

Perspective

Vedic Traditions & Scientific Applications

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Abstract

India is a land of temples and pilgrimage centres. It is ruled by many kings of different people and constructed by many religious places and temples and education centres for the betterment of their life and to understand purpose of life so that they upgrade them self and to the higher levels by following the Vedic scriptures and visiting the divine places. Thus, the Hindus have staunch believers of spirituality. They follow traditions and customs, based on Santan Dharma, which are derived from the Vedic scriptures and two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. They are meant for a prosperous, healthy, and spiritual environment in the society which would be free from the infections and crimes. The individual or society who follows systematically experience peace and harmony. In this materialistic world, people have either neglected or have forgotten to adhere to traditions and cultural values, may be due to the lack of understanding of their importance in everyday life. The sudden outbreak of pandemic COVID-19 has compelled them to realize and understand their importance, how our forefathers and sages designed without any flaws, and passed from one generation to another for the wellbeing of people and to protect from unforeseen incidents and epidemic diseases. Modern studies show that there is a strong relationship between spirituality and medicine. There are a large number of traditions and customs in Hindu scriptures. Some of the prominent traditions (such as hygienic and satvik food, eating habits, isolation, cleanliness, healing prayers, healthy children, yagnas, etc.) are systematically analyzed and presented in this paper. All the Vedic traditions are scientifically based and they need to be explored further for understanding the science behind them.

Keywords: COVID19, Hindu traditions, spirituality in medicine, lighting lamp, namaste, masks, cleanliness, healing prayers, vegetarian diet, eating habits, yagnas, cremation.

1. Introduction

India is a resource centre of spirituality in the world. Indian Rishies or Sages received the wisdom through “*Divya Drishti or Farsight*”. The Hindu way of life is based upon the teachings of the Vedic scriptures. The two great epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and holy scriptures the Bhagvad gita¹ and the Srimad Bhagvatam² are sources of inspiration and direction to establish proper civilized society. They led to the formulation of proper rituals and traditions, and cultural and moral values for human society. They are based on the concepts of Dharma, Ahimsa, and Karma. The customs and rituals are eternal and their culture is very rich. They have

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been framed by our great ancestors by considering all aspects of cosmic elements for the welfare of all living entities on this earth planet. These are challenges and eye-openers for scientists to explore Vedic science.

As per the scriptures, the birth and death cycle continue as per the law of Karma.^{3,4} The human form is very rare to get it and that should be utilized for liberation from this materialistic world and to go back to Godhead. These beliefs have made them follow and practice traditional and cultural values, which together give a proper direction to act in a particular way to lead a happy life in harmony with nature and other living entities. The studies have shown that the science of spirituality has a psychological influence on the behaviour and self-confidence of patients and the relation between spirituality and medicine cannot be ruled out.⁵

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The natural calamities, droughts, floods; and cyclones environment pollution, water crisis, and the regular epidemic diseases are consequences of the ruthless activities of humans in the name of civilization and industrialization of a country. The drunken people can enjoy themselves, but excessive drinking is harmful to self and others. Because of one drunken driver may kill innocent passengers and outside standing vehicles and other people and their properties. Professor Robin Room, Director, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, University of Melbourne writes in a given year 367 people Australians die because of another's drinking and 13,600 are hospitalized etc.³⁹

It is believed the regular epidemic diseases such as Ebola virus, Zika virus, Chikungunya, Plague, H1N1, Swine flu, and the present Coronavirus were caused due to the merciless activities killing of animals for consumption of unhealthy meat, beef, pork, and chicken, etc. These diseases are mostly originated from slaughter centres and unhygienic places from different parts of the world. The present dreadful Coronavirus which was originated from the Wet market, Wuhan, China, spread globally and cause pandemic diseases and claimed millions of lives of innocent people.^{6,7}

To save people from the deadly COVID1, the most of the world leaders-imposed lockdown in their countries to avoid gathering of people and prevent the virus, it is suggested to maintain social distance, cleaning hands regularly with sanitizer or soap water, and use a mask to cover mouth and nose, whenever one goes outside and the infected people are put in quarantine (Isolation) for 14 days. These types of precautionary measurements saved and cured a lot of people from COVID positive patients.

The impact of lockdown is so powerful that it has touched the hearts of many people in the world and cautioned them to follow ancient traditional values which were forgotten or neglected intentionally or unintentionally in the name of human civilization and the development of society. The basic concepts of moral and ethical values such as neatness and cleanliness; respect all living and non-living bodies are taught to all children right from primary schools too, apart

from the values they learn from their families. But people have either forgotten or not understood the basic fundamental laws and concepts taught in our schools, colleges, or may be our education system has failed to inculcate these values through texts and curriculum.

