

Commercialization of Food in Punjab: A Sociological Study of its Multiple Impacts

Abstract

The present paper is an exploration of the changes in traditional food system of Punjab due to the commercialization and its impact of food consumption, health, society and culture. Historically, agriculture and animal husbandry was main occupation of people of this region due that their food habits have been developed. But the entry of market forces in traditional food structure is changing the entire food system. The food consumption from daily routine meals to ceremonial and religious foods have changed. Younger generations, educated sector and urban population is getting more attracted towards the fast and packed food leading to many health and socio cultural issues.

Keywords: Agriculture, Traditional Food, Modern Food, Globalization, Urbanization, Youngsters, Junk Food, Apparatus

Introduction

Food is any nourishing substance that is basic need of human body and prime need of every society to attain health and development. "Food is a central element of cultural identity in all societies" (Montanari 2006). As the preparation and consumption of food is to meet the biological needs but they are also seen as of diverse cultural and social significance in society. Punjab is one of the major cultural regions of South Asia and Punjabi food system has its own distinctive features. Punjab's population is religiously and culturally diverse. On the basis of religion at least there are three major communities namely the Sikh(60%), the Hindu(37%) and the Muslim(1.6 %) with microscopic minorities like the Christians(1.2%) and Janis(0.16%) (Census2011). On the basis of culture Indian Punjab has three distinct cultural regions- Malwa, Majha and Doaba, speaking different dialects of Punjabi language. These cultural regions though follow the common patterns of Punjabi food system but they have their own different varieties of food which are popular across their regions. These foods were simple and full of nutrition but with the development of food industry, the food have become complex as the ways of preparing food till eating has been changed. Traditional food has undergone a huge change, even the food related to ceremonies have changed. Traditional food was produced domestically so it was central to the social network within family and in the larger society. But now a day's industrial production of food is playing a major role in commercialization. Due to Industrialization the varieties of food has increased and the globalization of food is widening the scope of food market depending upon the society, along with development in food storage facilities.

The present study has its primary focus on commercialization of food and its exploration and description of traditional food system of Punjab and the changes occurring in it due to commercialization. It has been observed that change in patterns of food consumption is impacting the social structure, culture patterns and the health of people in Punjab, especially the younger generations. All the aspects of food were tried to cover like old and new techniques of cooking, process of cooking, changes in food system, impacts on age and gender, impact on rural urban populations, impact on social groups, home remedies, community food, festival food, occasional food, concept of food offered to god and goddess.

Objectives of the Study

1. To prepare the socio economic profile of respondents
2. To explore the traditional food system of Punjab
3. To explore the impacts of commercialization of food according to rural and urban populations



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4. To explore the impacts of commercialization of food on different age and gender groups
5. To explore the differences of impacts on different caste groups and religious communities.

Review of Literature

The academic research on Punjabi food system is in initial stage but as far as review of literature is concerned some academic works has been dealing with other traditional food systems or few works are reviewed about the process of commercialization of food in various regions of the world.

Yong Chen (2010), in his article discusses “the differences intellectual interpretations of fast growing food systems. This article overviews the fast growing field of food studies and globalization of this processes.” He also brings out the difficulties in measuring the impacts of these changes on different societies.

James Farrar (2010) while commenting globalization of food observed “The increased speed of production and scale of transnational flows of food products, food ways and food producers has resulted in a greater interaction among cultures. It increased cross-border dependencies for supplies.”

Donna (2012) observed that “The scholars have considered the study of food as part of world histories.” Her article reviews the research connecting the history of food with that of human mobility. It finds out “the spread and diffusion of food among human societies. It asserts that the study of food is becoming a more central theme in world history due to recent interest in mapping the links among the culturally distinct societies of the six continents over the course of human life on earth as such histories generally offers a look into relationship of particular and general culture”.

Kaur Reetinder and Sinha A (2011), while studying the changes initiated by green revolution in Punjab and results of globalization which led to commercialization of agriculture and brought many changes. All these changes have their effect on health due to which people of Punjab are fighting against health problems like cancer, infertility, mental retardation and kidney problems. Thus green

revolution brought many changes which have bad effects on food system and health.”

Parvinder Bali (2014) describes the various aspects of the kitchen-ranging from the layout of the kitchen department to menu planning, and principles and methods of cooking to production of different cuisines as of Indian, Western, and pastry food items. It discusses meats, vegetables, fruits, bakery food, many more and explores the evolution of Indian cuisine and discusses Indian gravies.

