

Hyderabadi Cuisine – The Flavour of Deccan

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Abstract

Cultural development is a historical process. Our ancestors learnt many things from their predecessors. With the passage of time they also added to it from their own experience and gave up those which they did not consider useful. We in turn have learnt many things from our ancestors. As time goes we continue to add new thoughts, new ideas to those already existent and sometimes we give up some which we don't consider useful any more. This is how culture is transmitted and carried forward from generation to next generation. The culture we inherit from our predecessors is called our cultural heritage.

Originating from different national, ethnic, religious, social and economic backgrounds, the migrants contribute to the urban life, thus effecting cultural change. There has been lot of debate and discussion about the origin and authenticity of "biryani". Some believe that biryani belongs to Mughal Darbar, while others reckon that it was Awadh Darbar that gave old pilaaf (pulao) a twist to create biryani. Fans of Deccan food, don't even want to join the discussion, because for them anything other than Hyderabadi Kachhi biryani is not worth consideration. This paper focuses on the genesis, emergence and transformation of Hyderabadi Cuisine and the historical significance of its presence in gastronomical world. The paper also gives an insight into the role of Culture and Heritage, particularly, Deccan and the surroundings. This paper attempts to highlight the importance given to Hyderabadi Cuisine among various cuisines of the world and also the influence of Hyderabadi cuisine in the cultural heritage of Hyderabad.

KEYWORDS : Hyderabadi Cuisine, Cultural Heritage of Hyderabad, Hyderabad Biryani, Deccan Cuisine, Deccan Culture & Heritage

Introduction

Culture refers to the patterns of thinking and behavior of the people. It is a combination of values, beliefs, faith, rules of conduct, social, political and economic patterns which are passed from one generation to another by both formal and informal process. Culture is the way we think and live in the society as its member. Thus, all the achievements of group life are collectively called culture. In popular parlance, the material aspects of culture, such as scientific and technological achievements are seen as distinct from culture which is left with the non-material, higher achievements of group life (art, music, literature, philosophy, religion and science). Culture is the product of such an organization and expresses itself through language and art, philosophy and religion. It also expresses itself through social habits, customs, economic organizations and political institutions.

Culture has two types: (i) material, and (ii) non-material. The first includes technologies, instruments, material goods, consumer goods, household design and architecture, modes of production, trade, commerce, welfare and other social activities. The latter includes norms, values, beliefs, myths, legends, literature, ritual, art forms and other intellectual-literary activities. The material and non-material aspects of any culture are usually interdependent on each other.

Sometimes, however, material culture may change quickly but the non-material may take longer time to change. According to Indologists, Indian culture stands not only for a traditional social code but also for a spiritual foundation of life.

Indian culture is an invaluable possession of our society. Indian culture is the oldest of all the cultures of the world. In spite of facing many ups and downs Indian culture is shining with all its glory and splendor. Culture is the soul of nation. On the basis of culture, we can experience the prosperity of its past and present. Culture is collection of values of human life, which establishes it specifically and ideally separate from other groups.

CONCEPT OF CULTURE

The English word **Culture** is derived from the Latin term “**cult or cultus**” meaning **tilling**, or **cultivating** or refining and worship. In sum it means cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes our admiration and respect. This is practically the same as **Sanskriti** of the Sanskrit language.

Culture is a way of life. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the language you speak in and the God you worship all are aspects of culture. In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. It is also the things that we have inherited as members of society. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Art, music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion and science can be seen as aspects of culture. However, culture also includes the customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living and one's outlook on various issues of life.

Culture varies from place to place and country to country. Its development is based on the historical process operating in a local, regional or national context. For example, we differ in our ways of greeting others, our clothing, food habits, social and religious customs and practices from the West. In other words, the people of any country are characterized by their distinctive cultural traditions.

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Cultural development is a historical process. Our ancestors learnt many things from their predecessors. With the passage of time they also added to it from their own experience and gave up those which they did not consider useful. We in turn have learnt many things from our ancestors. As time goes we continue to add new thoughts, new

ideas to those already existent and sometimes we give up some which we don't consider useful any more. This is how culture is transmitted and carried forward from generation to next generation. The culture we inherit from our predecessors is called our cultural heritage.

