

Indian Food and Cuisine in the 17th and 18th Century

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD

OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

Department of History

BY

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November 2021



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in the present thesis entitled “**Indian Food and Cuisine in the 17th and 18th Century**” is carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Rekha Pande**, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of Hyderabad, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this dissertation has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any University. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Indian Food and Cuisine in the 17th and 18th Century**” submitted by **Rizwan Ahmad** bearing registration number **16SHPH03** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by here under my supervision and guidance.

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Parts of the thesis have been:

A. Published in the following publications:

1. Ahmad, Rizwan and Rekha Pande, 2019, ‘Indian food and Cultural Heritage in the Mughal India’, *Kakatiya Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. XIV, May- 2019
2. Ahmad, Rizwan and Prof. Rekha Pande, 2020, ‘Food, feast and feeding of Royalty in Mughal India, ‘*Journal of Modern Thamizh Research*’ Vol. VIII, September-2020

B. Presented papers in the following conferences:

1. 2020 in the International Conference titled “Reconstructing of Indian History: Society and Religion”, held at Berhampur University, Odisha. 2020, paper “Consumption of Pleasure; Food, feast and feeding of Royalty in Mughal India”
2. 2016 in the Conference titled Indian History Congress, 77th Session, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 28th-30th December 2016, paper titled "Royal Feast in Mughal India" section II, Medieval India.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework during the M. Phil June- December, 2015.

Course Code	Name	Credits	Pass/Fail
1. HS 701	Historiography	4	PASS
2. HS 702	Historical Methods	4	PASS
3. HS 703	Seminar Course	4	PASS

Dedicated to my Parents and my Supervisor Professor. Rekha Pande.

Acknowledgements

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Rekha Pande for her great guidance and support throughout my research work. I am thankful to her for spending her valuable time in discussing various aspects and providing immense help I needed throughout. This is a small acknowledgement to you ma'am for your encouragement and motivation throughout the research period.

I'm grateful to my Doctoral committee members Dr. M.N. Rajesh and Prof. Ajay Sahoo for their timely suggestion in my research. I also extend my gratitude to acknowledge Prof. Bhangya Bhukya, Prof. Rila Mukherjee, Dr. Vijay Ramdas, Prof. Aloka Parasher Sen, Prof. K. P. Rao, Prof. Sanjay Subodh, Dr. Rashmi Mishra, Dr. V. Rajagopal, Dr. Swarupa Rani, Dr B. Eswara Rao, Dr. Ramdas, Dr. V.J. Varghese and Prof. Ananditha Mukhopadhyaya for their supports in the department. This is also an occasion to thank all the nonteaching staffs of the Department for their constant co operations and supporting during this research program.

Here I am also thankful to the Librarian and other Library staff at the University of Hyderabad, Aligarh Muslim University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Annamalai University and Osmania University for their support in my research period.

I am really fortunate to have many other faculties and seniors and friends who have provide me a deeper understanding on Mughal Foods, Drinks Culture and works related on Food History. I am deeply indebted to my Parents, family members and extend my heart full gratitude for their continuous cooperation, support and guidance in all my endeavours.

I am thankful to my friends Pavithra, Neeharika, Mir, Sujata, Sana, Silka, Monika, Vipin, Falguni, Tahir, Dhruva, Akaito, Akram, Hathika, Kishore, Dhananjay, Subhash, Danish, Yousuf, Ahmad, Asif and Ravi for their cooperation and pleasant company throughout the research period and constant motivation and encouragement.

At last I am thankful to my family for their constant support and motivations. I am thankful to all my other friends and seniors on the campus and outside the campus for their direct and indirect help throughout my research period.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The present thesis titled, “*Indian Food and Cuisine in the 17th-18th century*” analyses one of the less emphasized topic in the historical writing of the medieval Indian history by understanding the gastronomy of the past. The present topic becomes more relevant to study as our daily need of food and cuisine were not given importance in the historical writing which brings a lacuna in the late medieval history or early modern India. Therefore this study helps to understand various aspects of food in the 17th and 18th century. Unfortunately, there is hardly any adequate information on food and cuisine in the historical writing. The fact of the matter is unending need for food always have been seen as a basic necessity for the survival and growth of human kind which plays an important role in culture and tradition but it also helps for the formation of identity as it reflects one’s choice, beliefs, habits, passion and personality.¹ It is necessary to note that food and cuisine were always dynamic and also varied from region to region in India and very often region, religion and ethnicity are attached mostly through the kind of food consumption.

Indeed the strength of the living things in the society possessed by the food available before them. However, food also conveys the idea of communication for one’s individuality and one’s place in the society.² Food communicates class, ethnic group, lifestyle and other social position. Hence food can be termed as one of the medium of communication in the social system. In fact the notion of identity is not a passive experience but it develops through an active individual or social practice.³

As far as cuisine is concerned it is an integral part of food and with regards to cuisine India can be considered as one of the most diverse society in the world. Over the centuries India has borrowed many kinds of food and ingredients heavily and openly from every corner of the world. Therefore it is essential to look into the whole process of changes in gastronomy from historical perspective. One of the fact that, unlike clothes, luxuries items, houses, food is a constant need for the societies. Food and cuisine has always played a very dynamic role in changing all the spheres of the human beings in the society.

Basically, food consumption incorporates many aspects of the culture. Indeed with the elaboration in the ingredients it increases food items which also indicates the prosperity of the society as well as human lives. The 17th and 18th century occupies a very ambiguous place in the historical writing. As much of the attention has been given to the Mughals for their administration, military and architectural achievements and their disintegration too by the scholars and historians. Therefore in the present study an endeavor has been made to turn our attention to bring is an attempt to trace the linkages of the changing ingredients and the culinary habits that constituted the varieties of food availability and dining patterns of the people in the 17th and 18th century.

Food is generally understood as a medium for the survival and growth of humankind but it has also an ability to mobilize strong emotions in people. In in the Hindu thought, food is considered from physical and moral forms as cosmos because fundamentally it attached a link between human being and God.⁴ Even cooking in India is deeply embedded in moral and medical beliefs.⁵ The anthropological literature on the subject does not speak in one voice with respect to defining the concept of ‘cuisine’. According to Ferguson cuisine is ‘the code that structures the practice of food and allows us to discuss and to represent taste’⁶ Ferguson goes on to draw out certain

conditions that a set of culinary practices must fulfil in order to qualify as a cuisine: A more or less coherent repertory of culinary preparations, usually structured by the products at hand, becomes a true cuisine only when its status as a repertory becomes apparent. That is, culinary preparations become a cuisine when, and only when, the preparations are articulated and formalized, and enter the public domain.⁷ However cuisine is also fixed by a boundary or region with limited amount of ingredients depending upon the geography, climate and history of the territory.⁸ Though the haute cuisine or high cuisine can be kept in a separate category as it is not having any boundary or restriction in regards with ingredients.⁹

Unlike many countries, India is one of the oldest civilisations continuing with many practices and traditions of the past and taste is also one of the unique features attached to the Indian foodways. Gastronomy also has essential social elements that connects, or divide as the case may be, people specific food choices. The Seventeenth and Eighteenth century occupies a very important place in the history of the Indian sub-continent. One cannot deny the fact that food and cuisine received great attention in the past, but the narrative of the historian in the traditional histories focuses more on the socio-economic, political and architecture rather than the historical importance of the food and cuisine in the past. The aspect of food and cuisine add content and beautify the medieval Indian history as well as the cultural history of India. This period has been seen from several perspectives by different scholars and historians. Food and cuisine had a close relationship with people's livelihood throughout the Mughal era, and it gradually formed highly diverse Indian food and cuisine culture as a historical phenomenon.

The canvas of the 17th -18th century, in fact is very wide and has been discussed from a different perspective in the Indian history writing. In this works attempt has made to bring focus on food as one of the important aspects of culture in Mughal India and later Mughal period. Food is a

continuous process is an important part of traditional knowledge and reflects patterns of cultural amalgamations. The gastronomy of the past empowers us to comprehend our social legacy and society. Food also catalyzes human evolution, as well as a spiritual and cultural link in society. Mughal history starts with the conquest of India by Babur in 1526 after defeating Ibrahim Lodhi in first battle of Panipat and ended the struggle for hegemony in India with the establishment of Mughal Empire¹⁰. The focus have been rendered more to the Mughals as they have ruled India for more than three hundred years, in which they have been credited a lot of praise for their work like architecture, luxuries items, paintings, lavish life style, and last but not the least for their rule in India. The period 17th -18th century mostly covers war, politics, economy, society and were given much importance and dominated the historical writings. But food and cuisine largely ignored in the historical writings. Whereas the 18th century mostly attributed with the decline of Mughal Empire and therefore Indian cuisine culture also neglected in the historical writing. The present thesis gives emphasis on the importance of regional cuisine in the eighteenth century. Thus the present work endeavors to reduce the gap in the historical writing.

The objective of the study:

- To examine the importance of food in the 17th and 18th century and examine it as a part of identity and culture.
- To explore the idea of Royal Feast and its contribution in culture and linkages between food, power and spectacle.
- To analyse the drinking culture during this period and question of consumption.
- To analyse the food for common people and their cuisine in the 17th and 18th century.

- To examine the amalgamation of various cultures in the food of 17th - 18th century and account of diversity.

Research Methodology:

The methodology for present work necessitates intensive research for which we have examines both primary and secondary sources. The methodology also relies more from gastronomical perspective. In this endeavor present work will also cover the archival as well as library works. The works done so far on the aspects of food and cuisine or related to this theme will also been taken into account. Even those works which have been done so far with certain perspective will also be checked and examined keeping a close nexus of the present contours of scholarship related to the subject. Finally we will try to apply an anthropological and sociological perspective to understand importance of food in respect of cultural emancipation of the Mughals.

Research questions:

- What was the role of food in the 17th-18th century?
- Did food have some contribution in shaping the identity and culture?
- What influence did Mughals have on the food and how did Mughals employ food as a marker of cultural idiom?
- What was the role of cuisine, taste and spices in the 17th- 18th century?
- What was the impact of regional cultures on food and cuisine on Mughals?
- How food and cooking became gendered in the 17th-18th century?

Sources:

The topic of research on ‘Indian food and cuisine in the 17th- 18th century’ is fortunate in terms of material sources. As there are mainly literary sources but varied in nature. Indeed, it is critical to note that food, which is both a necessity for human survival and a symbol of culture, has been overlooked in historical literature from the 17th and 18th centuries. However the literary sources which have been used in the present study can be divided into three categories- the first is primary sources, secondary sources and last one is travelers’ accounts.

Primary sources:

The necessary information for the study has been taken from the primary sources which includes the information that have been contemporary to the Mughal times like memoirs, official records, letters and other then these we are going to use several culinary contemporary manuals like *Nimatnama*, *Manosollasa*, and *Nuskha-i-Shahjahani*. These literary sources occupy a prominent position in depicting and for understanding the real meaning of food in the 17th-18th century. In this regard one of the important sources is *Baburnamah*, the memoir of Babur which gives a very detailed account of India in every aspects that touches the socio-economic and political condition of India.¹¹ The second major source is *Tezkereh-al-Vakiat* or private memoirs of Humayun by Jouher. In this account he throws light upon the private conduct of emperor Humayun.¹² In this regard another important source is *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abu Fazl. It gave a brief account of imperial kitchen during Akbar’s period. This is an official record which touches all the social aspects of Emperor Akbar’s life.¹³ Apart from these other primary sources also play an important role in

which *Ruka'at-i-Alamgiri* or Letters of Aurangzeb provides the information on social aspect of his time.¹⁴ Apart from that we have also a Persian travel literature, Anand Ram *Mukhlis*'s "*Safarnāma-i Mukhlis*" which contains a rich with descriptions of menus and meals of that time. He also wrote the *Mir'ātul Iṣṭilāḥ*, which is an encyclopedic dictionary that offers some information on life in *Shāhjahanābād* during the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Some of the important Urdu sources also taken into consideration for this study like '*Kulliyat e Nazir*' by Nazir Akbarabadi. In this works we get a lot of important information about the regional cuisine of India.¹⁶

Secondary sources:

In addition to these the next source which have been used in this study is the secondary sources. That includes books and articles published by several historian and scholars related to this topic has also been taken into consideration. Though there is a considerable amount of work available in different aspects related to polity, economy and society, works concerning food is ignored in Mughal history and later Mughal history writing. One of the important book concerning to food is by Elizabeth Collingham's "*Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*". It discusses more on study of colonial cuisine and is largely drawn from English sources. She also gives a very brief note on Mughal biryani as well.¹⁷ However another important recent work entitled "*The writer's feast, Food and the cultures of representation*" edited by Supriya Chaudhuri and Rimi B. Chatterjee provides a brief account of food culture of the modern India. As this work has been four section with different themes, in which second theme is related to gendering of the food. Interestingly this work as well focused on the modern period.¹⁸

Travel Accounts:

We get some information on food also from the European travelers' accounts. As these accounts are also contemporary to the Mughal period and played a vital role in providing important information with regard to the present study. These travelers from different parts of Europe have visited Mughal India and have left detailed accounts that touch almost every aspects of the society. These literary sources can be seen as the representation of others in regards of Mughal India and one can also expect less bias in the accounts as these are not courtly funded. One of the important travelers is Thomas Roe (1615-1619). He says that during Jahangir's period twenty dishes at a time were served at the tables of the nobles but sometimes number went even beyond fifty, and Jahangir himself was very fond of wine and meat despite that he banned slaughter of animals on certain days as he wanted to maintain the tradition of his father during his rule as well.¹⁹ Apart from this, Francois Bernier (1656-1668) also says that the nation consumes an immense quantity of fresh fruits which came from different parts of countries like Bali, Samarkand, Bocara, and Persia etc. which simply indicates Mughal India was culturally much advanced and diverse. He also argues that different kinds of meat and wines like chiraz or canary were available in shops and varieties of food items and fruits of Kashmir was send to several places throughout the Mughal Empire.²⁰

Review of literature:

No separate and comprehensive study concerning to the food and cuisine in India has been made in historical writing more particular in the 17th and 18th century. It is necessary to draw

attention to the fact that remarkably few notable works which have been done so far on history of food. We will try to look closely at the literature which is produced on the food culture in modern times. Therefore for general understanding of my topic we are looking at the available sources that give a brief account on this topic. When we look into some of the early works on food and cuisine it is interesting to find some of the foreign works discusses about their country's food culture.

One of the important book which discusses about food is "*The Food culture of France*" by Julia Abramson. As this book talks about food in France from ancient to modern period in which medieval France which largely got influenced with the increase in European voyages that simply led to the introduction of new food varieties like potato, tomato, Virginia strawberry, wild rice etc. Largely hot chili peppers never took hold much in the food of France. Whereas food culture of France also reflects the strong sense of social hierarchy that prevailed in the society during that period. It has been seen in medieval society of France that a woman always held a position of a cook in the wealthiest household.²¹

Even in the 17th century, when coffee, chocolate, tea, and sugar became prominent in elite section, it took a century for being common in France. However Sugar was very expensive that's why it was unknown to the peasants house hold by that time. It took decades for being accessible to all section in France. Apart from these, Bread was staple diet throughout the centuries, which makes meal complete as it was available indifferent sizes and on reasonable prices. Despite all these facts it provides only over view of food history of the France.

Michael Ashkenazi and Jeane Jacob, "*Food culture of Japan*". This book also deals with the history of food and its growth in varieties of food till present time. In this work attempts were

made to know about new changes occurred in the medieval times or samurai period. It can be seen when Europeans entered into the domain of Japan along with firearms and new way of food baking in early 16th century. Tea was common among all people while after 1637, Japan was closed for all foreign countries except small trading post of Dutch and China which simply led to the self-reliable food. The best part of this period was the invention of lunchbox (obento) practiced one by the traveler mostly.

However the famous dish of Japan, Edozushi popularly known throughout the world as ‘SUSHI’ was born during this period and it consist of fish and vinegar rice.²² Whereas another attempt was made for the study of food by Ursula Heinzelmann tittle “*Food culture of Germany*” which throws light on the importance of food in German society. During medieval period countries like Italy and Russia had impact on Germany’s cuisine. Which lead to increase in the food items like lemons, cauliflower, cabbage and buckwheat etc. that enhances their food culture. The author also talks about the shortage of sugar in Germany and common people hardly consumed it. In the sixteenth century meals and representations of status were closely linked and food often served enormous to them who were having demonstrate economic and political power in the Germany. Despite of all these the varieties of beer, meat, beef, roast hare, boiled meat, and flour dishes were also prevailed which never the less, help to great extent in understanding the food culture.²³

In this regard another important book by Peter Heine’s “*Food Culture in the Near East, Middle East, and North Africa*” talks about the changes in food culture in a society where the majority of the population are Muslims. There one can easily see the influence of religion in the food culture. However here hospitality becomes more important as Syrian proverb says “Good cooking is one half of the hospitality only”, which means host should also take his or her

time for an interesting conversation, some jokes, or even gossiping. That serves better way of attachment to the visitor. However food like bread, dates, camel or sheep meat, fish, rice was common among people besides these, pork and other non-eatable item were common among those who were not Muslims like Jews and Christians. Thus it reveals from all these that in these countries food culture plays an important role not only for depicting the social strata but also the various items of food available and eaten which were largely dependent on region, trade, and beliefs.²⁴

There was hardly any attempts made to examine historically the food culture in India. Despite the lack of research on this topic, we do have some important books which provide knowledge of foods in India. Among those one of the important book which deals with the food is K. T. Achaya's "*Indian Food: A Historical Companion*". He presents a fairly competent historical survey of food from prehistory to the colonial period. The first few chapters give the details of food journey in a chronological manner, beginning with prehistoric times and ending with British rule. In this book one chapter also gives more emphasis on regional cuisines as well where he endeavors to cover almost all the states of India with its brief historical background of food. Apart from this, the author also gives a brief note on the changes brought in by the different communities in Indian food, and coming Europeans to the new world scenario.²⁵

Yet another attempt is done by Colleen Taylor Sen in her work "*Fasts and Feasts, A history of Food in India*". In this work, she praises the diverse traditions, and techniques in the Indian culture. She undertook the track of India's Food history from ancient India till present without obfuscating any chronological order of India. This work has been divided into thirteen chapters where eight chapters discusses from prehistory to sultanate period. She summarizes in one chapter from Mughal to late nineteen century. Therefore her work itself shows very less

importance has been given to the 17th- 18th century. However the importance of her work lies in the discussing about cultures of food consumption within religious, philosophical, and socio-economic frameworks. Her work theorizes that food is not a static in pose but as an active, ever-changing product of 5,000 years of political upheavals, migrations and conquests, revelries and lamentation.²⁶

In this regards another interesting work by Utsa Ray “Culinary Culture in Colonial India, A Cosmopolitan Platter and the Middle Class”, deals with inquiring how cuisine became a central idea in the construction of colonial middle class in Bengal. She raises one point clearly that there can’t be any national cuisine as our society has adopted many items from outside and also varies from region to region. One of the chief arguments of this work is that the middle class in colonial Bengal has indigenized the culinary experiences that came with Colonialism. She also discusses the concept of ‘Hybridity’ in the new cuisine emerged in the late colonial period. In this work she argues that the act of cooking was more gendered in the colonial period than in the precolonial period.

Ray also presents various documents to prove the interesting story of how middle class in Bengal attempted to distinguish itself as rational social class through the medium of food in colonial India. She puts forward an argument that the new culinary skill was acquired by the middle class women through the support of modern education. Even though her argument is persuasive but has not provided complete details on especially 17th-18th century as her work focuses more on Bengal region and impact on its food.²⁷

Another attempt was made in the field of food during Mughal period by Shireen Moosvi, “Episodes in the Life of Akbar” in which she gives a brief biography of Akbar’s life. In this

book a focus has given on Akbar's personality. However one very brief chapter also deals with the drink and diet in the age of Akbar where she mentions the choice and food items which were available in Harem during the meal time. She also talks about the quality of food what Akbar preferred.²⁸ In this work as well she is confined to the Akbar's food and his lifestyle, there is no discussion about later period.

One more book entitled as "A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food" by K. T Achaya deals with the varieties of the food items available from the prehistory to the current period. Here he focuses more on the history of food items prevails in Indian History. The author has arranged the food terms in a dictionary pattern, where he also discussed the varieties of foods presents in different communities which exist in different part of Indian subcontinent. He brings an interdisciplinary approach in this work. He utilizes the possibilities of Archaeology, Anthropology, Sociology and even Botany too.²⁹

Another important book concerning to this theme is "*Medieval India, The Study of a Civilization*" by one of the prominent historian of India Irfan Habib. Here the author gives a descriptive survey of India from ancient times to Mughals Era. The book touches the socio-economic, technology and cultural aspects which exist in Ancient India till Mughal Empire. In which author has categorized Mughal Indian society into three groups. Where he says that lower section of the society don't have proper food to eat and their standard of living is also very bad and they hardly consume meat. The second group which comprises of middle class were having a better life style because they can consume more items and finally upper class or noble class for them he says that they were having enormous kitchens and levies of attendant.³⁰

One more important work by Cecillia- Leong-Salobir is “*Food Culture in Colonial Asia: A Taste of Empire*” studies about the social history of colonial food practices in India, Malaysia and Singapore. She presents the contribution of domestic servants in the development of hybrid cuisine in colonial countries, especially the South Asian countries between 1858 and 1963. She refuses the current historical notions on colonial food and argues that rather than trying to differentiating themselves the British colonialists adapted their own culinary tradition linking it with the indigenous practices. She clearly highlights the fact that the British colonialist consumed a hybrid or fusion of food. As her work most of the things have been drawn from English sources.

Leong - Salobir, explores the variation of colonial food culture in the three colonies of British. India is primary concern of study in her work however it also includes an analysis of Malaysia, and Singapore. Though she covers three countries but her study can't be regarded as comparative study on the subcontinents as she provides a complete picture of the colonial culture using the platform of culinary tradition and patterns domestic service. She also discusses the variations of food culture among the different caste, class race and ethnic groups of the servants involved in it. The work is divided into five chapters which analyses the making of the British colonial food culture in relation to race, caste, gender and food production and preparation respectively. In the first part, the author argues that the British did not try to differentiate themselves from the local people by their own separate cuisine. She also argues that, on contrary to this practice, a hybrid cuisine emerged through the blending of British and local food culture in India. In her book, she had used mostly Travelers account, letters and the European sources.³¹

Another important work in field of food history is the edited work of Supriya Chaudhuri and Rimi K. Banerjee, titled the “*Writer's Feast, Food and the Cultures of Representation*”. This

work is a collection of essays that makes important contribution to the field of food and culture. The work innovatively address the socio-political and symbolic meanings of food in a broad aesthetic and cultural context. Interestingly this work as well focuses more on the modern period food culture of India along with certain other countries as well. The second part of the book deals with the gendering of food.³²

Chapterization:

This study has been divided into seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion chapter. The first chapter, “**Introduction**” discusses the subject of the study and its importance, highlights the objective of the study, methodology, research question, sources of the study, review of the literature and finally the chapterization for the study.

The second chapter is “**Material Context of 17th and 18th century**” and under this, attempt has been made to bring focus on the material context of this period and how food and cuisine evolved. We focus on the conditions of different sections of the society with regards to the consumption. This chapter looks at the brief history of food in the different sphere of the society like social, political and economic.

The third chapter, “**Food of the Elite**” throws the light on the role of food in a symbolism of power and status. Attempts have been made to explore the kinds of food and manners in which nobles and emperors eat. This chapter argues how food creates a special status in the society

and see the role of the available foods for the rich or elite section of the society. It also analyses the role of women in the food consumption and their participation in the cooking.

The fourth chapter is “**Food of the Commoners**” it discusses about the foods consumed by the common people in the society, where people belonging to different social sections had different tastes and preferences that was guided on the basis of availability of food before them. This chapter also talks about their cuisine as well with the changes in the gastronomy. This chapter explores the survival and evolution in the food of common masses in the 17th and 18th century.

The fifth chapter is “**Regional Food and amalgamation of cultures**” deals with the impact on food by various cultures. This chapter covers the information of all external as well as local cultural fusion that resulted on the food of the period from 17th-18th century. As amalgamation plays a key role in the enhancement and enlarging the food items. Though this chapter argues more on Europeans and their Impact on food, changes in food items, changes in ingredients and taste? Hence this chapter gives importance to the cultural fusion and changes on the food from different aspects.

The sixth chapter is “**Drinks in the 17th and 18th century**” studies about the different types of consumption like non-alcoholic and alcoholic consumption. The role of beverages in the 17th and 18th century. The kinds of drinks that were available before the people and how it also created identity based on consumption. However, in this regards this chapter also analyses the role of food and cuisine with regards to drink as it was integral part of the gastronomy. It also raises question about changes in the gender perspective for consumptions of drinks at the time of ritualistic feast in 17th -18th century.

The seventh chapter is “**Conclusion**” summarizes all the chapters of the thesis. This chapter also tries to portray the changes to aid a better understanding of the 17th-18th century. Food and cuisine are always attached to our daily needs but it is necessary to draw historical attention to food consumption of the period from 17th -18th century.

END NOTES:

¹ Heinzlmann, Ursula, 2008, *Food Culture of Germany*, London, Green wood Press, p. 11-12

² Anderson, E.N., 2005, *Everyone Eats, Understanding Food and Culture*, New York, New York University Press, p. 124-125

³ Rosenblum, D. Jordon., 2010, *Food and Identity In Early Rabbinic Judaism*, New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 6-7

⁴ Appadurai, Arjun, 1981, “Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia”. *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 3, Symbolism and Cognition

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst 2004. *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.p.18.

⁷ Ibid p.19

⁸ Mintz, Sidney, 1996, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursion Into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. Boston, Beacon Press Book. p. 99

⁹ Ibid., p. 100-101

¹⁰ Habib, Irfan., 2008, *Medieval India, The Study of a Civilization*, National book trust, New Delhi.

¹¹ .Babur, Zahiruddin Muhammad., 1922, *Babur Nama*, Vol. II, tr. A.S. Beveridge, London, Luzac and co

¹² Jouher., 2009, *The Tezkerah -Al-Vakiat*, tr. Charles Stewart, Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, Delhi.

¹³ Abul Fazl., 1873, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, tr. H. Blochmann, G. H. Rouse, Calcutta

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Chapter 2

THE MATERIAL CONTEXT OF THE 17th -18th century

Food has never been an important subject of study in the history of the world. Indeed it has always played a significant role in the one's identity whether it's a family, society, or the empire. The Indian food and cuisine have developed from an incredibly rich and varied dishes reflecting its geographic, climate, and cultural tradition. Though food has always seen as a backbone for a prosperous economy and for the survival of humankind in any society, moreover the role of food is also attached with the political situation, stabilization, and disturbance in the state directly impact on the food availability and its distribution. The enormous appetite is generally attached to the prestige in almost every society, firstly as a sign of power and a sign of wealth but on the other hand, it also indicates poverty in the society.

