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Culinary Processes as Body of Knowledge and Cultural Phenomenon

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Abstract: The central broadest interest besides nutritional values and culinary procedures evaluated there is also commitment to the reflections on the presence of food in ceremonial and communal festivals across the world. For that reason and as focused discourse this paper would give specific cultural examples from Hindu traditions. Discreetly never losing sight of the intercultural interests that give sense of daily nourishments being also as sharable metaphors and part of communal bonding in many cultures. Four examples of culinary techniques will be the approach to the researched tested and transmitted ways of nourishment. 1. Ghee: Clarified butter traditionally made by churning fermented milk curd and boiled until fat is separated from milk solids. Discussed are the practicality and symbology of the most commonly used substance in Indian subcontinents as a nourishment, social sharing and part of auspicious rituals and religious beliefs 2. Khichri: As old as Vedic time researched by Rishi's tested and integrated into daily diet as highly nutritive value, culinary delicacy and also used for dish as celebrating new crop, alleviating medical conditions. The chapter would also look into Khichri as a part of food folklore and food proverbs. 3. Galouti Kebab: Extremely tenderized and fine textured Lamb's ground meat. Associated in Indian subcontinent as an example of desirable delicacy. It was minced nine times to get extremely fine texture and marinated with spices and raw papaya as a tenderizer. This procedure and its story of origin (Emperor Nawab Asad-ud-Daula 1748 -1797) will be discussed as an example of a relationship of story and food process and enjoyment. Conclusions: In closing the general reflections on culinary skills commitment, social engagement and aesthetic values will be complimented and briefly summarized by presences of traditional, historic and contemporary cultural values. .

Keywords: Nourishment, Sustainable, Cultural, Traditional medicine, Human consumptions

Introduction

The reflections on the presence of food in daily use, communal festivals and ceremonial occasions across the world is central broadest interest and context of this paper. Specific cultural examples from Hindu traditions going back to Vedas and Ayurvedic understandings of diet and body types are included in the focused discussion and analyses. Discreetly never losing sight of the intercultural interests of nourishments being sharable metaphors and part of communal bonding in many cultures. Examples of Hindu culinary techniques Ghee making, Khichri nutritional values, Galouti Kebab history, dietary ubiquity are approached to present and analyze the researched, tested and transmitted ways of preparation, serving and sharing of nourishments.

Ghee:

Ghee is a type of clarified butter or fat obtain from milk, usually cow milk and buffalo milk are used to make ghee. Ghee was primarily originated in Indian subcontinent and it was mentioned in Rig Veda (1500 BCE-1000BCE) as a text for the very first time after a millennium of practice. Since beginning Ghee is been used in cuisine, traditional medicines, rituals, religious and communal practices and as a symbol of prosperity. Preparation of traditional ghee is totally different than the regular clarified butter. Dr. JV Hebbar describes in his

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article Ghee usage, benefits and side effect 1 the difference between ghee and clarified butter by paraphrased here “Ghee is different than butter the same way wine is different than the grape juice” (Hebbar, 2014).

Traditional ghee is prepared with Vedic suggested time-honored method. A Traditional Vedic Ghee is prepared by boiling raw whole milk in an earthen ware for two to three hours on a slow fire. After boiling it thoroughly it is kept at room temperature for few hours and then culture (some amount of yoghurt which contain *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus* bacteria) is added while milk is lukewarm (like body temperature) this initiates the process of fermentation milk converting into yoghurt. It is usually kept overnight in a warm atmosphere for the better density of the yoghurt. Then yoghurt is churned and butter is separated from the butter milk. This cultured butter is collected and simmered until all the moisture evaporated, then strained the hundred percent pure fat content. The process in itself radiates awareness of relationship of body temperature to nourishment, sustainability and vitality.

According to Ayurveda ghee is used for traditional medicine as well as it is also a part of basic nourishment culturally. For example, according to Hindu traditions in northern India 2-3 drops of Ghee is given to newborn as a first thing after mother's milk. At the same time mother is also prescribed to consume ghee during pregnancy and after pregnancy for the replenishment of essential nutrition's lost during pregnancy. According to Ayurvedic text book *Astanga Sangraha* (7th century)² ghee helps in brains health and memory, process of digestion, and maintain the health of skin and cell membrane (Vidhyanath & Prakashan, 2006). Ghee is also used in remedies for joints pain during old age, epilepsy, ear and nasal drops also in reproductive disorders. Another classic scripture on Ayurveda *Charaka Samhita* (2nd century)³ mentioned the importance of ghee in its chapter Oleation therapy (Sharma & Dash, 2004). As Ghee helps in balancing different body types and promote the healthy formations of bone marrow and human strength. In some treatments ghee is also considered as a base ingredient of making concoctions for using herbs and spices along with it. Ghee is also used in auspicious rituals where a candlewick is dipped in ghee and burn, according to the Ayurveda the fumes come out from burning of ghee is good for brains health and considered as a therapy. Ghee also used as an air purifier by burning it with Loban (a tree gum) and sandalwood. Ghee is continuously providing a nucleus nourishment in Hindu culture and worldwide as a food ingredients, medicine and symbolic ritual substance.

