

The Divine Connection

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As George Bernard Shaw mentioned, "There is no sincere love than the love of food." The world of food is changing, gradually. Food once was about satiating hunger, not anymore. Today, food is linked with words such as healthy, diet, stylish, presentation and many more. And each of these words has numerous definitions of their own. The Indian food industry has brought itself in-line to the western ones and hence a change in the mindset of the Indian people. Misconceptions about our Indian oils, spices and cereals are many. Ingredients that our ancestors claimed to be healthy are accused of being deleterious. And the fact is that people listen and start to following trends with no clear know-how. Being in the corporate for more than 4 years now, food has raised many concerns in my mind. The food that many vendors sell cause numerous cases of heartburn and digestive disorders. It is not only the case in corporate but also in schools. Food is an integral part of our life, but how many of them have actually raised this concern and finds a realistic solution to this? I am here with a lady who is here to provide solutions to all of us through her magical food journey. I am fortunate to introduce A.Santhilakshmy, a fun-loving, adventurous, energetic lady who loves to cook, teach and loves to mingle with all kinds of people. This is a short description, though, Santhinam is more, I must say. Being a biology and environmental science teacher for more than 8 years in Prakriya Green Wisdom School, cooking is something she has always enjoyed. Her mother being her inspiration, her passion for both cooking and teaching got her to join Bhoomi, a Bangalore-based NGO. She conducted various cooking workshops and food learning sessions too. However, Santhinam has her own dreams too that didn't allow her to sleep. The dream of doing something by her own made her quit Bhoomi. "Leaving Bhoomi was not an easy decision", Santhinam said lowering her tone, "I quit to follow my dreams inside and was positive to come up with something", she added. This is when "Sankalpa" was born. Santhinam wanted to stick to teaching as she is passionate about the same and her targeted audience was children as she can learn more from them through their innocent questions. Her objective was to spread the message that one should not understand food as mere food, understand food as a relation. She wanted to make her students learn about the connections of food or its ingredients with each other and with our body as well. A new direction to understand our food in a different way. Sankalpa offers workshops on the healthy kitchen to both parents and teachers to gear up towards holistic food and a conscious kitchen. They have a 1-year programme for schools, Delicious revolution for school children which is an 80 minutes session and also holistic cooking workshops. She is also coming up with Food Trails for children to teach more about green leafy vegetables in jungles or in villages having conversations with the locals. I always had a notion that healthy foods are generally not palate friendly. However, Santhinam debunks the myth. The kids are huge fans of her white sauce, made of potato she used for pasta. Santhinam has reached out to different schools to provide her unique idea of healthy food. Her aim was not to change the meal plan that the students were following over years but just the addition of a healthy dish. For instance, she adds a salad which not only provides the nutrients but is also a great provider of fibres. She believes that if one is shifting from their usual dietary plan to another, the process has to be slow. If one is shifting from rice to millets, then she suggests not cutting down rice completely in one go, rather the reduction of quantity of rice with increased amount of millets that will help to shift in the new diet plan. This will greatly reduce the craving for rice too. She uses this

formula for different schools also. Millet is highly nutritious, non-acidic, high on fibres and iron too. One can make anything with millets that one prepares with rice. Following a gradual process of shifting, one's body system will fully accept the change within a year. Santhinam also emphasizes on fruits which provide natural sugars and asked cutting powdered sugars. "Having fruits during body's elimination cycle is always the best choice", she said. She wants to educate the parents as they are the ones who will bring the healthy ways of food to their home too. The children should not only get good food at school but also at home too. Santhinam has raised her concerns about the corporate culture. The employees work at odd hours adversely affect their biological cycle and, in turn, affect their food intake too. They live on pizzas, burgers and soft drinks which deteriorate the body systems leading to various disorders. For females, PCOD and hormonal imbalances are such examples. She told that she is willing to provide food solutions to corporate too. She concludes laying importance on both macro and micronutrients. Most of us are aware of macronutrients, viz; carbohydrates, fats and proteins. However, very few know about the micronutrients which play a vital role. I had a big takeaway after a long conversation of almost 2 hours. Now on, I am going to know about each and every ingredient I am consuming and will respect my body. Not but the least, I will also try to understand the relation of food with our body in a better possible way. First published on the author's blog Visit [Sankalpa](#) website