This heritage exists at various levels. Humanity as a whole has inherited a culture which may be called human heritage. A nation also inherits a culture which may be termed as national cultural heritage. Cultural heritage includes all those aspects or values of culture transmitted to human beings by their ancestors from generation to generation. They are cherished, protected and maintained by them with unbroken continuity and they feel proud of it

THE DECCAN PLATEAU

The Deccan plateau is a topographically variegated region located south of the Gangetic plains-the portion lying between the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal-and includes a substantial area to the north of the Vindhya Range, which has popularly been regarded as the divide between northern India and the Deccan. The name derives from the Sanskrit **daksina** ("south"). The plateau is bounded on the east and west by the Ghats, while its northern extremity is the Satpura Mountain Range. The Deccan's average elevation is about 2,000 feet (600 m), sloping generally eastward; its principal rivers, the Godavari, Krishna, and Cauvery, flow from the Western Ghats eastward to the Bay of Bengal. The plateau's climate is drier than that on the coasts and is arid in places. Although sometimes used to mean all of India south of the Narmada River, the word Deccan relates more specifically to that area of rich volcanic soils and lava-covered plateaus in the northern part of the peninsula between the Narmada and Krishna rivers.

Having once constituted a segment of the ancient continent of Gondwanaland, this land is the oldest and most stable in India. The Deccan plateau consists of dry tropical forests that experiences only seasonal rainfall

On the western edge of the plateau lie the Sahyadri, the Nilgiri, the Annamalai and the Cardamon Hills, commonly known as Western Ghats. The average height of the Western Ghats, which run along the Arabian Sea, goes on increasing towards the south. Anaimudi Peak in Kerala, with a height of 2,695 m above sea level, is the highest peak of peninsular India. In the Nilgiris lie Ootacamund, the well-known hill station of southern India. The western coastal plain is uneven and swift rivers flow through it that forms beautiful lagoons and backwaters, examples of which can be found in the state of Kerala. The east coast is wide with deltas formed by the rivers Godavari, Mahanadi and Kaveri. Flanking the Indian peninsula on the western side are the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea and on the eastern side lies the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal.

The eastern Deccan plateau, called Telangana, is made of vast sheets of massive granite rock, which effectively traps rainwater. Under the thin surface layer of soil is the impervious gray granite bedrock. It rains here only during some months.

Comprising the northeastern part of the Deccan Plateau, the Telangana Plateau has an area of about 148,000 sq km, a north-south length of about 770 km, and an east-west width of about 515 km.

The plateau is drained by the Godavari River taking a southeasterly course; by the Krishna River, which divides the penneplain into two regions; and by the Penneru River flowing in a northerly direction. The plateau's forests are moist deciduous, dry deciduous and tropical thorn.

Most of the population of the region is engaged in agriculture; cereals, oilseeds, cotton, and pulses (legumes) are the major crops. There are multipurpose irrigation and hydroelectric-power projects, including the Pochampad, Bhaira Vanitippa, and Upper Penneru. Industries (located in Hyderabad, Warangal) produce cotton textiles, sugar, foodstuffs, tobacco, paper, machine tools, and pharmaceuticals. Cottage industries are forest-based (timber, firewood, charcoal, bamboo products) and mineral-based (asbestos, coal, chromite, iron ore, mica, and Granite). There is a dense network of roads, as well as railways and waterways; Hyderabad, capital of newly emerged Telangana State, is linked by air with major cities in India. The language of the plateau is Telugu of the Dravidian family. The plateau's important cities and towns are Hyderabad, Warangal, Karimnagar, and Nizamabad.

HISTORY OF HYDERABAD

The Hyderabadis who are from the Deccan region of India. racing their footsteps in history, is learn that the area was ruled by the Bahmani Sultanate in 1347. The empire was the first Muslim kingdom in the southern part of India and was founded by Alauddin Hassan, an Afghan by birth and a descendant of Persian King Bahman. How he landed in India is not clear, however, what is known is that he established the Bahmani Empire in the area after revolting against the Delhi Sultanate that ruled the Indian subcontinent at the time.

