CONSUMER GUIDANCE SOCIETY OF INDIA
CGSI
ग्राहक सेवा सुरक्षा संतोष

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Keemat

The Consumer's Voice — Value for Price, People and the Environment

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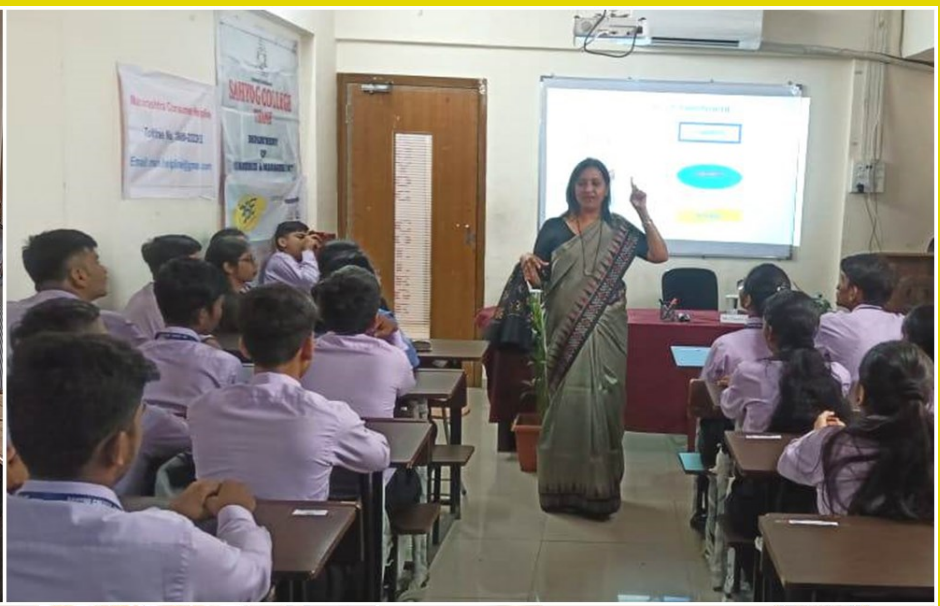

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Happy New Year

22 March 2023 – Vikram Samvat 2080, Saka Era 1945
14 April 2023 – Shobhakrith Varsha – Kali Era 5124

Re संस्कृत

सूर्य संवेदना पुष्पे, दीप्ति
sūrya saṃvedanā puṣpe, dīpti
कारुण्यगंधने।
kāruṇyagaṃdhane
लब्ध्वा शुभं नववर्षेऽस्मिन
labdhvā śubhaṃ navavarṣe'smina
कुर्यात्सर्वस्य मंगलम्॥
kuryātsarvasya maṃgalam

As the sun gives light, the sensation gives birth to compassion, and the flowers always spread their fragrance. The same way, may our new year be a pleasant one for us every day, every moment.

Revisiting the Budget

Editor – Ms. Jamna Vardachary

Every March, we start worrying – first about taxes, and then about investment plans for the next financial year. So, this would be a good time to revisit the Budget, to see what it means for us as individuals and for the country. Why did the budget receive mostly positive reviews? What are the big issues? What will change for the middle class? Let us summarize what economists are saying.

This was not an election budget. On the contrary, it was sensible, even conservative. It made reasonable assumptions about future growth and revenue. No new freebies were announced. And Covid emergency programs (healthcare, food relief) were scaled down now that the pandemic has receded.

The budget also sent a clear signal that economic policy will remain stable. The approach will be the same as followed in recent years: simplify bureaucratic rules, invest in infrastructure, and reduce deficits as far as economic conditions permit.

Economists were pleasantly surprised that the budget managed to increase infrastructure spending while simultaneously cutting taxes and reducing the fiscal deficit. How? One big factor was that post-Covid recovery was quicker than anticipated. This allowed the government to reduce expenditure on Covid management, food subsidies, and the MNREGA employment program. The money thus saved was put into infrastructure.

This is an over-simplification, of course. But capital expenditure outlay increased by a massive 33%, from Rs 7.5 trillion last year to 10 trillion in FY 23-24. The railways budget increased by 48%, roads by 24%. If the money is well spent – a big 'if', because state governments must cooperate – transportation and logistics will improve significantly, boosting industry and creating jobs.

Growth, but slower

The economy will continue to grow, but more slowly than before. The budget predicts that real GDP (adjusted for inflation) will grow by 6.5%, roughly similar to World Bank and IMF estimates. This slowdown – GDP keeps increasing, but at a slower rate – is not new. Compared to 6.5% projected for the coming financial year, real growth was 7% in FY 22-23 and 8.7% the year before. But growth is slowing worldwide; both during and after the pandemic, India's economy has done better than most countries, rich or poor.

Lower taxes

Income tax is always a hot topic. We hate to pay it, but love to talk about it. The budget further improves the new tax regime introduced last year. The old regime had complex rules and numerous tax 'shelters', where you can invest savings to reduce income tax. The new regime has simple rules and very few exemptions or deductions; your taxable income may be higher but tax rates are reduced.

This change may not make much difference to individuals – everyone will choose the regime that suits them best, based on the size and type of their investments. It may increase tax collections through better compliance; that remains to be seen. But certainly, it will simplify the process, increasing efficiency for government as well as individuals.

There is also a 'philosophical' angle. By giving exemptions to some investments, the government is encouraging people to spend or save in a certain way, thus channeling investment towards a particular sector. For example, exemptions on home loans help the construction industry; exemptions on insurance help one segment of the financial sector.

Ideally, everyone with the same income should pay the same tax. For example, consider two people with the same income. One wants to spend his money on exotic vacations, the other wants to buy a house. Should the government, through tax incentives, favor one person over the other? Or should it apply the same rules to both, and let them make their own decisions?

What is in it for me? Under the new regime, the majority of Indians – anyone earning up to Rs 7.5 lakhs per year – will pay zero income tax. Someone earning Rs 9.5 lakhs will pay Rs 45,000, i.e., effective tax rate of less than 5%. Not that it concerns us, but taxes on the super-rich have also been cut, in the hope of getting them to spend and invest more within the country.

Speed-breakers ahead

India may be the world's fastest growing big economy, but we still face serious challenges. GDP growth is slowing. Inflation has dropped from its peak of 7.8% in April 2022, but will still be (projected) 6.8% this year, well above the Reserve Bank's target of 6%. And then there is debt… Total government debt is about 85% of GDP.

This is not necessarily alarming (many rich countries have higher percentages), but more debt means more interest. Interest payments swallow nearly 25% of the Central government's total expenditure, leaving less money available for development.

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Economists worry about the fiscal deficit, which was 6.4% in FY 22-23, and is projected to reduce to 5.9% in FY 23-24 and 4.5% by FY 25-26. This is the famous 'glide path' we keep hearing about. Even if this target is met (no guarantee), remember that the original plan, under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, was to reach 3% by March 2021!

Another measure of a country's financial health is the primary deficit, which is fiscal deficit minus interest payments. A low primary deficit means the country is borrowing (if at all) only to pay interest on previous debts, not to fund ongoing expenses. Ideally, primary debt should be close to zero; but it was 3% of GDP last year and is projected at 2.3% for 2023-24, still very high by global standards.

You could quibble about details. You could justifiably complain about inflation, under-employment, and lack of investment in key sectors like health or education. Given the circumstances, most experts agree that the economy is doing well; that things will keep getting better (perhaps not as quickly as the government says!); and that our children will have more opportunities than we did.

Happy New (Financial) Year!

Letters to the Editor/ CGSI

There is a belief among household insecticides manufacturers that they can hoodwink people by portraying such products as "safe". Especially, liquid vaporizers which are popular for repelling mosquitoes. One brand claim in TVCs that it is "Smarter and Safer".

The Insecticides Act and Rules thereunder prohibit use of adjectives as "harmless" or "safe" with/without any qualifications when promoting a pesticide. The self-regulating body ASCI ignores these misleading ads.

The consumer must be aware of advertisements encouraging dangerous practices in using a product which is inherently designed to be cidal (lethal) whether to insects (and humans) in its long-term application.

Narendra Wagle, Ex-President, CGSI

Pedro the quote master

It was the first day of school and a new student named Pedro, the son of a Mexican telecom tycoon, entered the fourth grade. The teacher said, "Let us begin by reviewing some American history.

Who said 'Give me Liberty, or give me Death?' "She saw a sea of blank faces, except for Pedro, who had his hand up. "Patrick Henry, 1775". "Very good!

Now, who said "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth'?" Again, no response except from Pedro: "Abraham Lincoln, 1863", said Pedro.

The teacher snapped at the class, "Class, you should be ashamed. Pedro, who is new to our country, knows more about its history than you do".

