

## Release of thematic luni-solar calendar ‘Food as Medicine’

Charu Lata & Paramananda Barman

India has a great cultural heritage and a rich repository of traditional knowledge particularly aimed towards the overall holistic health, nutrition and well-being of humans. Ancient Indian traditional knowledge system has a scientific basis as well. On food and food habits, our ancient literature depicts tremendously about their nutritional and medicinal values, and also correlates them with time as to what to eat and when to eat. Such traditional knowledge grounded in scientific facts is required to be disseminated to the masses for creating scientific awareness and societal benefits.

On the occasion of Chaitra Shukla Pratipada (NavVarsh) on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021, CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (CSIR-NISCAIR), a premier national institute in science communication, popularisation and inculcation of scientific temper, and Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA), an organisation committed for promotion and propagation of swadeshi science movement, jointly organised a special session on the release of a thematic luni-solar calendar “Food as Medicine”. The aim of this effort was to make the calendar more user-friendly based on science. The acute challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 has advocated the importance of food and food habits and the resultant immunity. During the present health crisis, the theme had a direct relevance to the common people, wherein, it becomes important to understand the correlation between the diet and health.

The programme was organised by Research Journals (Life Sciences) Division and coordinated by Dr Charu Lata. The organising team comprised of Shri R S Jayasomu, Dr Charu Lata, Dr Paramananda Barman, Dr Manish M Gore from CSIR-NISCAIR and Dr Suman Ray from CSIR-NISTADS. The programme was organised in a hybrid mode. The programme was live through NISCAIR and VIBHA Facebook pages and VIBHA YouTube channel.

The programme was inaugurated with lighting of the auspicious lamp by Dr Ranjana Aggarwal, Director CSIR-NISCAIR, Shri Jayant Sahasrabudhe, National Organising Secretary VIBHA and Dr Arvind C Ranade, Scientist F, Vigyan Prasar. Dr Shekhar C. Mande, Director General of CSIR and Secretary DSIR, and Prof Somak Raychaudhury, Director, Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics joined virtually.

Prof Ranjana Aggarwal in her welcome address and introductory remarks emphasised that luni-solar calendar is based on science and its release by a science communication institute like CSIR-NISCAIR makes this calendar more significant and relevant. She highlighted two salient outcomes of this luni-solar calendar which are time calculation and Indian food.

In his inaugural address, Dr Shekhar C Mande said that India has a rich heritage of space exploration and time calculation. Calling this occasion an opportunity to explain the science behind luni-solar calendar and the Indian calendar system, he added that the calendar features significant information on fruits and vegetables from India. Since fruits and vegetables possess great nutritional and health values, the United Nations has declared the year 2021 as the “International Year of Fruits and Vegetables”. In this context, the calendar has depicted the important seasonal fruits and vegetables, their nutritional and medicinal value, and their Indian names wherever possible.

Shri Jayant Sahasrabudhe said that Indian traditional knowledge tells us ‘how to live in harmony with nature’. He stressed upon the inevitability of scientific temper for handling the environmental challenges which in fact is the inspiration behind the development of the thematic calendar ‘Food as Medicine’. The right kinds of diet and food not only ensure overall holistic health and well-being but also do not put unnecessary pressure on natural resources. He emphasised that by following this calendar, common people shall lead their lives following the mantra of harmonious coexistence with nature.

Prof Somak Raychaudhury delivered the keynote address on the theme “Indian Astronomy and Calendar System-from Ancient to Modern Times”. He explained the scientific basis of motion of Earth around the Sun, the relation of Earth with moon and other stars, the importance of the Equinox, measures of time and main calendar systems (Solar, Lunar and Luni-Solar calendars). He talked about *Surya Siddhanta*, the earliest

available treatise on the subject which deals with ascertaining time. He also discussed the Roman (Julian) calendar, Islamic calendar and Bengali calendar.



Later the dignitaries released the thematic luni-solar calendar 'Food as Medicine' which prominently displays the 'Tithi' and 'Paksha'. It also displays the corresponding date as per the Indian National Calendar of Government of India and the Gregorian system, highlighting the scientific basis of the Indian calendar system and scientific content on the seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Dr Arvind C Ranade, in his address discussed about the scientific concept of luni-solar calendar. In addition to salient features and terms and explanations of this calendar, he also elaborated the significance of '*Surya Siddhanta*, *Chandramasa* and *Samvatsara*. He clarified that in the calendar, all other features of regular calendars such as the national holidays, festivals, birthdays of Indian scientists, etc. are also included. The calendar includes the dates of the Indian National Calendar as well as Shalivahana Saka.

At the end, the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Paramananda Barman. The calendar release event was given generous coverage by both print and electronic media.

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