

FOOD & POWER

Expressions of Food-Politics
in South Asia

Edited by
**KANCHAN
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Dravidian Food Culture

Discourse on Identity and Diffusion

Sreenathan M.

Introduction

Food has emerged as a promising enterprise of localizing culinary experiences of the global others. It became a mediating cultural item for negotiating otherness. Globalization has opened a new food landscape of global culinary cultures across the world. It can be viewed as a palate colonization of the West. Such a classic view on colonization as a metaphor of exploitation does not sustain in the global narrative frame. Exchanges and mobility of cultures do not suit any more in the exclusive frame of exploitation and dominance in the emerging web-cultural context. Experiencing the other has emerged as a web-induced metaphor, which emphatically necessitates the avenues of experiences of global humanity. In this context, it has projected food tourism as a way of experiencing the other. Globalization from the West to the East has brought the international taste to the local tongue. The classical view generated against the West confirms it as nothing but the cultivation of the taste of the West in the East. Hence, as per the so-called 'ideological interpretation', it is nothing more than the colonization of tastes within the frame of globalization. The necessity of arguing in line with the classical dichotomy between the West and the East created by the print can be questioned. To the netizens, global

experiences can be more humane than that. As per the channels offered by globalization, there can be an equal possibility of the reverse, that is, the framing of the idea of localizing food culture from the East to the West. If the reverse process has not succeeded to that extent, it cannot simply be blamed as globalization-induced colonization. On the other hand, the failures of not attaining the reverse localization must be verified, as those might have happened due to economic and cultural reasons. However, the debate needs to be settled before arguing against a process of exchanges. The trend of arguments continues with the believed background of print legitimacy by ignoring the web context of digital emancipation. It is expected in this context, discussion on any cultural package would frame the subject more overtly in lieu of digital humanity. The digital humanity is conceived more as a process of emancipation than print-inculcated compassion. The theme focused here is on a specific cultural package of Dravidian food culture.

Landscaping of Dravidian Food Culture

In the Indian context, food is conceived more as an identity marker and understood in terms of one being holy or forbidden (Siddique Mohamad Asim 2011, Utsa Ray 2015). While understanding the dietary practices in India diachronically, different trajectories of conflict and negotiation emerge. Food culture of India stands against the imagination of Eurocentric nation state ideology, which is heavily rooted in the singularity of representation. Cuisine in India is pluralistic from its very representation, which reflects the lineages of sub-regional, regional, caste, class, religious and cosmopolitan converged paradigms. Ever growing inclusion, exclusion, diffusion and enforced expulsion of food made India a culinary hotspot. The country bears culinary strands derived from hunting-gathering communities to globalized cosmopolitan societies. Tracing the dietary ideas and practices along the line of linguistic lineages, food cultures of India suggest both diverse and converged patterns. As a linguistic area, South Asia is a well-acknowledged model of convergence. A review on food cultures of India shares the realm of convergence and mutually exclusive cultural traits as in linguistic lineages. Keeping the evolutionary nature of the consumption tradition and associated social practices, it cannot be expected that any cultural package as that of food culture would remain in isolation. With this proposition, this chapter has its focus on Dravidian food cultures. This embodied reasoning necessitates defining Dravidian food cultures at the outset. Primarily, the word Dravidian is reflected here as a linguistic family, which otherwise comprises various speech communities representing

30 or more languages. Looking at it ethnologically, they are represented diachronically by groups of almost all economic practices. It includes small and relatively isolated communities with low development indices, identified by the Government of India as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), to representatives of knowledge economy, thus covering a very wide ethnic sphere of the Dravidian language speakers. It is important to recognize that Dravidian is not a single social category and thus they cannot be expected to have a single culinary culture. Hence, the postulation is on food cultures of the Dravidian.

Food and Language

Edward Sapir's (1949) insight serves as the underlying framework of this cultural analysis on food culture. In his words, 'vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people'. No doubt, there is a strong relation between food culture and the food lexicon of respective languages. Food lexicon can tell us a lot about the eating or drinking habits of the people. Dravidian ensemble covers the simpler PVTGs to complex cosmopolitan communities, cutting across the wide spectrum of social-cultural variations. Thus, the Dravidian languages provide objective evidences in the form of domain-specific words. Culture-specific words are conceptual tools that reflect a society's past and current experiences of food culture. There cannot be a linear culinary tradition traceable to any speech group without fractured punctuations. Vestiges of multiple representations of food culture practices are expressed by all linguistic lineages. As the society changes, some of the habits may gradually be modified or discarded, while some new ones may be enjoined. Outlook of a society is assessed from its stock of food cultural lexicon, which offers insight into the cognitive taxonomy of food and associated cultural practices.

