



THE EVELUTION OF NON-VEGETARIANISM AND VEGETARIANISM OF INDIA IN THE PAST

Hanu G. Das

PhD Research Scholar , Department of History
University of Hyderabad , Hyderabad , India.

Abstract:

This paper tries to discuss a brief history of food habits of India from the Indus valley civilization to the days of British India. It tries to evaluate the ideologies and concepts related to food habits which circulating in different historical junctures. This study starts in a point where, we all know that Indian society had a peculiar character to strictly follow its age old customs and manners. Apparently, it should be make any one felt wonder that nowhere in the world do not have values embedded with food and food habits than in India. People not only always observed strictly the values or customs regarding food consumption, but also they handed over it meticulously (sometimes even in transmuted forms) to the generations.

KEY WORDS:

Mughal Empire, food, culture, Delhi, political rivalry, poetry, army, capital city.

INTRODUCTION-

As a natural human phenomenal character, meat eating was part of Indian ancient civilizations but later it received certain values and went on several changes. The omnivorous characteristics of food consumption engaging with changes by the different concepts of *Ahimsa*, non violence and social purities etc., could be seen in the history of Indian society. These discursive forms of meanings in values generated a new form of vegetarianism, which is still having a power to influence the present. Later the social re-acceptance of non-vegetarian dietary habits with the influence of Muslim dominance and European invasions brought innumerable changes in the dietary habits of the country. Thus the modern culinary practices are having its cultural values and meanings, rooted in these genealogies of the past. Moreover, the connection or relation of the caste system with the food habits can also be traced out from the roots of these historical evolutions.

THE OMNIVOROUS INDUS VALLEY

The Indus Valley civilization of India is considered as one of the most developed human settlement of ancient times in the history of mankind. The richness, prosperity and fertility of the valley indicate that they had provided enough food to feed the people of that time. The calamities like flood and so on seriously affected that area, even though they had good agricultural economy. The domestication of wheat and other cereals in the subcontinent began in the Seventh Millennium BCE . The Indus valley people also began to domesticate animals and cattle provide them enough milk, meat so on and so forth. In

Indus valley the bones of many animals have been found, like cattle, sheep, turtles, tortoises, gharials and river and sea fish. The bones of fowls have also been found. The beautiful seals of the Indus valley, which were probably used to stamp traded goods, carry representations of hump-backed zebu cattle and of the water buffalo. It is, therefore, likely that all these were eaten by the dwellers then.

There are enough evidences to prove that the people of that civilization used meat as a symbol of prosperity. Regarding the non-vegetarian dietary habits of Indus Valley, Vijayan Kannampilly says "The development of agriculture and the emergence of the great river civilizations in India and other parts of the world did not spell the end of non-vegetarianism. However, the growth of these early agrarian civilizations pushed the majority to turn to vegetal proteins and made meat a symbol of prosperity mostly confined to the tables of a minority. This was an economic necessity primarily caused by environmental changes". In that ancient civilization, rice was grown only in the more southerly towns, such as Lothal and Rangpur in Gujarat. Interestingly, at certain southerly sites, ragi and Italian millet (called Kangni in Hindi and Thennai in Tamil) have been discovered as well as crops like Jowar millet). A large number of Dhals with which we are now familiar have been excavated at the Indus valley sites. These include Masoor Dhal, Urad dhal, Mung Dhal, Horse gram, garden peas (Mattar). Animals were used for both meat and oil for cooking. K. T. Achaya points out many evidences to substantiate this point. He says that "the oils found in the meat of the animals that were killed must have been used for cooking in the Indus valley as they were everywhere else in the world. These included tallow from mutton and beef, lard from pork, and fish oil. It is also likely that the ghee from milk was used. However, even at this early stage, vegetable oils were being used in the Harappan cities. A lump of charred sesame seeds (Til or Gingelly) was found in the archaeological excavations of Harappa. At other Indus valley city sites mustard seeds and linseed have also been found. It is likely that the oils from these seeds were known too". Regarding the fruits and other vegetable consumption he gives further information. He says: "There is plenty of evidence that many fruits were available then to the dwellers of the Indus valley cities. Both lemons and melons were known. Dates, pomegranates and probably bananas were eaten. It is very likely that the coconut was known though perhaps it was not very abundant in regions so far north. Many other vegetable berries and green leaves that were also eaten; being perishable, they cannot now be traced or detected in excavations".

