

Healthy Habits for a Healthy Life

Your Health is in Your Hands - V

**Dr. Manthena
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Rajarshi....!

Among the precious sons bestowed by Nature, he is the most blessed. A Rajarshi (A king elevated to the stature of a sage) who offers a daily oblation to the philosophy of Nature itself. Like a sage walking beside us, he is the fragrant jewel that spreads the perfume of human evolution, blossoming under Nature's grace. He is the gardener who tends to the way of natural living, sowing its seeds and nurturing it with care.

Under his guidance, the “Natural Way of Life” is growing as Nature’s beloved child on the banks of the Krishna River. He is the chief architect of the Ashram, envisioned so that all people may follow Nature’s laws and live in good health under the watchful gaze of Goddess Kanaka Durga of Vijayawada.

With affection and reverence, I dedicate this garland of books, *Your Health is in Your Hands*, to the virtuous couple — our spiritual companions, pure-hearted and gracious — Sri Gokaraju Gangaraju and Smt. Laila Gangaraju.

Your loving well-wisher

Manthena Satyanarayana Raju

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Shall We Let Go of Bad Company?

Every human being wants to eat tasty food and live comfortably. To achieve this, people form friendships with flavours and with habits that provide pleasure. By obtaining what they desire through these habits and enjoying the temporary comfort they bring, one hopes that life will continue smoothly in this way.

But bad company will inevitably destroy us one day.

Just as sorrow hides behind pleasure, disease hides behind taste. Even if we do not wish for it, a body that enjoys excessive tastes and comforts cannot escape the consequences — it must eventually endure the diseases and suffering that follow.

The illnesses, pains, and hardships we experience today are not accidental. They are things we have earned for ourselves. The problem is that we often fail to recognise why they have come. Though we try many different methods to get rid of these diseases and difficulties, we rarely achieve the results we hope for.

If, on one side, we keep damaging the body through our own actions, and on the other side try to repair it, can such efforts ever truly succeed? Good health can never be achieved this way.

Realising this truth, people in countries like America have recently begun moving away from harmful habits and making conscious efforts to adopt good habits.

We must give our body good company. And to offer good company, we must first abandon bad company.

Letting go of bad habits is often harder than learning good ones — but there is no alternative. To give up something harmful, we must first understand what damage it causes, why it is harmful, and what consequences it leads to. When

the mind clearly understands these truths, a natural disinterest develops, followed by a firm decision never to return to that habit.

Only then can we truly free ourselves from it.

Protecting the body from harm is the greatest kindness we can do for ourselves. When a bad habit is abandoned, the foundation for a good habit is automatically laid.

So let us first make an effort to understand which habits are harmful and why they must be abandoned. Then, let us completely give them up and restore our health with our own hands.

In the end, let us once again prove that our health is truly in our own hands. Move forward with determination and commitment.

2. Give Up White Rice

For the telugu people, rice is the staple food. Of the total energy our body needs each day, more than 70 percent is supplied by rice alone. Recognising how vital rice is to human life, our ancestors used to pound paddy manually and eat it. Because of this process, none of the nutrients were destroyed; everything remained intact. From the day humans invented rice mills, however, the practice of polishing rice began. Today, this “polishing disease” has worsened to the extent that rice is polished until it shines like pearls.

Rice from which the husk is removed is naturally reddish in colour. Since this red rice does not store well for long periods and tends to attract insects, people began polishing it to make it white and suitable for storage. It also became easier to cook and easier to swallow without chewing. Let us now see what actually happens when rice is polished.

When red rice is put into a polishing mill, the mill scrapes off an outer layer. This scraped outer layer is called the first polish (bran). Nearly 50 percent of the most important nutrients present in rice are found in this outer layer. These include, in particular, twelve types of B vitamins, vitamin E, dietary fibre, lecithin, and other vital substances. Since this first polish contains all these valuable nutrients, pharmaceutical companies purchase it and use it to manufacture medicines. The same bran is filled into empty capsules and sold to us as “strength-giving capsules” at one rupee per capsule. To ensure shelf life, colour, and smell, certain chemicals are added to these capsules. People find it convenient to eat white rice and then consume B-complex capsules for strength.

