

The History of India

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The Aryans came into the Indian sub-continent around 6000 BC. They also introduce some of the finest culinary arts to the region. Over time, Indian cuisine was significantly shaped by various other invaders throughout the history of the country. This includes the Mughals, British, Turks, and Portuguese, all of whom left their mark by incorporating their own cooking techniques, ingredients, and spices into the already rich diversity. This led to a unique cuisine that is varied, diverse, and distinct. (DUBEY,2011).

There is a period in Ayurveda where food is considered to be nourishing, supportive, and a source of healing that is essential for the well-being of all living beings. “Ayurveda focuses on the individual, not just the illness.” Ayurvedic meals are made based on the principles of an ancient Indian medical system. This healing practice, known as ayurveda, is one of the oldest in the world, with origins that go back 5000 years. It is based on an elemental framework that connects the qualities of nature, the human body, and the flavours of food, which are categorised into three main doshas. Our dietary requirements and digestion are influenced by the changes in nature, such as the different seasons. (AILAWADI,2018).

This highlights the importance of making wise food choices with careful consideration and the right preference. A balanced and nutritious diet comes from eating a variety of fresh foods that are properly prepared and consumed with self-awareness. Food is fundamental; it is a basic need that boosts our strength and immunity. It can be seen as a necessity for both mind and nutrition. When we are in good health, we crave healthy food. However, if our mind, body, or spirit is unbalanced, it can lead to significant issues for our body. (AILAWADI,2018).

This country has a rich religious history that spans a thousand years. It is the birthplace of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Jainism, Christianity, and the Parsi faith. Each of these religions has its own unique dietary practices. For instance, Jains avoid garlic and root vegetables, Muslims do not eat pork, and Hindus refrain from consuming beef. Sikhs prefer jhatka meat, while Muslims opt for halal. Additionally, there are specific days when people fast, and on those occasions, special meals must be prepared according to the rules of their respective religions. (DUBEY,2011).

Moreover, our food choices significantly influence what and how much we eat, viewed through the lenses of economics, health, and commercial interest. A key question arises: ‘Who eats what? And how much of it?’ Globally, rice and wheat are the two most commonly consumed staples. (WOODHEAD,2007). Despite the diversity and differences, the foundation of an Indian meal remains consistent, typically including lentils, local or regional vegetables, pickles, chutney, and, for some, a meat or fish dish, all served at every meal. Desserts are often milk-based. Meals are traditionally eaten with fingers, which helps to scoop up vegetables and curries from the plate. Each meal usually concludes with a digestive, such as paan, areca nuts, sugar-coated fennel seeds and more. (DUBEY,2011).

Globally, around 1.23 billion individuals work in the food system, while 3.83 billion reside in households that are connected to or overly dependent on agricultural food safety in some manner. (DAVIS, 2021). This study looks into the dietary habits of people in rural areas of India and examines the factors that influence their nutrition in specific states. It particularly focuses on whether there is a disparity in food consumption between men and women, providing concrete evidence of gender bias in nutrition and its implications for rural communities. (LANCHESTER,2006).

Gender refers to the behaviours, cultural expectations, and psychological characteristics that are usually associated with being male or female. Gender essentialism is the idea that these characteristics are natural, inherent, and unchanging, and that there are only two genders: male or female. Those who believe in this concept might acknowledge that culture affects some gender behaviours, but they think that the main differences between men and women are innate and established from birth. This viewpoint implies that gender roles are fixed and not influenced by surroundings or experience. However, many people today dispute this notion, highlighting that gender is far more intricate and diverse than just two categories, and that our experiences, society, and culture significantly influence who we are and how we express our gender. (JOHNSON, 2020).

In our society, women have a significant role in interpreting Indian culture. When it comes to what defines a culture, many practices that are seen as cultural are related to women's freedom of movement and control over their sexuality, such as child marriage, purdah, sati, and the social death of widows. One of the most contradictory, or rather, the most troubling aspects, even today, is that a woman's power is often linked to her qualities of motherhood and virginity rather than her fertility or sexuality. (SHARMA, 2017).

This is especially true for women from the lower and middle wealth groups. When asked about what she ate the day before, one participant mentioned, "I had the same food I cooked in the morning again in the afternoon." A common reason for repeating meals was a lack of time. If we are short on time, we tend to eat leftovers from the day before. The same women also pointed out that sometimes work demands made it necessary to choose convenience over having a variety of food: "whether I find in front of me, I cook it. We are working class; our main goal is to fill our stomachs and get back to work." (Baile, Garg, Kapoor, Wasser, Prabhakaran, & Jaacks, 2018).

