Chapter Two

CONCEPT OF ĀHĀRA IN THE WORKS
OF MODERN SCHOLARS AND OTHER RELIGIONS

It is said that food (āhāra) is an inseparable and indispensable part of human life. With changing stages in human civilization the concept of food, too, has undergone accordant changes. From its unrefined form in the primitive age to its present refined form, food culture has constantly progressed. Two major facets of the food culture however, can be said to have remained more or less constant. Firstly, food comes from nature. Nature is one and the only source of most of the foods that are later processed to suit the taste and the digestive system. Nature implies mainly the environment and bio-diversity around us. Availability of food varies according to diverse regions. Secondly, in every culture certain beliefs, ideas or concepts are associated with food peculiar to that culture. Thus, food is never a mere means of sustenance but a mirror, which reflects the pattern of thoughts and beliefs of that culture and vice versa.51

This chapter focuses firstly on a survey of modern researches and studies by modern scholars on the Buddhist concept of āhāra. Secondly the concept of āhāra in different religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in which in the concept of each religion, foods will be mainly examined through the beliefs and food practices of the forms of taboo, symbols, rituals, fast, and diet will be surveyed in this chapter.

51 Source: http://foodandculture.blogspot.com/.
2.1. A survey of modern researches on food

Āhāra is a simple word but it directly occupies the entire destiny of human, hence it is not easy to give a necessary and sufficient definition as well as perfect viewpoint on food although as with so many words and ideas that are universally used and presumably universally understood.\(^5\)

Being an essential substance to nourish and sustain human beings, food is always a burning topic to discuss and debate every time and everywhere. The research on āhāra is the study related to biology, psychology, and morality of human beings. Hence, the food scientists always do their best to point out the relationship between food and human beings.

According to several modern researches or concepts of some scholars, āhāra is understood as: substance taken in by the mouth, which maintains life and growth, i.e. supply energy, and build and replace tissue.\(^5\) Any substance containing nutrients, such as carbohydrates, proteins and fats that can be ingested by a living organism and metabolized into energy and body tissue.\(^4\) What one takes into the system to maintain life and growth, and to supply the waste of tissue, aliment, nourishment, provision, victuals. Anything which, when taken into the body, serves to nourish or build up the tissues or to supply body heat, aliment, nutriment.\(^5\) Food: what is food to one man is bitter poison to others.\(^5\)

Food: 1) Any substance (nutritive material of plant or animal origin) or mixture (except oxygen and water) that nourishes an organism, builds tissue, and supplies heat. 2) Any nutritive material that is taken into an organism or consumed for maintenance, growth, work, and tissue repair but sometimes consumed for social or other reasons; the term sometimes means only solid

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Ibid.
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
food or nutriment; for legal purposes, it may sometimes refer to things that are normally considered nonfood but that are regulated by a governmental food agency. 3) A material recognized by an individual or a group as fulfilling the physiological needs of the body and usually consumed for that purpose, or sometimes for social or other reasons.57

Food, anything eaten to satisfy appetite and to meet physiological needs for growth, to maintain all body processes, and to supply energy to maintain body temperature and activity.58 Nutrition is a combination of processes of receiving and utilizing materials needed for sustaining life. These processes not only maintain the functions of the various growths and renewal of its components.59

According to a currently accepted definition (FAO 2000), ‘Food Security’ is achieved when it is ensured that “all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Food is here defined as any substance that people eat and drink to maintain life and growth. As a result, safe and clean water is an essential part of food commodities.60

The above researches on food generally mentioned the function of edible food for the growth of the physical body, for maintenance of physical health of life. These concepts can urge humans to satisfy the material needs more than to cultivate the mind, and they do not help one understand what the nature of food is. The researches imply that human beings only live to eat more than eat to live. ‘Live to eat’ is understood as satisfaction of needs of life such as health, beauty, wealth, position,
knowledge, and honors. In order to gain these needs, human beings must compete with others and must trample upon mutually, even without feeling regret with any wrong deeds. Competition is the embodiment of seditions of greed, hatred, and delusion. These seditions make human life get hungrier and worse. The hungrier, the thirstier to cling to life and fear death are human beings. Hence, such competition is never ending in the modern world. In modern life, the sedition of market competition is hard to identify, because they are organized and designed by many sophisticated and artful forms.