Like language, food also is a cultural product (Blench R. M. 2004). It is a marker of humanness between nature and culture. Levi-Strauss (1969) has highlighted the distinction between nature and culture in order to define humanness, while the raw represents nature, cooked signifies culture. It is the cultural process of cooking that transformed some animals into humans. In other words, it is through culinary practices that humanity distinguishes itself from the natural world. Selected natural materials are culturally structured into food and the transformation also is engineered by culture. Procurement and consumption are always governed by ecological and economic conditions within the cultural milieu. Ecology delineates the cognitive categorization of the edible and non-edible among natural items. The idea of edibility does

not propose what is good to eat, rather it conforms to the semantic value of edibility. All edible items listed in an ecological niche cannot be equally tasty and healthy to all who consume; there is a choice involved in it at individual or social level. Such dietary preferences and its cultural reasoning among social groups are subjects of detailed enquiry. Food culture of any group holds the food package trajectories embedded in different economic practices. Along with ecological, the social and cultural reasoning, and the economic factors also delimit the choice of edibility. Further, the physiological state of individuals plays a significant role in the making of choice. What is healthy to eat is a concern of nutrition and health sciences; those disciplines are sometimes insensitive or even opposed to the Levi-Straussian concept of transformation of food as a cultural product. Modern dietary specialists often suggest raw or just heated food rather than cooked one.

Semiotics of Dravidian Food Sphere

Anthropologically food is a primary need (Doglas 2004). This need is highly structured when we look at it from the perspective of structuralism. It involves raw substances, culinary practices, habitual patterns, recipes and politics of consumption. As a system it covers the topic of semiotics, nutrition, social structure and cultural ethos and to related discourses and associated images. As it is a sign system, its signification can be interpreted. It can be conceived as a language expressing social structures and cultural systems (Levi-Strauss 1969).

This study has traced the line of enquiry made on choice (Caplan et al. 1998); a culinary package choice is basically a socially loaded representation. One may ask, to what extent food culture can be valued as altruistic in its praxis. There lies the narrative turn, as food culture has a myriad of ideological underpinnings and it is positioned against altruistic imagination. The cultural construct of culinary can be understood by recognizing the importance of each node, those represent different trajectories of palate adaptation. It is a continuous process of addition, omission, admixture and innovation. Hence it would share plurality in identity construct. Dravidian food culture represents the very plurality of tastes of varied times and choices. The word Dravidian in 'Dravidian food culture' does not qualify 'food culture' as a uniform food choice or culinary practice. On the contrary, it pluralizes the food cultures practised by different speech communities. This way of understanding redefines the premise as 'food: culture'. However, the term 'Dravidian' itself stands with a plural representation and justifies the terminology: Dravidian food spheres.

As it is mentioned earlier, Dravidian as a linguistic family represents a gamut of diverse speech groups. Each speech group has both shared and exclusive traits in language and culinary culture. Also, continuous co-existence with other families of languages helped diffusion of linguistic and cultural traits at inter-linguistic family level. Thus, Dravidian food cultures represent different levels of sharing, innovation and conservation of food traits in diachronic and synchronic contexts.

Dravidian Culinary Mapping

The boundary of a language and its dialect diversity is pertinent in drawing the food map of a speech community. A language is an ensemble of dialects. Dialects can be differentiated geographically as rural or regional, coastal, urban and marked with social variables like class, caste and religion. Food culture of a speech community can also be marked with the same line of differentiation. Unlike dialect continuum, food mapping shows different isoglosses coexisting in the food atlas and isolexic lines can be crossed between different isoglosses. Within the family, demarcation between different dialects of a language and between different languages is not absolutely discrete. The same can be observed in case of food culture as well. Raw materials used may be common, the cooking process may be shared, but not always the recipes. Other ingredients used may or may not be common and the end product may be different as per the taste of each group. Both shared and exclusive paradigms are evident and thus it is diverse in representation. The culinary practices indicate differences like languages and these differences become markers of identity. Beyond such differences at certain levels, sharing of features is seen between languages of a family. Similarly, certain commonalities in food culture can also be present inherently. Apparently, differences of identity sustain. Thus, to say, different food atlas can be drawn at family, subfamily and individual language levels. Mapping of unique and common food traits within Dravidian diversity and across other language families of India is typologically possible. The cultural reason for existence of all traits is not diffusion, and that is an issue which needs further probing. Why selective features are accommodated and others are not preferred has not been convincingly explained by typologists in case of linguistic convergence. Like languages, cultural diffusion also remains selective. Diffusion of culinary practices shows a pattern of borrowing and integration. But it is not to the extent of culinary replacement that is not allowed by receptive cultures in order to maintain their respective identity. It can be argued that reduction in heritage food repertoire is not encouraged by cultures within India.

