

HOW PARTITION IN 1947 IMPACTED THE CULINARY CULTURE OF INDIA? A HISTORICAL DISCUSSION ON THE SHARED CULINARY PRACTICES ACROSS THE BORDER

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INTRODUCTION:

The study of partition related Indian cuisine besides explaining diversity of Indian culture, throws light on relative importance of food in the field of diplomacy & inter-state relations. The latter aspect though not studied in detail here, provides an insight into the future scope of research regarding interdisciplinary study on Partition of India. The direct proportionality between political setup and social structure has left indelible influence on culinary history of India in different phases of historiographical analysis. The intermix of sweet and tangy, the choice of tastes and flavors is a reflection of India's vivid history in the backdrop of change in topography. In order to understand the impact of partition of 1947 on Indian cuisines, the study of history of food culture in Indian subcontinent becomes mandatory. This shall also help in relating the change visible in food choices with the change in economic situation i.e., how people belonging to different socio-economic strata tend to differ in their fooding preferences. Moreover, it shall reveal how religious beliefs provide sanction to prevalent food culture of any particular community. The transition of hunter-food gatherers of pre-historic times to the well-settled agriculturalists, opened up multiple avenues in the arena of food experimentation. The archaeological findings of various variety and sub-varieties of crops in ancient period are relatable to modern day types of crops in different geographical regions, and how trade and social relations help in transfer of popular items of fooding. The ancient method of fixing meat or hunted animal body part on sticks in order to make it roast-ready for eating, somewhat appears as a primitive 'tikka' in making (Antani and Mahapatra, 2022, p. 2), that holds a special place in present day India and Pakistani platters. Prior to boasting of a recipe as utterly Indian, or sub-continental, the contribution of intra-regional traits and inter-national ingredients used to cook the same, should be acknowledged. This is because, throughout the course of history, sub-regional and inter-continental trade of edible items, had been an inherent feature of India, that left permanent marks on its food culture. This in turn, resulted into trade of raw ingredients and introduction

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of new crops in and out of Indian mainland. Besides, political structure, Indian philosophy had been one among the driving factors behind classification of food type based on three 'gunas' (characteristics) - 'satvik' (entirely vegetarian, peace giving), 'rajasik' (spicy) and 'tamasik' (oily, anger raising, carnivores). An ancient sweet-dish, 'Malpua', is one among the top picks for both Diwali and Eid celebrations in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan). While the ancient 'Apupa' (vedic name for Malpua) had barley as its main ingredient, Malpua today is largely made with refined flour, or semolina. The pancakes made of consistent batter on being fried in ghee, are dipped into the saffron and cardamom flavored sugar syrup. It is later garnished with chopped pistachios and almonds. Few strands of saffron added to the top steal the show. 'Malpua' with additional twist of eggs, 'mawa' and 'rabri' is a popular item on the Iftar table in Karachi.

With the onset of Turkish invasions in medieval period, there began a change in socio-political makeup of India. Further, conversion of Mongols as New Mussalmans (converted Muslims) under sultanate period started altering demographical features. Later, under Mughals, a treasure trove of delicacies was laid open to natives of Indian sub-continent. The use of term 'Mughal cuisines' creates an aura of creamy curries, use of 'shahi' (royal) ingredients, and something quite elite in character. However, it is to be noted that this umbrella term comprises not only of elite recipes cooked in royal household of emperors, but also includes local dishes, and fooding tradition of vassal states. Moreover, as Mughal state itself was embodiment of people from Iran, Turan, Hindustan, so was its fooding practices (Narayanan, 2016, p. 3). Various types of flatbreads that were introduced by Afghans and other Muslim rulers had in it the traits of West Asian preparations. Further, 'Koftas', a recipe made with meat balls (either deep-fried or steamed) served in gravy of nuts and cashews, enriched by different spices, bears Afghani legacy. Later with the introduction of tomatoes by the Portuguese, tangy gravies prepared with lots of 'love apples' (a French slang for tomatoes), added by a pinch of sugar became dominant. Though, in Pakistan 'Koftas' are taken largely to be a non-vegetarian delicacy, followers of vegetarianism in India gave it a makeover by replacing meatballs with balls of veggies and 'paneer' (cottage cheese). 'Jalebi', at times made in big sizes, is called as 'Jaleba', is another mouth-watering sweet meal, equally close to the hearts of people on both sides of the border.

