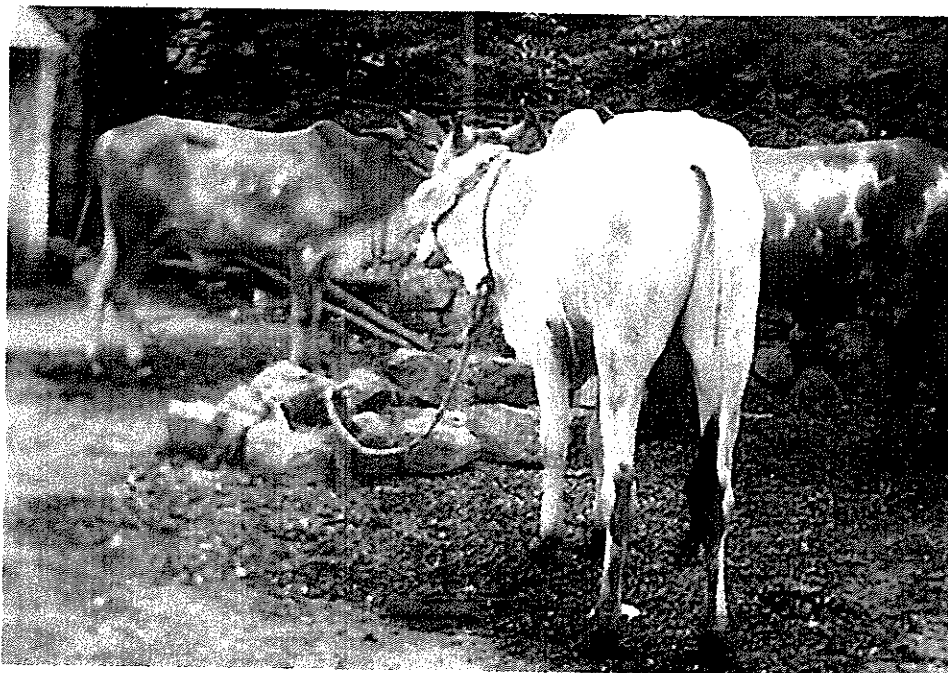


AGRICULTURE AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE : A DIALOGUE NEED OF THE HOUR

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Domestication after hunting and gathering food products by hit and trial methods started the process of stability in agriculture by our forefathers. However, migration to places of better climate and agriculture started the mechanism of intercultural dialogues during the Stone Age itself and has ended up into IPRs (Intellectual Property Rights) presently. However, it started with the exchange of food with goods in those days a system known as 'Barter system'. WTO, world food summits, world environment summits, etc., are now the organizations to resolve hunger and malnutrition and the ideal places for intercultural dialogue. As every animal and human needs agriculture for food, this dialogue is the need of the hour.

Nearly 1/6th of the world's six billion people are hungry and are mostly from developing world. Steps for eliminating this

situation has been taken by many a fora. The 'World Food Summit 2002' resolved to halve the above figure by 2015. But all this has to be done while protecting the environment as this is also very important for providence. International alliance against hunger is to be applauded for the efforts. The world food day is an opportunity for furthering the process of dialogue the world over including the rich and poor countries. The diversity of humans only can ensure the quality/sustainability of biodiversity of crops / animals / trees essential for human and animal welfare for food and environment security. And this human diversity forms a strong foundation for the dialogue.

This dialogue has been a continuous one up to modern days of 21st century wherein the IPR's (Intellectual Property Rights) and WTO etc., have taken over. It is

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an irony that thus far, all the movement/introductions of plants and animal stocks have occurred for the benefit of human race without any motive and the hypothesis was that all plant and animal stocks belong to all humans irrespective of region and race. And unless again there is an intercultural dialogue across the cultures of various nations, the sharing and caring for God's gifts to human race cannot be met out. With more knowledge, greed rather than need has taken over and decisiveness for exploitation at different levels is the present day order and this imbalance has to be stabilized in a more sustainable manner to benefit all human race on our dear planet earth-the life giver.

Components of intercultural

The culture of any community or a nation is due to the culture of their inhabitants. The various components of culture are evinced through

- Habitat / Eco-environment of the region
- Religion
- Language
- Festivals
- Food habits and nutrition
- Education
- Medicine
- Implements
- Political system
- Post harvest technology and value addition

Agricultural interface with these components should form the basis of the intercultural dialogue to realize all its comprehensive benefits befitting the nobility of human welfare in this modern knowledge society with IT making our earth a global village.