Some believe the Hindu cultural values are too complicated to perform and to understand its procedures, and implications may not be scientifically proved. They are perfect and intact. No one can find out any flaws and shortcomings. During ancient period people were following Vedic culture and rituals relentlessly and passed from one generation to other, which yielded peace and harmony in the Hindu families thus the Vedic culture was rich in the world. Western people used to come to India to learn in Takahashila and Nalanda Universities.

But the present generation people are unable to understand or might not have reached that level of consciousness to realize what is written in the literature. As a result, the people are materialistically oriented and following unethical values for corrupt practices and lust for power that is prevailing in the present society causing violence and unrest in the world.

Now we can see during this pandemic COVID19 the Government authorities of all countries are educating people, the basic principles of cleanliness, washing hands and feet periodically, social distances, stay at home and quarantine for COVID positive patients, etc, which are basics and common practices in Hinduism. Some of the Hindu traditions and customs and practices in daily life are studied and presented below.

2. Traditions & Customs

(a) Greetings - Namaste

Namaste or Namaskar is a special type gesture to greet each other when two people meet each other. Every living entity has a soul and a super soul. It implies "I bow to the Supreme Lord in you". It means "The Supreme Lord in me recognizes the Supreme Lord in you". In other words, two souls are coming to unite for fruitful discussions. Namaste is usually spoken with a pleasant voice by slightly bending and hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointing upwards, thumbs close to the chest. This mode of greetings avoids physical contact of persons and stop spreading infections. It is being followed by most people in the world after the outbreak of Coronavirus.



Fig 1 : Namaste

(2) Hands & Feet

The well-known concept is "Cleanliness is next to Godliness".



Fig.2 Cleaning Hands and Feet

One needs to be pure internally and externally. Purity needs to be in the heart as well as on the surface of the human body. The yoga and meditation yield internal purity whereas the cleaning hands and feet regularly with soap water or sanitizer leads to external purity. One needs both moral purity and personal hygiene. Cleaning your hands (Fig.2) and feet with regular soap and with water is a highly effective way to stop the spread of germs and bacteria; and removes fungal infections if any.

(3) Shoes & Socks

One must remove shoes and socks before entering the house and temples. (Fig.3) One must be pure of the purest form to enter into the sanctity place at religious places. The Supreme Lord in Bhagavad-gita says



Fig 3 Remove shoes



one out of one million will reach Me. Thus one must be pure internally as well as externally. The basic thing bringing shoes and socks odor inside means allowing soiled things and bacteria into the house or temples. It is a courteous way in respecting the house and temple to keep floor free from fungus and harmful substances come along with shoes. It is a strict custom in Hindu families to clean your hands and wash your feet and legs before entering in to the house (Fig.3) and clean hands before taking food. One must wash hands and feet after coming from toilets. Rest room shoes or slippers must be avoided to use in the houses. In some of the of the orthodox families, outside cleaners and maid servants are also discouraged. One can see these customs in some of traditional Brahmin houses that they clean their houses, utensils and wash their clothes by themselves. The way one cleanses one's own body, one can clean one's own rest rooms. If the anatomy of human body parts is not secret, humans could have appointed maid servants to clean those parts also.

Visitors are not allowed into ICU of hospitals with their own shoes. As per the reports, the during the Coronavirus period in *Italy*, most of the patients in the hospitals are infected by the doctors, nurses and other medical staff, they were carrying the contagious Coronavirus through shoes¹³. These small values could have saved people from death. Keeping your hands and feet clean and dry is an effective way to prevent these health issues.

(3) Rangloi

It is the general practice in Hindu families that everyday morning, the front portion of the house, the open place is swept and cleaned with water; and especially in rural areas, they use even cow dung to wipe out dirt and insects. Before performing morning and evening prayers, it is mandatory in Hindu families to clean and mop the houses every day, using detergents to remove dirt, dust, and insects for a hygienic atmosphere in the house.



Fig.3 B . Rangoli

The way one cleanses one's own body, one should clean one's restrooms. If the anatomy of human body segments is not concealed, humans could have appointed maidservants to clean those parts also.

(4) Lighting Lamp

We are in a world of darkness. The light leads us from darkness to enlightenment. It symbolizes the presence of goddess Laxmi and goddess Sarswathi.⁸



Fig 4. Lighting a Lamp

- a) Lighting lamp is a symbol of truth and wisdom and increases the worship
- b) Lighting lamp in the morning and evening before the deities in the house gives peace, happiness, and positiveness in the house.
- c) In any organization, a program starts with lighting a lamp.
- d) Diyas are lit in during dusk and place in front of the door to purify the house and air to welcome goddess Laxmi in the evening and prevent insects and reptiles entering the house.
- e) According to the Science of Spirituality lighting lamps with pure ghee is more satvic (mode of goodness) when compared to oil. The pure ghee produces more satvic vibrations and it spreads longer distance, the satvic effect is more predominant on the atmosphere when it stops burning than the oil used lamps.⁹ When ghee comes in contact with fire, the atmosphere becomes a more sacred and pleasant smell, and it removes diseases from the place. A house without a lamp is considered to be a ghost place.

