Be Healthy - be Vegetarian
Part 1
Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Echo, March 2001

Nowadays, there is a great deal of discussion all over the world on the subject of vegetarianism. Many people have independently come to the same conclusion that being vegetarian is the best approach to healthy living. This does not mean just avoiding meat, fish or eggs, but also the products that contain non-vegetarian ingredients. For example, gelatine may be found in ice cream, sweets, puddings, jellies, etc. Although it is best to avoid such substances, the main problems connected with non-vegetarian products are related directly to the blood and meat.

Ayurveda places particular emphasis on not eating beef (cow's meat). It is not a question of any particular cast, creed, religion, or anything like that. Ayurveda clearly states that there are only five animals that may be consumed by humans because all the other types of meat have an adverse effect on the body and mind. Sometimes, in order to justify eating meat, people argue that, according to Indian mythology and the ancient textbooks, even the Brahmans, Rishis and meditators were eating non-vegetarian food. However, they were only eating the meat of these five animals that are allowed (which are mostly birds).

A time has come now when people are becoming very wary of eating meat, particularly beef. I recently saw a menu card where it was specially mentioned that the beef was imported from South America, because people are afraid of eating European beef. There are still many people
who say that they cannot live without meat, but I say that they cannot live with meat! It is not only beef that can cause a health risk but also eggs, chicken, etc.

Quite apart from any spiritual considerations, it is necessary to become vegetarian in order to live a healthy life. The risk of eating non-vegetarian Products has increased; for example BSE (mad cow disease) has now spread from England to Germany, and nobody knows where it will end. Maybe it has already reached India, but it has not yet been recognised as the same disease. There is one type of malaria that is creating a lot of problems nowadays, encephalitis, which causes Paralysis and brain dysfunction. In my opinion, this disease also stems from eating non-vegetarian food, and it could well be the beginning of mad cow disease. I don't have any scientific proof, of this, but I have a feeling that it is a similar disorder.

Basically, anything unnatural creates a problem. It is in a cow's nature to be vegetarian, chickens have particular habits, pigs have different habits, and so on. It will disturb the natural balance if we change the action of the animal's body, for example by feeding them the wrong type of food. Cows are given injections to increase the milk yield, or growth hormones to increase the production of meat; chickens are given artificial treatment to increase the size of the eggs, and so on. Animals are really being mistreated and all these unnatural practices are having disastrous results.

Why is all this happening? We are now in the era of kaliyug [dark age, breakdown of ethic values, low spiritual capacity], which means that people in general are becoming more tamasic [lazy, ignorant, demanding without working]. There are so many people who don't want to work and expect that everything should be cheap and easy. Everybody is complaining that unemployment has increased, while at the same time industries are short of workers. Many of those who are unemployed are uneducated and don't want to work; they simply depend on welfare benefits. Here in India, there are so many beggars on the street who are
not ready to take care of themselves. They just wait for handouts and take advantage of the humanitarian principles of others.

Because of this tamasic attitude, there are more and more people who expect cheap food to be provided. There is an ever-increasing demand for more rice, wheat, milk, eggs, meat, etc. at lower prices. As a result, techniques have been developed to increase the fertility of land and crop yield, to make the cows produce more meat and milk, the chickens produce bigger eggs, and so on. We can't blame the scientists for these unnatural developments because they were only acting in response to unnatural demands.

It has really become a very big problem that we are eating so much hybridised food. There is currently a big debate whether genetically altered food should be allowed or not, but actually it has been eaten for the last fifty years under the name of hybridisation. Many of the fruits, vegetables and grains that are available on the market are hybrid species have been developed to increase the size and quantity of the crop, and these are no longer natural products. It is true though that genetic alteration represents a bigger change in the basic nature of substances, and this genetically mutated material will interact with the human body in a totally different way than natural substances.
So, if you want to be healthy, the first step is to become vegetarian and the second step is to avoid taking any unnatural products. One of the biggest culprits is milk. Pure and natural milk is one of the most satvic [light, pure] substances, but the modern processing techniques have turned it from nectar into poison. So many doctors tell their patients not to take milk and milk products. The problem is that if you don't take milk, you are likely to suffer from arthritis, osteoporosis, calcium deficiency, immunity failure syndrome, etc., whereas if you take processed unnatural milk, there is more likelihood of developing sclerosis, arterial blocks, and so on.