Proper food consumption has long been regarded as the single most important factor in leading a healthy and prosperous life. Indian food may be described as a fusion of several cultures and seen as a one platter dish. The present chapter focus on all three aspects i.e. political, social and economic in the light of food and cuisine. Food consumption is not a singular phenomenon. Many aspects are usually associated with food intakes in the past, and unfortunately, this issue has not received adequate consideration in Indian historical literature. Even, cooking is also a kind of alchemy that transform basic ingredients and raw materials into a lavish dish or healthy food. The cooking process also never remains static and keep on evolving from centuries with amalgamation of several cultures in it. However, the seventeenth and eighteenth century was the time when the food was enriched itself through amalgamation of various cultures and along with

that the Indian cuisine also evolving simultaneously. This was also the time when cultural diversity of India was enhanced not only through the rule but also with the varieties of food consumption.

The Mughal Empire, one of the most powerful empires in Indian history writing, begins its rule in the sixteenth century. Though Mughals entered in India after the first battle of Panipat in 1526 and very soon they were able to control the more power in their own hand. Their hegemony over India started a new phase in the cultural space. However, the Eighteenth century was the period of their decline and the centralized power got divided into so many regional powers. They have built their presence in India with Babur and later gave a centralized state during the time of Akbar that remained stable till the period of Aurangzeb or in other words this till the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth century when Mughal have started losing their controls on India. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal dynasty started declining and when East India Company took charge of the subcontinent the essence of Mughal rule almost disappeared from the subcontinent. In the mean time they have added so many features of their rich socio-economic culture which got mingled with the Indian land so well that now it is difficult to see whose culture we are pursuing. Babur descendants emerged as the powerful rulers in the subcontinent and their vision for the state made the Mughal Empire sturdy and bureaucratic in nature. On the other hand, the eighteenth century was the period in the world history where so many things were happening at global level, the French revolution, agriculture and industrial revolution all these have changed the political and the social narrative of the European history. At the same time India was also going from a transition period. The Mighty Mughal power started disintegrated and the East India Company tried to capture not only the economic power but administrative power in the India. Initially all the Europeans entered in

India with sole purpose of trade or economic favor for their respective nations. The Mughal Empire, which had ruled more efficiently in the seventeenth century started losing their ground with internal and external pressure in the eighteenth century.

According to Harbans Mukhia, the Mughals were self-sufficient, self-explanatory, and had never had to deal with the dilemma of being outsiders governing over an alien land¹. The splendor of the Mughal Empire in the seventeenth century gives them a distinctive place in the history of world. The political, social and economic factors were responsible in the expansion of Mughal state in the subcontinent in this century. The trade and commerce, mercantile group also contributed in linking the subcontinent with the outer world. The rich culture which they brought with themselves also benefited the Mughals in merging with the rest of the subcontinent. With the comings of Mughals the state was advanced in technology, military tactics, trade and commerce. Similarly, the eighteenth century India was suffering from a chaotic situation. The centralized Mughal structure now started shaking its base, regional powers were becoming stronger along with the East India company. Despite all these upheavals, the Indian culture was not touring at its own pace without getting much harmed. Thus in the medieval history of India, the seventeenth century made its own impact which has sparkling colors that added to the beauty of the Indian culture. For better understanding of the food and its culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, a brief political history, society, and economy is need to be discussed.

Political Background: The political scenario of the Mughal Empire starts when the Lodhi dynasty lost their battle to Babur in first war of Panipat and subsequently it begins a new era of historical writing in India. The establishment of the Mughal Empire in India enhances the existing culture. Although the founder of the empire Babur and his immediate successor

Humayun, hardly had time to change the administrative structure or to provide a centralized structure for an empire which they overtook from the Lodhis. Their efforts were to stabilize themselves as their time was mostly spent in struggling with inside and outside powers. However, Babur's successors ruled India for more than three hundred years in Indian history and provided a much stable and strengthened empire. Some of the descendent of the Babur have left a firm impression of greatness by their works and personality in the Indian subcontinent. The political scenario got changed after the death of Aurangzeb, for this was the time when East India company were also very active not only in the trade but also in administrative works of the India and they soon established themselves in the power.

As far as food is concerned, it is not only a means of survival or necessity for living but it can be seen from political perspective as well. As in the beginning itself Babur had gone through a difficult time in his life. He faced a problem from Ibrahim Lodhi's aunt as she wanted to take a revenge from him. In order to do so, she took help from the cooks who worked in the kitchen and added poison in his food. Despite eating that food he escaped from the danger and says that "an evil arrived and happily passed on"². Thus in the beginning itself, food was not merely used to feed someone but also used as a weapon of war in the medieval India. However though Babur after coming to India, never liked its food and fruits and made a lot of complained about Indian way of living and diet. The unified politico- administration base for the seventeenth century was already started by one of the pioneer ruler in the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who not only engineered the great empire but also gave a strong platform for the establishment of food culture. As in the beginning itself of his rule he has taken several measure to make his empire centralized. That was basically required for fruitful economy and to make empire politically strong.

In this regard Abu Fazl says that the centralization of the empire in the Akbar's period led to the growth of trade, cultural amalgamation and increase in the member of upper classes. Now the fruits from different parts of the world were coming in India like Kabul, Qandahar and Kashmir. Thus the bazars were now filled with a lot of fresh and good quality fruits like melons, grapes, water melons, peaches and almonds.³ Even the cooks were also available before him from across the country who were well versed in cooking several kind of dishes.⁴ In order to avoid unforeseen danger as which Babur has faced while eating food, he made separate department of kitchen where every dishes would come before him sealed and checked by the head cook Mir Bakawal.⁵ One of the contemporary traveler Edward Terry observed that the territories, wealth, and rich commodities enjoyed by Mughal Emperor definitely make him the greatest king of the east if not whole world.⁶ The expansion led by Akbar that added the territory like Bengal(1576), Kabul(1585), Kashmir(1586), Sind(1591), Orissa(1592), and Qandahar(1595).⁷ Thus with the expansion of the empire also provides a systematic and centralized structure, which gave the Mughal Empire a great strength. As one can say because of his several initiatives the Mughal Empire was able to survive here for so long. At this backdrop, the seventeenth century starts with the death of Akbar and the Mughal throne went in three able successor's hands i.e, Jahangir (1605-27), Shahjahan (1628-58) and Aurangzeb (1659-1707). Under them also expansion was taking place but with low pace.⁸ They tried to uphold and expand the legacy which they received from the Emperor Akbar.

Food has not a single meaning i.e., to feed someone or fulfill someone appetite. In the medieval period, the consumption of food has political attachment as well. The seventeenth century was the time when social norms of the society were always taken into account. This century was also a period of the political strengthening, Emperor Jahangir in his time declared not to kill animals

on Thursday and Sunday in the remembrance of his father.⁹ Despite the fact he was very fond of chased meat. Thus the food was also used as political tool in the medieval period. Seventeenth century was the time when the political situation was stable and the Mughal Empire was expanding but along with that culinary culture was also nurturing with so many items that added charm to the available food of India. This was also the time when cultural boundaries were not restricted to any place or region. For instance, one of the British ambassador to the court of Jahangir records that in his royal kitchen he had both Indian and English cook.¹⁰ So the cultural boundary was multifaceted with so many culture and mingling with our existing culture. One can also understand this was the time when a lots of Europeans (the Dutch, French, Italian, and Britishers) were entering in India, with a notion of trade opportunities for their native nations. This shows the political ability of the Mughal emperor. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler writes that at the time of Shah Jahan, European style of pastries, cakes and other sweet dishes were prepared by some of the slaves who had been with the Portuguese at Ugulim.¹¹ Thus this lavishness and splendor indicate the elaborate system of food consumption marks a legitimacy and power in the society. This can be considered as a symbolic way of showing power or supremacy among the masses.

The political situation started changing in the eighteenth century, the powerful Mughal Empire so persistently built up started faltering and splitting up into fragments. In this century, one of the contemporary writer Elizabeth Fay writes that there was a perception in England that the heat of the Bengal would destroy one's appetite. Interestingly she observed just opposite of it, people consume more food in India.¹² Soon everything changed in the eighteenth century, the whole administrative structure got collapsed after the death of Aurangzeb, but unlike the political aspect the cultural aspect remains the same and helps in shaping the texture of the society for a long

time.¹³ Despite the fact that the kings and ministers were losing their military success on their enemies, this period noticed a different phase of the food culture in India, now regional cuisine was becoming popular in the masses. There were so many contemporary authors and poets who have amplified the beauty of Indian cuisine through their writings. Interestingly the festive food also becomes popular among the Indian masses. One of the contemporary poets of the Eighteenth century Nazir Akbarabadi writes in his one of the poetry for Diwali that this was one of the festival in which lots of sweet dessert were part of the celebrations.^a

Interestingly, one can notice so many food items were part of the celebration like Barfi (one kind of sweet), Batashe (one sweet dish) are still part of our cultural practices. On one hand this was the period of chaos in the political sphere and on the other hand cuisine was becoming binding force and getting closer to the common person's taste. Food can be seen as a medium of binding the people. However, for Eid celebration, Nazir Akbarabadi writes that everyone was very excited from the morning itself with several kinds of sweet dishes like 'Sewaiya'.^b

^a. “*Kisine naqad liya kisi ne udhar*

Khilone khelon batashon ka garm hai bazar

Mithaiyon ki dukanen laga ke halwai

Pukarte hai ki la laa divali hai aai

Batashe le koi barfi kisi ne tolwai.” Akbarabadi Nazeer, *Kalam Nazeer Akbarabadi*, 2003, ed. Farooq Argali, Alhaj Md. Naseer khan, Fareed Interprises, Delhi , p. 92-94

^b. “*Phicle pahar se uth ke nahane ki dhum hai*

Sheer o shakkar sewaiyan banana ke dhum hai

Koi to mast firta hai jaam e sharab se

Though mostly the poets used so many hyperboles and filled it with imaginary things in their poetry to make their works beautiful. But here in his poem, one can also find out the true feelings of the Indian society. The dishes which were prepared for the Eid celebration was Sheer (a kind of sweet pudding), Sewaiyan (a popular sweet dish). Indeed here one can also notice that for some people, Sharab (wine) was not excluded from the celebration, it was part and partial of the celebration. Thus the regional cuisine also started a new phase in the social sphere. In fact, the eighteenth century was marked mostly as a declining period for the Mughal Empire, interestingly here one can notice for the later Mughals the concept of hospitality also becomes important. For instance, Donna Juliana, a Portuguese lady holding a rank of trust in the harem was presented by a dinner of fifty dishes from the emperor's table; she noticed that all of them were having fragrances of roses and other perfumeries. Even betel leaf still continued to be one of the important aspects as a post-dinner dessert.¹⁴

Society:

The medieval Indian society was one of the most complex and agrarian based society. The seventeenth century was one of the organized socio-politic and economic entity in the Indian subcontinent. The features of this period marks distinguish place from others on the pages of the Indian history writing. The social structure of the Mughal Empire is very complex and that also depicts the stratification in the society. In fact, the villages were divided into segments on the basis of social and economic condition. The seventeenth century always attributes with the Mughal legacy and their administrative policies. This was the time when many European

Koi pukarta hai chote azab se” Ibid, p. 82-84

travelers coming to the India and had provided the picture of the social and economic life of the masses in India. Most of the contemporary sources of the Mughal Empire frequently filled with the war, politics, splendor, life style of emperors or nobles but they hardly gave information about the poor section of the society or day today life of the common masses. To get the clear idea about the common masses in the seventeenth and eighteenth century we came to know about them through limited sources. In the beginning itself, India was divided into several political groups and masses mostly divided into two major communities- Hindu and Muslim, though one cannot ruled out the presence of other religious communities like Buddhism, Jains, and Christians. Here we are also looking at consumption and cuisine as an internal elements of the social history, which has not been discussed before in the social framework in the history. Seventeenth century was the period when the Mughal were on their peak and culture was also flourishing at its own pace.

The socio-cultural environment which governed the largest section of Indian population was bound to affect the lives of the masses. The whole area was divided into several small parts and there was lack of central authority over it in the eighteenth century. However, the majority of the population resided in the village as it was a agrarian-oriented society. The society was complex in nature as the king or emperor was supreme in the system and his nobles occupied most of the offices. The imperial court was the center of wealth and culture.¹⁵ In the beginning itself, One of the contemporary writer in Humayun's period states that the Mughal society was generally divided into three classes – first, the *Ahl-I- Daulat* comprising royal family and the military aristocracy; second was *Ahl-I-Sa'aadat* comprises of men who were known for their learning, mainly religious, ulema, qazi, the Sayyids and men of letters and last one was *Ahl-I-Murad* it

includes musician and singers¹⁶. However as for as the material condition of the people in Mughal India, Irfan Habib also categorized them into three classes.

The first comprises of lower class who hardly consumes meat and resides in poverty, the second one or middle class had easier life with higher standard of consumption and final class of course higher nobility had all kind of luxury with enormous kitchens and levies attendants¹⁷. Mughal society also comprises of several other categories and in the medieval times the social structure of the society play an important role for the establishment of an empire.

This stratification in the society had an obvious to impact on the food consumption or in other words it was not only stratification of people but it was also stratification of food consumption in the society. The basis of food consumption creates a social hierarchy and gives so many identity based on the food consumption. The higher category mostly comprises of nobles, the autonomous chiefs, rajas and wealthy merchants who enjoy a high status and power in the society with full of luxury, expense, splendor and extravagance. They raised their standard of living and set a level or position in the society for common people. The food consumption also incorporates several things especially in India, the concept of purity, vegetarian, non-vegetarian, and food taboo existed during that time as well. For instance one of the contemporary writer states in the kingdom of Gujarat that surprisingly in a family all the members hold the same opinion with regards to food consumption, some eats meat, some do not, some eat meats but do not slaughter the animals themselves, some eat only fishes, some only milk and vegetables, and some do not eat red spinach as they believe that it comprises of blood.¹⁸

Another instance, the dinner given by Asaf Khan to Sir Thomas Roe, confirms the lavishness of the Mughal nobility¹⁹. They have their private bungalow which they decorated handsomely²⁰. Even one of the contemporary traveler Edward Terry also confirms that many people do not

consume wine but they have other sorts of liquor which was healthier and it popularly called as Cohhaa (coffee) a black seed boiled in water which changes the taste of simple water²¹. The fresh fruits like apples, pears, grapes and melons which comes from different parts of the world like Samarkand, Bali, Bocara and Persia are very much dear to the higher class of people.²² The higher class of people only make use of saltpeter to cool the water which can be seen as a symbol of luxury.²³ Even the king also comes in the court with the most magnificent attire. The dress appears white and flower satin, with silk and golden embroidery of finest texture. The turban is of gold cloth.²⁴ These are people mostly who enjoyed the beneficiary of the tax-rent.²⁵ The Mughal emperors treated nobles as their paid employees. Even one more contemporary traveler Francisco Pelsaert also states that the life of the Mughal nobles was concise within four walls that was popularly called as Mahal or Palace with all luxury, gardens and tanks inside it which adorned the enclosure of their palaces.²⁶ Their guests as well sit on the carpet where food served of a rich quality mixed with melted butter and with little spice.²⁷

Mughal Empire was highly developed as they maintained and keep the records of taxes, houses, prices etc. The second group also play an important role in the path of making Mughal rule as a centralized Empire. This class also includes physicians, architects, scholars, teachers, poets, painters, musicians and craftsmen²⁸. The middle class also have the capability to afford servants for the house and bring good amount of articles for the decorations of the house²⁹. They had of course, easier life and higher standard of living. They were having servant as well to take care of their needs. Irfan Habib says that cavalrymen and clerks were gentlemen with attendants to look after.³⁰ Their condition can also be checked as they invite people for feasts, or to show their gardens and Qanungo (local revenue officer) feel proud to have a lots of books in his library³¹. But perhaps the prosperity and luxuries life style was not that much part of the intellectuals as

they were mostly dependent on the patrons.³² This was the time when table manners were also becoming popular at least in the royal people. On certain occasion the banquet filled with all kind of luxuries items. For instance, the emperor Shah Jahan was invited for the feast by Asaf khan, the hall was decorated with the rich carpets, fine white muslin table cloth with cushions, and perfume holders were present around the room. This feast continued for around four hours with music.³³ Thus the middle class in the Mughal period enjoyed their status with higher standard of consumption and had a fairly good image under the Mughals. This also shows the extravagant's of the Mughal Empire was in the seventeenth century.

In this regards, the poor people or common masses who could not afford the life of middle class and upper class. Their condition was deplorable and pathetic. Their houses were made up of mud with thatched roof.³⁴ Even they did not have anything for sleeping as well. They slept bare on the mud with a wooden or piece of stone that serves as a bolster.³⁵ However their household utensils were mostly made up of earthenware.³⁶ The situation for the common masses was not simple as their livelihood was always challenging for the survival. For instance the salt was also not accessible to the poor people as it was under the control of government monopoly and thus the price was just double of the wheat in sixteenth century.³⁷ They hardly ever tasted meat in their lives. Their diet was monotonous and a fixed food was Khichery.³⁸ Even these people were obliged to obey their superiors and one cannot pass the order to another. Those servants who follow their master regularly were considered as excellent.³⁹ Thus their life style in the society was very much backward and pathetic.

Interestingly in the eighteenth century, with the evolution in the society the food consumption also experienced a new development. This was the time when regional cuisine got importance in

the society. The weakness in the central political structure helps to blossom new small power at a regional level and with this so many local dishes got their name and fame at a larger scale. However, the society all together noticed a different gastronomy culture in India. In the eighteenth century while addressing a known acquaintance, Mrs. Elizabeth Fay in one letter states that the sugar and water was the favorite beverage in India in the eighteenth century. This must be a mixture of sugar and water. Whereas in the form of butter India had “ghee” with multiple use.⁴⁰ This was also the time when the importance of food was more, the chapati of wheat was not easily available to all the masses. For instance, Nazeer Akbarabadi writes that ask the affluent people who flaunted their wealth how many of them had eaten wheat chappati.^c Thus the condition was not that good for the rich section of the society.

From this small couplet, one can understand the society was not so prosperous at that time. The importance of wheat chapati shows the real picture of the eighteenth century. Although, on the other hand this was also the period when other food items shows the existing culture that was so vibrant for at least food consumption. In another poem, Akbarabadi described about the vegetables which was used for eating purpose and had resemblance of many sweet items.^d

^c “*Ashrafon ne jo apni ye shanen badhai hain*

Sach puchiye to apni ye zaten chupayi hai

Kahiye unhe ki rotiyan kis kis ne khayi hai” Ibid, p.168-170

^d “*Meethi hai jiske barfi kahiye, gulabi kahiye*

Ya halka dekh isko tazi jalebi kahiye

Tal sakariyo ki faanke ya ab imarati kahiye

Sach puchiye toh inko danrane misri kahiye

Indeed this poem also indicates that, there were many items existed in the Indian cuisine culture like, Barfi(sweet), Jalebi (sweet dish), and Imarati(Sweet dish). So all these items enhances the existing food culture of the eighteenth century. Despite the fact, the central empire or the Mughal Empire had collapse in the eighteenth century, this had no impact on the food largely. Interestingly this was also the time when wine was part of marriage celebration. For that Mir Hasan, one of the contemporary poet of the Eighteenth century writes in metaphorical ways that liquor was very much dear to him and he liked to consume it mostly.^e

The Indian society in the eighteenth century was very vibrant with so many dishes for consumption in the society. The elite's table is always part of the machinery of the wealth and a show case of prosperity. This also increases the demand and subsequently supply for food in the society. Interestingly waste foods feeds the poor. Food sharing was always treated as an essential form of the gift exchange, strengthening the society and breaking of social restraint. This was also a period of social crisis for the centralized empire, the blend of so many cuisine was possible only with the rich socio culture of the medieval India.

Economy:

Kya khub narm o nazuk ish agre ki kakdi

Aur jisme khas kafira si kandre ki kakdi” Ibid, p. 296-298

^e *“Chaka hu Nashe Mai bahut sakiya*

Mujhe Badale ab Maai ke sharbat pila.”

“Hua jab Nikah aur Batein har pan

Pila sabko sarbat diye pan dan” Hasan Mir, 2003, Masnawi- Saharul Bayan, U. P. Urdu Academy, Lucknow, p. 34-38

The economy always plays an important role for depicting the social growth of the human being in any society or for wellbeing of the nation. For understanding the economic growth in the seventeenth and eighteenth century it is necessary to know the availability of the resources and what were the steps have been taken in order to satisfy the people's need in the nation. The Mughal economy was simple, straightforward and almost palpable.⁴¹ In this regards, even Irfan habib argues that in the late seventeenth century there was agrarian crisis in the Mughal empire, for which he provides multiple reason like by this time there was high revenue collection from the peasants, moving of the peasants from their land, negative impact on expansion of the peasants settlement, peasants uprising.⁴² There was a two phase of economic changes in the food culture as well. Firstly the seventeenth century was the period of maximizing the revenue for which the Mughal Empire was pressurizing the peasants and others to give the revenue. The economic situation gets deteriorated in the eighteenth century, when British merchants were praised for their good business enterprise with energetic spirit that leads to economic crisis in the society.⁴³ Although this period was not altogether one of an economic crisis, some studies shows there was commercial expansion in the economy for Maratha Deccan.⁴⁴ Interestingly the medieval economy was flourishing at least at trade level. One can notice that the Dutch people were active in economic activities and they were engaging themselves in varieties of the dishes as well as salads. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler of seventeenth century Tavernier states that on his arrival in Hugli he was welcomed with salads of several kinds, cabbages, asparagus, peas, and beans for which notes that the seeds of beans must have arrived from japan.⁴⁵ This also shows the economy was in the favour of food. At other instance, one another traveler Thevenot of the seventeenth century states that white grapes were big and pleasing to the eyes were brought from the Surat and from the little town called Naasora in the

province of Balagate.⁴⁶ The seventeenth century of India was full of paradox, the revenue which was accumulated from the masses was spend mostly all for the expenditure of the Emperor. The emperor was not enjoying the vast surplus of wealth as most of the people seem to imagine.⁴⁷ Though the wealth was not small, in the seventeenth century the pearls and gems of all kinds with different sizes and worth. For which Bernier, one of the contemporary traveler of the seventeenth century writes that he doubts whether any ruler who possesses this much of wealth with huge items in the world. The Mughal throne itself covered with pearls and diamonds, being alone valued so much.⁴⁸ Thus the economy was seen very prosperous from a French traveler about the Mughal Empire.

Though the Mughal economy was an agrarian based economy where the large number of people indulged in the activities of agriculture and the resources were extracted in the form of land revenue which was the fixed share of the produce. The emperor assigned this work to their Nobels which are known as Jagir who didn't have local ties with the locals for their position and the place was not permanent.⁴⁹ But the most important development occurred during the Farrukhsiyar's reign of was expansion of revenue farming through *Ijara*.⁵⁰ These intermediary for the collection of revenue, started a new phase in the revenue collection that impacted the economic system of Mughal India. However, Edward Terry thought that the Mughal Empire was so huge, considering their territories, their wealth, and the commodities, was one of the greatest ruler of the East, if not the world.⁵¹ According to this traveler of the seventeenth century, the Mughal India can flourish so much without any help of any neighbors' state.⁵² As a result, it's easy to see how this wasn't entirely terrible from economic perspective with regards to food culture.

Indeed Abu Fazl says that the advantage of Indian agriculture was because of it produces the large numbers of food and non-food crops. The whole credit for doing such job goes to the peasants who were better than those in any part of the world as they know more things to grow in compare to other people who were having limited knowledge.⁵³ The advantage one can notice when in the seventeenth century two new items develop in India i.e., Maize and tobacco.⁵⁴ Even one of the travellers, De Leat, claims that feeding the elephants and other creatures, as well as royal food and clothing, costs Rs. 50,000 per day at the Agra court.⁵⁵ Indeed, the Mughal economy was very rich as nowhere else in the world had these much marvelous presentation of wealth as in the Mughal court.⁵⁶ However with the coming Europeans the Mughal economy enhances with different varieties of fruits like potato, tomato, guava, almond, cashew, chilli, tea, and coffee etc. and these become part and parcel of the Indian culture.⁵⁷ Agriculture was mostly done by the individual peasants, hardly any proof for communal cultivation in Mughal India.⁵⁸ The central feature of the Mughal Empire was indeed, land tax. Although the Mughal Empire was basically based on agricultural economy but it was able to give space to the skilled and unskilled labourers like spinners, printers, washers, dyers, and others who contributed in making Mughal Economy strong.⁵⁹ Apart from these the major part of the Mughal Economy based on inland and foreign trade. Irfan Habib says that the condition of the inland trade in sixteenth and seventeenth century were similar to the other part of the world economy.⁶⁰ One of the contemporary European writer, Robert Omre talks about the rice cultivation was plentiful and very often sold on the spot, varieties of fruits, vegetables as well as spices were available and produced according to the wants.⁶¹ This was the time when Mughals were on their peak of their rule and the lavishness they were enjoying simply make them supreme in the eyes of a common man. Once on the death of a close noble, Umdatul Mulk, the emperor Aurangzeb ordered that for

three days one twenty dishes of food should be sent to deceased family.⁶² The bakers of the Mughal period, especially of Aurangzeb period, were numerous. Though they were not able to produce such fine bread.⁶³

The economic scenario of the eighteenth century was not in the favour of Mughals. The economic condition of the empire marks a special place in the Mughal history writing. This period is always seen from the various perspective for the collapse of the Mughal Empire. The condition of the peasants had already started deteriorating and soon they refused to pay the revenue.⁶⁴ The economic reason has been put forwarded many of the scholars for the decline of the mighty power in India. For any prosperous nation, economy always works as a backbone of it. Despite the fact of decentralization of the central power and economy was already scattered. Interestingly One of the contemporary writer Anand Ram Mukhlis writes that the imperial cooks (Khansamah) at this time was not a common man in the Mughal court, as his income was equivalent to the deewan.⁶⁵ At a larger level the Mughals political structure received severe attacks at internal level and external as well, but at the economic level still they were continuing to marks their legitimacy on others. One part of the economy is also based on the trade that determine the prosperity and cultural diversity of any nation. Interestingly this was the time when regional fruits were becoming popular among the masses. For Anand Ram Mukhlis, mango (amba) of the deccan was weighted more but the mangoes of Gujrat, Saharanpur, Malwa, Delhi and Muradabad were also famous.⁶⁶ Even Mohammad Shah sent Morabba of Mango (Mango Pudding) to the Nadir Shah of Iran through subedar of Lahore.⁶⁷ One can also understand the economic condition of the eighteenth century, when the regional rulers started showing their wealth. For instance, Nawab of Awadh, Asafud Daulah was very much fond of luxuries items, wines, bhang, and the weed.⁶⁸ Thus the economic background of eighteenth

century for food was very much vibrant. At another instance in one of the Malfuzat, interestingly there was a discussion whether the food in the house of prostitute and those who do menial works can be considered to be edible. For which Abdul Shah Dehlavi states that, the income of both the person is haram or forbidden for use, so the items which are prepared from it are also haram or forbidden.⁶⁹ Now along with the food consumption, the terms like purity and pollution started to matter in the eighteenth century.

