



PROTECT THE PLANET

Study circle



EATING TO PROTECT THE PLANET

This guide has been designed to help Centres/Groups of the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) facilitate a study circle on the topic of Food. It has been developed to be delivered in three parts. This part has a duration of 90 minutes.

Part 3 will cover: *We are what we eat – how the food we eat has both an environmental and ethical impact – and how it also impacts the mind. Plus, tips on choosing food that reduces our impact on the environment, while simultaneously providing sustenance for a spiritual life.*

PART 3

OPENING AND INTRODUCTION			
ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	DURATION
3 OMs (or a minute's silent sitting) followed by an opening prayer	<p>Whether Omkar or silent sitting is used depends on the audience this study circle is being delivered to. Either way, the objective of this activity is to help settle the group and establish group dynamics. This is the same for whether a prayer or short reading is used.</p> <p>Example of a prayer that could be used to start the session: <i>Dear Swami, we, your children have gathered here today so that we can be your instruments in protecting and serving Mother Nature. You have blessed us with Mother Nature. Please guide us on your mission to serve Her. Please let our words, thoughts and actions be of your accord. Please bless us to be open minded and to learn from one another, so that we can truly embrace the inherent divinity within us, in all beings and Mother Nature.</i></p>		1 MIN

<p>Introduce today's topic</p>	<p>This study circle is part of the Serve the Planet (STP) initiative of the SSIO.</p> <p>In Part 1 and 2 we covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food as God – what food is and its importance in our lives ○ The importance of knowing where our food comes from ○ Tips on sourcing food that is both environmentally sustainable and healthy for us ● Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If global food production is enough to feed the world why are people going hungry? ○ How much do we need to eat? ○ Why and how are we wasting food? ○ Tips on how to reduce food wastage <p>Review any homework or actions taken from the last study circle and then introduce this week's topic.</p> <p>The purpose of this study circle is to help us to better understand the environmental and ethical implications of the food we eat and how we can make better food choices not just for the environment but also for our own health and wellness as human beings on the spiritual path.</p> <p>It is important to remain respectful and open at all times. Keep in mind that the Study Circle is about sharing and exploring the topic and inspiring each other rather than 'finding right answers'.</p>		<p>10 MINS</p>
TODAY'S DELIVERY			
ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	DURATION
<p>Question 1: <i>'Are we aware of the impact of food on every layer of our physical and mental makeup as human beings?'</i></p>	<p>Read aloud the following quote from Sathya Sai Baba and discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What impact does food have on our mind and body? ● Do we pay enough attention to the impact of food on our bodies and minds when choosing what to eat on a daily basis? <p><i>"The food consumed by man provides the source of origin, sustenance and development of his mind. After digestion, the grossest part of the food is thrown out as excreta. The subtle part becomes blood and flesh, while the subtlest</i></p>		<p>5-10 MINS</p>

	<p><i>part assumes the form of the mind. So, the nature of the mind depends on the quality and quantity of food consumed. While the gross body or the food sheath (annamaya kosa) is chiefly derived from food, the subtle part of the water we drink contributes to the life sheath (pranamaya kosa). The grosser part of the water goes out as urine. The food sheath and the life sheath provide the basis for the other three sheaths, namely, the manomaya kosa (the mental sheath), the vijnanamaya kosa (the intellectual sheath), and the anandamaya kosa (the bliss sheath). This shows the paramount importance of food and drink in moulding and developing the human personality” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 1990.08)</i></p>		
<p>Question 2: What is the impact of different foods on the mind?</p>	<p>Read Attachment A and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of the foods we eat on the mind – particularly vegetarian versus non-vegetarian food? • How have we experienced the impact that food has on our mind? • How do foods affect our spiritual progress? 	Attachment A	10 MINS
<p>Question 3: What is the environmental impact of the food we eat?</p>	<p>Refer to Attachment B, the video and information below, to facilitate discussions on the environmental impact of the food we eat. Discuss if there are any other factors that also have a bearing on the food choices we make.</p> <p>Questions to discuss could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact does the food we eat have on the different elements? • How are animals and land treated in producing our food? How might this affect us? How might this affect existing eco-systems? • How do our food choices affect the balance or imbalance on Earth? <p>As we saw in Study Circle 1, nature provides the resources which are necessary for vegetables and fruits – which form the basis of most of the food we eat – to grow, including air, water, nutrients, sunlight and soil/land. What we choose to eat can have a further impact on the use of these natural resources, which are finite and depleting fast.</p> <p>For e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Attachment B, Sathya Sai Baba refers to not ‘destroying them [trees] for other purposes’. A typical meat eater's diet requires up to 2.5 times 	<p>VIDEO – Winnie loves adventure (1 min)</p> <p>VIDEO – Impact of our food choices on the environment and on our health (4 mins)</p> <p>Attachment B</p>	20 MINS