(5) Early to bed and early to rise

This is a well-renowned thought.¹⁰ *Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy and wealthy.* One should sleep early and wake up early. The early morning period is considered to be an auspicious time known as *Braham Murtha* nearly one and a half-hour time before the Sunrise.¹¹ During this time the environment is very clean and birds are cheerful for waiting to see

the rising Sun. It will have a considerable effect on the body and mind when one practices Meditation and Yoga. The early morning sun radiations will keep the body fit and healthy. These are basic principles in Gurukuls and Vedic schools to learn scriptures and chanting Vedic hymns during Brahmamurthi time. The power of retentivity is very high; and students would be sharp and bright if one utilizes this golden period for studies. Another advantage is, that one feels the day is longer.

The human body requires at least four to five hours of sleep so that the body is not overburdened with conscious activities and concentrates on unconscious activities to rejuvenate for the next day's work. The regular night shift jobs in present MNCs may not be advisable for employees in regards to health issues.

(6) Bath

The human body temperature varies from 36.1⁰C to 38.3⁰C (under extreme situation it may go up to 40⁰ C). Under these conditions dynamics of various parts of the body release sticky oil through oil and sweat pores of the skin which accumulate bacteria and other microorganisms with dirty smell. It gives irritation and suffocation to the self and unpleasant to others who are standing nearby. To keep a healthy body and hygienic one must take bath with soap preferably using hot water that removes the dust particles and bacteria. As per the scriptures: ²

- a) One must take bath at least twice a day i.e. morning and evening. It is mandatory to take bath before preparing the food and worshipping God.
- b) Once taken bath you should not touch others who did not take bath.
- c) After coming from a barbershop and funeral, one must take bath.
- d) One should not touch anything or anybody in a home without taking bath
- e) One should touch others who are in isolation. These are further discussed in detail in sections 13 and 14.

(7) Clothes – Decency

Fresh or new clothes make you feel pure and happy. The used clothes generally will have dust particles or dirty oil layer due to one's sweating and bacteria from our own body, and from outside. The body oil and sweat, other junk generated from glands reach out through the oil and sweat pores of the skin. They cause skin infections and unpleasant smell to self as well as to nearby people. Once the unwashed clothes and bed sheets especially pillow covers are used, again and again, the sweat rubs off the bacteria and it gets multiplied which can cause a stinky

smell and potentially skin irritations or cause fungal infections. Thus, it is suggested to have a bath at least twice in a day i.e., morning and evening.

The conservative families avoid giving dirty clothes to washer men, thinking they mix and boil with other's infectious clothes. Either they were calling washer men to homes or washing clothes by themselves only. Washing machines are better to avoid spreading outside infections. One should generally avoid giving clothes to laundrymen or dry cleaners unless there is an emergency of important dresses.¹²

The old clothes must be periodically disposed of to avoid the growth of germs. In the past, people used to have a lot of manual work in the fields and outside, thus new clothes were generally preferred to purchase during festivals and other occasions. The trend still is going on to wear on important festivals. Turmeric powder is sprinkled or few dots are placed on new clothes to kill bacteria. Special woollen or silk clothes kept separately are used for devotional activities.

The types of new clothes or dresses we wear affect our behaviour, attitude, personality, mood and confidence, and even the way we interact with each other. In Hindu rituals, the dress code is the most important attribute for both males and females. Specific dresses are meant to wear on specific functions during rituals and marriages. To have proper decency, dress codes are also observed in some of the educational institutions and organizations. The indecency or sexy dresses will put her self-others in problems. Most of the crime rates are alarming problems in the world because of dresses of women clothes. The difference between the human and animal is that we wear clothes they do not wear, because we are intelligent. Those who do not wear clothes they are worse than animals.

(9) Tilak

Tilak or Tika is a religious mark on the forehead that represents as Hindus. The location on the forehead is of immense significance for both males and females. Applying Tilak is mandatory for females and especially for married people. Human bodies are energy possessing bodies, where energy continuously flows within the

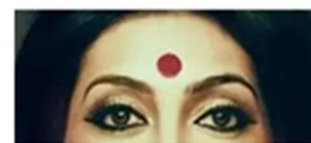


Fig.5. Tilak

body; and between the body and surroundings and vice versa. This energy flows through Nadis (Astral nerves)¹³ distributed through the body. All these Nadis will meet at a divine point on the forehead between two eyebrows and above the nose or in other words the whole body is controlled from this point. The point is also known as Ajna Chakra (it is one of the seven chakras).¹⁴ This symbolic location is very sensitive and more powerful for two reasons - 1) negative energy directed at this point, passes through the body and cause damage to the body and

imbalance to take place within in the body, 2) positive energy flows out the body from this point to protect as well as destroy harmful incidents.