This first polish is also mixed into malted health powders and other so-called strength-giving foods. After removing the first polish, the rice becomes slightly white but not completely so. Therefore, it is polished again. In this second polishing, the mill removes an even thicker layer, and the rice emerges bright white and glossy. The bran obtained in this second polish, which still contains

about 30 percent of nutrients, is fed to buffaloes, cows, other livestock, fish, and prawns as strength feed. The fully polished white rice alone is retained for human consumption. In this manner, we have been eating white rice for many years and causing immense harm to our bodies.

Let us now understand the harms caused by white rice.

1. Of the twelve types of B vitamins present in rice, more than 80 percent are lost, leaving only about 15–20 percent.
2. Due to the lack of adequate B vitamins, eating white rice leads to excessive fatigue, quick exhaustion, calf muscle cramps, and an inability to work hard. For example, the stamina that people aged 70 or 75 have today is not seen in people aged 25 or 30, and even children lack such stamina. The primary reason for this is clearly the consumption of white rice.
3. Vitamin E, which prevents premature ageing, is present in the outer layer of rice. It is almost completely absent in white rice.
4. White rice lacks lecithin, a substance that prevents the accumulation of fat and cholesterol in the body and acts as an antidote to excess fat. Those who eat white rice do not have this protection, and white rice offers no defence against heart disease.
5. Since all dietary fibre is present in the outer layers, white rice contains almost no fibre. As a result, constipation occurs, and it does not subside no matter how many medicines are taken.
6. People who eat white rice tend to gain more weight. Due to the absence of fibre, the energy derived from food enters the bloodstream all at once, prompting the body to convert it into fat. If fibre were present, this process would be slowed down.
7. Because the grains of white rice are fine and soft, they slip down the throat without proper chewing. As a result, digestion does not occur properly in either the mouth or the stomach.
8. White rice does not provide sustained energy for long periods. It causes fatigue within three to four hours of eating.
9. By eating white rice, we are forcing the body into a condition where it depends on B-complex capsules and strength tonics.
10. Swelling in the legs and frequent numbness or tingling sensations are common.

11. White rice lacks easily digestible healthy fats. These beneficial fats are lost into the bran during polishing. Such fats provide energy without harm, and those who eat white rice suffer from a deficiency of this energy.
12. White rice has no real taste. It is bland, encouraging excessive consumption of pickles and condiments.
13. It was only because our elders ate hand-pounded rice and possessed great strength that, despite our many mistakes and our consumption of white rice, we have managed to survive. Our children are born from us, and since we lack that strength, they lack it even more. Feeding children white rice from birth has led to a situation where parents end up serving their children instead of children serving their parents. All this is the consequence of white rice.
14. Raw rice costs about 14–15 rupees per kilogram. When this rice is polished and its two useful layers are removed, what remains — white rice — has no real value and should cost only 5–6 rupees per kilogram. Instead, we buy white rice for 20–25 rupees. Truly, buying white rice is like “losing money and inviting misfortune.”
15. Bran gets infested with insects within 10–15 days. Raw rice takes two to three months to attract insects, while white rice may not get infested even after seven or eight months. Insects clearly recognise which food is nutritious and rush to consume it, whereas humans, despite their intelligence, choose the inferior white variety. That is why, despite having everything, humans lack health.

We have eaten white rice all these years, but from now on let us ensure that this mistake is not repeated. Let every household develop the good habit of eating unpolished rice. Do not excuse yourself by saying it is unavailable. Rice that has undergone even the first polish is also unsuitable; buy fully unpolished rice only. Farmers' markets have sprung up everywhere, and many places sell it. You can also request rice directly from farmers, or buy it from rice mills nearby. If stored properly with neem leaves in tightly sealed sacks, it will not attract insects.

Cooking unpolished rice does not require extra effort. Usually, adding two glasses of water for one glass of rice is sufficient. With rice cookers now available, simply cook it until three whistles, then simmer on low heat for ten

minutes. Old rice does not become sticky; it cooks soft and fluffy. The belief that unpolished rice is hard to digest is a misconception. If we can digest meat pieces and chunks of pickles, claiming that unpolished rice is indigestible is merely an excuse.

Wheat, ragi, and jowar can also be cooked and eaten as rice. If using wheat rava, choose red wheat rava. Even people without teeth can eat such rice comfortably, and bowel movements improve. White wheat rava, like white rice, is also polished and therefore offers little benefit.