It can be said that if ‘live to eat’ is understood in that way, ‘eat to live’ is the opposite. One who eats to live is aware of what true value and purpose of life is, one eats but does not injure himself and others. He is moderate in food and does not waste it. He eats to love, to tolerate, to sacrifice, and to save and to protect life of all beings as well as the environment. While consuming, one understands that what he is consuming is the result of effort of many people and protection of the environment, even the food he works for.

For edible food or food for physical body is being alarmed due to its unsafety. The modern society is so busy that men cannot prepare food for themselves daily; they have to order their meals from the restaurants. Hence, food safety is always noticed. In fact, food safety hygiene is one of the urgent problems. Food safety awareness is at an all-time high nowadays. It is because new and emerging threats to the food supply are being recognized; and consumers are eating more and more meals prepared outside of the home.\(^6\) Although the meals are carefully prepared and inspected, food borne disease expands fast. In the United States alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that each year diseases caused by food may result in 325,000 serious illnesses.

resulting in hospitalizations, 76 million cases of gastrointestinal illnesses, and up to 5,000 deaths. In order to ensure food safety for the physical body, in Frank Yiannas’s research, in his book, has dignified human behavior or morality while processing food. He thought that food safety is dependent upon human behavior while making food. He wrote:

“To improve the food safety performance of retail or foodservice establishment, an organization with thousands of employees, or a local community, you must change the way people do things. You must change their behavior. In fact, simply put, often times food safety equals behavior. When viewed from this perspective, one of the most common contributing causes of food borne disease is unsafe human behavior."

Frank Yiannas’s concept of food safety is very interesting. It calls upon one to be responsible for community food while processing and making it. However, food safety is not quite dependent upon one who processes and makes food but it depends on the manner and fit and clever food choice of those who consume it. Furthermore, his standpoint is limited because he does not mention what food for the mind is at all.

Ian Shaw’s concept of food safety comes from cooking. No one knows when or why people first began to cook. Cooking, of course, made food much safer from the microbiological point of view. No doubt as cooking was introduced, food poisoning incidence declined. In fact, if cooking makes food become safe why people still get ill and the spirit of man gets upset; as a result, conflict and violence emerge from family to society. Ian Shaw’s view indeed needs to be reviewed, because it has only dignified the method and technicality of cooking, he has not

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62 Ibid., p. 4.
63 Ibid., p. 1.
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
considered self-control or thought and manner of a person with regard to food consumption. In other words, one must be aware and mindful with all types of food that enter or are received into both physical bodies; this is a way leading to great safety in having food. However, this is mere safety of the physical body. Ian Shaw did not attach special importance to safety of mentality while touching things.

Being good at the study of food and culture for many years, Kittler and Sucher’s researches on food are as follows:

“Food is integral and universal aspect of human existence. Food is any substance that provides the nutrients necessary to maintain life and growth when ingested. Food to ingest is further complicated, however, by another psychological concept regarding eating - the incorporation of food. Consumption is understood as equaling conversion of a food and its nutrients into a human body. For many people, incorporation is not only physical but associative as well. It is the fundamental nature of the food absorbed by a person, conveyed by the proverbial phrase, “you are what you eat.” In its most direct interpretation, it is the physical properties of food expressed through incorporation.

Kittler and Sucher pointed out the conversion of a food into physical body and its incorporation after digesting; it is one-sided, without inverse. Besides, they have only realized the eater who consumes food and that food assimilates into physical life, and they do not show in the course of assimilation, also the food devours the eater and there is thus mutual absorption between them.

Different from the standpoints as mentioned, Francine Schiff’s concept of food is food for solitude (alone) as a purpose to heal body,

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68 Ibid.
mind and soul. Here food is not something to eat but food is a process of preparation to live alone, be in front of itself, and look inside the heart, control actions with the aim of tasting of inner peace and harmony. This is to say that, Francine Schiff is interested in food for nourishing the mind. He wrote:

