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THE FUTURE TRENDS IN ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Abstract

Food is a human essentiality that has transcended time and space. It is a basic human necessity and the substratum of human survival because it provides vital nutrients that generates energy for maintaining life and stimulating physical and mental growth, leading to overall well-being.

This paper explores the dimensions of food that have expanded into the various horizons of anthropological thought and research. The paper aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding in the academic field about the need for pursuing studies on food under the umbrella of anthropology as an emerging discipline in the anthropological teaching and learning in various institutions of higher learning.

The academic approach towards food has been attributed to the ways and works of early anthropologists wherein they contributed to the development of a new, interdisciplinary approach to study food in culture. Such studies shared the inter-mingled approach of empiricism upheld by the most often sought theoretical concepts. Miller and Deutsch (2009) defined food studies as, "The interdisciplinary field of study of food and culture, investigating the relationships between food and the human experience from a range of humanities and social science perspectives, often times in combination."

Keywords: *Human, Survival, Food Development, Interdisciplinary, Food, Culture, Relationships, Perspectives.*

A basic term used in food studies is 'food culture' or 'culinary culture' that as Skowroński (2007), denoted "Food culture is a set of practices, habits, norms and techniques applied to food and eating." This broad definition has been taken to encompass food production, its distribution and its subsequent consumption among people. This definition connotes the range and differential usage of foodstuffs and the allied ways they are looked at. Food culture has come to incorporate various aspects of food over the years that are connected in many ways to the lives of people, their food preparations, habits and ritual significance; food etiquette is also the socio-cultural acceptance or rejection

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factor in various associated practices. Food has served as a medium that differentiates the several discerning aspects of society, with special reference to the changes and growth adopted and adapted in food cultures along the development of human settlements across the world.

McGee (2004) felt that “there existed convincing motive to understand the significance of food for individuals and society in the socio-cultural framework.” While conducting a review of the available literature, it was observed that there are not enough studies focused on determining the detailed meaning of food even though there has been an increase in the academically oriented studies on food in recent years (Polat and Polat, 2020). These studies were perceived socially, culturally, structurally, economically, symbolically and also in the terms of religious, artistic and metaphorical ways.

The study of food and its related issues became an integral part of the earliest anthropological monographs on culinary cultures across communities situated across the world geographically. Food was observed to serve as a satisfying medium for studying these communities. Studies on food became popular and fostered interest in several academic discourses (Siewicz, 2011).

Franz Boas (1940) in the ‘Science of Man’ stated that anthropology could be understood under the purview of several allied subjects. Anthropology set out to observe three major aspects of communities: physical appearance, language, and the inherent beliefs and customs related to their overall existence. The importance of food, its interpretation and importance for human existence were considered and recognized by anthropologists. The earliest works of anthropologists and ethnologists have emphasized the socio-cultural and symbolic dimensions of kitchens as the significant and independent food manufacturing units (Cohen and Csergo, 2012).

Therefore, the anthropology of food can be defined as the branch of anthropology that “provides an understanding of the range, role, relevance and rigor of studying food related to man as a subject.” Food barter has been observed to be the commonest form of non-verbal communication according to the anthropological descriptions (Ahirwar, Sharma and Gautam, 2021). This form of communication can be taken to be the sum total of conjectural and practical approaches to diet, food habits and kitchen practices, which have led to the origin of varying perspectives towards the understanding of individual cultures and societies (Polat and Polat, 2020).

The Temporal Historical Progression in the study of Food Developments “can be traced across phased changes” in the progress and development of human society and settlements. Earlier emphasis had been on studying food in terms of what was eaten and also by incorporating various stages in the production, preparation, consumption and exchange of food (Gautam, 2021). Some of the earliest works in this direction are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Earliest Works in Food Studies

Sr. No.	Author	Year	Work
1	Edward Burnett Tylor	1865	Proponent of classic evolutionism who identified cooking to be 'human universal' defined
2	John G. Bourke	2017	The Urine Dance of the Zuni Indians of New Mexico
3	Garrick Mallery	1888	'Manners and Meals'. It discussed the food habits and mannerisms of man across different cultures in various parts of the World
4	Robertson Smith	1894	Conducted a discussion on semitic sacrifices and sacrificial meals in 'Lectures on the Religion of the Semites'

Source: Mintz and Du Bois, 2002.

