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IS INDIAN FOOD DIVERSE?

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to examine the issue of diversity of food, common in Indian food studies. India is rich in culture, culinary values, traditional food practices even so Indian food is presented in form of regions or province at global level. It has been also reported by many academicians and gourmet tourists that Indian food is diverse. Owing to the lack of involvement of food anthropologist, sociologist and limited working in ethnography, studies done on the functional basis of food or for tourism promotion. So, no fixed food image and identity till date is awarded to Indian food and country is losing food heritage. India is lacking in food identity, national food identity and gastronomic identity as compared to Italy and China. It's really true, food diversity notion and its spread among the gourmet to foodie community is dilemma and concept of diversity is not clear till today on qualitatively and quantitatively backgrounds. This research study concludingly provide understanding of two words, diversity and differences specially to experience Indian gastronomy with issue of product availability, geography and cuisines traditionality, and also going to explain ingredients cooccurrence in different regional dishes and similarity of the ingredients uses in regional cuisines of India.

Key Words-

Diversity, Differences, Product Availability, Geography, Cuisine and Culture, Gastronomy

INTRODUCTION

Food has been studied from every possible aspect in the last 23 years approximately in India. Now food has become more necessary to understand in recent times as a consequence of tourism growth specially tourists liking gastronomy tourism. Tourists are travelling for gastronomy, which means they visit a particular destination or place only for food and to know about others, such visits include a visit of foodie and gourmand's sake to experience unique food and culture.

Food is an important reason for travelling and an essential source of tourist satisfaction; as such, appealing foods can serve as a destination-marketing tool. In fact, food has many roles to play for tourists: it is functional for sustaining life; it is entertaining; it is a way of experiencing new cultures; and it is part of a travel experience. In any circumstance, a destination needs to capitalize on appealing foods to create its own cultural capital. (L.W. Lan et al, 2012). Gastronomy recognises religion has framed the food habits and eating behaviour in most of the communities, Judaism and Islam follows certain dietary rules strictly (Khan 1981). Jews were the first community to follow the dietary rules, which is one of the reasons for food diversity from Christians. "One of the most important is kosher butchering" (Civitello, 2008).

In India, no gourmet is available exactly to talk about food, where to go to taste real Indian food and enjoy real Indian taste. The biggest uncommon feature or actually a problem with Indian cuisine and food, culture and cuisine understood by cookbooks, on the whole, meant to cater to the needs of middle-class bourgeoisie society and upper-class elite groups. For tourists difficult to get clear-cut ideas even if is travelling in small cities or towns. For example, "in 1548, one commentator (Ortensio Lando), perhaps one of earliest forerunners of gastronomic tourism, suggested in his literature a tour of Italy travelling north from Sicily to the Alps for a hypothetical visitor, recommending where to stop and eat local food speciality" (Montanari,2012:53; Montanari1996:160). In ancient India numbers of travellers travelled across India, but very few wrote about food, prominently they emphasized about eating behaviour and activities associated with eating like serving food on leaves like banana leaf, lotus leaf, etc. No traveller visited India to understand cultural and food integrity, most of them wrote about cultural diversity and food diversity. Is it true or they were unable to understand the philosophy of food in India and its vastness? Indian cuisine is well accepted in the recent tourism market but it does not answer the fact that Is Indian food diverse?

Question for discussion?

To understand the culture, society, and cultural diversity mainly tourism experts worked and researched on, tourist arrival, tourism activities, food at particular destinations and place, and “language and words, as key elements to understand society and others”. Due to food and its integration with the global world, the dietary habits of its population have undergone significant transformations, which include an increased consumption of industrialized products.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Product availability & geography
2. Cuisine and locality
3. Gastronomy in India

1. Product availability and geography

Food is one of the factors and the symbol of identity, civilization generated identity through food and used it as a supporting factor to be part of its own culture. Food is one of the intangible heritage that connects tourist, and gives insight to get comprehensive knowledge of other cultures, local food, and cuisine. “One of the basic reasons for this is the strong relationship between certain localities and certain types of food” (Richards.G 2001). Regional specialty, local food, and cuisine are strongly related to certain localities, As Hughes (1995: 114) points out there is a “notion of a natural relationship between a region’s land, its climatic conditions and the character of food it produces. It is this geographical diversity which provides for the regional distinctiveness in culinary traditions and the evolution of a characteristic heritage”.