As a result, we see an extremely dynamic image of this period and which was additionally reflected in food culture. Truly, food is for the most part treated as a need for a person's endurance but during the Mughal period, we see the role of food in politics as it was used as a weapon of war, and with the passage of time, the food system evolved with the expansion of the empire and the formation of different social groups in the society based on various types of food availability and consumption. The Indian cuisine can be said as the blend of multiple culture and available in a one platter. As far as Indian food is concerned it was always dynamic and got mingled with so many cultures that not only enhances the food varieties but it also gave the strength to our cultural diversity. Whereas in the eighteenth century in India was one of the most chaotic period in the Indian history writing. This period attracted the attention of so many historians and scholars, who continue to debate on the factors for the decline of the mighty power and the nature of the Eighteenth century. However, at the same time we saw how regional cuisine becomes important and the nature of the food also flourishing with lots of cultural amalgamation for the consumption purpose in the society.

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Chapter 3

Food for Elites

The Mughal period is a very significant period of history in India and marks an important place in our culture and identity formation. Food and livelihood are always incorporated with the social status and superiority in the society. In this chapter, we focus on Indian food and its cultural heritage, which historians have largely neglected. Food is always understood as an essential need for any living thing. Through an attempt on food studies, one can examine how the food is connected with people's identity and analyze how the various cultures contributed to building the Indian food and cuisine culture. Fundamental studies on food are extensively studied within the framework of anthropology, sociology, and medical science, but unfortunately, Mughal food history remained silent in Indian history writings.

Mughal Food and cuisine is one of the important links for understanding the Indian food culture and which has gain lots of fame in the modern times. Food is a continuous process is an important part of traditional knowledge and reflects patterns of cultural amalgamations. The gastronomy of the past empowers us to comprehend our social legacy and society. Food also catalyzes human evolution, as well as a spiritual and cultural link in society.

Interestingly, as far as proper food consumption is concerned, India has maintained its momentum and development from the past. The gastronomy of Mughal India was always dynamic and mingled with so many cultures that not only enhanced the indian food varieties, but also gave added strength to cultural diversity. Food intake, in fact, connects people to their cultural or ethnic group through comparable eating habits. Notibly, immigrants often use food as a means of

retaining their cultural identity. The elite dining in the seventeenth century comprises so many items that depict their appetite for food, gluttony for identity and power precisely. This showcase conveys an image of superiority or richness among the masses. Feast and Banquets largely used as a sign of luxuriousness and reinforcing hegemony on others even today. Mughals were no exception in displaying their power and creating a separate identity in the society on the basis of consumption.

Unlike many countries, India being one of the oldest civilisations continuing with so many practices and tradition of the past along with that taste is also one of the unique features attached to the Indian Foodways. Gastronomy also has essential social elements that connects, or divide as the case may be, people specific food choices. The seventeenth-century starts with the flourishing of the Mughal Empire and added new items in gastronomy. This Empire occupies a very ambiguous place in the writings of Indian history. The Mughals had come to India with a rich socio-culture background, and it got mingled with the land so well that today's cultural heritage is difficult to see whose culture we are pursuing. The emergence of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century added more sparkling colours to the beauty of Indian culture in medieval India. Throughout the Mughal times, food and cuisine had a strong link with livelihood of the people.

Food availability and consumption are frequently used as a barometer of one's status and dignity. The expression of hierarchy, social position, economic status, and prestige were attached to the kinds of food eaten and the availability of various dishes in the bygone times. Food reflects the choices, beliefs, passion, habits, status, and personality which have not been focused in medieval Indian history. Despite all these, the ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures. The food preferences develop with multiple reasons, like the area in which families live, the influence of the ancestors, economic

condition and somewhat the faith to which one belongs that result in patterns of food choices within a cultural or regional group.

Food always got cherish as a sole purpose for a healthy and prosperous life. Indeed food also conveys the idea of communication for one's individuality and one's place in society.¹ Food communicates class, ethnic group, lifestyle and other social positions. Hence it can be said to be a medium of communication in the social system. For instance, this food is "our food" and that food is "their food" is marker in the society. Sometimes, these foodways of different sections in the society also attract each other's food patterns and build a bonding between two groups. So, food is also medium to exchange ideas and notions of oneness in society.

Consumption of Pleasure: Royal Food and Identity

In India, the foundation for cultural diversity existed in food consumption as well. The canvas of the Mughal history is very wide and has been looked from different perspectives in the Indian history writings. The aspects of the food would be path breaking in the cultural history of India. This chapter, we have tried to emphasise food as an important element in the formation of our cultural heritage in the Mughal Empire. Albeit the Mughal history begins with the success on the Lodi's by Babur in 1526 in the principal clash of Panipat and finished the authority of force battle in India with the foundation of the Mughal Empire. As in the beginning itself Babur had gone through a difficult time in his life. He faced a problem from Ibrahim Lodi's aunt as she wants to take a revenge from him. In order to do so, she took help from the cooks who worked in the kitchen and add poison in his food. Despite eating that food he escaped from the danger and says that "an evil arrived and happily passed on, God gave me new birth, I am coming from that other world"². So in the beginning itself, food as not merely used to feed someone but also used as a weapon of war in the Mughal India. Apart from that, Babur writes in his memoir that

*“Hindustan is a country of no charms. Its people have no good looks; of social intercourse, paying and receiving visits there is none; of genius and capacity none; of manners, none; in handicraft and work there is no form or symmetry, method or quality; there are no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, muskmelons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no good bread or cooked food in the bazars”.*³

From the initial days of his reign, the founder of the empire was dissatisfied with the kinds of food that was available in India. Through the Memoirs of Babur, we get an idea that there were no established gastronomical connections among the people during his reign in Hindustan. But on the other hand he gives a detailed account of fruit varieties available in India of which some he loved most like mangoes which was the best fruit of Hindustan for him while others were the jack fruit, almond, Plaintain, Mahuwa, and wall nut.⁴ Nevertheless, his preference clearly shows his substitute for food was in eating fruits mostly. Through the Memoirs of Babur, we get an idea that there were no established gastronomical connections among the people during his reign in Hindustan.

His immediate successor Humayun also could not contribute much to India's food culture as his period was full of turmoil. Thus, the significant changes occurred in food culture from the period of his decedents mainly. This was also the period when food consumption attributed to prestige and royalty in society, resulting in the formation of different sections in society based on consumption. The eminence of Mughals was additionally checked by having tremendous sorts of food varieties with all luxuries, which demonstrated their social superiority and authority.⁵ For instance, the feast for the emperor and other nobles included many sorts of exquisites of food and every tables contained royal delicacies ranging from birds to fish and beverages were made available.⁶ The cooks of the royal Kitchen took lots of pain for preparing these dishes, but it was

on them to choose the fruits and meats from which they would make lavish dishes.⁷ Thus one can understand that the varieties of the food marked the royalty and their distinct position in the society. Indeed, the pan (betel leaf), water vessels with jeweled drinking vessels and utensils made of unadulterated gold and silver were used.⁸

The presentation of food always marked the richness in the Mughal noble people along with status and symbol of power they pursue. Such practices continued for a longer period and added to Indian gastronomy. Though huge appetite which normally attached with the prestige in almost every society, firstly as a sign of prowess, and secondly as a marker of enormous wealth.⁹ Even though Humayun didn't get enough time to establish himself in India but it seems he was very keen about his food habit. The royal women were not confined exclusively to the Harem but they were active members of the royal feast along with the emperor. Gulbadan Begum in her biography mentioned that a lavish feast occurred in the 1534 on a riverside in which many royal women participated and she talks about the sitting arrangements of that banquet. She says that the emperor along with Aka janam sit together on the gold embroidered divan that was in front of the throne and on the right side of the Aka janam's sat her aunt and other royal ladies.¹⁰ One of the interesting parts of this feast was the symmetry because the whole function was held in a octagonal hall. There was a octagonal tank and platform where the Persian carpet had been placed for Musician to sit.¹¹ Thus, it represents royal feast was not all about varieties of food only. On this occasion, she states that there was a musical ceremony on the octagonal tank as well, which was part and partial of the royal feast. That can be considered as part of their lavish life style of having food with music or in other words music can be seen as a part of the happiness and joy of royal people. As Gulbadan begum notes that "Young men and pretty girls and elegant women and musicians and sweet-voiced reciters were ordered to sit in the tank".¹²

Humayun was also interested in giving up animal flesh for few months when he began campaigning to recover his throne back. He made a firm decision after much thought, that beef was not a food fit for the devout person.¹³ Here, one can notice that his view on food was not to satisfy someone, but his thought for food gives an idea that those dedicated to something should keep away from certain flesh to achieve their goal in life. Apart from these another contemporary record by Khwandamir also confirms the lavishness of emperor and varieties of the food available before the emperor. For instance he notes that for preparing several kind of dishes and drinks, the cooks of the royal kitchen took a lots of pain but it's up to them to choose the fruits and meat from which they would make lavish dishes.¹⁴ Thus one can understand the varieties of food the royal people have marked a higher position in the society. Even one of verses attached with the food in the period of Humayun also represents the richness of the Mughals. This is being reflected when Khwandamir writes about a feast where various types of exquisites of food were present and every table had royal delicacies from birds to fish.¹⁵

It was from Akbar's period that the emperor started taking care of the food availability and the types of the food that was made available for consumption. The period of Akbar portrays that he was able to introduce lots of new things but on the other hand he didn't give much importance for eating meat and took it seasonally. He wanted to maintain the social fabric of the society and for good governance. Indeed, Abu Fazl's account in *Ain-I-Akbari* represents the lavishness, splendor, and symbol of power. For instance, Abu Fazl was of the opinion that the emperor took keen interest in the kitchen department with regard to food and had a lot of wise regulation for the food department. As far as his personal food is concerned, he ate very less in a day, often only once a day. He was not greedy or having lust for food because he always left his meal before getting fully satisfied¹⁶ and hence one can't attach gluttony with the emperor Akbar.

Even there was no fixed time for him when he would like to take food, servants were always ready and within one hour, more than a hundred dishes were prepared.¹⁷ By this time, the political stabilisation helped in strengthening the food and cuisine and became more elaborate and lavish adoring when Akbar's successor added gift giving rituals. Indeed it also represents the symbol of power and status for instance Abu Fazl says that for the emperor table cloth would be spread on the ground and all the dishes would be served mostly in gold, silver, earthenware victuals with many dishes along with various kinds of bread, curds, and several small stands plates of pickles, fresh ginger¹⁸. He divided the cooked food into three parts. First one was without meat popularly called as 'sufiyana', second one in which meat and rice were used and third one where meat mixed with the spices.¹⁹ These were something to do with the taste of the emperor.

This also gives a separate identity and moreover added a horizon in the food culture. All the prepared item would have the seal of Mir Bakwal who was the head of the kitchen department. However, the gold and silver dishes will be covered with red cloth.²⁰ In the context of bread, Abu fazl mentined about the various types of bread and their ingredients. First one prepared in oven which is large in size and mixed with milk, ghee, and salt. Secondly prepared on the iron plates but short in size and prepared with khushkah. The taste wise also it was so good when it was served hot.²¹ Here the taste and showcase were important in the food ways of the elite section of the society. The bread at the court were prepared of fine wheat flour along with other coarsely pounded flour and bran.²² One can understand the health were also taken into consideration in the case of elite dining in the Mughal empire. The lavishness of emperor produced by Abu fazl has also been backed by one of the traveler account of that time, Father Monserrate says that the emperor table is very splendid and it was filled with more than forty courses of dishes. The foods were always taken care off to avoid the unforeseen tragedy for which every food were covered with the linen

cloths and tied up having sealed by the cook. However, one more aspect of royalty can also be traced when youths carried foods to the dining hall along with the master of kitchen and from there, it further passed to eunuchs who passed it to the serving girls who were part of the royal family table. Generally, the emperor prefers to take his meal in private except certain occasions where he had to dine in a public banquet.²³ All this reveals that the emperor has a lavish lifestyle along with a lots of attendees but it also show that he segregated himself from the royal women for feast despite having female attendees to serve the food. But the lavishness and splendor simply indicate that the elaborate system of food creates legitimacy and power in society. Abu Fazl was of the opinion that even emperor would have totally abstain himself from eating meat if on his shoulders the work load of the world would not be there. Therefore to maintain the fabric of the society he taste meat but very less.²⁴ Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of the food was betel leaf or pan that played an important role in enhancing the food culture. Even today, one could find in the Indian culture being eaten after meal. Writing about the benefit of the betel leaf Abu Fazl writes that it strengthens the gums and satisfies the hunger while the satisfied would feel hungry. It also helps in getting rid of bad breath.²⁵

The political significance of the feast and acquisition of power with the help of feast became fashionable in the Mughal India. It was Akbar who instructed his nobles to arrange a lavish feast, Ash-ihayat (Food of Life) on their birthdays.²⁶ To substantiate this, Jahangir claimed in his memoirs that in his father's time, it was traditional for one of the great amirs to throw a feast every day and organise unique presents of diamonds, gem-studded vessels, rich fabrics, elephants, and horses, all in the hopes of persuading His Majesty to attend.²⁷

By this time the political stabilisation helps to strengthen the food and cuisine. Food became more elaborate and lavish after Akbar, with gift giving rituals added in it. This can be marked as a

changer in the gastronomic perspective as in ritual and symbolic identity. In this regard one of the traveler John Jourdain states that no one can come without a present in the court.²⁸ So the feast was not solely confined for eating but for showing respect towards the emperor. The occasion, the presentation of gift and the nature of food were inter linked. For instance, Thomas Roe states that ‘At night Aitmaud Daullah, father of Asaf Khan and Noor Mahal sent me a basket of Musk melon with this complement, that they came from the hands of the queen his daughter, whose servant was the bearer’.²⁹ Simply as fruit indicates sweetness and also symbolizes good will.

However with the coming of Europeans the Mughal Empire was enriched with different varieties of fruits like potato, tomato, guava, maize, almond, cashew, and chilli etc.³⁰ all these become part and parcel of the Indian culture. Despite the fact, these products definitely enhances the cuisine aspect of the Mughal Empire but it was accessible to the limited people in the beginning. In the Jahangir’s period he simply enjoyed the meat of the chased one. In his memoir, he mentioned that he fond of mountain goat flesh was more delicious than the wild animals, although the odour of skin of mountain goat was unpleasant even after being tamed.³¹ Jahangir also shared his chased animal flesh with the poor for in one instance he writes that more than two hundred had gathered to collect it.³² Such virtuous act marked him as a benevolent ruler in the eyes of his subjects.

This activity has also been confirmed by one of the traveler Thomas Roe of Jahangir’s period that Jahangir has sent him the chased fat wild boar to eat.³³ Despite this he himself maintain his father tradition for ban on slaughtering of the animals on two days of a week (Thursday and on Sunday) and on his birthday.³⁴ Another traveler from Dutch, Francisco Pelsaert also confirmed that rich people were having all kind of lavish food some of which were not known to his own country. The lavish feast consisted of many dishes like Brinj (dressed rice), Aeshelia (spiced meat), Pollaeb (pulao), Zueyla (spiced wheaten cakes), Dupiyaza (meat with onions), roast meat and other items

but before having food they washed their hands and table clothes would be put before them on floor. The head servant served everyone but they never used spoon, napkins and knives to eat their food.³⁵ He further gives the table manner as well in that it was considered bad behavior to lick the fingers and food should not go beyond knuckles.³⁶

The description he provides clearly indicates that food intake was not just limited to grandeur, but that food etiquette and the way in which it was consumed also became significant, distinguishing the aristocracy from the rest of society. The foods were extravagant in terms of culinary in Mughal times. Interestingly, this was the time when European traveler praises Indian cuisine and dishes. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler in the late sixteenth century, Van Linschoten, gives a detailed account for the preparation of mango pickle ‘Achar’. He writes that ‘Mangoes gathered when they are green, and conserved for the most part in the salted pots, and commonly used to be eaten with rice and mostly stuffed with green ginger and garlic’.³⁷ He also compared the Indian mango pickle with the white Spanish Olives with the similar taste.³⁸ Thus the ingredients of indian cuisine were enhancing the the taste of the Indian food. Thus the remarkable platform was already set for the Akbar’s successor, for the culinary culture in India.

The seventeenth century starts with the death of Akbar and the Mughal throne went in three able successor’s hands i.e, Jahangir (1605-27), Shahjahan (1628-58) and Aurangzeb (1659-1707). Under them also expansion was taking place but with low pace.³⁹ Food has not a single meaning, i.e., to feed someone or fulfil someone appetite. In the Mughal period, the consumption of food has political attachment as well. The seventeenth century was the time when the social norms of society were always taken into account. Interestingly one of the contemporary merchants in the Jahangir’s period, Banarsidas writes that when he earned his first income, it was a moment of happiness and pride for his family.

Moreover, it was celebrated in a huge manner by distributing sweets in the area by his grand mother.^a In terms of hospitality in the Mughal times, Banarsidas himself writes that when he was running out of money one of the shopkeeper helped him by feeding the kachoori for free but later he paid him.^b Kachoori, a dish that is a kind of chapathi that is stuffed and oil fried, was used for several purposes in Agra in the seventeenth century. Indeed, a drink called Falooda, a favorite drink of Jahangir was also a rich drink only consumed by a higher section of the society and the other sections of society could not afford this as it was a mixture of fruit juices, creams and jelly.⁴⁰ The dishes are laid out on a spotless dastarkhwan (tablecloth), even the condiments, the sliced mango, ginger and lime pickles and bread having been brought in small sealed dishes.⁴¹ Shah Jahan disliked eating in the presence of Europeans, who are considered filthy for not attending to this basic hygienic practice. The elite's section of the society displayed their purchasing power by employing cooks who were heavy-handed with the spices.⁴² Another item of food was *paan* or betel leaf for which one of the English traveler Peter Mundy says that it had become a custom to provide betel leaf in every banquet without which the celebration would be incomplete and many great people in the empire ate it.⁴³ The importance of pan or betal leaf was also noticed by one of the Italian traveler Manucci during Aurangzeb period as well and he had noticed that it was common practice among the chief people of the empire to have betel leaf and also it was considered as goodwill to have betel leaf for several guests who visited them. No person refuses to have it as

^a. 'Dadi baatein seerani, laadu nuukati neet.
Pratham kamai putra ki, sati a'aut nimit'. Banarasi Das, Half a Tale. *ArdhaKathanaka*, (trans., ed.,) Mukund Lath, Rupa and co, New Delhi, 2005, p. 131

^b. 'Kabhu aawahein haatmeihe, Kaabhu deramaahi.
Daasa na kaahuso kaahe, karaz kaachoori kaahi.
Kaahe kaachori baal nar, bees rupaiya kaahu.
Tumso koi na kaachu kaahe, jaahein bhaave the jaau'. Ibid., p. 193

it considered to be bad manner.⁴⁴ This was also a period of the political strengthening, Emperor Jahangir in his time declared not to kill animals on Thursday and Sunday in the remembrance of his father.⁴⁵

Despite the fact, he was very fond of chased meat. This period was also the time when cultural boundaries not restricted to any place or region. For instance, one of the British ambassador to the court of Jahangir records that in his royal kitchen he had both Indian and English cook.⁴⁶ So the cultural boundary in this period was not confined to any place or region, it was multifaceted with so many culture and inter mingling with our existing culture. One can also understand this was the time when a lots of Europeans (the Dutch, French, Italian, and Britishers) were entering in India, with a notion of trade opportunities for their native nations which shows the political ability of the Mughal emperor. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler writes that at the time of Shah Jahan, European style of pastries, cakes and other sweet dishes prepared by some of the slaves who had been with the Portuguese at Ugulim.⁴⁷

Foreigners were surprised to notice the proportion of their income that the Mughal noblemen and administrators spent on fruits.⁴⁸ Thus this lavishness and splendor indicate the elaborate system of food consumption marks a legitimacy and power in the society. Their obsession was more than mere gluttony. Even the Dutch were active in our culinary practices and they introduced a varieties of the dishes as well as salads. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler of seventeenth century Tavernier states that on his arrival in Hugli, he was welcomed with salads of several kinds, cabbages, asparagus, peas, and beans for which notes that the seeds of beans must have arrived from Japan.⁴⁹ One of the contemporary traveler Edward Terry also confirms it that many people do not consume wine but they have other sorts of liquor which was healthier and was popularly called as Cohhaa (coffee) a black seed boiled in water which changes the taste of simple water⁵⁰.

The fresh fruits like apples, pears, grapes and melons which comes from different parts of the country like Samarkand, Bali, Bocara and Persia as these items as these items were very much dear to the higher class of people.⁵¹ The feast mostly continued for hours at emperor's place with impeccable table manner.⁵²

This was the time when movements in foods and spices had larger implication on the culinary practices, health, agriculture and culture. The food consumption also incorporates several things especially in India, the concept of purity, vegetarian, non-vegetarian, and food taboo existed during that time as well. For instance one of the contemporary writer states in the kingdom of Gujarat that surprisingly in a family all the members hold the same opinion with regards to food consumption, some eats meat, some do not, some eat meats but do not slaughter the animals themselves, some eat only fishes, some only milk and vegetables, and some do not eat red spinach as they believe that it comprises of blood.⁵³

One of the contemporary European writer, Robert Omre talks about the rice cultivation was plentiful and very often sold on the spot, varieties of fruits, vegetables as well as spices were available and produced according to the wants.⁵⁴ This was the time when Mughals were on their peak of their rule and the lavishness they were enjoying simply make them supreme in the eyes of a common man. Once on the death of a close noble, Umdatul mulk, the emperor Aurangzeb ordered that for three days one twenty dishes of food should be sent to deceased family.⁵⁵ The bakers of the Mughal period, especially of Aurangzeb period, were numerous, though they were not capable of producing such fine bread.⁵⁶ Even for Aurangzeb, he says that although he was the person of simple tastes but more than thousands of rupees were used for the maintenance of the royal kitchen.⁵⁷ Thus in the period of Aurangzeb also we can notice the prosperity and lavishness of various food and rich lifestyle of a higher class or royal class.

Tavernier, another contemporary traveler states that luxuries life style of the king was not over yet as chalice from which he drinks was covered with gold and it was enriched with diamond, rubies and emerald.⁵⁸ Thus in the period of Aurangzeb as well we noticed the prosperity and lavishness of various foods and rich life style of higher class. The possession of variety of foods indicates a special place in the society. The show case of extravagances is also one way of projecting a special image in the society. The period of Aurangzeb also witnessed the quality and importance of good food. For instance in one of his letter to his son where he writes that he was still remembered the taste of good food of Khichery and Biryani. Even he was able to recall the cook name as well Islam Khan who has cooked 'kabuli' for him. Although he was getting old then also he says that the desire for eating good food has not left him completely though blackness has departed from his hair but not from his face⁵⁹.

Food and cuisine were formed the image of power and enormous wealth which they represent in the eyes of their subjects. The eighteenth century in the Indian history occupies a very ambiguous place. In the eighteenth century, the powerful Mughal Empire so persistently built up was started faltering and splitting up into fragments. Mostly historians have seen 18th century as a period of decline. In spite of this decline in the political realm food consumption reached new heights. This was the time when regional cuisine and poetry were written on the food, making tremendous change in the gastronomy of the people. Consumption of food and cuisine for rich people in the society remained the same in the eighteenth century. Mandelslo noted that fifteen to sixteen dishes of meat, besides the desert were available before the president of English merchants at Surat who all lived together.⁶⁰ In this century, one of the contemporary writer Elizabeth Fay writes that there was a perception in England that the heat of the Bengal would destroy one's appetite. Interestingly she observed just opposite of it, people consume more Food in India.⁶¹ Though,

Eighteenth century, perhaps most saddening phase for the Mughal India, proves most vibrant phase for the culture and food and cuisine .There were so many contemporary authors and poets who have amplified the beauty of Indian cuisine through their writings. Interestingly the festive food also becomes popular among the Indian masses.

One of the contemporary poet of the Eighteenth century Nazir Akbarabadi writes in his one of the poetry for Diwali that it was matter of happiness in the society. Someone took money, someone took debt, markets were filled with the toys and sweets (batashe), simultaneously the sweet makers used to call the customers in a attracting manner.^c Interestingly one can noticed so many food items that were part of the celebration like sweet, Barfi (one kind of sweet), Batashe (one sweet dish). On one hand this was the period of chaos in the political sphere and on the other hand cuisine was getting more spaces for joining the people. Food can be seen as a medium of binding the people and now festive representation with the food becomes part of the Indian food culture. However, for Eid celebration he writes that from the early morning itself it was crowded for baths and sheer, sewaiya (festive food) were prepared with lots of joy.^d Though mostly the poets uses so many

^c . “*Kisine naqad liya kisi ne udhar*

Khilone khelon batashon ka garam hai bazar

Mithaiyon ki dukanen laga ke halwai

Pukarte hai ki la laa divali hai aai

Batashe le koi barfi kisi ne tolwai”. Akbarabadi Nazeer, *Kalam Nazeer Akbarabadi*, ed. Farooq Argali, Alhaj Md. Naseer khan, Fareed Enterprises, Delhi, 2003, p. 92-94

^d . “*Phicle pahar se uth ke nahane ki dhum hai*

Sheer o shakkar sewaiyan banana ke dhum hai

Koi to mast firta hai jaam e sharab se

Koi pukarta hai chote azab se’. Ibid, p. 82-84

hyperbole and filled it with imaginary things in their poetry to make their works beautiful. But here in his poem, one can also find out the true feelings of the Indian society. The dishes which were prepared for the Eid celebration was Sheer (a kind of sweet pudding), Sewaiyan (a popular sweet dish) and are still continuing as a part of celebration.

Indeed here one can also notice that for some people, Sharab (wine) was not excluded from the celebration, it was part and partial of the celebration. Thus the regional cuisine also established a new phase in the social sphere. The society all together noticed a different gastronomy culture in India. In the eighteenth century while writing to a friend, Mrs. Elizabeth Fay in one letter states that the sugar and water were India's favourite beverage in the eighteenth century and this must be a mixture of sugar and water. Whereas in the form of butter India had “ghee” with multiple uses.⁶² This was also the time when the importance of food was more, the chapati of wheat was not easily available to all the masses.^e Thus from this small couplet, one can understand the society was not so rich by that time.