A temporal shift occurred in the 1930s as attention shifted toward the ways in which food and food habits changed and created an impact. These anthropological studies accounted for the various ways in which food has affected the development of relationships in various populations as well as the ongoing conflict with the environment besides enumerating the functions and structures of socially accepted and interpretation of culture. Biological anthropologists have been concerned with the food studies that were related to adaptation and evolution, the impact of food on health, occurrence and prevalence of diseases, nutritional deficiencies and cardinal aspects of food related changes in human behavior (Gautam, 2021).

Most of the earlier studies included the concept of culture as pertaining to the production and consumption of food along with examining the functionalist and structuralist approaches to food related practices.

The Spatial Progression of Culture- Food Continuum

The American school of diffusionism was led by Franz Boas (1858–1942), Clark Wissler (1870–1947) and Alfred Louis Kroeber (1876–1960) who dealt with the concept of 'culture area', including 'food areas' and 'culture centers' as dominant concepts. Franz Boas gave the concept of 'natural-history', which stated that the history has influenced by the philosophy and social laws of society. His student, Clark Wissler, felt social groupings could be formed by indicating and locating varying modes of life, attributed to spatially oriented dominant traits. He presented ten culture areas in North America, four in South America and one in the Caribbean. He also devised eight food areas from the original areas. His views on culture and food areas are depicted in 'Man and Culture' (Wissler, 1940). Table 2 refers to the food categories segregation and the geographical location of the populations to which it pertains.

Table 2: Food Categories and Geographical Location of Populations

Sr. No.	Substance	Areas of Habitation and People
1	Caribou	Eskimo Habitation
2	Bison	Great Plains
3	Salmon	North Pacific Coast
4	Several Kinds of Wild Seeds	California
5	Eastern Maize	South East and Eastern Woodland
6	Intensive Agriculture	South West, Mexico, Peru
7	Maniac	Amazon region, Caribbean
8	Guanaco	Guanaco

Source: Wissler, 1940

The Functionalist Approach to Food Concepts

Herbert Spencer (1910) detailed the idea that particular functions are ascribed and the purpose becomes vital for survival in the society. Emile Durkheim (1893, as cited in Jones, 1986) had thought of society as having a particular function and tended to divide the society into two types:

- a) one with organic solidarity and
- b) one with mechanical solidarity.

Mechanical solidarity, therefore, connotes the cohesiveness among certain communities like the tribals and hunting gathering communities, where people tend to stick together because of their beliefs, politics and other reasons. Hence, food tended to become a dependent function of the activities of a number of persons.

Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski (1935) took up after Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) wherein he highlighted the interconnections between society and culture. He emphasized that people have basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and biological coupling that are fulfilled according to the social institutions and societal norms. He visualized the culture as the function to satisfy the basic needs of individuals in society. Food production has been identified with economic institutions and industry.

Malinowski (1935) in his treatise 'Coral Gardens and their Magic' had focused on the economy, social systems and magic among the Trobriand Islanders. He reported in detail how the Trobrianders grew taro, banana, yam, pumpkin, mango, sugar cane, peas, etc., with plants forming the main part of their diet and have been associated with the seasonal gardening cycle. They used their crops as a medium of economic exchange. It was also used as a tribute to the chief or marriage gift. Symbolically, there are special connotations attributed to food in a matrilineal society; for example, the yam was shared as a harvest gift with the sister's household. The Trobriand islanders had identified three categories of food:

- a) Main Food: Yam, the staple food has a special significance whereby even the storage houses for yam have special significance based on social hierarchy. The stored yams are used to resolve conflicts among people of higher status because they can be treated as gifts.
- b) Light foodstuffs: Sugar cane, wild fruits, etc., are not used frequently and do not form a substantial part or an entire meal.
- c) Delicacies: Edible larvae, pork, fish, birds and all forms of food materials rich in proteins.

