Global Dharma
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A Monthly News Digest

Indian Nutritionist Blasts Egg Myth

Many doctors without nutritional training put the fear of "deficiency" into the minds of young vegetarian mothers. "Eat eggs for the sake of your unborn child. Your young vegetarian children should get a few eggs to keep them strong." But the idea that eggs are a nutritious food is a myth of marketing, according to Indian nutritionist A. Srinivasa Murthy. Meneka Gandhi cites his research in the June issue of Vedic Light. According to him, the annual consumption of eggs in India rose from 5 million in the 50's to 10 million in 1993. [Still a remarkably small number, being only 1.23 eggs per year for every 100 people.] The growth was due to the slanted advertising of the National Egg Coordination Committee, the apex of the poultry industry. The image for the masses is: eggs are a "multivitamin capsule (A, E and D), a high protein imperative for growing children, etc."

But none of these claims is true. Each egg, weighing about 100 gms, has 170 calories, is 13.6% protein and 13.3% saturated fats. But 100 gms of dal has 24% protein and only 1.3% of unsaturated fat. One egg contains only 200 I.U. of Vitamin A, while a few drumstick leaves contain 6,000-10,000 I.U. of Vitamin A which is present in far greater quantities in all green vegetables. The Vitamin B content of eggs is microscopic, virtually nil. Vitamin B is found mainly in cereals and certain vegetables. Vitamin D is readily available from the sun. Carbohydrates, the essential energy producing element in all foods, is absent in eggs. The calories in eggs are from fat. Fiber is essential to alimentary health. Eggs have none. The claims for an egg's nutritional value are completely false.

The story doesn't end there. Each egg contains 450-500 mg. of dangerous cholesterol, a harmful amino-acid, melhionine, and is easily subject to

contamination by microbes passing throught the porous shell.

The answer for India's health problems is not eggs. Simply eliminate processed, packaged, powdered, refined foods and oils. Feed your family a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Follow an Ayurvedic lifestyle. Food, say the sages, is the best medicine.

Bharat's Children Under Pressure

Asia's total adoption of the western paradigm for an individual's social development-get a so-called "higher" education, middle-class job and enough money for the luxuries you see on TV-has turned childhood into a living hell for hundred's of thousands of children and teenagers in India. According to a Washington Post report, the Indian government has not succeeded in providing modern public style education. "Last year, 58 percent of all students who took the national standard tenth grade exam failed to make the passing score of 33 percent. In several New Delhi schools, not a single student passed." Cited causes are lack of facilities, bookless classrooms, a teacher shortage and teacher absenteeism without substitutes.

Shakti Sinha, director of education for the New Delhi City schools says, "The middle-class aspirations are growing so rapidly they have realized that the only real ladder to rising economically and socially is through education." The poor view education as an escape from low caste menial work. At exam time parental pressure mounts on inadequately prepared children. A black market of standard test answers has developed. The pathetic fear of failure has launched bizzarre scenarios. Parents surround the schools during exams, throwing in cheat sheets wrapped around rocks. While lawmakers are considering new legislation against cheating, educationists rebuke officials "who view cheating as a law and order problem rather than as an education failure."

While the poor struggle simply to pass, the monied middle and upperclass parents vie for admissions to expensive private schools. The competition for seats is vicious as anxious parents physically force terrified three- year-olds into "interviews" for kindergarten. Admission refusals lead to open fighting between angry parents who turn against each other. Pressures increase after

enrollment-three-year old-toddlers tote nine pounds of books through grueling twelve-hour days. The cycle of competition repeats itself yearly, reaching excruciating intensity during college admission exams, when as few as 2% will be accepted.

Childhood competition engenders combative, win/lose, "me-first/destroy-others" attitudes. Those who "fail" are mentally scarred. Hinduism suffers as religion is eclipsed in the child whose values are restricted to social climbing and material acquisition. It is remarkable that India, so laid back on the surface, is nurturing such a "we are driven" culture in young kids.

Mahabharata-1300 bce in Afghanistan?

Research by Dr. B.G. Siddharth of the BM Birla Science Center shows that the events of the Mahabharata war could have occurred about 1350bce in the region of 35 degrees latitude stretching from Turkey to the Indus Valley. Pitamaha Siddhanta, a text on astronomical principles, gives this date which is corroborated by the ancient Jyotish Vedanga, one of the world's oldest astronomical texts. Siddharth said the total solar eclipse mentioned in the Mahabharata occurred on June 24, 1311 bce, putting the location of the war in present-day Afghanistan, not far from Kabul. Grammarian Panini lived in Afghanistan and linguisitic evidence shows a Sanskritic base ranging from Turkey to the present-day Pakistan. Another piece of evidence was connected with the legend of Ganesha's writing down the Mahabharata. A metal plate depicting the elephant-headed deity holding a quill was been found in Luristan, western Iran, dated to about 1200 bce. Dr. Siddharth said this could explain why no evidence for the epic period had been found in sites like Kurukshetra.

Hotline to Solace-The Voice of Sankara

The Voice of Sankara-a new computerised, fully automated round-the-clock dial-in service that's been on line since April '93 in Madras-is providing comfort to hundreds. Ask Lakshmi, a desperate Madras housewife, who heard that her teenage son was on drugs. She sought refuge by phoning the Voice of Sankara. For three minutes, she listened to some soothing bhajans and a discourse from the Bhagavad Gita. It gave her a sense of peace and an inner strength to deal with her crisis.

