

PERMANENT  
REFERENCE  
NOT TO BE  
REMOVED  
FROM THE  
LIBRARY

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE EXTENT OF THE  
USE OF PERMITTED SYNTHETIC COLOURING MATTER IN SWEETS SOLD IN THE  
COLOMBO AREA



403410

SUBMITTED BY RANI SINNATAMBY  
TO THE FACULTY OF NATURAL  
SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF COLOMBO

FEBRUARY 1981

## INTRODUCTION

Food, clothing and shelter are the basic needs of civilized man. Of these, food is the most important ingredient because it is essential for the sustenance of life. Food not only satisfies a basic biological need but also gives pleasure. Hence various methods are adopted to make available all types of food at all times of the year. One such method is the addition of additives which besides helping to preserve food, makes it more attractive in appearance.

An additive is a substance added to food to give it a desired property. The Food and Agriculture Organization, (FAO), defines an additive as a non-nutritive substance added intentionally to food, generally in small quantities, to improve its appearance, flavour, texture or storage properties. (Goodwin 1967).

Additives added merely for the purpose of making food more attractive in appearance are produced in various colours. Colour is an important attribute of food, similar<sup>to</sup> taste. It exerts a remarkable influence on peoples attitude towards food. Variety is the spice of life seems certainly true where food colour is concerned. Colour may sometimes be an indication of nutritional value. However, its significance is based solely on custom rather than on nutritional need. Many food habits and traditions deeply ingrained in people are concerned mainly with food colour. It is therefore not surprising that colour additives are the most widely used of food additives in the food industry.

Food colouring today is carried out using natural as well as synthetic colouring matter. It is easy to simulate natural colours with synthetic dyes. Moreover, synthetic dyes offer many advantages to the technologist. Consequently, the synthetic dyes are extensively used in foodstuffs. However, because it is difficult to be certain whether synthetic dyes in the long run may not be shown to be carcinogenic or otherwise toxic, their use in food has to be restricted. For this purpose it is necessary that regulations concerning the use of synthetic dyes in food have to be enacted and rigidly enforced.

Many countries have enacted legislation to control the use of food additives in order to protect the consumer against adulteration and the use of harmful chemicals. For example, United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other European countries have detailed regulations passed with regard to these matters. In Sri Lanka too, there are regulations governing the use of colouring matter in food.

During the last two decades the manufacture of sweets, one time described as the 'seenibola industry', in this country has expanded considerably. A large variety of sweets in various shapes, designs and colours is freely offered for sale today and the consumer falls easy prey to the temptation, created by these. The increase in consumption of sweets has led to a greater exposure of the consumer population, which includes mainly children, to the hazards involved in the use of colouring matter. Therefore it is necessary to ensure that the regulations controlling the use of colouring matter in foods are strictly adhered to by the manufacturers. In order to do this, it is necessary for the controlling authorities to examine regularly samples of all types of food in which colouring matter is used. Unfortunately due to various reasons this

*examination is not carried out systematically in our country today.*

*The survey of the extent of the use of all permitted colouring matter in food is not a practicable task for an individual. I have endeavoured in this brief survey to examine the use of permitted synthetic dyes derived from coal tar and called coal tar dyes, in the manufacture of sweets sold in the Colombo area at the present time.*