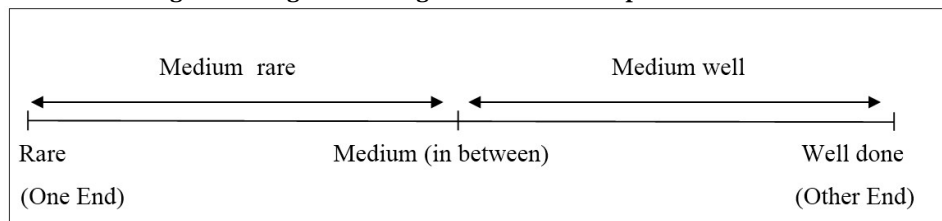
These are rarely included in the everyday diet but are offered in honour to guests.

In a horticulture-based economy, food has been connected with several functions in society. Cultures have different concepts of raw and cooked food, and also cooking and food exchange. Culture tends to determine the manner in which food is cooked or processed.

Documentation of Food Related Practices

People in Norway and Sweden have developed the habit of keeping their food in big tubes in a specific area to allow for its decomposition over time. It is kept like this for over three months after which there is a feast to utilize such foods as a delicacy for that particular culture. The balance between raw and cooked food has been seen to emanate from the two ends of the spectrum. People's preferences for the food rest on the different stages of being cooked, which have been depicted in Figure 1.

Figure1: Stages of Being Cooked and People's Preference

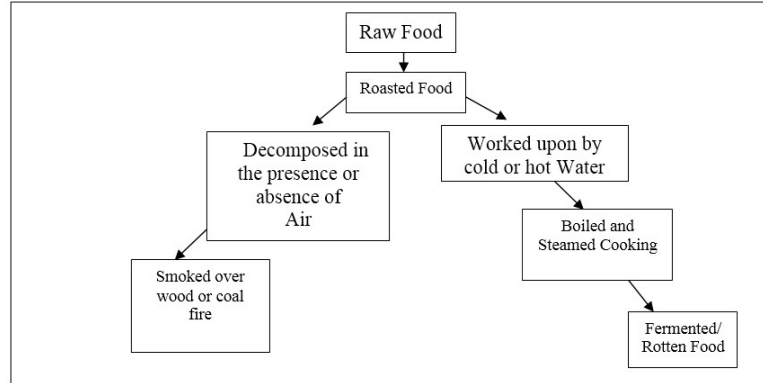


Source: Retracted from: <https://medium.com/@samsonspaddockau/whats-the-difference-between-rare-medium-and-well-done-steak-fe463e0f960f>

It was Claude Levi-Strauss (1966) who suggested the idea of the 'culinary triangle' (published in 1966). He discussed the food habits of the ancient Greeks, Indians of Northern and Southern America, the feasts and orgies of the XVIII and XIX century French intellectuals as well as peasants from Central Europe. He examined their cooking techniques in detail and contrasted between roasted food and food that was directly exposed to fire and boiling or the food that has been doubly mediated by water. Food has been taken to be the medium between nature and culture. Cooking is the act of changing the natural form. This aspect of food is a universal feature observed in all human societies. Ever since the

discovery of fire cooked food made its advent and became the accepted medium of change in most societies. The culinary stages triangle has been depicted in Fig. 2.

Figure 2 : Stages in the Culinary Process



Source: Retracted from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/roasting>

Franz Boas (1921) had described the relevance of food by detailing the Kwakiutl Salmon recipes and their significance for the people whose lives revolved around the Salmon. Similar aspects of single materials have been discussed by several authors in anthropology and have been tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Contributions of other Authors

Sr. No.	Author (s)	Title	Publication Year
1	Helen Codere	“Kwakiutl Society: Rank without Class	1957
2	Cushing, Frank Hamilton	India Notes and Monographs Vol. III Zuni Breadstuff”	1920
3	Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois	“The Anthropology of Food and Eating”	2002
4	Edward Evan Evans- Pritchard	His book on “The Nuer” highlighted how the Nuer depended on cattle for dairy, foodproducts, their food patterns as also their significance in sacrificial, ceremonial and religious purposes	1940
5	Mary Douglas	“Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo”	1966
6	A. F. C. Wallace and R. E. Acherman	“An Interdisciplinary Approach to Mental Disorder among the Polar Eskimos of Northwest Greenland”	1960
7	V. J. Rohrl	“A Nutritional Factor in Windigo psychosis”	1970
8	Edward F. Foulks	“The Arctic Hysterias of the North Alaskan Eskimo”	1972

