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FROM MEDIEVAL FEASTS TO MODERN TRENDS: A CREATIVE LOOK AT HISTORICAL CHANGES IN FOOD CONSUMPTION IN INDIA

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Keywords	Abstract
Historical changes, Food consumption, Food diversity, Dietary habits	Food consumption in India has evolved dramatically over the years, affected by cultural, religious, economic, and technical reasons. Ancient Indian meals were predominantly vegetarian, based on agricultural products such as grains, pulses, fruits, and vegetables, with dairy playing an important part. The arrival of the Mughals in the 16th century brought rich, diversified cuisines with meat, exotic spices, and new cooking techniques, resulting in the fusion of Persian and Indian culinary traditions. The colonial period brought about additional changes as European influences introduced new foods and eating habits, like tea, coffee, and refined sugar, which became staples of Indian diets. The Green Revolution of the mid-twentieth century greatly revolutionized food production, increasing the availability of staple grains such as wheat and rice and shifting conventional consumption patterns. In recent decades, globalization and urbanization have resulted in a more



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	diversified diet, with increased consumption of processed and fast meals in addition to traditional diets. There is also an increasing trend toward health-conscious eating, with an increased interest in organic foods and plant-based diets. Understanding the historical changes in food consumption in India illustrates the complicated interaction of tradition and modernity, as well as the current issues of maintaining food security and sustainability.
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1. Introduction

The term "historical changes in food consumption in India" describes how dietary patterns and tastes have changed throughout time as a result of globalization, economic reforms, cultural changes, technical breakthroughs, and agricultural advancements. Driven by urbanization and increased wealth, this development has resulted in a transition from traditional diets rich in grains, pulses, and vegetables to more diverse diets that include processed foods, dairy products, and meats (Pingali, 2007; Sharma et al., 2013). Furthermore, the global food trade and the Green Revolution have had a substantial influence on food choices and availability, which has improved nutrition but also contributed to the rise of new health issues including diabetes and obesity (Chand, 2017; Misra et al., 2011).

It is important to comprehend the historical shifts in India's food intake for a number of reasons. In order to create successful nutritional policy and public health measures, it aids in determining the effects of globalization, agricultural policies, and economic changes on dietary patterns (Pingali, 2007; Misra et al., 2011). These alterations also demonstrate the dual burden of malnutrition, which calls for focused interventions due to the coexistence of undernutrition, growing obesity, and non-communicable illnesses linked to food (Chand, 2017; Kumar & Kapoor, 2016). In addition, analyzing these changes sheds light on socioeconomic factors influencing dietary preferences as well as cultural transformations, which helps create sustainable and culturally relevant food systems (Sharma et al., 2013).

2. Pre-Industrial Revolution

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, food consumption in India was mostly driven by agrarian lives, with diets heavily influenced by locally available agricultural products, seasonal fluctuations, and regional culinary traditions. The staple diet was mostly composed of grains such as rice, wheat, and millet, supplemented with pulses, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and occasionally meat or fish depending on regional and cultural circumstances (Achaya, 1994). Traditional food preparation practices, including as fermentation and the use of spices, were essential to the diet, contributing to both nutrition and preservation (Chopra 2004). Social and religious practices also had a substantial impact on eating preferences, with certain tribes practicing vegetarianism owing to religious beliefs (Bharati & Som, 2010).



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3. Foods available during Pre-Industrial Revolution

Before the Industrial Revolution, the diversity of foods available in India was mostly determined by regional farming techniques, seasonal availability, and local dietary traditions. The diet was based on staple crops like rice, wheat, and millets, with rice dominating in the eastern and southern regions, wheat in the north and central areas, and millets in desert regions (Achaya 1994).

Legumes and pulses, such as lentils, chickpeas, and beans, were important protein sources, while vegetables and fruits varied according to season and place, including gourds, leafy greens, and a range of local fruits such as mangoes and bananas (Singh, 2003). Spices were an essential component of Indian cuisine, with each area generating its own unique spice mixes (Thapar, 2002). Dairy products were widespread in pastoral groups, although meat eating varied depending on cultural customs and availability (Majumdar et al., 1964). This restricted range reflects India's reliance on locally grown and seasonal products, which is influenced by the country's geographic and climatic variability (Saraswati, 1987).

4. Localized diets based on geography

Before the industrial revolution, India had a wide range of regional diets affected by geography. Reddy (2009), for example, investigated how regional climate conditions and agricultural techniques influenced food trends across the country. For example, coastal regions' diets were rich in seafood, but dry regions depended largely on drought-resistant crops such as millets and pulses (Patel & Patel, 2014). Rajan et al. (2017) investigated the role of indigenous knowledge systems in determining dietary behaviors, emphasizing the use of locally accessible products and culinary methods. These studies highlight the complex interplay of geography, environment, and culture in defining pre-industrial diets in India.