She heard a loud whisper: "Screw the Mexicans". "Who said that?" she demanded.

Pedro put his hand up. "Jim Bowie, 1836".

At that point, a student in the back said, "I'm going to puke". The teacher glared and asked, "All right! Now, who said that?"

Again, Pedro. "George Bush to the Japanese Prime Minister, 1991".

Now furious, another student yelled, "Oh yeah? Suck this!"

Pedro jumped out of his chair waving his hand and shouting to the teacher, "Bill Clinton to Monica Lewinski, 1997!"

Now, with almost a mob hysteria, someone said, "You little shit. If you say anything else, I will kill you". Pedro frantically yelled at the top of his voice, "Gary Condit to Chandra Levy, 2001".

The teacher fainted, and as the class gathered around her on the floor, someone said, "Oh crap, we're in BIG trouble now!"

Pedro whispered, "Saddam Hussein, 2003".

SPICES – ADDING MORE VALUE THAN TASTE

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India is a land of spices. We are not satisfied with dash of salt and a squeeze of lemon we need spices in our food for great flavor, taste and their medicinal properties. Every spice has its own flavoring and essence and they can literally make or break a dish. In fact, it's addition of a bouquet of spices, that make tradition Indian home cooked food one of the healthiest meals eaten around the world. Find below a list of some commonly used spices in every household for cooking and their benefits for our health when used in moderation, but overdose of any spice can lead to indigestion or even ulcers.

Cumin seeds or 'jeera' – Most of our dishes are incomplete without cumin. It is a savory spice helps in digestion of food and helps in boosting metabolism for weight loss, treats skin disorders, insomnia, lowering urinary infection chances and reduce the chances of anemia as it has iron and manganese. It may also help in piles, serves as a laxative. It helps lactating mothers by increasing the milk production.

Turmeric or 'haldi' – The golden powder is the quintessential Indian spice, gives rich color to the food and has many health benefits. It has anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties due to presence of active compound curcumin. It may help improve symptoms of arthritis, heart diseases, PCOD in women.

Cinnamon or 'Dal-chini – This woody spice is popular all over the world and used in both savory and sweet dishes for its aromatic and refreshing taste. It is very effective in keeping our heart healthy by lowering cholesterol, making arteries flexible thus helps in proper circulation of blood and helps in lowering blood sugar levels. Its anti-inflammatory properties help in giving relief from common cold, diarrhea and tummy bloat.

Cardamom or Green Elaichi – It has intense and sweet flavor and used in both sweet and savory recipes. It may lower blood pressure and protect cells from damage due to its anti-oxidant and diuretic properties and it may relieve stomach issues, nausea and vomiting. Cardamom is used to treat bad breath and improve oral health.

Black cardamom – It has strong smoky flavor. It eases out digestive problems and reduces flatulence. Due to its anti-inflammatory properties and the fact that it can alleviate muscle spasms. It is good in treating respiratory problems and asthmatic attack and even in vomiting. Due to presence of anti-oxidants, it helps improve blood circulation and lower the risk of heart attack and blood clots.

Cloves – Cloves are dried flower buds of Syzygium Aromaticum tree. Every Indian knows it is used to treat tooth problems, bad breath as it contains anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. It may give you relief from vomiting, indigestion and loose motions. Eugenol present in cloves is effective against many harmful bacteria, fungus and virus. It boosts immunity, reduces pain and inflammation.

Chilies – it brings warm heat and color to our dishes. There are many different varieties available varying in color and spiciness. Chilies contain capsaicin which gives it characteristic pungency. It could help increase blood flow or even alter the mix of your gut bacteria in a helpful direction.

Coriander – It is one of oldest spices known to us which has earthy flavor. These tiny seeds are magical for all your intestine issues including bloating, gastric, nausea and diarrhea problems. It may lower blood sugar by activating certain enzymes. It is full of antioxidants so it is immune-boosting, anticancer, anti-inflammatory and neuro protective. Some studies have shown coriander seeds may lower heart disease risk factors such as LDL, high Blood Pressure. Coriander's anti-inflammatory properties

The views expressed in 'Keemat' do not necessarily reflect those of CGSI, but rather are personal opinions of the author(s) concerned.

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may safeguard against many brain ailments including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis and anxiety symptoms. Studies also reveal that due to its antimicrobial effects it can fight the bacteria responsible for food borne illnesses and UTIs (urinary tract infections).

Mustard seeds – It is readily available everywhere. There are 3 different varieties yellow, black and brown used in cooking all over the world. Apart from taste mustard seeds are highly beneficial for health. As they are rich in selenium, known for its high anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant effects provide good resistance against cancer cell formation and high amount of magnesium in mustard seeds helps in reducing the severity of asthma attacks, congestion problems in respiration and certain symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and may help in lowering blood pressure. They are good source of dietary fiber and make bowl movement better

Fenugreek or 'Methi' – It belongs to Fabaceae family, the same family as soy. Based on research, fenugreek has benefits for lowering blood sugar levels and stimulate the production of Insulin. It boosts testosterone levels which play a vital role in many bodily functions in males, and increasing breast milk production in lactating mothers. It may also help in lowering blood cholesterol, lowers inflammation and help with appetite control, the fiber in fenugreek forms a thick and sticky gel in the intestine which makes it harder to digest excess sugars and bad fats. Methi seeds are packed with various nutrients that promote hair growth and can treat a flaky scalp (dandruff). Research has shown that applying the paste of methi leaves to acne can prevent fresh outbreaks. It also contains salicylic acid that unclogs the pores in the skin. It has natural oils that help in hydrating, moisturizing and softening skin. Research has shown that in women it helps in menstrual disturbances and infertility. The methi seeds are rich in mucilage and helps prevent constipation, it is a bulk forming laxative. In a study it was found that whole fenugreek seeds powder could reduce aluminum toxicity by offering protection to the brain, bones and kidneys. There are innumerable benefits of methi seeds. Soak 10-25 gm methi seeds in water overnight, then in the morning drink the water in which seeds were soaked. Chew the seeds followed by few sips of warm water.

Saffron – it is one of the most revered Indian spices around the world. It adds beautiful color and flavor to biryani or any dessert. It is quite expansive but its benefits are priceless. It has the ability to treat depression, prevents loss of vision, and helps in improving memory. It has anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and anti-depressive properties.

Nutmeg – Like cloves nutmeg also has anti-bacterial properties. It helps fight tooth decay. It helps in fighting Alzheimer's and improves memory. It has the ability to reduce flatulence and improve appetite. It can also release tension in your muscles. To cure acne, it is applied externally in the form of paste on facial skin.

Black pepper – Also known as king of spices. Once upon a time it was considered as gold, a precious commodity for trade. A dash of black pepper can create an explosion of flavors to any bland dish. It should be used in moderation. It has the ability to increase the secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach to help you in digestion by boosting metabolism. It saves you from flatulence and constipation. It helps relieve cough and cold.

Carom seeds or Ajwain – They are often chewed for medicinal purposes. Despite a partially bitter taste they provide a whole host of health benefits. It promotes digestion, cures stomach ache and helps relieve tooth pain. These seeds are rich in calcium, protein and fiber too.

Fennel seeds (Saunf) – They have crunchy texture on the outside with a mild sweet flavor. In India fennel seeds are quite popular as they can treat many digestive ailments including colic in infants, intestinal gas, acidity problems. They are known for containing powerful antioxidants, phytonutrients, etc., that aid in improving the wellbeing of a human body. People consume fennel seeds after meals as a mouth freshener and for faster digestion. It helps in improving the eyesight as they have high amount of vitamin A and helps in removing toxins from the kidney. People who suffer from IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) highly benefit from fennel seed extracts.

All spices play a significant role in the way we cook and consume food around the world. They have great medicinal value besides giving rich aroma and taste to our food.

Buddha and the Angry Man

One day Buddha was walking through a village. A very angry and rude young man came up and began insulting him, "You have no right teaching, others,' he shouted. "You are as stupid as everyone else. You are nothing but a fake." Buddha was not upset by these insults. Instead he asked the young man "Tell me, if you buy a gift for someone and that person does not take it to whom does the gift belong?" The man was surprised to be asked such a strange question and answered, "It would belong to me. Because I bought the gift."

The Buddha smiled and said, "That is correct. And it is exactly the same with your anger. If you become angry with me and I do not get insulted, then the anger falls back on you. You are then the only one who becomes unhappy, not me. All you have done is hurt yourself. If you want to stop hurting yourself, you must get rid of your anger and become loving instead. When you hate others, you yourself become unhappy. But when you love others, everyone is happy."