9	R. Bolton	“Aggression and Hypoglycemia among the Quolla: A Study in Psychobiological Anthropology”	1973
10	J. D. Gussler	“Social Change, Ecology, and Spirit Possession among the South African Nguni”	1973
11	C. Ritenbaugh	“Human Foodways: A Window on Evolution”	1978
12	W. S. Abruzzi	“Flux among Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest: An Ecological Interpretation”	1980
13	D. Brokensha, D. M. Warren and O. Wertner	“Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development”	1980
14	L. S. Greene	“Social and Biological Predictors of Nutritional Status, Physical Growth, and Neurological Development”	1980
15	A. B. Kehoe and D.H.Giletti	“Women’s Preponderance in Possession Cults: The Calcium Deficiency Hypothesis Extended”	1981

Source: Compiled by Author

The earliest functional attribute of the Anthropology of Food was observed in 1975 when the Committee on Nutritional Anthropology (CNA) was established. The Society for Medical Anthropology aimed to collect people on a singular bio-cultural perspective on nutrition because of which the anthropological study of food gained significance and publications on the subject increased. The subjects ranged from patterns of food sharing in various different cultural groups, consumption patterns, nutritional and medical consequences, socio-cultural significance and the categorization of food besides its availability, dispersal and disposal of food products pertaining to ecology (Gautam, 2021). Studies on food through various opportunities is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Studies on Food through Various Approaches

Sr. No.	Author (s)	Publication Year	Title
1	S. Katz	1982	“Food, Behavior, and Biocultural Evolution”
2	R. A. Rappaport	1971	“The Flow of Energy in Agricultural Society”
3	E. Messer	1976	“The Ecology of Vegetarian Diet in a Modernizing Mexican Community”
4	R. Revelle	1976	“Energy use in Rural India”
5	R. S. Khare	1992	“The Eternal Food: Gastro-nomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists”
6	C. S. Fowler	1977	“Ethno ecology”
7	B. E. Montgomery and John Bennett	1979	“Anthropological Studies of Food and Nutrition: The 1940s and the 1970s”

8	C. Cassidy	1980	"Benign Neglect and Toddler Malnutrition"
9	E. B. Ross	1978	"Good Taboos, Die and Hunting Strategy: The Adaptation to Animals in Amazon Cultural Ecology"
10	E. B. Ross	1980	"Patterns of Diet and Forces of Production: An Economic and Ecological History of the Ascendancy of Beef in the United States Diet"
11	A. Sharman	1980	"Dietary Choice and Resources Allocation by Household members"
12	A. Sharman	1981	"Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia"

Source: Compiled by Author

Note: The list is comprehensive but no doubt there are several other studies as well. It was not possible to include all.

Food Studies in the Early 1980's: A Turning Point

During the period from 1978 to 1985, the International Committee on 'Anthropology of Food and Food Problems', co-chaired by Mary Douglas and R. S. Khare (1980), boosted the anthropology of food, culture and food problems by giving it the platform to gain recognition simultaneously at the international level. The turning point in the way food studies were being conducted was observed through the studies of Sidney Mintz (1985) and Jack Goody (1982). Food was the central focus and the main factor for studying patterns of manufacturing and supplying food, sharing it the consumption and disposal. The concept of taste and communication of food as related to everyday experiences formed the substance of several ethnographies on food. This turning point in food studies after the early 1980s is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Turning Point in Food Studies Post the Early 1980s

Sr. No.	Publication		Title and Content
	Author (s)	Year	
1	S. W. Mintz	1985	'Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History'. It also cast light on the transition of sugar from gourmetto everyday food.
2	J. Goody	1982	An account of the culinary cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa and Eurasia in 'Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology'.