Various services in Tamil and Hindi are offered: the religious discourses of the late Sri Chandrashekara Sankaracharaya of the Kanchi Math; the almanac of the day; slokas and explanations from the Gita; questions and answers by Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi (top photo, left) and more.

Subscribers access the system by calling and entering their password with touch tones, then selecting a category to hear a maximum recording of three minutes. The multimedia system, (bottom) developed by M.G. Radhakrishnan and his wife, Meera, (left) of Beta Byte Technologies (P) Ltd, is considered to be the first of its kind outside of the US. The popular service has expanded rapidly with a host system at the monastery in Kanchi. New services include non-member public and international dial-in; "leave a question" (which is later answered); the "Just a Minute Competition" where callers sing or offer their spiritual wisdom for one minute; expanded services in Hindi with recordings from other spiritual teachers; and a mail order cassette and video tape service. The Voice has evolved into a powerful media tool for propogating Hinduism. The enrollment fee is us$100. Additional membership fees are $250/Annual, $500/Life and $1,000/Patron. Voice of Sankara; 32, 2nd Street, East Abhiramapuram, Madras, 600 004, India, Ph: 91-44-499-2933. Article by Prakash M. Swamy

Trends to Watch: Renewable Energy-Good for the Little Guys

An energy revolution is underway that will soon put renewable energy sources -wind, solar, geothermal, biogas, hydrogen-at the forefront of energy production. Such is the conclusion of oil giant Shell International. One spokesman, Peter Kassler, speculates that renewable energies may be competitive with fossil fuels by 2020. He says fossil fuel technologies will probably be unable to lower costs as quickly as will the younger upstarts. Developing countries might leapfrog industrialized nations in energy efficiency. It may take a longer time. But the Shell study group headman, Roger Rainbow says, "It is obvious that there won't be much coal, oil or gas being used in 100 years."

The new view has stimulated debate because a three-year study of the conventional World Energy Council, (WEC) a body of the world's largest private and governmental producers, predicts that fossil fuels will keep on burning in ever larger quantities as new technologies will not mature fast enough to meeting mankind's exploding energy demands. The WEC predicts that renewable sources may account for only 5% of production in the year 2020.

But Shell's report is corroborated by Worldwatch Institute's latest book Power Surge, Guide to the coming Energy Revolution that is already underway. It says that WEC's report is myopically focussed on past fossil fuel and nuclear power infrastructures. Meanwhile Sri Lanka is rapidly producting photovoltaic solar cells. India is installing solar panels throughout its labyrinthine railway system and will soon take the lead in wind power production. Electric cars are being built in Switzerland. While Texas oilmen, German coal mongers and failing nuclear projects plod along the path of giant subsidized energy plants and power grids, peasants in Nicaragua are going to their local hardward store to get small roof solar panels to run their TVs. As production increases, unit prices for small energy devices are dropping. Also, the free-market profit motive in a liberalized global economy is fueling the energy revolution with independent power. It could come as fast as the microcomputer explosion which radically changed the information world of man in less than 10 years. It is up to us: buy energy efficient bulbs; invest in clean power companies; switch to solar at home.

Sri Chinmoy's Yogic Champions

In a feat of yogic mind control as taught by Sri Chinmoy, disciple Antana Locs, (left runner) Canada, won the October 1300 mile New York Ultimate Ultra in 18 days, 18 hours-averaging 65 miles plus daily on a looped, one-mile course. She says, "Where you're `at' inwardly is more important than physical capacity. I try to feel it is God running inside of me. If I think I am running, I feel I am suffering. I consciously offer myself to the higher power and allow it to flow." Disciple and Guinness record holder, Ashrita Furman, set another record recently. He peddled 53 miles backwards-on a unicycle!

Dhyanyogi, 116, Travels On

On August 29th, 1994 Dhyanyogi Madhusudandasji, master of Kundalini Maha Yoga and founder of Dhyanyoga Centers, Inc. in USA, entered Mahasamadhi in Ahmedabad, India, at the age of 116. Born in Bihar, he left home as a child in search of God and found his shaktipat Guru, Saint Parmeshwardas, on Mount Abu, after 37 years of tapas and searching. After a samadhi which lasted for several days, his Guru advised him to awaken the kundalini in sincere seekers. He was later to give shaktipat to 1,000s of aspirants the world over. His spiritual heir, Anandi Ma, along with her husband, Dileepji, continue Dhyanyogi's work from their home in Antioch, California.

Jalota Tours for Hinduism Today

In October and November, our dynamic publisher of Hinduism Today in South Africa, Mr. Mahalingum Kolapen and his wife Satyabhama (right and left in the photo), engineered a concert tour of India's famed devotional singer, Anup Jalota (center). Under the banner of Hinduism Today, Anup Jalota thrilled audiences with his crystalline voice in 20 concerts that benefitted various cultural and religious organizations. It was a remarkable synergy of bhakti, hard work, bliss, culture, religion and community cooperation that augers well for Hinduism's future in Africa.