Dravidian Food Study—Synthetic Paradigm

Tracing of food culture of Dravidians touches archaeological, historical, ethnological and linguistic discourses. However, placing all such discourses and their conflicting views would not suffice to continue the study of the subject. Notwithstanding the inadequacy, framing some of the discourses becomes necessary. Elaborate accounts on prehistory and linguistic archaeology need to be touched through references in order to build the background setting of this discussion.

Dravidian Food Archaeology

In recent times, much attention has been directed towards the linguistic archaeology of India. Franklin Southworth (2005) has reconstructed the prehistoric linguistic map of South Asia. The presence of the Dravidian family of languages in India has been elaborately discussed and their antiquity was traced to Neolithic and later to the Mesolithic (Fuller, 2003a) Dravidian culinary practices, including food items, methods of preparation and consumption practices. This opens a framework comprising economic activities and associated food culture practices. Southworth (2005) also traced the historical and etymological background of South Asian crops and crop names. He has discussed in detail diffusion of crops and crop names across linguistic boundaries and migration of crops from Africa and other continents to India. Crops and associated linguistic groups and direction of borrowing of terms and inclusion of crops have also been discussed. By assessing the sharing pattern of crop vocabulary, it can be assumed that cultural convergence is more common than exclusively associated packages. This in turn leads to two kinds of inferences—either common borrowing from an extinct language or deep-level interaction between Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages in prehistoric times. Southworth (2005) has undertaken an analysis of Dravidian etymological data (Burrow and Emeneau 1984), in terms of subsistence reconstructions with generally convincing results. It has shown that the earliest phase of Dravidian expansion records no sign of agriculture but (lexically) reflects animal herding and wild food processing. This is associated with the split of Brahui language from the remainder. The next phase, including Kurukh and Malto, shows clear signs of agriculture (taro production but not cereals) and herding, while South and Central Dravidian had a wide range of agricultural production (Southworth, 2005).

Dorain Fuller has widely studied the Dravidian crop vocabulary (2001, 2002, 2003a), Indus and non-Indus tradition of agriculture (2003b), African crops in prehistoric South Asia (2003c), culinary changes in

TABLE 3.1 *Four Modes of Diffusion/Evolution of Cuisine in Terms of Food Items and Associated Cultural Practices*

Cultural Process	Archaeological Expectation	South Indian Examples
Food item already used, evolution/elaboration of existing cooking practices	Crops already present in earlier period	Horse gram, moong bean, native small millets
Food item(s) borrowed with practices of preparation	One or more food items introduced together with introduced artefacts for preparation	Crops and ceramic forms from North Deccan, including wheat and barley, possibly use of milk, and new jar forms
New food items added to existing culinary practices	New food item appears without other associated changes	African crops, e.g., pearl millet and hyacinth bean, in the second millennium BC. These foods, including pigeon pea, fit the existing summer millet/pulse category.
New food item with newly created culinary role	New food item associated with new, but not introduced, changes	

Source: Fullet et al. (2004).

prehistoric India (2005) and jointly on southern Neolithic cultivation system (Fuller et al. 2001). He has illustrated the following four modes of diffusion/evolution of cuisine in terms of food items and associated cultural practices of food preparation (Fuller et al. 2004; see Table 3.1).

Fuller also established linguistic models for different modes in the evolution and diffusion of words in a given language in relation to foodstuffs. These included: name evolving from earlier linguistic roots; name borrowed with food item; pointing to a semantic shift whereby existing name was re-applied to new species and compound name created from existing words. To conclude, Fuller (2003a) believed that Proto Dravidians (PD) have been part of the pre-agricultural complex following wild grain using Mesolithic representatives.

