

18. The Impact of Food Adulteration on Human Rights; A Threat to Health and Safety

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18.1 Introduction:

As we deal with a growing population, environmental hazards and dwindling natural resources, one of the man-made dangers is food adulteration.

Food adulteration has become a national issue. The problem is not only the neglect of human rights to safe food, but also the serious endangerment of public health by many acute and chronic diseases.

Our future generations will be severely affected by the physical and mental development that can be affected by food adulteration.

This article describes the impact of consumption of adulterated food on human health and the role of concerned authorities in its eradication

The main purpose of this article is not to blame anyone. We want to report the current situation of food adulteration and bring about a positive change through proper actions by the concerned regulatory authorities.

Our food culture has changed a lot in the last few years. Due to many reasons like lack of time, taste, attractiveness, convenience, ease of cooking, fast food and processed packaged food have become important in our lives.

These are often high in salt, sugar and/or fat. Due to this, many diseases such as childhood obesity, high blood pressure, juvenile diabetes, heart diseases and cancer are on the rise.

Presently, there are numerous commercially set reciprocal food brands available in the request that contain these constituents.

In recent times, pollution, fraud and and problems with contamination in child formula and reciprocal foods have been reported to increase

Given the high threat of foodborne illness in children, food safety during food product, processing and running practices plays an important part in child health utmost food products in India, whether manufactured or reused, are moreover unsafe for consumption or thinned to varying degrees.

This problem persists at every position of the food chain, from product to consumption. Food manufacturers, processors, cafés, fast food outlets and further are all involved in this loose contamination practice in one way or another.¹

Foods are thinned using colorful dangerous chemicals and poisonous artificial colors, on the one hand, turning into rotten poisonous foods, on the other hand hygienic.

Stored in the terrain, vended and delivered to the consumer Unsanitary and unsafe running of food seriously affects public health by causing numerous conditions. Despite colorful reasons for unsafe running and contamination of food products in India.

This study will concentrate on the nonsupervisory failures to combat the current food safety issues in India.

18.2 Healthy Food -Essential of Life:

Food is the basic need of life. The food we eat is absorbed by our body and used to run metabolic processes and sustain life. Food is essential for growth and various life processes. Substances that reduce the quality of food, when added to it, are called adulterants. It is a substance found in other food products that inhibits the natural quality of the food.

Some additives have been identified as carcinogenic or dangerous with long-term exposure. Different types of additives are used for adulteration in different food types.

18.2.1 The Vulnerability of Women and Children to the Effects of Food Adulteration:

When is food considered adulterated?

Certain criteria are required to decide whether food is adulterated or not.² A substance is added to the food which reduces its quality or makes it dangerous. Cheaper or lower quality products are used as substitutes for whole or some products. A portion of the food is partially or completely expelled, reducing the quality of the food. It is made from harmful ingredients. When children cry or fuss, most Indian parents immediately seek the help of sugar or sweets.

Globally, one in 10 people get sick from eating contaminated food, says the World Health Organization. Proper hygiene practices technical errors, unverified microbiological activity, pesticide residue and misuse of microbicide, contamination during food storage and transportation, Scientific evidence shows that food security in India is a big question. This leads to many diseases like diarrhea, endocrine disorders, birth defects, cancer, etc.

¹ Amarjeet Singh Minhas, Puja Dudeja, Raju K Gupta (2016) Food Safety in the 21st Century Public Health Perspective

² V. Ravi Shankar Rai and Jamuna A. Bai (2017) Food Safety and Protection, crc press

We all know that consuming too much sugar can lead to weight gain and tooth decay in children. Along with the sweets, there are some unnecessary, inferior and useless adulterants that the children eat or enjoy to eat. They are mixed in the snacks they buy and forget how toxic and very dangerous the poisonous and life-threatening effects of these snacks are due to the effect of adulterants. How multiplied are these adulterated giants who are hunting human beings only for the sake of purpose?³

Earlier, if children were hungry, they would take the best from the kitchen and give them to eat. Now, on the streets, roads, school roads, and college roads, there are many snack shops that look like big and small trains with eye-catching colors. Beyond that, on the streets, there are snacks that are available without any hygiene, without any manufacturing date or expiration date. There are many snacks on the streets and in shops. There are many money and coins in the hands of children to buy them.

