CHAPTER ONE
SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOOD: AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I am attempting a description of the various social scientific perspectives on the socio-cultural dimensions of food and eating. This exercise familiarises ourselves with the research trends and theoretical convergence in this area of sociology which in turn will help us clarify our research objectives and locate the thesis in the scope of sociology of food.

‘FOODWAYS IN TRANSITION’ AS TOPICS FOR SOCIOLOGICAL/ANTHROPOLOGICAL THINKING

As a preparation to the presentation of the outcome of this research work we will now discuss the possible ways of incorporating food and eating as topics for sociological/anthropological studies. We will attempt to achieve this through an overview of a few social scientific perspectives on food and eating.

In the absence of a long-standing sociological legacy based on the study of food and eating, it is relevant to look into the possible ways of incorporation of food related issues into sociology. We may conceive two major routes through which the study of food and eating can be incorporated into the main stream of sociology. The first involves the analysis of foodways to illuminate existing sociological preoccupations. For example, the underlying dimension of social differentiation including gender, age and class can be illustrated by an analysis of patterns of food allocation and consumption. In the second route, the food based topics become ends in themselves. It involves an analysis of food-based topics such as how we obtain, share, select, prepare and eat our food and how we allocate meaning to what we are doing. As stated by Beardworth and Keil (1997: 5), these two approaches may coexist
within one piece of work, since the difference between them is essentially one of emphasis. Both these routes will be considered in the present research work.

**Categorisation of Available Studies on Food and Eating**

In order to analyse the socio-cultural aspects of food and eating the social scientists have adopted several approaches. The categorisation of approaches has been attempted by Goody (1982), Mennel *et al* (1992) and Beardswoth and Keil (1997). Whereas Goody (1982) identifies three main approaches, the functional, the structural, and the cultural and considers his own study as historical and comparative, Mennel *et al* (1992), suggest functionalism, structuralism and developmentalism as convenient heads under which studies of food and eating could be taken up. Developmentalism has been a new label to identify the studies of historical and comparative nature. This approach should not be confused with the theories of development and underdevelopment. Beardsworth and Keil retain this classificatory scheme and omit the cultural category stating that culture “is a concept so fundamental to the other three approaches” (1997: 57).

The functionalist study of food and eating are to be found within the British school of social anthropology. Bronislaw Malinowski (1935), for example, provided a highly detailed ethnographic account of food production and allocation systems in the Trobriand Islands, and complex patterns of belief and social reciprocity, which articulated these systems. Audrey Richards, one of Malinowski’s students, studied from the functionalist perspective the ways in which the production, the preparation and the consumption of food among the Bantu were linked to the life cycle, to group structures and to the social linkages which constituted them (1932). In a later study she attempted to place the nutritional culture of the Bemba into its broader economic setting (1939). The functional significance of food and foodways was also highlighted...
by Radcliffe-Brown (1922) and Evans-Pritchard (1967). In his discussion of the Andaman Islander, Radcliffe-Brown demonstrated the way in which food-related rituals and taboos act as devices for dramatising the collective sentiments of the community. In his documentation of the political and ecological dimensions of the Nuer society, Evans-Pritchard demonstrated the extent to which the food system of this pastoralist people was based upon a form of “symbiosis with cattle” (quoted in Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 60).

The virtue of structuralist approach is that it clearly recognises that ‘taste’ is culturally shaped and socially controlled. The structuralists have turned to the aesthetic aspects of food and eating and mainly cooking and cuisine (Mennel et al. 1992: 8). As rightly pointed by Goody (1982: 17), the analysis of cooking has been associated with the name of Claude Levi-Strauss. The categories of culinary domain constituted for Levi-Strauss a ‘royal road’ in a double sense: the cuisine of a society is a language into which its hidden contradictions can be uncovered and they lead towards a revelation of the fundamental structures of human thought, even though the contents assigned to them are peculiar to each society (Mennel et al. 1992: 9). The most famous example of Levistrauss' exploration of the ‘royal road’ in the direction of universal patterns of the human mind is his ‘culinary triangle’ (1966, 1970). He relates the three poles of the raw, the cooked and the rotten to human thinking about ‘nature’ versus ‘culture’.

