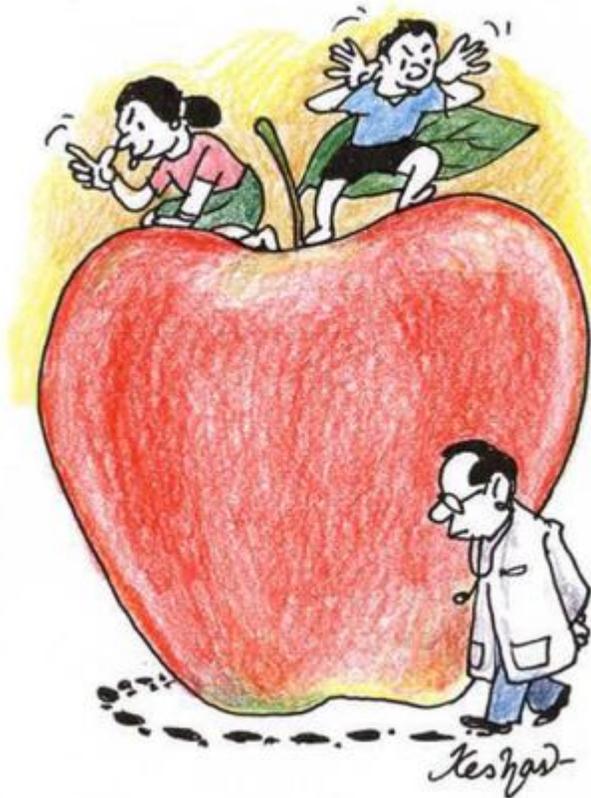


Why don't we trust nature? It can very well be our doctor

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Tulsi for cold, dhurva for longevity, bilwa for cleansing, vallarai for memory power, curry leaves for indigestion and good hair growth and a host of other herbs are the saviours from tiny ailments in villages.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. A garlic clove a day chases asthma away. A carrot a day keeps the ophthalmologist away . . . a dentist away and cancer away. Deep breathing exercises 20 minutes a day can keep most diseases away. A few yogasanas a day can keep most diseases away.

These are some of the sayings that we don't trust. Everyone one of us has some health ailment or the other. Some have severe headaches, others develop breathing problems, yet others get serious problems such as heart or lung ailments. But have you ever taken an apple or carrot a day as you must have learnt by heart in your primary school?

We don't trust nature. Most of us do not drink rainwater. Rainwater may be slightly contaminated with dust and other chemicals on the first day and from the roof that may be coated with chemicals, but one can harvest it directly from the skies. Keep a clean tub right in the open on the terrace. This can be done the second day of heavy rain. The first day, the water from the skies can wash away dust and other particles in the atmosphere. Then it can be double-filtered and stored in huge drums. This water can be filtered again for drinking.

One must experience the taste of rainwater. It is heavenly. An Australian study has confirmed that rainwater is very much safe for drinking and other household purposes and does not cause any illness. Most people have installed a rainwater harvesting system but use this water for bathing and washing and rarely for drinking.

Children love the rains. They love snapping those bubbles and having a bath. But today you find a lot of elders shooing them away from having fun in the rain all because they think they will catch a cold. Don't you get a cold even when you don't bath in rain? Your hair shines so well after a bath in rain/rainwater.

Working late or watching movies most of us have lost the habit of waking up early and doing some form of exercise. Schools back in the 1960s had morning prayer and some exercises in the open sunlight for about half-an-hour. Although yogasanas and breathing techniques have gained importance (more in the West), we turn to them for style, or when we have some ailment that refuses to budge with our popping pills.

Ancient texts kept at the Saraswathi Mahal library in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, about breathing exercises have this to say. Practising a certain type of deep breathing while studying (alternate right and left nostril breathing) can improve memory power and help you retain whatever you are studying. This text says that breathing should be practised on an empty stomach pretty early in the morning (studying early in the morning some time before sunrise). The text says that this way, you cannot forget whatever you have read. This is because the oxygen that

enters your body clears congestion in the brain and enables it to retain whatever you have read with concentration in memory.

Deep breathing exercises practised just for about 10-20 minutes a day can improve eyesight, cure constipation, ward off most diseases. A person practising Asanas rarely gets any degenerative disease. It is advisable to learn these breathing exercises and yogasanas from a practitioner as there are rules about doing the same and they can cause harm if done in haste or on a heavy stomach or when ill.

While you can get rid of most skin problems by taking a sun-bath, we have the habit of seeing the sun when we travel to our workplace and on weekends after a late breakfast. Suryanamaskars have become a religious sign or practised to help us rid ourselves of paunches.

We use polyester garments and rarely expose ourselves to cool air or sunlight. The fresh air can give you a cold or fever. We get the idea that standing in cool air can give us a cold whereas overeating and eating junk foods or drinking colas cannot.

A lot many people are scared of tasting seasonal fruits. Mangoes are a 'no' 'no' for fear of our sugar levels rising or our getting diabetes. Whoever said fruits will usher in diabetes, and not a sedentary lifestyle and wrong eating habits? Bananas no, potatoes no, carrots no. There are a lot of self-analysed 'Nos.'

Tulsi for cold, *dhurva* for longevity, *bilwa* for cleansing, *vallarai* for memory power, curry leaves for indigestion and good hair growth and a host of other herbs are the saviours from minor ailments in villages. People living in cities cannot even identify common herbs, much less use them to benefit. Looks like we don't trust nature.

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