Agriculture and eco-region

In India, five eco-regions are identified viz.,

- **Rainfed ecosystem:** Castor, a non-edible oilseed crop, one of the dryland crops is specific to some regions of world.
- **Coastal:** The rice is the staple crop while coconut known as 'Kalpatharuvu' plays an important role in the cultural, socio-economic lives of its inhabitants, making the coconut and also rice an inseparable part of their religion, medicine and daily livelihoods.
- **Irrigated:** Cropping systems involving varied crops to suit the high water management.
- **Humid:** Cultivation of some medicinal plants like vanilla is exclusive to these regions.
- **Arid:** Israel is known for expertise in water management in desert areas and this can be utilized by India can pass on its indigenous knowledge of water storage structures etc., to Israel.

Natural calamities like floods/Tsunami, effect the coastal rice cultivation, the principal crop and increase alkalinity. This is a problem of most SAARC nations also. Therefore, this intercultural dialogue is necessary for addressing these problems. Similarly drought in the vast dryland areas of India and SAARC nations are also a common occurrence, With three years out of five are drought affected, resulting in hunger in India, SAARC countries and other nations across the globe.

Agriculture and religion

In India various religious rituals exist which are in tandem with agriculture. For example the new year of many Indian communities is celebrated during the harvesting season-Baisakhi of Punjab, Ugadi of Telugus.

In Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannadh, the staff goes to field of temple lands and harvests paddy everyday, pound and prepare Prasadam. It reveals that meaning that photo-insensitive cultivars were in existence then. However, now certain of that germplasms are

lost. Had we protected these germplasms, we would have got photo-insensitive superior cultivars in paddy.

Religious diversity along with diversity of regions has led to biodiversity of crops, animals, fish, etc.

Agriculture and language

Many of the agricultural wisdom or Indigenous Technical Knowledge is embedded in the age-old languages like Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, etc. Some of these wisdoms has been taken by the modern languages. Still more knowledge is embedded in the ancient languages and is to be brought out like ITKs, watershed technologies, water-harvesting structures, etc. which have sustained human race thus far.

Agriculture and festivals

India, being a multi-cultural nation each culture has contributed immensely to others cultures by way of religious festivals like Jagannadh Rath Yathra of Puri wherein even foreigners visit India for this, Hare Krishna Conscious Society spreading far, New Year's day, Ugadi for Telugu culture, Baisakhi for Punjab, Onam for Kerala, Bihu for North-East culture and their inter mingling to become national festivals of joyous celebrations.

Agriculture and food habits, nutrition

The world's wealth of agriculture is the backbone of world's wealth of culture. The bridge between the south-north, east-west, rich-poor, developed and developing countries for food can be a sustainable index for intercultural dialogue. In India, in A.P. through the public distribution system of Rs. 2/- kg of rice, accessibility of rice to poor (rice for rich, and coarse cereals for poor) resulted in changed food habits and subsequently the food habits have changed with certain negative aspects like the low intake of nutritious cereals and low acreage subsequently.

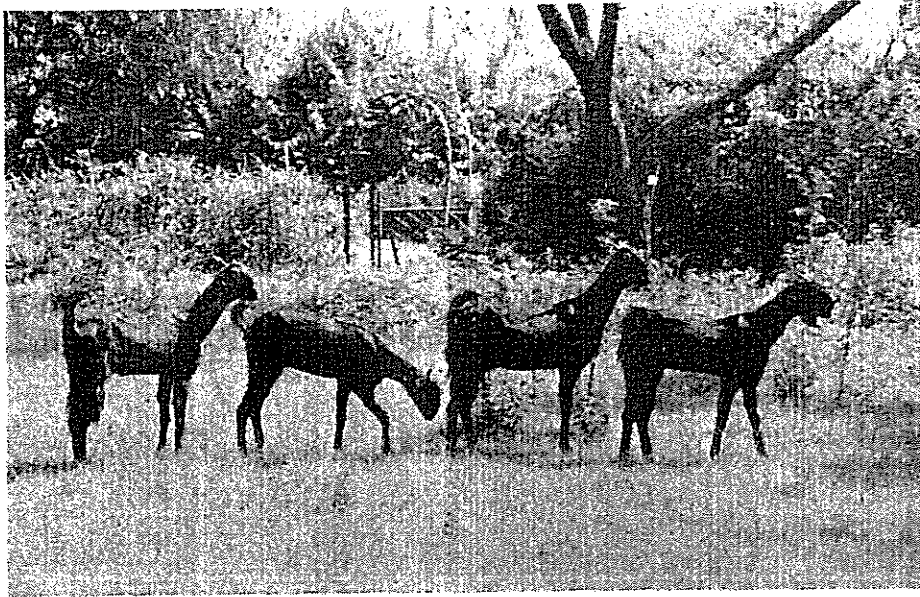
Here food and environment are very much tagged together with their respective habitat of the people. For example in Kerala coconuts are Kalpatharuvus and its products very important in Coastal environment. The principal products are used in house constructions, dietary, decorations and other uses. However various religious cultures enabled the enrichment of diet and environment.