Those who prefer rotis instead of rice can eat wheat rotis, jowar rotis, ragi rotis, or rotis made from a mixture of three or four grains. Do not buy wheat flour from shops, as it is made from polished wheat with the nutritious outer layers removed. Such flour is attractively packaged and falsely marketed as superior, but it causes bloating rather than nourishment. Instead, grind whole wheat yourself and make rotis from that flour. To make wheat rotis softer, adding a little sesame powder or ground peanuts helps.

Eat whichever wholesome grain is available to you. Just as we nourish trees for fruit and feed cattle well for milk, we must abandon the culture of consuming lifeless white rice and instead choose nutrient-rich unpolished grains with foresight. Teach these good practices even to visiting relatives. Let the entire family grow strong and healthy, and let us pass on these good habits to future generations.

3. Give Up Tea and Coffee

Everyone seems to have fixed notions like “this is coffee time” or “this is tea time.” In other words, without even realising it, people have developed the habit of drinking them strictly by the clock. When the British ruled our country, our people adopted their habits, and without ever giving them up, continued drinking tea and coffee. Like a contagious disease, this habit spread from person to person across the entire country, so much so that everyone — from the illiterate to the highly educated — began consuming them. No one considers drinking tea or coffee a bad habit. In our country, drinking brandy or whisky is labelled a bad habit, whereas tea and coffee are not. In other countries, even if people drink brandy or whisky, no one calls it a bad habit, because men, women, young, and old all sit together and drink. When everyone does it, who is left to call it a bad habit? In our country, since only 40–50 percent of people drink alcohol while the rest do not, there are people left to label it a bad habit. Tea and coffee, however, are consumed by almost everyone, so who is there to point a finger — except people like me?

In reality, tea and coffee are addictions just like cigarettes, gutka, whisky, jarda, and paan. What does addiction mean? If you consume something daily for a few days and then skip it for a day, even if you forget, your body will not — it will remind you at that very time to consume it. Try drinking buttermilk every day at the same time for a year, and then skip it one day. Will your body trouble you because you did not drink buttermilk? It will not, because buttermilk is food. Then are tea and coffee food? We drink them many times a day, for ourselves and for others, often serving them with our own hands. They are not food; they are drugs. Let us see what tea and coffee actually contain.

One cup of coffee contains about 150 milligrams of caffeine, which is a drug. One cup of tea contains about 150 milligrams of theine, which is also a drug. These drugs are used in medicine to treat certain nerve-related and blood-vessel-related problems. When I studied B.Pharmacy, we were taught how

extracts from coffee and tea are processed to manufacture medicines. When someone has nerve or vascular issues, doctors use these substances to stimulate nerve activity. When we drink just one cup of tea or coffee a day, it is equivalent to consuming a 150 mg tablet that acts on the nervous system. Some people argue that coffee is bad and tea is good. In truth, both belong to the same family — they are sisters, nothing more.

Now think about how many cups we drink each day. Some people consume ten or twelve cups, others five or six. Consider how much of this drug we are sending into our bodies day after day. Is it just for a day or two? No — we have been troubling our bodies with these stimulants for years. Let us see what happens inside us after drinking tea or coffee.

Normally, our nervous system functions in a balanced state. Within half an hour of drinking tea or coffee, the drug in it begins to act. Due to the effect of caffeine and theine, the nervous system suddenly becomes highly stimulated and overactive. Just as a bull that normally walks calmly begins to run at great speed when whipped, our nerves also start functioning in an unnaturally accelerated manner. This heightened state lasts for about two to three hours. During this time, you feel extremely alert, energetic, and mentally light, eager to do things quickly. You may think this is good. But just as the bull, after running for some time, becomes so exhausted that it cannot even walk normally and slows down to a plodding pace, our nerves too fall below their natural state and begin to function poorly.

At that point, you feel tired, lazy, and dull, with reduced enthusiasm. Then the body again reminds you that it wants coffee or tea. If you do not provide it at that time, you immediately experience headaches, mental dullness, and fatigue. That is why, when it is “tea time” or “coffee time,” you feel restless until you drink it, wherever you may be. These habits weaken both the body and the mind, and that is why they are called bad habits. Why unnecessarily stimulate nerves that are already functioning normally, only to suffer afterwards? A human being is meant to remain in balance, not to constantly excite the body and mind every day.