5. Seasonal food consumption patterns

Seasonal food consumption patterns were significant in pre-industrial India, since agriculture greatly influenced food supply. The diet changed dramatically throughout the year as different crops were gathered at certain times, altering both culinary techniques and nutritional consumption. For example, during the monsoon season, which runs from June to September, crops like rice and vegetables were plentiful, resulting in a diet high in rice-based meals and fresh produce (Saraswati, 1987). In contrast, the winter season, which lasted from December to February, focused on grains such as wheat and millets, as well as root vegetables and dried legumes, to provide robust and nourishing meals. Furthermore, particular festivals and cultural events were linked to certain seasonal meals, influencing consumption habits and culinary traditions (Thapar, 2002). Overall, seasonal food intake in pre-industrial India demonstrated the intimate link between agriculture, climate, and dietary preferences, with individuals tailoring their meals to the fluctuating availability of crops.

6. Industrial Revolution to World War-II

Food consumption habits in India changed dramatically between the Industrial Revolution and World War II as a result of colonial policies, economic developments, and socio-cultural alterations. British colonial policy promoted cash crop production for export, frequently



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production for export, frequently such as the Great Famine of 1876-78 and the Bengal Famine of 1943 (Bhatia, 1963; Raychaudhuri, 1983).

This time saw a significant drop in nutritional standards, with studies demonstrating a transition from diversified indigenous diets to monotonous ones dominated by staple grains such as rice and wheat (Majumdar, 1946; Kumar, 1982). Urbanization and industrialization also had a significant impact on dietary patterns, particularly in cities where migration and employment in the industrial sector increased consumption of processed and imported foods (Chandavarkar, 1994). These developments accompanied greater socioeconomic upheavals and had profound implications for the Indian population's health and nutritional status throughout this period.

7. Rise of processed foods and canned goods

The growth of processed foods and canned products in India from the Industrial Revolution to World War II was heavily impacted by colonial trade policy, urbanization, and changes in food consumption habits. During this time, the British colonial authority encouraged the import of processed and canned goods to fulfill the needs of the British expatriate community and the expanding urban population (Arnold, 2013). This resulted in increasing availability and consumption of these foods in metropolitan areas. The construction of railways and ports aided the dissemination of imported items, such as canned meats, vegetables, and fruits, which became mainstays in many urban Indian diets (Chandavarkar, 1994). Furthermore, the rise of industrial capitalism in India influenced eating patterns, with the working classes becoming more reliant on easy, ready-to-eat food goods (Chandavarkar, 1994). These developments reflected greater global movements toward industrial food production and distribution, which influenced local eating practices and nutritional patterns.

8. Shift towards convenience and mass production

From the Industrial Revolution to World War II, India's food consumption shifted significantly toward convenience and mass manufacturing, owing to colonial policies, industrialization, and urbanization. The British colonial administration's emphasis on importing processed goods benefited both the expatriate community and the urban Indian middle class, which desired convenience in their meals (Arnold, 2013). Infrastructure development, notably trains and ports, aided the mass distribution of imported commodities, including canned and packaged meals, making them more available in urban markets (Chandavarkar, 1994). This period also witnessed the emergence of local companies that began manufacturing food in huge quantities to fulfill the expanding demands of urban customers, echoing wider developments in industrial capitalism (Chandavarkar, 1994). The transition to convenience and mass manufacturing was accompanied by changes in dietary patterns, with a rising desire for readily available and ready-to-eat food products, influenced by both economic considerations and the changing lifestyle of the urban populous (Arnold, 2013; Kumar, 1982).

9. Influence of war on food rationing and preservation techniques

World War II had a considerable influence on food rationing and preservation techniques in India, motivated by the need to manage finite resources and assure food security during the wartime



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interruptions. The colonial authority imposed severe rationing practices to regulate the distribution of critical food commodities in order to alleviate the impacts of scarcity and inflation (Mukerjee, 2007).

Rationing systems were used in urban areas, where the populace was most impacted by food scarcity, and included basics like rice, wheat, sugar, and kerosene. These initiatives were part of larger attempts to keep prices stable and minimize hoarding (Mukerjee, 2007). The war also accelerated improvements in food preservation techniques as part of the attempt to ensure adequate food supply. The colonial authorities encouraged the use of canning, drying, and refrigeration to preserve perishable foodstuffs and prevent food waste (Sen 2012). These techniques were especially crucial in ensuring that food could be preserved for extended periods of time and transported to various regions of the country, notably to assist the war effort and military requirements (Sen, 2012). Furthermore, throughout the war years, food technology research and development increased, with efforts to enhance traditional preservation methods and integrate new technologies provided by the British (Sen, 2012).

10. Post World War-II to Present Day

Food consumption habits in India have changed dramatically since World War II, owing to economic development, urbanization, globalization, and changes in agricultural policies. Following independence, India moved its attention to food self-sufficiency, resulting in the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, wheat and rice production increased dramatically, becoming essential crops in the Indian diet (Swaminathan, 2006).