	<p>the amount of land compared to a vegetarian diet and 5 times that of a vegan diet.¹ A non-vegetarian diet is a significant contributor towards deforestation, as more and more land is cleared to make way for rearing animals for food. For e.g., A Cornell University study in 1997 found that around 13 million hectares of land in the US was used to grow vegetables, rice, fruit, potatoes and beans, but 302 million was used for livestock.²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A kilo of beef requires anything from 13,000 litres up to 100,000 litres. In comparison, the water required to produce a kilo of wheat is between 1,000–2,000 litres.³ ● Animal farming contributes significantly towards greenhouse gases too, producing carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane. Nitrous oxide is almost 300 times as damaging to the climate as carbon dioxide and 65% of the total quantity produced by human activity comes from livestock, mostly their manure. Methane has 25 times the global warming impact of carbon dioxide and a single cow can produce 500 litres of methane a day.⁴ In 2006, the UN calculated that the combined climate change emissions of animals bred for their meat were about 18% of the global total – more than cars, planes and all other forms of transport put together.² ● The dairy industry alone has a significant impact on the environment. Today there are over 270 million producing milk across the world, with the EU being the largest milk producer with 23 million cows.⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The average dairy farm with 700 cows uses 3.4 million gallons of water everyday and pumps 350,000 litres of methane into the atmosphere every day.⁶ <p>And when it comes to dairy and non-vegetarianism, there is also the ethical impact to consider...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We saw in the first study circle guide that agricultural farming practices have changed considerably towards intensive farming to meet with the growing demand for food, and animal farming is no exception to this change. The rearing of farm animals today is dominated by industrialised facilities known as confined animal feeding operations, or CAFOs (often referred to as ‘factory farms’) that maximise profits by treating 		
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	<p>animals not as sentient creatures, but as production units.⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to facilitate confinement of these animals in such stressful, crowded, unsanitary conditions, painful mutilations like cutting off the horns of cattle, cutting off the beaks of chickens, and docking the tails of sheep, pigs and dairy cattle are routinely performed.⁷ • Cows for example are artificially inseminated to produce calves and aggressively milked as soon as their calves are born, to meet the demand for milk and dairy products.⁸ • Extreme productivity means cows in dairy farms produce 20–50 litres a day compared to the 4–6 litres of milk a day they would naturally produce to feed their calves.⁹ <p>As more and more people become aware of this, it is informing their choices of what to eat.</p> <p><i>“Compassion toward all creatures is the greatest virtue, willful injury to any creature is the worst vice. Have full faith in this; spread love and joy, through compassion, and be full of joy and peace, yourself.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 12.51: October 25, 1974)</i></p>		
<p>Discussion: <i>The three gunas, spirituality, and food</i></p>	<p>We have discussed both the environmental and ethical impact of the food we choose to eat, but there is a third more spiritual element here that can help us to make wiser choices about the food we consume and that is knowledge of the three gunas.</p> <p>Read Attachment C and discuss the following with the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the gunas responsible for human behaviour? • Why is knowledge of the three gunas important for spiritual endeavour? • What composition of gunas should a spiritual aspirant be aiming for and how is this to be done? <p>So how do the Gunas relate to food? Just as a person is a composite of the three gunas, all food is also essentially split into these three categories.</p> <p><i>“If man wishes to experience manavatwa (humanness) and reach divatwa (divinity), satwaguna is very essential. It is only when you consciously cultivate satwaguna that you will be able to attain satwic nature. If you aim to attain satwic nature but indulge in rajasic and tamasic acts, it is</i></p>	<p>Attachment C</p>	<p>20 MINS</p>