Variety and differences in food practices are awarded very negligible attention in socio-cultural studies and overshadowed by diversity, histography has been always a factor in shaping food choices of the region so differences in food practices based on histography of region, [t]he histography has given fair space to local food. Local food has two faces like a coin, one is product is grown in certain boundaries and sold in the same, second is food considered as a region's speciality can be used as exporting assets. Martinez et al, (2010) define local food as “food produced, processed, and distributed within a geographical boundary that consumers associate with their own community”.

Indian cuisine whether it is terrestrial, coastal, or hilly, the major ingredients used are the same or the basic properties of ingredients are the same, if any part of the peninsula uses any ingredient different from others, these differences raised the term “diversity” in the recent culinary world. Differences in using any particular ingredients are because of climatic conditions, traditions, and rituals followed in particular geographical areas and communities. Diversity never forms the base in any society without histography, “[h]istorical events may affect cooking techniques, traditional viticulture, vinification, olive cultivation and cheese processing methods in the regions to a significant extent (Solungulu.A,2019). Historical perspective on change over time is also crucial for understanding a society’s food culture (R. Kenji, 2012).

The identity by the food and culture, called Gastronomic Identity, “[t]he concept of gastronomic identity points out the effects of the environment (geography and climate) and culture (history and ethnic influences) on the dominant components of flavor, texture, and taste of food and beverages (Harrington, 2005a)”. Food heritage is one of the elements that must be researched, it gives great satisfaction to consumers. Consumers' food preferences and choices are affected by the product availability, no matter whether native is consuming staple food or tourist are experiencing local food, all comes in heritage food category, “Staple, flavouring and preparation are the food characteristics closely related to heritage. Belasco (2008) and Rozin (2006) stated that staple foods or basic food which has a unique value and significant to communities ranging from meat and potatoes, stew and fufu (porridge) and many others could be classified as heritage”.

Why to India must honour her food heritage, it is a treasure used by Aryan to English, modified according to situation and circumstances nevertheless it is incomparable and palatable, “A heritage that is the fruit of deep historical, social and cultural roots, of hereditary processes of long duration, altogether of a *Mittleuropathat* directs the horizon of our cities” (Piercarlo Grimaldi et al., 2016).

An example of Indian food heritage is Rice which is the staple food of India and largely provides sustenance to Northern, Southern, and North-Eastern regions. As culinary tradition reveals both the southern and northern parts consume rice. The southern part consumes rice in grinded form as idli, dosa, or curd rice in their daily diet but northern part residents are using grained forms of rice with dal, pulao, or in Biryani form. Nevertheless, the supremacy of rice in all parts of India remains the same. The ingredients in the recipe of rice differ region-wise. Hypothetical diversity in sub-continental food is not because of pre-preparation, and preparations but because of the local environment, product availability impacted practices.

Geography consists of several factors like history, regional and culinary practices, development of taste through decades and years. Famous Muslim philosopher and geographer Ibn Haldun said “Geography is Destiny”. He remarked that geography has physical, spiritual, and moral effects on human, and also the type of nutrition affects human in physical, spiritual and moral aspects (Ibn Haldun, 2013; 269-274).

Food practices, ingredients, spices, methods of cooking, serving, and sharing all are closely connected to community and geography, the possible differences are in sequence and methods of using spices and ingredients, gastronomic beliefs the community opted for, besides its centrality of “food” is all the time. “The geography and climate of the destinations affect the current agricultural products and adaptation of the trend, fashion and the demanded products due to the increasing frequency of travels” (Ali Solunoglu ,2019). The geographical location and climate of Italy influenced the culinary culture. Products such as wheat, grapes, wine, olives, olive oil, corn, rice, sugar beet, tobacco, soybean, sunflower, potatoes, tomatoes, apples, pears, peaches, oranges, lemons, mandarins are produced in Italy where the Mediterranean climate dominates (Sert.A,2017). Local food can offer an emotional experience to visitors who can feel the experience and understand the uniqueness of local food of the particular region while enjoying and exploring its history and function (Graham & Howard, 2008; Henderson,2016).