When the Bahmani Empire started to deteriorate in the 16th century, Sultan Quli Qutbul Mulk, who served the then-Bahmani sultan, conquered the empire's main city of Golkonda and declared independence from the Bahmani Sultanate. Quli, who migrated to India from a federation consisting of present-day Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iraq and parts of Iran and Turkey, established the Qutb Shahi dynasty in Golkonda in 1518.

Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, founded the city of Hyderabad in 1591. The city derives its name from Hyder, the title of the fourth caliph of Islam Hazrat Ali (RA), which means lion. Another myth states that the city was named after the founder's wife Bhagamati who was named Hyder Mahal after she converted to Islam, while another version claims it was named after his son.

The Qutb Shah Dynasty ruled Golkonda for 171 years but was forced to acknowledge the Mughal Empire's authority in the later years. In 1687, the area was taken over by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and was made a province of the empire.

CULTURE OF HYDERABAD

The culture of Hyderabad also known as the Hyderabadi Tehzeeb is the result of evolution and assimilation of several cultures some of which were transitory (like British and French) and some cultures which made Hyderabad their home and thereby assimilated with other cultures. The arrival of different cultures though dates back to the period much before Qutub Shahis. The present Hyderabadi Tehzeeb foundations were laid during the Qutub Shahi time. Different communities from north and south India migrated to Hyderabad during different times of the reigns of Qutub Shahi and Asaf Jahi. Subsequently Hyderabad became the meeting ground of practically all the elements of the population of the country. Many families from north India came in the early 10th century. These communities played a significant role in the political, social and cultural life of Hyderabad.

EMERGENCE OF CUISINES IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD IN DECCAN

The Deccan region is an inland area in India. The native cuisine was prominent until the Vijaya Nagara empire lasted, it was during the rule of Delhi Sultanet, Mohamed bin Tuglaq when he shifted the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, the Deccan region adopted the foreign cuisines. In the 14th century when the Bahmanid sultanet was formed by revolting against the Delhi sultanet in Deccan, the Turkish noblemen were appointed in the high positions, and introduced the **Turkish Cuisine**. The Bahmanid sultanet was eventually broke into five self declared kingdoms in the 15th century, among which the Golconda sultanet was the most prominent until the early 17th century and during their times the **Persian Cuisine** introduced, later when the Mughals supremacy increased and appointed Governor in Deccan and finally when occupied the Qutb shahi kingdom in 1668 to form the Deccan suba. It was then that **Mughal Cuisine** was introduced in Deccan and became common among the *Lashkar* (war men). Eventually this two-centuries-long political instability in the region and migration has introduced Deccan with multiple foreign cuisines.

In Deccan medieval cuisine banquets were common among the aristocracy. Multiple courses would be prepared and served in a style called **Dastarkwan** (A long cloth laid on floor on which food dishes and dinners plates are placed). Food was generally eaten by hand, served on among commons and nobility. The food was mostly meat oriented being grilled and fried in **tandoor**. The **Curry** was highly seasoned and flavored by using spices. Fruits were preferred rather than dessert after main course. Once the meals are ended **Kahwa** (liquid hot drink) was consumed that contains ingredients to digest food. The ingredients of the cuisine varied greatly according to the seasons and festivals, and many items were preserved in the form of Pickles.

EMERGENCE OF MODERN CUISINE IN DECCAN

The modern cuisine was evolved during the Nizams in the mid-17th century, and elevated to a sublime art form. Hyderabad has a history of continuous influx of migrants from all over the world and in general from the Indian sub-continent, particularly since 1857.

Most of the foreign food had been improved to suit the culinary preferences, resulting to form the unique derivative cuisine that excels over the original. **Biryani** (Turkish) and **Haleem** (Arabic) for instance is prepared all over India, but the Hyderabad variety is ultimately form the Hyderabad Biryani and Hyderabad Haleem.

Til ke chatuni with Arabic tahini, Persian dried lamb with beans is modified with dalcha, tanduri naan of **Uzbek** (central Asia) to create *Sheermal*. Most of the modern day desserts in Hyderabad cuisine were introduced and invented during the times of Nizams, today that had become an integral part of cuisine.