It is obviously clear that the need of serious studies based on highly sophisticated research, on the Religions, social, political philosophies circulated in Indus valley, which is still remains totally vague. Then only we can understand clearly that, what were the concerns and values which, Indus valley people kept in their dietary habits. The Granaries, the remains of various agricultural equipment, food grains etc., implies the richness of Indus valley's food sufficiency into a greater extent. Large number of utensils found in Indus valley also suggests the different dishes both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, of Indus valley. Fish was used in the valley abundantly. The maritime relations with other regions of Asia might have served wide varieties of culinary methods and dietary habits to the people. By about 1500 B.C.E, the Indus valley civilization had vanished. Yet, some of the cultural patterns that were followed then have come down to us. The foods that were used are certainly among these. The lack of literature from Indus valley people cause to remaining a great hurdle on the road to read the society of that time quiet clearly. Even though one fact is clear that, the Indus valley people were omnivorous.

Values from sacred texts: Changes of Vedic and Later-Vedic Times in Culinary Practices

The Vedic period in India witnessed many serious changes in the social, political religious life of the people. It also reflected in the life style of the people into a greater extent. It is commonly accepted that this period, Brahmanical social order came to exist. The evolution, development and influence of Brahmanism seriously tightened the social life. Even though they were omnivorous they preferred non vegetarian diet. In India the earliest references to diet are found in the four sections of the *Vedas-Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*.

Rig-Veda says about the animal Sacrifices performed by the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas for praising Gods to obtaining blessings. These bloodshed rituals contain not only killing of large number of animals but also eating of their flesh in large quantity. They shared the sacrificial flesh as per the rules and regulations in a hierarchical manner. Dr. Ambedkar says: "The Aryans of the *Rigveda* did kill cow for purposes of food and eat beef is abundantly clear from the *Rigveda* itself. In *Rigveda* (X. 86.14) Indra says:- "They cook for one 15 plus twenty Oxen". The *Rigveda* (X.91.14) says that for Agni were sacrificed horses, bulls, Oxen, barren cows and rams. From the *Rigveda* (X.72.6) it appears that the cow was killed with a sword or axe". Apart from that there are many references in *Taittiriya Brahmana* and other text says about the flesh eating of the Brahmanic peoples. They believed that through these bloodshed rituals their God's would be satisfied, and in return they should be blessed and they can enjoy the blessed sacrificial flesh of the animals. The *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* 14, 15, 29 says "The cow and the bull are sacred and therefore

should be eaten. Again in the same Apastambha Dharma Sutra clearly indicates about wide varieties of food and food preparations. "It depicting approximately 2560 years before of the food preparations and uses in India.

Vedic and *later-Vedic* period witnessed the strengthening of Brahmanism in the society. The *Chaturvarnya* and the prerequisites of caste system appeared in the society. At this time we can see Brahminist ideology began to implemented many rituals and customs, which contained the ideology of social inequality, even through dietary practices. In other words Brahmanism used dietary habits as one of a major tool for permeates its ideology. As we all know that at the climax of the social tensions of this period caused many anti undercurrents formed. The rise of many philosophical and religions ideas which were strictly criticized the existed dominant social philosophy of Brahmanism. The hegemonic Brahmanical social order and believes caused many dissatisfactions and revolts both physically and ideologically. The extraordinary and dangerous slaughters of animals in the name of religion and customs seriously and badly affected the social, political and economic life of the people. The hierarchical, brutal, caste rigid social order paved the way to think about alternatives for the people.

The Conflict of Values and the Birth of 'Vegetarianism'

The bloodshed sacrifices of *Vedic* and *Later-Vedic* ritualism met serious challenges from different parts of intellectual endeavors. It is interesting to note that during that time approximately 62 varieties of non-Brahminic philosophies and sects emerged. Among them Buddhism and Jainism were the most important philosophical sects. They introduced the concept of 'Ahimsa', non-violence systematically on every aspects of life. Buddhism and Jainism have different approaches to 'Ahimsa'. Buddhists were kept middle path' in it, while Jains were totally vegetarian and they rejected all kinds of violence. They were extreme in non-violence. The practicability of the extreme non-violence was not provided a very good and smooth way of life. So Jains met many difficulties to lead an extremist non-violence life. According to Jainism rigid food restrictions were based on avoiding injury to life, even when this was not apparent. K. T. Acharya says about the food habits of Jains, in his book *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food*, that: "No one could eat after dark (arathri- bhojana), preferably all-round the year, but at last during the four monsoon months when insects are abundant. The question of eating flesh simply did not arise, only 'absolutely innocent food' was being permitted. The prohibited food included not only 22 'uneatable', but '32 things that have infinite life germs in them'. This was explained as food which had the potential for the life to manifest itself such as putrid or rancid food, vegetables like underground bulbs, roots and tubers that had germs in them, or pickles more than 3 days old. To illustrate these prohibitions, pulses that splitting the two parts (like the chickpea) were not allowed; nor were brinjals, any fruits (such as five kinds of figs) with abundant small seeds (bahu- beeja), green turmeric and ginger, carrot, the tender green leaves of any vegetable, and tender tamarind fruit before the seeds had formed. Honey was expressly banned on the ground that its removal from the comb implied the death of bees, the consumption of honey would destroy spontaneous creatures arising from it. All water had to be boiled and re-boiled every six hours: all liquids had to be strained before drinking, whether water, milk, or fruit juice. When drinking water from a tank or stream and for a monk at all times, a Jain covers his mouth with a cloth, and drinks through it. *Mahaveera jayanthi* is one of the four major Jain festivals, and there are some minor ones. There are twelve *prathimas* or fasts, of various durations, when the community abstains from even permitted foods, which may include milk, curd, ghee, oil, salt and sweetmeats. Jain monks are not allowed to eat even permitted fruits if it was fallen from the tree or fruit that is kept for sale in a shop or on the roadside. Everything eaten has to be thoroughly washed and wiped. Juices from quite a number of fruits are permitted, but soured rice gruel (kanjika) is not. As for liquor a Jain monk is not permitted to even stay in a place in which liquor is stored. Thus Jain food prohibitions for both monks and laymen are considerably more severe than those for Buddhists or orthodox Hindus". What it clearly states that Jainism followed an extreme position in Non-Violence, which was impossible to follow any ordinary person so that their participation in that sect remained less. On the contrary rich merchants, influential aristocrats and ruling people included at large in Jainism.