not possible. All our ancient sages and seers did their sadhana when they were young and strong. Embodiments of Love! You have to partake of satwic food. By partaking of satwic food, you will be able to cultivate satwic thoughts. And, by cultivating satwic thoughts, you will be able to undertake satwic karmas.
In short, the rajasic and tamasic food that you consume is the root cause for the bad thoughts that are entering your mind.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 38.17: October 22, 2005)

Refer to **Attachment D** and the two tables below, to inform your discussions of the foods to avoid and foods to consume.

Based on our knowledge of the environmental impact of different foods, what do we notice about the environmental impact of satwic foods compared to rajasic and tamasic foods?

Attachment D

Foods to consume/avoid according to Sathya Sai Baba

Foods to avoid	Foods to consume
Meat, fish, eggs, liquor, too much tamarind, chillies, chilli powder, cheese, too much milk (dilute the milk), thick yogurt (make it semi-solid). Excess spice and salt. Foods that are steaming hot.	Vegetables, green leaves, cow’s milk in small proportions, rice, fruits, wheat. Drumsticks, tomatoes without seeds, green leafy vegetables. Fresh garlic or garlic pills to help reduce cholesterol.
Food that fans the flames of thirst. Food cooked in water should not be used the next day, for it becomes harmful. Even fried articles should be consumed before they develop unpleasant odours.	7–8 glasses of water daily. Foods that are not too salty, too hot, too bitter, too sweet, or too sour. All food in reasonable proportions.
Onions (though onion does improve digestion power). Too many	“Many people assume that Satvic means fruits and milk. These can also be tamasic. For example. eating two bananas is

potatoes.

proper. If you eat four bananas, it becomes tamasic.”

Table adapted from:

1. SSS 38.17: Oct 22, 2005
2. SSS 40.01: Jan 15, 2007
3. Gita Vahini – <http://sssbpt.info/vahinis/Gita/Gita.pdf>
4. Sathya Sai World Youth Festival – <http://youthfest.sathyasai.org/node/88>
5. Values Based Manager:Three point personal lifestyle charter – <http://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/t-free-point-personal-lifestyle-charter.html#.WZITG1V97IU>

Food and drink categorised as Sathwic, Rajasic and Tamasic¹⁰

Sathwic	Rajasic	Tamasic
Nuts (see link below for type of nuts), seeds, oils, fruit, dairy, vegetables, whole grain, legumes, natural sweeteners (such as honey/jaggery) Certain spices (such as basil, cardamom, fennel)	Caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea (both black and green), cola drinks, energy drinks, brown or black chocolate, ginkgo biloba, spicy food, unfertilised eggs, and salt	Meat, fish, fertilised eggs, onion, garlic, scallion, leek, chive, mushroom, alcoholic beverages, durian (fruit), blue cheese, eggplant, opium, and stale food

Table adapted from:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sattvic_diet#Rajasic .28stimulant.29 foods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sattvic_diet#Rajasic_.28stimulant.29_foods)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

