

FOOD BEHAVIOUR IN KANDIAN REGION WHICH EXPLICIT THROUGH FOLKLORE IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract- One of the basic needs of human beings is food. Food has defined as a combination of organic and inorganic elements which need to nurture the human body in biological approach; also food is a cause variable of hungry. That's mean hungry is full filled by food. Although, in sociological approach, people get food not only for fill up the hungry but also for full fill various needs. It is a really appropriate field for researches. Based on selecting, preparing, eating and sharing foods had been formulated a culture called food culture. Food culture is based on customs and values which established by the Sinhala community. Other than due to the commercialization and urbanization of the modern society some cultural factors which linked with food behavior had been changed. Furthermore, many differences could be seen in food behaviour region wise. Excluding in our folklore many attributes of food behaviour has defined and explained. Folklore can be defined as the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of people which they transmitted orally. The alternativeness was taken about different portions of Sinhala food behaviour by Sinhala folk ware which indicated past indigenous people's customs, beliefs and expectations. It can be confirmed varies aspects of folklore. Consequently the topic which used to study is "Food behaviour in Kandian region which explicit through folklore in Sri Lanka". The principal aim of this paper was to identify the aspects which food behaviour of Kandian region explicit through folklore. Other objectives of this study were firstly, to identify key attributes of traditional food behavior, second one is to identify the relationship between folklore and food behavior. As the methodology basically based on secondary data through a literature review and ten open interviews were conducted with key informers in Kandian region of Sri Lanka. As of the selecting foods, in preparing, sharing and gifting, many specific features of attributes of food behaviour had been identified as the findings of the present study.

Index terms- Food behaviour, Folklore, Traditional Culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

As food is considered as a one of the basic needs of human beings, it is an important aspect of human life. Food can be defined biologically a combination of organic and inorganic elements which need to nurture the human body; also food is a cause variable of hungry. That's mean hungry is full filled by food. Although, food in sociological approach, people get food not only for fill up the abdomen but also for full fill various needs. Even S. L. Doshi also mentioned in his book on 'Anthropology of food and Nutrition' as "Food is a bio - chemical process and products which sustain life. But it is not merely the source of biochemical needs, it also has cultural dimension which helps a person to determine his food and nutrition habits and choices" (Doshi, 1995: 11). According to Doshi it is proven what had been mentioned about biological and cultural dimensions of food. The Culture which is created around the South Asian country is called Rice Culture. It is based on customs and values which established around the paddy cultivation. Rice is the main food among the South Asians despite their Race, Cast and Colour of human beings. Food behavior is a significant concept of this research. Also research is contemplated to study important aspects of food behavior in kandian region of Sri Lanka. Kandian Region means the middle and the hill area of the country. It mainly includes Matale, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle and Kurunegala Districts. Yet In this research Kandy and Matale districts had been mainly focused. Also seeing that there are many types of folklore in this are diversity

of various cultural aspects could be identified through the folklore in this area. Consequently "Food behaviour in Kandian region which explicit through folklore in Sri Lanka" had selected as the topic of the present research.

II. METHODOLOGY

According to the topic seeing that folklore is one of the main aspects of the present research. Therefore should have to understand the meaning of folklore. The folklore can be defined as which was manifested by thoughts, wishes, faiths and expectations of Sinhalese ancestors, constituents with various elements of Sinhalese food behavior.

As the present research has based on qualitative data and as it had needed to analyze qualitatively ethnographic research method has been applied. As data collection instrument basically a literature review has conducted based on based on the secondary data. Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities. (Reeves, S., Kuper, A., & Hodges, D., 2008). Also ethnographic research method is useful to understand and find out latent data in any research. Hence, ethnographic research method is the most appropriate research method for the present study.

III. DEFINE AND DISTINGUISH OF FOOD

Rice (bath) is the main food of Kandian Region of Sri Lanka and all other societies in South Asia; the

culture has been shaped based on rice. In history, agricultural culture, paddy cultivation and consumption of rice were important aspects of the major culture also it is called culture of rice. Through the folklore as an example,,

“pisimin sudhu batha muththappa hata- yahamin thel batha gopalu swamita

hadhamin kiribatha kiriaththa hata- mahadankaha batha wishnu dewindhata” (Manewa K. B. 2004. 176)

(Meaning- “White rice is prepared for great grandfather, Oil rice is prepared for husband of cowhand, Milk rice is prepared for grandfather, Yellow rice is prepared for god called as “Wishnu”).

Seeing that, manifest through the above mentioned folk poem historical civilians had prepared different types of rice for different individual, including gods. God Vishnu, mentioned in the above poem, is worshiped by Tamils too. The folk poem highlighted the rice culture in ancient Sri Lanka.