Hyderabad cuisine is an integral part of the cuisines of the former Hyderabad State that includes the regions of Telangana (earlier in Andhra Pradesh State), **Marathwada** (now in Maharashtra) and **Hyderabad-Karnataka** (now in Karnataka).

The Hyderabad cuisine contains city specific specialties like **Hyderabad** (Hyderabad Biryani and Hyderabad Haleem) and **Aurangabad** (Naan Qalia), **Gulbarga** (Tahari), **Bidar** (Kalyani Biryani) and others.

In the past, the food was called *Ghizaayat*. The cuisine is linked to the nobles, who religiously maintain the authenticity of the past, and the recipes are a closely guarded secret. The royal cooks are known as *Khansamas*, highly regarded by the nobles. *Shahi Dastarkhan* is the dining place, where food is served and eaten. A chowki is a low table, instead of a dining table and cotton mattresses for squatting and bolsters for the back rest. The **Dastarkhan** is revered in the noble household.

GENESIS OF HYDERABAD / DECCAN CUISINE

Hyderabad cuisine also known as **Deccani cuisine** of India was developed after the foundation of Qutb shahi dynasty by Sultan Quli, promoting the native cuisine along with their own. Hyderabad cuisine had become a princely legacy of the Nizams of Hyderabad State. It is an amalgamation of Mughlai, Turkish and Arabic along with the influence of the native Telugu and Marathwada Cuisines. Hyderabad cuisine comprises a broad repertoire of rice, wheat and meat dishes and the skilled use of various spices, herbs and natural edibles.

The cuisine emphasises the use of ingredients that are carefully chosen and cooked to the right degree and time. Utmost attention is given to picking the right kind of spices, meat, and rice. Therefore, an addition of a certain herb, spice, condiment, or a combination of these adds a distinct taste and aroma. The key flavours are of coconut, tamarind, peanuts and sesame seeds which are extensively used in many dishes. The key difference from the North Indian cuisine is the use of dry coconut and tamarind in its cuisine.

Traditional utensils made of copper, brass, and earthen pots are used for cooking. All types of cooking involve the direct use of fire. There is a saying in Hyderabad, cooking patiently (*ithmnaan se*) is the key; slow-cooking is the hallmark of Hyderabad cuisine. The Slow-cooking method has its influence from the Dum Pukht method used in Awadhi Cuisine.

Hyderabadi Cuisine has different recipes for different events, and hence is categorized accordingly, like banquet food, for weddings and parties, festival foods and travel foods. The category to which the recipe belongs itself speaks of different things like the time required preparing the food, the shelf life of the prepared item, etc.

All Andhraites love spices, especially red chillies, and use it so generously that your tongue, ears, eyes and everything else will burn days later. The cuisine draws its flavour from two rich legacies - the **Deccani cuisine of Nizams** with its delectable Biryani (rice flavoured with meat and vegetables), Haleem (pounded wheat and mutton dish) and Kebabs, and the spicy Andhra style of food, laced with mustard, garlic and chillies and eaten with dollops of chutney and pickle. Eating Some of the most traditional Hyderabadi dishes which were probably served 400 years ago, and still served today are Biryani, Moghlai dishes, Chicken korma, Sheer korma, Double-ka-meetha, Gajar-ka-halwa . Be it the North Indian Peshawri delights, the traditional spicy South Indian or Continental & Mexican to the Chinese food or the best of Fast Food Centers, Pizzerias, Snack Outlets bakeries and sweet shops, Hyderabad caters to all pockets and taste buds.

Hyderabad has a typical cuisine which combines the tastiest recipes of the south with the northern Mughlai. The most popular is the birani or pulao. It is the aromatic long grained basmati rice cooked with mutton or chicken pieces. These meat pieces add a flavor of their own to the preparation. The kebabs are barbecued meat, hot and succulent, they are irresistible in taste.