18.3 The Impact of Deceptive Advertising on Children: Cheating Their Trust:

Children and students, who are at an age where they don't know whether anything they see is right or wrong, think that what they think is right, and at this age, they boldly buy and consume whatever they want without knowing the consequences. It can't be said that it's their fault. It can be said that it's because of their age or because they have a visual defect such as having the things they need right in front of their eyes. How much poison is mixed in all those food items? Without knowing that, those young hearts love these adulterated foods and ruin their lives and their health. This is a huge social threat and a great destructive force for future generations. The products of this adulteration are a terrifying fear for parents and social activists.

In particular, fast foods are a great favorite for children beyond snacks. Due to the additives and flavorings added to those fast foods, children, students and women are affected to a large extent. Why did I mention women here? A woman passes on all the good and bad things that have changed within her to her child. Thus, the fetus or infant that is born overcomes all the attacks that the mother has suffered and is born. Therefore, when a mother consumes food products that are harmful to health, such as fast foods, snacks and medicines, which are mixed with poison and are of poor quality and expired, it is passed on to her child without any compromise.

In general, when a child is born, the poison is present in the child's blood or hormones. Not only a child is affected by consuming highly adulterated foods or by the great impact of highly adulterated foods or by the toxic properties transmitted to the child through the mother. The future of a country is in question because of ignorance, inattention, lack of intelligence to know everything, lack of health, lack of legal awareness. These are the reasons.

³ Amarjeet Singh Minhas, Puja Dudeja, Raju K Gupta (2016) Food Safety in the 21st Century Public Health Perspective

⁴Eating highly adulterated or highly adulterated snacks or food products can cause dizziness, fainting, vomiting, impaired thinking ability, impaired speaking ability, blood pressure, diabetes, mental health problems, eye problems, hearing loss, lack of hearing, deficiency of essential nutrients in the body, changes in the development sector, delay in growth according to age, hormonal disorders, early puberty or failure to mature for a long time in the case of girls, and many more effects such as insomnia, inattention, etc. Although these various problems are visible to the eye, many atrocities are taking place without the eye being aware of them.

Starting from a simple headache, cancer, brain ulcer, nerve damage, and even death is possible because this happens by adding some stimulants that are not suitable for consumption to food. Many people are affected by this without realizing it. The list of those affected is not easily recognized, recognized, or even revealed.

Therefore, the future life of a country is threatened by these adulterations of food, food adulteration, and the right to health of the individual rather than the right to a person's individual rights.

If there is a war in a country or if there is no living environment in that country or if there are no essential things needed for a person to live, that person will fear for his life and run away to another country or another place, because he sees that his life is in danger.

He cries and tries to escape from it. He knows where his rights are being affected. He struggles to get that right or not. He struggles to maintain it somehow because he knows with his own eyes and understanding what a terrible loss his lost right is to his life.

But let's take adulteration in food products. Those who consume it, those who buy it, those who crave it, go without knowing the danger in it. Perhaps if they knew, they would run away like they would flee from the city.

Because they don't know, they end up working for their own lives by buying and drinking such adulterated food products that have eye-catching flavors or colors and take their lives. Little by little, it is not too much.

The right of man, that is, the right to health, is being affected a lot in this place. He has the right to live. Indian democracy has given him the right not only to live but also to live with self-respect and self-identity. He has the right to live in good health.

But this right is being hunted by these big business owners who have brought adulterated food products to use, by the big business owners who treat the lives of others with contempt for their own profit, by the lazy people. If rights are being plundered, it is not an exaggeration.

⁴ J.Y. Asomah, H. Cheng; Food crime in the context of cheap capitalism
A handbook of food crime, Policy Press (2018), pp. 193-210

18.4 Food Adulteration and Its Threat to Maternal and Child Health:

Not only children are affected, women are also affected in large numbers. When I say women, I am referring to pregnant women. During pregnancy, women consume adulterated food without knowing that it affects the life of the future generation. How many research articles and reports have been written that if a child is born disabled or less efficient, it is because of some medicines and some foods that the mother consumed in the days before pregnancy?