Source: Mary Douglas and R. S. Khare (1980)

Globalization of Food in the 21st Century

The inception of the 21st century saw a distinctive subject curve shaping towards studying food and the impact of globalization. The study of food broadened its horizons to the concept of global food systems and the cultural responses manifested by the trading of food, associated barriers and facilitations across continents of the world (Gautam, 2021). The studies of this dynamic time period are depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Depiction of the Food Studies in 21st Century

Sr. No.	Author (s)	Publication Year	Title and Content
1	J. André	1981	L' alimentation et la cuisine a Rome
2	Mary Weismantel	1988	Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorin Andes
3	Sharry A. Innes	2001	Dinner Roles
4	Carol Counihan	2004	Depicting Food Related Works and Gender Relating Through Life Histories
5	J. Holtzman	2009	Dietary Changes Among Samburu of Northern Kenya
6	R. R. Wilk	2006	Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists
7	V. Isaakidou	2007	Cooking in the Labyrinth: Exploring 'cuisine' at Bronze Age Knossos
8	Auberger and Goupil	2010	Archaeology of Food Ways
9	Wilkins and Nadaeu	2015	A Companion to Food in the Ancient World

Source: Compiled by Author

Note: The list is comprehensive but no doubt there are several other studies as well. It was not possible to include all.

The Language of Food: Anthropological Tenets

Language associated with food revolves around the structural aspects of food in terms of raw and cooked as well as other considerations. It touched upon the structuralist approach of Claude Levi-Strauss (1966). These studies are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Linguistics of Food in Anthropology

Sr. No.	Author(s)	Publication Year	Title
1	B. Berlin	1972	Speculations on the Growth of Ethnobotanical Nomenclature
2	A. D. Fina and A. Georgakopoulou	2019	The Handbook of Narrative Analysis
3	D. R. Gabaccia	2000	We are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans

Note: The list is comprehensive but no doubt there are several other studies as well. It was not possible to include all.

According to Polat and Polat (2020), the anthropological studies on food can be evaluated under six groups which can be listed as follows:

- (i) **Cultural Difference:** These examine the differences in patterns of food procurement, its preparation and consumption.
- (ii) **Change and Modernization:** It looks at the ways of cooking which have been attributed to modernization and the resultant change in the lives of the populations across time and space.

- (iii) Communication: How food communicates with people and helps them to establish social relations.
- (iv) Religion: Symbolism and myths emanating in religion tend to dictate the use of food as encrypted in various cultures.
- (v) Social Analysis: Food and beverages tend to become a part of the social and cultural entitles.
- (vi) Identity established through food: The preparation and serving of food is considered as a significant symbol for identity maintenance in various communities.

The Anthropology of food as a branch of anthropology has originated from various branches of anthropology to provide an understanding of the relevance of studying food as related to man's patio-temporally. Sidney Mintz (1985) has been regarded as the 'Father of Food Anthropology' for his work 'Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History'.

Studies on food established their place in ethnographic descriptions ever since the initiation of fieldwork traditions in anthropology. The anthropological observations have always taken into account the exchanges of food as a form of the very first non-verbal communication that effectively and meaningful occurs between the observer and those being observed. During the early 1930s, the focus had been on the changes brought about by food and its impact on the food habits of a population. Anthropological concerns like the relationships of human populations and social groups as well as their dependence on their environment. Food is allied with the symbolic construction of cultures as a function of the social relations and social structures of societies. As a case in point, biological anthropologists have studied the impact of food and related behaviour on health conditions like diseases and deficiencies.

Almerico (2014), in "Food and identity: Food Studies, Cultural, and Personal Identity" introduces the concept of food studies and explores the relationship of food to the human experience as an interdisciplinary field of study focused on intricate relationships between food, culture and society.

The Need for Food Studies

Food studies examine people's relationships with food revealing a lot of the information about them. Food choices exhibit individual or group beliefs, background knowledge and assumptions. Hauck-Lawson (2004) introduced the concept of food voice. Food choices apparently unveil several stories of families, migrations, assimilation, resistance, changes over times, and personal as well as group identity.

Teaching food anthropology is essential from the curriculum point of view. However, it is essential to look at the perspective tradition and modern concepts of food while examining the avenues of learning and teaching about

food anthropology.

According to Ramhota and Vivek (2017) social change “becomes a primary focus, in terms of its directions, its processes and its origins”.

The idea, that the traditional rules, norms and meanings which structure human food intake, are increasingly subjected to ‘disaggregation’. This disaggregation involves a breakdown of these long-established rules, and crisis thus developed lead to a state that is termed as ‘gastro-anomy’ (Fischler 1980: 947).