The problem started with the modernisation of the dairy system. I remember when I was a young child I used to get up early in the morning and go to collect the milk from the farmer. This was a common practice, but gradually people didn't want to get up early and walk a long way to collect fresh milk. Because of the demand for an easier method, the farmers began delivering the milk from door to door. But when the farmers could no longer meet the demand, some started mixing water with the milk.

Gradually there was a revolution in the dairy industry, as milk began to be mass-produced, pre-packed and sold on a large scale. But the problem remained of how to meet the demand for so much milk, and how to preserve it for a longer time. A cow does not produce the same quantity of milk throughout the year. After delivering a calf, the milk Production is at the highest, and then it gradually decreases to zero until the cow becomes pregnant again. This natural fluctuation means that a static level of milk production cannot be guaranteed throughout the year. So, scientists developed artificial methods by which a cow can become pregnant out of the natural cycle and produce a greater quantity of milk. Not only this, but the milk itself was altered to give a specific fat content, ultra-heat treated to make it last for a long time, and so on.
All the problems with milk production began when the dairy industry started controlling the yield and content of the milk by unnatural means. The traditional method of making dairy products was to heat the milk, remove the cream, add natural curd culture, and then churn the cream to separate out the butter and buttermilk. This is relatively time-consuming and quite a lot of buttermilk and milk is wasted in the process. In order to find a short cut, the dairy industry made its biggest mistake: instead of first boiling the milk, the cream was removed from the cold milk. Once the cream has been removed from the milk only very little fat remains, and then this milk is dried out to make milk powder. This milk powder is the main culprit for causing many diseases like arterial blocks, sclerosis, obesity, etc. Those who were fed breast milk as babies are really the lucky ones. Many of the children who were fed on powdered milk or preparations made from powdered milk are facing health problems now.

Another important point to remember is that milk should not be heated again and again. Milk that is cooked for several hours until it becomes sticky and condensed, for example in sweets like barfi, is much more difficult to digest. So you can imagine that milk powder, which is a very hard and dry substance, takes a long time to dissolve in the body. In fresh milk, there are natural enzymes that help the digestion process. But once the milk has been dried, the enzymes are destroyed and all that remains are dead particles that create such a big obstruction in the body.

If you take such milk powder over a long period of time, there will be a hardening of the cells and deposits will start to build up in the body. These hard deposits, which are not accepted or dissolved in the body, become the nucleus for disease. Sclerosis may develop in the lungs, or joints, a cancerous tumour may develop, or maybe arterial blockages in the heart. Many women are also suffering from hormonal disturbances because the cows are given injections to change their hormonal balance, and this in turn affects the human body.

It is very important therefore to take natural, unadulterated milk on a daily basis. It may be unavoidable to take milk powder for one day, for example if you are travelling, but it should not become a habit. Even if
you only take it rarely, it is very heavy to digest and the kidneys should have the capacity to expel it from the body.

Milk is one of the basic necessities of life, along with sugar, honey and ghee. Ayurveda clearly states that all these substances are a vital part of the daily diet. Real ayurvedic ghee is made by the process of heating the milk, separating the cream, adding curd, churning it to make butter, and then boiling the butter until it is clarified. Such ghee will bring diseases under control very easily. So many women are taking calcium, iron and hormone supplements to avoid the problem of osteoporosis. But how has this become such a big problem all of a sudden? Because many women are worried about obesity, they don't eat sugar, milk, ghee, etc. Gradually the body's energy is depleted and the immune system is weakened, which invites disease.

Only with a proper diet will you be able to develop stamina and a strong immune system so that you can resist disease and live life to the full. Can you really enjoy life if you are sick in a hospital bed and being kept alive by artificial means? Living means that you should be able to decide what you want to do, to be independent, to work creatively, to enjoy loving relationships with others and to enjoy the world.

Be Healthy - be Vegetarian
Part 2
Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Echo, April 2001

(c) Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Village, India
As a consumer, you should create pressure to get fresh and natural products, for example milk that has not been artificially processed. **Pasteurised milk is all right, but it should surely not be homogenised or contain dried milk powder.** Whatever you consume will affect your body, so the only solution is to become more natural. Organic farming methods are good, for example using biological rather than chemical fertiliser, since any synthetic compound affects the human body and changes its basic structure and nature.

