



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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JUNK FOOD VS. ORGANIC FOOD: VALIDITY EXAMINATION THROUGH CULINARY SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE STRATEGY

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**TAJ HOTELS, RESORTS & PALACES (IHCL) – A TATA ENTERPRISE
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ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, organic food is replacing the choice of the elite consumers' today world over against the junk and non-healthy food. Change in the food choice seems natural and obvious, rather a social and knowledge compulsion. This growing trend has controversies between developed and developing economies, nations and policies and consumers in the cost factor. Organic farming is treated as social countermovement born out of the crisis of between the second food regime of 1945 to 1970 and the birth of third food regime, of 1980, & is a politico-economic approach to food with a special reference. Neoclassical economy defines itself from the heart of the market. Key components like demand and supply, price and cost and producers and consumers are components measurable. Modern society of interdependent people with anonymous exchange, no obligation other than contractual obligation is complex. Adam Smith's concept of 'invisible hand' in 'The Wealth of Nations' ascribes to the hidden interdependence of a commercial society and its anonymous exchange. The story of the butcher and the baker goes on with its chain of operations. Karl Marx also has highlighted on the aspect of agriculture production same as Adam Smith. Eco-friendly character of the consumer is fast catching up. This is a growing trend and strong as an option for the human civilization to go organic in food habits in near future soon.

KEYWORDS

Organic Food, Junk Food, Organic Farming, Integrated Farming System, Ecological Balance.

ORGANIC FOOD – A GROWING POPULAR CHOICE: LATE ADAPTATION

The organic food culture has recently become a practice in the field of dieting. This has revolutionized a preferential dieting phenomenon in many; who are health conscious. It has also happened in the domain of junk food eaters too. Today junk food eaters are also imbibing conscious for organic food items. Contemporary first paced society of the globe is heading towards a dead alley of chemically treated food products. (Food Standards Agency, 2003) Modern man has invented 10 million new chemicals, thousands of which are added to our food products.

Initial phases of agriculture revolution were bereft of pesticides and manures; which is rampantly prevalent now. It is eventually making the soil toxic, poisonous and barren. Though fertility of the soil is enhanced by virtue of artificial manure; it is infusing chemicals into the body constituent of the soil. It makes the water, food and air etc. filled with toxic substances, which are packed as edibles; although being junk. In these cases, soil condition give vent to artificial germination of plants; and give birth to inorganic blends of fruits, vegetables, paddy, gram and other food produce which becoming dangerous for intake in the body (Murray, 1991).

Countries worldwide have adhered to the formula of mass productivity by use of using chemical pesticides; at the cost of the good health. Reductions of agriculture land in many of the countries have come up with multiple cropping and un-seasonal productivity unnaturally cultivated. These are fed to the teeming millions of the country who require the basic need of food. Eat a diet rich in organic food and take nutritional supplements is important (FAO/WHO, 1994).

TECHNO-ECONOMICS OF NON-ORGANIC FARMING

Green revolution was a great hope of improving the farming economy in India. Green revolution has forced several farmers into deep debts, which the country has well experienced and discussed in the media to entertainment industry. These debts were at first not so scary for the farmers because they were able to get a good yield. But as time passed and progressed with an aim of increasing the yield more chemicals and pesticides were dumped in to the soil. This dumping of chemicals in to the soil over some time spoiled the air, water, soil and many beneficial micro organisms, insects and birds which were helpful to farmers. The increase in application of chemical fertilizers in turn led to increase in debts and with soil reaching saturation, the yield became poor with the results of poor farmer finding himself entangled in debts unable to repay. Unable to repay the debts accumulated resulted in committing suicides. The common thread, which runs in all the suicides, is that most of these farmers have grown pure crops in large areas. Tempted with the hope of huge profits, they grow hybrid seeds and borrow money at high interest rates to plant in all the available area. Majority of them have no idea of what schemes and credit facilities available. Banks prefer to play safe and want the farmers pledge his jewels or land documents for availing agricultural loans. Even if the farmer gets a bumper harvest he prefers to spend the money on purchasing another piece of land or buying new machinery rather than repaying. If we are serious about preventing further suicides, farmers should be educated on hands-on risk management, working capital management, and marketing and social marketing and bravery issues. Farmers have become lazy and prefer urea than cow's dung and urine to grow their crops. Some factors, which contribute to the risk include, high input costs, mono-cropping,

market price fluctuation, pests and diseases, unpredictable weather and insufficient water for irrigation. (Prabu, 2007) How does an ordinary farmer with limited resources manage and mitigate their risks?