“How I found my food for solitude, for now how I really care about how you will discover your own food for solitude, how you will learn to transform what could be boring lonely hours alone, into the most creative and fulfilling experience possible. Like the nature of solitude itself, there are many foods and moods. As you will see, food is on all levels. As metaphor, it nourishes us in realms beyond our normal perceptions. As ingredients from our mother earth, it nourishes us so we may be grounded enough to go a bit higher. Without the soup, we couldn’t say our prayers, but without prayers, what good is the soup? We need both. The soup in itself is a prayer. The prayer in itself is the soup to nature our hearts and souls. If you already enjoy your solitude, I hope you will find new and inspiring ingredients to make your time alone even more meaningful. If you are shy about being alone, especially about eating alone, then I know the recipes - gourmet food for one - will change all that. If you are about what other people have to say about their food for solitude, about their solitude journeys, their harmonizing time, their solitude moments, their fears and needs to be alone, then here you will find insights and perceptions that will confirm what you may already feel, and tell you things you never heard before. I hope these ingredients inspire you to be alone creatively, happily, and with complete permission to give up all the guilt about being truly alone on all levels. If I accomplish anything, I want to give you that permission

to feel good about being alone, to encourage you to celebrate yourself, however you choose, so you can continually discover your own kind of food for solitude."^71

Francine Schiff believed that ‘believe yourself, or believe the answer in you’ is food for being alone. He thought that only man could decide or solve all his problems, not any other. ‘Believing in you’ means you can control yourself, can do the right way. She again wrote:

“I’m the best friend I ever had; I like to be with me.
I like to sit and tell myself, things confidentially.”^72

Generally, Francine Schiff’s concept of food is close to the Buddha’s teachings as described in the Bhaddekarattasutta (Discourse on Auspicious) of Majjhima Nikāya and the Khaggavisānasutta (of Sutta Nipāta). Yet, food for solitude (alone) of Francine Schiff as a purpose to heal body, mind and soul is still bounded in the ideal ‘food’ is not just a symbol of or for the culture but it is integral to the Hindu’s ultimate reality in the same as ‘self’ is.^73

From Francine Schiff’s view, it makes us recollect one of the phrases that concerns the meaning of food mentioned in many dictionaries is ‘food for thought’ or ‘intellectual nourishment’. Food in ‘food for thought’ does not mean something to eat. The phrase means something that makes one thinks carefully, or anything that provides mental stimulus for thinking, or if something is food for thought, it is worth thinking about or considering seriously, or this is something one should think about. This meaning implies that careful thoughts and noble actions of a person will nourish his mind, or food for his mind. There are many things in life to stimulate us to think about, but choosing a right way of thinking is not easy. Each person has a different way of thinking, but mostly the ways of

^71 Ibid.
^72 Ibid., p. 2.
thinking of human beings who are living in a worldly life relate to suffering and produce suffering. Their ways of thinking are always bound by craving and grasping, by lust, anger, and delusion. Sometimes, they also think very carefully, but their aim is to get more advantages, wealth, and high standing. They have thought about what does not need thinking. Such as to think with loving attachment, considering oneself as a living being, or an atta, an individual or ‘self,’ in spite of the fact that in personalities of themselves there exists only a continual phenomenal process of rupa and nama, Buddhism calls such way of thinking as wrong thought (micchadiṭṭhi.) All ways of thinking as mentioned are toxic food for the mind.

In general, the modern researches on āhāra of Bonnie J. Kaplan, Francine Schiff, Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Conee Ornelas, Kittler, Sucher, Judith E. Brown, etc. which have discussed many aspects on food, are very interesting and useful, but very limited. Their researches have only centered on food for the body, not for the mind. They can help us to understand its meanings better, to have a firm grasp of some way of consumption of edible foods in order to prevent from causing diseases and to make our health to be improved. To some extent these researches also have pointed out that happiness or anguish, both physical life and spiritual life of human quite depend upon food and manner of eating. Therefore, they cannot resolve the mysteries regarding food and life, for example, even when a man has sufficient food, why is he far from happiness, what has food to do with the thought process of the man and his conduct, the requirement of food other than merely the physical food.
2.2. Studies by modern scholars on the Buddhist concept of āhāra

In their studies on Buddhism, the modern scholars crucially center on the concepts of no self or emptiness (anatta,) impermanence (anicca,) dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda,) and intentional action (kamma,) These doctrines are valuable for the philosophy and human life, from which the positive solutions for the current crises can be found. Therefore, the concepts of such doctrines are discussed in details in many pieces of work that have been publicly published. Yet not many have studied the concept of āhāra as taught in the Pañca Nikāya hinge not only on those values, but also the entire teaching of the Buddha.

