

Celebrating satvik food: Poor people grow rich crops

Organic produce grown by farmers in some districts of Gujarat is safe, healthy and tastier

When we break fast (kept for religious or cultural reasons), we make different kinds of preparations to share and rejoice. But would it not be worthwhile to think about how this celebration can be more meaningful, healthy and at the same time purposeful for not just us, but also for those who grow food.



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Let me talk about the Satvik Traditional Food festival we have been organising every winter at the IIMA campus. This year too, it will be held from December 19 to 21, at the same place but with a difference. We will try to create wider consciousness among consumers about the way food is cultivated and why they should support those farmers who grow organically. The adverse effects of chemical pesticides on soil, water, human health and the entire biodiversity are well known.

Why is it then that even those who can afford to buy organic food don't buy it for their daily consumption? After all, if they broke their fast with organic food recipes cooked in organic oil and in a healthy manner, would they not be healthier and happier?



It is true that there are not many places where they can find round the year regular supply of reliable raw materials. But who is to be blamed for that? Obviously, the consumers.

If there are not enough people to provide a place where organic food can be easily sold, or offer support to store it safely or pool their purchasing power to push up demand to make it sustainable, then surely, we have to blame ourselves.

There are two kinds of organic producers and both deserve support, but some deserve it more than the others. Some producers are those who have re-

cently shifted from intensive to organic farming. There are many of these farmers in Guajrat and elsewhere. But a large number of farmers in the Dangs, Banaskantha, Dahod, Panchmahals, Kutch and other regions take to organic farming out of compulsion.

Without much rain or irrigation, they don't get too many opportunities to use chemicals and thus what they produce is essentially organic.

If consumers realise that in many of these areas the soil is rich in minerals, which our body needs badly, then we could consume these food as nutraceuticals.

Boron found in large proportion in local varieties of rainfed maize is known to reduce the incidence of arthritis pain. Most minor millets and other low value crops like nagli, banti, kodri among others have a high fiber content, not to mention other necessary nutrients. Thus we get safe, healthy and tastier food.

At the same time, money from our pockets goes to people from the economically backward region, who happen to have a rich culture and biodiversity.

Will this not make our consumption a driver of conserving healthy soil, biodiversity, fast disappearing crop varieties and make our life healthier at the same time?

If in the process poverty gets reduced and new supply chains emerge which connect urban consumers with farmers, why not. We will also encourage people who will visit us in December to start thinking about many other ways in which their consumption this year will trigger prosperity for poor people who grow rich crops.

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