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Contrast The Role Played by Globalization in The Stories "Tasting Independence" And "A Different History of the Present"

Food, the only commonality among all people, is sometimes a signifier of what globalization means for individual communities in practice. It is not enough to belong by virtue of your nationality; you must be able to eat and participate in every aspect of the process. The role that food plays in globalized society can be seen differently depending on which story one looks into. Akhil Gupta's "A different history of the present: the movement of crops, cuisines, and globalization" provides a historical narrative that illuminates the way in which globalization has shaped food. Globalization is a powerful and unpredictable force for change, but also one that is not so easily categorized. In contrast, Camille Frazier's story "Tasting Independence" provides an account of how people can use global products like noodles as a symbol to create new ways of socializing.

In the article "A different history of the present" Gupta (29-46), tells the story of India's independence with food as one of its main focuses. During a time in which India was striving for independence from Britain, there were also other factors that came into play. One such factor was the emergence of new kinds of nationalism unlike that which had developed before. With this emerging nationalism, food played a significant role. By the time of the independence struggle there was already a tradition of local foods being mixed into the national dishes and when Independence came about the same traditions continued (Gupta 29). The new nation was immediately developed with regard to food, just like it had been with clothes, religion, and dance.

In modern India, cooking is an important part of life for Indians regardless if they are Hindu or Muslim or Christians as well as being a part of everyday conversation. Cuisine in India is so rich and varied because of its cultural diversity (Frazier and Gupta 5). Without globalization, India would not have had the same amount of diversity in its food. Globalization helped shape the way that traditional Indian food was made and prepared. In "A different history of the present" Gupta states, "The question of the origin of foods, and the circulation of foodstuffs from their places of origin to their places of consumption has become abiding interest to foodies and scholars” (Gupta 31). Globalization makes food a unifying factor.

In Gupta's and Frazier’s article "Tasting Independence" globalization is most significantly shown through sharing of food, food safety and the uncertainties of global food systems. Although the essay is focused on Nestlé’s Maggi noodles, it is interesting to note that the topic of food is used as a way of connecting globalization in the article. The story is about a student Jyothi sharing Maggie noodles with her friend from school, and falling in love with the food (Frazier and Gupta 1). Jyothi loved to eat noodles in her hostel with her to cope with stress of being in medical school. In this case, food is a unifying factor for different cultures and groups of people, including students and immigrants.

Globalization has changed the way India thinks about itself and its history. It has erased the original way of thinking about India and its independence. The new way of thinking is completely different from the original goal of independence. The moment independence arrived, India became a modern country that was completely different, from the past. (Gupta 36) The old way of thinking about food and its significance for India has been erased in favor of a new way.

Food has had a large role in the history of India due to food being such an important aspect. Food was considered one of the most important gifts that an emperor could give or receive. The food that they received was considered a sign of appreciation and their acceptance into their empire (Gupta 39). When the British took over, they brought with them a lot of different foods. The new foods made it so Indians had to choose between Indian food or British foods. This was a hard decision for Indians because they were loyal to their own culture and defending it from outsiders. In the end, India had been successfully invaded through the way of their stomachs.

The food that is different about Indians today is the fact that there are many globalized foods, for example, pizza. This is a globalized food and not Indian in any way. Food has become a part of culture and globalization has taken this one step further, making it one thing that consumers have to choose between now instead of different ways of cooking and preparing food which was common before globalization. People are now looking for quick ways of preparing their meals, for example Nestlé’s Maggi noodles only take 2 minutes to prepare (Frazier and Gupta 2)

India is an interesting case study to look at globalization through food because when it gained independence a whole new way of thinking about food and its importance had emerged. Food played a big role in the movement of ideas during the time of Indian independence. Food and the ways it is prepared are important parts of Indian culture. There are numerous traditional foods that have become modernized due to globalization, such as noodles. As for how globalization affects Indian culture, Gupta writes, "These new foods changed not only eating habits but also cropping patterns and land use” (Gupta 41).

Modern food is created through an adaptation of the traditional or through globalization. There are no foods that are completely traditional and completely modern in India because they have influenced each other. These two ideas come together to form contemporary and globalized Indian food. India was able to adapt and change its foods by putting a new twist on the traditional or adapting it into a modern version of itself. Food was a crucial means of forging a new sense of national identity. This shows that food played a big part in Indian culture, as well as its development.

Food plays a very important role in the life of an Indian. India is a country with many different kinds of people and food is the way they all come together as one. Food unites them but also divides them. Each area of India has its own specific foods: north, south, central, etc., and each food has different meanings to each person. To understand India and its people correctly, one must understand what their foods mean to them and where it comes from. Food and the meanings it has to each individual plays a vital role in Indian culture and life.

There is a tendency to link globalization to homogenization, both in terms of food and culture. But in India, globalization has not led to homogenization but rather, to a new cultural formation. Globalization has opened up a whole new world of food for the people of India but it has also served as a way for them to preserve their own cultures and languages. Gupta writes, "Now the need to create a national identity has been replaced by the fear that ethnic and fundamentalist identities are a problem in the west “(Gupta 43).

Conclusion

Globalization has affected India in a big way. Through the influence of globalization, food and culture have changed drastically. This essay explains how food affects culture in India. As the people of India traveled all over the world, some foods were brought to them and added to their own traditional foods. The foods brought from other countries were served with different spices and flavors to change what was originally a traditional dish into something new. The foods made their way through the country where each region would cook it differently, adding its own twist to a traditional recipe. India is now a country of many different people with different cultures and cuisines that come from all over the world. The foods of the world have not changed the culture of India; rather, they have added and enriched their own culture, bringing people together as one.

Works Cited

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