The direct structuralist influence on the sociology of food and eating comes from Douglas (1975). Analysing the food system of her own household, she found out that food categories encode social events; they express hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries (quoted in Mennel et al. 1992: 10). The strength of Douglas’s (1984) use of structuralist perspective as
recognised by Beardsworth and Keil (1997: 63), is that she never loses sight of the fact that, while food may be seen as a metaphor, a symbol or a vehicle of communication, it is, above all, a life-giving substance, and a meal is a physical as well as a social event.

One of the criticisms levelled against structuralism as an approach is its inability to throw light on the historical and processual aspect of social reality. All other works that are sensitive to the historical dimension of food and foodways have been grouped under the developmentalist category by Goody (1982), Mennel et al (1992) and Beardworth and Keil (1997). Developmentalism is not a perspective in the strict sense of the term. The works grouped under this category spring from the belief that an understanding of contemporary cultural forms or patterns of social relations must take into account the ways in which these are related to past forms. Hence, social change and transition are the primary focus in terms of their direction, processes and origin. Let us look into a few of such studies, for they not only inform us of the research trends in this area but also draw our attention to trends in and dimensions of culinary practices in various parts of the world.

Development of cooking. The studies of the development of cooking point out that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ did not stand in static contrast but in dynamic interaction with each other. In Stahl’s (1984) view, the regular consumption of a wide range of cooked food most probably influenced the biology of the human digestive system in the long run. Therefore cooked food cannot be assumed to be a natural constant. These are the nutritional effects of cooking. Goudsblom (1992: 34-5) argues that cooking has also affected social organisation and mentality.

‘Cooking developed into a complex set of activities which was far removed from the simple reflex chain of hunger, food-seeking, eating
Like the control of fire, cooking is an element of culture. It has to be learned and such learning is done in groups. It demands some division of labour and mutual co-operation and, individual attention and patience. One has to watch the food from time to time and postpone eating it until it is well cooked and has cooled off a little' (quoted in Mennel et al. (1992: 14-15).

*Development of food preferences and avoidance.* The humans do not eat all foodstuffs that contain nutritional value. They develop preference to certain foods and aversion to certain other foods. The orthodox anthropological view is that the connection between food objects and their meanings is arbitrary and no instrumentalist explanation of food avoidance can be valid. Harris (1986) challenges this view through his historical explorations of the developments of beef avoidance among the Hindus, the Jewish and Islamic taboo on pork, eating and non-eating of horseflesh, dogs and other pets and milk in China (Mennel 1992: 15-16).

All these, food preference and avoidance are puzzles for him. Such cultural categories, apart from having symbolic power, explain the development of a group's idea on the practical costs and benefits of preferring one culinary practice to the other in the broad social and ecological context of the region. The recognition that the cow is a symbol of sacredness for Hindus will not explain the apparent irrationality inherent in the fact that India has the largest cattle population of any country on earth along with very large population of humans many of whom are short of dietary protein. How to account for this taboo?

Harris gives a pragmatic explanation to this taboo on beef, which may otherwise appear as an absurdity to a European. The prohibition may actually have crucial practical advantages, protecting and enhancing the living standards of some of
the poorest sections of Indian society. The humpbacked Zebu breeds of cattle in India are capable of providing the motive power for ploughing, even in extreme conditions of heat and drought, and can survive on very meagre rations of feed and fodder. Such animals are far more cost-efficient than tractors for ploughing the small farm holdings. In addition, cows provide the Indian peasant with several valuable products: oxen for ploughing, milk, and dung. Thus in pragmatic terms Harris argues that the prohibition on killing cows effectively enhances the long-term viability of Indian agriculture (quoted in Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 206-207).