Local food products involve a relationship between geography, history (tradition) and culture (expertise and gastronomy) (Amico.A,2004) These aspects relate to another essential dimension: authenticity. Authenticity is recognized as connecting food and place. The “taste of place” implies that geographic conditions contribute to foods’ characteristics and qualities (Trubek.A, 2008). Notably, geographical origin is only one of the dimensions linking foods to place; the others are the specialized knowledge of the region’s food producers and the use of food by the local community (DeSoucey, M. 2010).

2. Cuisine and locality

History, climate, and geography corroborate relations with each other and subsist on food and cuisine. Dietary practices in India, considered food as *bhojan*, followed rituals and before and after meals. India has a unique blend of culturally and climatically different regional cuisines. Its culinary history dates back to the early Indus Valley civilization (Weber, 2011.Kashyap,

2012.Lawler,2012). Indian dietary practices are deeply rooted in notions of disease prevention and promotion of health.

In the investigation of this part, it is found very apparently cuisine and traditionality in India have been scanned on a tourism basis, the 3-4 major agencies working in India like ITDC, IRCTC, State tourism, THSC, etc, all are concentrating on the development of tourism infrastructure, tourist arrival and departure at particular destination or place and researched on food from tourist food image than the image in the mind of the host, who loves food honestly. In previous studies, there is hardly any scope for food tourism and gastronomy tourism which are the most demanding topics of research in the tourism field. India can move in the direction of food tourism as WFTA Suggested “[it] follows the example of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA) as well as the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), who switched from culinary tourism to using food tourism as it is more encompassing of the offerings (e.g. farms, artisanal producers), while the culinary term “can sometimes have an exclusive or elitist ring to it” (WFTA, 2018, p. 7)”.

Investigation of food diversity is the idea of finding the ingredients commonality found in most Indian food. Parallely the Investigations of the diversity of Indian food generate the notion of hybrid culinary that overpowered the authenticity of local food and cuisine in India specially in the last few decades. In the food event, hybrid culinary is, two or more local cuisines combined with each other, a reason to come together can be different either because of work, education, political and social association, etc., or via tourism activities in that particular area or region, “A tourism destination is the blending of different cultures” (Polat.S, 2020). What Sami Zubaida speak about Indian food and food diversity [t]hat there was no common Indian food when I speak of Indian spicing? Is there a common denominator in the prevalence of spice? When you look at Indian cooking of the different regions, especially among common folk, then you find that most used few spices, different ones depending on what is available, most commonly ginger and chilli, some places mustard, others cumin and coriander.” (Z. Sami 2009)

Cuisine of India is hybrid and fusion? Travelling of domestic tourists in the last 70 years transformed the local cuisine. In 25-30 years, globalization opened the window of exchange of both the fusion of recipes voluntarily and the hybridization of cuisine circumstantially. In Indian society “where dining across caste or ethnic boundaries is still a relatively delicate matter, recipes sometimes move where people may not (Appadurai. A ,1988). The same has occurred with the Indian culinary society, which accepted recipes without knowing nano differences. On this fact **Rahul Restaurateur** commented “So much of what we call “fusion

cuisine” is really just confusion, so as a consequence of this I want to teach people how to explore their senses, to really understand that authentic cuisine is all about the subtleties of differences.

Cuisine, culture, and food culture are classifying heads of gastronomy and gastronomic tourism. Gastronomy explains elements to understand and promote gastronomy tourism, these are geography, history, ethnic diversity, culinary etiquette, valid taste, and recipes (Dhani,2003) When all such elements we put together the outcome is traditional cuisine which lay out the unique food experience to tourist.

