

Sathya Sai Baba

Health is wealth. A sound mind needs a healthy body. Health is an essential prerequisite for success in all aspects of life, for realising the four ideals that should guide humans: moral living (*dharma*), prosperity (*artha*), fulfilling beneficent desires (*kama*), and liberation (*moksha*).

Every activity of man is dependent on the energy he derives from food intake. Often food is looked down upon by the ascetically minded and spiritual seekers as something that does not deserve attention. Since the body and the mind are highly interdependent, no one can afford to neglect it. As the food, so the mind; as the mind so the thought; as the thought, so the act. Food, as an important factor, determines alertness and sloth, worry and calm, brightness and dullness. The scriptures classify food as *satvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* relating these three types to the three mental modes or gunas of the same names.

Sikh

Bhagats Dhana and Kabeer said God ought to provide the necessities of life, including items like lentils, flour, ghee, grains of seven kinds, a milk-cow, some fine clothes and other essentials. Appeased and pleased they could perform Lord's devotional service with love.

Guru Nanak likens these items to moral virtues:

"O, Creator Lord, You alone are my Benefactor.
I beg for only one blessing from you: Please bless me with Your Name.
Please bless me with the rice of Truth and self-restraint, the wheat of compassion and the leaf-plate of meditation.
Bless me with the milk of good karma, and ghee of compassion. Such are the gifts I beg of you Lord.
Let forgiveness and patience be my milk-cows, and let the calf of my mind intuitively drink in this milk.
I beg for the clothes of modesty and the Lord's Praise, Nanak chants the glorious praises of the Lord."

Interfaith Annual Gathering 2004



Year of Rice



"Rice Banquet: Food For All"

Baha'i

"... As the East and the West are illumined by one sun, so all races, nations, and creeds shall be seen as the servants of the One God. The whole earth is one home, and all peoples, did they but know it, are bathed in the oneness of God's mercy. God created all. He gives sustenance to all. He guides and trains all under the shadow of his bounty. We must follow the example God Himself gives us, and do away with all disputations and quarrels ..."

Brahma Kumaris

In our Local Community we are fortunate that, despite the fact we have many social problems we can still count our blessings in that the majority within our community still manage either through their own resources, government support, or the tireless work of local charities to sustain themselves. This cannot be said for many of our Global Family. We have large numbers in Korea and Africa whose plight can only be described as horrific. Many of these tragic conditions have been brought about by the inhumane attitudes of a small number.

Unless and until we awaken in humanity the futility of greed, anger, and ego for power, our world will slide further into poverty, homelessness and lawlessness. There is a need to establish a society which is, prepared to share, co-operate, to encourage, otherwise we will lose sight of this dream of Food for All.

Buddhist

Food is one essential need of all beings. The Buddha, the Blessed One said this: “All beings are maintained by nutriment. It is also a source of happiness. Both Divas (gods) and human beings always take delight in food. What sort of spirit could it be that does not take delight in food?”

Good food is not easily available to all. The Buddha said: “Those who obtain the exquisite taste of delicious food are few; while those who do not obtain such food but subsist on scraps bought in a bowl are many”.

The Buddha clearly points out that when people do not get their basic needs including food fulfilled, immorality and crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, are caused.

The Buddha always encouraged his followers to lead simple lives, consuming little, sharing wherever possible, and eating moderately, saying in “Giving food one gives strength”.

Christian

The Bible has a number of stories about banquets. One of the stories told in the Gospels is that Jesus was at a wedding banquet and noticed how the guests chose places of honour. He engaged the guests and host in a discussion on what seemed, on the surface, to be about social etiquette. It was more than that; it was about humility and generosity.

He advised the guests that they should choose the lowest place, so as to be invited to the highest place by the host. To the host he counselled that they should not always invite people who are well off whom may repay him; but to invite the poor, lame and blind who are in no position to do so. At the heart of this and many other stories we are reminded to be humble and to share with those who are less fortunate than us.

Hindu

Rice as one of the oldest prime grains in India, is considered to be most auspicious for Hindu Puja (worship) rituals. The husked rice is

beautiful, small, white, and does not sprout. It is considered to be a full and complete grain, as it is not subjected to birth and death through growth. It is therefore used for the religious and important social customs.

Rice is applied along with vermilion as tilak on the forehead of the deities and also on the auspicious occasions on foreheads of the people, because small white rice beautifies and stays on the tilak. With the recitation of “Akshat Samarpayami”, rice is offered with respect to Gods, during Puja. It is used as confetti, when the guests arrive on the important occasions such as marriages, births, etc. It also forms the main diet in the predominantly rice growing parts of India.

Jewish

“We give thanks to the Lord our God King of the Universe, who in His goodness feeds the whole world with grace, with loving kindness and with mercy. He provides food for all creatures and through His abundant goodness food has not failed us; and may it never fail us, for He is God who feeds and sustains all, does good to all, and provides food for all His creatures that He has created. Amen.”

Muslim

Eating in Islam serves a spiritual, physical and social function. We begin eating by saying, “In the name of Allah, most Gracious, most Merciful,” in recognition that all our sustenance and blessings come via the grace of Allah. We then eat with our right-hand and enjoy whatever is on our plate.

Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) commanded us to add a little extra salt and water to our food so that more family, friends, neighbours and poor can share with us. He stated: “the food of two is sufficient for three, the food of three is sufficient for four ...” Sharing our food with others will not only strengthen community ties, but will also reduce the incidence of hunger in our world. Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) advised us that we will never attain true faith if we have a full belly while our neighbour is hungry. Let’s hope we can attain true faith.