Advocate charged Rs 90 excess on wine, Bengaluru court orders bar to pay Rs 10,000 compensation

The Bengaluru Urban District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission recently ordered 'King Fish, the restaurant and bar' to refund the Rs 90 excess charge along with the compensation to the complainant. Krishnaiah ST (49), an advocate living in Amar Jyothi Nagar in Vijayanagar, went to the restaurant and bar located on Nagarbhavi main road on 13 February last year. He ordered a bottle of Sidus wine along with mushroom fry. When he was given the bill for the same, Krishnaiah noticed that he was wrongly charged for Titl Wine-FL, which is Rs 90 more expensive than Sidus wine. Krishnaiah, who produced the bar's receipt, filed a case before the consumer court and sent a legal notice. The bar, in an affidavit, denied the allegation.

However, the commission in its order said, "If really the complainant (Krishnaiah) has not ordered for Sidus wine amounting to Rs.140 and he has ordered for Tilt Wine-FL amounting to Rs.230 the opposition (King Fish The restaurant and bar) would have produced any documents before this Commission. They would have produced the CCTV footage maintained in their restaurant or they would have produced any other documents to show that they have supplied only Tilt Wine-FL amounting to Rs.230 and not Sidus wine".

"When the complainant has produced all the documentary evidence and lead oral evidence the burden shifts on the opposition to establish the wine ordered by the complainant is only Tilt Wine-FL and not Sidus wine and they have rightly collected Rs.230 instead of Rs.140 for the wine. The opposition failed to establish their contention. On the other hand, the complainant has clearly established the mischief and the unfair trade practice in their restaurant.

The opposition has supplied one item for a meager amount and issued the bill for a higher amount even though they have not supplied the said item to the consumer. Hence the complainant is entitled for the relief claimed in this complaint", the order said. The court also ordered the restaurant and bar to pay litigation expenses to the complainant within 60 days from the receipt of the order.

Delhi HC declines petition on 'dead rat in buttermilk pack', directs UP to respond to woman's complaint

THE DELHI High Court Thursday declined to entertain a Noida resident's petition alleging that she has been suffering from continual health issues since she consumed a tetra pack of buttermilk that she later found "contained a dead rat". The woman sought a direction for compensation of Rs 20 lakh from the authorities and product manufacturer.

Justice Rekha Palli said that prima facie there was nothing to show that the product was defective and that the question cannot be decided in a writ petition. Asking the petitioner to approach the consumer court, Justice Palli directed the Food Safety and Drug Administration department of the Uttar Pradesh government to respond to the complaint. The woman, who had ordered the product online in October 2020, said that she had vomited after consuming the drink. When she later checked the tetra pack, the plea said, she found "dead/rotten rat or dead chicken flesh or any other thing" at its bottom. She is not sure as the woman is a vegetarian.

Since consuming the product, the petitioner is "facing physical (stomach disease/ complication dyspepsia /acid reflux daily) and mental effect (depression) continuously", she said in the petition. Complaints to the authorities have not been acted upon, she added.

In December 2020, the company had visited her residence and collected the sample but has not been informed about the lab test result, the court was told.

Man loses hair after applying oil, firm asked to give compensation

The desire to get thick tresses by using a hair oil turned out to be a nightmare for Shiv Charanjit as his hair started falling instead. The Chandigarh consumer court has now asked the company to give a compensation of Rs 25,000 to the complainant and refund Rs 4,800 which was the cost of the hair oil. Charanjit ordered for Hair Building Fiber Oil after being allured by the promise of increase in density of hair without any side-effect in an advertisement of Shree Krishna Enterprise on a TV channel. The product was supplied to the complainant against bill no 1986, dated October 12, 2015, for Rs 4,800. However, when the customer applied the oil, instead of density of hair increasing, his hair started falling. Also, the product was smelly which was not bearable. Therefore, the complainant asked the opposite party company to replace the product to which it initially agreed, but did not do.

The forum held, "It is evident from the complaint that the opposite party while making use of electronic media was promising benefits not scientifically proven. Such false promises have crept into normal day-to-day practice of doing business and fleece unsuspecting customers with products that are neither tested nor recommended by established laboratories created for such purposes. The complainant has suffered excess fall of hair, itching and dandruff. So, rather than being of any benefit, these products are harmful too".

Consumer court fines US travel company Cosmos for making Indian pay tip, not other nationals

An Indian lawyer and his wife were having a meal while on a holiday in Germany. After the meal, he asked the waiter for a glass of water. The waiter, after serving, charged him two euros. None of the other guests, hailing from other nationalities, were charged. The man then learned that his travel plan had made tipping compulsory for Indian customers alone and, what was more, had pre-determined tip rates. A lawsuit and three years later, the man on Thursday shouted fantastic on receiving the order from a city consumer court directing the erring travel agency to cough up an apology and Rs 25,000 for the intentional racial discrimination.

The US-based travel agency, Cosmos, had introduced compulsory tipping for its group tours offered to Indians. However, the tips were neither compulsory nor these amounts pre-determined for customers of other nationalities. When pulled up by the consumer court, Cosmos defended its action by stating that without compulsory tips it was difficult to attract and retain talented staff.

Their response was condemned by a three-member panel of the consumer forum, headed by judge C K Chaturvedi. It held that tour operators could not transfer the cost of hiring talent to consumers of a certain nationality alone. The commercial considerations should remain secular commercial considerations and not morph into a nationality issue, the order read.

The court on August 8 held that the practice of the travel agency was an act of racial discrimination against Indians, which in turn amounted to deficiency of services under Section 2(g) of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. It directed Thomas Cook, the connecting travel agency, to record an apology on behalf of Cosmos and deposit punitive damages of Rs 25,000.

Upon the prayer of Ajit Bhasme, the complainant in this case, the amount is to be deposited with the Delhi State Consumer Welfare Fund. The order took into account that the act of tipping was voluntary and discretionary and making it compulsory introduced an element of unconscionable bargain, which is specifically void under contract law in India.

Judge Chaturvedi also drew parallels of the practice of compulsory tipping to the discrimination faced by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. He labelled the practice as a subtle insult to human dignity and maltreatment to the lawyer for being an Indian. Bhasme, a lawyer practicing in the Supreme Court, termed the verdict a moral victory. ***Bhasme has been blacklisted from the group tours offered by Cosmos after he filed the legal suit.*** However, the real victory, according to Bhasme, lies in the fact that Cosmos has discontinued the practice of compulsory tipping for Indian customers after the suit.

Pay Rs 22,500 as compensation: Consumer court to electronics store

"Men may lie but the circumstances do not", stated a three-member bench of the district consumer disputes redressal forum, Panchkula, while passing a judgment against an electronic goods store which had sold the wrong microwave model to a consumer. The store has been directed to pay the consumer Rs. 22,500 including Rs. 12,500 as the cost of microwave, Rs 5,000 as compensation and Rs. 5,000 as litigation costs within a period of one month.

Complainant Ram Diya Attri, a resident of Pinjore, alleged that he had purchased an IFB microwave from SR Traders, Sector 20, in September 2014 for Rs 12,500, which had a capacity of 25 liters.

Later, he realized that it had been replaced with a microwave which had a capacity of 23 liters. Despite several visits to the shop owner and letters to IFB, the matter was not resolved and Ram lodged a complaint in the consumer court.

SR Traders in their reply stated that the complainant's sister had visited their store for the purchase of a microwave oven with 25 liters capacity as a gift for him and purchased the product under his name. Later, the complainant informed the store that he already had a microwave oven and requested them to keep the product and return the payment made by his sister. However, his request was refuted as it was against the sales policy and therefore, they should not be held for any deficiency.

IFB in their reply stated that the appliance sold to the complainant was of the highest quality and that the complainant had taken the delivery of the microwave after pre-delivery inspection.

On the day of the hearing, the forum presided by Justice Dharam Pal held that the photocopy of the sale letter submitted as evidence by the complainant categorically indicated that the purchase made was of a microwave oven of 25 liters capacity, whereas he was given one with 23 liters capacity, which amounted to deficiency in service.

A Polish father tell his lovely daughter, "My darling, please do not marry this man. He is lame, ugly and an orphan".

The daughter, surprised and angry, tells him, "I only care about love, daddy, I do not care about his looks or his background".

Her father says to her, "I am not talking about that. Don't you think he has suffered enough?"

The Effect of Diet on Mental Health

Dr. Liji Thomas MD(OB-GNY), Reviewed by Aimee Molineux, Courtesy: News-Medical.Net

The brain controls and regulates most of the body's vital functions, conscious or not. For this reason, it is essential that the brain receives a steady supply of fuel and oxygen. The fuel is obtained by metabolizing nutrients made available in the bloodstream, originating in the digested food.