Hypotheses

1. Traditional Punjabi food system is an outcome of agricultural basis and the local geographical conditions of the Punjabi society
2. Commercialization of food is differently impacting rural and urban populations
3. Commercialization of food is differently impacting different age groups
4. Commercialization of food is differently impacting different caste groups and religious communities

Research Methodology

Among the population of 27,743,338 for the purpose of data collection three main regions of Punjab namely Malwa, Majha and Doaba were selected. In each region one urban center was selected for detailed study. These were Bathinda of Malwa region, Amritsar of Majha region and Jalandhar of Doaba region. 150 Respondents were selected from each region and further from different age groups that is old (60-80), middle (25-60) and young (age group of 5-25).

Following techniques for data collection were used:-

1. Observation
2. Formal and informal interviews
3. Focused group discussions
4. Experience survey
5. Mixed Methods

Profile of Respondents

The population of Punjab living in rural area is 17,344,192 and urban area is 10,399,146. Among them the number of respondents selected for interview is 450 from the three regions of Punjab. The tables are drawn as below:-

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Regions

	Majha		Malwa		Doaba	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Rural	75	50%	75	50%	75	50%
Urban	75	50%	75	50%	75	50%
Total	150	100%	150	100%	150	100%

The above table shows the distribution of respondents on the basis of three regions and area of

Punjab From each region 150 respondents were interviewed.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents of Three Regions on the Basis of Age

Age	Majha		Malwa		Doaba	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
0-25	49	32.66	50	33.33	58	38.66
26-50	48	32	50	33.33	47	31.34
50+	53	35.34	50	33.33	45	30
Total	150	100	150	99.99(100%)	150	100

The above table shows the distribution of respondents on the basis of age further divided into age categories. In Majha region the respondents of 0-25 age group (young group) is less i.e. 32.66% then

Malwa region i.e. 33.33% and Doaba region i.e. 38.66%. The age group of 26-50 (middle group) respondents is with the less difference in three region i.e Majha 32%, Malwa 33.33% and Doaba 31.32%.

The age group of 50+ (old group) respondents is 33.33% and Doaba i.e. 30% more in Majha region i.e. 35.34% then Malwa i.e.

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents of Three Regions on the Basis of Income

	Majha		Malwa		Doaba	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Nil	78	54%	8	5.34%	21	14%
Below 50000	2	1.34%	13	8.66%	-	-
51000- 1lac	6	4%	33	22%	60	40%
Above 1lac- 3lac	36	24%	55	36.66%	39	26%
Above 3lac	28	18.66%	41	27.34%	30	20%
Total	150	100%	150	100%	150	100%

Note - Nil includes students and housewives who do not have their own income and are dependent on family.

The above table shows that the highest percentage is of respondents who don't earn; in Majha region the percentage is 52% followed by Doaba region 14% and the Malwa region i.e. 5.34%.

Whereas the respondents having income above 3lac: is highest in Malwa region i.e. 27.34% then Doaba region i.e. 20% and Majha region i.e. 18.66%.

Table 5 Distribution of Respondents of Three Regions on the Basis of Religion

	Majha		Malwa		Doaba	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Sikh	104	69.34%	64	42.66%	80	53.34%
Hindu	34	22.66%	40	26.66%	53	35.34%
Muslim	5	3.34%	35	23.34%	10	6.66%
Christian	-	-	6	4%	4	2.66%
Jain	7	4.66%	5	3.34%	3	2%
Total	150	100%	150	100%	150	100%

The above tables shows the lists of respondents distributed on the basis of religion. Sikh religion in Majha region has the highest percentage i.e. 69.34% then Doaba region i.e. 53.34% and Malwa region i.e. 42.66%. Hindu religion has the highest percentage of respondents in Doaba region i.e. 35.34% than in Malwa region i.e. 26.66% and Majha region 22.66%. Muslim religion has the highest percentage of respondents in Malwa region i.e. 23.34% then in Doaba region and Majha 3.34%.

Christians are in minority in Punjab. The respondents are only in Malwa region i.e. 4% and Majha region i.e. 2.66%. Jains are also in minority in Punjab. The percentage of respondents in Majha region i.e. 4.66% is more than Malwa region i.e. 3.34% and Doaba region 2%. Thus it can be concluded by seeing the table that Sikhs and Hindus are with majority of population in three regions than followed by Muslims and Christians. Jains are with the lowest population in the data collected.

Table 6 Distribution of Respondents of Three Regions on The Basis Of Caste

	Majha		Malwa		Doaba	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
General	79	52.66%	83	53.34%	50	33.34%
SC/ST	65	43.34%	35	23.34%	85	56.66%
BC	6	4%	16	10.66%	1	0.66%
Others	-	-	16	10.66%	14	9.34%
Total	150	100%	150	100%	150	100%

Note- Others include those people who do not want to disclose their caste.