<p>Closing summary of today's session</p>	<p>In Summary, we have discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of food on the mind and body • The environmental and ethical impact of the food we choose to eat • How man is made up of the three gunas and must aim to imbibe as much of the satwa guna in his personality, until he is able to transcend the gunas altogether • How the foods we eat and the quantity in which we eat them impact on the gunas within us and how we can eat food to help increase our sathwic qualities 		<p>2-3 MINS</p>									
<p><i>Closing activity:</i> 'Individual introspection on food shopping and eating habits to lead a more satwic life and be kind to the environment and to all life forms'</p>	<p>This activity follows the summary so as to allow participants to continue their reflection after the closing prayer. It also brings together the key areas covered in all three study circle guides relating to food as well as other themes covered by Serve the Planet 2017.</p> <p>Have a reflection as a group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you learnt today? • What has challenged you? • What might you do differently as a result of attending this study circle? <p>Handout paper and pens to each participant and individually reflect on the following points:</p> <p>Make a list of the key food items you consume over a typical week. Split the food items into the following categories:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="331 1344 1005 1881"> <tr> <td data-bbox="338 1352 491 1545">As classified by the three gunas</td> <td data-bbox="497 1352 737 1545">Sathwic</td> <td data-bbox="743 1352 999 1545">Rajasic and tamasic</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="338 1554 491 1680">Plant or animal based</td> <td data-bbox="497 1554 737 1680">Vegan (no dairy) Vegetarian (including dairy)</td> <td data-bbox="743 1554 999 1680">Non-vegetarian</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="338 1688 491 1881">Farmers paid well and treated well</td> <td data-bbox="497 1688 737 1881">Yes (e.g. fair-trade certified)</td> <td data-bbox="743 1688 999 1881">No</td> </tr> </table>	As classified by the three gunas	Sathwic	Rajasic and tamasic	Plant or animal based	Vegan (no dairy) Vegetarian (including dairy)	Non-vegetarian	Farmers paid well and treated well	Yes (e.g. fair-trade certified)	No		<p>10-15 MINS</p>
As classified by the three gunas	Sathwic	Rajasic and tamasic										
Plant or animal based	Vegan (no dairy) Vegetarian (including dairy)	Non-vegetarian										
Farmers paid well and treated well	Yes (e.g. fair-trade certified)	No										

	Sourced	Locally	Overseas		
	Grown	Organically	Conventionally (through intensive farming)		
	Seasonal	In-season where you live	Out-of-season where you live		
	Use of natural resources	Minimal/average	Resource-intensive		
	Environmental and ethical impact	Low-Medium	Medium-High		
	Purchased	Supermarket/ greengrocer/ grown at home	Local farmers' market		
	When buying	Available loose	Wrapped in plastic or packaging		
	Nutritional value	Medium-High	Low-Medium		
	After purchasing	Eaten raw or cooked and consumed	Thrown away		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the foods you should consume more/less of, to move towards a more sathwic diet ● How have you become more aware of the environmental and ethical impact of the food you consume? (ethical not just in the treatment of animals but also to those involved in bringing the food to your table e.g. farmers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will this awareness now impact your food choices and how? ○ How soon will you implement these changes into your food shopping and eating habits? ● What is one change you will commit to? 				
CLOSE	Closing prayer or reading Prayer for universal peace – OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti				1 MIN

Note: Ideally there should be two facilitators in groups of ten or more participants. The first facilitator is the one who is conducting the study circle. The second facilitator observes the group's dynamics and informs the first facilitator of any lethargy and confusion from participants. This second facilitator also conducts the opening activity (eg. Omkar) and the sharing of insights at the end. This helps give variety to the participants, but also allows the first facilitator space to capture important feedback and learning points at insight sharing.

Attachment A

"Today, let it be anyone, whether one deems himself a devotee or not, he should give up meat eating. Why? Meat eating promotes only animal qualities. It has been well said that the food one consumes determines one's thoughts. By eating the flesh of various animals, the qualities of these animals are imbibed. How sinful is it to feed on animals, which are sustained by the same five elements as human beings! This leads to demonic tendencies, besides committing the sin of inflicting cruelty on animals. Hence, those who genuinely seek to become devotees of God have to give up non-vegetarian food. Calling themselves Sai devotees or devotees of Rama and Krishna, they fatten the chickens. How can they be deemed Sai devotees? How can God accept such a person as a devotee? Therefore, whether they are devotees in India or outside, they should give up meat eating from this instant. ... Therefore, those who aspire to become devotees of God must give up meat, liquor and smoking." – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 27.31: November 23, 1994)