**Homogenization**
Like composition, fat globules vary in size from less than 0.2 to about 15 micrometers in diameter between different species. Diameter may also vary between animals within a species and at different times within a milking of a single animal. In unhomogenized cow's milk, the fat globules have an average diameter of two to four micrometers and with homogenization, average around 0.4 micrometers. The fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K along with essential fatty acids such as linoleic and linolenic acid are found within the milk fat portion of the milk.

The milk is pumped at high pressures through very narrow tubes, breaking up the fat globules through turbulence and cavitation. A greater number of smaller particles possess more total surface area than a smaller number of larger ones, and the original fat globule membranes cannot completely cover them. Casein micelles are attracted to the newly exposed fat surfaces. Nearly one-third of the micelles in the milk end up participating in this new membrane structure. The casein weighs down the globules and interferes with the clustering that accelerated separation. The exposed fat globules are vulnerable to certain enzymes present in milk, which could break down the fats and produce rancid flavors. To prevent this, the enzymes are inactivated by pasteurizing the milk immediately before or during homogenization.

Milk that has undergone high-pressure homogenization, sometimes labeled as "ultra-homogenized," has a longer shelf life than milk that has undergone ordinary homogenization at lower pressures.

*Source: Wikipedia, Article:Milk*

**Ayurvedic perception**
Homogenisation spoils the milk. The human body cannot digest homogenised milk properly. This problem may cause milk intolerance or diseases.
Ayurveda deals with the basic nature of all substances. The ancient Rishis had studied everything in great detail and discovered the nature of every substance; the nature of a chicken, dog, or cat; the nature of wheat, or mango, and so on. If the basic nature of a substance is changed, this mutation will create an unnatural reaction in the human body. For example, very expensive imported apples are available nowadays in Mumbai. They look beautiful and they are very large, but the taste and smell isn't like an apple at all. This is because the structure of the apple has been changed.

It is high time that we should promote a healthy diet for mankind. Doctors say that you should avoid taking milk, but which milk? It is the homogenised milk where the cream has been separated by cold processing, milk powder, and other such milk products that are creating a problem. In one way, the doctors are right to say that such milk should be avoided, because there is no substitute for natural milk.

In this day and age, there are so many misunderstandings about nutrition, and once they are removed you will be able to live much more happily and healthily. The vast majority of health problems are caused by wrong eating habits. So often, I tell patients to change their diet and to avoid certain types of food, but some of them don't listen. If they would be ready to include fresh milk, ghee, sugar and honey in their daily diet, then even problems like heart disease, diabetes and cancer could be brought under control very fast. As a general rule, I would say that you should eat less and always eat food that is as natural as possible.

There are many different theories about what is a healthy diet. For example, research has been carried out in the West about the type of food that is suitable for different blood groups. The problem is that the categories such as 'A', 'B' and 'O' have no meaning because the action of a particular substance in the body depends on a number of different factors. It is not possible therefore to recommend a diet based purely on blood groups because we have to consider the complex interaction between the
constitution of the individual, his surroundings, the nature of his disease, and so on.

I am a member of the Government of India's Pharmacopoeia Committee that regularly meets in New Delhi. The purpose of the meetings is to try to standardise all the Ayurvedic formularies in a scientific way. But how to classify, analyse and standardise herbs and food substances? We try to find out the chemistry of the substance, the pH value, mineral ash content, etc., but this never gives us the full picture. These tests only tell us the qualities of a dead substance, but in Ayurveda we are interested in the life of a substance and how it interacts with the human body. When we burn rice we can analyse the mineral ash, but when we eat rice, what happens to that ash in the body? Similarly, we cannot increase the haemoglobin or minerals in the body just by taking artificial supplements because the substance has to be adopted by the body. It is a question of the interaction between the nature of the person, which means his constitution, and the nature of the object. We always take this perspective in Ayurveda.

Every scientific branch tries to understand the nature of substances in a different way. But how should we evaluate something? We cannot just understand an object by its appearance or superficial behaviour. For example, if a person is well dressed we generally think that he is respectable, and if he is dirty and poorly dressed we tend to avoid him. But we cannot really judge his true nature by the way he looks or speaks. The rich and well-dressed Person may have malicious intentions, while the poor person may have a very kind and loving nature. Therefore the way that a Person, or substance, lives and interacts with others is the best indicator of the real inner nature.

Likewise, we cannot understand the true nature of a disease just by studying the levels of triglycerides, cholesterol, etc. In Ayurveda, we use pulse diagnosis together with a detailed observation of the person to determine his constitution and the nature of his disease. We can use laboratory reports as supplementary information to help us understand what is happening in the body, but they cannot be taken as the main point of reference.