Development of systems of cuisine and culinary cultures. Social and cultural conditioning of cooking and cuisine and macro-sociological analysis of manners of food were the focal issues dealt with some of the leading theorists on food and eating. Goody (1982) attempted to answer the question why a 'high' (elite) and correspondingly 'low' (peasant) cuisine emerges in some societies but not others. He attempted to explain what contributes to the emergence or non-emergence of haute cuisines in different societies. It cannot be merely a matter of degrees of social and political complexity.

Goody comes to this conclusion on the basis of his fieldwork among two Ghanaian tribes in Africa where cuisine differentiation is not a hallmark. Then he turns to societies for which differentiation is a hallmark. He compares culinary cultural history of Egypt, India, China, and of Western Europe and also considers the contemporary development of industrialised eating and trends towards a world cuisine. Coming back once again to the field where he started his study, the West Africa, Goody recognises the specific globalising impact of the industrial food and the world cuisine. On the basis of comparative evidence, Goody examines the role of certain key factors in the emergence of haute cuisine such as a) the hierarchic nature
of the social structure, b) social differentiation on the basis of literacy, and c) organisation of household and structure of kinship.

In his study of the development of culinary culture Mennel (1985) applies Elias's 'process sociology' approach (Mennel 1989). In his books *The Civilising Process* (1982 originally 1939) and *The Court Society* (1983 originally 1969), Elias develops an understanding of how broad social, political and economic changes shape the expression of emotion, manners, taste and lifestyle. Mennel applies this in accounting for changing food preferences and emerging cuisines. He explores changing habits and cuisine over several centuries in France and Britain. He discerns many changes including emergence of bodily discipline rise and fall of class differentiation in diet and the commercialisation and internationalisation of food production and distribution.

Taste in eating and even appetite itself, Mennel (1986, 1987) argues is formed in the same way that Elias details the shaping of personality make-up more generally. “The transition from the medieval oscillation between feasting and fasting, plenty and want, to an emphasis on discrimination at table parallels—indeed is an aspect of—the broader shift in the balance between external constraints and self-constraints” (Mennel et al 1992: 17). In this transition many contrasts have diminished. Social inequalities in the qualities of food consumed have declined, appetite has been civilised in the form of self control over body and weight-watching, difference between seasons and between festivals and everyday eating have diminished so also towns and country food habits are less in contrast. While manufactured food have become part of the diet of every social class there is also a 'democratisation' and simplification of eating. The disappearance of the rigid ten-course dinners for the
middle classes at the end of the 19th century is an example. The cookery books and the diversified opportunities for out-door eating have contributed to these processes.

Now in the place of dominant, rigid, stylistic hierarchy in food, which used to characterise an older Europe, pluralism and contest emerge where there is a celebration of diversity of coexisting tastes, encouraged by fashion and the spread of international restaurants. Now there is a growing interdependency between the professional and the domestic cookery. This occurs through increasing eating out on the one hand and increasing influence of food technology and marketing on the domestic eating on the other (paraphrased in Warde 1997: 24-29). Breakdown of monotony, shift from class differentiation to plural tastes and increasing variety are the manifest consequences of these modern trends. However, the other less apparent trends need to be explored yet and other explanatory questions remain unanswered. As Warde pointed out, “he says little about how social and commercial processes from such plural taste, nor does he consider how such tastes might subsequently divide the population” (Ibid.: 29).

*Development from gastronomie to gastro-anomie: A pessimistic outlining of foodways in transition.* Claude Fischler, a French anthropologist of food and eating has introduced the idea of gastronomy (1980). Used in the literal sense, the word denotes the traditional norms, rules and meanings which structure human food intake. Regarding the future of this situation Fischler is very pessimistic. In his view the contemporary world is now being subjected to the process of ‘dis-aggregation’ (*Ibid.*: 947), involving a breakdown of long established rules. This crisis situation will lead to a state, which Fischler terms as ‘gastro-anomie’. The factors responsible for such a situation according to him arise out of a proliferation of contradictory and inconsistent pressures acting upon contemporary food consumer by way of food industry,
advertising and the State. The expansion of agro-industry and industrialised food production seem to create disturbances of uncertainties and anxieties arising from gastro-anomie. Of course, there are certain developments that may contribute towards restoring some order in the culinary sphere. They are found in the emerging dietary regimes such as weight loss diets and vegetarianism.