The brain consumes 20% of the daily intake of calories, that is, about 400 (out of 2000) calories a day. Structurally, about 60% of the brain is fat, comprising of high cholesterol and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs).

Thus, the food one eats is directly linked to brain structure and function, and thus affects the working of the mind. Many studies have found that diets that are too rich in refined sugars are toxic to brain functioning because the high content of simple sugars stresses the pancreas and induces insulin resistance. The high sugar levels with compensatory insulin responses stimulate the counter-reactive surge of autonomic neurotransmitters like cortisol and glucagon.

These are known to produce increased anxiety, hunger and irritability. Moreover, they induce inflammatory and oxidative stress. This has been linked to an exacerbation of symptoms of depression and other mood disorders. These findings have led to the emerging field of nutritional psychiatry that traces relationships between food, feelings, gut microbiota, and human behavior.

Deficiency disorders and mood

The deficiency of nutrients like cobalamine, folate and zinc are known to be associated with symptoms of depression and dementia, cognitive decline and irritability. Both overeating and food insecurity are associated with mood and anxiety disorders.

Mental illness is ranked among the largest contributors to the global health burden, especially depression, which accounts for the major chunk of disability in the more developed countries, especially in the age group of 15-44 years. Therefore, it is crucial to explore nutritional strategies to ameliorate these conditions. Not only do people eat differently when anxious or depressed, but these changes may occur in either direction. Conversely, depression may be the result, at least partly, of poor eating habits, or may become worsened by the inability of the patient to stop eating comfort foods and choose a healthy diet. Such inability may be financial, psychological, or iatrogenic.

Serotonin and the gut

Serotonin is a monoamine neurotransmitter that helps to control sleep and appetite, inhibit pain, and to regulate mood. About 95% of the serotonin is produced in the gut, which is rich in neurons – the enteric plexus contains a hundred million nerve cells. Thus, the gut is intimately involved in emotional regulation, pain perception, and vital physiological functions.

Interestingly, the function of these neurons and their secretion of serotonin, and other neurotransmitters, is closely regulated by the metabolic byproducts of the trillion or so bacteria that comprise the gut microbiome. These bacteria ensure epithelial barrier integrity for the intestine, preventing the entry of bacterial toxins and pathogens into the systemic circulation. They also prevent the spread of inflammation beyond the gut lumen, enhance nutrient absorption, and activate gut-brain neural pathways – the gut-brain axis.

Monoamine neurotransmitters are synthesized from amino acids in a process that is mediated by mineral-dependent cofactors. Both folate and vitamin B12 are essential for the methylation that occurs during these synthetic processes, also regulating the formation of homocysteine – a metabolite that is strongly linked to cardiovascular risk and depression.

Dietary fats and brain functioning

Anti-inflammatory fats such as omega-3 fatty acids (FAs) are known to be essential components of neuronal cell membranes, and play a role in many vital neural processes such as neurotransmission, gene expression, neurogenesis and neuronal survival. They are also known to have antioxidant properties. Omega-3 FAs are used to treat a number of psychological disorders, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, bipolar depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A high omega-6 proportion is linked to a higher incidence of these conditions, especially the first two.

The standard Western diet is rich in omega-6 but low in omega-3 FAs, primarily because of the consumption of refined flours and sugars, and highly processed foods, and low amounts of seafood (including fish) and grass-fed beef.

Some studies have confirmed that diets that are richer in healthier carbohydrates and fats, and lower in refined and highly processed foods, such as the Japanese and Mediterranean diets, are linked to a reduction in the incidence of depression by anywhere between a quarter to over a third, compared to the standard American diet.

Inflammation and the diet

Inflammation of the nervous system is also important in the pathogenesis of mental illness, and this is also linked to the diet. Many biomarkers of inflammation, such as C-reactive protein (CRP) and tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-α) were associated with a dietary pattern that was linked to a higher risk of depression over the next decade or so. This pattern included high simple sugars (sweetened drinks and refined flours), red meat and margarine (saturated fats), and little green or yellow vegetables, coffee, wine, or olive oil, which are all features of the stereotypical Western diet.

The high content of vegetables, fruits, grains, and seafood, with less dairy and meat content, and no refined foods, of the Mediterranean and Japanese diets, compares very favorably with the Western diet. The former uses small amounts of red wine and cheese or yogurt in the daily diet. The mechanism is thought to be via the brain-derived neurotrophic factor or BDNF.

This important molecule is implicated in the plasticity and survival of neurons, and neurogenesis. It is reduced in many mental health conditions including depression, PTSD and schizophrenia, and is affected by many antidepressants that are commonly prescribed.

Not only so, but the former presents many of the fruits and vegetables in fermented form, which provides probiotics protecting the gut by enhancing the content of health-promoting gut microbes and reducing or preventing inflammation throughout the body. Thus, including more foods with omega-3 FAs in the diet when on inflammation-inducing medications, not only prevents inflammatory changes but also prevents the induction of depression in such individuals, according to recent, admittedly early, work. Again, the Mediterranean diet promotes gut microbes that produce anti-inflammatory metabolites.

Of course, depressive tendencies or stressors may prevent the beneficial effects of healthy food from manifesting themselves as reduced inflammation or improved mood. Secondly, only some depressed individuals show this inflammatory tendency, which may mean that diet plays this role in only a proportion of people, perhaps with other inflammatory conditions or due to constitutional factors.

Conclusion

Many experts would recommend that people pay attention to the relationship between their diet and the foods they eat over a month or at least two weeks. If they could reduce or eliminate processed foods and sugars for this period of time, before bringing back these foods one by one, it would be instructive to notice how they feel.

Better eating strategies are essential to promote mental health and recovery from mental illness. It was over 2,000 years ago that the famous Greek physician Hippocrates said, “Let thy food be thy medicine and thy medicine be thy food”.

Not only does the Mediterranean (and similar) diet affect the availability of the basic building blocks of the brain and neurotransmitters, including myelin, the neuronal membrane, and monoamine neurotransmitters, but it modulates key chemicals like BDNF to alter neuroplasticity, mutes’ system inflammation, and determines the health and state of the gut microbiome.

Many such traditional diets are known to include mostly nutritious whole foods without much processing. The role of a dietary specialist in helping patients with mentally ill-health to choose approaches that promote the ability to take care of oneself and enhance one’s health is very important and should be encouraged.

As one set of authors comment,

This message supports the idea that creating environments and developing measures that promote healthy, nutritious diets, while decreasing the consumption of highly processed and refined “junk” foods may provide benefits even beyond the well-known effects on physical health, including improved psychological wellbeing”.

Lying on his deathbed, an elderly man made his final request to his wife: “Honey, I’m almost out of time and there’s something I’d like you to do for me when I’m gone”. She nodded her head and said, “You can count on me. Anything you ask, I will make sure it will be done”.

“I want you to wed my buddy, Jacob”, he said, his voice filled with emotion. Astonished, his wife replied, “Jacob? But I thought you couldn’t stand him!” He smiled and looked into her eyes as he answered, “That’s precisely why…”

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A rich man comes home and immediately starts shouting at his wife. “I’ve been looking at our expenses and they are through the roof! What have you got so much to spend on? From now on, things will need to be different!”

“Different how?” the wife asked. “Well, for starters, if you learned how to cook, we wouldn’t need a personal chef. If you learned to clean, we wouldn’t need a maid!”

The wife looks at him and responds: “Then we just need to teach you how to satisfy a woman. Then we can let the gardener go as well”.

The Effect of Intermittent Fasting on the Gut Microbiome

By Maira Ahsan, BSc, Reviewed by Aimee Molineux, Courtesy: News-Medical Life Sciences

Intermittent fasting is essentially a cleansing exercise in terms of health, and this is becoming increasingly evident from a growing number of extensive studies. It continues to impact all tissue and organ systems once the regeneration movement begins at the cellular level. If fasting for longer than 16 hours, autophagy occurs. Similarly, gut microbiota (GM) has been shown to have several beneficial effects on almost every organ and tissue in the body.

What is intermittent fasting?

The term "intermittent fasting" refers to depriving oneself of food and liquids for a specific number of hours or days. It includes a multitude of regimens, such as alternate-day fasting, prolonged fasts lasting several days, or daily fasting that limit eating to a set number of hours each day. The typical fasting period lasts fifteen to eighteen hours, leaving six to nine hours for eating.

If you have been fasting for two days, that does not imply you should eat as much as you normally would on your break. Long-term adherence to an alternate-day fasting schedule is not encouraged. Many people fast once a month or even once every few months, going without food for 24 hours and then eating normally for a day. Instead of restricting your caloric intake, intermittent fasting allows you to get all the calories and macronutrients you need in a shorter time frame.

How does diet affect the gut microbiome?

