

Satsang with Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Three Types of Food

Question:

Does eating onion and garlic give rise to *rajo-guṇa*? What are the appropriate foods for creating *sattva-guṇa*?

Answer:

Generally, any food that stimulates your mind is *rājasik*, any food that makes your mind dull is *tāmasik*, and any food that has a calming effect on your mind is *sāttvik*. The 17th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita discusses the classification of food into *sāttvik*, *rājasik*, and *tāmasik*.

Lord Krishna says [17-9] that foods that are *kaṭu*, very bitter, *amla*, very sour, *lavāṇa*, very salty, *uṣṇa*, very spicy, *tikṣṇa*, very pungent create or enhance our *rājasik* tendencies. They stimulate our mind, and they also create lots of diseases.

Any food that has life in it is *sāttvik* food. When you boil the food too much, or cook it too much, then a lot of life is lost in the food. Therefore, the ideal food is one with minimum cooking, and in which all the life is there.

Tāmasik food is food in which practically no life is left. It is food that has very strong smells, and includes leftovers. Onion and garlic are included in this category. Any food that has strong smell is either *rājasik* or *tāmasik*.

Should we not eat onion and garlic? I won't say that we should not eat them. This is what these foods do. If you find some other desirable effects from the point of view of health etc, then I guess it is okay to eat such foods. But if it is purely for the sake of taste, then I would recommend that we slowly cut such foods from our diet¹.

¹Transcribed and edited by Jaya Kannan and KK Davey.