Development of menu-pluralism. Not all theorists on foodways share Fischler’s despair and anxiety. Changing foodways are seen as quite normal and constitutive of contemporary social reality according to some social theorists. Beardsworth and Keil (1992) who proposed ‘menu pluralism thesis’ belong to this genre of writers. For them the alimentary totality of a society would include the whole range of aliments available during a particular period. The aliment is recognised as any basic edible item within a given nutritional culture (Levi Strauss prefers to use the term ‘gustems’). The set of principles that guide the selection of aliments form the available totality has been defined as ‘menu’ by them.

The menu principles can take multiplicity of forms. Hence ‘menu pluralism’ is the characteristic feature of any given culinary situation. There are ‘traditional menus’ which are based on customary practices built up over many generations that derive their authority and legitimacy from long-established status. These traditional menus have been thus taken for granted and their sociological acceptance appears natural and immutable. Any violations of these rules are very likely to induce contempt or disgust.

In contrast to these, there are the ‘rational menus’ that are based on selection criteria and are designed to achieve specific goals like the weight lose or weight gain, improvement of physical or mental performance, avoidance or particular disease or for promotion of general health. Closely related to rational menus, can be identified
others like ‘convenience menus’ based on minimisation of time and effort required for acquiring, preparing and presenting food; the ‘economy menus’ based on cost consideration; the ‘hedonistic’ menus based on maximising gustatory pleasure or the ‘moral menus’ that are based on ethical consideration. The menus of last categories can be related to ecological issues, political issues or issues relating to animal welfare or animal rights.

Beardsworth and Keil further state that in any given society we might expect a degree of menu differentiation wherein different categories of individuals within the population (defined in terms of gender, age, class caste etc.) would make different choices from the aliments available in the given menu. The degree of differentiation is higher in contemporary societies, which are characterised by menu pluralism, a situation being experienced in the wake of rapid social change. There are choices existing in competing and contrast in menu principles making selection of aliments possible. Thus individuals find it easier to draw up their own personal diet and adjusting their menu choices to suit their mood, economic circumstances or the setting in which the eating events taking place.

Thus the contemporary food situation is understood quite differently from that of Fischler who saw it as the decline of value consensus and confusion. However, for both Fischler and Beardsworth and Keil the processes that underlie the making of this situation are same - the globalisation of food supply, its industrialisation and production and distribution.

Codification of sociological theses on consumption foodways in transition. The recognition of consumption as an important socio-cultural process by the social theorists has been very noteworthy at least from the point of development and
sophistication of social theories on food and eating. While codifying them all Warde (1997) groups them as four theses.

1. Towards arbitrary individual diversity. Fischler’s ‘omnivore’s paradox’\(^4\) and ‘gastro-anomie’ thesis have been included in this group. He interprets food fads, fashions and sects such as vegetarianism as evidence of atomisation and the disintegration of social regulation.

2. Post-Fordist food. According to this second thesis, there is all agreement that the European world is becoming more and more pluralistic in terms of food availability and consumption patterns. However, this state is not conceived as pathological. But the situation can be explained in terms of the emerging concerns in the post-Fordist western society. As per John Urry’s (1990: 13-14) formulations, in the Fordist society the producer rather than the consumer is dominant where there is relatively limited choice. This was a condition of mass production for mass consumption. On the contrary in the post-Fordist phase the consumption process is dominant. Urry (quoted in Warde 1997: 34) suggests five distinctive attributes of consumption behaviour in a post-Fordist world: (1) consumers will make more use of commodified provision; (2) there will be ‘much greater differentiation of purchasing patterns by different market segments’; (3) there will be ‘greater volatility of consumer preference’ (hence products have a shorter life); (4) consumer movements will proliferate; and (5) there will be a, presumably conscious and active, ‘reaction of consumers against being part of a “mass”’ - which will involve seeking out specialised, and perhaps ‘natural’, raw materials. Warde observes that though there is some supporting evidence for all the shifts
towards post-Fordism listed by Urry, there is no sufficient evidence to
demonstrate this to be the overarching tendency. There may be more
powerful forces and some of the contemporary features may not clearly
separate post-Fordist from mass consumption. (Ibid.: 35).