Against this background, organic farming seems to be the only answer to the panacea which is troubling farmers at present. Organic farming requires no external input and all the necessary items required for cultivation of the crop are present in the farm itself. Organic farming has been getting a lot of attention from researchers, policy makers, scientists and farmers in recent times because it reduces the input costs thereby minimizing the farmers' dependence on fertilizers and is labour intensive, that is, it generates plenty of rural employment. Currently, there are about 30,000 organic farmers and 8,000 organic farms in the country. Till 1970, about 25 percent agricultural land was used to grow cash crops. Currently cash crops are being cultivated in nearly 60 percent of the land and food crops cultivation has come down by 50 percent. (Ramakrishna, 2007) Farmers are moving away from the normal food grain and fruit, vegetables cultivation to more remunerative crops such as teak, casuarinas and bamboo etc. exclusively plantation of wood and industry related plants. In addition, migration of people from villages to cities has created severe manual labour shortages leading to problems.

ORGANIC FARMING & ECOLOGICAL BALANCE: THE CONCERN OF THE MASSES

Chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds are high earning resources. Though for some time it may be profitable; in the long run these chemicals and hybrids fails to produce the desired results. The current agricultural scenario is depressing. Production cost is high, selling cost is low. The soil has become barren due to indiscriminate use of chemicals. Organic farming is the alternative solution. In fact, after the spate of suicides in Vidharba, a number of farmers in Maharashtra took to organic cultivation. Currently there are nearly 10,000 organic farmers in Maharashtra. Compared to chemical farming, organic farming is economical as there is minimal input cost. The cultivated crops are healthy and free from toxic chemical residues, which affect human health. At present, about 30 percent Indian farmers are organic. They can create awareness among others on the organic benefits. According to estimates available with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM), the total organically managed area in the world is about 26 million acres. Organic farming is being practiced in about 150 countries. The market for organic products is growing steadily in countries such as Europe, North and South America, Finland, Canada, U.S., Denmark and Sweden. By the end of 2010 the global market for organic products will be 35 to 40 billion US dollars. Indian agriculture is at a critical juncture at present. Some organic farmers voice an opinion that they do not need hybrid seeds. What they need is a small working capital and the conviction to cultivate crops organically. Recession impact on the basic price hike of the edible products has provided a satisfactory provision for organic farming, but price fluctuation acts as the biggest hindrance to support further. Another factor is the absence of a comprehensive seed legislature bill, which could provide punishment to spurious seed manufacturers. (Prabu, 2007) Many small farmers are apprehensive about switching to organic farming. They feel it is a risky experiment and can suit only big farmers. But they fail to understand that they can the same or better harvest without spending much on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Cattle-based integrated farming system (IFS) is ideal for small and medium scale farmers. It is not only eco-friendly, but also more economical for farmers to raise animals in an integrated farm. The waste obtained from the animals not only provides organically rich manure but also helps in manufacturing biogas. Biogas technology provides an alternative and cheap source of energy that meets the basic need of cooking fuel in rural areas.

Organic marketing is different from regular marketing. Further reliable information is on organic products are hard to obtain unlike European countries. Vermicompost is the basic ingredient for successful organic farming. More than 85 percent organic crop cultivation depends on it. Usually farmers across the country build a roof either with thatched straw or asbestos sheets as a cover for their vermicompost manufacturing unit.

ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIC FARMING

In fact, this is the high time that Government makes a shift in its agriculture policies to divert more funds to encourage organic farming. Public and private support required to improve buying trends and subsidies to be provided to organic farming like non-organic practices. Efficient channels of communication must be created to bring awareness in general public on positive and healthy benefits of consuming organic food. At present inadequate policies, legal formalities are not well defined due to shortfalls in the legislature to encourage organic farming. Another factor is to see that bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and bio-manures are readily available in market similar to chemical fertilizers.

WORLDWIDE CHOICE OF ORGANIC FARMING

Advanced countries like US, UK and Japan have ensured the use of bio-fertilizer to reduce the toxic content of the food produce by virtue of certain rules enforced by the Government. United Nations in its GATE & GATT norms; it has stipulated the permeable limit of pesticides for international use by the population. To manage the shortfall striking a balance in the economies of scale (Keegan, 2006). Countries have adopted the regulations in their own spirit. But in the transitional economies and developing economies, leaving apart the basket cases, it is seen that reckless maneuvering of agriculture lands for substantial productivity has poisoned the soil to the extent of 1700 per cent; which itself is detrimental to health living. Yet our human body is able to absorb the toxic food produce and maintain the metabolism for a living condition. To maintain the sanctity, World Health Organization (WHO) has issued an International Code of Marketing of Food Products to check the relentless negligence. WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a joint statement on the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding of mothers.