Let us now consider the harms caused by tea and coffee.

1. Their effect on the intestines suppresses appetite; everyone has experienced hunger disappearing after drinking them.
2. The stomach and intestines are protected by a mucous layer that prevents burning and ulcers. Tea and coffee affect the goblet cells that produce this mucus, reducing its production by half. As a result, stomach burning, intestinal inflammation, and ulcers occur. When these problems arise, people avoid spicy and sour foods but continue tea and coffee, which is why the issues never fully resolve.
3. They reduce the production of digestive enzymes needed to digest food in the stomach and intestines.
4. Because the nerves are overstimulated, they become fatigued more quickly.
5. When the stimulating effect of tea or coffee wears off and you do not consume it again, headaches appear. Such habitual headaches tend to occur at some point every day. It can be said that tea and coffee are responsible for 50–60 percent of headaches.
6. Tea and coffee act on the adrenal glands above the kidneys, increasing urination little by little and frequently, eventually leading to urinary problems.
7. The liver takes an entire day to detoxify the effect of just one cup. If you drink five or six cups a day, the liver cannot neutralise the excess drug, and it becomes a burden.
8. Excessive stimulation of the brain leads to overthinking, restlessness, and irritability.
9. Since the nerves are constantly excited, they cannot relax, resulting in poor sleep and difficulty falling asleep.
10. Drinking tea or coffee early in the morning halts the body's natural elimination process. On an empty stomach, the body cleanses internal waste, but the moment you drink these beverages, this cleansing process stops and the body shifts into a state of agitation.

Without understanding what is contained in tea and coffee, we have been tormenting this body for years for the sake of passing time. Would you smear mud on your house just for timepass? Would you pour sand into your car's oil tank for entertainment? Of course not. Then why are you pouring such waste

into this priceless body — which cannot be bought even with crores of rupees — just to kill time? Not just once, but repeatedly: once for yourself, once for relatives, once for guests, once because there is nothing else to do, once for friends. Several times a day, you are turning this body into a chemical laboratory.

This is your body. It exists only for your well-being. Therefore, give up the custom of tea and coffee completely. Do not serve them even when relatives visit. Does that sound surprising? Are you afraid they may not come again? We should improve ourselves and help others improve — not ruin ourselves and ruin others. I will tell you what to do when relatives visit. As soon as they arrive, seat them comfortably and bring a large pot of water. Personally ensure they drink plenty of water. After ten minutes, politely ask whether they would like tea or coffee. With their stomachs already full of water, they will say they do not need anything and soon leave.

You too should give up tea and coffee and instead develop the habit of drinking more water at those times. The body will cleanse itself, and it is good for health. When you first give up tea and coffee, for five or six days your mind and mouth will crave them. To overcome this craving, from the very first day drink warm water with the juice of one or two lemons squeezed into it, making it distinctly sour. If you wish, you may add one or two spoons of honey. Sour taste has the quality of suppressing cravings. You can drink this two or three times a day.

If you experience headaches while quitting, take a head bath twice a day with cool water. If absolutely necessary, you may take a painkiller. Within a week, your body will forget its attachment to tea and coffee. Once you quit completely, never drink them again in your life for anyone's sake. In fact, people drink tea and coffee more for others than for themselves. Do not stake your life for someone else's habit.

Instead of tea and coffee, even milk is unnecessary — the age of drinking milk has passed. At those times, develop good habits such as drinking sour fruit juices, honey-lemon water, sugarcane juice, or coconut water. Life will become better. Let us make an effort to improve ourselves.

4. Give Up Non-Vegetarian Food

Before living beings were born, the food meant for them already existed. Living beings were created with bodies suited to the food they were meant to consume. Some creatures were designed to eat plant-based food, while others were designed to eat meat. Body structure itself evolved according to diet. Every living being knows what kind of food it is meant to eat and remains committed to that food throughout its life. Carnivorous animals never turn to vegetarian food. All creatures instinctively know what they should eat and live contentedly on that food.