It is believed that the Lord Shiva's third eye or sixth sense is located at this point¹². The scriptures say when Lord Shiva opens the third eye; mahapralayam or disastrous events may take place in the world.

The wrinkles on the forehead imply a person's facial expressions. Applying a tilak, ensures happiness, comfortable and peaceful, and gives self-confidence and appears to be a pure Hindu devotee.

(10) Bangles

The bangles and earrings are God gifted ornaments for ladies. The wrists are always in regular movements. The bangles on the wrists are in constant friction with each other which increases the blood circulation in the body. They control high blood pressure and recharge the energy levels of the body. The circular-shaped bangles revert the electricity which is passing through them.³²



Fig.6. Bangles

A function called "Seemantham" is arranged during the 7th month of pregnancy. The mother is gifted with various types of Bangles and Sarees. The tinkling sound of bangles of a mother, helps the child to develop the baby's audibility during the pregnancy period (more details in section18). The various types and colours of bangles have different significances. Gold bangles yield fortune Red colour gives energy, etc. The sound vibrations of bangles protect the ladies from negative energy sources. Thus, Hindu girls are mandatory to wear bangles. The colourful of bangles and tilak on the forehead represent they are married and respectable women and mothers in a society. Those representations reduce the crime rate in society. The western culture of ladies which is more luring to opposite gender causing more crime rates in the world.

(11) Healthy Children

Keeping in view of the healthy children and safety of pregnant ladies, the Indian government has generously sanctioned six months of maternity leave for employees so that they get proper rest in the home, and to be away from infections and virus-like COVID19 in offices and at other places

and a risk factor for child and mother for daily commuting, thus country will be free from birth defective or special needs children³³

Proper care and service to the pregnant lady and providing nutritious food daily, the happy joyful environment in the house will have a great impact on the mother as well as the child in the womb. Music is divine. In traditional families, classical music, divine slokas, and moral stories are recited and audiotapes are played before pregnant ladies. The rhythmic sound vibrations would give pleasure to the mother as well as pass on to the child which stimulates auditory senses and improves the reflexes of the child. It is believed, the type of music she listens during pregnancy would formulate the personality of the child when she or he grows up. The soft music develops calm and quite whereas loud music leads to an aggressive child. The loudness of sound also affects the sense organs, it is recommended to keep the volume around 50-60 decibels as other sound vibrations such as heartbeats, the gurgling of the tummy.³⁴ The alarming sound vibration due to the regular movement of trains and excessive labour work or activities for pregnant ladies may have adverse effects on the child and sometimes she may have a deformed child.

(12) Pure Devotees

The scriptures reveal, the human form is very rare to get it and its purpose is for self-realization and to go back to Godhead.¹ To achieve this realization, one has to be a pure devotee. The conditions for a pure devotee are: one should be in the mode of goodness (Satvic) and should follow four regulative principles^{1,2} -1) No eating meat, fish, or eggs. 2) No gambling, 3) No use of intoxicants and 4) No illicit sex. They are said to be satvic pure devotees. (discussed in detail in section 21)

If such saintly people are admitted to the hospital, they may be termed as Ideal Spiritual Patients (ISP). It is believed that their health conditions are better than others as they are satvic people. They are physically as well as mentally strong and always be in a transcendental state irrespective of any happiness or sorrowfulness.⁵ They realize the physical pain is due to their law of karma and they accept it as per the Lord's wish.

3. Prayers - Healthy Environment

Prayers and deity worships are two divine activities of their daily schedule during the Sunrise and the Sunset periods. Their prayers are for the welfare of all living entities, for self as well as for family members. They worship *Trimurti, Four vedas, Five cosmic elements, Six seasons, Seven rivers, Eight directions and Navagrahas and Dashvatharas* (Sanskriti Song)¹⁵ for providing optimum conditions for the liveable, healthy and prosperous environment on the Earth for living entities and some other prayers for Lord Shiva to destroy evils and curb diseases and

negative energy prevailing in the premises. The deities radiate positive energy and make free from miscreants. A house without a God's portrait, daily prayers, and lighting lamps are considered to be non-inhabitant or ghost house. These prayers will bestow happiness and make them psychologically strong.