Once I attended a conference together with many highly qualified Western doctors and health officials. There was a big debate about whether milk, butter, ghee and other dairy products are healthy or not. Nobody was ready to accept the Ayurvedic viewpoint that these substances, when properly prepared, are vital to maintain good health. The doctors had read the research reports claiming that milk, butter and ghee increase the level of cholesterol and triglycerides in the body, but
none of them had considered which kind of products had been tested.

Any milk product that has been cold processed will surely be difficult to digest and will create fatty deposits in the body. Therefore the Ayurvedic method is to heat milk before making cream, curd, butter, ghee and so on. I asked these highly qualified doctors if they had ever heated milk to make tea or prepare curd, or if they had ever churned butter and then boiled it to make ghee. Most of them were totally ignorant of these traditional processes and yet they were ready to condemn the Ayurvedic viewpoint.

Whenever doctors in the West ask me about starting a Panchakarma Centre, I tell them that the first thing they must do is to order fresh milk that has not been homogenised. Especially when we are treating People who have already developed a disease, we must be sure to provide natural milk from a cow that has not been fed the wrong food or given hormone supplements. Naturally, if the cow is fed unnatural, non-vegetarian products, the milk will make a Problem in the body.

Be Healthy - be Vegetarian
Part 3
Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Echo, May 2001

It is true that natural food products are often more expensive, but it is a question of Priorities. These days, many people are ready to spend money on luxury items, but they are not willing to pay a little more for good quality food. For example, in the slums you will find so many TV antennas even though the living conditions are very poor. People may not even have enough money for food, but still they want a TV. Without considering whether they have the capacity to earn enough, they expect a high and luxurious standard of living.

It's very important to change your priorities and reduce your demand for luxury items. Once when we were in Mumbai we passed a very famous sweet shop so we decided to bring something back to Karla. The shop was packed full of people and by the time we got served the sweets we wanted were sold out. All the sweets were very costly, Rs. 600 for a kilo of normal barfi, Rs. 1000 or more for others. But nobody was complaining about the prices and they were ready to queue for a long time even to get some chiwada or somosas.
On the other hand, when people see that our special medicated Chyavanprash is around Rs. 600 a kilo, they complain that it is too expensive. They are ready to pay so much for luxury items like sweets, but not for medicines that will improve their health. Actually, such a precious product like Chyavanprash should be around Rs. 5000 a kilo if you compare it with barfi.

The factories producing sweets like barfi get the milk in the morning and by afternoon the barfi is ready. In comparison, if Chyavanprash is properly produced according to traditional standards, as in Atmasantulana Village, it is a very long and complex process. First we have to collect the herbs and check that they have the proper potency. Then all the different types of herbs and other ingredients have to be soaked, ground, fried and so on. This whole process takes at least one week. After all this time and effort, naturally the Chyavanprash will be more costly. Of course you can buy some cheap Chyavanprash in the market but this may be nothing more than a jam.

Whenever you are buying a product, you must know how to select the proper quality. For example, there are hundreds of different varieties of honey on the market, but most of them have been adulterated with sugar. Cardamom is available from Rs. 200 a kilo up to Rs. 1200. If you bite on a seed of real good quality cardamom there will be such a sensation of freshness in the mouth, nose and eyes, you will feel it everywhere. But if you chew the seeds of cheap varieties there will not even be the taste of cardamom because the essential oil has already been extracted.

There are many countries where the poverty is appalling. At the moment, it is not possible for farmers to produce enough rice and other essential food substances at a low enough price using organic farming methods. This is a very complex problem, since the farmers have become habituated to getting a large crop from a small piece of land with relatively little investment or effort. By using chemical fertilisers and hybridised species, they can have a much greater income than by
natural farming methods. Even in Europe, it has taken time to make the change towards organic farming, and naturally produced food is still more expensive.

There are many different types of rice. The rice that is normally eaten in the daily meal should be very healthy, easy to digest and good for strengthening the body. In Europe and America, Basmati rice or rice that has been par-boiled is very popular and it is difficult to find any other varieties. In India, Basmati rice is only used occasionally for pulao or some special dishes since it is heavier for digestion and produces gas. Basmati rice is served when there is a festival or marriage, or in hotels.