Can it be said that it can be passed down from generation to generation? Although it is recognized on the one hand that children are born with disabilities due to genetic disorders or hormonal deficiencies or developmental changes or chromosomal abnormalities, and on the other hand, the biggest and most terrible reason is that women take these adulterated foods, pills and medicines, can we believe it? Children also prefer artificially made and exotic foods instead of natural foods. They are addicted to processed packet foods, snacks like chocolate, sweets, fried foods, pizza, burgers and other ready-made foods. Children like to eat fast foods because they are tasty. But such snacks are high in salt, sugar and fat. Eating them can cause many side effects. When you eat fast foods continuously, the fat content in the body increases, constipation occurs. This can lead to high blood pressure, blockage of blood vessels to the brain, difficulty in hormone secretion, and heart attack. Furthermore, fast food is a major factor in the occurrence of intestinal, stomach, and gastric cancer.⁵

The fast food that children eat contains a lot of bad fat, sugar, and salt. On average, we get 300 more calories than usual in fast food. The body does not get the necessary minerals like vitamin B-12 and magnesium, which leads to malnutrition, which increases body fat and causes obesity. Increased salt intake increases blood pressure, causes blood circulation problems in childhood, and reduces kidney function. Obesity causes problems with digestion and causes cancer in the future. As the days go by, heart disease and bone density decrease.

In today's busy world, parents buy harmful fast food just because their children like it. Seeing advertisements, colorful foods that catch the eye, soft drinks in bottles, food items packed in polythene bags, parotta, chili chicken, and foods prepared in maida and sold in bakeries cause chronic stomach aches, obesity, intestinal ulcers, liver damage, and even cancer.

The word adulteration everywhere and in everything has become very popular in recent times. The reason for this is that people have been forced to search for quality products and buy them. To such an extent, the public is suffering from various adulterations. During that period, we used to give children only a few types of food.

⁵ J.Y. Asomah, H. Cheng
Food crime in the context of cheap capitalism
A handbook of food crime, Policy Press (2018), pp. 193-210

There were no nutritional drinks. Due to this, children were given milk, millet varieties, tuber varieties, vegetables and other products that provide natural nutrients. Even in most villages, we have seen that children grow well and are healthy without vaccination.

In particular, those who grew up in such conditions were very less likely to get sick. But now, there are food products produced by famous companies that are sold in stores such as vaccination once every six months, complementary food for six-month-old children, and various companies have expanded their advertisements and established their markets in the name of nutritional drinks.

They brainwashed the public into believing that if children drink this nutritional drink, they would grow two and a half feet in a year, and made the public buy their company products by giving attractive advertisements in various models saying, 'I am growing, Mommy'. Parents also bought them for their children. We would have seen them proudly saying that my children will not drink tea or coffee and saying the name of the nutritional drink in the name of the company in a very stylish way. In particular, in the last ten years, the sale of nutritional drinks and complementary foods for children has increased a lot. Is this because of the affection parents have for their children? Or is it because of the laziness of not being able to prepare food for children at home? We can have a separate discussion on this. The number of companies manufacturing food for children has increased to such an extent in the last 10 years.⁶ If we look at what is in that food, it will be advertised as containing various nutrients including nutrients in fruits, nutrients in vegetables, proteins, vitamins, starches, etc. They did not bring all these nutrients from outer space or from a place where they are not available. These are taken from the vegetables and fruits that we normally get. They are processed, treated with chemicals to prevent them from spoiling, and then they are sold in the market by increasing the sugar content ⁷and adding flavors to make them more appealing to children. They are very attractive to look at and can be easily fed to children by simply taking them out of a bowl and pouring water over them.

It is bought and used in most homes for this reason. Especially so that their children should be intelligent and well-developed, young parents are buying it in large quantities and giving it to their children.

We, who always think about it only when there is a big problem, do not think about it at other times. In that regard, a shocking information has come out that the sugar content in food products, even the food that children like to eat, has increased not only in India but also in the world. In it, shocking information has come out that the food products manufactured by the famous food manufacturing company are sold in India and Africa, and the food products for children sold in Europe have more sugar content than in Europe. The latest report by the NGO Public Eye and the International Child Food Action Network has shocked everyone.