(1) Healing Mantras - Spirituality and Medicine

As per Hindu traditions, when people are under a critical situation in fighting for health and illness, or fear of threat and death or to protect from epidemic diseases or no hope on medicines, the final remedy for them is to plead the God of medicine "Dhanwantari" and the God of Destroyer "Lord Shiva" through a recitation of powerful mantras :¹⁶

- Maha Mrityunjaya, Mantra
*Om tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim puṣṭi vardhanam ;
urvā rukamiv bandhanān mṛtyor mukṣīya mā'mṛtāt .*
- Hare Krishna Mantra
*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare .
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.*
- Vishnu Sahasranama Stohram.

They may get survived as per their Law of karma. In order to give the importance of Indian medicines, the Indian Government has declared that Dhanwantari Trayodashi every year would be celebrated as "National Ayurveda Day"¹⁷

"Spirituality and medicine are closely associated and they are indelible; the quality of life of spiritual patients is overall better than non-spiritual patients; the need for the medical community to support the spiritual lives of patients. Do Spirituality and Medicine Go Together?" as reported by Michel Balboni and Tracy Balboni in their article.⁵

(2) Navagrahas- Effects on Human health and Peace

Hindus firmly believe astrology, the study of nine planets (Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, and Ketu) forecast the effectiveness of planets on the earth atmosphere and the lives of individual people.¹⁸ The interplanetary motion reflects some rays on the earth which influences the lives of people. The body derives energy from the Sun, any small changes affect the energy levels of the human body. It controls digestion and health, and healing process; Moon controls the mind and emotions; Mars(Mangal) controls blood circulation and diseases; Mercury(Budh) influences intelligence and grasping abilities; Jupiter (Brihaspathi, Guru) is a

powerful symbol of spirituality, fortune and causes hurdles and diseases when it comes to different positions; Venus (Shukra) is benevolent, brings wealth, honor and fame; Saturn (Shani, son of Sun) creates most of the problems in life, fear, sorrow and diseases, sometimes he gives happiness also; Rahu and Ketu are shadow planets, they are also like Shani cause problems. Thus together all these planets control entire living bodies on the earth.

Shani Shingnapur is a famous place in Maharashtra, India, where no house has doors but only door frames are found in the house. Still no theft takes place and no crime rate since centuries. The Shnai temple known as Jagrut temple, meaning the Shani god resides alive and He punishes anyone who attempts to theft from houses. The place is peace full and villagers are happy.

(3) Panchanga Shravanam

As per the tradition, kings in the ancient period and the present government authorities would request astrologers to recite Panchanga Shravanam (recitation of the yearly calendar) on the day of the new year festival, Ugadi (which occurs during the last week of March or the first week of April every year), to know the predictions, the effects of planetary motion on the earth particularly seasonal rains for agriculture, human health, diseases natural calamities, the safety of the people and security of the country, etc. Based on those predictions they take precautionary measures and allocate budget accordingly for the coming financial year.

The astrological effects are mainly due to the gravitational fields of various planets which are moving around the sun in our solar system. The impacts are prominent when they approach and deviate from the earth and when they lie on the same line. The Moon's gravitational pull on the earth is the main cause of the rise and fall of ocean tides. On no Moon day (Amavasya) is considered to be as inauspicious¹⁹, causes negative effects whereas on full Moon day (Poornima) is considered to be as auspicious, yield positive effects, these are visible human body and human behaviour. The solar flares of sun, electric and magnetic field of planets have also critical influences on the earth's atmosphere, climatic and seasonal changes.²⁰

People worship regularly, especially on every Saturday, would visit the temples and perform prayers to minimize the effects of Planets (Nava Graha). Thus considering these effects on the human body and mind, people give offerings to them before any auspicious or religious ceremony.

(4) Yagnas

A Yagna is a powerful ancient method of ritual to satisfy Supreme Lord Vishnu by reciting sacred Vedic verses through the fire of



Fig 7 . Yagnas

God (Agni) as a medium.²¹ It is a fire pit in which different materials like, pure ghee, cereals, navratnas, camphor are added such that they all get merged with cosmic elements.

- a) Yagnas yield bliss and benediction for the welfare of the members and remove bad karmas of individuals and society.
- b) Oaths are taken before the Fire God (Agni) are authentic and He stands as witness. Such rituals are mandatory during marriage functions.
- c) Maha yagam (large number of yagnas together) are performed for the welfare people and to minimize the effects caused by natural calamities such as drought, cyclones, and floods, etc.
- d) The significance of yagnas is studied by a team of research scientists under CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) conducted several experiments to observe the effect of yagnas.²² It is noticed that Particulate Matters 2.5 and 10 in the environment are found to be reduced the PM level after the yagna or hawan is performed. The results have shown that these yagnas reduced indoor microbes, bacteria, fungi, and pathogens (viruses or microorganisms that cause diseases). Thus Yagnas purify the environment of the place and drive away infections and negative energy from that place.