Current perceptions on Dravidian agricultural heritage (Fuller 2001, 2002, 2003, McAlpin 1981, Southworth 1976, 1988, 1992, 2005) vary widely and the debate over Dravidian antiquity reflects conflicting views. The linguists could not yet conclude unanimously whether the Dravidians were originally pastoral people from the mountainous areas

of Central Asia (Zvelebil 1990) or of South Asia (Krishnamurti 2003). In deciding this question, the agricultural loan word links of Dravidians with Sumerians can be of importance (Blazek and Boisson 1997, Blazek 1999). Southworth (1979), however, thinks they participated in the Indus civilization, from which they acquired agriculture and the accompanying vocabulary. The PD reconstruction reflects a southern package of food production (millet/cattle). This early form differs considerably from the data of the later iron-age stage of the Dravidian languages with developed millet/rice agriculture. Historical depth for PD is estimated to be 2500–2000 BCE but could be older; Proto-South Dravidian (PSD) is estimated to be between 2000 and 1500 BCE, and PSD1 between 1500 and 1000 BCE (Southworth 2005).

Review of discourses on crop names and archaeological packages suggest some trajectories of culinary practices. Fuller et al. (2004) have emphasized diffusion of culinary culture in prehistoric India. What was exclusive to the Dravidian could only be connected with the southern Neolithic ash-mound culture, and inference can be drawn in favour of millet consumption. A study conducted among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGS) of Kerala attests the fact that millet consumption has been their heritage. Grain husking and crushing technology have been commonly used by them; they also consume tubers, fruits, leaves, pulses, freshwater fishes, crabs, some birds and small animals. Roasting, boiling and steaming are popular culinary technologies practised by those communities. Cholanaikan, Kadar, Kattunaikan, Kurumba and Koraga are the five PVTGS of Kerala (Sreenathan, 2012). Among them, only Kurumba practice little agriculture in slash and burn mode. These days, the Kadars are adapted to practice agriculture, but there is not much trace of tradition among them. In brief, the above studies endorse millet and pulse as primordial items of food among the Dravidian 'heritage' communities. Not only has the linguistic archaeology affected Dravidian prehistory, it has also promoted multidisciplinary research on Dravidian studies. This in turn produced a rich body of critical discourses on Dravidian prehistory.

Dravidian Farming Societies

Keeping the conflicted discourses on pre-historic agricultural traditions of the Dravidians aside, the evolution of scriptural evidences of culinary tradition among the Dravidians can also be traced. Like the Rigveda for the Indo-Aryan tradition, Sangam literature was the ancient written source for the Dravidians.

Accordingly, the land of Tamilakam was divided into five *tinai* (recourse zones): *neytal* (coastal area), *mullai* (plains or grassland), *marutam* (paddy fields and riverbed), *kurinci* (uplands and hill) and *palai* (desert). Each *tinai* is marked with its geographical characters and associated economic practices. *Neytal* represents the coastal area and was inhabited by fishermen, sailors and salt manufacturers. Abundance of seafood defined the food culture of this zone. Sangam poems of this region also mentioned that the women folk of this area used to drink a special intoxicating brew called *munneer*. The next region that is close to the coast is the grassy plain land with pastoral settlements, where inhabitants made their livelihood out of pastoral practices. *Mullai* inhabitants' food culture was marked with dairy products. The fertile *marutam* was inhabited by agriculturalists and paddy and sugarcane were cultivated largely. The poems confirm that the people of *marutam tinai* were fond of toddy and *oonor* (mutton-rice, a preparation similar to biryani of present times). The inhabitants of the upland or hilly forest area, called the *kurinji*, were engaged in hunting, gathering and cultivated millets through the *punam* mode of slash and burn system. They also grew fruit plants and vegetables. Though they hunted small animals, a large part of their food came from gathered fruits, tubers and honey. People inhabiting the distant desert or barren land of the border area, the *palai*, robbed the traders of their money and merchandize.

Sangam literature reflects well-marked stages of transformation from hunting and gathering economy to agriculture and pastoralism. The emergence of trading centres and urban centric behaviour are also portrayed along with the capital themes of love and marriage, war and worship. It had outlined the culinary diversity very well that prevailed among the Dravidians. Each of the above zones had its own deities, flora, fauna, ethnic groups and their economic and cultural practices, including culinary culture. Different varieties of grains, millets, pulses, tubers and vegetables were domesticated. Different fruits, sugarcane and coconut were consumed. Cock and some other birds, fish, crab, turtle, rabbit, deer, goat, cattle, wild boar and porcupine were also eaten. Milk, *ghee*, curd, and butter were used in large quantities. Varieties of rice preparations, vegetable and meat curries were prepared and consumed. Use of oil, *ghee*, spices and salt was common. Methods of boiling, roasting, frying and steaming were followed and the use of cooking vessels of different sizes was in vogue. The crop items identified by Southworth (2005) and Fuller (2003a) and grown and consumed by the Dravidians have been also endorsed by Sangam literature. Consumption of beverage was considered aristocratic and was socially accepted; the habit of alcohol consumption was considered a mark of affluence and vigour.

