all kinds of possibilities opening up before you.

When you have finished eating, do not leave the table and go back to your discussions or your work immediately. On the other hand, it is not good to spend an hour or two in an armchair or on a couch, either. If you go and lie down and 'have a rest,' as they say, in point of fact you will not be rested, you will become sluggish and your organism will become lazy. When you have finished eating, stay quiet for a few moments and take a few deep breaths so as to obtain a better distribution of energy throughout your body. If you do this, you will feel refreshed and ready for any kind of work.

It is not enough to begin your meals well; you must also conclude them as well as possible so as to get the next activity off to a good start. Never forget that each activity has its beginning and that it is this beginning that is the key moment.



The distinguished philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900 - 1986), was born in Bulgaria. In 1937 he moved to France, where he lived and taught for almost fifty years. One of the most striking aspects of the Master's teaching is the enormous variety of ways in which he presents the one central theme of man and his growth in perfection. Whatever the question under discussion, it is invariably dealt with in terms of how man can better conduct his life.

‘This is not a dietary handbook. In fact it has little to do with diet. Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov teaches that our attitude toward nutrition is far more important than what we eat or how much we eat. He restores to the act of eating the mystical significance it attained at the Last Supper. Even the reader to whom this spiritual aspect is foreign will realize that his attitude toward food can lead to a deeper understanding of the relation between man and nature, for nature supplies man with food, and man, if his thoughts and feelings are attuned to nature, becomes capable of extracting from his physical food the subtle elements necessary to the full flowering of his whole being.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

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www.prosveta.com
www.prosveta.fr/en
international@prosveta.com