The importance of wheat chapati shows the real picture of the eighteenth century. In the 1770s, the nawab spent four times more on his kitchen than on his poor house.⁶³ Although this was also the period when other food items shows the existing culture was so vibrant for at least food consumption.^f From this poem one can notice that, there was so many items existed in the Indian

^e ‘Ashrafon ne jo apni ye shaane badhai hain

Sach puchiye to apni ye zaten chupayi hai

Kahiye unhe ki rotiyan kis kis ne khayi hai’. Ibid, p.168-170

^f ‘Meethi hai jiske barfi kahiye, gulabi kahiye

society like, Barfi(sweet), Jalebi(sweet dish), and Imarati(Sweet dish) and all these items enhances the existing food culture of the eighteenth century. Despite of the fact, the central empire or the Mughal Empire collapsed in the eighteenth century. Interestingly One of the contemporary writer Anand Ram Mukhlis writes that the imperial cooks (Khansamah) at this time was not a common man in the Mughal court, as his income was equivalent to the deewan.⁶⁴ At a larger level the Mughals political structure received severe attacks at internal level and external as well, but at the cultural level still they were continuing to marks their legitimacy on others. One part of the culture is also based on the consumption that determine the prosperity and cultural diversity of any nation. Interestingly this was the time when local fruits were becoming popular among the masses. For Mukhlis, mango (amba) of the deccan was weighted more but the mangoes of Gujrat, Saharanpur, Malwa, Delhi and Muradabad were also famous.⁶⁵ Even Mohammad Shah sent Morabba of Mango (Mango Pudding) to the Nadir Shah of Iran through subedar of Lahore.⁶⁶

It is generally assumed that women's role is very minimal in Mughal empire. In these regards, one of the contemporary poet of the Eighteenth century 'Insha' wrote about womens' position in India. He states that women were having all kinds of medicinal food while at pregnancy mostly it was Kadha and acchiwani (health drink).^g Moreover these items of food were available only to the rich

Ya halka dekh isko tazi jalebi kahiye

Tal sakariyo ki faanke ya ab imarati kahiye

Sach puchiye toh inko danrane misri kahiye

Kya khub narm o nazuk ish agre ki kakdi

Aur jisme khas kafira si kandre ki kakdi'. Ibid, p. 296-298

^g. 'Zahar lagti hai mujhko acchhiwani (medicine for newly mom)
mai piungi bula(son) janai ko

section of society. It was not only one dish available before them, it was mixture of varieties of food dishes. They were also open to have '*chillam*' a kind of intoxicant mixed with cardamom and cloves.^h In fact, one can also understand the economic condition of the eighteenth century, when the regional rulers started showing their wealth. For instance, Nawab of Awadh, Asafud Daulah was very much fond of luxuries items, wines, bhang, and the weed.⁶⁷ Thus the economic background of eighteenth century for food was very much vibrant. At another instance in one of the *Malfuzat*, interestingly there was a discussion whether the food in the house of prostitute and those who do menial works can be considered to be edible. For which Abdul Shah Dehlavi states that, the income of both the person is haram or forbidden for use, so the items which are prepared from it are also haram or forbidden.⁶⁸ Now along with the food consumption, the terms like purity and pollution started matter in the eighteenth century.

Conclusion.

Hence the vibrancy of Mughal India is reflected in the food culture. As a matter of fact, food is generally treated as necessity for human being's survival but in the Mughal period we see the role of food in politics as it was used as a weapon of war, even with the passage of time the food system elaborate with the expansion of the empire and formation of the different social groups in the society on the basis of various types of food availability and consumption. The elite's table is always part of the machinery of the wealth and a show case of prosperity. This also increases the

*nahi deti hai mujhko kadha kyu
du mai kya kya bata janai ko*'. Badayuni, Nizami, *Deewane Rangin Insha.*, Nizami Press,
Badaui., 1924, p. 46

^h. '*Mangau phulo ka gahna ilaichiya aur laung
mangau gadgadi kori bhi aur ek chillam*'. Ibid, p. 58

demand and subsequently supply for food in the society. Food sharing always treated as an essential form of the gift exchange, making society stronger. The Indian cuisine can be said as the blend of multiple culture and available in a one platter. But it was not same for the commoners in Mughal India. No doubt at some places the free kitchens were opened to feed the common people. But still these were hardly accessible to all or the majority of the common people who lived in remote villages miles away from the cities. Thus the condition of the common people remains miserable throughout the Mughal period from Babur to the Aurangzeb. However the eighteenth century in India was one of the most chaotic period in the Indian history writing. This period attracted the attention of so many historians and scholars, who continue to debate on the factors for the decline of the mighty power and the nature of the eighteenth century. In this period we saw how regional cuisine becomes importantce and the nature of the food also started matters for the consumption purpose.

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³ Ibid. p. 518

⁴ Ibid. 503

⁵ Irfan Habib, *Medieval India, The Study of a Civilization*, New Delhi: National book trust. 2008 pp. 144-145

⁶ Khwandmir, 1940, *Qanum-i-Hamayuni*, ed. by M. Hidayat Husain The royal Asiatic society of Bengal, Calcutta, p. 41

⁷ Ibid, pp. 40-41

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- ⁹ Armesto, Felipe Fernandez, 2002, *Near thousands tables*, Free Press, USA, pp. 102-103
- ¹⁰ Op. cit, Gulbadan Begum, pp. 118-120
- ¹¹ Ibid, p. 121
- ¹² Ibid, p. 121-122
- ¹³ Achaya, K.T., 1998, *The illustrated foods of India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p.160-162
- ¹⁴ Khwandamir., 1940, *Qanun I Humayuni*, tr. Bains Prashad, Royal Asiatic society. Calcutta, p. 40-41
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- ³⁴ K T Achaya, A historical dictionary, p. 161-162
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Chapter 4

Food of the Commoners

The commoners in India have always been struggled with deprivation on various fronts in their life. Food being as an essential part of livelihood and for the progress of human lives played a crucial role in the survival of commoners in the medieval India. The proper consumption of food always cherished as a component for the growth and development of Humankind at the same time it was used as a driver of all the central structure since time immemorial. Generally we discussed so much about our food and cuisine and contribution made by the Mughals in India, but common people story has always been at the backdrop of the mainstream history. So it would be interesting to examine the food culture of the commoners or ordinary subjects of the Mughal Empire. Recent trends in historical writings are centered around the life of the common people focusing on various dimensions such as socio-cultural, economic aspects but unfortunately there is not much discussion about the commoner's food in the historical writings. Mostly whatever is written of Mughal India is directed towards that of powerful strata of the society. Therefore it is both essential and interesting to explore the gastronomy of the commoners in the Mughal Empire.

The art and food practices has passed on from generation to generation carrying the culture, tradition and virtue of our ancestral past. Similarly, the foodways of the poor section of the society remained same from the past without much changes in it. Moreover, the people inherit numerous things from the bygone times, mostly many things from the past which usually remains unnoticed and commoner's food is also one among them. Indeed, the food patterns of the common people were always just for the existence in the society. The factors responsible for their poverties and miserable lifestyle can be attributed with to the social disparities in the Mughal times. But

moreover historically commoners were ignored largely and their survival was on the aid from the elite's section or on the emperor's pity. Thus, in this chapter an effort has been made to fill the gaps in the existing literature of the commoners of Mughal India. One of the prominent historian Irfan Habib states that common people during Mughal period ate inferior grains and hardly any meat¹. In the late seventeenth century there was agrarian crisis in the Mughal Empire. Irfan Habib, provides multiple reason like by this time there was a high revenue collection from the peasants, flight of the peasants from the land, negative impact on expansion of the peasants settlement, and peasants uprising and breakdown of the Jagirdar and Zamindars.² All these factors would have impacted the food of the commoners.

The condition of the common people as in any other society was miserable and pathetic. It can also be understood when the founder of the empire Babur in his memoir states that "peasants and people of low standing go about naked. They tie on a thing called lunguta, a decency-clout which hangs two spans below the navel. From the tie of this pendant decency clout, another clout is passed between the thighs and made fast behind. Women also tie on a cloth (lung), one-half of which goes round the waist, the other is thrown over the head"³. The official gazetteer in the Akbar's period, Ain-i-Akbari by Abu fazl also talks about the importance of food in human's life by saying that human being's survival and continuation of the life depends on five important pillars first one is Father, second is a mother, third is children, forth is servant and finally food⁴. The last one is the most important pillar among all pillars or in other words it is the back bone for rest four pillars in human life.

The glimpse provided by him portrays a true picture of the common people and their livelihood in the Mughal period. He says that staple diet of the general masses in the morning was confined to Jawar or Bajra flour kneaded with brown sugar and water.⁵ Here it can be noticed that unlike the

royal people the common masses had no diversity in their food. The condition of the common people was miserable and toilsome and one of the contemporary traveler John Linschoten was of the opinion that they consumed so little as it seems they survive by the air⁶. Even the houses of the common people were very little and less in size without having any window in it.⁷

Moreland also stated that the period of seventeenth century for India was extremely hopeless and pathetic condition for the ordinary man or common masses⁸. But Abu Fazl says that poor and abstemious people eat sufficient quantity of food and rainsment so as to keep up their strength required for the survival and to protect themselves from the influence of weather.⁹ Thus they just have food for their survival and to fight against the changes in the weather. The worse condition of the common masses made Akbar think in this direction. Subsequently, he started free eating houses to feed the poorer section of the society. He opened three places for three different communities i.e. Hindus, Muslims and Jogis. These places come to be known as Khairpurah, Dharmpurah and Jogipura respectively. People loyal to Abu Fazl were appointed to look after and to feed the poor people in these.¹⁰

So it can be understood that the condition was not that good for the common masses in Mughal period. For instance Jahangir in his memoir wrote that he had ordered for free eating houses (ghulhur Khana) were opened and provide the cooked food for the poor according to their conditions in all parts of the territory. So that the benefit could be also reached to the local residents and the traveler as well.¹¹ These acts itself represents their survival was merely on the pity of the Emperor. Indeed, it was part of the ritual and considered as noble work for feeding the poor section of the society. However with the arrivals of Europeans led to the introduction of several new food items which were also not familiar to the common masses. The items like maize, potatoes, pineapples, chilies and several other items.¹² Their social condition remained miserable as they

had no option but to eat the same and insufficient food every day. Jahangir states that ‘I ordered them to cook food for the poor in it. The poor of Ajmer were assembled to be fed in the royal presence. Five thousand persons attended, and all eat their fill of the food. After they had eaten I gave each of the poor a coin with my own hand and dismissed them’.¹³ Here one can understand the situation of common masses for survival and they often depended on the Emperor and it was a showcase of presenting a figure of well-wisher of the commoners as he tried to built a hegemony on others. To confirm this one of the contemporary traveler Coryat writes that he took keen interest in the ritual participation. Moreover it was part of the ritual and considered as noble work of feeding the poor section of the society. Jahangir states that ‘from the table of emperors comes relief to beggars’.¹⁴ It was not mere an obligeance but a duty for the humankind but more to do with the identity in the society.

One of the important traveler in Jahangir’s period Sir Thomas Roe talks about the condition of the common people. He had an opinion that the common people in India live like fishes found in the ocean. He presented the picture of the Mughals in hierarchical order where on the top king resides and at the bottom peasants. These all were interlinked to each other in a cyclic chain which starts with the farmer who robs peasants, the farmer gets robbed by gentleman, and simply the greater robbed the lesser one and finally the king who robbed all people¹⁵. Even Abraham Eraly says that although in the Mughal times some of the richest persons of the world dwells in India so did the poor as well¹⁶. However he also says that the country was poor as common people here were poor.

Another traveler De Leat also confirms that the condition of the common people in India was very miserable and pathetic. He stated that the artisans who were large in numbers are rarely have a good standard of living. Even those who worked in handicrafts, they teach their sons the same

profession. Thus it indicates their ideas and occupation were transfer from lineages to lineages without any change and so was their poverty. That simply indicate they were confine to their profession only and caste system was also part of the common life. This simply indicate that their income was not well enough to possess a better life style. For instance he says their daily income was very small perhaps 5 to 6 taccas¹⁷. But interestingly there was no gender segregation as such in the gastronomy of the common people family. As De Leat confirms it that whole family eats together but their dishes would be confined to a single dish which was popularly known as khichery¹⁸. He further talks about the ingredients which were used by them in preparing khichery like peas, little rice, along with water which they eat hot generally in evening with butter. Apart from these they munch the same peas or other kind of grains in the day time¹⁹.

Even one more traveler Palsaert says that the condition of the common people in India can only be described as in poverty so great and miserable that can be depicted from their appearance and where they dwells was made up of stark and place were also not good.²⁰ Indeed, he was of the opinion that these people were having a belief and do not possess more things as they deserve this only. They took great refuge in religion and felt it was due to their karma that they were having this kind of a life.²¹ The government or the people who possessing power never took any initiatives to upgrade the life of the common people and they hardly know the taste of the meat as well. The condition of the common people depicts their status as they were not having much varieties of food and their everyday diet was limited to khichri which was made of green pulse mixed with rice but in evening it was mixed with butter. In the day times they consumes little dried pulses or some other grain, which they thought enough for their lean stomach²². Indeed, they were not consuming meat in their usual diet.²³ Thus the condition of the common people remained the same without much changes throughout the Mughal Empire.

The common people lives can also be seen as the epitome of poverty in the Mughal times. For which Palsaert says that the condition was so worse that in order to write about the common people of Mughal India he had to change fully the tune or style of his pen. He says that the royal people who dwells in rich palaces where all wealth is stored, were acutely accumulated from the sweat of the poor people. He was of the opinion that their position was unstable similar to a wind, and their survival or livelihood was also not fixed as they did not have proper foundation rather than they stood on a glass which can be broken any time²⁴. In Aurangzeb's period one traveler Manucci writes that the dress of the common people limited to the single cloth through which they can cover some parts of the body.²⁵ Even he notes that goats, sheep, and chicken were confined to nobility only and commoners hardly consume meat but on a certain occasion like festivals or at marriage.²⁶

Manrique, states that the common people have no choice but their food and daily bread was rice, and sometimes they would eat with a little salt and be satisfied.²⁷ Even he also observes that there were three kinds of bread exists one is apas i.e., dry bread for the ordinary people and the second one is crunchas (sweet bread) and the Final one is ruganis (buttery) these were probably for higher class of the people.²⁸ That resembles their condition in the society was not only pathetic but the quality of food they were eating was also worse. Even the species such as cardamoms and pepper were not accessible to the common people as they were expensive but on the name of spices probably they used cumin seed, coriander seed, and ginger.²⁹

In this regard Bernier says that three or four sorts of vegetables which together with rice and butter, form the chief food of the common people. Even the condition for the common people was so worse that sometimes they did not have anything to eat and it was as if their master snatch food from them. For instance Bernier says that sometimes the poor people when failed to discharge their duties towards their masters, then their means of subsistence were snatched from them along with

their children who would now serve as slave to the master.³⁰ He also says that in the evening ‘this is the time when common people cook their victuals with fire made of cow and camel dung and green wood. The smoke of so many fires of this kind, when there is a little wind, is highly offensive, and covers the atmosphere in total darkness.’³¹

Bernier ascertains that Kichery remains as the chief food for the ordinary people in the Aurangzeb period as well. Thus, the burden and pain of poverty the common people take on their shoulders did not vanished even in Aurangzeb period.³² For instance Bernier writes that even artisan as well they can never become rich and they did not feel worried as long as they had sufficient to satisfy their hunger and covering their body with coarsest attire³³. He was of the opinion that more people in Paris were well off in comparison to Delhi. In the similar manner the proportion of the poor people in India were more, out of ten seven or eight people were poor, ragged and miserable being.³⁴

Plight of Commoners; Food and Survival

The condition of the common people remain so bad that it seems wheat also was not a part of the common people diet despite being produced plenty in the region of Agra and Delhi. Indeed Edward Terry confirms it the food of people was not made up of flour of wheat but some kind of coarser grain.³⁵ However he further observes that poor ate rice boiled with green ginger to which they added little pepper and butter. It was their principle dish, but was seldom eaten. The flour probably made of Jawar was baked upon small round hearths in the form of round, broad and thick cakes. The common people make their bread likes cakes, and bake it on small iron hearths, which they carry with them while travelling, making use of them in their tents.³⁶ Water was probably common drink of the common masses but sometime it was converted into sherbet with sugar and lemon.³⁷

The condition of the poor people remained the same, miserable and pathetic to overcome from such pains Aurangzeb issued imperial firmans to add more langarkhanas in the city of Agra. He also tried to remove the pain of the needy and poor people in other parts of his territory as well by ordering those nobles who were having up to thousand Zat to open langars in their dominion³⁸.

The common masses situation remained pitiful and depressing. Thevenot, one of the contemporary traveler states that the common people in the society were living so miserable that in the name of medicine for flux (Diarrhea, dysentery) they were having only rice along with milk. This was their medicine to cure themselves from severe fever.³⁹ He goes on to say that the Mughal army especially cavalry and musketeers were very much weak and coward that only hundred Europeans might be well enough to beat the thousands. Their meal was kneaded with water and brown sugar. Whereas in the evening they would consume Khichery which was a mixture of rice, water, salt, and grains along with some butter. As this food was the chief food for the soldiers and poor communities.⁴⁰

Indeed, it was a tradition or culture to distribute alms, land and money to the poor. Jahangir in his brief memoir stated that 'It has been the custom in the eternal empire from my exalted father's time until now for all goods from the weighing, approximately a lac of rupees worth, to be distributed among the poor and needy'.⁴¹ Thus one can understand the common masses were more dependent on the generosity of the emperor or elite section of the society. This action was more symbolic in nature rather than helping the poor people. Moreover the practice of weighing on the lunar and solar year was another symbolic act of supremacy. Jahangir in his memoir stated that, 'I have myself weighed twice a year against gold, silver and other metals, all sorts of silks, textiles, and all sorts of grains and other things. I am weighed once at the beginning of the solar year and once at the beginning of the lunar year. The gold from these two weighings turn over to the

treasurers to give to the poor and needy'.⁴² These acts of giving alms in charity and helping the poor remained a special expression towards creating a separate identity in the eyes of masses. It also shows the common masses were always deprived of so many things and food is one among them.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier stated that khichri made with green gram, rice, butter and salt was the popular evening meal of the peasant community. Moreover he stated that the workmen after returning from their fields perhaps in afternoon eats nothing but they consume some sweetmeats along with the water⁴³. His idea was that the Mughal army especially cavalry and musketeers were very much weak and coward that only hundred Europeans might be well enough to beat the thousands of the Indians. He cited their monotonous diet as the explanation, as their lifestyles were mostly focused on meals kneaded with water and brown sugar. In the evenings, they would have Khichery, which consisted of a blend of rice, water, salt, and grains, as well as butter. Because this was the main source of nutrition for soldiers and common people.⁴⁴

Thus the ultimate result for the common masses would be nothing as their quality of lifestyle or standard of living remained the same. Even their attaires also did not change much as in the beginning itself, the founder of the Mughal Empire Babur observed the pathetic and poor condition of the common people. That even continued in the Aurangzeb period as well for which Travenier says that they wear only a piece of linen clothes to hide their secret parts.⁴⁵

Even if the masses had something extra often that would be also confiscated. For instance Travenier states that the news of extra things obtained by the common people, if it reached in the ears of the governor they would get hold of those things either by saying this was their right to take it or by using force.⁴⁶ Even the condition of the common masses did not change much in the period of Aurangzeb as well. Indeed Niccolao Manucci another traveler in Aurangzeb's period

confirms that the dress of the common people limited to the single cloth through which they can cover some parts of their body⁴⁷ which was as similar to what Babur in his memoir said about the dress of common people. The commoners food remained static from the beginning itself with no varieties available before them. For instance Manucci writes that goats, sheep and chicken were confine to nobility only but if other people can consumes these items only on certain occasion like festivals or at marriage⁴⁸.

Unlike the Royal people in the Mughal Empire who were having affluent life style, the common people life's was dependent on very few ingredients or subsisted on rice, millet and pulses. Even chillies were not commonly used in Mughal cookery as they had just been introduced from South America by the Portuguese in Mughal India.⁴⁹ The common Indian food was not spicy and hot, as pepper was grown only along the Western Ghats and most of the spices had to be imported from South-east Asia and were expensive'.⁵⁰ Indeed in the English factory records, it has been mentioned that pepper was very costly and quantity was also not sufficient for all.⁵¹ But it seems green chillies become popular and was considered to be 'saviour of the poor'⁵² in terms of taste of the food. As it added one more ingredients in the cuisine of the commoners.

The ceremonial dining was missing in the eighteenth century for the common people in India. The rise of poverty was mainly due to the political instability and lack of central administrative in the eighteenth century. Eating proper food is an act for our survival and growth of life and opulence of the food is the matter of pride and high status in the society. But unfortunately for the common masses it was just survival nothing more nothing less in the eighteenth century India. This was the time when economic boom came to sudden halt in India. The economic disparities between the people rises and purchasing power of the common people reduced to a tip of water for the thirst.

One of the key changes that took place in this period was the foodways of the people. Indeed a major shift noticed in the availability of the food at larger level. The gastronomy of the common people didn't change much in the eighteenth century too rather it led more towards poverty. This was the time when economic boom came to sudden halt in India. The economic disparities between the people rises and purchasing power of the common people reduced to a tip of water for the thirst. The food was not easily available for the common masses. For instance, one of the contemporary poet of the Eighteenth century states that this was the time when people were struggling for the livelihood and for survival.^a His poetry can be seen as a depiction of poverty about the common masses in India. He further states that Chapati (roti) was not easily available for the common masses.^b Indeed, the upper strata of the society were also struggling for the

^a . *Jab adami ke hal par aati hai muflishi (poverty)*

kis kis tarah se usko satati hai muflishi

Pyasa tamam roz baithi hai muflisi

Bhukha tamam rat sulati hai muflishi

Ye dukh wo jane jis pe ke aati hai Muflishi

Muflis ki kuch nazar nahi atai hai aan par

deta hai apni jaan woe ek-ek naan par. Akbarabadi, Nazeer, 2003, *Kalam Nazeer Akbarabadi*, ed. Farooq Argali, Alhaj Md. Naseer khan, Fareed Interprises, Delhi p. 18

^b ‘*Har aan tut padta hai roti(chapatti) ke khwan par*

Jis tarah kutte ladte hai ek astkhwan par

Waise hi muflisho ko ladati hai muflishi

Biwi ki nath na ladko ke hatho kade rahe

kapde miya ke baniya ke hatho pade rahe’. Ibid, p. 19

chappati in the eighteenth century.^c This was the case when Mughal empire were very weak and was for the name shake. This definitely shows that the common masses were struggling for their survival and its very difficult for them to feed themselves. The situation even worsened in the eighteenth century for the common masses, one can understand from the one of the official letter that the custom of distributing the food in the majlis of Urs among the disabled, Fakirs, and darweshes who assembled in the majlis. The task of having been done was also reported to the higher authority.⁵³ Indeed, Nazeer Akbarabadi through his Nazm or poetry depicted the poverty and misery of the poor people in the eighteenth century.^d The destruction of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century impacted many businessman and resulted in their loosing jobs. This was the time when poverty was at its peak in Delhi and nearby area. Nazeer in one of his Nazm ‘Shahar Aashoob’ stated that it was the time of peace when the business were over.^e Indeed, the famous

^c ‘*Ashrafon ne jo apni ye shaane badhai hain
Sach puchiye to apni ye zaten chupayi hai
Kahiye unhe ki rotiyan kis kis ne khayi hai*’. Ibid, p.168-170

^d ‘*Muflis ka dard koi dil me thaanta nahi,
muflis ki bat ko koi manta nahi,
jat hasb aur nasab ko koi janta nahi,
Surat bhi uski koi phechanta nahi,
yaha tak nazar se usko girati hai Muflisi*’. Akbarabadi, Nazeer, 2003, Kulliate Nazeer, Kitabi Duniya, Delhi p. 19

^e ‘*Hai ab toh kuch sukhn ka mere karobar band
Rahti hai taba soch me lailo nihar band
Dariya sukhn ki fikr ka hai maujdar band
Ho kis tarah na muh me zaban bar bar band
Jab agra ke khalq ka ho rozgar band*’. Ibid, p. 9

city in the Mughal times, Agra stopped generating any employment.^f The flow of wealth out of India reduced consumption and employment in the country. Some noblemen, soldiers, merchants, and artisans alike fell upon hard days, there were cries of distress.⁵⁴ Thus one can understand the situation of common masses gets more deteriorated in the eighteenth century.

Hence we can see the conditions of the common people with regards to food during the Mughal times. It was just for the survival and their food was monotonous. It did not changed much from the Babur period till the eighteenth century. There was slightly changed from Jahangir period to the Aurangzeb' period. No doubt, at some places the free kitchens were opened to feed the common people helped them. But still these were hardly accessible to all or the majority of the common people who lived in remote villages miles away from the cities. Thus the condition of the common people remained the same throughout the Mughal period. In fact what we saw during the Mughal period was the wide gap between the upper and lower section of the society as far as their food culture is considered. This distinction and foodways identity in the society was very much clear in the medieval period. Contrary to the modern popular beliefs that Mughals were epitome of the richness but there also lies another facets of Mughals i.e., poverty and survival for the common masses with regards to the foods and their ingredients.

It was indeed, the twilight for the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century has been much debated topic in the Indian history writing mostly from the political front. The

^f 'Ab agre me jitney hai sab log hai tabah

Aata nazzar kisika nahi ek dum nibah

Mango azizo aise bure waqt se panah

Wo log ek kaudi ke mohtaj ab hai aah

Kasb-o-hunar key ad hai jinko hazar band'. Ibid, p. 9

social condition of the common masses and specially their dietary practices remained the same as it was earlier and gets deteriorated. The collapse of the imperial power from centre resulted in the emergence of local or regional powers along with a new beginning of the East India Company in India but the question of social disparities on the basis of consumption remained the same.

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Chapter 5

Regional Food and Amalgamation of Cultures

Culture is considered to be a central element, encompassing a range of phenomena that represent our human societies. Food is also an essential element of our culture that drives human civilization from the past. The study of food culture from a historical perspective leads to a socio-economic understanding of the past. A diverse combination of regional cultures, comprising a vast range of ingredients and culinary abilities, is always present in the Indian food ways. The traditional knowledge and practices of food consumption are a cumulative result of the past from various amalgamations of cultures over the millennia. As a nation of unity in diversity, India cherished this notion in food consumption with various regional varieties from the past.

Regional cuisine in India varies significantly from one place to another, not just in terms of nomenclature but also in flavours. The medieval period saw the rise of local cultures that had changed the socio-cultural milieu and formed a new identity in the society based on consumption. This chapter endeavours to highlight the regional food and how amalgamation aided in the flourishing of food and cuisine in medieval India. The paradox of cultural heritage preservation and the importance of regional cuisine 'didn't get importance in the historical Indian writings. One of the explanations that can be given here is that while the primary sources are replete with references to the food culture, we do not get the same in the secondary sources. One way to explain this paradox is to understand that there is a disjuncture between cultural history and political-social history.

While we have a large number of works on the agrarian system and life of peasantry and a large number of statistical references to grains, the cultural life of grains does not get elaborated. It is this disconnectedness that has prevented the lack of works on food culture. The relative dearth of critical analyses of historical and syncretism of regional foods needs to be given preference in the medieval historical writings.

The Indian cuisine is a modern edifice, basically it's a synthesis of so many cultures with a long span of Indian history. Diverse ingredients and traditions are included to create distinct styles of cookery and foodways in India. In Indian context, food has always been and continues to be at the heart of Indian ritual practice, social behavior, common etiquette and syncretism.