The real problem lies with us. Are we herbivores? Are we carnivores? Or are we beings who mix both kinds of food? Which type of food is our body actually suited for? Think about it. Do we have powerful claws to tear animals apart? Do we have sharp fangs? Do we have narrow jaws or teeth capable of crushing bones? On the contrary, we have soft hands, wide jaws, blunt nails, and evenly aligned teeth — all features perfectly suited for eating soft fruits and plant foods.

Place an apple and a rabbit in front of a milk-drinking infant. The child will try to bite the apple and will play with the rabbit. Place the same before a puppy or a fox cub, and it will attempt to bite the rabbit and play with the apple. The body clearly reveals what it is meant to eat.

All living beings smell their food before eating it. If the nose rejects it, they will not touch the food at all. If the nose approves, they eat it cleanly. Does the smell of meat appeal to the human nose? When fish are cut, or goats and chickens are slaughtered, can a human joyfully and comfortably inhale that foul smell? If one could, it might suggest that the body was meant to eat it. But even our nose cannot tolerate that stench. That is why people cover their noses in fish markets. Even women wrinkle their noses while cutting meat. Our nose itself tells us that we were not created even to inhale that foul smell.

If the nose refuses to accept it, how can the mouth and stomach agree to digest it?

On the other hand, animals like dogs, foxes, and vultures immediately become attracted to that smell, wagging their tongues in excitement. Their bodies are designed for it, and therefore they enjoy it. Moreover, human beings are born with a higher purpose. To achieve that purpose, only sattvic qualities are helpful. With tamasic and rajasic qualities, a person intends one thing but ends up achieving something entirely different. Since qualities arise from food, we must consume sattvic food alone.

A person cannot even smell tamasic food in a dream, let alone eat it. Because the stench prevents us from eating it, people cook meat to eliminate the smell. Immediately after cutting meat, hands and knives are washed thoroughly with soap. Until it goes on the stove, people struggle with the stench, holding their breath and avoiding free breathing. The moment spices are added generously, our senses get deceived — the nose begins to inhale eagerly, and what felt repulsive moments earlier suddenly becomes tempting. With enough spices, even mud could be swallowed comfortably. It is with the help of spices that humans commit this degrading act. Without cooking and spices, no one would even go near meat.

Our attachment is not so much to meat as it is to spices. At the sight of raw meat, the mind recoils. The eyes turn away from the sight of red blood. The nose rejects the stench. The body structure itself resists. Despite all these clear signals from bodily laws, humans still insist on eating it. What are we trying to achieve in the end? If we force the body to do what it rejects, how can it support us? How can it grant us health?

Let us consider the suffering meat causes to the body.

1. To digest meat, the stomach and intestines must struggle continuously for 8–10 hours. A large portion of the body's energy is wasted solely on digestion.
2. After eating meat, there is excessive drowsiness. Most of the vital energy gets diverted to digestion, leaving insufficient supply for the brain. As a result, mental dullness sets in. Even after sleeping 8–10 hours, fatigue

does not disappear. A tiger that eats meat sleeps for 15–20 hours — similarly, a large part of human life gets consumed by sleep.

3. Tamasic and rajasic qualities increase, leading to anger, irritation, and stubbornness. One begins to see only faults in others, not goodness. The mind remains restless and disturbed.
4. Severe constipation occurs. Blood in stools, piles, and related problems develop. Bowel movements may occur only once every two or three days.
5. Fat accumulates excessively in the body. Meat contains substances like lysine that encourage the accumulation of fat and cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease and paralysis.
6. It promotes the growth of harmful microorganisms in the intestines.
7. Nutrients are not properly absorbed by the body, leading to many secondary health issues.
8. Cooking meat requires excessive oil, salt, and spices, all of which further harm the body.
9. Instead of providing strength, digestion of meat consumes most of the body's energy — nearly 60–70 percent — leaving little for vitality and repair.
10. It increases the risk of chronic diseases and stubborn illnesses like cancer. Aware of this, many countries around the world are giving up meat by more than three-quarters and turning toward vegetarian diets.

Can we justify eating food that causes so much harm and suffering to the body? Our elders called meat neecham — not casually, but because it was considered the lowest and most degrading form of food. Eating neecham food leads us to a degraded state as well. In earlier times, if someone behaved wrongly, they were scolded as “neechuda” — a person of low conduct. Today, such words are rarely used, because everyone eats meat and the meaning itself has faded.