There are the three studies or works that are remarkable in which to some extent these studies have pointed out the specific sense of āhāra as Lord Buddha has taught. They can be summarized one after the other.

1. "If The Buddha Came To Dinner: How to Nourish Your body to Awaken Your Spirit" by Hale Sofia Schatz with Shira Shaiman is published Hyperion in New York 2003. This book is a guide to learning how to feed our spirit so that we can be fed by it on a regular basis in which the author has pointed out the specific senses of nourishment or food with the different levels. First, Schatz emphasizes the value of nourishment is dependent on that of the spirit. She calls God, Christ, and Buddha nature like "life force" that exists within each of us, and she uses "spirit" to describe this sacred life-giving force. She believes that our spirit is the place within ourselves that is balanced, connected to the source of life, deep within us exists a well of nourishment where we can find the sustenance to live joyful and meaningful lives. Here, it implies that the purpose of eating is to nourish our body, to awaken the spirit, and to develop Buddha nature. If we want our spirits to soar and direct our

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74 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
lives in rich and meaningful ways, we need to feed ourselves with the nourishing foods, activities, and relationship that encourage growth. This means we eat food in the meeting of Buddha nature or spirit. Schatz thinks that if we can listen and respond to the inner messages of our spirit, then we are in a state of nourishment. On the other hand, nourishment is food, yet food alone will never be enough to nourish us. This means that we are really nourished whenever food is consumed with awareness.

The distinguishing aspect of this book is the mention of the "transformational nourishment" - the process of transforming habitual patterns and behaviors into nourishing practices that encourage development. Transformational nourishment is not a quick-fix food program; the key to it is "awareness." It is a set of tools for living in awareness of life. There are myriad paths for learning self-awareness, from religious traditions and faiths to yoga, meditation and other spiritual disciplines. In general, however, the connection between food and spiritual development has not been widely explored. Most food models available today tend to focus only on the physical or emotional levels, such as dieting and eating disorder. Transformational nourishment's unique approach turns food and eating into a daily practice for becoming physically, emotionally, and spiritually aware. Before practising transformational nourishment, we should stop all business, let alone act on them. Transformational nourishment provides a road map for learning how to get in touch with the place inside yourself where you are free. From that place, you can be of great service to yourself, your family, community, and to the world.

In addition, Schatz points out the meeting of the emotions arises while eating such as happiness, or depression, sadness, and loneliness,
they are regarded as the answer to the question "who are we feeding". Sometimes it is our petulant inner being. We are feeding our rebellious adolescent, who knows this particular food may not make us feel very good but goes ahead and eats it anyway, damn it. Many people feed themselves based on an emotional need, whether the emotions are negative or positive. When people eat this way, they usually have something that is easy, fast, and requires almost no preparation. We are feeding ourselves quick fixes that usually have little nutritive value, and we are eating when we are in a state of emotional imbalance when hunger does not even come into the picture.78

In order to emphasize the value of spirit while having food as well as distinguishing between the term "eating" and "feeding," Schatz asserts that when we consume food without much thought beyond its taste, she calls it "eating." We know what eating looks like: It's the compulsive reaching into the potato chip bag; eating when we are full because food is just there; grabbing a quick bite for lunch between meetings; indulging our taste buds while ignoring how our bodies feel. When we make deliberate food choices based on our needs for physical energy, mental clarity, creativity, and focus, she calls this feeding oneself. She uses these terms to emphasize the difference between mindless consumption and purposeful, conscious fueling. When we feed ourselves, we are aware and responsive to our particular needs for nourishment in the present moment.79

From this distinction between the term 'eating' and 'feeding.' Hale Sofia Schatz really was not satisfied with the way of speaking "you are what you eat;" she attached special importance to the value of the spirit, awareness, and manner while consuming food. Hence, she criticized that we eat a carrot or junky, and we become a carrot or junky? While all

78 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
79 Ibid., p. 18.
clichés contain a grain of truth, “you are what you eat” focuses only on the after-effects of food in our body. In working with food and consciousness; that is, “people eat what they are.” If you are stressed out you are feeding yourself stressed out, quick-grab food with little vital nourishment. When we shift out way of thinking from “you are what you eat” to “you eat what you are, we see that the latter involves “awareness.”