There was always a local or regional food available as a marker of 'one's class or region. The consumption of anything has an essential role in representing the local culture and beliefs. In the civilized world, food is having an attachment that binds people culturally, spiritually and indelible with human psychology. There were certain dishes origins certainly elusive, especially for the amalgamated Food in India. Indeed, the foods can be seen to reflect social and traditional patterns and how culture, in turn, shapes food preferences. In Medieval India, the regional food has multiple facets to it. Indeed, it was the food through which one can connect with each other. It surpasses the feeding or satisfaction for one's needs. Mostly local foods are also attached to local customs and religious beliefs. The speciality about the regional food is their locally available ingredients. They mostly encapsulated the traditional values of eating and continued the same practices in later times with cultural amalgamation. Regions are made by many factors, and they emerged at specific points in Indian history. Surplus is the most important factor that ensure the continued vitality of the region. Interaction between the production process and reproduction of human societies is mediated through culture at one level. Therefore cultural profile

of a region is reflected in the food culture that is also consumed with ecological practices. Many examples can be given in this regard like preference for meat, vegetarianism and so on.

Regional Food and Amalgamation of cultures

In any culture, food evolves with time and combines with different existing norms of society. It is fortunate to note that Medieval Indian gastronomy had a rich source of local foodstuffs. Most of the regional Food is invariably associated with the place, techniques, and ingredients. Possession and utilization of natural resources were always part of regional gastronomy. In the case of medieval regional foodways, the food consumption varied with the respective social custom of the region. According to the old Hindu dietary hypothesis, each feast is assumed to have six tastes in the following manner: sweet, harsh, pungent, sharp, harsh and astringent.¹ The regional foods of the past were always cherished and primarily accepted by many people in medieval India when it came to consumption.

The regional food was socially and culturally very much vibrant that it also impacted the socio-political scenario of medieval India. Food intake is inextricably related to various beliefs and linked with the socio-economic well-being of a community. In Shrinath ji ki Prakatya Varta, it was noted that the people of Braj region offered Milk, curd and Butter to their respective God in order to take blessings and wellbeing of the society.^a So the local customs and beliefs were interlinked with food consumption in the medieval period. Indeed, the sweet 'Raj- Bhog' was

^a. *Sriath ji ko Snaan Karaay Angvastra karike jaise hamne shrangaar kryoa hain. So ta praman kariyo o guja chandrika ko dharan nitya kae or jo kuchu bhagvat ichha teaay prapti hoye soshidhh karike shrithakurji ko bhog sarpiyo or taso ta tero nirvah kaiyo or dudh, dai or makhan aadi to ye Brajbasi bhog dharat hain.* Srinaath ji ki prakatya Varta, p. 16

presented before God and distributed among the devotees.^b Another regional cuisine that was popular among the masses was *Daahi bhat* (rice curd pudding). The Braj region pre-dominantly consumed the locally available foods like milk (*doodh*), *dahi* (curd), *roti*, *ladoo*, and *ghee*.² Moreover, in the sixteenth century, the famous Braj poet, Surdas mentioned that *Saag* (lentils) was one of the basic food items in the northern region.^c These food items show that medieval India's primary food was primarily dependent on locally available resources. Indeed, these delicacies were not limited to a particular region since they were also popular in the Mughal Empire. This shows the prevalence of the great tradition and the little practice while the little tradition belongs to the folk and popular domain, the great tradition is part of the more pan Indian pattern. Some food and food cultures that transcend the region and become part of the entire Mughal Empire become part of the great tradition. An example of this is *Jalebi* (*Zalabiya*), which came from Iran and filtered from the court to all sections of the Mughal Empire.³

Jahangir, in his memoir, discussed about the mangoes, which were very much dear to him. During Jahangir's reign, mangoes were carried in from all across the Deccan, Burhanpur, Gujarat, and the Malwa region to the imperial fruits storage house. Although the Malwa region was known for its excellent mangoes, it cannot compete with other locations as it was huge and delicious mangoes with few strings. More than once, Jahangir ordered mangoes weighed in his

^b “*Yeh leela atyanta alookik he, tarkagochar hai, tadin nrisingh chaturdasi hati sau utsav sav, srigriraj padharike keeno raaj bhog aur sen bhog ikathe keeno taaso nrisingh chaturdarshike deena sen bhog aur rajbhog, bhalehi aawahe*”. Ibid., p. 39

^c “*Prabhu ju, tum ho antaryami*

Tum layak bhojan naahi, grah main aroo naahi grah-swami

Hari kaho saag- part mohi ati priy, amrit to sam naahi

Baarmbaar saraahi soor prabhu, saag vidur ghar saahi”. Surdas, 1952, Sursagar, ed., Pajpaye, Nand Dulare, Nagri Pracharni Sabha, Banaras, pada . no. 241.

presence. They usually came to a ser and a quarter, if not more. In any case, for juiciness (kḥwushābī), tastiness (lazzat u chāshnī), and digestibility (kam ṣiqḷī), the mangoes of Chaprāmau in Agra vicinity were the best of this or any other area in Hindustan⁴. Emperor Jahangir not only observed the many varieties of mangoes available in medieval India, but he also considered the flavour of mangoes and highlighted the value of regional mangoes in terms of health.

It is certain that medieval India's topography significantly impacted the culinary system that has become part of our cultural heritage. The framework of cultural diversity was there in the food consumption as well. In medieval India, regional cuisine did not exist as a single entity since it was blended with regional beliefs and social practices. One of the famous merchants in the Jahangir's period states that it was a moment of joy for his family when he earned his first salary. This was marked as a special occasion, and his grandmother distributed sweets among the people.^d In fact, when he ran out of cash, it was the shopkeeper who helped him in feeding in Agra.^e This act can be seen as a part of regional hospitality in the medieval food culture, and the term Kachori (fried toast) is still very much popular in our foodways. This is one of the reflections of urbanization and proto urbanization.

As far as gastronomical perspective is concerned, the Mughals were very keen on their foodways. Jahangir in his memoir, states that he was very much fond of fishes and a wide range

^d “*Daadi baatein seerani, laadu nuukati neet. Pratham kamai putra ki, sati a' aut nimit*”. Banarasi Das, *Half a Tale. ArdhaKathanaka*, (trans., ed.,) Mukund Lath, Rupa and co, New Delhi, 2005, p. 131

^e “*Kabhu aawahein haatmeihe, kaabhu deramaahi. Daasa na kaahuso kaahe, karaz kaachori kaahi. Kaahe kaachori baal naar, bees rupaiya kaahu. Tumso koi na kaachu kaahe, jaahein bhaave the jaau*”. Ibid., p. 193

of good fishes were brought before him. The Rohu was the best fish in Hindustan, followed by the Barin. Both have scales, and their shapes and forms were similar to each other. Not every person could undoubtedly differentiate them. There were just minor variations in their meat, and only some person with refined taste (ṣāhib-i zā'iqa-i 'ālī) could find that the taste of the Rohu is a little better.⁵ Here it was clear that the emperor had a distinction of taste (zaiqa or zauk) for the fishes. To confirm this, Bernier, a French traveler, also mentioned that the local fishes were very popular in medieval India's cuisine. Bernier noted that there were two types of fish that were consumed more, i.e, Singala and Rau (Rohu), the best fish in the northern Indian river.⁶ He also compared these two Indian fishes with his homeland (france) fishes pike and carp.⁷

The local dishes were also very different from one place to another. In the northern region, the Dampukht dish was very popular in medieval India and continued to be one of the important dishes in India. Abul Fazl, a contemporary historian of Akbar's period, mentioned the methods and ingredients used in preparing the Dampukht dishes. The receipe consisted of 10 ser meat, 2 ser ghee, 1 ser onions, 11 misqals fresh ginger, 2 dams cardamom, and 10 misqals pepper.⁸ Interestingly, Malghubah, a meat marinate with curd was also part of the regional dish in the northern India.⁹ Halwa, was prepared with the help of flour, sugar candy and ghee. Saag, a vegetable dish prepared with the help of spinach with some other greens and it was delicious in taste. Apart from these, the other interesting meat dishes were also available like Harisah, Halim, Kashk, and Qutak (samosa).¹⁰ The recipes for these dishes were almost similar to each other. They were generally made up of meat, crushed wheat, onion, ginger, ghee, cardamom, and other spices.¹¹ Yakhni, Kebab's and Dupiyaza (meat and onions) were also available for the elite section of the people in Mughal India in the northern region.¹² Gradually some of these dishes get lots of popularity in the formation of pan Indian cuisine.

The regional cuisine was so famous in medieval India that the Mughal Emperor also couldn't restrict themselves to liking it. Khichery was one of the local dishes available for the common masses was also a favourite dish of the emperor. The incident related to Food, Jahangir in his biography states that, the best meals in inhabitants of Gujarat was khichery. There was a khichri of bajra (a mixture of peas and millet boiled together) that they named as Laziza. It was a sort of split grain, which doesn't grow in any other country but Hindustan. It was cheaper than most veggies. As Jahangir had never tasted it before, hence he ordered the cooks to make some and carry it to him¹³. Slowly these regional foods became part of the all India Cuisine. Indeed, khichery was also popular among the other section of the society. It was widely prepared with different ingredients at different places in the society. De Leat, a contemporary traveler in the seventeenth century, states that *khichery* was the principal diet of the common people.¹⁴ He further described the components they used to make *khichery*, such as peas, a small amount of rice, and water, which they consume hot in the evening with butter.¹⁵ In this regard, Bernier states that three or four sorts of vegetables which together with rice and butter, form the chief food of the common people.¹⁶

The emperor Aurangzeb also liked the local cuisine khichadi and Biryani prepared in the winter. Here, one also understands that the gastronomy of the past was more related to the season and human adaptation. The kabuli was another item that was mixed in the Indian cuisine and favourite of Aurangzeb.¹⁷ Edward Terry, another contemporary traveler of the seventeenth century, states that the food of people was not made up of flour of wheat but some kind of coarser grain.¹⁸ However Terry, further observed that the poor ate rice boiled with green ginger to which they added little pepper and butter. It was their principal dish but was seldom eaten. The flour probably made of jawar was baked upon small round hearths in the form of round, broad and

thick cakes. The common people make their bread up in cakes and bake it on small iron hearths, which they carry with them while traveling, making use of them in their tents.¹⁹ Water was probably a common drink of the common masses, but sometimes it was converted into sherbet with sugar and lemon.²⁰

The specialty about the regional food items lies in the geographical area. Rice, the principal diet of Indian people, was produced in lots of parts during medieval India. Indeed, the quality of rice also matters for the nobles. In this regard, Travenier, one of the contemporary travelers, states that the route from Surat to Agra had a rich (basmati or sukhdas) source of rice cultivation. Moreover, the rice of this region had smell of musk after preparation and was in high demand in the noble class.²¹ He suggested that if anyone wished to present something in Persia, then this rice would be better option.²² Here one of the European travelers observed the Indian regional food closely and described it as one of the best rice among the kinds of rice in medieval India. Thus the regional variation in the food items started its demand at a larger level in medieval India.

The regional or local cuisine can't be complete without understanding into the local customs and traditions. The local beliefs played an important role in the regional cuisine. For instance, Tavernier reports an incident regarding 'a woman who was the wife of a rich Bania (merchant) in Ahmadabad. Having failed to conceive for many years, a domestic worker advised her and gave her small fishes (who evidently belonged to a different community) to eat three or four fishes as a remedy for conceiving. At first, the woman who felt unable to bring and consume it, but agreed when she was promised that it would be prepared such that she would not come to know. She agreed and later conceived a child soon after that caused a great doubt and distrust among her relatives on her legitimate child'.²³ Thus the narrative which Travenier puts here gives lots of

local beliefs and rituals which adhere to local dishes and cuisine. The fruits were also available from many places in medieval India. This shows not only the demand for these fruits but also the obsession of healthy diets in medieval India.

Fruits in Delhi were largely from Kashmir, Kabul, Kandahar and Samarkand.²⁴ Jahangir also confirmed that sweet cherry, pear, and apricot were imported and later being grown in Kashmir with the efforts of Muhammad Quli Afshar, the watermelons, oranges, citrons grown at Kistwar were all in superior quality.²⁵ The interest in the food items and their availability was one of the key roles in enlarging the food culture in Medieval India. Such elaborate descriptions of food items helped in enriching the cuisine of regional food culture.

Bernier, one contemporary traveler in the seventeenth century, states that shops in Delhi were well equipped with dry fruits from Persia, Balk, Bokara and Samarkande like almonds, pistachios walnuts, raisins, prunes, and apricots. In winter, with excellent fresh, black and white grapes brought from these countries, wrapped in cotton, pears and apples of three or four sorts, and those admirable melons that last for the whole winter.²⁶ However, with the coming of Europeans, the Mughal Empire enhances the cuisine with the varieties of fruits like potato, tomato, guava, maize, almond, cashew, and chilli etc.²⁷ All these become part and parcel of the Indian regional food culture. The upper strata of society mostly consumed these fruits. In the regional Food of India, mango was very dear in medieval India. Bernier had stated that “Ambas or mangoes were for two months in the summer; they were plentiful and were cheap in its rate. The best ones from Bengale, Golconda, and Goa were excellent and taste-wise more acceptable in any sweetmeat.”²⁸ These particular examples illustrated the linkages of regions that were earlier understood only as economic and political integration but also are part of cultural integration.

Aurangzeb was also very much fond of local mangoes. In one of his letters to his son, he noted that "You have requested me to suggest names for unknown mangoes. When you yourself are very clever, why do you give trouble to (your) old father? However, I have named them Sudha Ras (nectar juice) and Rasna Vilas (Tongue pleasure)".²⁹ It was not only the mangoes which was popular among the Mughals but the cooks and local dishes were also very much part of their consumption. The consumption of mango was also mentioned in the Eighteenth century with becoming more widely appreciated and consumed. The Deccan mango (Amba) was preferred by Mukhlis, although mangoes from Gujrat, Saharanpur, Malwa, Delhi, and Muradabad were also popular.³⁰ Thus with the especiality of food items, it gave a separate identity to the region in medieval India.

Moreover, watermelons or pateques were in great abundance in the Delhi, and the elite class people import the seeds from outside and cultivate it with much care and expanses.³¹ Here the abundance of local fruits shows that the demand for regional fruits and which got amalgamated with culture was more in the medieval Indian society. The consumption of good food is always central to human lives and the regional food played an important role in depicting the cultural values of medieval India. Betel leaf was also one of an integral part of Indian cuisine and varied in terms of eating from region to region. Abu Fazl, one of the court historians in the Akbar's period, states about the qualities of betel nut.

"The eating of the leaf renders the breath agreeable and repasts odorous. It strengthens the gums, and makes the hungry satisfied, and the satisfied hungry"³².

The betel leaf in the regional culture carries a lot of social norms that bind the people with affection. For instance, Peter Mundy, another traveler states the importance of betel leaf (paan) that there was no visit in the banquet, etc. without Paan, with which people used to pass away the

time, as people used to do in England with tobacco. The Indian paan was very wholesome and sweet in smell, and strong in Taste. For new people, it was most commonly given at farewell time. Indeed, paan was offered to the people, it was considered as a gesture of friendliness and also a signal that the time had to depart.³³ Here Mundy's account suggests that betel leaf (paan) was not consumed privately but was used as social norms and for gifting for a good bond in the society. So the importance of regional cultures was something that attracts the European travelers too. In his account, Bernier mentioned betel leaf as an important element of marker after certain preparation for royal favour.³⁴ However, the arrivals of Europeans in medieval India initially increased the ingredients for the cuisine and added new food items which were also not familiar to the common masses. The items like maize, potatoes, pineapples, chilies and several other items.³⁵ From this we can gather that significant change occurred due to the Columbian exchanges and many of these foods become part of the integral food style of India. It thus brings to our notice, a significant shift in production and consumption.

The liquor consumption was another important element of the regional food culture. It incorporates so many cultural and traditional aspects and thus, it was also marked as a social identity. In the Mughal period, there were multiple usages of liquor consumption. However, the locally available liquor was from the toddy tree. It was high in demand and consumed largely in medieval India. Indeed, one of the contemporary travelers Edward Terry talks about the Toddy or taddy as a form of clear wine for the masses that is pleasant in taste to any white wine. Moreover, Terry states that it was used as a medicinal drink but only if taken early.³⁶ The available varieties of the wine were also very similar to the food as there were enormous methods and techniques used to extract alcohol from a different medium in the regional cuisine. For instance, De laet, confirms that the local liquor was also extracted from the fruit of Mahua

tree.³⁷ The local intoxicants became more popular in the seventeenth century. Bernier states that, the basic wine for India was known as *Arrac* or *arq*, a spirit drawn by distillation from unrefined sugar.³⁸ Thus the importance of local drinks was very much popular among the masses.

Manrique, another contemporary traveler in the seventeenth century, observed that in the name of food the common masses consumed daily bread was rice, and sometimes they would eat with a little salt and be satisfied.³⁹ Even he also observes that there were three kinds of bread exists one was *apas* i.e., dry bread for the ordinary people and the second one is *crunches* (sweet bread) and the Final one is *ruganis* (buttery) these were probably for higher class of the people.⁴⁰ Thus the regional cuisine was very much lively in nature. Interestingly, this was the time when more European travelers applauded the regional cuisine and dishes. For instance, one of the contemporary travelers in the late sixteenth century, Van Linschoten, gives detailed account for the preparation of mango pickle 'Achar'. He writes that 'Mangoes gathered when they are green, and conserved for the most part in the salted pots, and commonly used to be eaten with rice and mostly stuffed with green ginger and 'garlic'.⁴¹ He was of the opinion that the Indian mango pickle was like the white Spanish Olives with a similar taste.⁴²

In Medieval India, tradition and religious practices helped in the development of culinary culture in a variety of ways. Father Monserrate, the Portuguese priest in the sixteenth century, noted the food practices of the Jain community. Their food mainly consisted of cooked pulse and any sweet food. They restrict themselves from meat, onions, garlic or anything of that kind. Moreover, they even avoided fruits and were very careful not to consume any oil, which can be deadly when combined with opium or drink.⁴³ Even in another community, the Parsis, their cuisine were largely mingled with Iranian and Hindu cultural traditions in Medieval India.⁴⁴ Their foods were like *Sewaiyan*, *Falooda*, nuts, mutton, Pulao, fish, milk, ghee, and other edible

items. They also have restrained themselves from consuming the beef.⁴⁵ This diversity existed in medieval India with regards to Indian food and continued to be an important element in binding the people with different social beliefs and practices.

One of the fundamental components that expand India's culinary culture is regional variety. Surprisingly, all of these dishes are still considered part of Indian cuisine. As one of the most important places in mediaeval times, Bengal has its own set of culinary customs. The Bengali sweets like *chhanabara*, *khaja*, *jalebi*, *pishtak*, *modak*, *malpao*, *sitamisri* and *Sandesh* were available in the sixteenth century and consumed largely by the people.⁴⁶ When the Portuguese arrived in Bengal in 1650, they gave a fresh impetus to the sweet-making industry. They were experts at making delicious fruit preserves and had a fondness for cottage cheese. *Sandesh*, (the name traditionally derived from the term given to bringer of good news) began to be cast in a variety of moulds, including those that resembled flowers, fruits, and shells in different colours with the help of jaggery, jackfruit, orange peel and sugarcane.⁴⁷

It was the food that united the people in medieval times too. In one stance, Aurangzeb recalled the importance of food and gatherings. He stated in his letters that 'Happy is the day and Happy is the time when a friend enjoys the company of another 'friend'.⁴⁸ Indeed, Anand Ram Mukhulis noted two types of kebabs popular in the Indian cuisine: *kabab I handi* and *kabab I shami* in the eighteenth century in the northern India.⁴⁹ However, after the collapse of Mughal power in the India in the eighteenth century. The regional cuisines were acquainted more with the people. The emergences of regional powers were another reason for eulogizing the local dishes at a larger level in the eighteenth century. One of the contemporary poet of the Eighteenth century Nazir

Akbarabadi, writes in his one of the poetry for the celebration of Diwali^f. Interestingly one can notice that so many regional food items were part of the celebration like sweet, Barfi (one kind of sweet), Batashe (one sweet dish). These festivals also helped in improving the food cuisine in the medieval India. The regional food was seen as a medium of binding the people through cultural practices. Indeed, for Eid celebration he writes that it was festival joy and celebration.^g Though mostly the poets use so many hyperboles and filled their poetry with imaginary things in order to make their work appear attractive. But here in his poem, one can also find out the true essence of the Indian regional society as most of the practices are still continuing with the same enthusiasm in India. The dishes prepared for the Eid celebration were Sheer (a kind of sweet pudding), Sewaiyan (a popular sweet dish), and still, it is continuing in our society. India in the eighteenth century noticed a distinct gastronomic culture. Mrs. Elizabeth Fay, an English traveler, wrote a letter to one of her acquaintances about her Bengal experience, stating that the favourite beverage in India was 'Sherbat,' which consisted of sugar and water. Whereas in the form of butter, India had "ghee" with multiple uses in the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Indeed this was also the time when regional food items mingled with the existing culture and made important

^f .“*Kisine naqad liya kisi ne udhar*

Khilone khelon batashon ka garam hai bazar

Mithaiyon ki dukanen laga ke halwai

Pukarte hai ki la laa divali hai aai

Batashe le koi barfi kisi ne tolwai”. Akbarabadi Nazeer, Kalam Nazeer Akbarabadi, ed. Farooq Argali, Alhaj Md. Naseer khan, Fareed Interprises, Delhi, 2003, p. 92-94

^g “*Phicle pahar se uth ke nahane ki dhum hai*

Sheer o shakkar sewaiyan banana ke dhum hai

Koi to mast firta hai jaam e sharab se

Koi pukarta hai chote azab se’. Ibid, p. 82-84

changes in the foodways of the people.^h From this poetry one can easily understand that, there was so many items existed in the Indian society like, Barfi(sweet), Jalebi(sweet dish), and Imarati(Sweet dish) and widely consumed. So, all these items transformed the existing regional cuisine and food culture from regional level to pan-regional echelon. We can also understand the different typologies of the foods from these items like ceremonial, ritual, and celebratory food.

The regional dishes no longer remained regional in the medieval India as they were highly appreciated and used as a token of goodwill. For instance, Mohammad Shah sent Morabba of Mango (Mango Pudding) to the Nadir Shah, the emperor of Iran through the subedar of Lahore.⁵¹ Thus the regional cuisine was not confined to any one place but it was traveling from one place to another with a separate identity. The advantage of the regional cuisine was also related to the health and climate. Nazeer Akbarabadi, in one of his poetry, mentioned about the laddu of til (Sesame Sweet) and it was sold in all the local markets at the time of winter.ⁱ Robert

^h ‘*Meethi hai jiske barfi kahiye, gulabi kahiye
Ya halka dekh isko tazi jalebi kahiye
Tal sakariyo ki faanke ya ab imarati kahiye
Sach puchiye toh inko danrane misri kahiye
Kya khub narm o nazuk ish agre ki kakdi
Aur jisme khas kafira si kandre ki kakdi*’. Ibid, , p. 296-298

ⁱ ‘*Jade me fir khuda ne khilaye til ke laddu
Hare ek khwanche me dikhlaye til ke laddu
Kuch gali me harja bikwaye til ke laddu
Hum ko bhi hai ke dil se khush aaye til ke laddu*

Orme, another European who served East India Company in the eighteenth century, wrote that for the Hindu society' esteemed milk as the purest of foods because they think it partakes of some of the properties of the nectar of their gods, and they esteem the cow itself a 'divinity'.⁵² It is generally considered 'women's role is very minimal in the regional food contribution. In this regard, one of the contemporary poets of the Eighteenth century 'Insha' wrote about women's position in India. He says women were aware of regional food medicine.^j Thus all these represent the practice of social beliefs along with a local understanding of food consumption.

Conclusion.

The Indian regional cuisine can be described as a synthesis of diverse cultures, ingredients and methods. The understanding of medieval food cultures can't be complete without knowledge of regional cuisine. The major emphasis on food and its availability was always treated to be a central focus from the time immemorial. The regional food is a complex phenomenon where socio-economic and traditional beliefs were interwoven. The regional foods in medieval India were precedent for global acceptability and integration into larger communication systems. The regional cuisine can't be seen from only one angle as it was widely popular and consumed. It created a separate identity and worked as a medium of understanding the culture. We also notice

Jite rahe to yarro fir khaye til ke laddu" Akbarabadi, Nazeer, 2003, Kuliate Nazeer, Kitabi Duniya, Delhi, p. 90

^j 'Zahar lagti hai mujhko acchhiwani (medicine for newly mom)

mai piungi bula (son) janai ko

nahi deti hai mujhko kadha kyu

du mai kya kya bata janai ko'. Badayuni, Nizami, 1924, *Deewane Rangin Insha.*, Nizami Press, Badaui, p. 46

that the Mughals' dominance was split into several regional powers during the eighteenth century. This was perhaps the most saddening period for Mughal power, yet it was also the most dynamic period for regional culture especially for regional cuisine and cultural fusion in terms of food. So many modern authors and poets have contributed to the advancement of regional cuisine via their writings. Interestingly, regional food appeared to be a food for some particular region. However, gradually it became popular among the larger area in medieval India, and still, we are enjoying so many dishes as part of Indian cuisine. Therefore, we may conclude by saying that in the making of food and cuisine of the region, there are many elements that can be read historically, poetically and through the angle of state and cultural practices. The raw materials of all these interpretations are based on varied food cultures. Thus, food which was interpreted in the larger political social history narratives, offers us scope for the rich cultural understanding of the past.

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Chapter 6

Drinks in 17th and 18th century India

This chapter analyses drinks from a gastronomical perspective in the 17th and 18th century. An attempt has been made in this chapter to highlight one of the core elements of food culture, i.e., drinking, which has primarily overlooked in medieval historical writings as far as food is concerned. Indian culture has never been static, it always preserves the tradition and builds a mechanism for upgrading the food culture. Drinking culture was also one among them, though drinking water is always considered a lifeline for all human civilization. But the desire for intoxication is something that comes down to us from the past. The diversity and the consumption of drinking encompasses the Mughal Empire with the food culture. Mostly the drinking culture in Mughal India revolved around the concept of unity between food and health. The drinking culture here incorporates two major aspects of the society, which includes alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. The intoxicating beverages in the Mughal India had their own social paradigms and historical trajectories. In fact, the chapter highlights major shifts in the drinking consumption along with feast culture.

The drinking culture is always associated with lots of beliefs that cut across the religious dogma. There were large varieties and specifications about Mughal India's drinking culture. It was used as a source of happiness or joy and had multiple usages with identity. Most of the historical writings overlooked the consumption of wine and thus it didn't get an appropriate place in the historical writing of Medieval India.

The consumption of liquor is always seen as a sign of happiness or pleasure and part of the feast in the bygone times. Wine consumption incorporates so many cultural and traditional aspects and thus, it is also marked as a social identity. The evolution of any social tradition goes through a process of both continuity and change. The drinking culture in the Mughal India was also not different. Mughal period witnessed a new phase of drinking culture, evolution and growth as a distinct tradition. In the seventeenth century, Mughals were already at their apogee and actively evolving in many dishes that enhance food consumption and wine. The consumption of various types of wine added beauty in the cuisine of medieval India. Wine consumption is mostly associated with the festive feast as well and part of rituals too. Wine consumption got amalgamated with so many cultures in this period.

