

FOOD CULTURE OF ERANAD : INDICATOR OF IDENTITY

Dr. Haripriya .M

Assistant Professor
Department of History
NSS College
Manjeri, Kerala, India,

Indian cuisine encompasses a wide variety of regional and traditional cuisines native to India. Given the range of diversity in soil type, climate, culture, ethnic groups, and occupations, these cuisines vary significantly from each other and use locally available spices, herbs, vegetables, and fruits. Indian food is also heavily influenced by religious and cultural choices and traditions. Also, Middle Eastern and Central Asian influences have occurred on North Indian cuisine from the years of Mughal rule. Indian cuisine is still evolving, as a result of the nation's cultural interaction with other society.

Historical incidents such as foreign invasions, trade relations, and colonialism have played a role in introducing certain foods to the country. For instance, the potato, a staple of the diet in some regions of India, was brought to India by the Portuguese, who also introduced chilies and breadfruit. Indian cuisine has shaped the history of international relations; the spice trade between India and Europe was the primary catalyst for Europe's Age of Discovery¹. Spices were bought from India and traded around Europe and Asia. Indian cuisine has influenced other cuisines across the world, especially those from the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, the British Isles, Fiji, and the Caribbean.

Traditional food of Kerala Hindus is vegetarian with regional exceptions such as the food of the Malabar area. It includes Kerala *sadhya*, which is an elaborate banquet prepared for festivals and ceremonies. Contemporary Kerala food also includes non-vegetarian dishes. "A full-course *sadhya*, which consists of rice with about 20 different

accompaniments and desserts is the ceremonial meal, eaten usually on celebrations such as marriages, *Onam*, *Vishu*, etc. and is served on a plantain leafⁱⁱ.

Fish and seafood play a major role in Kerala cuisine, as Kerala is a coastal state. An everyday Kerala meal in most households consists of rice with fish curry made of sardines, mackerel, seer fish, king fish, pomfret, prawns, shrimp, sole, anchovy, parrotfish, etc. (mussels, oysters, crabs, squid, scallops etc. are not rare), vegetable curry and stir-fried vegetables with or without coconut traditionally known as thoran or mizhukkupiratti. As Kerala has large inland water bodies, freshwater fish are abundant, and constitute regular meals.

It is common in Kerala to have a breakfast with non vegetarian dishes, in contrast to other states in India. Chicken, mutton stews, lamb, beef, pork, egg curry, fish curry with tapioca for breakfast are common. A wide range of breakfast with non-vegetarian is common in Malabar and in Central Kerala.

Kerala cuisine reflects its rich trading heritage. Various cuisines have blended with indigenous dishes, while foreign ones have been adapted to local tastes. Significant Arab, Syrian, Portuguese, Dutch, Jewish, and Middle Eastern influences exist in this region's cuisine, through ancient trade routes via the Arabian Sea and through Arab traders, who settled here, contributed to the evolution of kozhikodan halwa along with other dishes like Thalassery biryani.

Coconuts grow in abundance in Kerala, so grated coconut and coconut milk are commonly used for thickening and flavoring.ⁱⁱⁱ Kerala's long coastline and numerous rivers have led to a strong fishing industry in the region, making seafood a common part of the meal. Rice is grown in abundance, along with tapioca. It is the main starch ingredient used in Kerala's food.

Having been a major production area of spices for thousands of years, the region makes frequent use of black pepper, cardamom, clove, ginger, and cinnamon. Most of Kerala's Hindus, except its Brahmin community, eat fish, chicken, beef, pork, eggs, and

mutton.^{iv} The Brahmin is famed for its vegan cuisine, especially varieties of *sambar* and *rasam*. A thick vegetable stew popular in South and Central India called *avial* is believed to have originated in southern Kerala. *Avial* is a widely eaten vegetarian dish in the state and plays a major role in *sadhya*.