Hyderabad's strong Mughlai influence is perhaps the reason why the Hyderabadi Biryani has become so popular all over India. This famous dish has been experimented time and again to perfection. Infact the Biryani has influenced a Hyderabadi's tongue so strongly that usually other famous dishes of Hyderabad takes a back seat. It takes an extra ordinary taste for other dishes to beat the competition of Biryani.

For vegetarians, Hyderabad offers dahi vadas (lentil dumplings in Yogurt), mirch-ka-sabu (chilies in a cream gravy), and the more common Bagaara Baingan. On the dessert menu, Hyderabad is famous for double-ka-meetha (a bread and cashew nut pudding), Badam-ki-Jhab (marzipan), and Dil-e-Firdaus (a rich milk based sweet).

And of course the any-time favorite with all Hyerabadis - Irani-chai cannot be ignored. This purely Irani tradition of drinking chai is a spillover from Irani trade in the 1600s. Street-side "Irani" Cafes are most popular for it's typical refreshing Irani Chai that one would love to have at the first opportunity given.

The food we know today as Hyderabadi cuisine is a simplified version of what was once enjoyed by the Nizams, their ministers and their respective guests as edible art. A traditional meal would consist of several meat dishes – goat or lamb, beef, chicken, and game such as partridge or venison – served as a variety of dishes – mouth-watering kebabs, succulent roast, and rich curries. These were accompanied by freshly baked kulcha or naan, fragrant biryani and several varieties of dal. Some of the more famous Hyderabadi dishes include murgh mussalam, partridge pasinde, ambada gosht, nahari,

bagara baigan and qubani ka meetha. Most of these dishes are still widely available at restaurants or cooked in thousands of Hyderabadi homes, while a few have all but died out, remaining alive only in cookbooks and among the descendants of that resplendent era's ruling class.

Of course, given the nature of today's world, Hyderabadi Cuisine is no longer the only thing you get in the city. In fact, you can find pretty much any type of global fare ranging from **Japanese** and **Thai** to **Italian** and **Mexican** – much of it has been tweaked to suit the Indian palate, but there are establishments that remain true to the culinary traditions of the country of origin. In fact, one of the most popular and fastest-growing food segments in Hyderabad is **Pan-Asian Cuisine**. Hyderabad has always had an affinity for the heavily modified **Chinese food** that's available throughout the country, but **Thai**, **Vietnamese**, **Chinese** and **Japanese** cuisines are taking the city by storm due to certain similarities with what Hyderabad is accustomed to – fragrant aromas, generous use of spice, and a certain tart or tangy flavour in most dishes.

The modern avatar of Hyderabadi cuisine, as seen by outsiders, is restricted to Biryani, Haleem and Kebabs. Those in and from the city and its surroundings, however, know that while the decadence and extravagance of the royal era may not be around anymore, there is still so much more to Hyderabadi cuisine than the ubiquitous and evergreen staples. Snacks such as chota samosa, luqmi and Osmania biscuits; gravy dishes like Bagara Baigan and Dalcha; vegetarian delicacies like Khatti dal and Tamate ke kat – these foods are very much alive and kicking. The culinary traditions and landscape of Hyderabad, while no longer dominated by the royals and restricted to their courts, has been safeguarded through the centuries. Given the zeal and adoration with which they are treasured, there is virtually no chance of them being lost.

CONCLUSION

Irrespective of latest developments taking place globally due to technical advancement and migration of people from one place to another, neither the taste and flavor of Hyderabadi Cuisine is ever lost nor the culture and heritage. In fact more research is being done to make the cuisine more rich in appearance, nutrition, taste and flavor. Hyderabadi Cuisine is no more competition to any other cuisines in the world as it has been accepted by majority of people both domestically and internationally for its rich aroma, taste and spicy nature. It has been recognized as one of the best cuisines available to the mankind gifted by our ancestors and today many researchers and gastronomical experts and Social Scientists say that in the coming days, Hyderabadi Cuisine is going to conquer the world food eaters attention and become the Number 1 in position. They also feel that such type of cuisines which are amalgamations of other cuisines are the need of the hour to built up better relationships and sense of brotherhood among different areas, regions and countries of the world to bring the concept of ONE FAMILY – ONE WORLD, HAPPY FAMILY – HAPPY WORLD. .

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