



## **Traditional Cuisine as an Emerging Trend: A Study of the Changing Notion of Food Culture**

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**Abstract:** Human life comprises various elements. Food, clothing and shelter are the most essential and basic ones. As time passed several changes happened in the food habits of people. The differences between the rural and urban areas are very prominent, and so are their eating pattern of them. So how this line of difference comes to the point of cohabitation? How come the so-called obscured food items get into prominence after being commercialized? –this will be the main focus of the paper. Apart from that, rural folks are influenced by social media. This exposure to virtual reality impacted them in various ways. By using social networking, food has become the language of communication between different cultures. Nowadays, people come to know about the food habits of other cultures quite easily. Before this, the source of knowledge was limited and also the availability of the ingredients was limited. Here technology plays a crucial role because today the fluency of information very much depends on it. Time changes so people and their choices.

**Keywords:** Communication, Technology, Social Media, Commercialization, Coexistence, Traditional Food

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Food – the term denotes the most basic necessity for living. It differs from place to place. Each and every community have its own kinds of food habits. The cuisines that are curated for a particular community depend on the geophysical pattern of the place very much. For this, the availability of the crops is different in every place. The food can be interpreted in various contexts like, for some it is a way for survival; for others, it is an act of generosity etc.

Civilization changes over time, so the elements of it. Primitive people, at first they were used to have raw food items (e.g. fruits, raw meat etc). After a certain period of time invent new ways of having their food, learning cultivation, new technology came and now there are numerous kinds of seeds are available to cultivate, their shelf life has increased. Even in the suburban areas get raw foods all over the year nowadays.



The urban areas have their roots into rural settlement. And folk people are those who are settled in these rural areas living simple life, cultivate crops on their own. As a matter of fact rural people are connected to their roots more than urban people. The difference of lifestyle is one of the most significant factors in this matter. Residents of the city living their lives totally different from the rural people. Busy, hectic, fast moving, impersonal etc. words are revolving around the city life. Whereas in the case of rural life – personal, calm, down to earth, simple etc. words are implied on them.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The very objectives of this essay are-

To highlight the mutual existence of traditional and modern cuisines (*Traditional Food - Wikipedia, n.d.*).

To shed some light on the influence of social media in the promotion of traditional food.

How the coexistence is happening in a mofussil festival? (*Mofussil Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster, n.d.*)

In writing these essay, the role of the primary data is very crucial as the study mainly uses non-participant observation for data collection. For Sampling the purposive sampling has been used. And secondary data's has been collected for social media websites.

People in rural society are closely tied to their rituals and customs. The folk people, their distinct food habits are influenced in various ways. They migrated from their hometown to the city in search of work –their lifestyle goes through changes. Food is one of them. As the city is a melting pot of cultures, every culture brings their some cultural trait with them. As a result, the coexistence of different things are very vivid in urban life.

According to Alan Dundes, folk can refer to – “any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is-it could be a common occupation, language, or religion-but what is important is that a group...has some traditions that it calls its own” (Dundes, 1965: 2).

But this is also the fact that urban life is made of these rural people who are migrated to the urban area. They create the cultural sphere of the urban which includes literature, clothing, way of speaking to culinary cuisine, and what not. So in one hand the branded food outlets are standing (e. g. kfc, pizza hut, subway, etc.) as food giants. On the other hand those medium



food outlets establish their existence among these giants. Among them another kind of vendors existed who are selling those foods which are very much connected to the roots.

For example – that vendor who sells kulfi on a cycle or sells ice pop sickles. Nowadays, big ice cream brands like Baskin Robins, Amul, London Dairy, Qwality walls, Mamma Miah etc get the hold on the Market. People also love these. Children of these eras are known only these outlets. That small vendors roaming through narrow lanes, going to the localities which are called “Para”– became a rare scene.

It is just an one example, but the concern is not about what is lost or what existed in the scene. Here the focal point will be on the changing outlook of traditional cuisine and it’s journey of evolution.

#### **‘DOOARS UTSAV’- The Study Area:**

The place of observation is “DOOARS UTSAV”(Times, 2023). This is a fair that took place in the Alipurduar District every year in the winter season, around the months of December- January. In the year 2005, the fair took place for the first time at Alipurduar (*Official Website of Alipurduar District*, n.d.). The fair celebrates the natural beauty of dooars and the various tribal communities who resides in there. Cultural programmes are held during these 10 days festival (Times, 2023). On one hand members of different tribal communities like Nepali, Rava, Mechia, etc performs their own art in a very authentic form. On the other side, famous artists from outside like Kolkata, Mumbai; they are also invited to perform here. After a break of two years due to Covid-19 the Dooarsutsav held from 7<sup>th</sup> January to 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2023, Parade Ground, College Halt, PS-Alipurduar, Alipurduar, Pin-736122.