Khichri:

An ancient Indian staple dish, it was mentioned in Ayurveda during Vedic times (1500 BCE – 500 BCE) and still part of general diet in Indian house holds. Khichri or Khichdi word comes from a Sanskrit word called Khichha which literally means a mix preparation of rice and lentils⁴. Other than Ayurveda initial documents of khichdi can also be found in writings of Indian philosopher and statesman Chanakya (300 BCE). Chanakya described khichdi a balanced meal that is a proportion of rice, lentil, ghee and salt⁵. This proportion is a classic recipe of khichdi. Also, the Greek ambassador of Seleucus mentioned the popularity of rice – pulses (lentils) combinations in South Asia. A Moroccan scholar and explorer Ibn Battuta who travelled across Africa, Europe and Asia visited India about 1350 CE and also mentioned about Khichri⁶. He mentioned Moong dal Khichri which is commonly consumed in Eastern and Northern Indian states. Later in 15th century a Russian traveler Afanasy Nikitin also described Khichri in his writings (Global Pulse Confederation, 2016).

Khichdi has multiple versions and vary from one region to region in Indian subcontinent. Khichdi has evolved with time as researched classic recipes of Ayurveda mentioned mostly three ingredients are Rice, dal and Ghee. In northern Indian Khichri is usually prepared with addition of some vegetables such as cauliflower, carrot and green peas. It is usually tempered with cumin seed in hot oil and a gum from *Asafetida* plant root and finish with ghee. In most places Khichdi is served with accompaniments such as raw mango pickle, pappadam, yoghurt, fried potato, spiced onion rings and tomato chutney.

In Sates of Haryana and Rajasthan Bajra Khichdi (Pearl Millet khichdi) is consumed during winter season as it helps to keep body warm during cold weather. These versions and geographic and season specific versions of khichdi reflects on the researches about food consumption by south Asian monks during Vedic times.

In Gujrat a western state of India most people follow Jainism and are vegetarian. Khichdi has become a delicacy and its being experimented and evolved according to their staple ingredients. In Gujrat people make simple Khichdi, Masala Khichdi, Corn khichdi, Broken wheat Khichdi, Millet khichdi, five lentils khichdi, Buckwheat Khichdi and herbs-based khichdi such as mint, Indian gooseberries, fennel, coriander and fenugreek leaves.

All these ingredients-based khichri is made for specific season or because of the nutritional properties of the ingredients. For example, broken wheat, corn and leaves and seeds of fenugreek khichdi is usually prepared during cold weather as it helps to maintain temperature like the example we cited earlier. While a simple khichri, fennel and coriander flavored khichdi is consumed during summer for the same reasons of dietary traditions responding to seasons. Indian gooseberries and herb-based khichdi is good for immunity. Buckwheat khichdi is prepared to consume in evening after having fast during day as it is very light in nature and easy to digest. Dr Vasant Lad in his book *Textbook of Ayurveda chapter food as medicine*⁷ mentioned the importance and health benefit of the above-described ingredients in different season as a dietary supplement and nourishments (Lad, 2012).

In Bengal, East Indian state, Khichdi is called Khechuri and it is considered as food of the god. Bogher Khechuri is a traditional Bengali Khichdi preparation offered in Puja to goddess of preservation, strength and protection Durga⁸. This preparation is slightly different, moong lentil is usually toasted in a hot pan before mixing it with rice and other ingredients. After offering it to goddess Durga during auspicious rituals it's been distributed to the family, friends and community. Jaganath temple is a Hindu temple which was built in 10th century in east Indian state called Odisha. Since beginning Khichdi is one of the main offerings to lord Jagannath (a form of lord Krishna). Usually, khichdi is prepared every day and offered to the god and then distributed as a meal to the pilgrims.