Hale Sofia Schatz’s work as mentioned, although the author did not mention directly the Buddhist concept of food to us, she has presented her experiences and understanding on the sense of food, its way of consumption and transformational nourishment as well that are consistent with Lord Buddha’s teaching on āhāra that is to be discussed in details in the present study. Especially, in the entire book, the author has always attached special importance to the role of awareness or mindfulness while eating and acting, had a high opinion of it “the food itself is not bad, the point is awareness or mindfulness - having awareness of our actions and knowing how any particular food stuff at any particular moment will feed us.” Mindfulness (sati) is the very meditation, concentration, or Buddhism that is always dignified by Lord Buddha during His life. Indeed, mindfulness plays an important role in nourishing the human life; it is a kind of special nourishing substance within us, is the determining factor in freeing us from the current serious problems as well as the near disasters.

2. “Food For The Heart” by Ajahn Chah is published by Wisdom Publications in Boston 2002. For the author of this book, J. D. Buksbazen who is the author of “Zen Meditation in Plain English” has appraised: “compassionate, lucid, and far beyond any sectarian categorizing, Ajahn Chah stands out as a profound teacher in the best of Buddhist wisdom

80 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
81 Ibid., p. 11.
Food for the Heart is an important volume for all serious followers of the Buddha's way, and one of the great classics of spiritual literature.\(^{82}\)

At first sight, we imagine the title of book “Food for the Heart” will introduce some kinds of “edible food” to whom he gets the heart disease, but “food” in here bears the specific meanings that are ways, methods, teachings, or technologies to free from anguish and problems, to obtain true happiness in this life. In this book, “virtue or precept” (sīla,) “concentration or a deep state of meditation” (samādhi,) and “insight or wisdom” (paññā) are regarded as the main kinds of āhāra introduced by Lord Buddha to one who wants to take them in order to purify their bodies and minds. These kinds of food have the function to transform suffering into happiness, they are the good medicines for everyone to get out of all diseases of life. Ajahn Chah has presented in a specific order, all these meanings of food in his work (see more in his work).

3. “Food of Bodhisattvas: Buddhist Teachings on Abstaining from Meat” is written by Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol. It is interesting to know what food of Bodhisattvas is. First, we should understand from where the figure of Bodhisattvas to be known in Buddhism. As we could know that original Buddhism comprises the teachings given during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha. This was the first Buddhism or called a time of unified Buddhism, there was just Sutra Collection and one Vinaya Collection. Then came Schools of Buddhism, which developed in about 150 years after the Buddha’s lifetime, when the early Budddhist Sangha split into two schools — Theravāda (Way of the Elders,) which was conservative in nature; and the Mahasanghikavada (The Way of the Majority,) which was more progressive. As time went on, these two schools further divided. The records speak of eighteen schools but we

\(^{82}\) See at the title page of “Food For The Heart.”
know that at one time there were more, as many as twenty-five or twenty-six schools, each with its own *Sutra* and *Vinaya* Collection. The *Mahāyāna* way of study and practice arose from the *Mahasanghika* School. When that study and practice were sufficiently ripe, the *sutras* of the *Mahāyāna* began to appear. Thus we could say that formation of Buddhism took place in three stages: 1) Original Buddhism 2) Schools of Buddhism 3) *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. When *Mahāyāna* Buddhism began to develop, *Mahāyāna* practitioners call the schools which did not belong to *Mahāyāna* (Great Vehicle,) *Hinayāna* (Little Vehicle.) The word “little” saying: You vehicle cannot carry many people, only you yourself; “great” is to the contrary, it can carry tens, even hundreds of people. The highest spiritual ideal of the *Hinayāna* is the *Arhat* (Worthy One) who through his own effort and practice attains liberation, thinking about nirvana only in individual terms. The *Mahāyāna* put forth the ideal of the *bodhisattva* (*bodhi,* “wisdom, enlightenment,” *sattva,* “beings”), who shares the fruits of his or her practice with all other beings. The *bodhisattva* is someone who, upon attaining enlightenment, vows to forgo enter *nirvāṇa* until all other sentient beings - down to the very last blade of grass - are also liberated.