Varieties of brews were in use. Despite differences in the geography of habitat and of economic practice, Dravidians developed a habit of consumption of certain common varieties of food crops and edible fauna. Culinary practices among hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators were simple in comparison to pastoral communities and those who were largely dependent on agriculture. Both agricultural and pastoral communities had rich and elaborate culinary culture. The fisherfolk had slightly different culinary practice, which was dominated by fish consumption. The frequency of consumption was varied as was the choice of eating. Otherwise, every stratum of society used to exchange and was familiar with the foodstuffs and culinary techniques of others. Dravidian food culture in those days was not vertically divided based on the intake of meat. Depending on availability and affordability, everyone consumed dishes made with meat. Inter-tinai exchange and egalitarian trends existed in Dravidian food culture. Deep cultural bipolarization started due to contact with the non-Dravidians, which started during the Sangam period. Jain and Buddhist vestiges found in Sangam literature supposedly accept the contact and its influence (Champakalakshmi 1996; Joseph 1997). This influence was more spatially structured, agriculturists and pastoralists were heavily influenced by those contacts than the rest of the occupational groups. Later, the agriculturist and pastoralist groups became the Dravidian mainstream and the rest remained as forest and coastal outliers. At the initial phase of Jain and Buddhist contacts, the Dravidian food map was redrawn on the basis of preference for meat eating and its abstinence.

The post-Sangam era had a different socio-cultural arrangement centred on institutions like temples and new movements like Bhakti cult of the Nayanars and Alwars. The large-scale migration of Brahmin fortune hunters in search of royal patronage and cultivable land in the river valleys led to intense interaction between the Aryan immigrants and the local Dravidian population, marked by conflict and co-operation (Champakalakshmi 1996).

With this contact interphase, the concept of pollution became socially rooted and eventually a new sense of food crystallized based on the concept. Tracing the notion of pure-impure dichotomy to Dravidian etymological base, it becomes clear that the notion of impurity was initially associated with death rituals and menstruation, but it was not practised at the level of social discrimination and unsociability. Under the Aryan influence, a sense of discrimination infiltrated into the Dravidian society, leading to the emergence of untouchability. The community of Pulaya, who got marginalized and discriminated in the post Sangam period, present one of the clear examples. Occupational

purity became a concern in the text of Tirukkural and Manimeghalai, which in turn marked the diffusion of Aryan traits within the Dravidian cognitive space. Eventually, untouchability became a rule and purity gained a central space in all cultural frames. This led to the notion of purity in food among the Dravidians.

Bipolarity in Eating Habits

Traditional Dravidian eating habit changed due to their contact with the Middle Indo-Aryan population. During the Sangam era, there was a marked influence of Jainism and Buddhism in Dravidian areas. *Tholkaappiyam*, the Tamil grammar of Sangam era, and the ethical treatise *Tirukkural*, were written by Jain sannyasins. *Chlapthikaram*, another Sangam work, is also credited to a Jain follower. There are enough evidences of Jain presence in South India and many remnants are still preserved (Joseph 1997).

Due to Jain and Buddhist influences, mainly of the Jains, Dravidian culinary culture became polarized and vegetarianism came to be the preferred dietary habit. They also promoted changes in agriculture by providing better seeds and agriculture calendar.

During the Sangam period Buddhist practices were very popular in the Dravidian area. *Manimeghalai*, the Sangam text, is believed to be authored by a Buddhist. Introduction of agriculture among the pastoral communities is credited to the Buddhists. Spread of education, introduction of literacy centres near Buddhist temples and popularization of the Ayurveda system of medicine are credited to them. The heritage of non-violence is also rooted in Buddhism. The last phase of Buddhism was dominated by tantric beliefs; the practitioners were less interested in social service but more in earthly pleasures. Seeking affluence and eroticism became the order of the day. In this situation, Shaivism and Vaishnavism emerged as alternative paths for the people, their simpler lifestyle attracted majority of them. Emphasizing upon the purity of food and following the sanctity of culinary culture, Brahmins practised the Jain model of vegetarianism. Such food practices encouraged the production of certain agricultural goods in abundance. Abstinence from eating meat and some selected vegetables was strictly followed. In sequel to this, the Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions too recommended the selection of religiously sanctioned food items, abstinence from certain other items and fasting. Religious protagonists imposed new trends in the culinary culture by introducing the idea of purity on it. Socially practised concept of purity was extended to choose food and its making. Community-specific food culture was redefined and Brahmin-centric