Even those who eat meat cannot tolerate its foul smell. That is why, after a meat meal, people scrub their hands with soap two or three times. They rinse their mouths repeatedly and consume fennel, betel leaf, or some other substance to remove the stench. They wash their hands for holding it for fifteen minutes and their mouth for eating it for fifteen minutes — but what do

they use to cleanse the stomach that holds it for 8–10 hours? How do they cleanse the essence that spreads throughout every cell of the body?

In a culture where even seeing a corpse is believed to cause impurity, why should we adopt the practice of eating dead bodies? Our culture is not one of killing beings. We are meant to protect life, not consume it. As human beings, as embodiments of humanity, think once again. Is it righteous to slaughter a fellow living being and feast upon it just because relatives have arrived, a son is home for holidays, a son-in-law has visited, or because it is a birthday or marriage anniversary? Is such violence worthy of a human being?

Let us abandon this cruelty and make an effort to consume good food with a compassionate heart. Just as pouring kerosene into a car ruins its durability, power, and increases pollution, meat acts like kerosene for the human body. Let us give up this harmful habit and learn a good one instead. Just as a Hero Honda runs smoothly for 75 kilometres with one litre of proper fuel, without pollution and with high pickup, the human body too can function tirelessly, peacefully, and disease-free when fueled with coconut, sprouted seeds, dates, and fruits.

From tomorrow onward, I hope you will fuel your body — this precious vehicle — with such wholesome nourishment and protect your health by avoiding unnecessary repairs.

5. Give Up Cool Drinks

In our culture, the moment a guest arrives at our home, we welcome them by offering drinking water. Sometimes we offer buttermilk to quench their thirst. Even without formal education, our elders taught us such wonderful and thoughtful habits. Today, despite being well educated, what are we teaching and practicing? We are offering our guests and even our own children a chilled poisonous substance in the name of cool drinks. We buy these bottles in large quantities, store big bottles in refrigerators, and keep drinking them happily at home.

If we spend money on something to eat or drink, it would at least make some sense if, along with taste and pleasure, it gave us even a little health. Let us think carefully about what we actually gain from cool drinks apart from taste and momentary enjoyment. To determine whether a substance is acidic or alkaline, we use a pH meter. If the pH value is above 7, it is alkaline; if it is below 7, it is acidic. When a pH meter is dipped into any substance, the reading immediately reveals its nature. If you pour a cool drink into a glass and dip a pH meter into it, its true character is exposed.

When about ten commonly available cool drinks in the market were tested, their pH values were found to range between 1.1 and 2.0. Whether sweet or tangy, all of them were found to be extremely acidic. You may have seen the acids used to clean toilets. Their pH value also ranges between 1.5 and 2.0. That is why, when poured on dried stains, they clean them effectively. The cool drinks we consume have acidity comparable to toilet-cleaning acid. If you doubt this, the next time your toilet bowl has hard stains, instead of pouring acid, pour a cool drink and wait for five minutes. It will clean the surface just like acid does.

Can we drink substances that work like toilet cleaners? Can we allow our children to drink them? Think about it seriously.

You may wonder why cool drinks are so acidic. If you look at the chemicals added to them, the reason becomes clear. Substances such as phosphoric acid, carbolic acid, erythorbic acid, and benzoic acid are added. Only when so many acids are combined does the drink feel “exciting.” That is why after drinking cool drinks, people experience burning in the throat and stomach, belching, severe discomfort in the head and nerves, and acidity.

I remember a small incident from my childhood. In my entire life after birth, I might have consumed around twenty cool drinks. Once, at a wedding, since it was free, I tried to drink Thums Up. When I saw it fizzing and foaming, I felt scared. Still, I tried to drink it. The moment I swallowed one sip, my throat burned badly. I wondered whether alcohol was mixed in it because it was so harsh, and I couldn’t continue drinking it. At that time, I did not understand the reason, but today I clearly know what causes that burning sensation and where that power comes from.