Being around attractive people of the opposite sex affects what men and women like to eat and drink in different ways. The findings showed a bit of a typical response: when women saw attractive men, they were less willing to buy unhealthy foods and more likely to choose healthy options. On the other hand, when men were exposed to attractive women, it did not change their preference for healthy or unhealthy foods; instead, it made them want to spend more on fancy drinks and dining experiences. (Rodrigues, Gómez-Corona, & Valentin, 2020)

Regional and caste influences shaped traditional Indian food; however, due to liberalisation and urbanisation, global influences are now evident in the Indian diet. There is a growing preference for animal products, fruits from temperate zones, and convenient processed food and beverages. Additionally, South Indians, who traditionally consumed rice, are now showing a preference for wheat. Consumers are no longer restricted to local foods but have access to a global variety. Processed and ultra-processed foods have gained popularity in modern urban societies. (Kumar, Kulkarni, & Rathi, 2022)

The term "globalisation" became popular in the 1990s, similar to "interdependence" in the 1970s, but the idea it represents is not completely new. The way we understood interdependence over 20 years ago now fits with globalisation, as we entered the new millennium: "This vague phrase expresses a poorly understood but widespread feeling that the very nature of world politics is changing". Globalism refers to a state of the world where there are networks of interdependence that stretch across continents. These connections happen through the movement and influence of capital and goods, information and ideas, as well as people and environmental factors. (Keohane & Nye, 2006). Over the past 40 years, there has been a significant change in how many goods, including food, are produced and distributed. This change is called "globalisation", and it has deeply affected people's lives in cultural, ideological, and economic ways. The term has become a common part of social science discussion, as it is widely accepted that the world is going through a new and different phase of capitalist growth. One major result of globalisation

in agriculture is the creation of a global market. This is clearly seen in the growing trade of fresh fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers, which now makes up over 5 per cent of global commodity trade. (Robinson & Carson, 2015).

Globalisation is a key theme that defines our modern world. Its effects are visible in our everyday lives, from the food we eat and the clothes we wear to the movies we watch and the cars and gadgets we use. The processes of globalisation are complex, involving not just economic and political factors but also social and cultural elements of society. Overall, globalisation is a broad term that explains how people from different cultures, languages and lifestyles are brought together. (Araneta, 2020)

Fermented foods like wine, beer, baked goods, and dairy have been created by ancient cultures all over the world, with the oldest record going back to 13000 BC. The groundbreaking biotechnological method of fermentation is mainly driven by the native microorganisms that are naturally found in food ingredients. Originally, this process was focused on prolonging the shelf life of food and allowing for the long-term storage of fruits and vegetables at room temperature by enhancing the microbial stability of these food products. Quickly, people unknowingly discovered that fermenting food could also provide nutritional and health advantages. (Galimberti, Bruno, & Agostinetto, 2021). The globalisation of food has connected once-isolated farming systems to create a new type of agriculture, where combining local and exotic crops leads to a new level of intensification. (Liu, Jones, Motuzaitė-Matuzevičiūtė, Hunt, Lister, An, Przelomska, Kneale, Zhao, & Jones, 2019)

Cities such as Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, and Hyderabad are known for having the best biryanis. There are many similarities in how they are made throughout the country-using spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves for fragrance, adding saffron to give the rice a nice colour, and the taste that comes from cooking meat and vegetables together with the rice. (Antani & Mahapatra, 2022)

When we talk about national culture or ethnic differences, we usually point out these differences by using stereotypes, viewing individual traits as variations caused by specific “sub-cultural” characteristics. For instance, to create a “heterogeneous” group, we might mix one black person, one woman, one senior citizen, and so on, as if each individual somehow represents a uniform group. This approach can mistakenly lead to what we call “heterogenization,” which might actually be a form of “homogenization” in disguise. (Fatehi, 2015)

Although the sociological perspective has provided valuable insights, it falls short on its own. We naturally recognise the differences between individuals, but we also need to enhance our understanding of cultures. The goal of this research is to show that there is individual diversity in thought, reasoning, and behaviour both within and across cultures. Cross-cultural studies, viewed through a sociological lens, have taught us a great deal about national cultures, but there are still many areas that remain unexplored and require further investigation. (Fatehi, 2015)