The present knowledge on nutrition is the accumulation of wisdom over many centuries and generations experience resulting in the concept of continuous consumption of one type of food leads to health problems while its blending with other foods leads to nutritional security. EEC had taken a stand that growing organic produce must be carried out independently.

India now supplies food to 16 countries apart from its own target production of wheat, rice, milk, fruits and many vegetables. Many of the crops for example sunflower, soybean were introduced to India. All these export and import has been the result of such dialogues in the past.

Agriculture and medicine

In India, Siddha, Ayurveda and Unani are the traditional indigenous systems, relying on medicinal plants. However, WHO has recognized other traditional systems widening their scope. Such widening scope is possible through intercultural dialogue. For example, Siddha system, which is highly interlinked with Dravidian culture and therefore, Siddha literature, is available in Tamil in the original form. However, through the dialogue it can be translated to other languages. Sage Agasthya, the outstanding scholar of Siddha and Hippocrates, the Greek physician who is referred to as 'Father of medicine' by westerners occupy similar positions in fact. The Palani hill in Tamil Nadu was the abode of Siddhars and Siddha system due to which the richness in herbs is observed.



Basic concept of Siddhars is 'Food is medicine and medicine is food'. The seven elements namely plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, nerve and semen are responsible for physiological and psychological functions. And these are activated by three components namely air, fire / heat, energy and water. These three components are in a particular ratio in the human body. Similar to this concept in Ayurveda. However, when this ratio is disturbed, diseases occur and the major reasons can be diet, physical activity and environmental conditions including stress.

Agriculture and implements

Farm mechanization is the need of the hour for all agro-ecosystems due to

- Non availability of labour
- Timely and quick agricultural operations
- Non availability of animal energy

The dialogue has to deliberate on ways and means of farm mechanization with better tools and their access even to the small and marginal farmers. Information on improved farm implements of different cultures and their exchange can enhance this dialogue for effective agriculture.

Unity in diversity

Our own country is an excellent example of a mini-world with many religions, languages, creeds, colours, blending of these different cultures have in the process of sharing and caring for common resources of land, water, vegetation, livestock and crop have evolved many indigenous technologies for feeding and second most populous nation of the world. This was possible also due to the open-minded dialogue between different cultures of India itself.

Dialogue between rich and poor countries

International treaty on plant genetic resources was formulated. The farmers' rights were recognized by this treaty for food and agriculture. The multi lateral system of access and benefit sharing was also established by the treaty due to a dialogue between rich and poor countries. The food security is based on the principle of access and benefit sharing. The opportunities of the developing nations to impart to the under-developed nations is also possible by this dialogue in the areas of organic farming and medicinal plants.

CGIAR

The CGIAR, (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) is a classical example with cross-cultural community forming its research staff and due to its very logic of serve the globe forms a focal point for agriculture and intercultural dialogue. Feeding hungry masses, nutritious food to animals and humans while sustaining the environment are the prime concerns of CGIAR also.

Green revolution occurred due to transfer of Norin-10 and Dee-Gee-Woo-Gen genes in wheat and rice from various countries. High yielding varieties were developed at CIMMYT (Mexico) and IRRI (Philippines) and later introduced to developing countries including India. This is a classical example of CGIAR and its role in such a dialogue. The transition of traditional varieties to improved varieties was and is possible only through exchange of genetic material from a multitude of nations so also is the case of animals and fish etc.

India's offer of technologies in this dialogue

Organic farming is an age-old concept of India, which changed during the 1st green revolution. However, Indigenous Technical knowledge (ITKs) of India can also be helpful to industrial nations who are in the process of quality lives.

Crop and animal introduction, played a very vital role in intercultural development the world over. However, in the present scenario of IPRs, the genetic wealth of both crops and animals are being made a property of the region where it exists making its movement now very cumbersome and lethargic due to many regulations and due to these, there cannot be improved livelihoods of the disadvantage sections.

Intercultural negotiations always are benefited by introgression of innovation of processes, technologies, methodologies, tools, bio-diversity of crops and animals and even microbes in the new settings of organic farming for sustaining the universe for providence.(IA)

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