culinary practices got acceptance. Gender divide in the habit of eating together was introduced allowing certain preferences towards men. The husband was to eat his meal first; after all male members of the family finished eating, the remaining food was to be shared among the females of the family. Having major meals twice a day was prevalent during that period. Eating with the right hand became a rule imposed by the Aryans. A vertical division in culinary practices emerged when certain food items were earmarked for certain groups. It was in consonance with the Brahmanical dominance in food culture. These changes in culinary culture were evident in rudimentary conditions earlier, but the same became absolute reality during the post-Sangam period.

To sum it up, the social organizational pattern of the Sangam period was characterized by diverse food culture of different ethnicities based on ecology, climate, custom, region, caste, class and religion. Choice of food, cooking procedures, consumption style and sharing of food had multiple identity structures. Aryan contacts redefined the social organization and eventually changed the culinary culture, though a broad uniformity could be seen in culinary practices. Sharing, however, reflected social inclusion and exclusion. Rule of eating together was brahmin-centric and was determined hierarchically. Thus, food became a symbol of hierarchy and prestige. Such social order penetrated other caste groups as well, and borders of co-eating emerged along the line of elite castes. The downtrodden untouchable castes were not allowed to eat the food taken by the elites.

For all traditional societies, including the Vedic society, the basic culinary pattern was meat eating and so was the case with the Dravidians. This universal paradigm of culinary tradition was fractured and vegetarianism got rooted in the Dravidian context under the influence of Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism. The practice widened further and included abstinence of onion, garlic, cloves, tomatoes, in addition to meat and poultry items. This made all sections of the society to follow specific patterns in the selection of food items. Despite following practices recommended by their respective religions, the communities continued to eat what they were eating traditionally. Brahmins, however, were the exceptions. The divide was negotiated by the non-Brahmin groups by strictly following vegetarianism during religious festivals or at the time of worship. Rest of the time, they remained as Dravidians as they were in pre-contact days. Social structure influenced the culinary practices to such an extent that a sharp line between 'our food' and 'their food' was drawn. This divide could be seen at the community, regional, caste, class and religious levels.

To the mosaic of culinary culture of the Dravidians, Christian faith has also contributed with their biblical food traits and dining practices; eating three times a day was their contribution. The colonial strand of localization of taste for cake and biscuit to the local tongue can be mapped. Though a significant stress on meat and poultry consumption can be seen in comparison to vegetarian practices, individual preferences were well accommodated. Islamic religion also contributed with their culinary practices and showed preference for meat and poultry. The fasting practice was also followed according to their religious doctrine. Some of the local food items were absorbed as part of religious practices, which reflects a syncretic tradition in the process of localization.

Diffusion of Culinary Culture

The food lexicon of the Dravidian reflects on the borrowing of items from all cultures that came in contact (Witzel 2006). Many items were borrowed from Middle Indo-Aryan languages like Prakrit and Pali. Words for rice gruel, boiled rice, jaggery, ghee, curd, toddy, feast are borrowed from the above languages. Similarly, vestiges from Sanskrit language and other modern Indo-Aryan and foreign languages are also visible in the Dravidian food lexicon. The loan words of Dravidian food lexicon suggest diffusion of food traits from a very early period of history.

Despite keeping the identity in culinary culture alive at the regional, sub-regional, caste, class and religious levels, there is a syncretic pattern of food traits across boundaries. It is mainly because of the development of urban centres, mobility of people and growth of open markets. Restaurants have allowed people to taste the cuisine of others, thus blurring the boundary between 'our' and 'their' food, rather encouraging the cultivation of innovative tastes. New experiences enforced people to accommodate each other's taste, which propelled a diffusion of food traits. Other than the Brahmins, it was accommodated by all as a process of assimilation of the otherness, which has been localized and connected with food heritage. The openness induced cosmopolitanism of culinary culture among the Dravidians. Being part of India culturally, the North Indian dishes introduced in South India have been well accommodated; this is evident from the popularity of North Indian restaurants in the South. North too has accommodated the Southern cuisine. Chinese, Arab and Italian food items too have been well received by the Dravidians. It all renders a narration of accommodating otherness by declaring that though food identity is rigid, it is

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