Foods of each meal had been divided to main two categories as Rice and curries. Also there is variation of those categories too. Accordingly “Bath” (rice) has been divided as,

“Goda bath” - Minari and amu (Types of grains)

“Mada bath” - Main rice

“Diya bath” - Olu bath (prepare from the seeds of water lily) & vilakatu bath (Types of a grain)

At the contemporary Sri Lanka as there are various kinds of curries which used to eat with rice, many types of curries had been identified in traditional food patterns. Those are commonly called as “Malpini or malu pini” (curries) in traditional Sinhala terminology. Some of the those types are as follows,

- Vegetables
- Yams – Katu, Hinnala, Kekatiya & kiri ala etc.
- “Mase mansa or pilihudu” (Flesh foods)
- “Anama”- Gravy
- Grain

“Nawa tikka”- Nine flavors

“Nawa tikka” means nine flavours which traditional housewives used to flavor each food which they preparing. Some of those “Nawa tikka” are chilly, salt, ginger, lime and coriander, etc. One of the main points which should emphasize is cinnamon which using commonly in contemporary context had not been included for nine flavours as it is come for usage after the colonialization. The following folk poem had explained about how “nawa tikka” had been applied by housewives in traditional Kandian society in Sri Lanka.

“nawa tikken rasa kora kora
wel piththen kara kora kora
hodi anam bath uya uya

.....”

(Folklore)

(Meaning- preparing foods tasty by adding nine flavours)

“Passa kema”- Desserts

The term of “passa kema” means as desserts which people have used to eat after main meals. Verities of dessert are been used in contemporary society due to the modernization and westernization: Though only three types of desserts had been used by Kandian people in Sri Lanka. Those three dessters are as follows,

- Kiri peni (Curd & Honey)
- Kee roti (Types of a sweet)
- Fruits

“Siw batha” (magul batha)

Siw batha means four types of meals which had been used to provides at wedding ceremonies in Kandian region of Sri Lanka. Those are as follows, (Batha means rice)

- Nedara batha
- Adara batha
- Lodara batha
- Yodara batha

Nedara batha had been provided at the occasion which bride groom goes to visit the Bride for the first time. Therefore it had been prepared at the bride place. Adara batha had offered at the wedding in bride place. That means wedding lunch. Lodara batha is different from the above two meals. In History people of the kandian region has strictly concerned about the purity of brides. That had been checked by a women in the first morning after the honeymoon of the newly married couple who represented the ‘radawa’ caste (Traditional occupation is washing) and she had to bring to light that message to the adults of the groom’s family. Subsequently if only the purity had been proven grooms relations had invited for a lunch to bride’s relations. That is called lodara batha. If the bride did not able to proven her purity as she had protected her character lodara batha or yodara batha had not been celebrated. Yodara batha means at the end of the ceremonies newly married couple had to visit bride’s place with grooms relations and at that occasion yodara batha had been provided by people in Kandian region. According to the following folk poem,

“Siw batha waladalai umba ma pel awe
Aw wesi nethiwa api gowi then bath keruwe
Dhai ma papuwa hamada wendamu uwe
Ai deiyo thaniyama wala pas kewe”
(Folklore)

[Meaning- This poem had been sung by a widow. I came to your place after celebrated all four meals (Siw batha) without considering about rain or sun rise we had farmed. I can't bear this heartbreaking, why you went (Die) alone?]

It is explained the importance of the celebrating four meals (Siw batha). That means for complete wedding siw batha should be offered by relevant groups.

In the wedding there are some other special features of the food offerings such as therum maluwa and nemme kema. Therum maluwa means brides party had prepared a curry which could not be able to easily identify. Therefore after seating for the lunch one of the relations of grooms family should have to identify the curry for start eating.

Nemme kema means the wedding lunch had not been provided at the house. They had prepared a special hut called magul maduwa and the lunch had been offered to relations at there. Also they had sit on the ground and used banana leaves as plates.

Mala batha

Mala batha had been provided at the funeral house after the funeral. Normally pumpkin and dry fish had applies as curries for that and it had been offered to all guests who came to the funeral.

Dei batha

Dei batha is prepared for offer to gods. In Sinhala terminology pannamusu and Kiri ahara is also used to identify dei batha. Pannamusu means pan+nomusu. Pen means water and nomusu means didn't add. That means dei batha had prepared by adding milk. This dei batha had offered at several occasions such as aluth sahal mangallaya and other offering of gods ceremonies. Aluth sahal mangallaya means after weed the harvest of paddy villages used to offer first part of rice to the god. That functions is named as above mentioned.

Atalos poopa (kewili)

Poopa means sweets. Atalos means number of eighteen. Therefore in the present research eighteen sweets which had been endemic to the kandian region has identified through the folklore. Some of those sweets are vella vehum, pani kewum, konda kewum, Kokis and aluwa. In ancient respectable people of kandian region had prepared all these sweets for celebrate special occasions.

