



# Rituals of EATING

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## Eating as a sacred act of communion with nature

From the beginning of time cultures across the world have created eating rituals as part of their existence. These rituals varied according to climatic and geographical conditions, time of day, season and sun and moon phases. Different stages of one's growth and development also meant different eating requirements. Different foods were required for different emotions and celebrations. Across the globe, irrespective of religious and faith boundaries, humans have been guided in these practices by intuition, and through accessing their inner intelligence.

Honouring nature, therefore, is essentially rooted in this primary act of seeking union with energy and matter. In Asia, Africa and the Americas, the annals of human history are strewn with colourful rituals related to survival through growing food, food preparation, and praying before eating.

Very broadly speaking, eating is nurturing. Eating is an act, a primordial act of honouring the soul that chose to incarnate in the physical form. Eating therefore is a sacred act of communion with the Creator. It is a promise to the Creator that the physical manifestation, which the spirit has taken

on, will be looked after as long as it is used to fulfill the soul contract.

The ancients therefore believed that illness is a reminder that the body is not being used for what it came to do on the earth plane. The crime of forgetting the source of origin (*Prajnaparadha*) leads to disease. The memory of the origin is kept alive through seed carriers. As living beings, the seeds of life are continually unfolding, spiralling out to perform the task that each organism came to play before returning to the source.

As seed carriers, every living organism on this planet carries the memory of its state of being and becoming. It carries the memory of creation as a wholesome act. It carries the memory of interconnectedness, the sanctity of the web of life, a dance of unfolding life.

Ishavasyamidham Sarvam says in the great Isha Upanishad that everything in the universe vibrates with the memory of the source it comes from. Scientists speak of DNA as being the carrier of the genetic code. Genetic code is nothing but the cellular memory that the Upanishads speaks of. So when we ingest food that is appropriate, that is grown as naturally as possible, we are transmuting that food energy into subtler forms of energy. The synergetic effect of the transmuted food energy blending with the individual life force becomes the



*ojas* (the subtler cosmic force that finetunes *prana*), as well as the light force that is Life, that sustains life, *prana* (which is more the individualised life force).

One of the most universally recognised rituals of eating, practised even today, is the act of praying before eating. Many indigenous cultures as well as the mainstream religions across the world (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) have retained some form of offering thanks to the forces that provide food and nourishment.

The transformative effect of prayer on the negative aspects of food has been extensively researched by scientists and healers alike. Studies have shown the remarkable effects that a simple act of thanks or prayer have on the human aura.

A simple act of eating, therefore, speaks volumes about the ethos, values, basic principles and vision that a particular community or individuals embody. It speaks of whether or not at an individual or collective level the cellular memories of creation, the sacred web of life, is being honoured or not. It speaks of compassion through exercising choice regarding what you eat and how you eat. It speaks of the inner state of being, your own web of life. It speaks of how and whether you contribute, within yourself and with regard to others, to a state of being in the moment. It speaks of your ability to create balance (or turbulence) within yourself and others around you. It speaks of your ability to create the winds of creation or destruction, winds that brings forth the sweet fragrance of life or winds that howl destruction, causing chaos in and around your external ecosystems.

## **EATING** as an act of delinked existence

As opposed to the earlier scenario, eating today is often delinked from the source. Eating has been severed from the food chain in the last century with the advent of industrialisation and the emergence of technological innovations broadly termed biotechnology and genetic engineering. The story of how biotechnology and agri-business corporations have taken over the world's food production and related processes takes us from the sublime to the banal.

The multi-billion dollar food industry, in connection with multinational agri-business corporations, has set the trend in the world's eating habits. Our hunger is primarily fed by multinationals in the agri-business corporations. Biotechnologists trim and tailor our taste buds. Titillated by the glitzy advert world run by the media-moguls ruled by the food chain tycoons, the world gets used to new tastes. New and high-fashion tastes, not from the garden of nature, but clinically prepared and concocted in sterile lab conditions. Artificial food created by arrogant minds – cleverly concocted tastes of orange-flavoured strawberry bananas. The global taste of oneness reinforced through market forces thus bonds parents and children alike, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. Global menus dictate tastes as they still manage to speak about sustainable development – cross culturally and trans-continently, however unsustainable they prove to be in reality. Today's eating habits thus reflect the pathos of our times.

I wonder what are the possibilities of sustainable living and eating in such a globally contaminated food environment severed from the natural food chain? The havoc of genetic engineering has taken away the basic human right to eat naturally grown food. Even worse is the speed with which it is spreading worldwide, taking away our basic right to live naturally using sustainable means.

Genetically modified seeds have lost their memory. They are a natural aberration. A seed is a seed because it can reproduce, because it can regenerate. It thus keeps alive the memory chain of generation and regeneration, of life and death. Clinically tested, genetically manipulated designer seeds are no longer seeds. Their productive capacity and reproductive capacity have been divided, segmented. The collusion of the fertiliser and pesticide industries together with those who control the seed banks has made the agri-business corporations invincible giants. Pharmaceutical industries collude with them to create a vicious chain of money and muscle, exerting unbreakable clout.

Thanks to the politics of bio-piracy, world biodiversity is being patented and regulated to benefit the same vested interest groups, mainly from the North American and European countries. Eighty per cent of the world's seed collection is held in the gene banks of these countries.

Environmental lobbies have termed bio-piracy the act of rich nations using their clout to steal plant materials and related indigenous knowledge systems from their natural environment for the purpose of patenting and ownership rights in their own countries. There is a big lobby among pro-geneticists and bio-technologists to patent traditional forms of knowledge of bio-diversity for productive use.

Ordinary people and communities have sustained themselves using traditional knowledge, passing it down the generations for thousands and millions of years with no patent rights. Their knowledge base has survived, adapted, sometimes gone astray, and in the name of tradition and culture has often been misconstrued and abused by vested interest groups. But life continues to unfold with no scientist issuing any patent right.

Life carries the seeds of regeneration, and the seeds carry life. It has been so forever. It will be so forever. If only geneticists will have the humility to embrace that deep knowledge, we could still avoid some of the ravaging effects. In South Africa,

the effect takes many forms. There needs to be concerted action and awareness around the issues of bio-piracy, bio-ethics and genetic engineering. Questions need to be asked about the motives of the few well-resourced communities in appropriating indigenous healing knowledge systems for pure profit motives.

**IT IS TIME**  
**to take the simple act**  
**of eating more seriously.**  
**It is time to connect with**  
**the story behind the**  
**seed of each morsel that**  
**goes to feed our bodies**  
**and souls.**

It is time concerned groups in South Africa begin to talk about bio-ethics and the politics of sustainable living.

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