



The Natural Way: Food, Eating and Obesity (Part 2)

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The ancient Indian understanding about food, medicine, health and illness is unequivocal. The awareness about food restrictions for different individual and drug-food interaction can be found in the *Pathyam* practice of *Ayurveda* and *Siddha* system of medicines. For thousands of years, all Indian traditional system of medicine has always emphasized that dietary choice remains the basis for maintaining health and well-being. The concept of “Food is medicine, medicine is food” in India predates Hippocrates “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food”. However, these ancient statements clearly show the relation between food and medicine. The postmodern western medicine system has recently learned the importance of food in health and illness which is evident from its preventive medicine approach. The fundamental principle on which the western preventive medicine stands is “healthy dietary habits”, which is only a re-discovery of “Food is medicine, medicine is food” concept. The idea of functional foods is a direct implication of the same ancient concept.

Food consumption is an everyday requisite of animal kingdom. The major activity of a human in a day was to search food. As humans evolved to produce and store food, the approach towards everything changed including food. The ease of food availability at door step has urged people to consume whenever and whatever. The promotion of food has also tremendously increased in the last two decades. Conversely, people also consume more fearing to waste food. It is important for us to understand that “nothing goes waste in nature”. Nature has many sophisticated ways of recycling

everything that it produces. Wastage of food is only a human perspective. Food waste actually means that “the excess food is not consumed by a human”. Wasted food, in the minds of humans are actually consumed by numerous other species (from domesticated animals, birds, insects to microorganisms) and humans have failed to understand that they are not alone in planet earth, but co-exist.

Numerous types of diet plans claim to reduce body weight and improve health but, it might not work for all. The other ancient understanding of all Indian traditional system of medicine is that every human body is unique which was for the longest time ignored by the western medicine system. The advent of personalized medicine has re-established the ancient Indian understanding. The basis of personalized medicine is that every person has a unique variation of the human genome. This uniqueness of every human will not allow the body to react in a similar manner towards any food and/or medicine. Selection of food, food habits and being healthy is a personalized beneficial choice for every human.

The current lockdowns due to COVID-19 will exponentially increase obesity and its related consequences. When food is medicine, it is not required regularly. The challenge in “required eating” is to be aware of the need of the body. As human mind is conditioned for habits, practicing required eating becomes difficult. It is better to be aware of certain questions in relation to eating; When to eat? What to eat? The most important question is “Why are we eating”? Are we eating only when we are hungry?