The concept of Ahimsa, non-violence in Buddhism is entirely distinctive in its character. The Buddhist dietary habits prefer abstention from killing. It does not mean that they were totally vegetarians. In fact, Buddhist Bhikshus were permitted to eat three kinds of flesh that were deemed pure. Later on they were extended it to five classes of eatable meats. Ambedkar says regarding the non-vegetarian practices prevailed among Buddhist *Bhikshus*, in his influential book on Untouchables, as follows: "Yuan Chwang, the Chinese traveler was aware of this practice among *Bhikshus* is explained by Mr. Thomas Walters. According to the story told by him – "In the time of Buddha there was in Vaisali a wealthy general named Siha who was a convert to Buddhism. He became a liberal supporter of the Brethren and kept them

constantly supplied with good flesh-food. When it was noticed abroad that the Bhikshus were in the habit of eating such food specially provided for them, the Tirthikas made the practice a matter of angry reproach. Then the abstemious ascetic Brethren, learning this, reported the circumstances to the Master, who thereupon called the Brethren together. When they assembled, he announced to them the law that they were not to eat the flesh of any animal which they had seen put to death for them, or about which they had been told that it had been slain for them. But he permitted to the Brethren as pure (that is, lawful) food the flesh of animals, the slaughter of which had not been seen by the Bhikshus, not heard of by them, and not suspected by them to have been on their account. In the Pali and Ssu-fen Vinaya it was after a breakfast given by Siha to the Buddha and some of the Brethren, for which the carcass of a large ox was procured that the Nirgranthas reviled the Bhikshus and Buddha instituted this new rule declaring fish and flesh 'pure' in the three conditions. The animal food now permitted to the *Bhikshus* came to be known as the 'three pures' or three pure kinds of flesh', and it was tersely described as unseen, unheard, *unsuspected*, or as the Chinese translations sometimes have it 'not seen, not heard nor suspected to be on my account'. Then two more kinds of animal food were declared "lawful for the Brethren viz, the flesh of animals which had died a natural death, and that of animals which had been killed by a bird of prey or other savage creature. So there came to be five classes or descriptions of flesh which the professed Buddhist was at liberty to use as food. Then the 'unseen, unheard, unsuspected' came to be treated as one class, and this together with the 'natural death' and 'bird killed' made a Sun-Ching". It clearly indicates that the Buddhist had not followed any kind of strict vegetarianism. It is in fact a later development.

The Buddhist life style introduced many delicious culinary practices in Indian Society, based on their middle path non-violence perspectives. The Buddhist Scholars, *Bhikshus*, Rajas and other eminent peoples led a good life style which influenced the society. The Buddhist kings of Magadha and other states, and Ashoka of Maurya's were contributed well to spread Buddhist life styles and beliefs among common people. We can see that Ashoka's edicts are advised to the people that abstain from killing of animals and to prefer vegetarian food.

In B.C.E. 185, Pushya Mitra, who founded Sunga dynasty, by killing of the last Maurya king, established Brahmanical rejuvenation in the subcontinent. The counter revolution led by Pushyamitra Sunga recaptured the supremacy of Brahmanism over Buddhism on the society. Ambedkar observes Pushyamitra's revolution was a political revolution engineered by the Brahmins to overthrow Buddhism. For substantiate this view he quotes Vincent Smith, "The exaggerated regard for the sanctity of animal life, which was one of the most cherished features of Buddhism, and the motive of Ashoka's most characteristic legislation, had necessarily involved the prohibition of bloody Sacrifices, which are essential to certain forms of Brahmanical worship, and were believed by the orthodox to possess the highest saving efficacy. The memorable horse sacrifices of Pushyamitra marked an early stage in the Brahmanical reaction, which was fully developed five centuries later in the time of Samudragupta and successors". Later Buddhism lost its glory and Brahmanism took advantages and it insidiously percolated in to the society.