⁶ Kiron Prabhakar (06 Mar 2017) A practical guide to Food laws and regulations, Bloomsbury professional india,476 pages

⁷ Kiron Prabhakar (06 Mar 2017) A practical guide to Food laws and regulations, Bloomsbury professional india,476 pages

It has researched the sugar content in popular children's food products in various countries. It has been found that there are glaring differences in this. After examining and investigating about 150 food products used by children from various countries, the research institute has brought to light that the sugar content is higher than the permitted level in various countries in South Asia, including India. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has ordered the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India to take appropriate action in this regard.

This report has raised various controversies. How many people read newspapers and TV news is a matter of concern to their respective families. If so, it is definitely not the case that such news reaches the entire public. There is a constant risk of the public making mistakes in the matter of children's food. Therefore, it is time for parents to wake up when it comes to children's food. At one time, diabetes, high blood pressure and other co-morbidities were found only in people over the age of 50. But today it has reached the age of thirty. But even now, we have seen with our own eyes that some children develop diabetes at the age of ten and use insulin. No research has ever been done to find out the reason for this.

In countries with a large population, including India, when a disease occurs, only medicines for that disease are sold. Doctors say how to cure that disease. But no one studies what caused the disease. Due to this, the number of diseases is increasing day by day. Medicines are also being sold for this. But the solutions are only available to a few. If a child gets diabetes at the age of 10, the child has to live with medicine pills for the rest of his life. Parents should think about how cruel this is.

18.5 Consumer Rights at Risk: The Consequences of Inaccurate Food Labels:

It is well known that advertisements are often a bit exaggerated. But today, advertisements are largely false and give the wrong message to the people. Advertisements that are released targeting children and youth for the purpose of increasing business and profits have a great impact on them.

Advertisements are coming that say that food products are for growing taller, gaining more energy, developing the brain, preventing forgetfulness, being rich in protein, minerals and vitamins, and being healthy. But it is doubtful whether they actually work as they claim, and whether the raw materials for it are present in the food! As if this were not enough, when cinema and sports stars act in these advertisements, consumers, especially children, are attracted by them and try to buy those products.

If you look closely at the ingredients in drinks advertised as 'healthy drinks', you will find that they contain more harmful ingredients than healthy ones.

The Food Safety and Standards Act states that the labels of packaged food products must contain important information such as the name of the product; date of manufacture and expiry; name and address of the manufacturer/importer; details of the ingredients; weight; maximum retail price; symbol for vegetarian and non-vegetarian food; etc.

However, the truth is that such information is missing from the labels of many packaged food products that we buy every day!

Similarly, the back of the labels should provide information about the nutrition content of the product. In reality, studies say that very few people read this nutritional information. The main reasons for this are: The presence of very small fonts; Consumers have to look at a label.

Food adulteration and human rights violations are deeply interconnected issues, often with severe implications for public health, safety, and dignity.⁸

18.6 Food Adulteration:

Food adulteration refers to the practice of intentionally adding inferior, harmful, or non-edible substances to food to either increase quantity or reduce cost. This is done for financial gain, often at the expense of consumer safety

18.6.1 Common Forms of Food Adulteration:

1. Chemical Additives: Pesticides, preservatives, and artificial colors added to food to enhance appearance or preserve shelf life.
2. Contaminants: Harmful substances, such as heavy metals, microorganisms, or toxins, that can make food unsafe.
3. Substitution of Ingredients: The use of cheaper or non-food items to replace high-quality ingredients (e.g., adding starch to milk, soap to honey).
4. Spoiled Food: Rotting or expired food being disguised and sold by adding artificial flavoring or color to make it look fresh.

18.6.2 Impact on Human Rights:

Food adulteration, while primarily a public health concern, can also become a human rights crisis for several reasons:

1. Right to Health: Right to Life (Universal Declaration of Human Rights - UDHR)

Food adulteration can lead to severe illness or death, violating the most fundamental human right—the right to life. Unsafe or contaminated food can cause fatalities, especially if consumed unknowingly over a prolonged period. The use of toxic chemicals in food, such as lead or harmful preservatives, can cause irreversible damage to health and result in fatal outcomes in severe cases

The intentional contamination of food with harmful substances or the substitution of safe ingredients for cheaper alternatives endangers public health. In many cases, these actions lead to severe health consequences, including:

⁸ Manojkumar Sinha, (2014) Right to Food international & National perspectives,56(1) 47-61 (15 pages), Indian Law Institute

- Food poisoning, allergies, and long-term health conditions such as cancer or organ failure.
- Vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly are often disproportionately affected.
- Poor access to health care and the inability of individuals to seek compensation from manufacturers or producers, especially in lower-income regions, exacerbates the problem.