Here is another secret you may not know. When a dead body is cremated, the entire body burns completely, and even the bones turn to ash. But the teeth do not burn. If the body is buried instead, the entire body merges with the soil, but even after twenty years, if that soil is dug up, the teeth remain intact without breaking. That is how strong our teeth are. Yet, when a tooth is placed in a cool drink for about twenty days, it completely dissolves. The tooth turns black and becomes soft like paste when pressed. In one dark-colored cool drink, a tooth placed inside was found to have completely dissolved and disappeared by the eighth day. This is something I personally observed.

From birth to death, we chew nearly fifty tons of food with our teeth. Teeth that can withstand chewing such massive amounts of food without damage get dissolved by a cool drink in less than a month. Should such liquids be called drinks or poisons? They are poisons — but because they contain a high percentage of water, they act as slow poison. If such strong teeth can be destroyed by these drinks, what about our intestines, nerves, and cells?

All living beings, including humans, inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide, a toxic gas, is added to cool drinks to preserve them for long periods. That is why, immediately after drinking any cool drink, the foul gas

escapes through the mouth and nose. In one college, two young men competed with each other — one drank eight bottles and the other nine bottles of cool drinks with great difficulty. Before a doctor could arrive, both died. Post-mortem reports revealed that they died due to excess carbon dioxide gas in their bodies. This incident occurred in Mumbai. Now do you understand how dangerous the gas added to these drinks is?

Some cool drinks sold in India also contain high amounts of caffeine, a chemical extracted from coffee. This caffeine causes irritation, sleeplessness, and headaches. Chemical analysis of various cool drinks has revealed the presence of toxic substances such as oxalic compounds, cadmium, zinc, sodium glutamate, potassium sorbate, methyl benzene, brominated vegetable oil, and more. Because of these harmful substances, warnings are printed on bottles in some countries stating that children below six years should not consume them. In our country, such warnings are not printed.

Cool drinks contain excessive sugar, which damages teeth and intestines. There is not a single beneficial nutrient in these drinks. Buying and consuming them is like purchasing poison with money. When you buy them for your children, or encourage them to drink these beverages, you are directly harming their health with your own hands.

Therefore, eliminate these harmful habits and make arrangements to give children fruits and fresh fruit juices every day. Do not waste money by offering cool drinks to guests. Our tradition says Atithi Devo Bhava — the guest is divine. Offer divine guests clean drinking water. It gives health. If we want to eliminate such harmful habits from society, we must begin by eliminating them from our own homes. Let no one in your family ruin their health through such mistakes. The money you earn should not destroy you. Use that money to buy fruits and make fruit juices a habit for your children. They will drink them happily and fill themselves with health.

6. Give Up Snacks

Foods eaten just to pass time are called snacks. Our elders did not have much money, and even when they did, they often lacked the leisure, energy, or convenience to grind flour, sieve it, and cook snacks laboriously on wood-fired stoves. Snacks were prepared only on festivals or during auspicious occasions. When they were made, people ate them freely for two or three days and then forgot about them. That itself turned out to be a blessing. On other days, after meals and before evening, they ate naturally available seasonal foods such as date palm fruits, jujube fruits, palmyra fruits, tamarind pods, tender pods, roots, and other wholesome natural snacks. For children, they bought roasted gram, peanuts, peas, puffed rice, dried mango pulp, palmyra fruit pulp, and similar snacks. Apart from these, whatever fruit was available was eaten. Even if they ate simple foods like porridge rice or buttermilk rice daily, the nutritional gaps were filled by these natural snacks. That is why our elders had fewer health problems. At least until the age of fifty or sixty, they lived without illness, without weakness, and without swallowing pills. Problems such as loss of eyesight, loss of teeth, digestive disorders, blood pressure, diabetes, joint pains at a young age, or premature greying of hair were uncommon. Their habits and discipline protected them.

Let us now think about how our habits are today. If snacks have to be prepared by grinding flour and cooking on a stove, even on festival days many women today do not prepare them. The reason snacks have become so common is that there is no need to grind or sieve flour, gas stoves cook food in minutes, money is not a problem, and children are not seen as an obstacle to cooking. On top of this, refrigerators allow these cooked snacks to be stored for days, encouraging people to eat them for longer periods. People prepare two or three varieties, store them in containers, and keep eating a sweet here and a savory there while watching television, munching absentmindedly throughout the day. When children return from school or relatives visit, snacks are immediately served as a form of welcome. If cooking

is not possible on a particular day, a simple phone call brings “home foods” delivered instantly so that eating snacks is never missed.