Interestingly for the first time, wine or alcohol consumption gets public attention and praise through regional poetry with the emergence of new regional powers in India. The local traditions and cultures also had a significant impact in developing India's drinking culture. The consumption of wine was always an integral part of the gastronomy. From the ancient times itself, wine was considered a secret drink and was the marker of the social identity.¹

Non Alcoholic Drinks.

The non-alcoholic drinks are always considered as source of Life for living beings. The cultural construction of drinking largely based on non-alcoholic beverages considered to be healthy and intake various ritualistic heritage. Indeed, there are considerable works from the anthropological and sociological perspective on drinking culture. Unfortunately, the works on non-alcoholic drinks in the medieval times have not been discussed much in historical writings. Many social features like feeding, living, and drinking attached with us derived directly from the religious text books, similarly, in the medieval Indian times the non-alcoholic drinking was connected with the

traditional knowledge and cultural practices of the past. Every culture represents different signs of prosperity and identity, and nonalcoholic drinks have also one of the elements that helps in understanding the socio cultural fabric of the society. In every society, the more nonalcoholic consumption behaviors are considered pious, healthy, and important for the whole social order. Implicit in the uses of nonalcoholic consumption in the medieval times was more to do with survival and self satisfaction. The more meticulous study in the field of non alcoholic consumption, the more indelibly the idea takes root that the non alcoholic consumption was indeed in the cultural and traditional knowledge of the past with a more refined manner in the medieval India.

Non alcoholic consumption played an important role in the Mughal India from the beginning itself. In the non alcoholic consumption, water as one of the most essential drink of the world and most common drink of east India.² Indeed, the emperor Akbar was the one who opened a separate department for water known as ‘Abdar Khana’. Moreover he appointed a separate person to look after it.³ He always drank water of Ganges both at home and while travelling⁴, and emperor Aurangzeb was also continued this practice in his time.⁵ To cross-check the unforeseen tragedy, the emperor Akbar has appointed a trustworthy person to look after on the banks of the river, who dispatch the water in a sealed jar.⁶ So the importance of drinking water was in the tradition of the Mughal India. In fact a separate person was appointed for tasting the water. ⁷ Here non alcoholic consumption played an important role for the formation of identity in the society. It was not merely a normal drink but played a symbolic role in conveying the idea of health consciousness among the masses. Interestingly, the cooling system of water also started at the time of Akbar with the help of Saltpetre.⁸ Abu Fazl mentioned that snow and ice became part of culinary practices in Mughal India. There were ten boats employed for the transfer of Ice, and one arrived daily at the

capital. Mostly they arrived from the place called Panhan, a northern mountains, forty five kos away from Lahore.⁹

The common culture in using the non alcoholic consumption was in the preparation of food along with the drinking water. To confirm this, the Abu fazl states that rain water or water from the Yamuna and Chenab was used and mixed with the Ganges water for the cooking purposes.¹⁰ Thus the water had also more symbolic and spiritual connection. For emperor Akbar the Ganges river water was the “water of immortality”.¹¹

However, the water also had different purposes as it was mixed with the alcoholic substance too for healing purpose. For instance, as per Jahangir’s testimony in his memoir, his mother and nurses administered one tola of liquor mixed with rose water and water as a cough remedy.¹² Hence from the above mentioned discussion it can be seen non alcoholic consumption were used to treat ailments. Thus the non alcoholic drinks were not only used for amusement but also for medicinal purposes. Finally, Bernier tells us that “a wise man” would confine himself to “the pure and fine water, or to the excellent lemonade” that were easily available.¹³

Moreover, this drink had a health booster as it was treated as relief from hot weather. To confirm this, Bernier in his account states that, ‘I felt as if I should expire before night. All my hopes are in four and five limes still remaining for lemonade, and little dry curd which I am about to drink diluted with water and sugar, it was popularly called as ‘Sherbet’.¹⁴ It was one of most pleasant drink for common masses in the Mughal times. For Bernier, the water in India was far better, sweet and helpful in digestion than his respective country France for consumption. The reason he put forward for the sweetness and blissful of water was the heat of the sun.¹⁵ These non alcoholic drinks were not only for showcase or for identity. Indeed it was used as a health drink and treated as medicinal drink along with for survival. Another traveler of the eighteenth century states that

buffaloes were used in carts and for tilling the land. There were great herds like buffaloes used for milk and their milk was plentiful supplied in the market.

Indeed, the traveler states about the taste of the milk, that the cow milk was more sweet.¹⁶ So the milk was another non alcoholic drinks available for the masses and it was well connected with the people. Intriguingly the consumption of sweet beverage was also a common practices at that time in the society. The two important component through which it was prepared was sugar and water, mixed together to form one of the favourite beverage in India in the eighteenth century. Whereas in the form of butter India had “ghee” with multiple uses.¹⁷

By and large in the investigation of gastronomy, the non alcoholic utilization gets no place in the historical compositions. The consumption of coffee or Qahwa, was a luxuries non alcoholic drink in seventeenth and eighteenth century. The legend also attached with the Qahwa or coffee that Sufi priest Baba Budan of Karantaka, who had travelled to the middle east brought this in India in the fourteenth century.¹⁸ Indeed, Terry states that those who were strict to their religion drink no wine at all they used to drink coffee, a black seed boiled in water and that turned out into the same colour.¹⁹ To was also used in the digestion and for cleaning of the blood.²⁰ This was the beginning of such non alcoholic bevarage in the Mughal India and later it was amplified alots of places in India. One of the contemporary account written by Anand Ram Mukhlis described in his writing that there were couple of *qahwa khānas* in Chandni Chawk. Qahwa-house was a place where individuals sit and make cheerful and drink it. Just qahwa (espresso) for qahwa-khana (cafe) is utilized in the refrains of numerous artists. It was said that in Vilayat (Foreign) there are various qahwa-houses, extremely rich and smooth. High aristocrats proceed to make joyful there. Gatherings of men of taste, smooth people, writers, men like songbirds collect there double a day.

In Shahjahanabad there are a couple of shops in Chandni Chawk where the upper strata of the society gathered, and connect with themselves in discussing sonnets and expressive discussion, and take a cup of qahwa at incredible expense.²¹ Thus one can understand that non alcoholic consumption not only gain the popularity among the masses but its utilization also acquired the prevalence among the elite section of the society and became drink of mingling. However, there were other kind of non alcoholic drinks that were also available for the masses in the eighteenth century. Juice of fruits, for which Mukhlis states that he purchased a watermelon and had a drink out of its juice mixed with rose, amberginis and sugar.²² Moreover there were other medicinal non alcoholic drinks available for the common masses. This drinks were popular among the women of the society.^a The kadha was a mixture of so many items used for several purposes in the medieval times.

Alcoholic Drinks. The second part in the drinking culture is alcoholic drinks. Interestingly, the consumption of alcoholic drinks was traditionally and historically very much popular among the masses. India was always a diverse society with many different cultures. Historically the alcoholic beverages were the part of Indian culture and tradition from time immemorial. One of the popular juice *Soma*, was part of the rituals in the early Aryans, but it was a kind of a drink which was considered as a non-alcoholic beverage. Even the Indus valley was known for distilling liquor and that was called as Sura²³. The Rig Veda promoted the consumption of soma and urged Indra drink

^a “Zahar lagti hai mujhko acchhiwani (medicine for newly mom)

mai piungi bala (son) janai ko

nahi deti hai mujhko kadha(mixture) kyu

du mai kya kya bata janai ko”. Badayuni, Nizami, 1924, Deewane Rangin Insha., Nizami Press, Badaui , p. 47

it and have no restriction in the use of sura.²⁴ Thus from the beginning itself, wine consumption existed in the Indian culture. One of the important cultural and gastronomical enhancements happened at the time of medieval India more specifically at the time of Mughal India. The period 17th and 18th centuries saw a unique phase of drinking culture in medieval India. Indeed the Mughals emperor before the seventeenth century were also very fond of wine consumption. The drinking of alcohol was associated with the companionship, which was evident from the testimony of Babur Nama. Babur states that his father Umar Shaikh Mirza that;

“He used to drink a lot. Later in life he held drinking parties once or twice a week. He was fun to be with in a gathering and was good at reciting poetry for his companions. He grew rather fond of *ma’jūn*, and under its influence would lose his head. He was of a scrappy temperament and had many scars and brands to show for it. He played backgammon a lot and occasionally gambled”²⁵

The above quote shows that liquor was treated as a warrior drink and gambling cherished as a part of happiness and get together. These were a traditional part of the culture, which continued in the gastronomy of the people in India. Indeed, this was the time when religious boundaries were not confined for any *amirs* or elite’s for the wine consumption. Mostly they were very attached with heroic prowess to hedonism for consumption of alcohol. In his biography, Babur mentioned about his nobles who indulged in drinking and their fondness for wine but at the same time had fear of God too. He records for Sultan Ahmad Mirza, that he was a man of orthodox hanafi in belief. He never missed the prayers even when he was drinking.²⁶ In fact, he also notes that one noble’s son died due to his overindulgence of Herat wine.²⁷

Babur also discussed about the toddy drinking as well. He states that like date, a jar can be tied to the toddy tree and the liquid can be caught and drunk. This drink is having intoxicant effects was said to be stronger than that of date liquor.²⁸ However at last he repented from drinking. Babur

wrote in his biography that why still his spirit wanted to savor the sin by consuming the wine. Temperance was not a bad thing. Babur went on complaining that how long his soul would be contaminated with sin. How long do you think you would be able to be comfortable amid deprivation? How long were you going to chase your lust? How much longer were you going to waste your life? Then he confirmed in his biography that he was able to forgive himself for his sin and stopped drinking alcohol. He had brought all of the assembling tools, including gold and silver dishes and goblets, and then had broken them all. Later he stopped drinking wine and let his heart to rest.²⁹

However, this act had a political motive behind it. When he was on his last battle of Khanwa, he motivated his ghaza imbued warriors and gave symbol of religious war through this act.³⁰ Thus, wine was something that had multiple usages at the beginning itself. Babur declared his repentance from wine but he didn't completely leave the intoxicants as he was relied on Ma'jaun.³¹ The entire story of wine drinking in the Baburnama from drinking to abstinence was built around socio-political circumstances. It was nothing to do with the religious beliefs, as Babur continued to have intoxicants in the form of ma'jaun. The culture of drinking wine gets its pace in the reign of Akbar too. For Babur, this world was not to be given second time, therefore on the New year, he ascertained of consuming liquor.³²

Several attempts were made in the Akbar's period for regulation in the wine sale and prescribed as medicinal use. For instance, Abu Fazl discussed about the wine for Malwa ruler, Baaz Bahadur. For him, wine was something which specialists have endorsed, in little amounts and at fixed occasions, regarding the course of action and organization of their real components, for specific personalities and constitutions, was made by this man (Baz Bahadur), who was drenched in brutal joys, a reason for expanded inactivity, and without recognizing night from day or day from night,

was constantly enjoying it.³³ The above passage shows consumption of wine was used as a medical purpose or in words for health purpose and for the balance of humor rather than for satisfaction of thirst. The usages of wine made popular among the people and promoted for drinking wine in limited quantity.

The 17th century, noticed a different phase for drinking in the Mughal India as they were at the peak of their rule. At this time it is interesting to understand how food culture in general and more precisely wine consumption evolved with multiple forms. For the Mughals, richness and grandeur were not solely bound by the varieties of the foods but also through wine or liquor which enriched their superiority among the masses. Bernier states that intoxication was part of the royal people for food consumption³⁴ and an essential part of every entertainment.³⁵ He adds that there were two types of wine that were found in the Mughal Empire, they were expensive and delicious wines come from a different place in Mughal India. One was *Chiraz* or *Shiraz*, which was brought from the Persia through Bandar Abbas and then dispatched to the port of Surat and took forty-six days to reach Delhi. The other one is Canary, which was brought by the Dutch in India.³⁶ These two varieties of wines were very costly and popular among the elite section of the society. So one can easily understand how they maintained the superiority and prestige through the medium of wine consumption.

Interestingly drinking was not confined only to males but it was open to all. Palsaert, another contemporary traveler states that women learn quickly from their husbands and drinking became fashionable in the last few years in the Jahangir period.³⁷ The manner of their life style was really enviable and magnificent. The glasses or chalice were used for drinking and were set with jewels, some of them were made up of ballace ruby, Turkish stone and other sorts of stone.³⁸ Though wine sale was restricted in the Mughal Empire but the consumption was not fully prohibited rather it

was preferable drink among the Mughal nobles.³⁹ However, the tragic part of wine drinking starts with the Jahangir's decrees on wine. Though he was very much fond of the wine. He confesses, 'No wine, spirits, or any kind of intoxicant or taboo alcohol is to be fabricated or sold. This is in spite of the way that he himself submit the wrongdoing of drinking wine and have continually continued doing as such from the age of eighteen until his current age of thirty-eight. In his childhood, when he was an energetic consumer. He in some cases consumed around twenty cups of two-fold refined spirits (*'arq-I do ātisha*). Since gradually it was having an extreme impact upon him then he started to diminish his intake of alcoholic consumption. In fact, within seven years he reduced it from fifteen cups to five or six cups. He additionally drank at different occasions: in some cases, he started to drink three or four hours before the day's end, once in a while he drank around evening time, and occasionally he drank during the day. Until the age of thirty this is the manner by which it was. After that, he concluded that he would drink just around evening time. Later he consumed liquor exclusively for stomach digestion'.⁴⁰

Jahangir's above testimony showed his passion and his attempt to restrict himself from wine consumption and indicate it was used for medicinal purposes. Drinking wine was evident that cultural practice in the Mughal times were more rely on the traditional values and customs. Thus in the beginning of the seventeenth century itself, the Mughal emperor indulged in the drinking parties with the courtiers.⁴¹ For Instance, at one gathering Jahangir states that he ordered to produce all sorts of 'intoxication or exhalirants (*makfiyat u mugirat*)' things for consumption, interestingly most of the amirs selected wine for drink and very few took mufarrib for drink.⁴² Thus the Mughal emperor has elaborated the feast not only with food items but also had an option for drinking. All these drinking were part and partial of day-to-day life's, despite the fact there was a regulation in

the beginning for the restriction of the non alcoholic beverage. On one of the occasion, he quotes ‘Hafiz Shirazi’ poetry with the wine consumption. In his testimony its states that

“Cupbearer; brighten my cup with the light of Wine,

Sing, minstrel, for the world has ordered itself as I desired”.⁴³

In this regard, one of contemporary traveler William Hawkins confirms that by the end of the day emperor Jahangir was so drugged with liquor and opium that his supper had to be thrust into his mouthe by others.⁴⁴ Even one of the court poet in the Jahangir’s time openly states that,

“I have two lips one devoted to wine and

The other for apologizing for drunkenness ”^b.⁴⁵

Thus it was not surprising that in the Mughal court drinking wine was not banned fully. Indeed with such poetry he tried to justify his drinking actions. The consumption of wine also crosses the boundary of religion. One of the traveler, Manucci writes that the chief Qazi of the Aurangzeb period was also addicted to the wine and drank secretly.⁴⁶ Despite all these facts, public sale of the wine was strictly restricted.

Here, it is interesting to note that wine consumption was not solely confined with desire in the Mughal India. There were different purposes and uses of wine consumption. By the seventeenth century, wine has symbolised for happiness and identity for any party or feast in Mughal India. Jahangir, in his autobiography, gives a detailed account of how he develops the craving for wine which converts into addiction.

^b “Du lab daram yeki dar miparasti

Yeki dar uzr khwahi hai mast”. The couplet was compsed by Talib Amuli, a Persian immigrant to the Mughal court. Lisa Balabanlilar, Royal Asiatic society journal, *The Emperor Jahangir and persuit of pleasure*. p. 181-183

“A wonderful gunner named Ustad Shah Quli, the chief of my uncle Mirza Muḥammad Ḥakim’s gunners said to me, If you drink a beaker of wine, it will relieve your exhaustion. Since I was young and my nature was inclined to do these things, I ordered Maḥmūd the water carrier (Abdar) to go to Ḥakim Ali’s house and bring some alcoholic syrup. The physician sent a cup and a half of yellow coloured, sweet-tasting wine in a small bottle. I drank it and liked the feeling I got. After that I started drinking wine, increasing it day by day until I no longer got a kick out of grape wine (sharab-i anguri) and started drinking liquor”.⁴⁷ His addiction for wines and accepting it without any negative thought shows that it was more like any common practices in the Mughal times to have alcohol consumption.

Wine was also utilised as a type of medication and was also used as a treatment for a specific ailment during the Mughal Empire. Gluttony for wine leads to obesity, but fortunately, this was taken as a medium of medicine. For instance, Jahangir’s mother and wet nurses gave some amount of liquor mixed with rose water and water for cough remedy and labelled it as a medicine.⁴⁸ Even it was considered as a relief drink from tiredness. Indeed, Jahangir also advised his son khurram (Shah Jahan), to drink wine at his weighting ceremony, and on other celebrations and festive days. He also advised his son not to drink a lot. As Avicenna, a great physician has said this in a poetic form, ‘wine is an enemy to the drunk, and a friend to a sober. A little is an antidote, but too much is venom’.⁴⁹

Wine was also used as a symbol of loyalty, Jahangir gave a party in which all his servants were intoxicated with the wine of loyalty.⁵⁰ Thus, unlike any other items, one can understand that wine was considered a strong medium of attachment with the common masses and the emperor. The affection and trust were also built with the royal gifts. As per the testimony of Jahangir, Shah of Persia had sent a crystal drinking bowl with a note if the emperor will drink from this bowl and

send it to me that will an honor and token of affection for me.⁵¹ The substitute of wine for Jahangir was 'Buza', a kind of beverage made from bread and rice and popularly was called as sar. The taste and liking depends on how old it was.⁵² Indeed, he was a person of good taste too. To confirm this in his brief autobiography he states that in Kashmir there was abundant of wine and vinegour, but in taste wise it was inferior and sour.⁵³

One of the contemporary traveler, Bernier states that though at the time of Aurangzeb wine was strictly prohibited but occasionally imported wines could be bought.⁵⁴ He also added that at the time of Aurangzeb, arrack (distilled from sugarcane molassess) was strictly forbidden and only Christians dared to drink it.⁵⁵ The foodways in the 17th century were of multiple forms, more particularly in drinking. There were different forms of wine that existed during this period. The drinking culture of wine was not everyone's cup of tea in Mughal India. Nevertheless, the common masses as well were actively engaged in the drinking culture. One of the contemporary traveler Edward Terry talks about the Toddy or taddy as a form of clear liquor for the common masses, that is pleasant in taste to any white wine. Moreover, Terry states that it was used as a medicinale drink but only if taken early⁵⁶ and goes on with the description of the tree from which it was extracted. This was also confirmed by another traveler Ralph Fitch, who also states that this tree is the most profitable tree in the world. The available varieties of the liquor were also very similar to the food as there were enormous methods and techniques used to extract alcohol from a different medium. For instance, another traveler De leat of the seventeenth century, confirms that liquor was also extracted from the fruit of Mahua.⁵⁷ Interestingly one more variety of wine or alcohol was introduced by the Europeans, basically, it was more used in the voyages. To confirm this, Thomas Roe, an ambassador of English monarch at the court of Jahangir, stated that sack preferred to be a wine. Though with the passing of the time its consumption got a decline.⁵⁸ Della Valle, an Italian

traveler in the 17th century records that he drank a hot wine, boiled with cloves, cinnamon and other spices for which Europeans called as burnt wine.⁵⁹ Moreover, Della valle compared the Surat liquor with Italy's liquor, 'Uva Jugalitica' or early july grape liquor of Italy.⁶⁰

The consumption of basic liquor becomes more popular in the seventeenth century. Bernier states that the basic liquor for India was Arrac or arq, a spirit drawn by distillation from unrefined sugar.⁶¹ Interestingly, it was also strictly forbidden for the sale. But Christians only dare to drink it publicly in Mughal India. Even one more form of arrack called as Nipa, an exchange between the English and the Portuguese in Goa.⁶² Another contemporary traveler, John Ovington mentions three types of arrack based on the places, First one was Goa arrack, the second was Bengal arrack and third was from Batavia. These were very cheap in price and Bengal arrack is much stronger than of Goa.⁶³ He also states that arrack was distilled from either rice, toddy, the stronger variety was from Jaggery mixed with water along with bark of Babul tree. It was as hot as brandy for him (jagery arrak).⁶⁴ The Europeans used these at large for consumption. Interestingly, a drink called Punch (Paunch or five Five) become so much popular during the late seventeenth century among the English subjects. This drink was a combination of five ingredients- arrack, sugar, lime juice, spices, and water.⁶⁵ Arrack also finds mention in the English factories records in India in the seventeenth century, as it was often a part of the traders' and factors' supplies.⁶⁶

Liquor consumption was not only meant for entertainment or to satisfy one's thirst. It was used for several purposes in the Mughal India. For instance, it was used as a sign of good gesture or a medium of friendship and a gift. One of the contemporary traveler, Thomas Roe states that once Asaf Khan asked him whether he wants to taste the grapes wine for which he was willing to taste it.⁶⁷ Moreover in returned Thomas roe, as a compliment sent some elegant wine.⁶⁸ Thus, this way of interacting people or in other words a sign of hospitality for some travelers clearly shows that

liquor consumption was their routine. Infact, women were also involve in serving in the taverns⁶⁹, which was mostly looked after by the womens who entertains the guests by serving with musical instruments.⁷⁰ To confirm this one of contemporary historian from Akbar's period, Badayuni states that Akbar has appointed a woman belonging to the caste of wine distillers to the official wine shop at the court.⁷¹ This development suggests that there was a separate group of wine distillers and they were actively involved in the alcohol business. Indeed in the social gathering, it was more often to shake the wine cups among the elite section of the society. It was Jahangir's birthday, when Thomas Roe states that 'Jahangir asked him which wine, regardless of whether of the grape or made of something else. Whether solid or light in taste. To which Thomas Roe answered, neither solid nor in excess. Then Jahangir called for a Cup of Gold filled with the blended wine, a big part of the grape, half artificial, making it been filled and sent by one of his Nobles to me with this message. Thomas Roe should drink this wine twice, threefold, four or multiple times for Emperor Jahangir sake, and acknowledge the Cup and appurtenances as a present. Thomas Roe drank a little bit and expressed that it was more solid than ever I tasted with the goal that it made him sneeze. It was filled with wheat, raisins, almonds, and cut lemons, which were welcomed him on a Plate of gold. Jahangir encouraged him to drink and eat.'⁷² This act of hospitality and with huge showcase of wine in a rich victuals was always seen as a sign of superiority and linked with the symbolic power in the society.

Moreover Tavernier, another traveler of the seventeenth century states that he saved his valuables from being robbed off by offering wine as a gift.⁷³ Even to confirm this, officials of the East India Company were importing liquor from London to satisfy their own appetite but also used it as a gift for the Mughal monarch, the governor and the officials.⁷⁴ Thus liquor also played a role of bridge between the two opposite people in the Mughal India. Another method of intoxication was Bhang

(hemp) and Boza (spirit distilled from rice, millet or barley) being sold in Bazars, and Jahangir attempted to ban it for consumption.⁷⁵ These were also some of the other medium of intoxication available in the medieval Indian culture and more interestingly some of them are still continue in our present culture. Despite the fact that liquor consumption was allowed publicly, it was not more widespread in the Mughal society and openly drinking was very rare among the elite section of society.⁷⁶ Travenier also confirms that one of the epicenter for intoxicant was Burhanpur, a place between Agra and Surat. This was the place known for opium and Tobacco cultivation.

Indeed, he also mentioned that people sometimes neglect to save it as they were already in abundance and allow the grown crop to be decay.⁷⁷ Moreover the process of distillation was very lengthy to procure the wine. For which Travenier states that in the earthen vessels, glazed inside which were called as Martabans (Vessel). That vessels filled with black sugar (unrefined) look like yellow wax with thick black bark. That bark served as to make palm wine fermented in four of five days like European new wines. This process also converts from sweetness to sourness in taste.⁷⁸ These show that even though there was a ban on wine consumption but practically it was allowed at a certain extent. Thus the Mughals were very much attached with the pleasure of wine consumption and actively evolving the food culture of medieval India. This also shows that the symbol of power and legitimacy was becoming more popular in the seventeenth century. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal dynasty started declining and the East India Company took charge of the subcontinent and the essence of Mughal rule almost disappeared from the subcontinent. Despite all new changes in the social and cultural facets, the evolving in the food culture still continued its pace. This also gave space for drinking culture to develop in the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century for the liquor consumption was a new phase all together, the barrier which were noticed in the seventeenth century earlier was over. In this century, one of the contemporary

writer Elizabeth Fay writes that there was a perception in England that the heat of the Bengal would destroy one's appetite. Interestingly she observed just the opposite of it, people consume more food in India.⁷⁹ She also states in one letter that Madeira (wine) was quite expensive in compare to the food items. "We dine too at two o'clock in the very heat of the day. I will give you our own bill of fare and general prices of things. A soup, a roast fowl, curry and rice, mutton pie, a forequarter of lamb, a rice pudding, tarts, very good cheese, freshly churned butter, excellent Madeira (that is expensive, but the eatables are very cheap)".⁸⁰

One can also understand the economic condition of the eighteenth century when the regional rulers started showing their wealth. For instance, Nawab of Awadh, Asafud Daulah was very much fond of luxuries items, wines, bhang, and the weed.⁸¹ Thus, the wine consumption was part of the regular food culture and made gastronomy very much vibrant in India. Interestingly after the decline of Mughal power in India, the Indian poets openly talks about the consumption of wine and wrote so much poetry on it. For Instance, one of the contemporary poet Meer Taqi Meer of this period states that *sharab* (liquor) consumption becomes like a common practice^c in the eighteenth century, more over *Arq* was still in the use as an intoxication.^d Indeed, the consumption of liquor was seen as a companion for friendship too.^e The importance of liquor one can understand

^c . *'Tujh bin sharab piker hue sab tere kharab*

Saqi begair tere inhe jaam jam hua'. Meer taqi Meer, 1973, *Deewan e Meer- Nuskha e Mahmoodabad*, ed. Akbar Haidari, Delhi, Delight press, p. 199-202

^d . *'Wa tu ghar se apne peekar sharab nikla*

Ya Sharm se arq (distilled wine) me doob aftar (sun) nikla'. Ibid, p. 196

^e *'Dil me lab ke khayale shrab tha*

Manind aaina ke ghar me aab tha

Mujhe saqi de koi jam e aqeeq

when it becomes part of our festival or in other words got mixed with our socio-cultural tradition. Nazeer Akbarabadi, in the Eighteenth century, writes that people do love to drink wine and bhang in the rainy season and after having bhang they become wet in the rain.^f

Interestingly on the occasion of *Eid ul Fitr* or *Eid*, one of the famous Indian cultural day or festive days. He writes that some people do enjoy the alcoholic drink on this day.^g Indeed, for the festival of *Holi* as well wines were part of the celebration, another cultural or religious festival.^h Though mostly the poets use so many hyperboles and filled it with imaginary things in their poetry to make their works beautiful. But here, in his poem, one can also find out the true feelings of Indian society and culture. The metaphors used to highlight the wine in socio-cultural tradition got amplified in the eighteenth century. In these cultural occasion wine were not only mere a drink but also a mark

Lekin labalab ho usme raheek'. Ibid, p. 496

^f. "Kitne to bhang pee pee kapde bhigo rahe hai

kitne sharab pe kar ho mast Chhak rahe hai.