It is important to keep in mind how food significantly affects the gut microbiome's makeup before reviewing the evidence that suggests fasting may have beneficial effects on the gut microbiota. We can better grasp how fasting impacts the gut microbiota if we first comprehend how the gut microbiome varies daily, and even on an hourly basis, in response to the foods we consume.

According to one study, a severe change in diet can rapidly alter the composition and functions of the gut microbiota. It has been discovered that short-term, extreme dietary changes can alter the makeup and number of gut microorganisms. In addition to showing that eating food, particularly certain food types, causes substantial changes in the microbiome, research findings also give us reason to think that fasting and not eating can have similar effects.

Benefits of intermittent fasting on the gut microbiome

The effects of intermittent fasting on the microbiome of the digestive tract have received little attention. When you consider how quickly changes in nutrition may impact the microbiome, it is not hard to see how fasting could have a comparable impact. Begin with the sleep-wake cycle because it is the most familiar form of fasting. Most people eat multiple meals throughout the day, typically beginning with breakfast and finishing with supper or a late-night snack. It is recommended that they then sleep for eight hours, during which time they will have unintentionally fasted. In this state, the gut microbiota can recover from its hard work of digesting food and creating vital molecules.

Evidence suggests that our gut microbiomes and circadian rhythms are interconnected. The bacteria in our bodies affect our regular sleep schedule and vice versa. Consequently, sleep deprivation has an effect on the microorganisms in the digestive tract. The population and variety of the gut microbiome rely on the brief fasting phase known as sleep. This knowledge will be useful in laying the groundwork for a future argument that prolonged fasting may be more helpful than the normal fasting that occurs while we sleep.

How does remodeling of the gut microbiota happen during intermittent fasting

Intermittent fasting is a popular choice for those looking to enhance their health. There are many potential advantages to different approaches, and new research reveals that intermittent fasting may also affect your gut health.

Earlier research has demonstrated positive health impacts, including decreased body fat and vulnerability to cardiometabolic diseases. Some of the benefits of intermittent fasting may be attributable to a lower caloric intake, but the precise processes are still unknown.

Recent studies suggest that intermittent fasting can alter the composition of the human gut microbiome by increasing taxonomic diversity and promoting microbial remodeling. During fasting, a particular family of anaerobic bacteria called Lachnospiraceae flourished. This group of bacteria, part of the order Clostridiales, is responsible for a process called butryogenesis in the gut, which has beneficial metabolic and anti-aging effects. The metabolic and maybe health-span-enhancing advantages of intermittent fasting and food restriction may be related to changes in the microbiome.

Future recommendations

Intermittent fasting benefits gut bacteria because it gives them time for rest and repopulation, even though more research is necessary to define its precise advantages. In addition, it is essential to reiterate the benefits of a gut-healthy diet and lifestyle.

Consider your existing lifestyle, level of daily stress, nutrition, exercise, sleep, and mindfulness practices before beginning a fasting regimen.

High-fat diet allows the immune system to eliminate a parasitic worm from the intestine

Reviewed by Reviewed by Emily Henderson, B.Sc. Courtesy: News-Medical Life Sciences

Scientists have discovered that a high-fat diet allows the immune system to eliminate a parasitic worm which is a major cause of death and illness in the developing world. Parasitic worms affect up to a billion people, particularly in developing nations with poor sanitation. One of these parasites known as "whipworm" can cause long-lasting infections in the large intestine. Researchers from Lancaster University and the University of Manchester in the UK have discovered that a high-fat diet allows the immune system to eliminate the parasite.

Lead author Dr Evelyn Funjika, formerly at Manchester and now at the University of Zambia, said: "Just like the UK, the cheapest diets are often high in fat and at-risk communities to whipworm are increasingly utilizing these cheap diets. Therefore, how worm infection and western diets interact is a key unknown for developing nations.

"In order to be able to study how nutrition affects parasite worm infection, we have been using a mouse model, Trichuris muris, closely related to the human whipworm Trichuris trichiura and seeing how a high-fat diet impacts immunity".

It has been previously shown that immune responses which expel the parasite rely on white blood cells called T-helper 2 cells, specialized for eliminating gastrointestinal parasites. The findings, published in the journal "Mucosal Immunology", demonstrate how a high-fat diet, rather than obesity itself, increases a molecule on T-helper cells called ST2 and this allows an increased T-helper 2 response which expels the parasite from the large intestinal lining.

Dr John Worthington from the Department of Biomedical and Life Science at Lancaster University co-led the research. "We were quite surprised by what we found during this study. High-fat diets are mostly associated with increased pathology during disease. However, in the case of whipworm infection this high fat diet licenses the T-helper cells to make the correct immune response to expel the worm".

Co-lead Professor Richard Grencis from the University of Manchester said: "Our studies in mice on a standard diet demonstrate that ST2 is not normally triggered when expelling the parasite, but the high-fat diet boosts the levels of ST2 and hence allows expulsion via an alternative pathway".

> *It was really fascinating that simply altering the diet completely switched the immune response in the gut from one that fails to expel the parasite, to one that brings about all the correct mechanisms to eliminate it".*
>
> ***David Thornton, Co-Lead Professor, University of Manchester***

However, Dr Worthington added caution to the findings. "Before you order that extra take-away, we have previously published that weight loss can aid the expulsion of a different gut parasite worm. So, these results may be context specific, but what is exciting is the demonstration of how diet can profoundly alter the capacity to generate protective immunity and this may give us new clues for treatments for the millions who suffer from intestinal parasitic infections worldwide".

The research was funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, The Wellcome Trust and EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council).

Source: Lancaster University

Karnataka HC fumes as pension to 102-year-old withheld

The Karnataka high court has slapped a fine of Rs 1 lakh on some central and state government officials for withholding a 102-year-old freedom fighter's pension and forcing him to litigate over the matter thrice. Along with the fine, the court has ordered a payment of Rs 3,71,280 in arrears, with a 6% interest. The dues will have to be paid within two weeks.

Freedom fighter H Nagabhushana Rao's pension under the Gaurava Dhana scheme was withheld from November 1, 2017, to December 24, 2018, over non-production of a mandatory Life Certificate. He was 97 then. Even after the pension was restored, the arrears were not paid despite two HC orders to release the dues. Justice M Nagaprasanna castigated the officials for apathy and holding the bank concerned responsible for dereliction of duty towards the petitioner. Justice M Nagaprasanna ruled: "Pension is not a bounty. It is a measure of socio-economic justice. The [reason] behind granting of pension is the inability to provide for oneself due to old age. This can be withheld, curtailed or taken away only in accordance with law". He further said: "The officers have displayed apathy towards the petitioner by not taking the Life Certificate from him as, by then, the petitioner was 97 years old, a recipient of the pension for long time".

The judge added: "The petitioner would be entitled to all the arrears along with interest, as the bank had failed to collect the Life Certificate from him. The bank ought to have visited the petitioner and collected the Life Certificate and regulated pension". The court clarified that in cases where pensioners are unable to visit the bank for documentation, it is the duty of the bank officials to visit them, obtain their Life Certificates and update the details in the bank's system. ***(Courtesy: The Times of India)***

Health Benefits of Mangos

Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD

Full of Fiber

Mangos are the fruit of an evergreen tree and considered a drupe, or stone fruit, because of their seed. They're also part of the cashew family. One of their many benefits is that they're high in soluble fiber. One cup has 2 grams -- 7% of your recommended daily value -- to help you manage constipation and feel full longer.

High in Vitamin C

Move over oranges: One cup of mango has 70% of your recommended daily allowance. In addition to boosting your immune system, vitamin C helps activate collagen. That's a building block for your skin, bones, hair, and muscles. It also helps you absorb the iron your body uses to make protein for red blood cells.

A+ in Vitamin A

Knock out 25% of your daily requirement when you toss 1 cup of frozen mango in your smoothie. Not only does vitamin A support your immune system, it's also essential to your eyes and vision. And it helps your heart, lungs, and kidneys function well.

Full of Antioxidants

There are six popular varieties of mangos in the U.S. and every one has antioxidants. You need them to protect your cells from free radicals, the molecules your body makes when it breaks down food or is exposed to harmful elements like tobacco smoke and radiation.

Mango Allergies

Unless you have an oral allergy to all raw fruits and vegetables, you're probably not allergic to the flesh of mangos. But you may react to urushiol, the chemical compound found in poison ivy, oak, sumac, and mango skin. In most cases it shows up as contact dermatitis, or a rash near your mouth. It can happen up to 2 days after you eat mango.

Don't Shun the Sugar

One cup of mango has 22 grams of naturally occurring sugar. But because they're high in fiber, the sugar enters your bloodstream slowly and doesn't cause a big spike. If you're trying to watch how much sugar you eat, pair mango with fat or protein, like avocado or fish. That helps slow down absorption even more.