'Ni'matnama' that translates to 'Book of Delights' belongs to the fifteenth century ruler of Malwa (Mandu), Ghiyath Shah. This cookery book was given patronage in Akbar's court, post his occupation of Malwa. This book holds detailed recipes of some cuisines common to present day Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Besides, revealing various types of 'sambusas' (i.e., samosas), the most famous street food of India, the book describes several 'bara' (now 'wada') variants. As per the book, 'bara' can be made up of either by

frying minced meat balls with certain added spices or by frying balls made of pulses, later dipped into curd, or different types of curries. Another appetizing meal mentioned is- 'Seek kebabs', where good quality meat is rolled in cylindrical form around a skewer or a stick, and later roasted on a tandoor (Tittley, 2004; Antani and Mahapatra, 2022). Seek kebabs is of the most lucrative food option for Punjabis as well. Punjabi interpolation gave a sui-generic trait to the dish by introducing some vegetarian versions as well, that picked up leafy vegetables and gram / rice flour as the main ingredients.

Later with the establishment of Portuguese Estado da India, Indian food culture underwent a slight transition with add up of various new crops and vegetables like Maize, tomatoes, etc. Further, it was the impact of European dominance in Bengal, especially Kolkata, that led to experimentation in ingredient list of the traditional dishes. 'Chhana', also termed as 'Chhena' is considered as a Portuguese contribution to Indian cuisine. However, this topic is debatable among the scholarly circles as most of the Bengali sweets made of 'chhana' date prior to commence of Europeans. Infact, the holy temple of Jagannath puri has historical evidence of 'Rasagulla' making since 13th century AD. Rasgulla has its roots in Bengal and Odisha "through a cascade of ethnic gastronomic phenomenon" (Sarkar et al., 2021). This section of the paper besides laying out a brief historical background of Indian cookery, reveals that how in modern times, particularly under colonial rulers, an intermix of food habits and choice of flavourshappened, thereby, giving popular regional food a national character and a global face.

DISCUSSION ON TRADITIONAL RECIPES OF OTHER SIDE THAT TOOK A POPULAR FACE ON THIS SIDE OF BORDER AFTER 1947 PARTITION

Partition not only led to parting up of the land and administrative resources, but also parted away the families from their natal origins. The Radcliffe line though visible only on the map, created invisible boundaries in the hearts of people. In the backdrop of ensuing partition pogroms, people were forced to make both anticipatory and violence driven migrations (Talbot & Singh, 2009, p. 2) during 1947 and after. Further the Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Act of 1949 and Nehru-Liaquat Pact, signed on April 8, 1950 assisted in exchange of population in newly formed fledgling states. Though, government made various arrangements in the form of refugee camps, ration allocation, establishment of shelter homes, training centers etc., people who were displaced from their roots, had a lurking sense of 'Non-belongingness'. The string of their hearts remained attached to the homes, brethren, cattle, and other immovable items they had left behind. Further, it is clear from the account of partition survivors that due to having large families, and struggling management system on the part of state, the ration allocated to the refugees was irregular

and often fell too less to fill their empty stomachs, crying out of hunger after days of violence caused starvation. Urvashi Sharma, a partition survivor currently living in Panipat recalls how her mother in absence of food & milk, consoled her (Urvashi ji's) youngest sister by letting her suck a piece of ice. She gets teary eyed remembering how they starved for days after coming from Lahore (personal communication, April 7, 2023).