As the global population continues to grow, the demand for efficient services for this population has also risen. But the real question is, how can we manage such a large and expanding population in an orderly and effective way so that the solution for the rationalisation happens when people structure their thoughts and actions based on specific criteria. These criteria include efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control, which are all fundamental to the idea of McDonaldization. Returning to the initial question of how to handle an overpopulated society efficiently, Weber suggests that the answer lies in ‘the rationalisation of society in the modern period’. This means reducing the number of individual choices regarding means and goals, and instead, rationalising society through institutions that have specific standards to measure everything. (Najafi 2015)

Gender, development, and the primary guide on global feminist economic and development. It showcases significant theoretical, empirical, and methodological advancement, along with international changes over the past ten years. This interdisciplinary study remains easy to understand for a wide audience that is keen on analysing how globalisation affects development and overall wellbeing, especially regarding social and gender equality (Benería, Berik, & Floro, 2015).

India's food and agriculture policy has traditionally aimed at improving the supply and accessibility of staple grains, particularly rice and wheat, which has led to notable success in decreasing hunger levels in the nation. Although millions still experience hunger, one can only imagine how much worse it could have been if the country had not focused on boosting productivity for these key staples during the green revolution. (Pingali, 2019) As a discussion about McDonalidization and similar topics continues in the future, it is evident that today's globalisation of food must be understood through the conflicting and interrelated dynamics of standardisation and diversity. (Turner & Holton, 2015)

The evolving effects of development on both women and men. New challenges like climate change, terrorism, economic shocks, civil wars, and rising migration rates have caused a shift in development policies. The modernisation of agriculture has changed how labour is divided between genders, leading to an increase in women's dependency and workload. Women frequently lose control over resources like land and are often left out of access to better agriculture techniques. Additionally, they may experience the effects of climate change more severely than men, mainly because men tend to move more frequently between locations and jobs, leaving more women to care for children on their own. (Momsen, 2019)

In addition to leading demonstrations, home economists showcased the idea of the modern woman and highlighted the convenience, efficiency, and beauty that came with using electricity at home. These demonstrations were not just about explaining how appliances functioned; they aimed to spark interest in living a life powered by electricity and to portray electric appliances as clean, cool, reliable, healthy, safe, and cost-effective. While the benefits of electrical appliances could be described in pamphlets or shown in stores, which did happen, these demonstrations by home economists, these innovative appliances stood in stark contrast to the hard and time-consuming housework that rural women could grow into a broader interest and usage. (Fowler, Phillips, & Sipp, 2020).

Even today, women are not the main users of most electric appliances, only enjoying the comfort and flexibility they bring to their everyday lives. Nevertheless, the influence of electrification on their lives is significant. All women agree that having electricity is much better than not having it. For them, it represents a major change in the challenges they face daily, significantly reducing the need for labour-intensive tasks like grinding flour or fetching water from distant sources. (Rosenberg, 2016)

In 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established to address gender issues, with the goal of empowering women and reducing gender inequalities in education. These efforts saved millions of lives and improved conditions for many others. (United Nations, 2015). The roles of men and women, along with cultural aspects that show differences in roles across various societies, highlight issues of discrimination and ethics regarding sexual differences. (Neculaesei, 2015).

In traditional communities, women often find themselves at a disadvantage due to deeply rooted gender-based beliefs. When creating policies that are sensitive to gender, it is crucial to include women's viewpoints. The best way to achieve this is through a multidisciplinary, comprehensive, and holistic approach that fosters a truly inclusive society. (Das & Mishra, 2021)

Women tend to have less healthy eating habits compared to men. Although women are generally more aware of health issues than men, their eating patterns are influenced by various factors like socio-cultural aspects, job roles, and urban living. Therefore, it is important to enhance nutrition programs to lower the risk of non-communicable diseases and to boost the overall health of people. (Geetha, Yatnatti, Vijayalakshmi and Dittrich 2020).

A positive change is happening, along with a critical look at gender inequality in the context of agricultural commercialisation. When women get involved in higher profit value chains, value chain nodes, and value chain activities-like being entrepreneurs in scale farming, working in global value chains, and participating in agri-businesses, it can create conflicts with their household and reproductive duties, as well as the gender norms that exist locally. Being part of the commercial value chain, whether as workers or business owners, can also add stress for women, which may lead to their disempowerment, but this issue has not been thoroughly explored in research and data. (Pyburn, Slavchevska, & Kruijssen, 2023).

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