How to Pick

They come in many colors, so you can't judge its ripeness that way. You'll want to skip the ones that are visibly bruised or smell spoiled. Gently squeeze your mango. If you don't plan to eat it soon, it should be firm. If you want to enjoy your mango in the next day or two, it should be slightly soft.

How to Store

If your mango is already ripe and you don't plan to eat it right away, put it in the fridge to slow the process. To ripen a firm mango, store it in a cool, dark place -- like your pantry -- or in a bag on the counter. If your mango is cut, store it in the fridge to ward off bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

How to Cut

It's easier than you think. To slice it, cut off a side to the right of the seed, then cut off a side to the left of the seed. Then slice into the flesh of each side without cutting all the way through the skin, and scoop out the slices with a spoon.

Mango Salsa

Mango is perfect for a sweet version of salsa. Combine diced mango with chopped tomato, cucumber, onion, cilantro, and a squeeze of lime. Season with salt, pepper, or chili powder. Add it to a grain bowl or atop fish tacos.

Mango and Banana Smoothie

Frozen mango chunks were made for smoothies. Mix a cup with half a banana, ¾ cup of milk, and a cup of ice. Add a teaspoon of honey for sweetness or a tablespoon of nut butter for protein.

Chocolate-Dipped Mango Pops

Who needs popsicles when you can eat frozen fruit on a stick? Cut a mango into thick slices and slide skewers into one end, about halfway up. Dip the ends in melted chocolate (milk, dark, white, or a combination), freeze, and eat.

Eighty percent of married men cheat in America, the rest of them cheat in Europe – **Jackie Mason**

Scientific Tit-bits

Dr. Sitaram Dixit, Chairman CGSI

What makes flames turn colors?

Hot things emit certain color to show just how hot they are. We see the wires in a toaster glowing from dull red to bright orange as they heat up. The color of an incandescent light change as we move a dimmer switch from low to high as the dull orange in the lowest setting becomes white hot of the highest setting.

In a burning flame gas or alcohol, there are often two main colors, orange and blue, produced through different mechanisms. The orange comes from particles of unburned soot that glow from the heat and is determined by the temperature or blackbody radiation. Red is the coolest flame, then orange, yellow, white, and finally blue. Blue color indicates a temperature of over 10,000 degrees Celsius if the sooty part of the flame is blue.

However, the blue part of the flame gets its color from a different mechanism. Electrons in atoms and molecules is excited into higher energy levels as the gas or alcohol burns. These electrons emit energy as light when they fall back down to their normal energy levels. The color of light they emit indicate what molecules they are, as each molecule has a different energy level. The blue light comes mainly from a molecule made from one carbon atom bonded to one hydrogen atom. The greenish-blue portion of the flame comes from a molecule made of two carbon atoms.

How do we make different colored fireworks?

The blue part of a gas flame comes from electrons falling from excited high energy levels to their normal lower levels. The same mechanism is responsible to get colors other than blue due to addition of some atoms or molecules that have different energy levels. Adding sodium colors, a flame bright yellow. Soak a paper towel in ordinary table salt (NaCl) water, and let it dry. On burning we get yellow color flame, or just sprinkling some salt into a gas flame will produce a yellow color flame.

Copper is famous for its blue and green-colored compounds. Putting some copper compounds into a flame, gets pretty blues and greens. Lithium salts make red flames, and strontium salts make even brighter red flames. Barium salts make blue-green flames, and potassium makes violet flames. We can make fireworks with sparks of different colors, by adding these compounds to the burning materials.

Some burning materials make colors by other mechanisms. Magnesium burns with a bright white light, hot enough to get into the white region of the blackbody radiation curve. Similarly, to make orange colors in fireworks we use glowing balls of carbon, hot enough to glow orange.

What is plasma?

Plasma is a gas that is so hot that the molecules or atoms lose some of their electrons. Common forms of matter are solid, liquid, and gas. However, in a universe, the most common form of matter is plasma. The sun is a big ball of plasma. Lightning is a plasma. The electric sparks from static electricity are plasma. Plasma is inside glowing fluorescent light tube and neon light. Plasmas consist of electrons and the positively charged atoms the electrons stripped from. These atoms that are missing electrons are ions, and we say that the gas has become a plasma or *ionized*.

Gases with small percentage of their atoms stripped of electrons are weakly ionized and when more, the plasma is highly ionized. Most flames are weakly ionized plasmas unlike sparks and lightning. As electrons carry a negative charge and stripped atoms carry a positive charge, plasmas can conduct electricity. Gases do not conduct electricity. Plasmas can emit colors just like flames do emitting colors, as their atoms or molecules have different energy levels. Helium plasmas are pink. Plasmas made from sodium vapor are the characteristic yellow of sodium.

How do you make a volcano with chemicals?

Volcanoes made for science fair projects use a baking soda and vinegar reaction to create a foam to represent the lava. Dishwashing soap, along with food coloring, gets a red or orange appearance. Baking soda is a salt made of a strong base and a weak acid i.e., sodium hydroxide, and carbon dioxide dissolved in water. Adding a stronger acid (such as vinegar) to baking soda, replaces the weak acid. Since the weak acid is the same as fizzy water in sodas, it fizzes in the volcano and makes tiny bubbles. The dishwashing soap helps these bubbles form a foam instead of just popping when they reach the surface.

For making volcanoes with real flames and sparks, we can use ammonium dichromate. It then burns with bright red flames and orange sparks, and the ash expands, producing a typical volcano cone. The ammonium dichromate is not actually burning but undergoing thermal decomposition. The atoms in the molecule rearrange themselves to be in a lower energy state. Heating a compound breaks down into green chromium oxide ash, water vapor, and nitrogen gas.

The night light robbery: How LED bulb industry ensures that we keep buying

Dr. Jaijit Bhattacharya, President – Centre for Digital Economy Policy Research, (Courtesy: India Today News)

LED light bulbs are nowhere close to their promised life of 20 years. There are grounds for suspicion that perhaps this industry has fallen back to the days of the infamous Phoebus cartel, which ensured that the old filament-based light bulb's lifespan was reduced from 2,500 hours to 1,200 hours.

If we do not have to replace our light bulbs, then we will not need to buy new LED bulbs. In Short After about a year, the LED light starts blinking LED bulb manufacturers have been promising at least 20,000 hour-long life of bulbs Does the LED bulb industry really want us to have light bulbs that last forever?

"A promise is a promise". That was one of the famous statements of Ratan Tata when he launched the Tata Nano, after a few years of delay and cost overruns. The Tata Nano was launched at Rs 99,000, ex-showroom, to reflect the promise made several years ago that it would be a Rs 1 lakh car. In spite of inflation, and several price-related challenges, Ratan Tata stuck to his promise.

So, what does Ratan Tata's promise have to do with the "nightlight" robbery? The problem is that LED light manufacturers had made a promise that their product will last anywhere between 30,000 hours to 50,000 hours. If an LED lightbulb is kept switched on for four hours a day, every day, then 30,000 hours of life roughly translates to over 20 years. This may come as a surprise to many now, as we have got habituated to changing our LED light bulbs in one to two years. After about a year, the LED light starts blinking and it forces us to replace the light bulb with another expensive LED light bulb.

The whole premise of switching from cheap filament light bulbs to extremely expensive LED ones was based on the calculations of power savings over the life of an LED bulb, which would make the lifetime cost of the LED bulb lower than the incandescent bulb. But if the promise of 20 years of the life of an LED bulb does not hold, then does the economics of an LED bulb itself hold? Why should people use LED light bulbs and not use conventional incandescent or fluorescent lights?

The bigger question mark is, does the LED bulb industry really want us to have light bulbs that literally last forever, which will then be a death knell for the industry? If we do not have to replace our light bulbs, then we will not need to buy new LED bulbs, which means once we have bought all the lights that we need, the LED bulb industry will shrink drastically. Is it a conspiracy theory that the LED manufacturers are purposefully reducing the lifespan of their bulbs or is there any substance to such a possibility?

LED bulbs seem to be in grip of what appears to be a neo-Phoebus arrangement.

The startling fact is that the lighting industry did collude in the past to curtail the life of incandescent light bulbs. And any industry player who did not follow the diktat of this cartel was punished. This cartel was referred to as the Pheobus Cartel, based on the name of the organization that they created – PhÅ"bus S.A.Compagnie Industrielle pour le DÃ©veloppement de l'Ã‰clairage (French for "Phoebus plc Industrial Company for the Development of Lighting"). This was incorporated in Switzerland. The cartel included well-known manufacturers from US, Europe, and Japan, who operate to date.

So, what did the Phoebus cartel do?