The flood of millions of migrants, made it largely impossible for government to provide safe space in camps or shelter homes to each of them. Thus, many sufferers depended on their own fortunes to feed their hungry children. Under such circumstances, it was attempted to cook anything out of the bare minimum ingredients that lay at their disposal. This time what dominated over taste, and choice was feeding the starved ones. Though, the entire country was grief-stricken due to partition, the residents of Punjab and Bengal bore the brunt of violence at maximum. However, the characteristic of Indians in general and spirit of refugees in particular, retained the cultural importance attached to the mandatory moments of celebrations, even in such critical phase. Moreover, with the passage of time, as people realised the permanence of this mayhem and that their life as refugees had no quick ending, they started giving importance to the little happy moments that rarely appeared in those cracked times. It is this spirit that gave birth to 'Bread Halwa' in the refugee camps on Punjab side of partition (Vernika, 2024, August 9). The families who managed to carry their cattle along with them, or had some source of ghee and milk, but lacked too many greens and grains, made a successful experiment in the form this sweet dish. The three magic constituents of this flavorful 'halwa' were bread (usually available as a part of ration), sugar and milk, added with some amount of 'ghee' (clarified butter). While bread cooked in milk gives it a creamy texture, sugar adds a granular touch. The lustrous look and the pleasant aroma takes one back into the lap of pre-partition times, when relations between two sides were as sweetened as this halwa tastes. This simple recipe, was enriched with cardamom pods and thinly sliced almonds on top, during some special occasions, as days of chaos began to recede. Today, this unique halwa, made with bread stands as symbol of Punjab's will power in such a chaotic phase of life.

In addition to aforementioned argument, it was 'remembrance of past' that prompted cooking of traditional foods by the migrant families. For those people, who could never revisit their natal homeland, traditional food appeared to them the most appropriate option for reliving, remembering and realigning, the joyful memories they once shared with their left-out family members and friends belonging to other religious community. Later, such cuisines passed down to later generations of migrant families, for whom, it provided a historical linkage and emotional attachment to their ancestral past. Being a part of third generation of a family that migrated from Sialkot (currently in Pakistan), author (here, Krati

Jain) too finds herself in a space full of partition memories, when the story of some regional cuisine unfolds in family discussion. Besides, thorough literature review of some books and articles based on culinary history, interviews with partition survivors and personal communication with some members of particular ethnicity and religious community, has contributed to the writing of this section of the paper. This paper shall now discuss some sweetmeals, spicy flavours and authentic cuisines, belonging originally from other side of the border, but gained equal popular base in India. Additionally, regional variation in a recipe, which makes it part of daily lives in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is also studied.

Sindhi tastes in India

Sindh (now a province in Pakistan) had largely been a frontier at the periphery of major Indian empires. Its geographical location made it a point of transition between Indian mainland and some parts of Afghanistan, and land of Khorasan. This distance from mainland India, regional geography and later annexation by British (in 1843), gave a sui-generic character to socio-political, cultural and economic situation in Sindh. The massive persecution of Hindus in January 1948 and wave of forced religious conversion in Karachi, forced lakhs of Sindhi community members to migrate to India during partition (Kumar & Kothari, 2016, p. 776). Though, demographically non-dominant, Sindhi Hindus made up an economically well-off community. Tahalani and Kumari (2023) express that "they [Sindhis] were considered only 25 per cent of population of Sindh but 40 per cent of property (movable and non- movable) was possessed by Sindhi people in Sindh"(p.5141). This inward bound of Sindhis left a profound impact on culinary practices in India.