It differs from other any kind of fair, or expo is, that, it brings the tribal communities to one place, and promotes their art, their work. Also, the various self-help groups participated here.

Now come to the chief issue of food. During these long years, the arrangements of the festival have changed little by little. In the past the food section was not that much broad. Majority of the food stalls are provided by the local food merchants. Compared to now, the fair keep a specific corner for the food stalls. At a glance it looks like a food court which can be seen in the shopping malls of metropolitans. The restaurants put their outlets there. The twist is, along with these modern cuisine foods, the local foods which belonged to the rural area like “Puli”, “Pithe”– these are the sweet dishes which are closely bound with the ritual and customs (Makar



Sankranti) of the folk people(*Pithe Puli: A Bengali Dessert To Cherish During Winters; 5 Delicious Pithe Recipes For You - NDTV Food, n.d.*).

At first the folk people came from their village as Alipurduar is consisted of rural population, they come to the fair, put a small stall on the road side and sell their food during the festival. As time moves ahead these foods became commercialized. For example – the sweet shops are now selling these food items occasionally on their shops like on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Janmashami etc. In the urban area, the tendency is to get these traditional dishes from the sweet shops (*Makar Sankranti - Wikipedia, n.d.*).

But in a mofussil area like Alipurduar it is a bit interesting that here also those folk people have started official business out of their traditional recipes and make their living in the dooarsutsav. The crowd is enough attracted to these traditional sweet recipes.

Kolkata –a metropolitan city, here is the culture of buying these folk food recipes e.g. **Dudh Puli, Patishapta, Moog er Puli** etc. (*Moog Puli—Detailed Recipe with Video, n.d.*). are more prominent. The urban culture has influenced them also. Sweet makers have invented the variants like “**Mango Patishapta**”, “**Chocolate Patishapta**” etc. Both the old version and the new version won the heart of the people.

Traditional foods are defined as foods consumed in a particular region by a specific community, and which have been transmitted between generations over time.

### **Role of Social Media in Promoting Traditional Food:**

In the era of social media nothing is confined to one place. Starting from a road side small stall to a commercialized outlet in a festival of Dooars to a sweet shop of a metro city, the barrier got invisible day by day. Those recipes make their way from rural to urban to the world. Nowadays everyone is well known the word of vlogging. People from various parts of the world can reach to the other people through this vlogging. Sharing their daily life activities, food, tradition, ritual, etc. can be shared nowadays. Among these there are some channels on social media who shares particularly the rural life and the food rural people have. Here are the names of some of those channels – Villfood, Tradiswad, Popi’s kitchen (*Popi Kitchen with Village Food - YouTube, n.d.*). These channels on social media are handled by families who are living in villages in West Bengal (*Villfood - YouTube, n.d.*). It is promoted for the simplicity and naturalness of rural life and also the food recipes of village people (*TradiSwad - YouTube, n.d.*).



Using old methods of cooking makes it more interesting to watch. As these people get exposure through social media, people from different places get to know them, their lifestyle and food habits (Trichopoulou et al., 2007).

So it is quite visible that both of these modern and traditional foods coexist in today's world.

Also in urban cities, several restaurants are designed based on traditional cuisine. As an example, I would like to mention a few of them – “6<sup>th</sup> Ballygunge Place”, “ Bhooter Raja DiloBor”, “Bhojohari Manna”, “HimurHneshel” etc (*Bhojohori Manna / Home*, n.d.) . These are some of the most renowned restaurants in Kolkata is mostly famous for its Bengali traditional cuisine (Heshel, n.d.). On occasions like Jamaisasthi they curate special thalis for celebrating the day (*Bhojohori Manna / Home*, n.d.). Many people come to these restaurants nowadays for celebration, be it jamaisasthi or iburobhaat, etc. The specialities of these outlets are that they create a very cosy ambience so that people feel like home when come to celebrate something with their near and dear ones. Another thing is that they present those recipes which are not much prepared in homes now; because of these outlets which are readily make available a whole traditional menu in front of you in a less than an hour, the tradition of celebrating occasions at home and cooking the traditional recipes at home got changed a bit.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, it can be said that change is the constant we all have. Those who dominated in the past now pressed somehow but still evolved themselves and continued their legacy with the help of various ways. Talking about social media channels who promote traditional cooking recipes, “the Bong eats” is a YouTube channel, run by urban residents(*Bong Eats—Beautiful, Modern Bengali Recipe Videos*, n.d.).They promote the typical traditional Bengali recipes. Some of them belong to the rural area and some of them belong to the old families of the urban area, etc. Peoples may not have the newly introduced recipe to consume physically, but the information get transacted through online sources. Folk is people and like everything they have evolved from time to time. So their food habit. A requirement is the acceptance of development and carries forward the legacy given by the ancestors.

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