The above table shows the list of respondents distributed on the on the basis of caste. General class respondents of Malwa region are more in percentage i.e. 53.34% then Majha region i.e.52.66% and Doaba region i.e. 33.34%. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe has the majority of respondents in Doaba region i.e. 56.66% than Majha region with 43.34% and Malwa region 23.34%. Backward class respondents have the highest percentage in Malwa region i.e. 10.66% than Majha region i.e. 4% and Doaba region i.e. 0.66%. Others respondents are from only Malwa region i.e. 10.66% and Doaba region i.e. 9.34%.

Finding

Traditionally production was limited to home as much of the foods used for daily consumption were grown at home. Slowly with the influence of technology the changes started occurring. Kitchen the main place where food is cooked has undergone

many changes. For lightening fire fuel, wood, kerosene oil, cow dung cakes were used in old times. Fire was used in chulha, tandoor, haara, angeethi to cook food. The process of cooking was very slow and food used to be very nutritious and healthy. Slowly the change came in fire technologies and L.P.G gas was introduced to cook food. After this electrical appliances came with new technology. These new technologies produce heat to cook food. Even for grinding masala or any other eatables grinders, mixer, blenders replaced kunda-ghotna. Basically kitchen has been mechanized these days. Even cooking apparatus from clay, wood, brass and iron has changed to steel, copper and silver. Along with old utensils: aluminum utensils, plastic, glass apparatus are also used.

Traditionally food served was simple but now appetizers and starters are served before lunch and dinner, thus process of serving has become more

complicated. The people are becoming modern and forgetting the roots of traditional food. They are getting attracted towards standard based market food which is easily available and less time consuming for e.g. biscuits, chips, coke, etc.

Even the food consumption ways have changed, special cutlery and crockery is used. A cutlery, serving kitchen ware and kitchen ware has many options for choice. Industries are set up for kitchen wares and these things are also counted as a status symbol.

Daily Routine Meals

People consume food according to their taste and habits. Daily routine meals include breakfast, lunch and dinner. Earlier in rural areas people use to have their meals three times a day. Morning started with a cup of tea, milk or buttermilk. Men who use to go for work in the fields ate oatmeal or khichdi (mixture of rice and legumes) in the morning. Around 10 in the morning they use to take their heavy meal which was known as Hajri di roti (brunch). Then followed by teeya pehar (mid day meal), this use to include tea, roti with pickle. Then at the end of the day they use to have dinner followed by milk. In early times there were fixed meals among all age groups and everybody use to consume the homemade food with no difference. But gradually habits of eating have changed and there is difference in consumption of daily meals of younger generation. They don't have any particular time to eat and drink and their likings is more towards market food. Market based foods are habit forming and compulsively addicted food as they inbuilt craving in the mind of consumer.

Due to health problems the middle age and old age people consume light and simple food. As earlier people use to have milk, clarified butter, butter, buttermilk, panjeeri (traditional nutritional supplement) but now time doctors strictly restrict them from eating all these foods. People above 50's are more convenient with the homemade food and they don't have certain choices regarding their food habits, they prefer simple food. So the eating habits and hours have changed due to which collective eating has come to an end at majority of places.

The traditional food systems are changing with the coming of market food more in urban areas rather than rural. The major difference is observed in consumption of daily meals of younger generation and children of urban areas due to availability of market food. Rural population to some extent follows the same old patterns of daily consumption of food.

Traditionally food was given on the basis of gender. Boys were given that food which gives them energy and helps to grow up fast like dairy products, non-vegetarian and panjeeri while on the other hand girls use to have simple food so they grow up slowly. Girls were not allowed to have food having hot taseer (temperature of food) in order to delay their menstrual cycle. Young people use to consume healthy nutritious food such as dairy products. Old age people food use to be simple and ghee was given to them but now at the early age people have so many health issues, so the doctor advice them not to have ghee in

their meals. Gender specific food is changing as in majority of sections the concept of food and gender is finishing. For e.g.:- food served in McDonald's and others has no gender, age and caste discrimination. Food taboos are changing as women have started drinking alcohol few calls it as impact of feminism.

Social group wise also daily patterns of food are changing. But Muslim community according to my research still follows the traditional system in rural and urban areas as they only eat Halaal meat (law of Islamic religion regarding food), for them it is purest form. Christians are following the same patterns of food and lifestyle as Punjabi's. They called it as "Indianization of Christianity". Jain's to some extent follows the same Punjabi food pattern but they highly prohibit eating onion, garlic, non vegetarian and liquor.