There are likely to be individual, of course, and collective attempts to restore order to eating practices and meanings attached to food. Thus, individuals may adopt dietary regimes (weight-loss diets, vegetarianism, etc.) in an attempt to restore some ‘normative logic’ into their eating (Fischler 1988: 291).

The dietary choices made by each person within the context of an increasing variety of menu principles on offer become ever more important devices for establishing a sense of personal identity and expressing personal distinctiveness. It may be, however, necessary to exercise some caution while applying the broad concept of the ideology of consumerism (whether in its ‘mass consumption’ or its ‘postmodern’ form) to the activity of eating (Baudrillard, 1988).

Ideas of food production and consumption can help to divulge some of the inherent contradictions in the purpose of eating itself in a given society, and the way individuals are varyingly affected by what they eat. Giddens’s (2002) writings on reflexivity have its influence on both discourse and policy. Bourdieu’s (2005) concept of habitus and Habermas’s (1984) analysis of the colonisation of the life world by external forces take us further in theorizing why and how people eat the way they do.

Food and Identity

Group approval or disapproval of a given food has always had an impact on food choices. This is in conjunction to why some relatively unpalatable food items are preferred by certain groups. Food has been seen as an expression of identity as is apparent in the experience of going out to eat. McComber and Postel (1992) had suggested that restaurants served much more than just food. When deciding where to dine out, the consumers exercise their singular or collective choices. They may consider a variety of factors like the menu, atmosphere, service, location and cost or value of the meal. It was observed that most of the restaurants catered to specific types of customers because of which the same diner may choose a venue based on current needs. The psychological needs tend to intertwine with social factors when foods end up meaning more than the nourishment they offer or provide (Brown, 2011).

Kittler, Sucher and Nelms (2012) had coined and utilized extensively the term 'food habits' to describe "the manner in which humans used food, including everything from how it is chosen, acquired and distributed to who prepares, serves and eats it". Research on the relationship between the foods people eat and how others perceive them besides how they see themselves has been the direction taken by further food studies. Social and psychological factors have been known to influence people's food habits and choices. Larson and Story (2009) examined these influences on "the choices people make in food consumption. Social conscience and peer pressure has been known to impact food choices" (Brown, 2011).

Food as Symbolism for Cultural Identity

It can be seen from the above discussion that food has been loaded with certain symbolic meanings based on the association with other meaningful experiences. In everyday language and common everyday life, the humble bread is a good example of the symbolism of foods. For example:

- (i) "When peoples sit together with friends at a meal they are said to break bread with one another. This expression symbolizes a setting where friends come together in a warm, inviting and jovial manner to eat."
- (ii) "Bread has been called the staff of life."
- (iii) "The type of bread consumed by a person has been known to indicate his or her individual or group social standing. For instance, white bread has traditionally been eaten by the upper class (also known as the 'upper crust' – again a bread reference) while dark bread is consumed by the poor."
- (iv) "Whole wheat bread is the bread of choice in today's society by persons concerned more with their health than their status."
- (v) An affluent person has "a lot of bread."
- (vi) "In some cultures, bread is shared by couples as part of their wedding ceremony."
- (vii) "In the Christian religion it represents the body of Christ in the sacrament of Communion."
- (viii) "Superstitions about bread have also been documented. Greek soldiers take a piece of bread from their home into battle to ensure their safe and triumphant return home. Sailors traditionally bring a bun on their journeys to prevent shipwrecks. English midwives would place a loaf of bread at the foot of a new mother's bed to prevent the woman and her child from being kidnapped by evil spirits."

There are several similar corollaries governing food that can be found in the common parlance of the world. The food choices of different cultural groups are often connected to ethnic behaviors and religious beliefs. Kittler, Sucher and Nelms (2012) addressed the influence of food habits on an individual's self-identity by stating, "Eating is a daily reaffirmation of [one's] cultural identity. Many people affiliate the foods from their culture, their childhood with warm, good feelings and memories. The food we eat and associate with is part of who we are and who we become." Foods related to culture, society institutions like from our family often become the comfort foods that may tend to seek in times of stress.