3. Mass consumption in a mass society. In his overview of social trends
Ritzer (1996) proposed a mass society thesis. In *The McDonaldisation of
Society*, mainly an account of continuing rationalisation in the present
world, Ritzer takes the operating principles of the global chain of fast-food
producers as metaphors for general social trends especially towards
massification. Now the food is manufactured at a mass scale and targeted
at a mass. McDonald's meals, Kellogs cereals, Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola
are but a few examples. The issue to be addressed is the multiple responses
of the people towards this trend relating to the global politics of food
distribution vis-à-vis other related trends such as health promotion
campaigns, nutrition related policies of the governments. The question
being raised under this massification thesis is: Is the human culinary
culture marching towards homogenisation? Drawing on cross-cultural data
on culinary practices of certain national communities (Appadurai 1988;
Douglas 1975; Murcott 1982; Charles and Kerr 1988; and Charsley 1992),
Warde (1997: 38-39) concedes that some powerful homogenising forces
do exist. It means that amidst available variety of items and prevailing
diversity among the individuals of styles 'it remains plausible to argue that
the principle characteristic of recent times is mass conformity in dietary
matters' (Ibid.: 39).
4. The persistence of social differentiation. The above three theses note the reduction in degrees of social regulation of structural features of social differentiation such as class, gender, ethnicity, generation and life-course stage. However, they have not become totally irrelevant. ‘The fourth thesis suggests that structural differentiation in general, class differentiation in particular, is likely to persist in the field of food’ (Warde 1997: 39). In his Distinction, Bourdieu (1984), applying his social reproduction approach to French eating habits anticipates continued differentiation. He demonstrates that eating habits express class differences in France. There is a limitation with this social reproduction thesis: It privileges the dimension of continuity over change (Jenkins 1992) and because Bourdieu relies on data from only France, his conclusion applies more effectively to France (quoted in Warde 1997: 40). Notwithstanding these criticisms the emerging foodways in the whole of the Europe and also in USA as found out by Levenstein (1993) show that class distinctions may even have grown in the field of food in these regions. Thus the fourth thesis ‘maintains that there remains very significant structural differentiation in eating behaviour, indicating its social embeddedness and its social regulation, and which is primarily manifest as hierarchical class difference’ (Warde 1997: 41).

Salience of Continuity and Change

The socio-cultural perspectives on foodways in transition reflect the theoretical trajectories in social sciences. Initially, interest in food was never central given the overall interest of the social scientists in the production related social processes. Formulated within the perspectives of evolutionism, functionalism or
structuralism initial works were characterised by teleology and ahistoricity or explanation by purpose and the neglect of the changing nature of social reality. In most of these studies food is not the central point of reference; nor were they concerned with illuminating food related socio-cultural reality.

The so-called developmentalist perspectives, having food related social reality as the central focus, are sensitive to dimensions of change and history. They have noticed several trends and issues that contain in them aspects of continuity and change. Several formulations have been suggested to understand these trends: gastro-anomie, world cuisine, diminished contrasts and increased variety, homogenisation, menu pluralism, McDonaldisation and massification, and the like. All of these formulations have supportive facts observable in the current world. Notwithstanding their common interest in the nature of continuity and trends of change, there are differences in their conception of the nature of the current foodways. Apart from the differences in the specific aims of their research, this is also because of the differential nature of the research universe, its specific micro-historical experiences and its location in the network of global macro-relations. The rationale for the study of the foodways in transition in Goa and its delimitation into the domestic domain can be located in this circumstance.

As a next step towards the statement of the present research problem let us overview the available material on food and eating in India with reference to the domestic dining.