2. Right to Information: Right to Information (ICESCR, Article 12)

Consumers have the right to access information about the safety and quality of the products they consume. Food adulteration often occurs without the knowledge or consent of the consumer, depriving them of the opportunity to make informed decisions about what they are eating.

Example: If a food product is adulterated with cheaper or harmful ingredients, consumers are not aware of the risks, thereby depriving them of the right to make informed choices about their health.

Consumers have the to know what they are eating. Adulteration prevents people from making informed choices about their food, violating the principle of transparency that is essential for consumer protection. People are often unaware of the potential risks in food, as adulterants may not be visible or easily detectable.

3. Economic Exploitation and Social Inequality:

Food adulteration often targets low-income communities who cannot afford premium, "safe" food options. They are the most vulnerable to consuming contaminated food, which exacerbates inequalities in health outcomes. The practice also involves exploiting workers in the food industry, often through unsafe working conditions, low wages, and lack of adequate labor rights protections.

4. Environmental Impact:

In some cases, food adulteration involves the use of harmful chemicals or unsustainable agricultural practices that damage the environment.

These practices can also violate the rights of communities who rely on clean environments for their livelihoods, especially in rural and agricultural areas.

5. Access to Safe and Nutritious Food:

Food adulteration undermines the fundamental human right to access safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. The availability of adulterated foods limits people's ability to maintain healthy diets, directly affecting their physical and mental well-being.

6. Exploitation of Vulnerable Groups:

Vulnerable populations, such as low-income individuals or marginalized communities, may be disproportionately affected by food adulteration due to a lack of access to safe, quality food. This can lead to economic exploitation and deepen inequalities, further violating their human rights

7. Right to a Fair Standard of Living:

When people are exposed to adulterated food, it could lead to illness, affecting their ability to work, study, or engage in social activities. This can impact their overall quality of life, which links food safety to the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being

8. Right to Safety and Protection:

Consumers have the right to be protected from harmful products. Food adulteration undermines this right, as people may unknowingly consume unsafe or contaminated food. This can violate their right to be safe from harm caused by substandard products.

18.6.3 Global and Local Perspectives:

While food adulteration is a worldwide issue, its severity and impact vary by region:

- **Developed Countries:** Regulatory systems may be in place, but food adulteration still occurs through loopholes, negligence, or corporate malfeasance. Scandals, such as the use of unethical farming practices or misleading labeling, continue to raise concern.
- **Developing Countries:** Lack of regulation, insufficient enforcement of food safety laws, and poverty increase the risks of food adulteration. People in these regions often face challenges in accessing safe food due to weak infrastructure or corruption within the food supply chain.

18.7 Conclusion and Suggestions;

Efforts to address both food adulteration and human rights violations include:

- **Stronger Legal Frameworks:** Countries must have clear regulations regarding food safety, labeling, and transparency. Strict penalties for those who engage in food adulteration are essential to deter offenders.
- **Global Cooperation:** International cooperation and organizations like the WHO (World Health Organization) and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) can play an important role in setting global food safety standards and facilitating trade of safe foods.
- **Consumer Awareness:** Education and awareness programs that inform people about the risks of food adulteration can help them make informed decisions about their food choices.
- **Corporate Responsibility:** Companies in the food industry must be held accountable for ensuring the quality and safety of their products. Ethical sourcing and transparent production processes can help mitigate the issue.

Human Rights - Women and Child Rights

- **Human Rights Advocacy:** Activists and organizations that focus on food security, consumer rights, and health care advocacy can help address the systemic issues leading to food adulteration.

Food adulteration can indeed lead to human rights violations, particularly those related to health, safety, and access to information. Ensuring safe food practices is a key component of upholding human dignity and fundamental rights.

Ultimately, tackling food adulteration is not just a public health issue but also a human rights crisis that requires collective global action, stricter regulation, and a commitment to fair and ethical practices in the food industry.