4. Vegetarian Diet

Hindus perform several rituals that are based on the mode of goodness (sattvic nature). To be in a mode of goodness one has to follow vegetarian food (plant-based food includes dairy products and honey). It is one of the basic conditions of four regulative principles of a pure devotee who are eligible to perform rituals and go back to Godhead. They are termed as pure devotee.

The Bhagavad Gita (BG17. 8-10)¹ says, there are three types of foods based on three types of modes of material nature (Gunas):

- a) Foods prepared in the mode of goodness (Sattvaguna) are pure and sweet and increases the duration of life, increase strength, happiness, and satisfaction.
- b) Foods that are bitter, too sour, salty, pungent, hot belong to the people of the mode of Passion (Rajoguna).
- c) Foods cooked more than three hours before taking food is tasteless, decomposed and unclean, such people are mode of ignorance (Tamoguna).

The three types of material nature determine the behaviour, nature, and health conditions of people.

The scriptures say the soul carries good and bad deeds to the next birth. To progress in the next birth, one should not do any misdeeds. As per the law of karma³, slaughtering and consuming

animal meat are considered to be bad activities. Despite this, some people who are in the mode of passion and mode of ignorance do take animal meat as a regular diet, however, they undergo austerities as per their karma either in this birth or next birth.

The satvic vegetarian food has many merits than that of a non-vegetarian diet, in terms of human behaviour, ethical and moral values, and health problems in everyday life. To maintain good health, proper regular diet, and to have good health habits, and to be away from epidemic diseases and infections and environmental effects people are shifting towards vegetarian diet.²³⁻²⁴ Sometimes medical doctors also advise patients to take a vegetarian diet to avoid complications. Dr. N Gopal krishan (CSIR) scientist and Dr. T P Sethu Madhvan, Physician in an article in Mathribhumi Daily (April 25, 1999) pointed out that the daily requirement of energy for a normal human being is 2400 calories. The vegetarian food contains carbohydrates fats and proteins and the variety of minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, iron, zinc, etc are plenty available in grains, dal, vegetables, and fruits, which form healthier food. These are sufficient to produce the required energy for humans. One may avoid animal food which causes contagious diseases to human beings.²⁵

Ayurveda recommends to respect eating habits, timings, avoid overeating, processed packaged foods, and reduce fried items cold foods, and cold drinks, Thus traditional Vedic diets improve the immunity and make them as satvic people.²⁶

(1) Eating Habits

a) Sitting on floor

Earlier days, people were comfortably taking food by sitting on the floor. They were feeling healthy and maintaining a good physique. There are many benefits such as digestion, blood circulation and reduces muscle and joint pains. They sit on the floor with crossed legs (Sukhasana) before the meal plate (Leaf plate) and move the body front and back to take food. These repeated movements will activate abdominal muscles, which increase the secretion of stomach acids and allow food to digest faster. It is said that Sukhasan increases blood circulation and evenly distributed in the body. This posture reduces the muscle and joint pains in the legs and gives flexibility in the body and feel you feel comfortable.²⁷ This is still prevailing in traditional families.



Fig.8. Eating on Floor

It is not advisable to have meals always on the dining table. It may not add any benefit to the body except giving comfortable and adding richness to your home.

b) Leaf Plates

The general practice in India, people generally take food on leaf plates such as on banana, dhaka, betel palm and teak plant leaves by sitting on the floor. They are called “Pattal or Vistarlu”. They are hygienic and biodegradable. In some rituals it is mandatory to offer food on leaf plates for Brahmins. The conventional leaf plates are superior to plastic plates.



Fig.9 Leaf Plates

WHO says plastic papers are made of chemical substances like Melmine, Polypropylene, Bisphenol A(BPA), when hot food comes in contact with plastics, chemicals are leached into the food. These chemicals are absorbed by human body and gradually results in diseases, like breast cancer and heart diseases and others.²⁸

The most preferable plates are Gold, Silver or Copper. But they are unaffordable to middle class people, one can choose stainless steel plates which are less expensive as well as less harmful. However, the conventional leaf plates are superior to plastic plates.²⁹ One can manufacture leaf plates and leaf cups.

c) Chitrahuti

It is considered that whatever is getting to us because of God’s Grace and our Karma, be it food or clothes or anything. In some regions especially Brahmins sprinkle water around the food plates before taking the food by chanting Vedic mantras offering to the Supreme God, who is a fire of digestion residing in living beings, requesting for proper digestion of food with upward and downward of energy (BG 15.14)¹. This process is known as Chitrahuti. Another reason is that sprinkling of water around the plate does not allow insects or germs to enter and mix with food that gets impure and infectious.

d) Buffet System

In the present days, we come across another type known as the Buffet system. The eating habits are neither recommended nor preferred anywhere in Hindu scriptures. This western culture is prevailing in the society for the past four to five decades.