**FOOD IN INDIA**

As rightly noticed by Olivelle (1995: 367), the cultural landscape of India, from the earliest Vedic period to contemporary times, is littered with food. Food in
Aryan belief was not simply a means of bodily sustenance; it was a part of a cosmic moral cycle. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* states:

'From earth sprang herbs, from herbs food, from food seed, from seed man. Man thus consists of the essence of food...From food are all creatures produced, by food do they grow...The self consists of food, of breath, of mind, of understanding, of bliss' (quoted in Achaya 1994: 61).

Olivelle (1995: 367) succinctly records the polyvalent significance of food in India.

'As a biological necessity, as an economic commodity, as the primary ingredient of ritual and social transactions, as a medium of social and familial interaction, as a marker of social boundaries, as a principle of classification, and as a focus of ethical concerns of both religious virtuosi and common people, food has always been and continues to be at the heart of Indian ritual practice, social behaviour, common etiquette, and theological speculation.'

As far as ethical issues are concerned Indians did not have any confusion as to what should be their behavioural orientations. On the basis of a careful perusal of the Indian texts Bajaj and Srinivas (1996: xii) claim: 'Indians have always considered growing a plenty of food and sharing it in plenty with others as the primary attribute of human living. Food and sharing of food, *anna* and *annadana*, are at the foundation; all else, even the search for *moksa*, the ultimate state of liberation that Indians are taught to always strive for, is built on this foundation.'

These ethical considerations apart, food has been put to several uses. Madan's (1975: 86) observations on the food management among the Kashmiri Pundits are
relevant here: ‘...[T]he Pundits have a deep Epicurean interest in food; they also make much symbolic use of it to establish links between kith and kin and between man, beast and god.’ This functionality and food symbolism is pan Indian, of course, with regional and other specificity. So much so that Khare (1992) in one of his edited volumes attempted to go beyond the particular customs, rules, and meanings of food and to discover the underlying ‘gastrosemantics’ of Indian civilisation (quoted in Olivelle 1995: 371).

In spite of the multivariate roles of food ideology and foodways in the making of society and culture in India, they have ‘largely remained implied and unexplored in the usual ‘village, caste, and kinship’ stance of South Asian social anthropology’ (Khare 1976: vii). One need only go through the reports of the successive Surveys of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology, sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. So far the ICSSR has undertaken this activity three times and has come out with three sets of reports edited by Rao (1974), Ferreira (1985) and Gore (2000) respectively. In all these three sets, we do not find a single reference to a study conducted with an aim to throw light on the food related socio-cultural reality.

In fact there are several questions that could be answered satisfactorily with the help of social scientists. What is the functionality of foodways in the fast changing contemporary world? What are the new influences and pressures? In the new circumstances what new meanings the old symbols acquire? What is the nature of the interplay between the old and the new food symbolism? How to account for the contemporary division of labour around the hearth and emerging food ideologies that underlie culinary social reality?
In some sociological/anthropological works some of these issues have been dealt with as supporting evidences to their overall non-culinary concerns such as stratification (Ghurye 1963; Marriott 1968; Dumont 1970) and family and kinship (Madan 1965). The studies of the former category have been designated as commensal studies that hint at the ‘necessity for a closer study of domestic modes of food handling...’ (Khare 1976: 7). There are a few social scientific studies conducted having some of the questions raised above as their foci. Based on their disciplinary orientation they can be classified as economic, historical and anthropological/sociological.

Economists addressed mainly the twin processes of food production and food distribution. Enhancing agrarian production and ensuring its equitable distribution has been their long-standing concern. Among them welfare economists like Sen wrote extensively on famines, and the question of entitlement (for example 1981, 1999). The various dimensions of the issue of ensuring food security are recurring themes (Rao 1999; Rao 1999; Sinha 1999; Asthana 2001; Devadas 2001; Gopalan 2001; Sengupta 2001; Shiva 2001; Singh 2001; Swaminathan 2001; Mukherji and Mukherjee 2001; World Food Programme 2001).