In southern Indian Khichdi is tempered with curry leaves and mustard, In Tamil Nādu it is called Ven Pongal and in Karnataka it is called Bisi Bella Bhath. This version of Khichdi is usually spicy and have multiple spices in it. During Mughal era (1500 CE – 1850 CE) Khichdi being to developed as a royal court delicacy. According to PK Dutta in his article (Dutta, 2017), How khichdi travel through time to reach world food ⁹ Mughal emperor Akbar's Minister Abu Fazl mention in his book *Ain Akbari* the recipe of seven varieties of Khichdi, which used to be the part of Akbar and his family food menu. Akbar's son and successor Jahangir was also fond of khichdi. A special variety of khichdi used to be prepared for him by adding pistachio and raisins in it. The emperor used to call this khichdi as *Lazeezan* in Urdu language that means delicious in English. Another Mughal emperor Aurungzeb did prepare a unique and first documented non-vegetarian version of khichdi for the by adding boiled egg and fish to it and it is known as *Alamgir Khichdi*. Decedents of Mughals also started preparing khichdi with minced meat.

Khichri also became a part of culinary practices in other countries and the part of the international cultures in many forms of it. In British colonial times in India a well-known breakfast was named *Kedgerie*. According to A. Avtans in his article (Avtans, 2017), *Kedgerie – the Anglo-Indian Khichdi* (2017)¹⁰ mentioned that British travelers used to enjoy for them "classic" khichdi with hard-boiled egg and smoked fish. Now *kedgerie* has become breakfast in England.

Mujaddara in Arabic cuisine is a similar preparation as Khichri. In the 19th century the Mediterranean and Italian influence Egyptian *Koshary* is also prepared as khichri with addition of macaroni pasta. These similarities of khichri's presence in Egyptian, middle eastern and Indian subcontinent reflects on the cultural and communal inter-relationships of these countries.

Our research and studies of Ayurveda about khichdi discloses the deep understanding of food consumptions and the designated ingredients during Vedic era. Rice and lentils are the staple grains of Indian subcontinent and has been used for millenniums. But combining them and cooking together with ghee was based on experienced and considered practices and discourse. This inquiry by Vedic wisdom holders was very important for well-being at that time it was communicated culturally, mostly orally to every household in India. Khichri dietary practices, procedures and advised by Vedic wisdom holders was gained in close collaboration with women and food preparers after probably considered time span of observation and gathered experiences. It was passed on orally from generation to generation as a knowledge and ancestral wisdom.

Khichdi has been used in local languages in proverbs, sayings, tales and food metaphors. For example, this story of Akbar and Birbal his main advisor, wisdom holder and trusted mentor where Birbal cook's khichdi by exposing it to moonlight to teach a lesson of being fair to the emperor Akbar and asked him to reconsidered his decision he took recently.

The khichdi was not only limited to a dish prepared with lentil and rice but also witnessed inclusion of local ingredients and spice. As we mentioned above different names of the khichri in Indian subcontinent are influenced by the geographical diversity of available ingredients. One can differentiate and identify the region by knowing the types of ingredients and specific spice is used in khichdi.

Why khichdi was so special and important food preparations during Vedic time? In Ayurvedic text khichdi is mentioned as a balanced diet and ideal to eat at any meal period. Khichdi is considered as a complete meal because it has a balanced ratio of protein, fat and carbohydrates. Khichdi was also the main source of basic nutrients in general and for vegetarian people in Vedic era. Nutrition value of lentils are 11:

- Content low glycemic index
- High in dietary fiber (both soluble and non-soluble)
- Provides vitamins and minerals such as iron, potassium and magnesium, zinc and Vitamin B including folate, niacin and thiamine.
- High in protein content than other grains
- Lentils also helps to maintain cholesterol level, diabetes and heart disease.

Ayurveda also considered khichdi as a food to consume during sickness, during treatment and after treatment. Khichdi as a preparation is very easy to process in human digestive track including intestines and can easily convert into energy without over pressurizing the digestive organs. Normally, khichdi preparation for sick is thin and watery and have no spices sometimes chopped vegetable are added. Ghee also plays an important role in those preparations as it provides micronutrients and moisture that helps the process of digestion. Ghee also helps in cleaning detoxifying the colon and promotes the smooth elimination of deposited food waste in the intestine. Now a days khichdi is being prepared with oats, quinoa, buckwheat and millet in different restaurants as well as in household. By having access to multiple and globalized ingredient khichdi could add so much more to the world cuisine.

