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Local Food Habit – A New Horizon of Research.

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Importance of food in life

Food is one of the three supporting pillars of life. It has a direct impact on the body (*Dosha, Dhatu* and *Mala*), senses and mind. The impact will be with respect to origin, growth and development, and destruction (by causing illness) of elements supporting life.

The goal of taking food is to provide vital energy supply to the body. Food is a foreign substance and humans have to make it favourable for the body and mind. Seasoning, processing, habituation as per specific area, time, climate variation, lifestyle are tools for making the food favourable for the body. Food conduct mentioned in Ayurveda emphasis into two aspects firstly, principles related to proper intake of food that should be adopted and secondly, improper intake either knowingly or unknowingly which has to be avoided. Food consumed properly and improperly decides health and illness respectively. Knowledge of both food and food conduct are essential in preventing and curing diseases.

Parameters for making food compatible for the body and *Desha-satmya*

Factors responsible for beneficial and non-beneficial effects of food are eightfold named as *Ashta-aharavidhi-vishesha-ayatana*.¹ All of these are interrelated and independent. These factors could be either directly related to food, food processing, food combinations, amount of food, place of origin of food substance or directly related to food conduct or the person taking the food in relation to individual compatibility and compatibility to place or region he or she resides irrespective of individual compatibility

which is termed *Atma-satmya* or *Purusha-satmya* and *Desha-satmya* respectively.²

Local Food habit and its importance

The food habit is a dynamic lifestyle, changes are done accordingly to make the unwholesome to wholesome. Food habits are usually designed as per laws of the body, body status, mind, nature and inner quality of food.

Many of the local food habits are mainly based on *Desha-satmya* applicable to people residing in that particular place irrespective of individual compatibility. Since it does not take account of individual compatibility, the health risk is always involved. So proper differentiation between *Purusha-satmya* and *Desha-satmya* is necessary. Hence those local food habits are found beneficial which are prepared in accordance with geographical land, climate as per nature, the lifestyle, individual compatibility and by adopting minimum processes. Compatible does not mean that it never produces diseases.

Local food habits are generally compatible with people residing there. If general and individual compatibility match, the person will surely get the beneficial effects of food.

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Assessment of cause-effect between general compatibility and particular local food should be done based on parameters mentioned in the classical literature. Food taken with due consideration to eight factors will not hamper either propulsion or mixing of the food in the alimentary tract, secretory functions of the alimentary tract, digestion and absorption in the gastrointestinal tract.

Local Food habit as Immunity Booster

As stated earlier if local food habits match properly with *Desha* and *Purusha Satmya* it remains beneficial to maintain the body homeostasis of *Dosa*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. Hence, *Dhatu* essence are formed in a usual manner. *Ojas* the *Dhatu Sneha* is formed properly and thereby the body immunity is maintained properly. This is found that the common people who used to migrate one place to another in a frequent interval and unable to match with *Desha* and *Purusha Satmya* are more susceptible to getting diseases than the villagers who used to stay in a single place for a long time and used to take the local foods.

Exploration and Research on Local Food Habit – Need of the hour

The main purpose of learning and understanding the local food habits is to remain healthy by adjusting the

situation as per above parameters and to prevent the diseases appearing due to sudden adoption of new food habits and consumption of incompatible diet.

Nowadays on account of very first urbanization and social competitiveness in every aspect of life, people used to migrate from one place to another place in the search of better livelihood. Various kinds of health issues appear as a result of irrational use of food habits without due consideration of *Desha Satmya*. (i.e. Climate and geographical place)

So, it is high time to explore the scientific basis of local food habits being practised across the country and various useful local food habits should be restored.

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