Fertiliser is a very hot substance that immediately burns sensitive plants. For example, many varieties of rose have been developed that can withstand fertiliser, so they give a larger crop and the flowers remain nice for between four and seven days. But such roses are non-medicinal and they will not dissolve in the body when eaten as rose jam.

Natural roses have a fantastic fragrance and the petals have a cooling effect and help to improve the urination. However, these roses are very sensitive to fertiliser, and two hours after being removed from the bush all the petals will fall, so very few growers are ready to produce them commercially. Here in Atmasantulana Village, we are very particular about the quality of the medicinal plants and it is difficult to get real rose essence or petals to make gulkand (rose jam). Many varieties of gulkand that are available in the market have been adulterated because the proper roses are not available.

Be Healthy - be Vegetarian
Part 4
Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Echo, June 2001

(c) Dr. Shri Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Village, India
It is always necessary to understand the nature of a substance. For example, coconut trees are naturally slow growing and it may take fifteen years to get the first crop, but afterwards there will be many crops and the tree will live for up to a hundred years. A new breed of coconut has been developed that will give a crop within five or ten years and the tree is small so there are less labour costs to harvest the coconuts. However, the trees only live for about twenty years, so in the long run they are less productive.

Certain vegetables and fruits absorb fertiliser easily and others don’t. Coconut takes very little fertiliser because it is very hard and slow growing. Cabbage absorbs fertiliser very easily and quickly grows to a large size. Traditional varieties of potato cannot take fertiliser, so if the farmers want a bigger potato crop they have to use a hybridised variety. The nature of the plant is altered so that it can withstand fertiliser, but this means that the hardness increases, which will create problems in the body.

Another problem is that all the chemical fertilisers are spoiling the land. After a few years, it is not possible to grow anything because the soil is totally burnt-out. The land has to be left fallow for at least three years and jute is allowed to decompose in the soil until it becomes fertile again.

It is difficult to promote organic farming methods in India because of the poverty, lack of education, lack of political support, and so on. People in general are not conscious about the need for natural food and the tendency is to want a greater quantity of cheaper products. It is true also that some producers are cashing in on the biological idea and making the products unnecessarily expensive. One advantage is that many people still prefer the traditional varieties of rice, grains, vegetables, etc., rather than the new hybridised varieties. Unfortunately though, many of the younger generation are looking to the West and want to adopt new products and

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eating habits that are not suitable for the Indian climate and living conditions.

Change has to start at the individual level. As soon as people stop buying unnatural products and the demand decreases, the market will suffer and farmers will have an incentive to start growing natural products. In Europe many people have become conscious and now more and more farmers have changed over to organic farming. Naturally it is more expensive in the beginning, but after some time it will even out as the demand increases and there is more competition between the producers.

We should make people realise that cheaper milk, rice, vegetables, etc. are creating a health risk, but nobody is ready to accept this responsibility. The politicians only pay attention to the scientific reports, but it's possible that these are biased because they are funded by the producers who have a vested interest.

One of the reasons that people are so easily manipulated is that they are ignorant about their health and are only concerned with eating to fulfil their desires. I have experienced this difficulty with many of our patients. When they first come for Panchakarma treatment, they are advised about which food they should avoid according to their disease. So many times they don't want to accept the advice and they repeatedly ask if they can eat this or that, as if it is the most important thing in the world.

The obsession with food is one of the biggest hurdles for many patients to overcome. Many times people ask how long they have to maintain the diet, if they can eat the restricted food sometimes, when they can eat 'normally' again, and so on. But it is very simple; we give a list of maybe seven or eight substances that should not be eaten. If the diet restrictions are given for a specific illness, then after recovery maybe certain substances can be eaten again. But if the diet restrictions are
given as basic guidelines according to the constitution, they will apply life-long.

You are not born only for eating and once you fall sick you should forget about certain food. Now you should eat only whatever will help you to survive, to overcome the disease and to become healthy. You should eat to live, not live to eat! Most importantly, you should decide that you will only eat food that is good quality and natural. For example, beetroot is good for the blood and helps to increase haemoglobin. But if all that's available is some unnatural, hybridised variety that is full of chemical fertilisers, rather than being healthy, it is more likely to cause disease. In this case, you should stop eating beetroot. You shouldn't be dependent on your desire for a particular food and you should avoid whatever's harmful.

So, you should understand that if you spend less on food, afterwards you will have to spend more on medicines. It is entirely your choice. You should realise this and take the decision not to consume anything unnatural. Always remember:

It is your birthright to enjoy good health!