IV. SELECTING FOODS

People in the kandian region had considered about three major facts when they had selected foods. those are as follows,

- Hot & cold (Ushna sheetha)
- Purity & Impurity (shudhdha ashudhdha)
- Thridoosa

“The hot-cold concept of food consumption is not specific to a the community of Kandian region. It is believed all over the world ... hot-cold balance must be maintained ... The new foods which are included in the tribal food deities are also in terms of ethnicity as defined by the community” (Doshi, 1995. 123) Doshi discussed the relationship between hot-cold concept and ethnicity with relevance to the Bhil community in India.. As they had believed red, orange colour and yellow colour vegetables and other foods are hot and vegetables and foods in color white, green or blue are cool. Also Specially when housewives select foods for preparing based on the types of meals as is it for breakfast or dinner, they had been concerned about the hot and cool concept. . Furthermore, purity and impurity concept is also had been strictly considered by people in Kandian region. This concept of “kili” had been based on purity and impurity; they control some foods at some times. Because of that they had never provided foods at their funeral homes.. But in certain ceremonies, such as alms givings (kiri amma warunge dane) it is prohibited prepare flesh foods at the residence for three or seven days prior and post the almsgiving day. This alms giving is for obtaining blessings for infants and kids from the Goddess Paththini. Tamils also worship Goddess Paththini. Most of those beliefs and practices have changed in the contemporary context as most of the foods behavioural patterns are based on economy due to the commercialization. Accordingly norms and beliefs that had been relevant to the food behaviour of kandian region is very interesting.

Thridosa` is another concept that had been strictly conserened by people of the kandian region when they had been selecting foods. This concept developed based on Ayurvedha. Based on this concept people of each community of kandian region had selected foods depending on the time they eat at. Accordingly they believe wa, pith, sem are the thridosa concept. Wathaya means air and it is not good for the morning time. Pitha is bile and it is not suitable for lunch. Sema refers to cool food and it is not good for evenings and night. Also it had believed that this Thridosa concept as important for health as the concept has been developed based on the ayurvedic teachings that comes under the books of Vedha (vedha grantha).

As well as, combination of the foods and preferential foods of family members had been considered by housewives. As an example,

Hala pahadala padamata	hondinne
Goraka hodda rasa karala	araganne
Dada masuyala ekata	yodanne
Badunak thalapa gilalai pasu	basiunne

(Folklore)

(Meaning-This verse of four lines says about selecting curries to eat Halapa and it is stressed the choice of a suitable curry for a particular food to eat.)

According to the above folk poem it had explained about the combination of foods for meals and the preferential foods. In each household wives had been considered about the preferential foods of family member while they had been ignored themselves.

V. EATING FOODS AND SHARING FOODS

In Kandian region 'mudun batha' is one of the important aspects of food behaviour. According to that the first share of each food which had been prepared by housewives had received for the husband of each household in kandian region. That is called mudun batha and womens had done that without any hesitation.

Also pila (a step which had been built around the house) had been used to sit for have any meals at the kandian region. Even some of the poor people had offered meals at the pila in ancient kandian society.

Caste hierarchy

As same as in India caste is an important cultural dimension of Sinhalese community. Also in ancient kandian society caste had played a major role in food behaviour.

The following verses sung in Kohomba Kankariya, (a traditional and endemic drama to the kandian Sinhala community) say about the activity of cutting a pig carcass and sharing flesh, provide examples for traditional food behavior.

Asala keewe wagathuga	siyallak
Yodala ganne boru bas	asillak
Rawala keewe apahata	dosayak
Kapalademiya gammaha hata barata	gathayak

(Meaning- This poem explain about the govigama caste which considered as the highest caste in Sri Lankan caste hierarchy and they were given a full leg of the hunted pig)

Wada pala kale thenuwe ambuwatha	ekka
Hada bala bala thanuwe dagaena	wakka
Madaguli genath perala indagaena	ekka
Badahela male aragena palayan	bokka

[Meaning- Stomach of the hunted pig had given to badahela caste people (Traditional occupation is potters)]

Above two stanzas imply the strong influence and importance of the caste hierarchy in sharing food among houses in a traditional village. The first verse says that, gamamahage who was belonging to Govigama caste which is ranked in the top strata of caste hierarchy though it had been divided to other sub castes, was given a heavy part of the leg of the pig. The flesh of the pig is distributed separately among the individuals of various casts.

Wathagotha nodanagathth eema lee	danda
Athapaya ridawana thanuwe dunu	danda
Wathagotha nodana mikawath awe	yanda
Athakoluwata demi kakule thani	danda

[Meaning- athakoluwa (Traditional occupation is carpentering) had given a foot of the hunted pig]

Alawadana mage Honda bera	karayata
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Kola novee sabaye bera	gahanawata
Male karalana avidin	sitinawata
Gele kappa demi bera	karayata

[Meaning- Neck of the hunted pig had been given to the berawa caste (Traditional occupation is drumming)]

These verses disclose that food distribution was carried out based on caste hierarchy in kandian region.

CONCLUSION

As this present research has conducted based on ethnographic approach secondary data and open interviews; it is compel to study the topic of food behavior in kandian region which explicit through the folklore in Sri Lanka. Based on the folklore many dimensions of the traditional food behavior of kandian region had been identified. Especially when people selects foods hot and cold concept, Thridosha concept and Killa concept had been affected. As well as, combination of the food and the preferential foods of family members had been considered by housewives. Also when they eat food mudun batha was a major concept which they had practiced. Especially based on the gender relations housewives used to serve their husband firstly without any hesitation. As those norms and values had been internalized them through the socialization process it had been a habit of women. Furthermore influence of the caste hierarchy had been identified through the folklore and it had been affected to maintain caste identities also.

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