In the post-Green Revolution age, India's food patterns have evolved. Economic liberalization in the 1990s exposed the Indian market to foreign influences, resulting in increasing consumption of processed and convenient meals (Pingali 2007). Urbanization and growing earnings have resulted in more diverse diets, with increased intake of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and animal proteins (Pingali & Khwaja, 2004). However, this time period has witnessed an increase in worries about nutritional imbalances and the growth of lifestyle-related disorders including obesity and diabetes (Misra et al., 2011).

Furthermore, modern food consumption patterns in India reveal a dual burden of malnutrition, with both undernutrition and overnutrition. Government measures to increase food security, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), and other nutrition programs aimed at vulnerable groups have all been used to address this issue (Khera, 2011).

11. Advent of fast food and globalization of food industry

The introduction of fast food and the globalization of the food business in India have had a substantial impact on the country's food consumption patterns during the last several decades. The liberalization of the Indian economy in the early 1990s was critical in allowing multinational food chains and fast-food franchises to enter the market, resulting in the fast-food industry's rapid expansion. This time saw the arrival of global fast-food behemoths like McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut, which tailored their menus to Indian tastes and preferences while introducing new nutritional trends (Gupta, 2003).



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Urbanization, rising disposable incomes, and changing lifestyles have all contributed to the growing appeal of fast food, particularly among young people. Fast food is frequently viewed as convenient, stylish, and a sign of modernity, which contributes to its broad acceptability in cities (Mathur, 2012).

Furthermore, the growth of shopping malls and food courts has made fast food consumption more convenient (Sinha, 2014).

The globalization of the food business has also resulted in a fusion of culinary traditions, with international cuisines becoming increasingly popular in Indian cities. This tendency has been aided by greater availability of imported food goods and ingredients, as well as the impact of global media and travel (Batra, 2008). However, the surge in fast food and processed meals has generated worries about their influence on public health, with rising incidence of obesity, diabetes, and other lifestyle-related disorders (Shetty, 2002).

12. Emphasis on convenience and speed in food consumption

Food consumption in India has shifted toward convenience and speed in recent decades, owing to urbanization, changing lifestyles, and increased female labor force involvement. People are spending less time preparing conventional meals, therefore there is an increasing need for convenient food choices that may be cooked quickly or enjoyed on the move (Pingali, 2007). This transition has resulted in the rise of ready-to-eat meals, packaged snacks, and rapid food products in the Indian market (Basu 2015).

Urbanization has significantly influenced food consumption habits, with city inhabitants frequently choosing quick and easy meal alternatives due to their hectic schedules. The development of nuclear families and the reduction in family sizes has expedited this trend, since smaller households are more inclined to choose convenience foods over elaborate dinners (Kaur & Singh, 2017). Furthermore, the expansion of the fast-food business and the arrival of global food chains have given customers easy access to quick-service restaurants that meet their needs for speed and convenience (Goyal & Singh, 2007). This tendency is especially visible among the younger generation, who prefer the convenience of fast food because of its availability, variety, and cost (Mathur, 2012).

The growing availability of online food delivery services has also contributed to this transition, allowing customers to order meals from a variety of restaurants and have them delivered to their doorstep in a timely manner (Kumar et al., 2019). These services have grown in popularity, particularly in metropolitan areas where there is a great need for convenience.

13. Recent trends towards organic, sustainable and plant-based diets

In recent years, India has seen a significant trend toward organic, sustainable, and plant-based diets, reflecting worldwide concerns about health, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare. Singh and Singh (2019) found that there is an increasing desire for organic products due to claimed health advantages and less chemical exposure. Furthermore, Gupta et al. (2020) found that as people become more conscious of sustainability concerns, they are turning to plant-based diets to reduce their environmental effect.



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Additionally, studies like Sharma et al. (2021) show that Indian consumers are returning to traditional plant-based diets, indicating a renewed interest in indigenous culinary traditions and products.

These developments represent a deep cultural shift among Indians toward more attentive and ecologically conscientious eating choices, which mirrors a larger worldwide drive toward healthier and more sustainable living.

14. Conclusion

Globalization, technical developments, and cultural changes have all had an impact on food consumption throughout history, with serious consequences for both health and the environment. Traditional diets based on locally available foodstuffs have increasingly given way to more processed, convenience-oriented meals, contributing to increased prevalence of diet-related ailments such as obesity and cardiovascular disease. Furthermore, intensive farming techniques and extensive use of chemical inputs have caused environmental deterioration, such as soil depletion and water contamination. Organic, sustainable, and plant-based diets are becoming increasingly popular as people become more aware of these concerns and want healthier, more ecologically friendly food options. However, difficulties such as food insecurity, climate change, and socioeconomic inequities pose significant barriers to broad adoption of such diets. As a result, future food consumption habits require a comprehensive approach that targets both individual and planetary well-being through novel farming methods, regulatory interventions, and consumer education campaigns.

15. Author(s) Contribution

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16. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

17. Plagiarism Policy

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will taken care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

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