Traditionality of food and cuisine confirms the cultural function of food, it talks about trends that exist in pre-preparation, preparation, and production. Common Indian philosophy of cooking is based on “home cooking” or “as mother made it” (Srinivas.T,2006). India has seen both traditionality and cultural diffusion, traditionality strengthens the argument of simplicity and cultural diffusion opened the way to accept changes in preparation introduced by invaders, business communities, and religions. Because of the pre-existence traditionality of cuisine, the first generation handed over the simple dishes to the next generation like mashed eggplant (Baigan bhurta) and mashed potatoes (Aloo bhurta, chokha from Bihar), Khichdi, is one of the multigrain and vegetable preparation taught by every mother to her daughter. Food preparations like Korma, Nihari, Roganjosh, and Biryani versions are examples of cultural diffusion and dishes of complexity. Eating bitter cucurbitants like bitter gourd is sufficient to show the knowledge of rare and unusual food combinations. Traditionality of Indian food can be only understood by gourmets and connoisseurs, foodies and general food lovers who synonymise Indian cuisine with Mughlai cuisine “Mughlai cuisine has become synonymous, particularly for foreigners, with Indian food. Though it represents an important step toward Indian cuisine, its Indic base is restricted to the north and west of the subcontinent. It derives nothing of significance from the cuisines of Maharashtra, Bengal, Gujarat, or of any of the southern states. Though some version of Mughlai food is available throughout contemporary India, it cannot be considered an Indian cuisine if by that designation we mean a cuisine that draws on a wide set of regional traditions. It is the limiting case of a tradition that is "high" without being a civilizational standard” (Appadurai A, 1988).

The cuisine is a subset of culinary practices influenced by locality(geography), i.e. environments, community “Cuisine, the foods and methods of preparation traditional to a region or population. The major factors shaping a cuisine are climate, which in large measure

determines the native raw materials that are available to the cook; economic conditions, which regulate trade in delicacies and imported foodstuffs; and religious or sumptuary laws, under which certain foods are required or proscribed. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.2020)".

Indian cuisine is divided into regional cuisines mostly cuisines have owed their name either on place or cities. Dishes are available in regional cuisines and national cuisine known by the name of place or province- Gujarati cuisine, Maharashtrian cuisine, and Rajasthani cuisine. The name of cuisine clearly depicts influence of regions and places in their origination and popularity.

3. Gastronomy in India

Why to consider Indian Gastronomy instead of Indian national cuisine, first and foremost agenda to be understood, explanation about three words Gastronomic cultural heritage in Indian concern. World's tourism phenomenon is changing from visit of any destination to experience of gastronomic properties like familiarity to cultural tradition, accepting and enjoying authentic cuisine, seeing local traditions with local food tasting. "Gastronomy is a concept that examines the tastes and structures of foods and beverages in local culinary culture and the relationship between tableware and culture. Gastronomy was popular in the 1800s and has been used to signify "good eating and drinking" (Rosario S,2002) Misconception and irrational interpretations obstructed the worthiness and uniqueness of Indian food and culture, narrowed the span of integrity of Indian food. "Taste can also reveal the limits of the ubiquitous presumption of national cultures. But first we have to unthink modern Western formulations that have trivialized literal taste" (Ray.K,2015). India has to work on the fixed mind set of globalizations(fusion) of own cuisine and acceptance of international cuisines.

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culture, narrowed the span of integrity of Indian food. “Taste can also reveal the limits of the ubiquitous presumption of national cultures. But first we have to unthink modern Western formulations that have trivialized literal taste” (Ray.K,2015). India has to work on the fixed mindset of globalizations(fusion) of its own cuisine and acceptance of international cuisines. What gastronomy can give to India as Cheung’s analysis illustrates, one common motives for state participation in culinary politics is the promotion of national, regional, or urban reputations through supporting food cultures associated with a place (Cheung, Sidney,2007) Food push the nation in the direction of power and emphasize on an attributes like local food and culture, food and culinary authenticity and cultural distinctiveness. “Culinary soft power can be defined as the acknowledged attractiveness and appeal of food culture that adheres to a nation, region, or locality. Asian governments seem to have become particularly conscious of national culinary soft power” (Farrer, James, ed. 2011). Indian cuisine concept intensified after colonial rule, tourists are more interested in culture, which itself means to know other and enhance the experience of culinary product with cultural values. Food culture, however, is a living thing which evolves and subjected to alteration, modification and creating some new things and this is, in fact, occurring in the communities, ethnics or groups that hold the culture. This is related to the types of foods, methods of cooking, ingredients, eating decorum and consumption pattern (Zahari et al. 2011; 2008). The food culture of a region consists of food and beverage types and habits belonging to the region (Shenoy, S.S 2005). A happy by-product of this led to the realisation that food is one of the most effective ways to communicate with, and begin to understand, the ‘other’ and his or her culture. In effect, this breaks down the barriers that exist between cultures, different ethnicities, and geographies.