How it was made possible? We could see that this social, political, religious triumph of Brahmanism spread throughout and dominated the social masses of Indian subcontinent through the textual authority of the Brahmanical literature. We all know that the literature of Brahminism falls under six categories such as (1) Manusmriti (2) Bhagavat Gita (3) Sankaracharya's Vedant (4) Mahabharat (5) Ramayana and (6) the Puranas. It is interesting to note here that initially these brahminical literatures supported eating of meat. But later strict vegetarianism based on purity and pollution came in to exist as a central point in Hinduism. Ambedkar observes that: "Manusmriti suggested that the eating of flesh as well as Cow's flesh on certain occasions obligatory. Manu's laws contain the following provisions regarding meat – eating:-

- V.11. Let him avoid all carnivorous birds and one hoofed animals which are not specially permitted (to be eaten), and the Tithbha (parra) Jacana.
- V.12. The sparrow, the Plava, the Hamsa, The Brahmani duck, the village cock, the Sarasa Crane, the Reggudal, the woodpecker, the parrot and the starling.
- V.13. Those which feed striking with their beaks, web-footed birds, the Koyashti, those which scratch with their toes, those which dive and live on fish, meat from a slaughter house and dried meat.
- V.14. The Baka and the Balaka Crane, the Raven, the Khangartaka (animals) that eat fish, village-pigs, and all kinds of fishes.
- V.15. He who eats the flesh of any (animals) is called the eater of the flesh of that (particular) creature, he who eats fish is an eater of every (kind of) flesh; let him therefore avoid fish.
- V.16. (But the fish called) Pathine and (that called) Rohita may be eaten, if used for offering to the gods or to the manes; (one may eat) likewise Ragivas, Simhatundas, and Sasalkas on all occasions.
- V. 17. Let him not eat solitary or unknown beats and birds though they may fall under (the categories of)

eatable creatures, not any five-toed (animals).

V.18. The Porcupine, the hedgehog, the iguana, the rhinoceros, the tortoise and the hare they declare to be eatable: likewise those (domestic animals) that have teeth in one jaw excepting camels. Vijayan Kannampilly says that "Manu, the most well-known and off-cited law giver, holds that while the desire to eat meat is 'natural', it is better to avoid it because the meat eater in this world will be eaten like-wise in the next. The dire warning, in essence religious, is teased out of a derivative meaning of Mamsa/mans the Sanskrit word for meat".

There are many references about food taboos and habits in Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. The *Sundarakandha* of Ramayana, deals about the meat prepared by Seetha, the wife of Rama, the epic hero. In this text we can see Kshatriyas were allowed to use meat at the time of *Tretayuga*. In *Ayyodhyakandha* of Ramayana of Valmeeki depicting Seetha and Rama prepared and eat meat together. Vallathol Narayanamenon's Ramayana depicting that Seetha pleased to ate meat. It also says about the feast conducted by Bharata the brother of Rama for Bharadwaja Maharshi including the flesh of peafowl, chicken, and other beasts. In the drama, written by Bhavabhoothi, the *Uttararamacharita* also deals that Valmeeki prepared the flesh of a calf for the feast for Vasishtha, one of the eminent Maharshi in the epic, who received as a guest of Valmeeki's hermitage. In Ramayana *Kishkindha Kandham*, (17.39), *Markendy Purana* (35. 2-4) prescribe that one should avoid the flesh of all five-nailed animals except of porcupine, hare, Savavidh (a boar of hedge-hog), iguana, rhinoceros and tortoise (some of these works omit the rhinoceros). The notable reference in Mahabharat about dietary rules, regulations, and culinary descriptions is that king Rantideva, a descendant of Bharata, the founder of the *Bharata-Varsha* employed 20,000 cooks in his palace to cook every day 2000 head of cattle and other animals; the menu for Draupathi's wedding included the meat of buffalo, goat, deer, and fowl; and that *Pandavas* offered meat as a mark of great hospitality to the Brahmin priests who visited them. On the other hand there are contradictions about the dietary rules occurs in many places of Mahabharata. In the *Santhipurva*, *Asurapurva* etc., includes an exposition of taboos, 'table manners', health instructions, hygiene, and a classification of food that should not be eaten. The prohibitory list includes the flesh of goats and kin, all food that is forbidden in ritual acts and the 'flesh of animals not slain in sacrifices'. In sum, selective slaughter for consumption and sacrifice is permissible.

