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24IC - INDIGENEITY, CULTURAL RIGHTS AND HERITAGES

24IC - 3. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

SYMPOSIUMS: INDIGENOUS HEALTH BEHAVIOUR AND FOOD CULTURE OF TRIBALS: AN ANALYSIS IN PRESENT CONTEXT

CONVENOR: PROFESSOR CHANDRASHREE LENKA

CO-CONVENOR: PROFESSOR SHREERUP GOSWAMI

DISCUSSANT: DR. SURYAMANI PATRO

ABSTRACT

The tribal understanding of health, disease, treatment, life and death varies according to their culture and tradition. They have their own cultural and social practices to treat various illnesses. Their health and sickness are influenced in general by a combination of biological, cultural and environmental factors. Tribal people, who are self-reliant and self-sufficient, have over the centuries developed their own healthcare system based on plants and other items collected from nature. Each tribe has its own system of indigenous healthcare practices based on local plant resources. Indigenous health practices include the use of indigenous plants for healing purposes, which are the best practices that sustain the health of the community. Tribal people's access to forest products and the indigenous healthcare system contributes positively to tribal health. The ecological factor and the uses of indigenous herbs, taboos and superstitions are responsible for determining the healthcare practices of any tribal group. They believe in taboos, spiritual power and faith healing.

Food and health are closely associated with each other. The interface where people interact with the wider food system to acquire and consume foods is defined as the food environment which ultimately relate to the way in which the food is produced, processed, distributed, prepared and consumed. Depending on geographical location, people interface with wild, cultivated and built (i.e., market) food environments. The attributes of foods within these environments influence people's food choices and has the potential to affect their nutritional status. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 promises to end hunger, achieve food and nutrition security, and promote sustainable agriculture among all populations, especially nutritionally vulnerable people. However, achieving this goal is riddled with uncertainty because of the way in which the world currently produces and consumes foods.

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Sustainable food systems are those that aim at achieving food and nutrition security while limiting negative environmental impacts and improving socio-economic welfare of all, including poor and marginalized populations (7). Indigenous foods, accessed as part of traditional food systems and consumed by indigenous people throughout the world, are also derived from natural ecosystems, and are hence, perceived to be sustainable (11). These food systems are reservoirs of unique traditional ecological knowledge, incorporated in both cultivated and wild foods derived from plants, animals, and fungi species that are available from local natural resources. Moreover, indigenous food systems are better adapted to local conditions, more resistant to drought, altitude, flooding, or other extreme conditions, are low resource intense, have low carbon footprints and use environmentally sensitive technologies. Those are also nutrient rich and may have the potential in alleviating hunger and malnutrition. The indigenous food systems are grounded in historical legacy and spirituality that acknowledge the inextricable link of people with their sustainably managed resources, and thus can be utilized to provide sustainable diets and can play a crucial role in achieving SDG 2. The growing interests surrounding sustainable living and environmental concerns have prompted research on tribal communities and their food habits. Thus in the present context, the health behaviour and food culture of tribal people are in a period of transition due to climate change, education, modernization, migration, industrialization and changes in roles and responsibilities of governance. Indigenous health behaviour and traditional food culture need to be preserved for future. With this the present theme is designed to demonstrate the "INDIGENOUS HEALTH BEHAVIOUR AND FOOD CULTURE OF TRIBAL IN PRESENT SCENARIO".

Keywords: Indigenous Health Behaviour; Food, Culture, Nutrition

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