FAST FOOD GIANTS AND TAKEAWAY FOODS

The recent spurt of junk food markets otherwise known as take away foods have stolen the market from the traditional restaurants, hotels and other regular food cafes across the globe. Mass branding by KFC and McDonald as fast food chains, Wal-Mart and JC Penny Carrefour and other shopping malls have organized the unorganized market and have created a strong market niche for themselves. They mobilized the buyer community to resort to the luxury of style and guiles. The KFC and McDonald by virtue of its chain of restaurants worldwide have ensured the concept of readymade food in the food retails; which are being alleged for being providing chemically treated food used with slow poisoning preservatives. Chemical flavours added to the food; served to the customers afresh; has an undertone with respect to the health hazard of the bubbly consumer. (James, 2007) The consumer is unconcerned because of the gadgetry of fast paced life in the metros and cosmopolitan cities of the nation. It is becoming a lifestyle with young stars; which shall be translated in their posterity.

MIGRATION, INFLUX OF WORKFORCE AND JUNK ADDICTS

Presently due to the inevitable migration of people in search of work to the metros, time constraints for attending to highly placed and volatile job responsibilities of the corporate executives and commitment to time, the employees are forced to accept fast food as an alternative to quench their hunger. Besides, the teenager community is attracted by the fast food giants by virtue of attractive audio-visual media promotion and psycho-somatic advertisement glares. Media hypes create an indelible mark in the mind tree of the youngsters resulting in becoming brand loyal and a life time purchaser. They resort to frequent buying of edible stuff which have innate inorganic properties in them; which are hazardous to the health of children, youngsters and consumers at large (Gibson, 1990). This has become a passion with the buyers' psychology and is implanted in the mind, body and soul.

MINERALS AND VITAMINS

Organic food have an implication which is wanted by health conscious people, but take away food has become a substitute due to time constraints and has created an equity in the food market (Goulding, 1990). Foods have to contain certain valuable ingredients like carbohydrates, dietary fibers, vitamins (especially folate), vitamin-A available from yellow and green vegetables and vitamin-C available from dark green vegetables and most fruits, potatoes. Moreover minerals like magnesium, calcium, iron, zinc and selenium (wholegrain products) and potassium are essential for the body. Vitamins-B and vitamins: E (rich in wheat germ), Vitamins: B12, niacin and thiamin are beneficial for the body. These are available in the organic foods produced by the farms and are seldom available in the junk foods.

MANAGING SHOPPING MALLS AND MARKETING

Shopping malls retail rations, fruits and other consumables. They procure food material from unorganized markets in the requisite quantum, processed through organized service providers producing house products. These are procured with respect to the visual looks of the edible product like rice, wheat and maize, rather than based on the organic properties of the produce. It is collected with out wanting to know in which kind of firm it has been harvested. The quality of the produce is organic or not. Management by the shopping malls in arranging the requisite produce; packaged in the right way is important.

CONNOISSEURS OF HEALTH AND POWER RELATIONS

In the present context; organic food has become an interest for the connoisseurs and health savvy intelligent community. It has propelled a group of farmers to cultivate their produce in the organic methods; using the traditional manures, fertilizers and bi-fertilizers. These drastic changes in the minds of the conscious buyers have been changing the mind of the farmers. It is for that the prices of the organic agriculture products are going higher (Barnett, 2004). They are being sold in the specific identified vending zones at a cost which is three to four times higher than the usual harvesting made by the other farmers.

Organizing market places; call for the principles of management and marketing. They analyze, calculate and assess the critical quotient of the buyers to resolve at a decision. They arguably are analyzing the power relations of the buyer and the seller, between the vendor and the vendee, between the retailer and the consumer.

SOCIETAL TRANSITION

Societies are undergoing transformational changes in the different spheres of activities. It is due to the economical changes in the per-capita income of people. Cross-currents of changes are happening in the industrial arena too. It happens due to the procurement of manpower from lesser countries; at a lesser pay. They mingle to create a cultural mix in the society existing (Appadurai, 1988). Cross-cultural dimensions of life are changing for a lifestyle requirement at par with the living conditions of the market places.

In fact, Official National Food Surveys show that many people fail to get the Recommended Daily Intakes (RDIs) for a variety of nutrients due to junk food habits. According to the 15 years of research study by Emmanuel Cheraskin and his colleagues at University of Alabama, 13,500 people have been tested and found that the nutrient intake of most healthy individuals are often 5-10 times. We may be living longer, but other measures of our health like cancer incidence, infertility, mental health, low energy levels, depression and allergies worry us for life due to irregularities of food.

ETHICS WITH TRADITION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Traditional society of different countries across the globe is in a process of churning into a level; wherein they are unable to relate and juxtapose ethics with tradition. Tradition is condemned to be obsolete and values are becoming unethical and a new equity in the social climate has been emanating (Desmond, 1998).