It is clearly indicate that the impact of Buddhism and Jainism on the Hindu dietary habits and dietary codes was very significant. The Brahmins, whose genealogy says that they were practitioners of animal sacrifice and later they embraced vegetarianism and made it a cardinal article of faith. According to Ambedkar, "Brahmins gave up meat eating and became vegetarians because of they want to achieving supremacy over Buddhist. They wanted to oust the Buddhists from the place of honour and respect which they had acquired in the minds of the masses by their opposition to the killing of the cow for sacrificial purpose. To achieve their purpose the Brahmins had to adopt the usual tactics of a wreckless adventure. It is to beat extremism by extremism. It is the strategy which all rightists use to overcome the leftists. The only way to beat the Buddhists was to go a step further and be vegetarians". Moreover it can be seen in the life and mission of Sankara, who later led the Hindu counter-reformation, took over so many Buddhist concepts that he was denigrated as a *Prachanna Buddha* (crypto Buddhist) by the orthodoxy. Among the changes he brought forward was the substitution of gourds for animals in sacrifices.

Thus through the later versions of Hindu literature and interpolated old texts, like *Sankarasmrity* etc. the Hindu values of vegetarianism which is on purity and pollution began to spread.

Next widespread influence on the dietary code and habits of the people of India were the Tantric cult. The essentials of Tantric worship are the five makars, in which most of the things are directly related to food consumption. These five makars consists of

1. The drinking of wine and liquors of various kinds (Madya);
2. The eating of meat ... (mamsa);
3. The eating of fish (Matsya)
4. The eating of parched or fried grain ... (Mudra)
5. The sexual union... (Maithuna).

Although, it is not possible to give exact date of when the Tantra and Tantra worship came into existence. There is no doubt that their date is after Manu. This fact makes the rise of the Tantra worship a matter of great surprise. The Tantras not only lifted the prohibition enacted by Manu against wine and flesh but they made drinking and flesh eating articles of faith.

Ambedkar says that: "The Tantrik life style and Tantric approach to life spread every knock and corner of India. Even today we can see the influences and relics of Tantra philosophy and culture. The Tantra was

never repudiated by the Brahmins. On the other hand they recognized it as a fifth Veda. Thus orthodox a Brahmin as Kulluka-Bhatt, the celebrated commentator on Manusmriti says that Shruti is of two kinds, Vaidik and Tantrik. Not only did the Brahmins not repudiate the Tantras but actually promoted the Tantric worship... Why the Brahmins did repudiate father Manu and start again drinking liquor and flesh eating which Manu had stopped? This is a riddle”.

As observed by Ambedkar, Hinduism gained victory over Buddhist and other non- Brahmanic traditions through their ritualistic and textual supremacy, with an invented notion of purity versus pollution. The origin of untouchability should also read closely with it. Subsequently, A common Hindu dietary notion emerged at this juncture. The changed values in culinary practices of Hindu social order can be read in the narrative of K. T. Acharya. He says that: “The kitchen was considered the seat of ritual, and was in fact located next to the pooja room. The cook was expected to have a bath, change in to fresh cloth and only then enter the kitchen. Once cooking had started, he could not leave the kitchen still it was over; if he did so, he would be considered polluted. The inmates of the house ate in the kitchen and had to wash their hands, feet and mouth before sitting down on the floor to eat” . He further says that “Water could not be sipped but had to be poured in to the mouth so that the lips did not come in contact with the rim of the cup used. There was a strong belief against eating food that was even slightly stale. For example, if two meals were eaten in a day, no material from the first meal could be eaten at the second; everything had to be cooked afresh, especially boiled food . It may consider that these notions wear emphasized on good hygiene and good sanitation in the peripheral view, but it also contains the ideas of purity and pollution. In an orthodox Hindu society food divided in to ‘pacca’ and ‘kachcha’. Kachcha food consisted of things like boiled rice, chappathis and boiled dhal, which were common everyday foods cooked in the kitchen and eaten by the family at every meal without leaving the premises of the kitchen. Pacca foods were those fried in oil, and these foods could be shared with non-family members without incurring any pollution . Great sanctity was attached to the use of ghee for frying. According to the Hindu believes food was not simply for sustenance, or taste, or nutrition, but was believed to have certain spiritual qualities. The purpose of food was to join together the spiritual aspirations of the person eating the food with the higher purpose of living. Food was a part of a large, moral, cosmic cycle in which the spiritual part of human nature had to be sustained as much as the bodily functions of living and breathing . Through this newly evoked sanctity, and believes, the seeds of social inequality were well sowed. The graded inequalities and concepts of purity and pollution were under lied in these concepts. In actuality, Hindus practiced and maintained sophisticatedly caste in food consumptions.