Among the works of the Historians who studied food and its social and cultural dimensions, Achaya’s (1992) work is noteworthy. It is a comprehensive documentation of the making of the Indian food-culture and contains in it very minute details of formation of regional cuisines, variety and migration of food stuffs, and the evolution of the food ethos of Indian civilisation covering the vast historical time span, from the Indus Valley Civilisation to the contemporary times. It is a ‘historical companion’ in the real sense of the term to anybody interested in the socio-cultural reality of food in India. Not withstanding its lack of coherence between topics and
rugged narration, it is invaluable for a beginner in the systematic study of foodways in India especially for one who is interested in the transition in the domestic dining sphere in India.

Among other themes of the historical studies, beef avoidance engaged the attention of scholars every now and then (Harris 1966; Diener et al. 1978; and Nair 1987). In fact the prevalence of food ideologies in the form of food avoidance and food preference was the focus of several anthropological studies (Ferro-Luzzi 1975 and 1980; Moskowitz 1975; Pool 1986). The communication of culturally constructed meaning systems through food continues to engage the anthropologists and cultural historians. Such studies examined the food related categories and practices in the domestic and the public domains depending upon their research interests. Food symbolism has been at the heart of such studies (Appadurai 1988; Chakraborty 1992; Khare 1976, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Moreno 1992; Ramanujan 1992; Toomy 1992; White 1992).

Another line of research incorporates in it the concerns for the relationship between socio-cultural changes and foodways. They consider continuity and change as the characteristic feature of socio-cultural transformation. Of course the content of the transformation is context specific and the divergent studies are relevant in their own right. Such studies vary from each other as far as their conceptual clarity and analytical rigour are concerned (Khare1976; Rao 1986; Vidyarthi et al. 1979; Bhowmik 1984). While a few studies have attempted to document the contemporary food habits (Sanyal 1979; Sen 1980; and Singh et al.1992), some others attempted to give an account of the contemporary socio-cultural changes through food (especially Appadurai 1988). Food items consumed and prevalent food categories have been examined to throw light on the indigenous nutritive standards (Vidyarthi et al. 1981),
social differentiation and nutritional differences (Ahmed et al. 1998; Chakraborty 1992; Chen et al. 1981) and the medical lore (Sujatha 2002).

Most of the historical studies are Indological in nature and they borrowed the supportive data almost entirely from the literary sources. The economists relied generally on the statistical data published by several agencies to analyse the aspects of food security or famine. The food habit surveys conducted by the anthropologists are purely empirical. However, in the works of Harris, Appadurai, Khare and Rao we notice the mixture of empirical sensitivity and theoretical ingenuity. They are attempts at interpreting the complex socio-cultural processes that are taking place in the realm of Indian Food and eating. However, theoretical elucidation of the processes of change and continuity in the domestic domain, attempted by Khare long ago (1976), needs further attention and concern. This is very important in the face of multiple transformations in contemporary society and culture. At this academic backdrop the present study attempts to explore aspects of the changing domestic dining in Goa in the context of many socio-cultural transformations.

NOTE

1. After a thorough examination of the writings of eminent classical sociologists Mennel et al. (1994: 1-6) state: “One looks in vain for any discussion of food and eating in the work of most of the classical sociologists”. However, he also notes that some notable sociologists like Herbert Spencer and George Simmel have said about food and eating in passing hinting at the potentiality of the topic for sociological inquiry.

2. The term ‘developmental’ is used in the sense of growth from one point in the socio-cultural continuum to the other. It does not correspond to the theories of economic development and underdevelopment.

3. The phrase ‘manners of food’ corresponds to the term foodways or culinary practice.
4. Fischler (1980) feels that the insurmountable question before the contemporary food consumer is what to choose among the plethora of edible items? The source of the problem is ‘the omnivore’s paradox’: omnivores need variety, but unknown foodstuffs may be poisonous (quoted in Warde 1997: 30).

5. The list is illustrative and not exhaustive.

6. Especially the chapters on Indian food ethos and utensils and food preparation elucidate domestic dining (Achaya1994).