In most Kerala households, a typical meal consists of rice, fish, and vegetables. Kerala also has a variety of breakfast dishes like *idli*, *dosa*, *appam*, *idiyappam*, *puttu*, and *pathiri*.^v The Muslim community of Earanadu, blend Arabian, North Indian, and indigenous Malabari cuisines, using chicken, eggs, beef, and mutton.^{vi}

Popular desserts are *payasam* and *halwa*. The Hindu community's *payasams*, especially those made at temples, are famous for their rich taste. *Halva* is one of the most commonly found or easily recognized sweets in bakeries throughout Malabar, especially in Earanadu. Many Muslim families in the region are famed for their traditional *karutha haluva*.

The cuisine of Earanad, a place in the south west of India, is linked to its history, geography, demography and culture. Kerala cuisine offers a multitude of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes prepared using fish, poultry and red meat with rice a typical accompaniment. Chillies, curry leaves, mustard seeds, turmeric tamarind and asafetida are all frequently used. Kerala is known as the "Land of Spices" because it traded spices with Europe as well as with many ancient civilizations with the oldest historical records of the Sumerians from 3000 BCE.^{vii}

Food is extremely important when it comes to rituals or festivals. Food offerings in ritual are important in Kerala and throughout South India. Food offerings are often related to the gods of religions. In India, there are numerous offerings for Hindu gods and there are many differences between food offerings in North and South India. Most offerings contain more than one type of food. There are many reasons why people use the practice of food offerings. Some are to express love, or negotiate or thank gods. It can also be used to "stress certain structural features of Hinduism".^{viii}

Malabar's astonishing diversity in cuisine is its openness to absorb the foreign influences and merging it with native dishes. Influenced by Arabic, Syrian, Dutch, Portuguese and British, the Malabar Cuisine is famous for its exquisite taste and aroma.^{ix}

The lightly flavoured aromatic *Earanadan Biriyani* is a treat for the taste buds. This spicy *biriyani*, mainly made of Chicken, is accompanied by *date chutney* or *salads*. Cuisines of *Kallumakkaya* (Mussel) are another speciality of Malabar cuisines. The local people make varieties of dishes with the Mussel and *Arikkadukka* is one of the main dishes made of *Kallummakkaya*. The region is also blessed with plenty of Prawns, Shrimp and Crab, so the place is noted for variety of fish dishes.

Extensive use of fish and meat, red chillies and *kudampuli* (Malabar tamarind) - a souring agent are the speciality of Malabar dishes. Another common feature, not only a *Earanadan* cuisine but all over Kerala cuisine is the lavish use of coconut.

The Syrian Christians also have their own contribution to the list of Malabar cuisine. The popular *ishtew* with *Appam* (rice cakes) are from Syrian Christian tradition. They made *ishtew* with Chicken and Mutton and with vegetables also.

This area is also famous for its traditional snack items like *unnakkaya*, *halwa*, *achappam* and other lip smacking sweets and delicious savouries. The *Suleimani Chai*, a refreshment drink, which is getting popular in all over Kerala, is from *Earanad*. Go to any corner of *Earanad* during the holy month of Ramzan and the air will be thick with the mouthwatering aroma of spices, ghee and coconut oil. *Unnakkaya*, *kozhi Ada*, and about 200 Moplah delicacies that are savoured especially during Ramzan.

Moplah food was influenced by the food habits of Arab traders who, centuries ago, came to the Malabar region in search of spices. It also draws inspiration from the cuisines of later trading groups like the Portuguese and the Dutch. "The perfect blend of several cultures led to the creation of a cuisine that uses local ingredients with techniques and concepts borrowed from faraway lands,"

Malabar's exotic spices lured many, including the Chinese, the French and finally, the British. The proof as they say is in the pudding or the *alisa*, a delicious porridge made of wheat, chicken pieces, grated onion and coconut, that originated in Yemen. Another dish, the *mutta mala*, made of egg yolk and sugar syrup, is similar to the Portuguese *fios de ovos*. Kozhikode, where Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed in 1498, is also famous for its different varieties of *halwas*. Besides fruit-based and vegetable platters, Moplah cuisine includes a variety of mutton, fish and shell fish dishes.

