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Dr. D. Suresh



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES

H. No. 5-11-559, Srinagar Colony, Naimnagar,
Hanmakonda, Warangal- 506009. Telengana State (India)

spwi.ngo.2014@gmail.com / sjsw.jp.spwi@gmail.com

devathsuresh@gmail.com Ph: 9959026635

www.spwingo.org

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MEAT CONSUMPTION IN INDIA – AN OVERVIEW



Ajmeera Amrutha

Department of Sociology and Social Work,

Kakatiya University, Warangal,

Telangana

Abstract: *The consumption of meat is increasing in India. In the Indian context, culture, traditions, customs, and taboos influence meat consumption to a great extent. However, studies show that urbanization has been causing a rise in demand for meat products. The preference and consumption of meat can be considered as a universal phenomenon and chicken meat is greatly accepted by consumers in India as compared to the other meat consumption. There has been a great rise in the production of livestock products and this is expected to continue in the future. The pattern of meat consumption depends considerably on culture, tradition, and urbanization. This review was formulated with the objective of identifying meat consumption patterns in typical Indian society.*

Keywords: *meat, India, consumption*

Introduction

In India, growth in agricultural productivity has been slow during the past decades, and demand is growing for meat products, in addition to traditional staples, fruits, and vegetables. India remains home to the highest number of food-insecure people (Charles, 2012). An increase in meat production and its demand is expected to take place mainly in developing countries. Between 1995 and 2020 they will account for almost 85% of the increase in global demand as against 25% in developed countries (IFPRI, 1999). Over the past 72 years, meat consumption, in particular, has changed dramatically. Human diet and nutritional status have undergone a sequence of major shifts, stated as the nutrition transition (Tey et al., 2010).

According to Dietz *et al.* (1996), patterns of food production and consumption are at the core of all human ecology. Evidence for hominid and early human omnivores is rich and indisputable. Global meat including beef, pork, and poultry exports, has grown over 40% in less than 10 years, of 2014 forecast, depicting a strong demand and a record on rising incomes.

Among animal foods, meat is considered highly nutritious and has become an integral component of the human diet being a rich source of valuable proteins, vitamins, minerals, micronutrients, and fats. Meat consumption is supposed to supply omega-three fatty acid and conjugated linoleum acid that affords multifaceted nutrients for human health. The style of cooking meat in India is different from that of other countries due to the incorporation of more spices, chilies in their preparations. The majority of meats consumed in India are fish, bovine (cow and buffalo), mutton, goat, pig, and poultry.

Meat-related development of major evolutionary importance was the domestication of many animal species that began about 11,000 years ago with sheep and goats and then progressed to cattle, pigs, horses, and camels (*Alvard and Kuznar, 2001*). Since the early 1990s, India has achieved a striking speed of economic growth, leading to the increased disposable income of Indian consumers. It would have been expected that income growth would lead to changes in the structure of demand for food commodities in India. However, research concerning India's food consumption continues to be focused on foods from plants, while the demands for foods of animal origin are poorly understood. In India, there is only a limited number of earlier studies that looked into animal resource consumption. These include studies of Sinha and Giri (1989), examining the consumption of livestock products for three states of Gujarat, Punjab and Tripura (*Gandhi and Mani, 1995*), discussed about the importance of livestock product demand in India till the late 1980s and Dastagiri (2004), provided some general features of livestock product demand using data up to 1993. The National Research Centre on Meat (NRCM) established in 2007 at Hyderabad for possesses diverse livestock resources including meat animals. The present paper reviews on meat consumption in India.

Factors of the Meet Consumption

The culture, traditions, customs, and taboos influence meat consumption to a great extent especially in the rural societies of India. However, studies show urbanization has been causing a rise in demand for meat products. As people move to cities, they adapt to get into meat consumption. The difference in consumption and production methods correlates strongly with the overall economy of a country. India is the country that consumes the least meat per capita (*Tepper, 2012*). In India, cultural differences are also accountable for variations in meat consumption patterns. In the case of India, the Hindu tradition of non-violence is the major reason why the country

does not consume large amounts of meat (*Hindu ethic of nonviolence, 1996*). Thus the meat consumption habits of people in the state depend considerably on culture, tradition, urbanization etc, among others.