Societies having low context culture, medium context culture and high context culture have undergone a huge change and the ideology of the segments is changing with respect to the food habits. New generation is thinking of burger, pizzas and hot dogs as a substitute for the conventional breakfast. Fast food giants have moulded the societal food requirements into the mould in which they want the customers to be standardized (Brown, 1996). They want the customer to procure the product as the way they are expecting to be served by the food giants.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultures across the world in different geographical places have evolved with the passage of time. Cultures have become uniquely different from each other with respect to the climatic variance and regional altitude. It has been mundanely unique at per the environment of the region or locality. Cultural nuances and subtle variances occur in places adjoining the epicenter of the culture and slowly diffuse centrifugally melting into cross cultural breeding grounds (Abel, 2001).

Culture is a changing phenomena, people shifting from one place to other part of the globe acquire new culture and forego old culture and create an eclectic culture which is peculiar. These of the peculiar assimilation of cultures with respect to food items have become prevalent in the civilization of the west and the east, north and the south. Amongst all US as a dominant force have enforced its ideology on food and mobilized the markets by virtue of equitable investments in the food market and has uprooted the concept of organic produce; enabling farmers to harvest for making profit and more profit at the cost of the health of the customer.

The factors of differences in the platforms of culture have been thronging inevitable results which are consequentially throwing health hazards and new set of diseases that doctors need to experiment to cure.

HISTORY IS EVIDENT

If we take a historic reference to the literature of food habits of the ancient times in different parts of the world, we see that they were eating out of the natural forest produce, agriculture lands, farm houses and courtyards prepared in the traditional way of cuisines. Traditional food menu have been typical in response to the socio-cultural background of the region; depending on the taste and preference of climate and species available. It has all along been a organic process of the preparation of food items which made people live long. They did not have to go for surgery and medicine for that matter.

Under the back drop we can realize that organic food fraternity can only bring considerable benefits and reduce risks to health. Dr Vyvyan Howard, toxicologist from the University of Liverpool, finds that we each of us have some 500 toxins in our systems that our grandparents did not have because they did not exist 50 years ago. These have created lifestyle-related diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, breast cancers and coronary heart diseases among people (Simmons, 1996).

CHANGE IN THE LIFESTYLE

Advancement of science and technology; innovations of transportation facilities in the roadways, sea-routes and air ways have opened corridors for business executives to travel in the quest of business deals. Smooth transportation of travelers; unlike the early years traveling on horse back; made people travel from place to place comfortably free from risk. Horse drawn carriages were slowly replaced by super-sonic sky-liners networking the geographical corners; making people travel within the shortest possible time. Dust and distances, jet-setters, globe-trotters and global customer swiftly became a buzz world in the corporate atmosphere.

Coca-Cola founded in 1875 transported in horse drawn carriage is being believed to the most popular brand sold in 200 countries of the globe; maintaining a flavours matching to the pallet of the ethnic taste buds of people. Things have to move ahead and with it hearth have to guard at the cost of alluring advertisements of marketing czars. Organic food market is picking up as a concept for the rich who is available in the remote corners of the globe deprived of the facilities of pompous life and plenty.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Organic food has been of vital interest to all people around the globe, but its non-availability has bolstered the market forces to launch preserved products. Science of preservation have resulted in maintaining for the durability of products and there by packaging. To drive the market by attracting potential customers companies are creating sensation in their promotional plans. (Murray, 1994) They create market share and reach to the heart share of the buyer.

Junk foods have all the disadvantages for the customer but it is an inevitable requirement. Countries concerned about the health and hygiene of the nationals, consciousness look for regulations to nab the perpetrators of law, yet the rules have their slackness in many ways.

People as buyers; need to be conscious of the purchase they make and food they eat. They need to have the social responsibility to report the authorities in case of any violation meted by the plethora of retails small or big scattered all around. There cannot be any substitute for organic food. Good health is all about good food and marketing ethics. In the power relations implicit in market forces; buyers prevail at the end of the game and they need to prepare themselves to be conscious to wage a war against junk food and ensure a proper order in the market places.

The two facets of organic food consumption and organic farming have controversies in the third world countries and the developing countries. United Nations role is inevitable in bridging the gap and covering the issue in favour of the mankind is indispensable. Role of intellectual masses and the opinion leaders' role for a healthy world can only encourage the organic farming and shift of the consumer choices towards the organic food. Eco-balancing is not confined to the developed countries only, positive media role has contributed towards the development of the consumer choices. Role play by the culinary professionals needs to reach the common man kitchen in this drive of organic food choices of the masses. Life is valuable; life must be protected and safeguarded.

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