Health

Health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental or social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity." (World Health Organization, 1948) Health of a person is directly related to the food that one consume, right from where the life span of a person starts food becomes the necessity from prenatal food till their death food. Earlier there use to be some prohibited food for pregnant women like she was not allowed to have food with hot taseer, oily food and ghee instead she was advised to have simple food, fruits and vegetables. In last months of delivery she was given dairy products, oily food, bloom raisins to eat. After delivery she was given panjeeri to retain energy. Now the pregnant women have no restrictions regarding the food and start having medicine from the very first trimester, she eats food according to her own choices. Slowly-slowly the concept of eating panjeeri is also getting replaced by doctor's medicines. Even the food given to new born baby is market based. Earlier lentil soup, oatmeal, khichdi and other homemade semi solids were given to a child but now it has shifted to packed cereals. These cereals are not the complete diet required they act as supplements due to which growth is not normal. The children's are suffering from obesity, low immune level, low oral hygiene, recurrent fevers, low eyesight, allergies and skin problems. Due to supplements mother and child is not better in health than before. Youngsters are also running after market based supplements like protein drinks, capsules and injections to build up there body instead of eating healthy diet.

The health of skin is also getting poor day by day, more than half of younger generation is facing the problem of different sort of pimples and bacterial allergies, to reduce them different type of medicated creams are applied and steroids are consumed. Earlier people use to apply clarified butter or sunflower oil which made their skin soft and shinny with no side effects. Basically our skin is also affected along with our internal organs due to the oily and unhealthy market food that we consume. Although knowing about the side effects still the half of population prefers the market food. Traditional food was considered very sensitive and functional and special food items were designed for reproduction

health but now time's reproduction function is weakening. As in old times all the foods were mostly homemade and there was quality control on them. The foods prepared and served were healthy and hygienic and has no health hazards. Now days, although the food joints claim their food to be healthy and hygienic but it is just visible hygiene as there is no check on the quality of these food because they are prepared and deep freeze in order to use them for longer time/days. Urban people are found more familiar to all the diseases as some expensive and addictive foods with causes health hazards are out of reach of rural population.

Even the concept of home remedies to cure a disease is followed in rural areas having older generations. In old times if anyone falls sick or any type of pain homemade medicines were given to them and they were effective too. But now young generation don't believe in homemade medicines and rush for allopathic medicine.

Ceremonial and Religious Food

Ceremony is an organized function held on special occasion performed with all rituals and customs. Ceremonial food differs among all communities of Punjab. Special foods are related to ceremonies which are distributed or served among all. Some ceremonies of all religion of Punjab are same like birth, death, birthday, anniversary, pre and post wedding ceremonies but different food items are prepared and served according to tradition among all religions. But now in urban areas ceremonies has become status symbol as caterers are hired for weddings or other ceremonies like during death an organized lunch is served made by caterers which include lentils, vegetables, cottage cheese, curd, rice and roti. Different cuisines like Mexican, Italian plus branded liquor are becoming part of functional food. Rural areas are also trying to follow the same lifestyle as urban people. Much difference is seen in upper class people as there ceremonies and food served are more lavish and high budget based. Earlier ceremonies were gender based as only boy birthdays were celebrated among all religions. But now times have changed as majority of people treat girls and boys as equal. Their birthday party is given to friends and relatives, special food items are prepared by caterers. Even middle and lower class people celebrate the ceremonies of children but those parties are pocket friendly to them.

Festival food is the food which is usually made annually on a special day. In old times the food use to be the symbol of festival and united people together. The food made on festivals was distributed among Sharika (closed ones). Every religion has their own festival with special food significance. Now these days the concept of making special foods on festival is not followed by all people. Urban area people are becoming more modernized they mostly get the readymade sweets

or packed food. Rural area people still make these festival foods and share them with others.

Parshad is sacred food offered daily to gods and goddess during worship. It is cooked with full rituals and purity and then distributed among followers. Different parshad is offered to different gods and goddess like fruits, sweets, rice, kadam/halwa, liquor, wine, bread, salt, lassi, kachi lassi (mixture of water and little milk), wheat flour and many other more food items. Hindu and Sikh communities of Malwa region follows gurudwara sahib and mandir but they also worship other god and goddess. The tradition of prashad is not followed by Muslim community. Even Jain's have "no adambhar" means no system of parshad. Christian distributes wine and bread on special occasions as parshad. There is no change observed in the food offered to god and goddess as it is considered pure.

Concept of langar (free food service) is also related to god. Traditionally langar was cooked collectively in a community kitchen and was simple. Langar from the times of preparation, cooking, serving and cleaning was done collectively without any discrimination. But with the changing time langar is also modernized as now days in some places cater are hired to cook langar and number of food items has increased.