It is not advisable for a health-conscious point of view, and in more philosophically the *rich man becomes a beggar with a bowl in front of a caterer*.

(2) Cremation

He who takes birth must take death also. In Hindu rituals, it is customary to do the last rites by consigning the body to fire. The human body is composed of five cosmic elements earth, fire, water air, and sky. The Hindu cremations are directed towards returning the body to these elements by burning it. It is the method for the final disposition of a dead body through fire.³⁰ The dead body is kept on a pyre (wooden structure or electric cremator) and then it is set on fire with rituals so that all parts of the body get burnt and no pathogens survive at that high temperature of the fire and ensure that all remnants are wiped out and preventing it from being a source of spread of any infections and diseases. To offer the dead body to fire (Agni) with earnest prayers signifies to purify and lead the individual soul for better and brighter life, and release of spirit that gives a feeling of detachment from the loved ones.



Fig.10. Cremation

In general, cremation is preferred over burial for space constraints, and the gradual decomposition of the whole body is not seen clearly, and the possibility of infections and insects around the place. The ancestors have meticulously planned, the cremation of one body takes nearly one tree, it seems in the past one Hindu person used to plant at least three trees during one's whole life span on special occasions.

On the third day, the ashes and bones are collected and mixed any one of the Indian holy rivers, preferably the Ganges river. The family members are allowed to enter the house after taking bath to prevent in spreading of bacteria or viruses if any on their bodies or clothes. Even the sons of the deceased will cut hairs and go for a bald head as per rituals. This cremation procedure is being followed in foreign countries also, especially recently the USA government allowed the cremation procedure for dead bodies of innocent people who lost their lives during the COVID 19 crisis due to the space constraints and spreading of infections.

(3) Isolation

Isolation means Sutak (Sutakam), in other words, it is a type of untouchability. In Hinduism, sutak is aimed towards the purification of Atma (Soul). At heart, humans are uncleaned. One must be pure both physically and spiritually. The family member must stay for 10 days in isolation at the time of the birth of a child as well as at the death of a person in the house. If parents are departed, the children stay in isolation for 12 days whereas wives are in isolation for 10 days. These details are well narrated in Sri Garudapuran³¹ which is generally recited during the isolation period if a person is demised in the house. In orthodox families, four days of

isolation is observed for ladies during the menstruation period. They come to normal and will be allowed to interact with family members after taking a head bath.

Thus, the concept of isolation was introduced in Vedic literature. It is nothing but, what we are calling now as the social distance to avoid shaking hands, staying, and sleeping together which would prevent in spreading deadly Coronavirus.

(4) Masks

It is an etiquette to use masks or put a hand before the nose and mouth while speaking with someone so that droplets will not fall and cause infections to others. The main traditional reason is the concept of Ahimsa, one should neither kill nor eat and inhale the air which contains germs or insects. This is still strictly followed in Jainism and orthodox families. They wear masks, especially during the Sunset period.



Fig. 10 B. Jains use Mask

(5) Neem Leaves

The Neem trees are abundantly seen in India. It is a medicinal plant, known as the divine tree and Village Pharmacy tree. They increase the fertility of the soil, the neem oil, or neem water is used as a pesticide. The twigs are used for cleaning teeth, the leaves reduce the boils, rashes, and wounds, they are placed near and under the patient as insect repellent who is suffering from chickenpox. The leaves are placed at the entrance of a door to protect harmful insects, viruses, and bacteria.



Fig 11. Neem Leaves

(6) Killing of Animals

All living creatures are part and parcel of supreme Lord. Even they have equal rights to survive on this earth. There is no theory, no law and no prayer to kill other living entities. Killing animals and selling their meat products for consumption is one of the easiest and lucrative businesses in the world. No proper scrutiny on their products

It is strong belief in Hinduism, killing animal is a misdeed activity and it is a curse which leads to bad karma. As per the Newton's 3rd law, one day there would be a revolt they chase humans for retaliation; and as per the law of Karma he (Killer) has to face the situation either in this

present birth or next births. We find many examples in the literature how people are affected by the curse

(7) Eating Meat

As per Hindu customs killing animals is a crime and eating meat is a double crime. The designated place for dead bodies of humans and animals is graveyard. But people are buying meat (pork, beef etc.) from unhygienic slaughter centres, keeping in houses that too in refrigerators, then frying them as mouth-watering dishes and finally eating and storing in human body for digestion. In this context lot of questions arise:



Fig 12. Meat Shop

- a) Is human body a graveyard?
- b) Does the anatomy of human body adjust with foreign material?
- c) Does it not create risk to human health?
- d) Why doctors do not recommend non vegetarian food to patients and old age people?
- e) Why non vegetarian food is not served in the temples? .
- f) Why don't they eat agro products which also give same amount of energy?