Muslims of Eranadu being the inhabitants of the agricultural area, where paddy Cultivation was intensively carried out, they heavily depended on the rice, as their staple food. Their breakfast is rice gruel. Again they take kanji as lunch. At night they also take rice gruel. It is most common in rich families. In poor families there is no rice gruel in three times. "They ate Tapioca, Chama, cholam or *kuva* and elsewhere. The easily available and grown items like tapioca, cucumber, colocasia, elephant yam, jackfruit, coconut, Banana etc. In this area most of the people are peasants and led a poor life"^x.

They serve it with chanter or pickle. Coconut is growing in Kerala is very big it can eat raw and also by mixing with other food items.^{xi}They use coconut in all food items coconut oil is given to whom they happened to see new born child. They made tapioca, *Puttu* at day time. They usually makes nice with meat curry, *pappad* and pumpkin curry, Dal curry also make. While in rich families they make ghee rice and beef curry at marriage functions. Poor families prepare rice with Vegetable curry and meat curry. But wealthy people make ghee rice or yellow rice with beef.^{xii}They eat by sitting on the floor. Meat of cow and buffalo and goat were used according to their means. Mappilas were very particular in using *ha_lal* meat that was killed in the name of Allah, having its throat cut.

The *Salkarams* that follows the marriage is most important one. They make it delicious. So many special dishes are served for '*Puthyappila*'. They will eat by sitting on a mat and ate together. "Some special dishes for *puthiyappila* Were *muttamala*, *Muttatsurka*, *Kozhiada*, *Avalosunda*, *Poorappam* etc. The Muslim dishes served for

reception are *Elanchi*, Chicken gruel, full chicken, *Balayappam*, *Muttanirachath*, *Irachippathiri*, *Neyjyappam*, *Pallooda* etc^{xiii}. On these occasions they gave to bridegroom *Cheerini*. Then they gave Ghee rice, *Kuruma*, *upperi*, chicken fry, *Mutton Kuruma*. The *Cheerini* is contains Halwa, date, coconut, *orotti* etc. Each region has special items for *Salkarams*. Calicut city had its special sweet *Halwa* and fried banana chips,^{xiv}

In the month of *Ramadhan*, the evening after sunset the fast is broken. They break the fast by eating date then they take lime juice, *Tarikanchi* and Tea. The staple items are *pathiris*, wheat *pathiri*. Tapioca *Appam*, *puttu* are also used by them. The items prepared by them are on the basis of their wealth and capacity. Among various porridges *Ravakanji*, *Pafizmji*, *Cheera Kanji* were important^{xv}

More important snacks are Bread *Pakavada*, *cutlet*, *sarnosa*, brain roast, *uttappam*. *Muttappam* is prepared by using egg, chilly, onion, rice flour and coconut oil. It is the most important snack. In these days the food items are making in one kitchen. "Special snacks like *Kozhiada*, *Kozhi nirchathu*, *Unnakkay*, *Baji*, *Muttamari*, *Muttasurka*, were specially prepared. They believes that *Kuriyari Kanji* and *jeera kanji* are not avoidable to *Muthazham*. *Muthazham* is the food taken before *Athazham*.

After the prayer, people eat fen dishes of food. Women prepared dishes. The common people usually prepared *Thengachor*, (coconut mixed rice) with beef. The rich among them made *Neychor* (ghee rice) with chicken as beef. Thus the day of *Id* is celebrated in a very festive mood through the entire Malabar region.

There is a strong link between culture and food. The Muslims of this Taluk followed their traditions like those of the Arabians. Even now these people were follow Arabian tradition. The people have close contact with westerners. Eranad having its cultural legacy, the main occupation of the people of this Taluk is agriculture. The Muslim Community had their own identity in their culture and tradition. The food culture of Muslims was different from that of the other communities. Each community has its own cultural pattern of food. Muslim dishes are famous all over the world. No other food

has its flavour and aroma. It holds the pride of the place on many tables. The arrival of Muslims to India is a remarkable event of Indian history. They maintained their separate identity and their traditions, customs and way of life was somewhat different from that of others.

References

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