The bizarre actions of the cartel were discovered by the historian Markus Krajewski. Besides controlling production and slicing out different geographies to players in order to limit competition, the lighting industry realized that with the advancement of technology, the bulbs were lasting several thousand hours. In fact, some bulbs from that era, are still functioning. So, the cartel started pouring in resources to actually work on shortening the life of the bulbs and limiting them to 1,000 hours, in order to force people to continue buying the bulbs, an unethical practice that is now labeled as "planned obsolescence".

In parallel, they put in an audit system that forced manufacturers to conform to the 1,000 hours of bulb life goal. Stringent penalties were imposed on manufacturers whose light bulbs lasted more than the prescribed hours. This ensured that the industry had the market, year after year, as consumers would line up to buy new bulbs after their old ones stopped working after roughly 1,000 hours.

The cartel's system worked brilliantly. Within a decade of the cartel coming into existence, the lifespan of a bulb was brought down from an average of 2,500 hours to less than 1,200 hours. And even though the cartel stopped functioning by 1940, its impact has stayed till today. When you buy an incandescent light bulb today from the market, its life will be roughly around 1,200 hours, half of what it used to be in the 1930s. It also led to the creation of the strategy of planned obsolescence that infests our laptops, smartphones, and a host of other smart devices, where bloat wares are injected into our machines under the garb of "updated software". And the moment a new model is launched, magically, some of the older models become slow and the battery life suddenly diminishes.

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Nut consumption and its impact on human and environmental health

Dr. Chinta Sidharthan, Reviewed by Benedette Cuffari, M.Sc. Courtesy: News Medical Life Sciences

In a recent review published in the journal Nutrients, researchers examine the impacts of nut consumption on human health and the environment. Future research directions that might improve production methods in continuously changing climate conditions were also discussed.

Background

Although nuts have long been a part of the human diet, their high fat and energy content led many to avoid regular consumption. However, modern nutrition science has identified several health benefits associated with nuts.

Dietary guidelines aimed at preventing chronic diseases and providing complete nutrition advised the inclusion of staple foods with low fat, salt, and sugar content. While the inclusion of nuts in food groups remained ambiguous, research suggested that nut consumption was associated with significant health benefits at a broad population level.

Recent studies have shown that nut consumption is associated not only with the prevention of chronic diseases and improved reproductive health but also with the planet's health. In addition, nuts constitute a significant part of plant-based diets, and nut consumption has been linked to issues that address the environmental impacts of sustainable food production and climate change.

Environmental sustainability

The current review discusses the role of nut consumption in promoting human health and the planet's health. The agricultural industry uses approximately 70% of the world's freshwater and is responsible for about 26% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Nuts, however, have been identified as sustainable foods, as they are plant-based, can be consumed whole or with minimal processing, have a long season, generate little waste, and can be stored and transported easily.

Although nuts are considered a sustainable food, the extensive water and chemical inputs requirements for the intensive agricultural practices required to produce nuts have raised concerns. Nevertheless, the traditional agricultural practices used to grow nuts are more sustainable.

Despite the lack of information from Lifecycle Analysis on nuts, nuts have been found to have a relatively low environmental impact when measured per gram of protein. For example, in one study that compared the environmental impacts of five common protein sources, including eggs, legumes, nuts, red meat, and poultry, the almond protein was found to be the second most highly ranked protein source after beans.

Nuts fit within the parameters of a sustainable diet, which includes the proportion of plant-based versus animal-based foods, the proportion of whole foods as compared to processed foods, the proportion of locally sourced or seasonal foods as compared to foods that are out of season or context, and the proportion of consumed versus wasted food.

Male reproductive health

Nuts are rich in nutrients such as unsaturated fatty acids, minerals, antioxidants, phytosterols, vitamins, polyphenols, and fiber. As a result, nuts are associated with various health benefits, including improved male reproductive health. Approximately 15% of the global population struggles with infertility, with 40%-50% of these cases reported among males.

Lifestyle and dietary patterns can impact sperm quality and overall male reproductive health. A healthy diet, including the consumption of fruits, vegetables, seafood, fish, whole grains, and nuts, along with reduced intake of alcohol, sugar, caffeine, and processed foods, has been linked to better sperm quality.

Animal models consuming diets supplemented with hazelnuts and cashews have demonstrated the ability of nut consumption to improve the quality and functionality of sperm. Furthermore, two randomized clinical trials in humans, one involving the inclusion of walnuts and the other involving the consumption of almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts, showed that nut consumption significantly improved sperm count, vitality, motility, and morphology.

These studies indicate that nut consumption may improve male reproductive health and sperm quality. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand the mechanisms through which nut consumption modulates fecundity.

Dietary patterns

Advances in nutrition science, accompanied by a shift in focus from nutrients to dietary patterns to address chronic lifestyle-related diseases, have resulted in the inclusion of nuts in healthy diets.

Nuts are a naturally occurring food source and consist of unsaturated fatty acids, fiber, essential micronutrients, and polyphenols. Moreover, regular nut consumption has been associated with a reduced incidence of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and type 2 diabetes.

The Mediterranean diet, which has been shown to reduce the risk of several chronic diseases, includes nuts as a regular part of the diet. However, population intakes do not appear to meet recommended levels for nut consumption.

Including nuts in global dietary guidelines recommends consuming between 15 to 30 grams of nuts daily. However, variations in food group allocations present challenges when comparing population intakes to current recommendations.

Conclusions

If nuts are produced using traditional growing practices, they significantly benefit human and planet health. Rich in protein and a wide range of nutrients, nuts have been linked to improved male reproductive health, better lipid profiles, and a lower risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

These health benefits might provide impetus to improve sustainable environmental practices to increase nut production and, as a result, allow for greater inclusion of nuts in diets worldwide.

Journal reference:

Tapsell, L., Sabaté, J., Martínez, R., et al. (2023). Novel lines of research on the environmental and human health impacts of nut consumption. Nutrients, 15, Article 4.

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Lighting industry did collude in the past to curtail the life of incandescent light bulbs.

So that brings us back to the issue of LED light bulbs and their real-life being closer to 2,000 hours (roughly 2 years) and certainly not the promised 30,000 hours to 50,000 hours.

This penny-dropping moment came to me when, several years ago, I was helping the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in putting their Smart City Plan together and executing the same. NDMC maintains the area where our President, Prime Minister, and most of our ministers and government officials live. As the procurement for smart LED lighting came up, the cost provided by all the vendors seemed high. As we all suspect vendors of providing higher costs, we called a meeting to check with them on their logic for higher costs. And what came out was revealing.

The vendors were keeping 20% extra LED light bulbs in inventory as their experience showed that the LED light bulbs fail within a year. With the stringent uptime conditions in the procurement documents, the vendors felt that they need to keep 20% extra LED bulbs in stock. This ran against all the promises of LED bulbs, which were supposed to survive almost forever. So clearly, LED bulbs seem to be in the grip of what appears to be a neo-Phoebus arrangement of reducing the lifespan of a bulb.

On discussing the issue with those who manufacture the LED bulbs, the clarification that came out is that a packaged LED bulb had the LED lighting with a driver. The LED lighting has the promised 30,000 to 50,000 hours of life, but the driver does not. Now that seems to be a technicality that is solvable. If it is the driver that fails, then only the driver should be sold separately for replacement, and it should be possible to swap the drivers in the bulb. That would not only save costs but also the environment.

And that brings us back to Ratan Tata's statement on a promise being a promise. When the LED bulb industry made the promise of the lifespan of an LED bulb, that promise needs to be kept. Whatever the technicalities are, they need to be solved. Else, it gives rise to the suspicion of the resurrection of a new Phoebus cartel.

Such a planned obsolescence strategy of manufacturers is neither good for the consumers, nor for the planet.

A devoted wife had spent her lifetime taking care of her husband. Lately, he had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she stayed by his bedside every single day. When he came to senses, he motioned for her to come near him.

As she sat by him, he said: "You have been with me all through the bad times. When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business failed, you were there. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house, you gave me support. When my health started failing, you were still by my side.

You know what?" "What dear?" she asks gently. "I think you bring me bad luck".

***

An elderly man went to his doctor and said, 'Doc, I think I am getting senile... Several times lately, I have forgotten to zip up.'

'That's not senility,' replied the doctor. 'Senility is when you forget to zip down.'

LAUGHTER THE BEST MEDICINE

Jokes are meant for amusement! It employs comedic vehicles like parody, satire, other material referencing, true people, organizations, religions, regions, country, sexuality, etc., making fun of them in ways that are obviously not true. Some jokes might be offensive to some readers as every individual's sense of humor is different. Our intent is not to offend or cause damage to anyone reading or understanding these jokes. If you trust that jokes could offend you, please do not read them! Despite this warning, if on reading you find, the jokes not to your liking, ignore and move on! Please be aware that they are simply just JOKES!