Mai (wine) ki gulabi aage pyale (bowl) chalak rahe hai". Akbarabadi Nazeer, Kalam Nazeer Akbarabadi, 2003, ed. Farooq Argali, Alhaj Md. Naseer khan, Fareed Interprises, Delhi , p. 101

^g. 'Picle pahar se uth ke nahane ki dhum hai

Sheer o shakkar sewaiyan banane ke dhum hai

Koi to mast firta hai jam e sharab se

Koi pukarta hai chote azab se

Kalla kisika phula hai laddu ki chab se

Chatakare ji me bharate hai nan o kabab se'. Ibid, p. 83-84

^h. 'Kuch raag aur rang jhamakte hai

Kuchh may ke jam chalakte hai.' Ibid, p. 89-92

of social celebration. The dishes prepared for the Eid celebration were Sheer (a kind of sweet pudding) and *Sewaiyan* (a popular sweet dish). Indeed here, one can also notice that for some people, *Sharab* (wine) was not excluded from the celebration, it was part and partial of the celebration. Thus the regional cuisine also started a new phase in the social sphere. Even another contemporary account of Lockyer states that still the wines and beers were imported in India from Europe.⁸² Even he also states that Bhang, a kind of intoxication used ‘as Tea, inebriates or exhilarates them according to the quantity they take’.⁸³ These all shows, in the eighteenth century though India was facing problems at the economic level, but culturally or more to say wine culture was evolving and enhancing our food and cultural diversity. Indeed, the new variety of alcoholic drink gets its popularity through the poetry. It was mostly mixed with the tobacco for intoxication and popularly known as Hukkah.

“Ever since hookah is your friend for the love of life

Since then it is right to say that there is some voice

The smoke that flies now from your mouth, O angel

The nature and talk of this smoke go till the sky?

There are many who tries to inhale the Pechwan (Hookah)

There is a class of styles in consuming the Gudgudi (Hookah)”

“Now the status to the bottom of the hookah is where:

Minhal is also Mumtaz if it touches the mouth

If you want to be Gul (Flower) Oh Heart you have to burn more

See what is the beauty and appearance of the tobacco

Gul can you notice the small quantity of tobacco burning in the fire

O Angel there must be something in you that makes you popular”.ⁱ

Hence, to conclude, food is linked to a large number of variables and dynamics such as biological, social, cultural, political and economic. Food and drinks go hand in hand in our society. The alcoholic consumption has its own importance in the gastronomy and for the formation of our cultural heritage. The non alcoholic consumption of drinks also had several meaning in the past with so many varieties in it. Social and political relationships and expressions of power and cordiality in the Mughal context were also expressed through the medium of food and with consumption of the wines. Liquor consumption or use of intoxicants were the integral part of the Mughal food culture. In drinking rituals, it was always the food that accompanied the wine, rather than the other way around. On the other hand, in feasts where food was the focus, the consumption of intoxicating beverages does not appear to have played a significant role. The non alcoholic

ⁱ *‘Jabse huqqah tujh lab jan bakshka ka hamraz hai*

Tabse haq haq kiya ki qah qah ki si kuch awaz hai

Ye jo udta hai dhuan ab tere muh se ae pari

Is dhuan wala nasab ki arsh tak parwaz hai

Pechwan pine me kis kis aan ka khulta hai pech

Gudgudi pine me kafir aur hi andaz hai’

‘Aab ne huqqe tawe niche ko ye rutba kaha

Muh se lagne me to ab minhal bhi mumtaz hai

Gar tujhe hona hai gul ae dil tu jal aur dam na mar

Dekh ke tambaku ko kya kya soz hai aur saz hai

Gul kya dam bhar mai tamabaku ko jalakar aag me

Ae pari ru tere dam me tu ye kuch gumaz hai’. Akbarabadi, Nazeer, 2003, Kulliate Nazeer, Kitabi Duniya, Delhi, p. 538

consumption added beauty and spirituality in our cultural heritage. There were multiple usages of water and it also created a separate identity in the society. There was a clear social hierarchy on the basis of wine consumption. We noticed though there was a change in the political power, wine culture evolves dynamically to contribute to our cultural past. In the wine consumption emphasizes were more on prestige and versatility of drinking in the Mughal period. Thus, the alcoholic and non alcoholic consumption were not simply for the entertainment or for someone's pleasure, it was also used for several purposes and most importantly was part of identity and used as a power connection in the society.

End Notes

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⁴ Ibid, p. 58

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⁸ Ibid, p. 55

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- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 345-346
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Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The present thesis entitled ‘Indian Food and Cuisine in the 17th and 18th Century’ examines the role and importance of food and cuisine in the 17th and 18th century of Medieval India. India’s cultural landscape is littered with various foods and their different usages from the past to the present. Culture is seen as a crucial component, comprising a wide variety of phenomena that characterise our human communities. Food is also an essential element of our culture that drives human civilization from the past. Firstly, understood as a biological requirement and then as an economic commodity, a key component of ritual and social transactions, as a medium of social gathering, as a social bonding and identity. Food has always been and continues to be heart of Indian culture and tradition. In this context, the present thesis throws light on India’s gastronomy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Food consumption is a continuous process and a necessary part of our traditional knowledge and reflects patterns of cultural amalgamations. The gastronomy of the past empowers us to comprehend our social legacy and society. Food also catalyzes human evolution, as well as a spiritual and cultural link in the society. Gastronomy also has essential social elements that connects, or divide as the case may be, people specific food choices. Indian food and cuisine, which we adore across the world, is a fusion of various cultures from the past. The traditional knowledge or practices of food preparation and consumption are part and partial of our today’s daily chores. Indian cuisine has a particular character in the world arena due to its different manner of food preparations, various ingredients, amalgamation of cultures in mediaeval India.

Thus the culinary system in the Medieval India was marked as an essential role in giving meaning to gastronomy and situating them in relation to human lives. The present study becomes relevant in today's time as most of studies on food culture have not been given much importance from the historical point of view in India.

Food availability and consumption are frequently used as a barometer of one's status and dignity. The expression of hierarchy, social position, economic status, and prestige were attached to the kinds of food eaten and the availability of various dishes in the bygone times. How food changed from ruler to ruler with the passage of time and the meaning of food also changes in Medieval India. The present work sees how food was dynamic and luxuries for one section of the society and for the other section i.e., lower section it was static and monotonous. Food generally understood as the basic necessity for the survival of human kind but one true face of the food consumption always attached to the status and power in the society. In the beginning itself Babur showed his interest in food and labeled India as a land of no charm but later liked the Indian fruits.

However, there are valuable sources that deal with the food culture like travel accounts which were numerous in numbers as they were contemporary to that time and provide valuable informations of food customs. Apart from this, the memoirs and poetries in the sixteenth to eighteenth century also played an important role in depicting the society of that time and the importance of food in the society. There were other contemporary officials and a semi-official record that gave the varieties of food glimpses of seventeenth and eighteenth century. These are some of the important sources for understanding Indian food culture during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. One of the main claim of the thesis is that the vibrancy of the 17th and 18th

century which is challenged by the contemporary historians on Mughal history is also rich in reference to food culture.

Food and cuisine have their own significance in society, since the consumption of food distinguishes various social groups and provides prestige, power networks, and identity. The Mughal period was clearly split into two major sections based on gastronomy. Yet, the upper classes of society enjoyed all of the comforts of life, with a wide variety of cuisine available to them. The Emperors always had a strong desire to preserve their identity and express themselves through pomp and show. While the lower section of them did not have variation in the food consumption as they were limited to single food mostly. Even in the political scenario sometimes food had been used as a weapon of war, and power networks worked around the food system in Medieval India. One of the most significant changes was the establishment of a separate department in the sixteenth century and the employment of cooks, who were responsible for appropriate food inspection and delivery of the food. The Mughal Empire's political situation has been connected to the food so well, that it portrays of a kind, humble, and polite ruler for the poor section of the society. The foodways can be determined in different sections of the society as their diets were different from each other. Here we see the convergence of the production patterns, surplus and the formation of different cultural patterns based on access to food.

Thus it makes a social hierarchy based on food consumption in the medieval India. Even in the Mughal times the importance of food was seen in the economy, the availability of foods and fruits boost the food culture with cultural amalgamations in Medieval India. The introduction of the various kinds of dishes and fruits during the Mughal era aided in making Medieval India's food culture distinctive in South Asia. From this we can gathered that there was a emergence of a indic regional particularity that included elements from both the great and little tradition and cut

across all religious communities. One can find these in expression related to meanings of salt, serving of betel, and hosting of Dawat etc.

The lavish life style of the royal people was having all kinds of enjoyment with them as music was also part of the feast. The royal people's diet is characterised by many servants and cooks from many parts of the world who prepare delectable dishes for them. Even a separate department had been established for cooking with a department chief to look after it. The fascinating aspect of the royal people during the Mughal period was how they established table etiquette while eating meals. Despite all these, there was gender segregation also developed in royal people from Akbar's period onwards. During this time, the food culture was also marked with gift giving rituals or, in other words, the power and authority become more showcase while having a feast. In short, their lives were full of splendour, lavishness and luxuries with the dynamic food culture.

The food culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth century definitely occupies a prominent position in the history of India. But beneath the glitz of royal meals, the impoverished and suffering face of common people in Medieval India also could be seen. Even for writing about common people after looking at the royal life style, one needs to change the tone and style for writing about gastronomy of the common people. Their daily food was restricted from beginning till last to khichery. There might be slight change in the mixture of ingredients otherwise it remains same. They just eat for their survival and to fight against the changing environment. Even they face alots of pains and poverty. Although some rulers have taken certain initiatives to look after the existence and food of common people. But it seems with the passage of times their work got finished with the changing of the ruler as well. Hence to conclude, in terms of food and

cuisine, India can claim to be, by far, the most varied society in the world. This would also leads us to a question of why there was so much of space in literature on food.

There was always a local or regional food available as a marker of one's class or region in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The consumption of anything has an important role in representing the local culture and beliefs. In Medieval India, the regional food has multiple facets to it. Indeed, it was the food through which one can connect with each other. It surpasses the feeding or satisfaction for one's need as mostly local foods were also attached to local customs and religious beliefs. The specialty about the regional food is their locally available ingredients and mostly encapsulate the traditional values of eating and continued the same practices in the later times with cultural amalgamation. The Indian regional cuisine can be described as a synthesis of diverse cultures, ingredients and methods. The understanding of medieval food culture can't be complete without knowledge of regional cuisine.

We also noticed that the Mughal's dominance was split into several regional powers during the eighteenth century. This was perhaps the most saddening period for Mughal power, yet it was also the most dynamic period for regional culture especially for regional cuisine and cultural fusion in terms of food. So many modern authors and poets have contributed to the advancement of regional cuisine via their writings. Interestingly, regional food appeared to be a food for some particular region but gradually it became popular among the larger area in medieval India, and still, we are enjoying so many dishes as part of Indian cuisine. The idea of Mughal's as a cultural land mark and food culture as a site of interaction also reveals that there were many cultural socio economic transaction that informed making of this site.

Indian food culture has never been static, it always preserves the tradition and builds a mechanism for upgrading the food culture. Drinking culture was also among them, though drinking water is always considered a lifeline for all human civilization. Mostly the drinking culture in Mughal India revolved around the concept of unity between food and health. The drinking culture here incorporates two major aspects of the society, which includes alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. The drinking culture always associated with lots of beliefs that cut across the religious dogma. There were large varieties and specifications about the Mughal India's drinking culture. It was used as a source of happiness or joy and had multiple usages with identity. Food and wines go hand in hand in our cultural society with medicinal values too as we have seen. The alcoholic consumption has its own importance in the gastronomy and for the formation of our cultural heritage. Indeed, the non alcoholic consumption also had several meanings in the past with so many varieties. In the Mughal empire, social and political ties and demonstrations of power and cordiality were also conveyed via food and wine consumption. The non alcoholic consumption added beauty and spirituality in our cultural heritage. There were multiple usages of water and other non-alcoholic drinks that aided in creating a separate identity in the society. There was a clear social hierarchy on the basis of wine consumption. Although there was a change in the political power, wine culture continued to evolve dynamically to contribute in our cultural heritage. In the wine consumption, emphasizes were more on prestige and versatility of drinking in the Mughal period. In drinking culture, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, was utilised for more than just entertainment or pleasure; it served a number of purposes and, most importantly, was a part of one's social identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

The study sheds light on how food facilitated demonstrations of power in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century. The picture that emerges from this thesis is of a complex mosaic of enunciations by actively participating in feasting, regional practices and drinks rituals. This research has larger implications for the study of the relationship between gastronomy and legitimization of power and survival in India. This research further supports the idea that the social formations and foodways were a polyphonic process in gastronomy comprising numerous claims to a share of status and power rather than a single entity.

India is a blend of multiple cultures and foodways from the past and embedded also with medical beliefs. Hence, Indian food and cuisine culture here are in continual flux, they must be seen as a dynamic, transcultural phenomena with multiple identity.

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**Department of
History &
Tourism Management**

KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY

WARANGAL - 506 009
Telangana, India

Vol - XIV No. 1
May, 2019

ISSN: 0976-2345

Kakatiya Journal of Historical Studies

(A UGC-CARE Listed Journal)



Editor

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Food Culture in Mughal India

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Introduction:

The Mughal Dynasty (1526-1857) has left a large and visible mark on India and among the Mughal heritage are the many beautiful buildings that were constructed in the Mughal style, the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort in Delhi, the Fort of Agra, Humayun's Tomb and a number of other beautiful monuments. During their period, the mingling of Persian and Indian styles created some of the world's best-known monuments. This combination of influences can also be seen in the arts, cuisine, gardens and even in the Urdu language. Through the Mughals, Indo-Persian culture reached an apogee of refinement and beauty. The Mughals were self-sufficient, self-explanatory and even they had never faced the problem of being foreigners ruling over an alien land.¹ Most of the attention for the Mughal period has been rendered on its administration, socio-economic, military and architectural success and there is hardly any focus on gastronomy of the Mughals. Historical writings have never given any importance to food in the historical writing and the focus is more on wars, diplomacy, administration, art and architecture. Gastronomy also played a very important role in the Mughal period. Through an attempt on food studies, one can examine how food has been connected to human being's life and analyze how food consumption established an identity in the society. The present paper attempts to look at Mughal food as a marker of cultural identity.

Food and Cuisine:

Food plays an important role in people's lives and impacts on culture. Many cultures have different varieties of food and ingredients. People also connect to their cultural or ethnic group through similar food patterns. Immigrants often use food as a means of retaining their cultural identity. People from different cultural backgrounds, eat different foods. The ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures. The areas in which families live and from where their ancestors originated influence their food likes and dislikes. These food preferences result in patterns of food choices within a cultural or regional group.

Food consumption is generally understood as the basic requirement for the survival and growth of humankind. Food is not simply for the purpose of diet and nutrients or for sustaining of life but it also plays an important role in culture and the

formation of one's identity. Indeed often food consumption has been considered as a measuring rod of human's status and dignity. The expression of hierarchy, social position, economic status, and prestige were attached to the kinds of food eaten and the availability of various dishes in the bygone times. Food reflects choices, beliefs, passion, habits and personality which have not been focused on medieval Indian history. Indeed, food also conveys the idea of communication for one's individuality and one's place in the society.² Food communicates class, ethnic group, lifestyle and other social position. Hence, it can be said to be a medium of communication in the social system. However, the notion of identity is not a passive experience but it develops through an active individual or social practice.³ The enormous appetite generally attached with the prestige in almost every society, firstly on one hand as a sign of power and a sign of wealth but on the other hand, it also indicates poverty. Cuisine is ever evolving and dynamic. According to Ferguson cuisine is 'the code that structures the practice of food and allows us to discuss and to represent taste'.⁴ Ferguson goes on to draw out certain conditions that a set of culinary practices must fulfill in order to qualify as a cuisine: A more or less coherent repertory of culinary preparations, usually structured by the products at hand, becomes a true cuisine only when its status as a production becomes apparent. That is, culinary preparations become a cuisine when, and only when, the preparations are articulated and formalized, and enter the public domain.⁵ Cuisine is also fixed by a boundary or region with limited amount of ingredients depending upon the geography, climate and history of the territory.⁶ Though, the rich cuisine or high cuisine can be kept in a separate category as it is not having any boundary or restriction in regards with ingredients.⁷

Royal Mughal Food:

Babur, the founder of the empire, was fully dissatisfied with the available food items in India. Despite being a critic of Indian food culture, he spent the rest of the life in India and remained an alien to its cuisine. For instance, Babur states that,

"Hindustan is a country of no charms. Its people have no good looks; of social intercourse, paying and receiving visits there is none; of genius and capacity none; of manners, none; in handicraft and work there is no form or symmetry, method or quality; there are no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, musk melons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no good bread or cooked food in the bazars."⁸

Thus from the beginning itself, the founder of the empire was fully dissatisfied with the kinds of food that was available to him. Through the Memoirs of Babur, we get the feeling that during his reign in Hindustan, there were no established gastronomical connections. During his period not much emphasis was given on eating etiquette and dining practices. Initially, during his itinerant phase, he shared a strong bond with his nobles and social inferiors, and we get to see that less emphasis was given on distinction among people according to their ranks and positions. Although the differences in status and position between the ruler and his *begs* were well-defined, Babur did not let these differences, influence dining etiquette. They were all invited to share Babur's wine parties, where music and dance, and poetry recitals were common. The climate is described in the contemporary sources as one of camaraderie, conviviality and faith. Many references shared by him in *Baburnama* show that on his excursions, Babur and his men cooked food, shared food and made merry together. Since he had a very troubled reign, both he and his successor Humayun could not contribute much to the food culture and hence changes occurred in food from the period of his decedents.

Ruby Lal states that the period from Humayun witnessed a slight shift in etiquette.⁹ Royalty during this period was having enormous kinds of foods with all luxurious items which marked their superiority and power in the society.¹⁰ For instance, the emperor and other nobles in the feast had of various types of exquisites of food and every tables had royal delicacies from birds to fish and drinks along with the pan dishes, water vessels with jeweled drinking vessels and utensils made of pure gold and silver.¹¹ The presentation of food itself marked the richness of Mughal royal people along with status and symbol of power they pursue. Interestingly, the role of women in the Humayun's period was not confined to the Harem only, but they were active members of the royal feast, along with the emperor. Gulbadan begum mentions that a lavish feast occurred in 1534 on a riverside in which lots of royal women participated and she describes the sitting arrangements of that banquet.¹² Apart from this, the royal feast was not all about varieties of food only, as on this occasion, there was a musical ceremony as well, which was part and parcel of the royal feast. That can be considered as part of their lavish lifestyle of having food with music or in other words music can be seen as part of happiness and joy of royal people. As Gulbadan begum notes that "Young men and pretty girls and elegant women and musicians and singers with sweet-voice were ordered to sit in the tank".¹³ In this regard, one of the contemporary writers Jouher also writes that Shah Tahmasp, invited Humayun for a special

occasion in which three hundred tents were installed and interestingly twelve bands of military music stationed at different places and the ground was fully covered with imperial carpets along with all kinds of eatables available before every guests.¹⁴ Such presentation with all items and abundant food as an exhibition is a part of every worldly paradise.¹⁵ However, Humayun was also fond of meat of hunted animals. For instance, Jouher writes that he found one deer for which he says "what a delicious prize this deer would be" as part of feast.¹⁶

Even one of the verses attached with the food in the period of Humayun also represents the richness of the Mughals.

"Every moment in that delightful feast, by the order of the king, whose horse resembled the heaven, all kinds of dishes were produced, filled with various types of exquisite foods, on every table, royal delicacies from birds to fish were served".¹⁷

Though, Babur was the founder of Mughal Empire in India, it was Akbar who was the real architect of the Empire. One of the contemporary writers of Akbar's time, Abul Fazl was of the opinion that the emperor took a keen interest in the kitchen department for food and he also had a lot of wise regulation for food department. As far as his personal food is concerned, he ate very less in a day, often only once a day. He was not greedy or having lust for food because he always left his meal before getting fully satisfied¹⁸ and hence one can't attach gluttony with the emperor Akbar. Even there was no fixed time for him when he would like to take food but servants were always ready and within one hour more than hundred dishes were prepared.¹⁹ He appointed many cooks from across the countries, who can prepare several kinds of dishes. He always drank water from the Ganges as for him the source of the life is water of immortality.²⁰ Thus, the food was meant not just for feeding purpose but it gave the idea of satisfaction in physical and moral life with power in the society. Abul Fazl goes on to say that the emperor table cloth would be spread on the ground and all the dishes served mostly in gold, silver, earthenware victuals with many dishes along with various kinds of breads, curds and several small stands plates of pickles.²¹ Though, all these makes eating pleasurable, that also indicate a path from primrose to obesity. The lavishness of emperor produced by Abul Fazl has also been backed by one of the travelers account of that time. Father Monserrate, says that the emperor's table is very splendid and it was filled with more than forty courses of dishes. The food was always taken care of to avoid the unforeseen tragedy for which every food was covered with the linen cloths and tied up having sealed by the cook.

One more aspect of royalty can also be traced when foods were carried by youths to the dining hall along with the master of kitchen and from there, it further passed it to the serving girls, who were part of the royal table.²² Generally, emperor prefers to take his meal in private, except on certain occasions where, he had to dine in public banquet.²³ All this reveals that the emperor has a lavish lifestyle along with lots of attendees but it also shows that he had segregated himself from the royal women for feast despite having female attendees to serve the food. But the lavishness and splendor simply indicate that the elaborate system of food creates a legitimacy and power in the society as well. For cooling of water, saltpeter was used mostly for the elite section and Akbar was the first emperor who introduced it in India.²⁴ Apart from this, a kind of ice cream (kulfi) was also prepared which was part of the royal kitchen by freezing a mixture of khoa, pistachio nuts and kesar in conical shape of metal device.²⁵ This introduction added to the royal feast and enhanced their lavish banquet.

The feast became more elaborate and lavish during the time of Akbar's successors with gift giving ritual added to it. In this regard one of the travelers John Jourdain states that no one could come without a present in the court.²⁶ So the feast was not solely confined for eating but for showing respect towards the emperor. Another traveler Francisco Pelsaert also confirmed that rich people were having all kinds of lavish food some of which were not known to their own country as well. The lavish feast consists of many dishes like Brinj (dressed rice), Aeshelia (spiced meat), Pollaeb (pulao), Zueyla (spiced wheaten cakes), Dupiyaza (meat with onions), roast meat and other items. Before having food they used to wash their hands and table clothes would be put before them on floor. The head servant served everyone, but from dishes spoon, napkins and knives were absent.²⁷ He further gives the table manners as well in that it was considered bad behavior to lick the fingers and food should not go beyond knuckles.²⁸ The description that he provides clearly indicate the food consumption was not only confined to splendor but etiquette regarding food and the manner of its consumption also become important and this distinguished the nobility from the other sections of the society. A drink called Falooda, a favorite drink of Jahangir was also a rich drink only consumed by a higher section of the society and the other sections of society could not afford this as it was a mixture of fruit juices, creams and jelly.²⁹ Another item of food was *paan* or betel leaf for which one of the English traveler Peter Mundy says that it had become a custom to provide betel leaf in every banquet without which there would be no function. It was eaten by many great people in the empire.³⁰

The importance of pan or betel leaf was also noticed by one of the Italian traveler Manucci during Aurangzeb's period as well and he had noticed that it was common practice among the noble people of the empire to offer betel leaf and also it was considered as goodwill to have betel leaf for guests, who visit them. No person refuses to have it as it was considered to be bad manners.³¹ Even for Aurangzeb, he says that although he was the person of simple tastes, more than thousands of rupees were used for the maintenance of the royal kitchen.³² Thus in the period of Aurangzeb also, we can notice the prosperity and lavishness of various foods and rich lifestyle of a higher class or royal class. For instance Tavernier, another contemporary traveler states that luxurious life style of the king was not over yet as chalice from which he drinks was covered with gold and it was studded with diamond, rubies and emerald.³³ This formed the image of power and enormous wealth which they represent in the eyes of their subjects.

For the Mughals, richness was not solely bound by the varieties of the foods and drinks but also through wine or liquor which enriched their superiority. Bernier states that intoxication was part of the royal people food consumption.³⁴ He adds that wine sometimes found in the Mughal Empire was either from Chiraz(shiraz) or Canary.³⁵ So one can easily understand how they maintained the superiority and prestige through the medium of food. Interestingly drinking was not confined only to males but it was open to all. Palsaert, one of the contemporary travelers states that women learn quickly from their husbands and drinking became accustom in last few years in the Jahangir's period.³⁶ The manner of their life style was really enviable and magnificent. The glasses or chalice were used for drinking was very fair and rich set with jewels, some of them were made up of ballace ruby, Turkish stone and other types of stones.³⁷

Food of the Common People:

Although, the true face of the Mughal Empire was hidden behind the shimmering royal lifestyle, in reality, for the majority of the people, there was only poverty and pathetic condition of survival. Common people's story is always the backdrop of the mainstream history. Recent trends in historical writings are centered around the life of the common people focusing on various dimensions such as socio-cultural, economic aspects. However, here too, there is hardly much written about the food and food habits of commoners in historical writings. As far as the history of the food culture of the Mughal is concerned, one gets the picture that the Emperors and royalty enjoyed delicious royal culinary

items. So it would be interesting to examine the food culture of the commoners or ordinary subjects of the Mughal Empire.