India's food culture had been aware of varieties of curries even prior to partition. In fact, with regional variation, curry, locally pronounced as 'Kadhi' has been part and parcel of Indian kitchens. Ni'matnama, the book mentioned in earlier section also dedicates certain pages to the preparation of various types of 'karhi' (phrase used in Ni'matnama)- the one made using either rice flour or chickpea flour. It even gives us details about a 'white karhi' whose specialty is visible via addition of cardamoms and white sugar. Thus, Sindh though at periphery, was not left untouched by this flavorful recipe. People residing there gave their own touch to the recipe, thereby, presenting it to the world with the nomenclature of the classic 'Sindhi Curry/ karhi'. Sindhi Curry is a tangy and flavor-rich curry made with gram flour, vegetables, and tamarind. It is a popular comfort food served with rice, now being enjoyed even by the non-Sindhis. This is a unique preparation of an Indian karhi, having no use of curd or milk. It is tomatoes and final addition of tamarind pulp that gives a zesty touch to the curry. Moreover, addition of veggies makes it a nutritious soul-satisfying meal. Another Sindhi contribution to the Indian platter is Dal Pakwan, a classic Sindhi

breakfast dish, combining the warmth of lentils with the crispiness of fried flatbreads. The base ingredients used here are 'chana dal' (chickpea lentil) for making first half of the recipe, and all-purpose flour i.e., 'maida' for making 'pakwan'. It is serving of hot, freshly cooked chana dal, along with crispy and golden fried pakwans that prove a heavenly treat for taste buds. Tamarind chutney acts as the friendliest add on to this delight. Another breakfast or snack ready recipe having Sindhi roots is 'koki'. It is Sindhi-style flatbread made with wheat flour, spices, and onions. "Dishes like Dal Pakwan, Sindhi Curry, and Koki became cherished parts of regional Indian cuisine. The adaptation of these recipes reflects resilience and cultural preservation, infusing Indian culinary diversity with Sindhi flavors and traditions post-Partition" (Swati Ratnani, personal communication, October 2, 2024).

Besides, contributing to tangy and savory meals currently popular in India, Sindhis are also credited for introducing 'Khorak', a delicious, traditional Sindhi sweet, made with wheat flour, jaggery, ghee, poppy seeds, cardamom and lots of dry fruits. Each square piece of nutty khorak leaves the food lovers with an awe for Sindhi cuisine. Another very popular sweet imported from Karachi (a city in Sindh province), as a direct result of partition led migration is 'Karachi Halwa'. While other variants of halwa look luminous and velvety smooth, Karachi halwa, quite different from others, appears a playful jelly block. It is the use of corn flour as the main ingredient and the process of making that leads to sticky texture from within. The iconic 'halwai' (confectioner) Chandulal Bahl, used to sell this sweet in Karachi. This sweet dish introduced by a Punjabi Khatri also came to be known as Bombay halwa, due to migration of Mr. Bahl and other Sindhi confectioners to Bombay post the partition of India.

Punjab got divided but the food culture remained intact

Being a part of land of Five rivers ('sapta-saendhav' region), later developing warm relations under Ranjit Singh, from the rise of Sikhism to the Independence of India, Punjab has always been at center while defining anything as characteristically 'Indian'. The days of partition left the happy streets and lush green fields of Punjab bloodied. However, the lively instinct of Punjabi community and mutual bonds shared between different religious communities i.e., Muslims, Sikhs, Jains etc., residing in erstwhile united Punjab led to considerable interchange of relishing delicacies. Ahmad is right that an individual's identity is multi-dimensional, based on the context one talks of, i.e. a person Muslim by religion can be Punjabi in ethnicity and language (2012, p. 9). The presence of an exclusive 'Punjabi-Jain' community in India stands unique in the same context. These people, largely followers of Svetambara sect of Jainism have deeply adopted Punjabi language, their vegetarian cuisine, and their cultural traditions. Thus, in addition to Punjabi-Sikhs, Punjabi-Jains act