Seasonal Food

Special food items are prepared according to the seasons. These food items have their own importance like in thand (winters) the food with garam taseer is cooked to maintain the warmth of body, in garmi (summers) the food with thandi taseer is made in order keep the body temperature stable. Same like in saun (rainy season) deep fried food is made so that it lasts long like mathiya, gulgulle, and mal-pudhe. Almost the same type of food is made in the three regions with the slight difference of technique of cooking. Food items are same but their names are different like in Malwa regions panjeeri is also called as Faljeera in Doaba region. Same like churri (made of clarified butter, roti and sugar/jiggery) is called ghuddhu in Doaba and Majha. Traditional food system or seasonal food is still made in rural areas but in urban areas this trend of traditional food is coming to an end. Only few families those who have grandparents make this food items.

Hospitality

Hospitality from old times till today has gone through many changes. Earlier tea with homemade biscuits was served to the guest. If the guest is from close relationship than Kadhani Da Dudh (milk boiled for long in clay utensils) was served with some Pinnia or Khoya (types of sweets). Then in lunch/dinner chicken and sweetish was made. Slowly milk was replaced with coke and it became a status symbol. Now days we have list of readymade snacks and sweets which are served to the guests. Rural and urban

population from upper class has totally adopted the new food and drinks for hospitality. Even the normal tea is getting replaced with black and green tea.

The discrimination among food sharing is still continued among different social groups. In early times schedule caste people were not allowed to enter kitchen. Only few prescribed cooks were allowed to cook that also during any function or wedding. In Hindu religion, if the lower caste people have touched the food then it was considered impure. The food was cooked by house wives but today the food concept of pure and impure has vanished from many communities. Lower caste people work as a cook in upper caste people. Still there is discrimination as shared cooking is there but there is no personal sharing of food.

Conclusion

Food has become one of the major focuses of commercialization and is also essential for individual as well as the health of social community/group. Punjabi society is going through the phase of transformation; demographically the orientation is more towards urbanization as agricultural occupation is shifting towards industry and service sector. The younger generation especially educated sector have strong tendency to migrate for better employment opportunities, towards metropolitan cities and foreign countries.

Traditional food was produced domestically and now a day's industrial production of food is playing a major role in commercialization. Due to Industrialization the varieties of food has also increased. Earlier commercialization of food was associated only with dhabas (roadside restaurants). The food served in dhabas was simple, traditional and healthy but now a day's these foreign brand restaurants are replacing the old market. Traditionally food was cooked in the domestic kitchens. Hearth was central to the home and it was incomplete without her (woman). But with the occupational changes of women, they have started moving out of the houses for jobs and career opportunities. Due to all this working women are getting busy and have no time to cook food for their families. They themselves are becoming consumers of ready to serve food.

The globalization of food is widening the scope of food market depending upon the society, along with development in food storage facilities like refrigeration, cold storage, microwaves. "Fast foods and industrial processed foods are the most common images associated with the idea of "globalization," as is evident in such terms as "McDonaldization," "Coca-colonization" or "Coca globalization"(Ritzer 1995; Foster 2008; Wagnleiter 1994, pp-4)". It has changed eating habits as people prefer easy to buy ready to serve/instant food like frozen food, tinted food or packed food instead of cooking at home. Multinational food

sponsored food chains like Subway, Kfc, McDonalds, Domino's, Pizza Hut are targeting younger generation as their prime segment. Youngsters consider body as a commodity; are following the new patterns of food system. For them food has become a status symbol. Traditional time was related to agricultural works, due to which cycle of consumption (breakfast, lunch and dinner) was dependent on it. Due to shift from agriculture the cycle of consumption of daily meals has changed. The study posed to find out the nature and extent of commercialization of food in Punjab and its consequences for Punjabi society in general. The major focus of the study was to locate and access the impacts of commercialization of food on health, society and culture. There is hardly any systematic and academic study of Indian food system especially Punjabi food system. The number of food changes is taking place in Punjabi society and Punjabi food system. Old priceless recipes have no record and food has acquired new position. Even the family aspect is changing towards food. In addition to the above mentioned factors the lives of people are changing rapidly due to the advancement of media and information technology. Market forces are entering in a big way into the relatively untouched areas like food, dresses and other private spheres of life. The last two decades have witnessed a major shift in the life styles of people from rural to urban. It has been observed that change in patterns of food consumption is impacting the social structure, culture patterns and the health of people in Punjab, especially the younger generations. The people are migrating towards urban areas with urbanization there by not only the societal life is undergoing a vast change due to modernization but also food patterns.

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