It is interesting to note hear that, regarding the contemporary Hindu food habits, Ambedkar observes “the food habits of the different classes of Hindus have been as fixed and stratified as their cults. Just as Hindus can be classified on the basis of their cults so also they can be classified on the basis of their habits of food. On the basis of their cults, Hindus are either Saivates (followers of siva) or Vaishnavates (followers of Vishnu). Similarly, Hindus are either *Mansahari* (those who eat flesh) or *Shakkahari* (those who are vegetarian). For ordinary purposes the division of Hindus into two classes’ mansahari and shakkahari may be enough. But it must be admitted that it is not exhaustive and does not take account of all the classes which exist in Hindu society. For exhaustive classification the class of Hindus called *Mansahari* shall have to be further divided in to two sub-classes (i) those who eat flesh but do not eat cows flesh; and (ii) those who eat flesh including cows flesh; in other words on the basis of food taboos, Hindu society falls into three classes: (i) those who are vegetarians (ii) those who eat flesh but do not eat cow’s flesh; and (iii) those who eat flesh including cow’s flesh. Corresponding to this classification, we have in Hindu society three classes; (i) Brahmins ;(ii) Non –Brahmins; and (iii) the Untouchables. This division though not in accord with the four fold division of society called *Chaturvarnya* yet it is in accord with facts as they exist. Four, the Brahmins we have a class which is vegetarian, the non-Brahmins the class which eat flesh but does not eat cows flesh and the untouchables, a class which eats flesh including cow’s flesh . In his study *The Untouchables* published in 1948, Ambedkar implies the connection between caste and food habits. He argues that the untouchables became broken men because of their Buddhist past, in which they used to eat the flesh of dead animals, especially the cow’s flesh; which was proclaimed sacred later by Hindus to get upper hand over them . Anyway, thus the vegetarianism based on purity and pollution gained popularity and it became the cultural symbol of Hinduism.

The Re-Birth of Non-Vegetarianism

Non- Vegetarian food habits never met any downfall based on its consumption by the masses because the untouchables, other lower castes and non- Brahmin people used it as an ordinary diet, though it was considered as a degraded one. But later the Muslim rulers and the European presence brought significant changes in the culinary practices. Later the British dominance literally gave re-birth to the non-

vegetarian cuisine in the subcontinent to new status. Let us have look what happened in these trajectory.

The coming of Islam in India as conquerors and rulers inaugurated a new phase in the socio-political religious arenas of the country. The Muslim dietary codes and habits abundantly influenced the people. The amalgamation of these two cultures created a new phase in the culinary practices. The notable point is that the Muslims rebuilt the non-vegetarian dietary habits in the mainstream which were degraded because of the ultra vegetarianist value and practices of Brahmins. Islam as a new ruling class, the new performer of power relations backed non vegetarianism in the social status of Indian society. But the Brahmin did not accept again non-vegetarian dietary, and moreover they firmly attached and emphasized the vegetarian values on the basis of 'sacred and profane', 'pure and impure' concepts. The Muslims avidly adopted the use of ghee as a cooking fat and used it freely in making all their dishes. Like this many customs and social norms were adopted by Muslims in India.

The Sultanate period as well as Mughal period heavily contributed also in the field of dietary codes and culinary practices of the country. The Islamic culture penetrated over the masses of the country during this period. Many new dishes with its values circulated among the people, during this time. In this period the ingredients that were used by both Hindu and Muslim culinary cultures remained more or less the same. What really changed were the ways of using them and the style for an elaborate code of table manners which was different from the prevailing Hindu ethos. Another significant contribution of the Mughal rulers to India was the systematic cultivation of fruit orchards. With their passion for good fruit, peaches, pears, cherries, grapes, melons and mangoes were cultivated with great diligence and became extremely abundant

During Muslim period the items of food that were known already in India, became enriched and almost transformed. From very early times, 'palao' was known in India, and was referred to in Sanskrit by this very name, or as *mamsaudana* (meat-rice). In fact, we read in the Ramayana that the favorite food of Sita was a 'palao' made of deer meat. However, the *biryani*, *shulla* and *shurba* of the Muslim cuisine were more elaborate. The meat was cooked till it was almost about to disintegrate and become part of the rice. Spices like turmeric, pepper and cumin seed (jeera) were included, and there was a free use of strong aromatic spices called garam masala, which included cloves, cardamom and cinnamon. Exotic ingredients like the stamens of zafran or saffron (kesar), with their beautiful color and strong fragrance, were freely employed. Various nuts like almonds and pistachios were used, and raisins were scattered throughout the rice. The word biriyani itself is derived from brinji, which is simply the Persian word for rice.