Galouti Kebab:

Galouti or Galawati Kebab literally means the kebab which will melt in the mouth, Galouti kebab is considered to be the king of kebabs in India. This kebab was invented in city of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. Sushmita Sen Gupta in her food article (Sen Gupta, 2017). Galouti kebab: the melt in the mouth delicacy originally made for a toothless king 12 mentioned the story of King Asad Ud Daula (1748-1797). This story is known to almost everyone in Lucknow and in north India, it is also a part of oral curriculum from the senior cooks to apprentices in restaurants and hotels. King Asad had huge affection for grand architecture and delicious food. His chief cooks were always preparing different and innovative dishes as instructed by the king. During his old age he lost his teeth and was unable to enjoy his meat and kebabs thoroughly. His cooks started working on the recipe which need minimum requirement of chewing and should be unique in taste. Tunde, known as one-handed cook with his colleagues rose to the occasion and came up with the idea of Galouti kebab which will melt in the king's mouth. The invention of Galouti kebab is associated with the affection of taste and requirement of basic nourishment.

The Galouti kebab is prepared with both beef and lamb, ideally lean meat is preferred. In the traditional recipes meat used to be pounded and strain through a sieve nine times to remove any cartilage, silver skin or fibrous muscles. After mincing it nine times meat consistency is like a thick paste then raw papaya pulp is added to it. Papain a tenderizing enzyme break down all the tissues and helps in giving the mouth melting texture to this kebab. Once texture is achieved the taste is created by using some unique spices like vetiver roots, stone flower, betel plant roots, nutmeg along with common Indian spices. Ginger, garlic, saffron and Ghee is added in generous amount. After adding spices mixture meat is smoked with the help of live charcoal, cloves and ghee in order to get a roasted flavor in the kebab. Then it is rubbed with hand for some time and then rest this process is followed for few times. Galouti kebab is shaped in small meat patties or medallions by using one hand and directly placed on the flat griddle and shallow fried in ghee. It is usually served with a bread called Ulte tawe ka paratha, mint chutney and raw onions.

In Lucknow Galouti kebab is still being enjoyed in classic restaurants from the decedents of the chief cooks of the king. They named the restaurant after their one-handed chief cook ancestor Tunde Kebab. It is also a prestigious kebab in fine dining restaurants and five-star hotels in India. A special skill is required to prepare this kebab a young cook must practice few years before preparing and serving it to the guest in restaurants. A fact about this recipe is that we have almost more than hundred recipes of the galouti kebab. As initially the recipe was kept secret and after eating the kebab people started making their own version based on assumption of spices they taste. Galouti kebab was not only limited to the its mouth melting texture but also for the highly nutritious and nurturing quality. It is also shared in oral stories that a spice blend for Galouti kebab used to have around 150 varieties of spices and herbs. All these herbs and spices were used to preserve and maintain the good

health of the king. The preparation of the Galouti kebab it's a story in itself it is where folklore, experimentation and cultural guessing games take place. One could say that Galouti Kebab is gastronomic foods and nutrition's its own myth and legend.

Conclusion

In closing the general reflections on and contribution for Gastronomy, Food and Nutrition could be summarized by reflections on core topics:

Culinary Skills Craftsmanship, Commitment and Celebrations

The immensity and complexity of the food preparations is often taken for granted. Heirloom aspect of dietary responses to the necessity requiring sophisticated and informed skills, appropriate serving and sharing. The example of these complexities is apprentice training in the Ananda in The Himalayas hotel, specializing in Ayurvedic medicine dietary requirements of guests in need. A chef Ashis Rout instructional methodology and discipline was identical to teacher disciple relationships and understanding of demonstrations, practice and response to learners' abilities and affinities. This considered background is and was invisible ingredient of the food offered to people in need.

Social Engagement

Most communal and family bonding comes around food and its sharing. Besides family daily nourishment the hospitality and special treatment of the guest both with traditions and social mores as well as emotions and reassurance that shared meals offered.

Aesthetic Values

Puja's devotional gifts to specific deities on auspicious occasions and arrangements besides being traditionally determined also allow for the individual and collective expression in the realm of colors, shape and compositions of the offerings.



Hindu Shiva Puja July 28th 2020



Serbian Slava Ritual Bread

The paper as a comparative cultural studied touched upon examples of ancient, historic and contemporary practices and cultural values in the field of culinary processes and its vast body of knowledge. Preparations and procedures are most of the time published as recopied books considered just practical nor record of bodies of knowledge or archeological, anthropological or folkloric studies often ignorant of culinary processes. This reflective contribution to general discourse on the cultural phenomenon of food, nutrition and gastronomy come from the practicing executive chef, scholar of Ayurvedic Medical diet and collector of orally transmitted culinary preparations in diverse cultural settings. These considered finding might contribute inter-culturally to the better understanding of culinary processes and diets.

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