Tired of the modern world, a businessperson visited a monastery to seek a simpler life. Entering the monastery, he saw monks in simple robes practicing their meditations and tending to the grounds. "Ahh", he thought, "here is a life free from distraction!" But walking into the study halls, he discovered monks staring into laptops. In the wings, he saw monks typing on iPads. Shaken by this intrusion of the outside world into monastic life, he sought out the abbot. The abbot looked up from his phone, greeted the man and asked if he had a question.
"Abbot, I came here expecting a place free from distraction, and yet I see distraction all around. Tell me, is it now acceptable for monks to spend their time answering emails?"
"Of course, provided there are no attachments".

A government man approaches a pig farmer and asks him what he feeds his pigs. The farmer answers: "Oh the pigs? I just feed them whatever scraps I have lying around".
The man shocked, says "Sir that is animal cruelty! I will have to fine you $10,000!"
The next day another official approaches the farmer and asks him what he feeds his pigs.
The farmer replies: "Oh the pigs? Only the finest products sir! Caviar, artisanal cheeses and handpicked salads!"
The man shocked, says "Sir, that food is too rich for them, to get sick! I will have to fine you $10,000!"
The third day another man approaches the farmer again and asks him what he feeds his pigs.
The farmer answers: "Oh the pigs? I just give them 20 bucks each and let them shop themselves".

A man and a woman were asleep like two innocent babies. Suddenly, at 3 o'clock in the morning, a loud noise came from outside. The woman, bewildered, jumped up from the bed and yelled at the man "Holy crap. That must be my husband!"
So, the man jumped out of the bed; scared and naked he jumped out the window. He smashed himself on the ground, ran through a thorn bush and to his car as fast as he could go. A few minutes later he returned and went up to the bedroom and screamed at the woman, "I AM your husband!"
The woman yelled, "Then why were you RUNNING?"
And that's when the divorce fight started…

A lady looking for a turkey couldn't find one big enough. She asked the stock boy "Do these turkeys get any bigger?"
The stock boy replied "No they're dead".

A child from a poor family wanted a bike for Christmas, so he asked his mother. His mother replied, "Well, we cannot afford one so you will just have to go ask the baby Jesus'.
The boy went to his room, got a stack of refill and a pen and began writing: 'Dear Baby Jesus, I have been good all year, can you please give me a bike for Christmas'.
Then he looked at it and thought maybe that was not entirely true, so he tried again. 'Dear Baby Jesus, I have been good for the past week, can you please give me a bike for Christmas'. Then he looked at it again still was not sure if that was true, he tried yet again.
'Dear Baby Jesus, if you give me a bike, I'll be good all year'. But even then, that seemed too hard, so he took a walk outside to think about it. As he was walking, he saw his neighbor's statue of Mother Mary. The boy hopped over the fence, tucked it under his shoulder and ran home to hide it. Then he finally wrote his letter again.
'Dear Baby Jesus, if you ever want to see your mother again, give me a bike!'

I asked my wife, "Where do you want to go for our anniversary?" It warmed my heart to see her face melt in sweet appreciation.
"Somewhere I haven't been in a long time!" she said.
So, I suggested, "How about the kitchen?"
And that is when our fight started…

O" Hey barista, how much for a cup of coffee?" says a customer.
"Two dollars", replies the barista, "refills are free".
"Great. Then I will have a refill", customer answers.

Josh was excited. As his first official duty as a parish priest, fresh out of school, he got to officiate his first funeral for a homeless man with no friends or family. The young priest vowed to give him the most loving send-off, the love he probably missed in this life. The funeral was to be held at a new cemetery across town and this man was the first to be laid to rest there.
New to the area, Father Josh arrived late, but noticed a few workers gathering around the grave opening. The young and enthusiastic priest poured out his heart and soul as he gave his sermon and recited the prayers. His voice was so evocative and powerful that he brought the cemetery workers to tears. When the service was over, the priest thanked the workers for listening and walked to his car.
As he opens the door, Josh hears one worker say another, "I've never seen anything like that before, I've been putting in septic systems for over 20 years!"

WISHING ALL KEEMAT READERS, A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR (Shobhakrith Varsha)

DEMISE – Prof. Narayan Madhukar Rajadhyaksha
(3 May 1957 – 27 January 2023)
President CGSI: 2014 – 2022; Chairman CGSI: 2008 – 2014

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायम् भूत्वा, भविता, वा न भूय:
अजोनित्य: शाश्वतोयं पुराणो, न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे....(गीता 2-20)
जातस्य ही ध्रुवो मृत्यु, ध्रुवम् जन्म मृतस्य च,
तस्माद् अपरिहार्येर्थे, न त्वम् शोचितुमर्हसि.....(गीता 2-27)

'Aathma' is neither born nor does it ever die, nor will it ever cease to be. Primeval, unborn, eternal, it does not decay, nor is killed when the body is slain. Death is certain for all who take birth. Birth is just as certain for all who die...(Gita 2.20/2.27)

It is with deep sorrow we report the demise of Former CGSI President and Principal of New Law College, Mumbai, Prof. N. M. Rajadhyaksha at the age of 65, on Friday, the 27 January, 2023 at Tata Memorial Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, after a brief illness. Prof. Narayan Madhukar Rajadhyaksha was born on 3 May, 1957 in Mumbai, to Madhukar and Sulochana. He is survived by his only daughter Ms. Tanvi.

Prof. N. M. Rajadhyaksha received his L.LB., degree in 1982, his Master's degree in 1984 from University of Mumbai. He had devoted 36 years of his life as an educator in the field of law and pedagogy. He was associated with various Universities and educational institutions.

Prof. N. M. Rajadhyaksha was a highly respected member of CGSI and had contributed to the organization for many years as the Chairman of the Managing Committee and as the President of CGSI. His charming personality with his warm smile, twinkling eyes, and sharp memory will forever remain etched in the hearts of all those who had the pleasure of working with him or had the privilege of being taught by him. His untimely demise is without doubt a shock to all and will be sorely missed by every one of us.

FORM IV (See Rule 8)
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I Ms. Jamna Vardhachary, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

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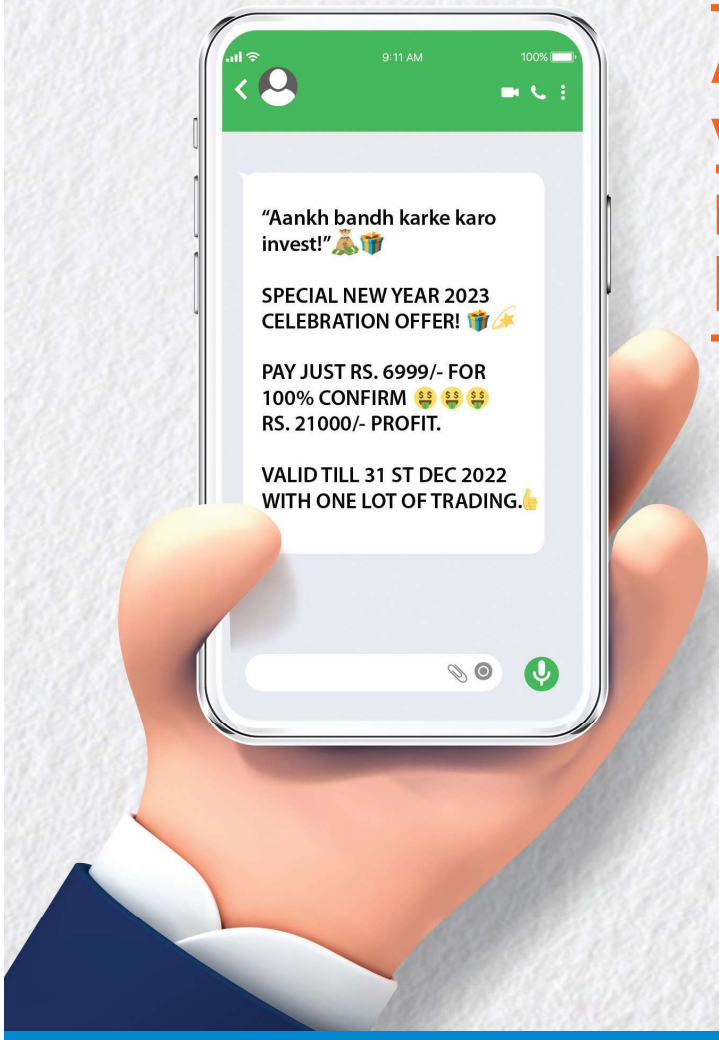

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