In the Muslim period large public dinners were a part of court etiquette, and such repasts were even held twice a day. Even at the so called private dinner, which the Sultan himself attended, about twenty people would sit down to dine. If the ruler wished to honor one of the guests particularly, he would place a piece of bread on a plate and give it to the person. The latter received it: and placing the plate on his left hand, he would bow with his right hand touching the ground. Some of these elegant rituals percolated down even to the common folk. There are instances of following Hindu cultural values. For example Humayun, was more Indianised, even arguing that beef was not a food for the devout. He even became a vegetarian for a while after taking a vow to win back his kingdom from the interloper Sher Shah. The great Emperor, Akbar, did not like meat and only took it seasonally. In fact, he was practically a vegetarian, though his table was very sumptuous. The poorer Muslims for his breakfast was fond of *naan*, the puffed roti made from 'maida' after slight fermenting of the dough, followed by baking in an oven. It was generally eaten with *kheema* or *kababs*. For the main meal, rice was the favorite, eaten with plenty of onions in Indian cooking seems to have been a Muslim contribution, because they were used either not at all, or very sparingly, by most Hindu cooks. The popular dessert of ordinary people was either threads of wheat ('pheni') or rice cooked in milk and sugar ('kheer'). 'Halwas' and dried fruits were also popular. Betel-chewing was adopted so avidly that it became, if anything, even more popular among the Muslims than the Hindus. Thus the political domination of the Muslims gained the social permission especially in the case of non-vegetarian food in to the prestigious status of popular food habits in the society.

The coming of Europeans in India in 1498 by the Portuguese inaugurated a new phase of culture to India. After the Portuguese, the British, the Dutch, and the French came to India for trade first and later they contested each other to invade and rule India. The final victory was with the British. However, all these European powers gave many contributions to India, even though, at the same time they brought to home many things from here. The European culinary practices and values abundantly influenced Indian dietary habits. They inaugurated the reconstruction of many values on the field of even the social order. This of course also reflected in the food habits of India. The European traders and settlers brought their own dishes and cooking styles with them and they taught it to the natives. Later when they hold share in ruling this land they implemented their culinary practices without any cultural frictions. Nevertheless, if we look closely at any of the mutinies or rebellions against the British rule in India, one of the immediate causes of those rebellions might be a violation of any religious sentiment which related to any taboos of food habits, is not an extraordinary fact.

Anyway, large number of feasts and durbars conducted by British and native rulers in British India, in European style definitely brought back a high status to the non-vegetarian culinary practice, without any unease. The varieties of meat dishes made up from beef, which considered unlawful by the Hindus and different cuisines made up from pork, which was considered *haram*, unlawful by the Muslims regained comparatively high status in the European dining table, because of their political and cultural hegemony over this subcontinent. Moreover, there had many dishes, which is a mixture of both the Indian and European, or Islamic and European in its styles, been invented. Different styles of curry made up of fish or meat is an Indian variety seems to be invented during this time. However, all these dishes, either they are European or native, or even the mixture of both, were in fact elite in characteristics. Along with the value loaded Hindu Vegetarian dishes, the elite Muslim culinary dishes and the European especially Victorian dishes with its highly sophisticated table manners and customs, captured the common dining table in India.

CONCLUSION

The food habits and the common dining table of a country, especially if it is a country like India, certainly reflect symbolically the socio-cultural and political meanings, which embedded in it. Similarly, the history of food habits in Indian subcontinent tells the story of many cultural values and meanings embedded within that. The conflict of Non-Vegetarianism versus Vegetarianism was one of the major themes, which was an outcome of the frictions of other factors like caste, religion and other social phenomena involved in it. Initially Vegetarianism gained a sacred, sanctified and high social status in the society backed by its cultural values and meanings of Hinduism. But later with the influence of power relations of Islamic and European Ruling class the Non-Vegetarian dietary habits secured culturally lesser but comparatively higher status in the society. However, the Non-Vegetarian dietary habit continued to maintain its sanctified space in the social realm. Interestingly, culturally value embedded Hindu Vegetarian dishes, elite Muslim and Victorian as well as European dishes with its table manners and customs occupied the common dining table of India. Obviously, there are no Dalit-Subaltern culinary practices or any cuisines from their kitchen found any place in the so called 'common dining table'. Thus, the acceptance, denial and the reacceptance of the non-vegetarianism did not include the subaltern and untouchable food habits into the mainstream food consumptions. It remained excluded, degraded and distinctive. To sum up, the history of food habits up to the modern British India says the story that, each dominating powers, the dominating social groups of the society and their ideology influenced and captured places in the common food habits of the country. It also reveals the relation of caste in to the food habits of the subcontinent. Apart from this, I don't think that, the contemporary history of the country might not have any different story to tell. Therefore, the State interference on the dietary habits of this country is not too coincidental.