Gastronomic identity refers to the region-specific features which are impossible to be imitated and differ in cultural, geographical, ecological aspects and economic conditions and historical patterns (Kesici,2012; Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares, 2012).

The popularity of cultural diversity and cultural differences negatively influenced the actual cultural values of India, same studies have done for Kenyan foods, Consequently, the coexistence of several ethnic groups, with their fading cultural characteristics (Elbert, 2011), has given rise to a variety of labels such as cultural diversity, cultural heterogeneity, multiculturalism and polyethnicity. All these has contributed to acculturation, assimilation, diffusion as well as adaptation (Stuart, 2008), which has significantly led **to the total demise of ethnic food**, as the same has greatly disrupted the original cultural factors that determine food choices. Culture is one thing that shapes the taste, food, and nation, culture distinctiveness, India is full of gastronomic treasures and can inspire the surrounding nations to respect and

materialize their food and culture. Nations and culture and their developments, apparatuses of discourse, technologies and institutions (print capitalism, education, the mass media and so forth) produced what is generally recognized as the ‘national culture’. The nation is an effect of these cultural technologies, not their origin. A nation does not express itself through its culture: it is cultural apparatuses that produce ‘the nation’ (1988: 32) (Bob. A,2004 p80).

The purpose of gastronomy is to maintain human health with best nutrition possible and ensuring enjoying life and eating; food and beverages’ being produced in hygienic environments and prepared to be consumed in a way that will address to palatal and visual pleasure are also among the study topics of gastronomy (Sormaz.U,2015) Ayurveda is insisting philosophy of well-being and age extension without effect of aging and utilising humour in harmonised manner the exact same concept gastronomy is accepting.

4. Discussions

India has to grow herself as a culinary soft power and has to work on an alternative path to develop the scope for tourism like food tourism. Many of Japan’s foods—but not its cuisine—and much of its culture, such as art, religion, and pictographic writing, originated in China. The diets of both countries rely on rice. Rice was cultivated in China about 8,500 years ago, but did not reach Japan until between 300 B.C. and A.D. 200 (Civetello. L,2008) The term “culinary soft power” has been used, for example, to describe the growing popularity of Japanese cuisine globally and its usefulness for promoting Japanese culture more broadly (Farrer. J, 2010b).

“The food-related cultures included in the intangible heritage list emphasize the cultural/social dimension of food; its relationship to the community and ritual practices; its cooking processes; its set of skills and knowledge; its practice and traditions related to production; the processing, preparation, and consumption of food; the sharing of food; and the cultural identity and social dimension of food” (Rinaldi. C ,2017)

Besides it, anthropologists stressed how societies have accepted culture in their daily lives and how it has become localised, and how it is impacting on tourist and tourism activities. “Ethnography, the methodology used by anthropologists as well as by some other social scientists, takes a holistic and embodied approach that derives from lived experience among the people who are being studied (R. Kenji Tierney, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney 2012).”India is accepting food globalization open handedly but At the same time,(has to develop)there is a growing interest in local food consumption, linked to aspects such as health, the environment, and cultural identity(Humberto Thomé-Ortiz, 2017)

Conclusion:

India needs to safeguard its cultural heritage and introduction of programs in food studies. Diversity is a myth leading to confusion of cuisine and confusion of cuisines is fusion cuisine. The unavailability of details of local cuisine and geographic importance turned into fusion and globalisation, fusion is nothing, the transformation of local and artistic culinary. Every food product is the outcome of, recipes, having three types of ingredients primary, secondary, and tertiary, the dish is only known by primary ingredients, secondary and tertiary ingredients give flavour, aroma, and texture to the dish and make the dish complete, nonetheless, all considered negligibly, co-occurrence of ingredients eradicate the concept of diversity and connect the country in one thread. The co-occurrence of ingredients strengthens the concept of food, cultural, and national integrity which cannot be kept in marginal space. The significance of Indian Gastronomy is more because local culinary is like raw food much closer to nature, based on sustainability and preservation of nutrients with the extension of age without aging, it provides a traditional, creative, and authentic experience that must be preserved that gastronomy can only do.

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