

Making Reason Strong

We are surrounded by food that continually tempts us with its processed sugar and savoury salt: chocolate, ice-cream, fizzy drinks and crisps.

At the same time nutrition experts will advise us of the importance of healthy eating. This is illustrated in the food pyramid which shows the amounts of different types of food to eat, lots of fibre and cereal, a good amount of fruit and vegetables and very little sugar and fats.

How do we develop the ability to make good decisions about the food we eat?

In Indian Advaita philosophy there is a hierarchy which describes how we are built. There are the 5 senses, smell, taste, sight, touch and sound which take in everything around us. Next comes the Mind or Manas which acts as an interpreter and acts on the different sensations that come in. Next comes Reason or Buddhi which makes the decisions on what to do with the information that is presented to it.

The image of a chariot perfectly illustrates this: the horses are the senses, the reins are the mind or Manas and the charioteer who controls the reins is reason or Buddhi.

For example, when we see a piece of chocolate, the senses observe, the mind takes those sensations into our mind and starts to dwell on them. If allowed to continue the desire for the taste of chocolate will grow and we respond by grabbing and eating.

Another alternative is that reason or Buddhi takes charge, the decision is made that regardless of the temptation, this food is not good for the body.

So how do we make reason strong?

The answer is that reason needs to be pure and still, pure in the sense that there is no personal consideration and still in the sense that there is no agitation or anxiety.

Two of the ways in our school that we practice making reason pure and still, are through the pause and meditation when we embrace the present moment and connect with our deeper self.

The challenge for this week is to ask yourself the question:

How do I make reason pure and still?