REFERENCES

1. Achaya, K.T. *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food*, Oxford University press, New Delhi, 1999.
2. Achaya, K.T. *The Story of our food*, Universities Press (India) limited, Hyderabad, 2000.
3. Ambedkar, B.R. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: writings and speeches vol.3*, Vasant Moon [ed.], Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai. 1987.
4. Ambedkar, B.R. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: writings and speeches Vol.4*, Vasant Moon [ed.], Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai. 1987.
5. Ambedkar, B.R. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: writings and speeches Vol.5*, Vasant Moon [ed.], Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai. 1990.
6. Ambedkar, B.R. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches –Vol -7*, Vasant Moon [ed.], Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai. 1990.
7. Chandra, Bipan. *Adhunik India (mal. tran. of Modern India)* D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2007.
8. Chandra, Bipan. *History of Modern India*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2009.
9. Chandra, Bipan. *India's Struggle for Independence*, Viking, New Delhi, 1987.
10. Chandra, Satish. *History of medieval India*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2007.
11. House go, David, "Cooking under the The Raj" 'Seminar 566, October, New Delhi, 2006.
12. K. R. Narayanan, "Bharatheeyarude Mamsa Bhakshanam: Vedam, Ithihasam, Smrithi Ivakalikudi Nokkiyal" (*Meat eating of Indians: Through Veda, Ithihasa and Smrithi*), Vivekodayam (mal). No:2 Issue : 9, 1968.
13. Kannampilly, Vijayan. "Food As Health, Ethics, and Social Marker", Seminar 566, October, New Delhi, 2006.
14. Nandy, Ashis. "The Changing popular culture of Indian Food: Priliminary Notes", South Asia Research vol – 24 No:1, May, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

15. Prasad, Chandrabhan. *Dalit Diary: 1999-2003: Reflections on Apartheid in India*, Navayana Publishing, Pondicherry 2004.

16. Sharma, R. S. *India's Ancient Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005.

17. Sreenivasan, M.N. *A Note on Sanskritisation and Westernisation in caste in Modern India*, Bombay 1962.

18. Thapar, Romila. *Asoka And 'The Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007.

1. Vijayan Kannampilly, 'Food as Health Ethics, and Social Marker', Seminar 566, 2006, p. 52.
2. K. T. Achaya, *The Story of Our Food*, Universities Press (India) Ltd., Hyderabad, 2000, p. 13.
3. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit.
4. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. p. 14.
5. K. T. Achaya, op.cit.
6. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. pp. 14-15.
7. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. p.17.
8. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit.
9. B. R. Ambedkar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches –Vol -7 (Ed) Vasant Moon, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, 1990, p. 324.
10. Ibid. p. 325.
11. K. R. Narayanan, "Bharatheeyarude Mamsa Bhakshanam: Vedam, Ithihasam, Smrithi Ivakalikudi Nokkiyal" (Meat eating of Indians: Through Veda, Ithihasa and Smrithi), Vivekodayam (mal). No:2 Issue : 9, 1968, p. 58.
12. K. T. Achaya, *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food*, Oxford University press, New Delhi 1999, p. 111-112.
13. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 7, op.cit, pp. 347-348.
14. B. R. Ambedkar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: writings and speeches vol.3 (Ed) Vasant Moon, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, 1987. P. 275.
15. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 3, op.cit., 269.
16. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 7, op.cit., pp. 330-332.
17. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit., p. 53.
18. This is a translated version of Ramayana from Sanskrit by Ezhuthachan an epic poet in the fifteenth century, known as Adhyathma Ramayanam in Malayalam.
19. See K. R. Narayanan, op.cit.
20. B. R. Ambedkar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: writings and speeches Vol.4 (Ed) Vasant Moon, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, 1987 p. 112.
21. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit., p. 53.
22. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit., p. 53.
23. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 7, op.cit., p. 348.
24. Vijayan Kannampilly, op.cit., p. 54. Moreover there is also prevails an argument that breaking coconut is a symbolic representation of the Buddhist concept Anitya – impermanence.
25. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 4, op.cit., p. 115.
26. B. R. Ambedkar, Vol. 4, op.cit., pp. 115-116.
27. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, p. 39.
28. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, p.40.
29. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, p.41.
30. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, p. 42.
31. B. R. Ambedkar, op.cit., Vol – 7, p.329.
32. See B. R. Ambedkar, op.cit., Vol – 7.
33. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, p. 67.
34. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, pp. 65-66.
35. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, pp. 66-67.
36. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, pp. 68-69.
37. K. T. Achaya, op.cit. 2000, pp. 73-74.



Hanu G. Das

PhD Research Scholar , Department of History , University of Hyderabad , Hyderabad , India.