"There should be some regulations with regard to food. Many doctors emphasise the value of proteins and recommend meat, eggs, etc. Proteins got in this form serve only to build the body but do considerable harm to the mind. Doctors are primarily concerned with the gross physical body. They pay little attention to the subtle form of the mental makeup. Most of the diseases that are prevalent in the world today are related to the mind. Mental illness seems to outnumber physical ailments. Vedanta has declared that the mind is the cause of man's bondage or liberation. This means that the mind has to be used properly and turned Godwards. Equally, the mind is responsible for health or sickness. In this context, food is all important. Proteins are present in milk, curds and vegetables as much as in meat. If in the matter of diet, the doctors give the right prescription, diseases can be averted." – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 26.26: December 25, 1993)

Attachment B

"The scientists are trying to stop the break-up of the ozone layer, but they are unable to find a remedy. The actual cause for this situation is that more carbon dioxide is let into the atmosphere, which normally is absorbed by plants and trees which can assimilate the gas and supply oxygen by the natural process of photosynthesis. But because there is deforestation to an alarming extent, the extent of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has considerably increased. Therefore, the remedy for this situation is intensive afforestation, growing more trees everywhere and protecting the existing trees without destroying them for other purposes." – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 26.03: December 25, 1993)

"Every day tonnes of fish are caught from the oceans. This indiscriminate exploitation of Nature results in imbalance in Earth, which is playing havoc with human lives." – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 34.03: February 21, 2001)

Attachment C

“Human being is a repository of trigunas or the three primordial attributes, namely, satwa (calm serenity), rajas (passionate activity) and tamoguna (sloth and slumber).” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 39.07: May 02, 2006 & SS 1993.08)

“Just as our body exhibits depressions and elevations, our ideas also are both high and low. The three gunas, namely sathwa, rajo, and thamo, are present in everyone and what comes up to a point of time will be decided by the circumstances. Life is a mixture of all these three gunas. When a man is happy and is in good circumstances, his ideas too will be of the sathwa type. On the other hand, when something goes wrong, he is immediately excited and the rajo guna shows up. When he has eaten heavily, he will slowly go to sleep and the thamo guna appears. In this way, all the three gunas coexist in the same body and a mixture of them comes up according to the circumstances.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SS 1973.12)

Characteristics of thamo guna	Characteristics of rajo guna	Characteristics of sathwa guna
Sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, laziness and inertia	Constant movement, restlessness, delusion, anger, unlimited desires,	Purity, serenity, brightness, peace, and harmony

Table adapted from: SSS 17.23: September 12, 1984 and Sandeha Nivarini

In the same way, a saadhaka (spiritual aspirant) who wants to realise 'Aathmaanandha' (the joy of Aathma), has to remove from his heart the various manifestations of Rajo and Thamo gunas in the form of malice, desire, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy. These six types of enemies of man are the children of Rajo and Thamo gunas. We won't be able to experience the joy of Aathma (individual soul) as long as these weeds are there. Therefore Krishna asked Arjuna to remove the Rajo and Thamo gunas from his heart.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 17.23: September 12, 1984)

“Man is exhorted to overcome thamas by rajas and rajas by sathwa and finally to go beyond sathwa itself to attain liberation” – Sathya Sai Baba (Gita Vahini)

Attachment D

“Can you not live upon a vegetarian diet consisting of vegetables, green leaves and cow's milk? Why should you cater to the dictates of your palate adding chillies, salt, tamarind and spices? It is only when you gradually reduce these ingredients for taste you will be able to cultivate satwaguna.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 38.17: October 22, 2005)

“They [foreigners] also like cheese very much. The more you consume cheese, the weaker you become. You should not also take milk in excess quantity. Too much milk is very bad. It should be in limit. The milk should be diluted with water in equal proportion. Same is the case with curd.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 40.13: July 28, 2007)

References

1. <https://www.vegsoc.org/saveland>
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