Mukhopadhyay's (2011), "Anthropology of Food in India: The Scopes and the Prospects" is a collection of anthropological writings on food and beverage across various dimensions of human behavior. Studies have critically examined the traditional knowledge as well as the political and historical perspectives in addition to the recent perceptions and popular discourses on the subject.

Scope of Studies on Food in India and Other Areas

How consumption or avoidance of certain food items acts as crucial factors in determining the position of social groups in India (and in most parts of the subcontinent) remained a popular subject matter among anthropologists. The norms and rules dictating who can accept food from whom and in what form remained equally important factors for scholars in their effort to understand social distance between Indian communities especially castes. Singh (1992) wrote on food habits in rural India is one representative of that type.

Anthropological studies on food carried out in India are moderately wide in scope. However, they are as yet not thorough enough, geographically vast and culturally varied enough for a country like India. Much of the anthropological information on behavior related to beverages, especially alcoholic ones, is scantier than that readily available on food. As anthropologists remained largely busy with the study of small scale 'traditional' communities for many years, as they feel comfortable while dealing with issues like food taboos specific to any particular caste or tribe or the culture specific cognitive categories. Issues like changes in food habit in a developing country like India in terms of who eats what, when and how under the influence of different cultural, economic and political processes which are rarely accorded a central position in anthropological research agenda. There are several issues on which anthropological studies of food in India must be taken care of.

Variation on Basis of Gender, Age and Marital Status

It is common knowledge that food and beverages are not shared equally nor at the same time in most of the Indian families irrespective of social status

of a person. Usually, the male members of the family, irrespective of age, tend to receive the best and most of the food cooked in the family kitchen. The sustained deprivation of women has often been countered by their own arrangement for food. Very few men have ever tasted dishes made the left over with skin of vegetables and leftovers from previous meals. A brief description of exclusively feminine food had been made available in some of the autobiographical works or cookbooks authored by women. It is essential, however, to unveil the detailed story and social-cultural implications of such food. The food served to infants and children also requires special attention. Weaning practices can tend to vary from region to region often due to ecological reasons. There have been enumerated variations between communities due to religious and social considerations even in the same geographical region. Marital status influences the eating habits, especially in case of the widows among certain sections of the Hindu society. Such widowed women are traditionally expected to refrain from eating 'hot' foods or those edible materials that can excite them and divert them from celibacy. All such food items possessing even mild aphrodisiac properties must be avoided by the widows at any cost. Variation on basis of religion, caste, class and education can be observed.

The most important factors responsible for preference and avoidance of certain items of food are therefore religious and related to ethical considerations. Structures and objects used for procuring, producing, processing, preserving, cooking, serving and consuming food and beverages are numerous. A large tangible part of food culture has been generated by material culture in the past studies and is the precursor to several future anthropological enquiries into food.

- a) The architecture of the kitchen and even or the space used for cooking is an important component of such studies.
- b) Knowledge of the technology used for making the hearth and burning appropriate and adequate fuel for cooking of food is important.
- c) The pots and pans kept in a household can characterize the residents.
- d) The furniture used for cooking and eating is another interesting area of study.
- e) All items pertaining to food and cooking like the space, utensils and furniture used for cooking and eating food, would possibly not be equally accessible for all members of the household irrespective of their age, sex and marital status, or for the outsiders belonging to the same or some other community or caste. These are aspects that require in-depth study.

The corpus of experiences, knowledge and wisdom of a people which are stored in oral and written forms contain their perceptions about food. Oral

traditions like proverbs, rhymes, stories, puzzles, poems, riddles, songs and tales contain a vast body of information on quality of food and beverages and praise what is considered good and condemn what is thought to be bad. Studying food culture or any other aspect of culture in most of the eco-cultural zones of the country requires the institutes engaged in ethnographic and anthropologists research to agree to carry and coordinate such studies on their research agenda.