as carriers of past traditions and help in passing down the authentic legacy of partition, to the younger generations. This is the reason that one can easily find some Punjabi-jains, in addition to Sikhs selling the authentic Pakistani meals mainly popular in Gujranwala, Sialkot and Rawalpindi etc., in India. The migration of such people in India, added by their resettlement in different parts of India, led to fast scale dispersal of such cuisines throughout the country. 'Karah- Katlama' is the most distinctive among such recipes. While the karah/kada is the traditional 'sujihalwa', made up of semolina, ghee, sugar and dry fruits, katlama, a deep-fried preparation is made when the all-purpose flour dough is rolled into multiple layers with paste of flour and ghee in between, later left to fry until golden brown in pure ghee. Even at present, Jagbir Lal who was just two years old when his father migrated to India from Gujranwala, runs a shop in Jalandhar selling this karah-katlama.

Pindi chana (small chickpea), served with naan (flatbread of all-purpose flour), is very popular street food of Delhi, derived its name from its place of origin- Rawalpindi (in Punjab, Pakistan). Kasturi Lal Wadhwa, a migrant from Rawalpindi is credited for introducing this dark colored, intense flavored chole in the streets of Delhi (Banerjee, May 18, 2017). Similarly, 'soodi di roti', crispy flatbreads made with addition of chickpea lentils, wheat flour and variety of condiments & spices also has its origin in traditional Punjabi kitchen (Aanchal Jain, personal communication, October 1, 2024). 'Makke di roti' (flatbread made of cornmeal) served along with 'sarson da saag' (made of mustard greens) is too famous to describe here. 'Meethi churi', a sweetmeat prepared with leftover wheat rotis, is another common food between India and Pakistan. 'Phirni' a traditional Indian rice pudding served in earthen pots to enhance the aroma, was the gift of Mughals, and continues to spread sweetness in the cross-border relations.

Bengali fish and sweets - common flavors of West Bengal and Bangladesh

The continuous export of Hilsa fish, the most loved diet of Bengalis, by Bangladesh (this year 3000 metric tonnes) to India is symbolic of both good gesture and role played by gastronomic in bilateral ties. Bhapa Ilish, made up of steamed Hilsa fish that had been marinated in a paste of mustard, yogurt and coconut, is a classic Bengali cuisine (Nabanita Barman, personal communication, October 7, 2024). 'Maach Bhaat' (fish curry served with rice), and 'Cholar dal' (Bengal gram lentil), find place in platters of both countries. Besides salty, there exist a range of sweet dishes like Sondesh (made from chhena), Chomchom (uses chickpea, coconut, dry fruits and mawa) (Mandavi Dubey, personal communication, October 2, 2024), Pitha (deep fried, made with rice batter with filling of jaggery, coconut, nuts, and cardamom), etc., which are common to lives of every Bengali, whether belonging from India or Bangladesh.

In addition to above discussed recipes, Biryani variants, Haleem, Zafrani Kheer, Nihari etc, represent the idea of 'unity in diversity'. Food has the power to transcend the communal boundaries, thereby establishing permeability into the impermeable. The flavorful inclinations tend to meet at some point on account of long historical linkages and geographical commonality. India had and still continues to strengthen international relations using its culinary culture as a soft power tool. This was also visible in the recent G20 summit, held in New Delhi in 2023. Gastrodiplomacy, also contributes to growth in international trade of India involving constituent items of such recipes (Bhatt, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The rich Indian cuisine is resultant of several socio-cultural factors, equally impacted by contemporary political circumstances. Food in general, bears an emotional instinct mainly for people of Indian subcontinent. Food, here acts as a ladder of popular remembrance which leads to progression and refinement in relations between the people on both sides of the border. In context of argument made above, this article contributes to the widening scope of partition historiography. With recipe of each common yet special cuisine being unfolded, gates to the vivid history of testing times during 1947 gets opened. This article justifies the agency of 'food items' that had been largely neglected in hitherto discussions on Partition. Moreover, study of common culinary practices also promotes bilateral trade, and policy making on matters of cultural exchange between nations.

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