When the entire family eats something or the other like this every day, they feel they are living well and enjoying life. Children feel their mother is good because she prepares snacks daily, and husbands feel their wives take great care of them. Thus, snacks are consumed daily in some form or another. When homemade snacks become boring, people turn to roadside items like bajjis, cutlets, samosas, hot pakoras, egg bondas, and similar foods three or four times a week. If only men eat these outside, they feel the rest of the family is missing out, so they bring them home in special packaging. During holidays, festivals, or movie outings, consumption goes even further with ice creams, drinks, pizzas, burgers, noodles, cakes, and more, spending large amounts of money. These are bought “for the children,” but adults also eat them happily along with them. The entire family collectively indulges in such habits.

No one seems to think about the consequences, where this leads, or the harm it causes. Even when both children and adults fall sick and end up in hospitals, with frequent fevers, colds, phlegm, and coughs, there is no awakening. There is no one left to say clearly that this is wrong and should not be eaten. Even doctors, who might be expected to advise otherwise, are often seen eating the same junk with their families. That is why diseases spare neither doctors nor their families. Like an infectious disease, this snack habit has spread throughout society and become deeply rooted. To get rid of this disease, we must first understand how these foods harm the body.

Most of these snacks are deep-fried in oil heated to over 300 degrees and kept frying for five to ten minutes before being consumed with added salt and spices. When rice and vegetables cooked at just 100 degrees lose 60 to 70 percent of their nutrients, what remains in foods fried at 300 degrees? Even if they did not cause harm, we would be lucky, but in reality, such foods become almost entirely waste and toxic substances. When salt and spices are sprinkled on deep-fried items, they may taste good to the tongue, but what the body needs are nutrients. Snacks bought from outside are even worse, as

they contain chemicals, colors, and preservatives, adding further burden to the body.

Our body absorbs useful substances from the food we eat and uses them for nourishment, while discarding what is unnecessary. Performing these two functions requires energy. The energy required to eliminate harmful substances and protect the body from their effects is far greater than the energy needed to digest nutritious food. For example, after a dust storm, leaves, dust, and debris collect at our doorstep. Cleaning this mess takes much more effort than routine daily cleaning. In the same way, when we eat snacks, cakes, ice creams, bajjis, and similar items, the body wastes enormous energy digesting them. Even after all that effort, the body gains almost no nutritional benefit. On the contrary, it must spend additional energy to neutralize and expel the toxins present in these foods. Our immune system gets exhausted just protecting us from this junk, leading to weakened immunity.

When we continuously bombard the body with snack storms, it becomes overworked and drains all its stored energy. Just as our body readily absorbs natural foods like fruits when they are available, it struggles with unnatural foods. By feeding such unnatural foods to a naturally designed body, we are inviting diseases upon ourselves.

Problems caused by snacks:

1. Deep-fried foods kill appetite, which is why children refuse regular meals after eating them.
2. Due to excess salt and oil, they cause excessive thirst, and drinking water afterward often upsets digestion.
3. These foods contain almost zero fiber, leading to constipation; many children and adults now pass stools only once every two or three days.
4. Blood vessels get clogged, leading to heart diseases even at a young age.
5. Due to impurities in these foods, infections such as colds, phlegm, and cough occur frequently.
6. Accumulation of waste in the body leads to frequent fevers.
7. Waste turns into fat, causing weight gain.

8. Eating these foods reduces the desire for wholesome, natural foods.

9. They increase the risk of chronic diseases.

If adults avoid daily consumption and do not give such snacks to children regularly, and instead consume them only during festivals or special occasions, the harm will be far less. If you feel like eating them occasionally, eat them once in the afternoon between three and four and skip the regular meal that day. Do not touch them again the next day. Eat them only as a formality, not as food. As our elders taught us, if we eat seasonal fruits daily, the mind will not crave junk. Healthy snacks include sesame laddus and peanut laddus made with dates, raw peanuts, roasted corn cobs, fruit salads with honey, and similar options. If fruits and fruit juices are used regularly at home, there will be no problem.

When adults adopt good habits, children automatically benefit. Therefore, let us first change ourselves and show our children the right path. Let the entire family live healthily. Let us prove that our health is truly in our own hands.