Future Research Inroads in the Indian Context

The Anthropology of Food will continue to explore a number of familiar areas in the years ahead. The social crises caused by migrants and the introduction of their food has been a favorite topic in the past. Recent attention to the strengthening of old traditions in communities hosting newly arrived immigrants. Garine (2009) represents a new direction for research and suggests other viewpoints yet to be explored. Anthropologists still have much to contribute to the history of globalization from the perspective of local communities. The Anthropology of Food will become more quantitative in the future. Currently, the literature contains little numerical data and even less statistical analysis. The overwhelming shadow of food insecurity that is threatening various parts of the world remains the veritable tip of the iceberg as far as research in this area is concerned.

The importance of food in Indian culture is immense. In the Upanishads, a Hindu religious text, food has been addressed as a “panacea” because all animate life depends on it. The Upanishads say that a mother must be very careful about the type of food she takes during pregnancy, because the mental make-up of child depends on it. The sages even suggested what food should be given to the child for the very first meal. History of Indian food has been a major part of Indian society that describes the evolution of Indian food habits in different ages. Indian food is greatly influenced by a 4000-year-old history of several cultures interrelating with the country, leading to a vast assortment of flavours. The Aryans, who came to India, brought with them knowledge of new food articles, methods of cooking and of raising food crops. In the early stages of Indian civilization, people ate vegetables, meat, eggs and fish without restriction or taboos. Slowly, there was reaction against the eating of meat because of the indiscriminate killing of animals. As with many other civilizations, food restrictions which started out for one reason or the other continued for centuries when the original premise had completely disappeared. Some restrictions were firmly imposed to protect India from getting into contact with the invaders and adopting their customs, through these rules were said to be intended to maintain the purity of the food.

Anthropologists, folklorists and sociologists always have examined “the relationship of individuals and populations to their food. In the era of economic globalization with its food inequities and scarcities, precarious and often tainted food supply, concerns about diet and health and fears of genetically modified

foods and food bioterrorism, food is recognized as a 'lens' through which we view, explore, analyze and interpret society in the present as well as in the past."

Conclusion

As an emerging field of inquiry, "food studies are intriguing in that it examines food as it relates to the human experience. Close inspection of food practices reveals an abundance of information about individuals and groups including the economic, political, social, and cultural significance of food in society".

The Postgraduate Syllabus in Anthropology under CBCS had a 75 marks paper covering 60 lectures. The topics covered under this included the meaning of food, cuisine and foodways: approaches to studying food, bio-cultural perspectives on nutrition and the concept of food security.

It is necessary that this syllabus be expanded and made an essential teaching platform for graduate and postgraduate students of anthropology. It should be added in Common Value-added Course for postgraduate and under graduate courses under NEP-2020. The subject also has tremendous relevance for students in several other disciplines as well.

The syllabus also entailed the following activities:

- (i) Maintaining a daily Food Log for 2–4 weeks and analyze it from the perspective of culture and nutrition.
- (ii) Describe a food memory preferably inspired from childhood; Place this food memory (by talking to parents, relatives, other members) in wider perspective- culturally, symbolically, socially, structurally etc. Specify the group for whom it his meaning, the context in which it is prepared, served and consumed.
- (iii) Describe one 'special' (uncommon/ strange/foreign) food, diet, or behavior while paying attention to identification (group and space), availability, cultural and social context and used for what/how.

"The staggering increase in the scale of food literature-inside and anthropology-makes bibliographic coverage, a challenge compounded by the close intertwining of food and eating with so many other subject. Culinary competence in the west declines at almost the same rate as discrimination in taste rises. Social scientists have examined the eating habits of westerners in terms of ethnic group, region and religion" (Roseberry, 1996). Much remains to be done in exploring food ways in other areas of the world. In this setting, "anthropologists are in a good position to make useful contributions to the development of policy in regard to health and nutrition, food inspection, the relation of food to specific cultures world hunger, and other subjects." By and

large, though, they have not taken full advantage of this opportunity.

In the arising food and culinary practices and their impact on health inequalities, no new theory is required, but rather a 'reflexive revisiting of what is already known'; in other words, 'met reflections, or thoughtful, independent-minded and critical reviews of the theoretical and empirical wisdom delivered by today's dominant paradigm'. The present research attempts to do just this, testing differing theories of class, human agency, consciousness and consumption in the context of food consumption and its implications for health and society as also the world teaching and learning.

This paper highlighted the significance of this vast area of study and its relevance to the teaching of anthropology across the sub- continent.

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