“If you eat meat, that animal of that meat will eat you”¹⁴. As per the law of karma eating animal food is bad deed. To overcome this one has to do lot of positive deeds either in this birth or next births.^{9, 14} The first basic condition in spirituality is violence (Himsa), is not allowed and the meat eaters are not eligible to become pure devotees

(8) Carpets

Carpets beautify the houses and palaces that illustrate richness. Despite the glaring appearances, the carpets are generally avoided in traditional houses for health hazards associated with allergic, coughing, wheezing and skin infections due to i) accumulation of dirt, dust, mites, particle pollutants ii) growth of bacteria due to the shoes, and pets paws iii) falling of eatable items when taking food over the carpet. iv) infants and children get easily infected especially due to the chemicals and adhesive used in color combinations are made with volatile organic compounds v) these pollutants may become airborne while walking and cleaning, may cause allergic vi) they are not easily washable. The houses and hotels appear to be multi-colored with carpets and curtains but a lot of risk factors in terms of health.^{35,36}

(9) Bats

The bats are blood suckling or harmless wild creatures but they are important to our ecosystem because they pollinate the crops otherwise they get ruined. They eat mosquitoes. They generate a deadly virus once if they are infected. There are a lot of myths about bats, if a bat enters the house, it is considered to be an omen and saddening news in a family and the house has to be vacated and one can return after performing rituals.³⁷ One can see the repercussions and chaotic situations, spreading of Coronavirus for eating the meat of bat at Wuhan, China.



Fig.13 Bats

(10) Alcohol

Taking alcohol is injurious to health is a well-known noble thought, but difficult to make alcohol free country. Everyone knows regular drinking causes health problems. The consumption of alcohol and non-vegetarian food does not give any environment in society. In spirituality, they are called impure devotees. They neither go to temples nor attend religious functions, on the day when they drink and eat meat.

In order to avoid the problems faced by the people during the lockdown period of Covid19, the government authorities had relaxed some of the rules for the benefit of the business people and daily labours so that they get employment. The permission to open the liquor shops had a negative impact and the purpose of lockdown, social distance to curb the virus are futile, which have been strictly monitored by the emergency service providers and security guards, that efforts are null and void. There were a lot of questions in minds of people like it is not necessary that the revenue would be generated only from wine shops. There are many other avenues also.

Do they not survive without liquor at least in the lockdown period? The long queues in front of the wine shops led a bad impression as “Are they Starving or Feasting?” The excessive drinking of alcohol adversely affects health conditions such as cancer of mouth throat, liver, heart failure, and brain damage, etc. and affects the immune system.³⁸ While some people may have multiple visible effects like slurred speech, vision impairment lack of coordination, etc. Professor Robin Room, Director, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, University of Melbourne writes in his article titled “*My drinking, your problem: alcohol hurts non-drinkers too.*” It is not only harmful self but it badly affects others such as family life, bad moments or may lead to diverse, financial loses, violence in the family and friends in the society or offices, a risk factor for co-passengers while driving and in some occasions, it causes a nuisance in the street.

The article says in a given year 367 people Australians die because of another's drinking and 13,600 are hospitalized etc. This report attracted internationally; the World Health organization decided to measure alcohol's harm to others as a major strand in its Global Strategy to reduce harmful alcohol consumption.³⁹

5. Conclusion

Ancestors were methodically practicing the traditions and customs for a healthy environment for the family and to the society. Unfortunately, those who do not understand their inherent meanings insulted and laughed at the followers and used to make counter-arguments. As a result, the rituals are being disrespected, decreasing, and discarding one by one for the fear of being isolated and forced to sit blindly in one place for a few days. Some others are tending towards simple rituals of the western culture.

The procedures of rituals laid down in Hinduism are appropriate and authentic to the society till today. In the present scenario of Covid19, some of these traditions are being implemented and educating people through social media as precautionary steps to wipe out the Coronavirus.

The industrialization and solid wastage, usage of plastic materials, global warming unhygienic food items, clean water, slaughter centers, killing of animals and viral infections, terrorism, nuclear as well as chemical weapons, and human values and healing of the earth, etc are some of the global challenges in 21st century for all countries.

The Coronavirus has exposed the success of science and technology as no medicine or vaccine is yet available to cure the patients, but it manifested the Indian traditional values social distances (isolation), cleaning hands, and healing prayers saved a lot of people from death. Thus to preserve harmony with nature, a healthy environment in society, adaptability to a vegetarian diet; and to reduce infections, one should not abandon to practice Vedic traditions and customs which are eternal in the nature and incorporation of spirituality in medicine improves the psychological status of patients. Thus, there is a need for the scientific exploration for Vedic traditions.

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