
GANDHIAN DIET -A HEALTH MANTRA FOR MODERN WORLD

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Abstract: Nutrition is a science related to nutrients in food and various stages in the life of an organism. A nutrient is a substance required for the overall growth and sustainability of an organism. Gandhi advocated “millet revolution”, vegetarianism, low salt diet, low sugar diet and fasting. Every thing has its own biochemical importance. Understanding the importance of animal sources he propounded the inclusion of milk and sterile eggs. Gandhi’s way of fasting is contemporary and has many health benefits. Gandhian diet has not only nutritional value but also has social, cultural, ethical and traditional values.

Keywords: Ethical Value, Fasting, Millet Revolution, Nutrition, Nutrients, Vegetarianism.

Introduction: Nutrition is the science that is related to nutrients in food and various stages in the life of an organism. It involves food intake, digestion, absorption, assimilation, anabolism, catabolism and excretion. It is the intake of food as per body’s dietary requirements. Nutrition can be classified based on function, chemical nature, essentiality and concentration.

A nutrient is a substance required for overall growth and sustainability of an organism. Nutrients are required by every living organism including plants, animals, microbes, humans etc. Nutrients enter into the cells for metabolism or exist in the cells to create non cellular structures such as hair, scales, feathers or exoskeletons. Carbohydrates, proteins and lipids are the nutrients which provide energy to the body. Minerals and vitamins are micronutrients. The end products of metabolism are water and carbondioxide.

Nutrition is Gandhi’s one personal passion. Eating local food means eating fresh, high quality food, reducing our carbon foot print by limiting transportation, supporting farmers directly, boosting local economy, helping the soil and ecology.

Gandhi advocated ‘Millet revolution’ in which wheat, rice, jowar, bajra , locally grown coarse cereals and millets as staple diet. Honey, hot water and lemon are his nourishing drinks.

Mahatma is in favour of ghee. It is high in monounsaturated omega-3 fatty acids.

Gandhiji was skeptical of salt. He steadfastly avoided adding any additional salt to his meals. After understanding the importance of salt as electrolyte he protested on Britain’s hefty tax that made salt virtually unattainable for poor. This led to ‘Salt Satyagraha’.

Gandhi aspired to be a Vegan. But due to health issues, he included goat milk in his diet. He even carried goatcurd with him. He loved raw, unprocessed foods. He wanted simple foods with simple ingredients. About eggs he said – “Those who can take milk should have no objection in taking sterile eggs”.

Fasting was one of Mahatmas way of health care. It is a part of ‘nature cure’ in healing the body. He observed his mother fasting from his childhood onwards. He followed fasting for fever and stomach trouble. He associated fasting with purification of the body.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that food is different for everyone and we need to embrace our bodies as they are. No two persons will have the same result for same dietary habits. He never pushed his diet agendas on anyone but himself.

Gandhi avoided sugar but he loved fruits. He thought enjoying food too much would distract him from his spiritual goals. “Mango is a cursed fruit” – in his opinion as he could not resist from eating mangoes. Gandhi’s diet included germinating wheat, sweet almonds, pounded green leaves, sour lemons and honey.

Every diet plan followed by Mahatma has a lot of biochemical importance as well as ethical values. His way of eating local foods not only enhances health but also protects our ecosystem. His ideology of helping farmers is reflected in every step.

Millets are a group of small-seeds of cereal crops. They are used as food by humans and also as fodder for animals. They have a short life span and can withstand dry and high temperatures. Consuming whole grains regularly helps to lose weight as they contain high fiber and bioactive compounds in them. They are gluten – free grains, rich in calcium, iron, protein. They help in reducing the bad cholesterol and boosts up the immune system. They are good antioxidants and hence prevent diabetes, cardio vascular diseases etc.

Although ghee is an animal food, it is the best alternative to Vanaspati. Vanaspati is a desi vegetable ghee that has been hydrogenated and hardened using Nickel as a catalyst. As per NIN guidelines, an adult human requires 25 g of visible fats daily. It is rich in fat-soluble vitamins-A, D, E and K. Ghee is made from grass-fed cows and contains conjugated linoleic acid, which is anti carcinogenic. It detoxifies the body and improves gut function. Vanaspati contains trans fats and it lowers HDL (High-Density Lipo proteins- bad cholesterol) besides increasing LDL (Low Density Lipoproteins-bad cholesterol) levels. Therefore Desi ghee is a preferable choice than vanaspati. Also animal foods which contain heme-iron have good amount of absorbable iron than plant foods which contain non – heme iron. So Gandhi’s inclusion of milk and sterile eggs can be applauded.

When we fast, our brain goes into survival mode, thus increasing the ability to focus on tasks. Fasting reduces oxidative stress, insulin resistance, blood sugar levels and inflammation. All these help the brain to be active. Fasting helps in reducing weight, to speed up metabolism, activates autophagy (breaking down of old cells), slows down aging process promotes detoxification, prevents acne, and cellular regeneration.

Excessive sugar consumption is linked to numerous health issues – including obesity, metabolic syndrome, heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, high B.P, cholesterol, chronic inflammation, fatty liver, dental plaque and cavities. Sugar in fruits are packed less densely and hence have a lower spike in blood sugar levels. Apart from sugar, fruits have fiber, minerals and vitamins.

Conclusion: Owing to the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, it is worth following the Gandhian diet. Gandhi’s diet is contemporary and evergreen. What we are following in modern era is followed by Gandhi long back. Gandhian diet has numerous values including social, ethical, nutritional and traditional. He believed in raw food and the reason is more social which reduced the amount of time women spent in kitchen and thus free up time for other pursuits. Gandhi’s lifestyle is a great inspiration for people who ought to live in a cruelty free country.

He inspired many people in the East and in the West to start taking up vegetarianism. He stood by his vows and inspired others through his actions and words. He strictly followed what he preached – Ahimsa. Gandhi’s books like “*Diet and Diet Reform*”, “*The moral basis of Vegetarianism*”, “*English as a guide to health*” have profoundly influenced the lives of many people.

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