As in the beginning itself, Babur states that “peasants and people of low standing go about naked. They tie on a thing called *lunguta*, a decency-clout which hangs two spans below the navel. From the tie of this pendant decency clout, another clout is passed between the thighs and made fast behind. Women also tie on a cloth (*lung*), one-half of which goes round the waist, the other is thrown over the head”.³⁸ The official gazetteer in Akbar’s period, *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abul Fazal also talks about the importance of food in human’s life by saying that human being’s survival and continuation of the life depends on five important pillars, first one is Father, second is a mother, third is children, forth is servant and finally food.³⁹ The last one is the most important among all or in other words it is the back bone for rest four pillars in human life. The staple diet of the general masses in the morning was confined to jawar or bajra flour kneaded with brown sugar and water.⁴⁰ Here one can notice that unlike the royal people, the common masses did not have varieties of food available to them. Even the condition of the common people was much miserable and toilsome as one of the contemporary travelers John Linschoten notes that they consumed so little as it seems they survive by the air. Even the houses of the common people were very small in size without even a window.⁴¹ In this regard, Moreland also mentions that poor condition of ordinary man was extremely hopeless and pathetic in 17th century India.⁴² Although, Abul Fazl states that poor and abstemious people eat sufficient quantity of food so as to keep up their strength required for the survival and to protect themselves from the influence of weather.⁴³

The worse condition of the common masses made Akbar to ensure that their livelihood must be checked. Subsequently, he started free eating houses to feed the poor sections of the society. He opened three places for three different communities i.e. Muslims, Hindus and Jogis, known as *khairapurah*, *dharmapurah* and *jogipura* respectively.⁴⁴ In the later period as well Jahangir ordered that in his whole hereditary dominions that include both the crown lands and Jagirs, where free eating houses (*bulghur Khana*) were opened and provided food for the poor according to their condition.⁴⁵ These acts itself represents their survival was merely on the pity of the Emperor. In this regard one of the prominent historian Irfan Habib argues that common people during Mughal period ate inferior grains and hardly any meat.⁴⁶ The arrival of Europeans led to the introduction of several new food items like maize, potatoes, pineapples, chilies and several

other items, which were absent in their daily food.⁴⁷ Their social condition remained miserable as they had no option but to eat the same and insufficient food every day. Most of the foreign travelers of the contemporary period also confirm that the conditions of common people were very pathetic. For instance, Sir Thomas Roe states that the common people in India live like fishes found in the ocean. He presented the picture of the Mughals in hierarchical order, where king resides on the top and peasants at the bottom. These all were interlinked to each other in a cyclic chain which starts with the farmer, who robs peasants, the farmer gets robbed by a gentleman, and simply the greater robbed the lesser one and finally the king who robbed all people.⁴⁸ It is a fact that although in the Mughal times, some of the richest persons of the world dwelled in India, so did the poor as well.⁴⁹ However, many foreign travelers regarded the country to be poor as common people here were poor.

Interestingly, there was no gender segregation as such in the gastronomy of the common people as was seen in the royal life. As one of the travelers, De Leat confirms that the whole family eats together but their dishes would be confined to a single dish which was popularly known as *khichery*.⁵⁰ He further talks about the ingredients in preparing *khichery* like peas, little rice, along with water which they eat hot generally in evening with butter. Thus, it reveals unlike royal people's rich cuisine their cuisine was very simple and limited. Apart from these, they munch the same peas or another kind of grains in the day time⁵¹ which they thought is enough for their lean stomach.⁵² Even one more traveler, Palsaert, notes that these people were having a belief of not possessing more things as they deserve this only. They took great refuge in religion and felt it was their karma that they were having this kind of a life. The government or the people who were possessing power never took any initiative to upgrade the life of the common people and the common people they hardly know the taste of the meat as well.⁵³

Thus, the life of common people can also be seen as the epitome of poverty in the Mughal era. For which Palsaert, one of the contemporary travelers says that the condition was so worse that in order to write about the common people of Mughal India he had to change fully, the tune or style of his pen. He says that the royal people who dwell in rich palaces, where all wealth stored were acutely accumulated from the sweat of the poor people.⁵⁴ Even the spices such as cardamoms and pepper were not accessible to the common people as they were expensive but on the name of spices probably they used cumin seed, coriander seed, and ginger.⁵⁵

That reflects their condition in the society which was not only pathetic but the quality of food, they were eating was also poor.

Bernier, ascertains the fact that, *Kichery* remains as the chief food for the common people in the Aurangzeb's period as well. Thus burden and pain of poverty the common people did not vanish even in Aurangzeb's period as well.⁵⁶ He was of the opinion that the proportion of the poor people in India were more, out of ten, seven or eight people were poor, ragged and miserable being.⁵⁷ The condition of the common people was so pathetic that it seems wheat was also not part of the common people diet despite having lots of produce in the region of Agra and Delhi. Indeed Edward Terry confirms it the food of people was not made up of flour of wheat but some kind of coarser grain.⁵⁸ The poor ate rice boiled with green ginger to which they added little pepper and butter. It was their main dish which was seldom eaten. Water was probably common drink of the masses but sometime it was converted into sherbet (sweet drink) with sugar and lemon.⁵⁹ Apart from all these, if we talk about their liquor or beverage was ambiguous. Edward Terry talks about the toddy as a drink for the masses, that is pleasant in taste to any white wine but only if someone drunk it in the morning but later it becomes heady, bad taste and harmful. He also states that it is medicinal drink if taken early.⁶⁰ In addition to the toddy, Ralph Fitch states that this tree is the most profitable tree in the world. Apart from toddy, he writes, its leaves were used to make thatch for houses, sails for the ships and mats to sit or lie on. He also provide us with the method to procure toddy from the palm tree, they cut a branch of a bow and bind it hard with the earthen pot, which they empty every morning and evening.⁶¹ Though, Bernier states that a wise man would confine himself to the pure and fine water or to the excellent lemonade that were easily available.⁶²

The condition of the poor people remained miserable and pathetic. To overcome such pains Aurangzeb also issued imperial *firman*s to add more *langarkhanas* in the city of Agra. He also tried to remove the pain of the needy and poor people in other parts of his territory as well by ordering those nobles who were having up to thousand *Zat* to open *langars* in their dominion.⁶³ Apart from these, one of the contemporary travelers, Thevenot says that the common man in the society was living so miserable that in the name of medicine for flux, they were having only rice along with milk. This was their medicine to cure themselves of a severe fever.⁶⁴ He goes on to say that the Mughal army especially cavalry and musketeers were very much weak and coward that only hundred Europeans might be well enough to beat the thousands. Their meal

was kneaded with water and brown sugar. Whereas in the evening they would consume *Khichery* which was a mixture of rice, water, salt, and grains along with some butter. As this food was the chief food for the soldiers and poor communities.⁶⁵ These all reveals that the commoners food remained static from the beginning till last with no other varieties available before them. For instance, even in Aurangzeb's period one traveler Manucci writes that the dress of the common people limited to the single cloth through which they can cover some parts of the body.⁶⁶ Even he notes that goats, sheep, and chicken were confined to nobility only and commoners hardly consume meat but on a certain occasions like festivals or at marriage.⁶⁷ Thus, we can see the conditions of the common people remained constant with no changes in their food consumption during the Mughal times. That separates the lower section of the society in the Mughal Empire in terms of gastronomy.

The feasts continued to play an important role in the Mughal cuisine. According to Marcel Mauss, the reciprocity of feast could be viewed as a particular form of gift exchange that generates the same relations of mutual obligation between host and guest as between donor and receiver in the exchange of other more durable types of objects.⁶⁸ The major difference here is that food is destroyed once it is digested in the body. This is a literal 'embodiment' or 'amalgamation' of the gift and the social obligation that it provokes is marked by a relationship that is reinforced by food exchanges and return feasts. Of course, unlike durable valuables, the food consumed cannot be re-circulated [or reinvested] in other gift exchange relationships, but like gift they serve to reinforce inter- and intra- community relations. The food that was laid out on the table had prestige value, as has been suggested by Levi-Strauss, to each dish was attached a different level of prestige.⁶⁹ According to Levi-Strauss, 'the less the food is transformed, the higher its social status.' The fruits that hang on trees for they rested in the air.⁷⁰ Hence, they were widely consumed among social elites. With what one served on the table, one would, in Mughal court culture, honour or dishonour a person, his household and community.⁷¹

Conclusion:

Hence, to conclude, food is linked to a large number of variables and dynamics such as biological, economic, social, cultural and political. There are many factors – from individual tastes and idiosyncrasies to cultural taboos – which influence and shape food practices across time and space. Social and political relationships and expressions of power and cordiality in the Mughal context were also expressed through the medium of food. Food is fundamentally social element that binds the people.

Sometimes social relations are defined and maintained through the food consumption. As Ross states that 'variation in what people eat reflects substantive variation in status and power and characterizes societies that are internally stratified into the rich and poor, sick and healthy, developed and underdeveloped, over fed and under nourish"⁶⁸

Food has its own importance in the society and in the Mughal society it not only differentiates the section of the society but also gave status and power. For the nobility and Royalty, food was dynamic and luxuries with rich cuisine but on the other hand lower sections of the same society lived a miserable life with static and monotonous food. There was a clear social hierarchy on the basis of food consumption. As we have seen two faces of the same society, on one hand it was glitters of royal life and on the other hand it was painful face of the common people. Thus, the food consumption was not simply for sustaining of the lives but it was also a marker of identity in the society.

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Journal of Modern Thamizh Research

(A Quarterly International Multilateral Thamizh Journal)

Arts and Humanities (all), Language
Literature and Literary Theory, Tamil
UGC Care Listed (Group-I) Journal



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RAJA PUBLICATIONS

No. 10 (Upstair), Ibrahim Nagar, Khajamalai,
Tiruchirappalli - 620 023, Tamil Nadu, India.

Mobile : 9600535241

Website : www.rajapublications.com

FOOD, FEAST AND FEEDING OF ROYALTY IN THE MUGHAL INDIA

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Abstract. This paper endeavors to bridge the gap which exist in the current researches with regards to food consumption in the Mughal India. Food consumption always plays an essential role in human's life. Food and cuisine is one of the important source for understanding the human civilization. The eating of food is also a continuous process and coming down to us from the past as a part of traditional knowledge and cultural amalgamation. Most of the discourse on Mughal India talks about the valor, prestige, and splendor of the Mughals in the historical writing. But unfortunately, no efforts have been rendered on the consumption of the food and feast in the Mughal India. Indeed, it was not only art or architectural aesthetic matters for the Mughals but apparently, presentation, taste and appearance of the food always attached with the pleasure and pride for them. Food consumption always depicts the social strata of the society and creates identity on the basis of food availability and its consumption. Thus, the present paper becomes more relevant to study as our daily need of food and cuisine were not given importance in the historical writing that brings a lacuna in the medieval historical writing. Therefore this paper helps to understand the gastronomy of the people in the Mughal India. In this context the present paper, endeavors to understand the Mughal society in a better way and tries to examine the historical

evolvment in the food and cuisine. This paper uses a large number of primary sources, corroborating with secondary sources and examines the role of food and feast from a historical perspective in the Mughal India.

Keywords: *Food, Feast, Society, Mughals, Identity and Cuisine.*

Food and cuisine are always incorporated with livelihood and social status in the society. The Mughals were known for their better polity and socio-economic establishment in the history of India. This was the time, the imperial presence was not only seen in the politico- socio sphere but also in the cultural sphere. The elite dining in the Mughal India comprises of so many items that depicts their appetite and gluttony for the food, more specifically that also conveys an image of superiority or richness among the masses. This article becomes more relevant to study as our daily need for food and cuisine were not given importance in our historical writing which brings a lacuna in the Mughal period. The framework of cultural diversity in India was started in food consumption as well. The Indian cuisine can be said as the blend of multiple cultures and available in one platter. The aspects of the food would be path breaking in the cultural history of India. This paper tries to enrich our cultural heritage and beautify the food history of India. Though the

canvas of the Mughal history is very wide and has been seen from different perspective in the Indian history writings. In this paper we have tried to bring emphasis on food as an important element in the formation of our cultural heritage in the Mughal period. The consumption of food is a basic necessity for the survival and growth of humankind plays an important role in culture and for the formation of one's identity in the society as it always reflects choice, beliefs, passion, habits, assumption and personality which got untouched till now in Indian history writing. Interestingly, identity doesn't define only with the consumption of food but also with the food practices. For instance, 'We don't eat such food, they eat this', which also reflects an image of differentiation in the society as "we" and "them". Gastronomy also has essential social elements that binds the people through food choices. It is necessary to note that food was always dynamic and also varied from region to region and very often religion, ethnicity attached mostly through the kind of food consumption.

Consumption of Pleasure; Food and Identity

It is said without water human life's can't survive but fact of the matter is even without proper food human being are lifeless. Thus, food works as a charger in human being for the growth and it also connects spiritually and culturally with the people of the society. Interestingly, as far as proper food consumption is concerned, India has maintained its momentum and development from the past. The gastronomy of Mughal India was always dynamic and got mingled with so many cultures that not only enhances the food varieties, but it also gave the strength to our cultural diversity.

Though food always got cherish as a sole purpose for a healthy and prosperous life. Despite the fact, food which plays an important role in the

culture and for the formation of the one's identity in the society. Very often, food availability and its consumption also seen as measuring rod for one's status and dignity. The expression of hierarchy, social position, economic status, and prestige were attached to the kinds of food eaten and the availability of various dishes in the bygone times. However, the splendor and grandeur had touched a peak under the Mughals. Within the India, food habits differ from time to time as in Mughal period the gastronomy had always varied from rulers to rulers. Interestingly, the characteristics of the medieval period food whose aesthetic and visual depiction of food had overshadowed the taste and quality of food. The lavish lifestyle and varieties of food availability, precious appliances and utensils for serving the food were always attached to the Mughal court culture. However, Food consumption always formed the image of richness and superiority in the society along with the power. Indeed the food should not be understood simply as a purpose of diet and nutrients or for the sustaining of life but it has some other meaning so that as it reflects the status and power in the society.

One of the most powerful empire that occupies a very prestigious place in Indian history writing is the Mughal Empire. Mughals have not only gave a centralized state till Aurangzeb period but also ended the struggle for hegemony in India with the establishment of the Mughal Empire. On the basis of food consumption, it has come across several developments in connection to the gastronomy with its own character sticks. It began with the arrival Babur and continued up to the end of the Akbar's rule could be considered as a first phase. The second one starts from the Jahangir period till the end of Aurangzeb period. However, the journey of the Mughal Empire was not so easy, as in the beginning itself, the founder of the Empire

Babur had gone through a difficult time in his life. He faced an attack from Ibrahim Lodhi's aunt as she wants to take revenge from him. In order to do so, she took help from the cooks who worked in the kitchen and add poison in his food. Despite eating that food he escaped from the danger and says that "an evil arrived and happily passed on".¹ Thus it seems food has also been used as a weapon of war. It was not simply for sustaining of life in the Mughal Period. However, the importance of food one can understand from the initial years of the Mughal rule when the Babur himself was fully dissatisfied with the available food items in India. Despite being a critic of Indian food culture he spent the rest of the life in India and remained an alien to its cuisine. For instance, Babur states that,

"Hindustan is a country of no charms. Its people have no good looks; of social intercourse, paying and receiving visits there is none; of genius and capacity none; of manners none; in handicraft and work there is no form or symmetry, method or quality; there are no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, muskmelons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no good bread or cooked food in the bazars."²

But on the other hand, he gives a detailed account of varieties of fruit available in India of which some he loved most like mangoes which was the best fruit of Hindustan for him while others were the jack fruit, almond, Plaintain, Mahuwa, and wall nut³. Nevertheless, his preference clearly shows his substitute for food was in eating fruits mostly. Thus in the beginning itself, the founder of the empire shows his interest in food which flourish and achieved greatness under his descendant.

Babur was succeeded by his eldest son Humayun on the Mughal throne. Humayun's reign has been marked by the internal struggle with loss

and recovery of the empire. However, in this regard, Irfan Habib says that upper class or noble class were having all sorts of joy as they were having enormous kitchens and levies of the attendant.⁴ Whereas Ruby Lal says that the period from Humayun witnessed a slight shift in etiquette.⁵ Even though Humayun didn't get enough time to establish himself in India but it seems he was very keen about his food habit. Here one can also notice that women were not confined to the Harem only but also they were an active member of the royal feast along with the emperor. For instance, Gulbadan begum mentions that a lavish feast occurred in 1534 on a riverside in which a lot of royal women participated and gave the sitting arrangements of that banquet. She says that the emperor along with the Aka Janam sit together on the gold embroider divan that was in front of the throne and on the right side of the Aka Janam's sat her aunt and other royal ladies⁶. Even one of the interesting part of this feast was the symmetry because the whole function was held in the octagonal hall and there was octagonal tank as well as an octagonal platform where Persian carpet had been put for the sitting of the musician.⁷ Thus it represents royal feast was not all about varieties of food only as on this occasion she states that on the octagonal tank there was a musical ceremony as well which was part and partial of the royal feast. That can be considered as part of their lavish lifestyle of having food with music or in other words music can be seen as part of the happiness and joy of royal people. As Gulbadan begum notes that "Young men and pretty girls, elegant women, musicians and sweet-voiced reciters were ordered to sit in the tank"⁸.

Apart from these another contemporary record by Khwandamir also confirms the lavishness of emperor and varieties of the food available before the emperor. For instance, he

notes that for preparing several kinds of dishes and drinks, the cooks of the royal kitchen took a lot of pain but it's up to them to choose the fruits and meat from which they would make lavish dishes⁹. Thus one can understand the varieties of food the royal people have marked a higher position in the society. Even one of the verses attached to the food in the period of Humayun also represents the richness of the Mughals. This is being reflected when Khwandamir writes about a feast where various types of exquisites of food were present and every table had royal delicacies from birds to fish¹⁰. This was the time when movements in foods and spices had a larger implication on the culinary practices, health, agriculture and culture as well.

The period of Akbar portrays he is able to introduce lots of new things but on the other hand, he didn't give much importance for eating meat and took it seasonally. This shows he wanted to maintain the social fabric of society not to be disturbed and for good governance and not disturb it. However, the account which Abu Fazl presents in Ain-I-Akbari represents the lavishness, splendour, and symbol of power. *He was of the opinion that the emperor took a keen interest in the kitchen department for food and he also instructs a lots of wise regulation for the food department. Even one of the interesting part of the food for which he says that appropriate food should be taken very properly as it has many qualities. Firstly it is having a connection with the nature of a person, secondly, as it also provides strength to the body, thirdly it added the beauty of a person externally and internally both. Even by having proper food one can gain the religious as well as in the worldly life. He further says that the knowledge about the food makes human being different from animals. He simply says that he would have given meat altogether if*

*there would be no pressure on him. Even he eats very less in a day that to once per day. But there is no fix time for him when he would like to take food but servants were always ready and within one hour more than hundred dishes were prepared*¹¹.

Thus one can understand how much Akbar was interested in food affairs. Despite all these he appoints many cooks from across the countries who can prepare several kind of dishes. Even he always drank water from the Ganges as for him the source of the life is the water of immortality and the water utilized for cooking purpose was being drawn from Yamuna, Chenab and rainwater also used for cooking¹². In fact, one cannot say he was greedy or having lust for food because he always left his meal before getting fully satisfied¹³. Indeed it also represents the symbol of power and status for instance Abu Fazl says that for the emperor table cloth would be spread on the ground and all the dishes would be served mostly in gold, silver, earthenware victuals with many dishes along with various kinds of bread, curds, and several small stands plates of pickles, fresh ginger¹⁴. All the prepared item would have the seal of Mir Bakwal who was the head of the kitchen department. However the gold and silver dishes will be covered with red cloth¹⁵.

The lavishness of emperor produced by Abu fazl has also been backed by one of the traveler account of that time, Father Monserrate says that the emperor table is very splendid and it was filled with more than forty courses of dishes. The foods were always taken care off to avoid the unforeseen tragedy for which every food were covered with the linen cloths and tied up having sealed by the cook. However one more aspect of royalty can also be traced when foods were carried by youths to the dining hall along with the master of kitchen and from there it further passed to eunuchs who

passed it to the serving girls who were part of the royal table. Generally emperor prefer to take his meal in private except certain occasion where he had to dine in public banquet¹⁶.

All this reveals that the emperor has a lavish lifestyle along with a lots of attendees but it also show that he segregated himself from the royal women for feast despite having female attendees to serve the food. But the lavishness and splendor simply indicate that the elaborate system of food creates a legitimacy and power in the society as well. *Abu Fazl was of the opinion that even emperor would have totally abstain himself from eating meat if on his shoulders the work load of the world would not be there. Therefore to maintain the fabric of the society he taste meat but very less*¹⁷. Interestingly, this was the time when European traveler praises Indian cuisine and dishes. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler in the late sixteenth century, Van Linschoten, gives detailed account for the preparation of mango pickle 'Achar'. He writes that 'Mangoes gathered when they are green, and conserved for the most part in the salted pots, and commonly used to be eaten with rice and mostly stuffed with green ginger and garlic'.¹⁸ He also compared the Indian mango pickle with the white Spanish Olives with the similar taste.¹⁹

However the second phase of the Mughal Empire also becomes important not only from gastronomic perspective but also from ritual and political symbolism perspective. From now onwards feast became more elaborate and lavish adoring the time of Akbar's successor with gift giving ritual added in it. The symbolism of power might have gone higher in the Jahangir's period. In this regard one of the traveler John Jourdain states that no one can come without a present in the court²⁰. So the feast was not solely confined for eating but for showing respect towards the

emperor. The occasion, the presentation of gift and the nature of food were inter linked. For instance, Thomas Roe states that 'At night Aitmaud Daullah, father of Asaf Khan and Noor Mahal sent me a basket of Musk melon with this complement, that they came from the hands of the queen his daughter, whose servant was the bearer'.²¹ Simply as fruit indicates sweetness and also symbolizes good will. However with the coming of Europeans the Mughal Empire enhances with different varieties of fruits like potato, tomato, guava, maize, almond, cashew, and chilli etc.²² all these become part and parcel of the Indian culture. Despite the fact, these products definitely enhances the cuisine aspect of the Mughal Empire but it was accessible to the limited people in the beginning. In the Jahangir's period he simply enjoyed the meat of the chased one. Jahangir also shared his chased animal flesh with the poor for in one instance he writes that more than two hundred had gathered to collect it²³. Such virtuous act marked him as a benevolent ruler in the eyes of his subjects. This activity has also been confirmed by one of the traveler Thomas Roe of Jahangir's period that Jahangir has sent him the chased fat wild boar to eat²⁴. Despite this he himself maintain his father tradition for ban on slaughtering of the animals on two days of a week (Thursday and on Sunday) and on his birthday.²⁵

Whereas another traveler Francisco Pelsaert also confirmed that rich people were having all kind of lavish food some of which were not known to his own country as well. The lavish feast consist of many dishes like Brinj (dressed rice), Aeshelia (spiced meat), Pollaeb (pulao), Zueyla (spiced wheaten cakes), Dupiyaza (meat with onions etc.), roast meat and other items but before having food they washed their hands and table clothes would be put before them on floor. The head servant served everyone but from dishes spoon, napkins

and knives were absent²⁶. He further gives the table manner as well in that it consider bad behavior to lick the fingers and food should not go beyond knuckles²⁷. These were some of the marks of royalty and lavish life style. Even Falooda a favourite drink of Jahangir was also a rich drink only consumed by higher section of the society as it was mixture of fruit juices, creams, and jelly.²⁸ Apart from him another traveler Edward Terry who also portrays the lavishness of the Mughal by giving a description of one of the feast which was hosted by Asaf Khan where Thomas Roe had been invited, Edward Terry writes that the feast which was held in the tent that was filled with pleasant perfume and was richly decorated with carpets, had nearly fifty dishes which consisted of salads, jellies, firnis, almond rice, hen flesh, cakes of flour etc²⁹. Thus these all reveals luxuries style of feast have been given much attention in their travels account as well as it also shows Mughals prosperity of royal people. One can also understand this was the time when a lots of Europeans (the Dutch, French, Italian, and Britishers) were entering in India, with a notion of trade opportunities for their native nations. This shows the political ability of the Mughal emperor. For instance, one of the contemporary traveler writes that at the time of Shah Jahan, European style of pastries, cakes and other sweet dishes prepared by some of the slaves who had been with the Portuguese at Ugulim.³⁰ Thus this lavishness and splendor indicate the elaborate system of food consumption marks a legitimacy and power in the society.

However during the reign of Shah Jahan the royal feast includes more gift giving ritual than a celebration of food which considered as a symbol of power and richness or extravaganza. As one of the French traveler Sabastian Manrique observe this on one such occasion that the purpose to attend

feast of the nobles and princes was simply to give precious gifts to the emperor. Even seating arrangements in the splendid banquet was according to the dignity or ranks of the nobles. But at the end of the royal function, the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan has very rich and precious products of the world³¹. Another travel account which attribute in this regard is De Leat who says that the life style of the nobles were full of luxury and extravagance³². Even one of contemporary traveler Peter Mundy says that custom to provide betel leaf in every banquet became so popular that without which there would be no function. It was eaten by many great person in the empire³³. The fresh fruits like apples, pears, grapes and melons which comes from different parts of the country like Samarkand, Bali, Bocara and Persia as these items were very much dear to the higher class of people.³⁴

Even for Aurangzeb he says that although he was the person of simple tastes but more than thousands rupees were used for the maintenance of the royal kitchen and officials were instructed to look after the food and dishes served in different vessels of china porcelain with golden stands³⁵.

The period of Aurangzeb also witnessed the quality and importance of good food. For instance in one of his letter to his son where he writes that he was still remembered the taste of good food of khichery and biryani. Even he was able to recall the cook name as well Islam Khan who has cooked 'kabuli' for him. Although he was getting old then also he says that the desire for eating good food has not left him completely though blackness has departed from his hair but not from his face³⁶. However in his period as well one of the important travel account by Bernier who writes that higher class or rich class of people from army to the town make use of saltpeter for cooling the water. Which simply indicate the higher class people of the

society were having all kind of facility which simply labelled them rich people or royal people³⁷. Apart from these Bernier also talks about the importance of beetle leaf as well he says it was considered as royal favor to have beetle leaf but only after it went with certain preparation which led breath sweetens and the lips red. Even it was customary to go and meet some superior people with beetle leaf in mouth always which makes mouth fresh with good smell³⁸. The political stabilization also helps in the seventeenth century was also the time when biscuits was becoming popular among the elite section of the society. One of the traveler bernier states that first-rate and with reasonable price, the Europeans and crew members were known to buy such stuffs.³⁹

However one more traveler Travenier confirms that in his period as well though he eat less and become lean but one can also noticed that luxuries life style of the king was not over yet as chalice from which he drinks was covered with gold and it was enriched with diamond, rubies, and emerald⁴⁰. Thus in the period of Aurangzeb as well we noticed the prosperity and lavishness of various food and rich life style of higher class or royal class. That simply formed the image of power and enormous wealth which they pursue in the eyes of his subjects.

Conclusion:

So we have examined the role of food in the Mughal period in several forms like it was dynamic and ever evolving, which aided to the Mughals as a dynamic empire in India. There are various facets of the Mughals have been looked in this article through food like power, status, lavish life style, gender, gift rituals, richness, table manners, and dessert etc. Even now if we visualize the word grand feast the image of luxury,

prosperity, pleasure and power that forms in our mind seems to be true as far as Mughal period is concerned in medieval India for the Elite section of the society. At the end, mostly the food consumption unknowingly even today we are continuing in the same fashion which was continued earlier or it got mingled with the culture so well that now it is difficult to see whose culture we are pursuing. However all these attachment to the food has its own impact and that definitely added sparkling colors to the Indian culture and heritage.

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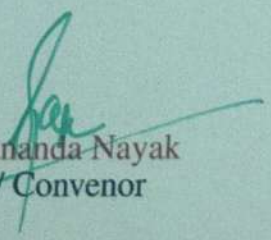
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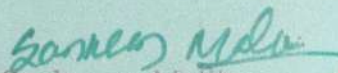
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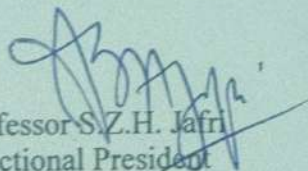
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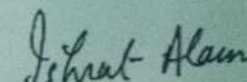
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