Consumption of Meat

Food consumption is a basic action contributing to the survival of human beings. Therefore, the understanding of the food culture creates a better understanding and a more intimate relationship among countries and people (*Koo et al., 2008*). The improvement in agriculture allowed some fundamental changes in the human way of life. Animal-derived food goods are the most resource-intensive foods (*Chemnitz and Becheva, 2014*). Animal protein foods are at the top of the food chain in relation to the resources.

Since the 1970s, there was a reduction in intake of whole-grain cereals, pulses, fruits, and vegetables in India while the intake of meat products has been increased (*Popkin et al., 2012*). Nearly 37% of agricultural output growth between 2005 and 2011 came from animal products. Within this category, the output of eggs and meat has risen faster, and poultry the fastest. Animal products have also contributed to 33% of the incremental food inflation over the years.

As per data from the central government's Sample Registration System Baseline Survey 2014, the top list of 21 states in the country in non-vegetarianism with 98.8% men and 98.6% women being non-vegetarians.

Table 1
Top State in India in consumption of Meat

Sl. No	Name of the State	Men	Women
1	Telangana	98.8	98.6
2	West Bengal	98.7	98.4
3	Andhra Pradesh	98.4	98.1
4	Tamil Nadu	97.8	97.5
5	Kerala	97.4	96.6
6	Odisha	97.7	97.0
7	Jharkhand	97.2	96.3
8	Bihar	93.2	91.7
9	Chhattisgarh	82.7	81.4
10	Assam	78.6	80.2
11	Karnataka	79.1	78.7

12	Uttarakhand	74.5	70.8
13	Jammu and Kashmir	69.0	68.1
14	Delhi	63.2	57.8
15	Maharashtra	59.0	60.6
16	Uttar Pradesh	55.0	50.8
17	Madhya Pradesh	51.1	47.7
18	Gujarat	39.9	38.2
19	Punjab	34.5	32.0
20	Haryana	31.5	30.0
21	Rajasthan	26.8	23.4

Source: *Sample Registration System Baseline Survey 2014, Register General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, table 5.2.*

IndiaSpend-FactChecker in its survey revealed that 80% of Indian men and 70% of Indian women have non-vegetarian food. However, these figures do not imply that they have non-vegetarian every day. The daily diet still consists of vegetables, milk, and pulses or beans. The report states that overall 48.9% of men and 42.8% of women consume non-vegetarian items weekly.

The IndiaSpend-FactChecker report also highlights that the highest amount of non-vegetarian among women in terms of weekly consumption is in Kerala (92.8%), Goa (85.7%) and Assam (80.4%), while among men it is in Tripura (94.8%), Kerala (90.1%) and Goa (88%).

The lowest figures in men who are non-vegetarian were registered in Punjab (10%), Rajasthan (10.2%) and Haryana (13%), while it is Punjab (4%), Rajasthan (6%) and Haryana (7.8%) yet again for women. It is evident from the numbers that meat consumption in South and Northeast India is highest in the country, while it is lowest in North India.

When it comes to religion, Christians consume eggs and meat the most, with men accounting for 71.5% and 75.6% respectively and women accounting for 59.7% and 67.3% respectively. They are followed by Muslim men with 66.5% and 73.1% and Muslim women with 59.7% and 67.3% respectively.

If caste is to be considered, individuals who said they were not aware of their caste consumed the most non-vegetarian food. Consumption of non-vegetarian food also increases with household wealth. However, a lower percentage of individuals among the richest 20% of Indians follow the trend (<https://www.businessday.com> May 22, 2018).

According to a 2017 study from India's National Academy of Agricultural Research Management 98.8% of the Telangana, the population eats meat a higher fraction than famously meat-loving countries like the U.S. or Australia.

Conclusion

Traditionally, people in India eat foods based on grains and vegetables and consume limited amounts of meat and meat products. The recent economic growth and introduction of western culture have changed the food consumption habits in India. The increase in the consumption of meat and meat products, however, will be limited, because of the staple diet due to the climate, geography, religion, and food culture. In order to increase meat consumption, a stable investment should be a prerequisite from the government.

There has been a great rise in the production of livestock products and this is expected to continue in the future. This is particularly the case in developing countries like India. Although there is the overconsumption of meat in developed regions, there is clearly a need to promote the development of livestock production and consumption. Livestock production can make good use of resources, some of which would otherwise not be used, and contributes high-quality protein and important micronutrients to the human diet. The pattern of meat consumption in India depends considerably on culture, tradition, and urbanization.

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