



# Cultural Influences in the Indian Cuisine

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# INDIA

- ◆ States

  - 29

- ◆ Languages

  - 16 official

- ◆ Religion

  - over 9





# Aryan Migration

- Aryan migration from Central Asia was thought to have occurred around 2000 BC
- Aryan Civilization was known for its rich literature including Vedas, Mahabharatas and Ramayana
- For the Aryans, cattle was a measure of wealth.

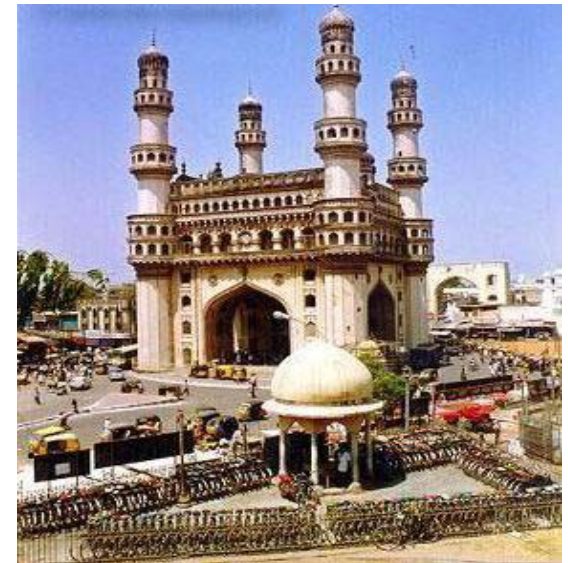
# Historical Tidbits

- Kingdom of Magadh spanned Northeastern India
- In 327 BC, Alexander of Macedonia invaded the region
- In 321 BC, the Maurya empire governed the region
- Kautilya, in his treatise on the art of government
  - listed the duties of the superintendent of slaughter houses
  - provided detailed lists of ingredients for cooking including exact proportions



# Historical Tidbits

- Ashoka first established edicts embracing vegetarianism which coincided with Buddhism
- Circa 300 AD, the Gupta Empire was known for its flourishing cultural and intellectual life
  - Kama Sutra
  - Advances in Medical Sciences
    - Physician Charak advised against eating fried foods



# Dravidian History

- Southern region was populated by people of a different race
- South was ruled by 4 dynasties for more than a millennium up until the fourteenth century
  - Cholas and Pandyas in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
  - Cheras of Kerala
  - Chalukyas of Andhra Pradesh
- Intermingling with Aryan peoples of the north was through traders and priests
  - Influence of vegetarianism
  - Adoption of Hinduism
  - Adoption of Sanskrit as a language



# Dravidian Culture

- The Dravidians interacted with a number of countries including China, S. East Asia and the Arab region through trade
- Spices were the most commonly traded agricultural output
- Roman writer, Pliny is said to have complained – “ no year passes in which India does not impoverish us of 50 million Sesterces...”





# Cultural Influences

- Influx of Arab traders who settled in Southern India
- St. Thomas traveled in AD 52 and established a large Christian community in Kerala
- Zoroastrians, “Parsis”, from Persia were given sanctuary in the Chalukya Kingdom
- Jewish settlements in Kerala



# European Influx

- Arabs dominated the spice trade
- Vasco da Gama arrived in 1498
- Soon followed by the British, French, Dutch and the Danes

# Moghul Influence

- Babar, in 1526, established the Moghul empire and it continued for six generations
- Akbar was known for his tolerance and wisdom
  - Had Hindu wives who practiced Hinduism
- Jahangir and Shah Jahan were gourmets who encouraged Moghul cooking into a fine art



Shah Jahan is known for the Taj Mahal



# Decline of the Moghul Empire

- Allowed regional empires and cuisines to flourish
  - Rajputs in the west
  - Awadh province in the northeast
  - Marathas in the central region
  - Sikhs in the North



# Culinary Idiosyncrasies

- Fish-based diets is prevalent along the coast
- Different cooking oils are used based on region
- Brahmin class primarily eat a sparsely spiced vegetarian diet
- The warrior class eat fiery curries with meat

# Culinary Idiosyncrasies...

## South

- Coconut and tamarind combined with spices are the base
- Spices are typically roasted whole, and then ground with coconut or onions
- Rice dominates the diet
  - Pounded rice, par-boiled rice, cream of rice, rice flour, fermented ground rice

## North

- Yogurt and cream based
- Spices are ground and then fried in oil
- Use of onion and garlic is not prevalent
- Wheat dominates the diet



# Persian Influence in Foods

- Use of apricots, raisins and almonds with meats
- Elaborate saffron, gold and silver garnishes
- Elaborate pulaos and biryanis, kebabs and tikkas, stewed meats
- Blending of traditional spices



# Fine Art of Cooking – Awadh Region

- Centered around Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- A “Rakabdar”, a skilled chef, was valued more than a “Bawarchi”, a cook
- Dishes decorated with gold and silver or dried fruits carved into flowers

# Anectodes...Pir Ali

- Made “Kichidi” with pistachio nuts and almonds carved into the shape of lentils and rice grains
- Pulaos made with rice in which each grain resembled a pomegranate seed
- Pies containing live birds that fly out when sliced
- “Fruit” delicacies made using meats
- A whole meal made using sugar, including the plates and bowls



# Portuguese Influence

- Settled in Goa
- A uniquely catholic, Portuguese speaking community
- Adopted the Portuguese style of marinating meats blended with Indian spices
- Pork dishes were common – “Chourisam”, a spicy sausage was developed by monks



# Modern India

- Culture of restaurants and eating out
- Fast food restaurants
- Homogeneity in the culinary styles and foods



# Namaskar



भारत  
India