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Nutrition And Health

A British doctor who had joined the Indian Medical Service at the beginning of this century and spent seven years looking after the health of the people of Hunza, a Himalayan principality which now forms part of Pakistan, discovered that they were 'unparalleled in perfection of physique and in freedom from disease'. Their dwellings were primitive and the climate severe, but their simple diet of grains, vegetables, fruits and small amounts of butter and milk afforded them buoyant health and extraordinary longevity. After further investigation among the Sikhs and Pathans, who subsist on the same kind of diet as the people of Hunza, Lt. Colonel Robert McCarrison, the doctor in question, came to the conclusion that the most important cause of chronic ill-health was over-processed and refined food devoid of nutritional integrity.

Heart disease and cancer are compelling ever-increasing numbers of people in the West to campaign for natural food vigorously. Processed foods are now dreaded as never before, and while they try to stay away from fatty meat and butter, fish has regained the popularity and esteem it once lost to beef and mutton.

We in the East, on the contrary, plagued that we are by shortages of natural food, are moving in a reverse direction, increasing our dependence on processed foods. Natural milk has given way to milk-powder, canned fruit and vegetables command brisk sales, and even in our choice of rice, the staple millions consumes, the upper and middle classes at least, show a marked preference for the white branless variety. Some knowledgeable people are still fully conscious of the difference in nutritional value between white and brown rice, but few dare offer brown rice to their guests. Refined sugar, in this country with a generous mixture of sand and other filth, has replaced the brown country-made variety on our table.

These are ominous symptoms. Since the incidence of heart disease and cancer, almost unknown before, has markedly increased. The nation that refined food represents an improvement in social refinement needs to be combated before it is too late.