

Satasloki

Sloka 20

अन्नं देवातिथिभ्योऽर्पितममृतमिदं चान्यथा मोघमन्नं
यश्चात्मार्थं विधत्ते तदिह निगदितं मृत्युरूपं हि तस्य।
लोकेऽसौ केवलाघो भवति तनुभृतां केवलादी च यः स्यात्
त्यक्त्वा प्राणाग्निहोत्रं विधिवदनुदिनं योऽश्नुते सोऽपि मर्त्यः॥२०

20. When one eats food only after having offered to gods and guests, that food becomes nectar for him. Otherwise the food eaten goes in vain (it does not conduce to his spiritual progress). To him who prepares food for his consumption alone, that food is death. In this world the man who eats without offering to gods and guests becomes the very embodiment of sin. The man who does not offer food as an oblation to the Pranas as prescribed in the scriptures also becomes the embodiment of sin.

See Bhagavadgita-3.12- He is verily a thief who enjoys what has been given by the gods without offering anything in return.

Bh.gita- 3.13- Those who prepare food for themselves alone incur sin.

Pranagnihotra- Section 69 of the Mahanarayana upanishad prescribes that the rite of offering food as an oblation to the Pranas should be performed when cooked rice is set before one for eating. A small quantity of the food is to be taken by the fingers and put into the mouth six times, uttering a certain mantra. This constitutes an offering unto the Divine Fire Vaisvanara in the stomach, which is the supreme Brahman itself. (The Lord says in Gita 15.14- Taking the form of Vaisvanara and dwelling in the bodies of all living beings, I, along with Prana and Apana, make the food fit for digestion). By this, the mundane act of eating food to satisfy one's hunger becomes raised to the level of a yajna (sacrifice). This also symbolizes the offering of the finite self into the Infinite Supreme Brahman.

Chandogya upanishad, 7.26.2 says- When the food consumed is pure, the mind becomes pure. When the mind becomes pure, memory is strengthened. When memory becomes strong, all the knots of the heart (the effects of Avidya) are cut asunder. Food becomes pure by being offered to the gods and guests.