According to this book, aspirants on the *Bodhisattva* path are encouraged to cultivate four “boundless” attitudes (*Brahma Vihāra,*) so called because their field of action (all sentient beings) and the resulting merit are incalculably vast. These attitudes are love (*mettā* - the sincere wish that others be happy,) compassion (*karunā* - the sincere wish that others not suffer,) sympathetic joy (*muditā* - a heartfelt rejoicing in the good fortune of others), and impartiality (*upekkhā* - the ability to apply the previous three attitudes to all beings without differentiation.) Of these

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84 Ibid., p. 9.
four attitudes, the fourth is the most significant and challenging. These four "boundless" attitudes are the very foods that nourish the Bodhisattvas who always bring peace, joy, and stability to the world.

The special aspect of this work is abstaining from meat eating. Based on one of the Mahāyāna Sutras, the Lankāvatāra Sutra, the author has emphasized that someone who wants to practice the Bodhisattva path he or she should never eat any kind of meat. It is because meat eating, which is harmful to the living of the species and animals and environment, will make hatred and desire increase and will bring disasters to the world. The reason why Lord Buddha asks his disciples – bodhisattvas to abstain from meat eating that can be known as follows:

“At that time Mahāmati the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva asked: Tathāgata, I pray you, tell me how I and other Bodhisattva Mahasattvas of the present time and in the future may remove the desire for the taster of meat in those who are soiled by the habit of consuming the flesh and blood of sentient beings. I beseech you set forth the teaching so that they may perceive the wrongfulness of consuming meat, and longing instead of the taste of Dharma, they may cultivate the kind of love that embraces all beings, cherishing them as their own dear children. …”

Lord Buddha answered, “Mahamati, a loving and compassionate Bodhisattva should not eat meat. There are countless reasons for this, only some of which I will explain to you. It is not easy, Mahamati, to come upon a being who, in the endless ages of samsāra, has not been once your father or your mother, your brother or your sister, your son or daughter, kinsman, friend, or close companion. Your kith and

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86 The chapter six of the Lankāvatāra Sutra, trans. by Padmakara Translation Group quoted, ibid., pp. 47-56.
kin in one existence, they have donned a different shape in later lives. They have become animals, wild or tame, beast or bird. Mahamati, all those who have faith in Buddha Dharma, how could they consume the flesh of living beings? ... Ordinary people naturally refrain from the flesh of donkeys, camels, dogs, elephant, and humans. It follows naturally that Bodhisattvas should refrain from meat of every kind. ... Mahamati, all my noble sons and daughters who embrace the Mahāyāna – all perceive that eating meat brings obstacles to liberation. And since they wish to benefit themselves and others, they do not eat meat of any kind. ... Mahamati, for those who feed on meat, already in this present life, their breath is foul and rank; they sleep with little ease, and they awake in pain. Dreadful visions haunt their dreams enough to make their hair stand up. ... They easily succumb to fits of rage and the sudden onset of intense anxiety and dread. They lose all mastery of the way they eat and gorge themselves excessively. Food, drink, and every vital nourishment, they cannot properly digest. ...”

“I have declared that food can be either as wholesome as medicine or as dreadful as the flesh of children eaten and consumed as food. Meat is the food of ordinary people, Mahamati, but the Aryas reject it utterly. Meat consumption is the source of many evils; it is wholly destitute of virtue. It is not the food on which the wise sustain themselves. ... For my disciples, I prescribe a fitting nourishment: rice and barley, wheat and peas, every kind of bean and lentil, butter, oil, honey, treacle, fruits and sugar cane. ... All this, I teach for all who follow in the footsteps of the Buddhas of the past, who have no clinging to their bodies, lives, possessions, and to their sense of taste.
Indeed they crave no taste of any kind; they are compassionate and, like me, hold all beings in their live. . . ."

"O Mahamati, the Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas eat the food of Dharma, which is by no means something material. Is there any need to speak of the food of Tathagatas? Mahamati, the Tathagatas are the dharmakaya; they are sustained by the food of Dharma. Their bodies are not form of solid matter; they are not sustained by material food. They have discarded all propensities related to samsāra, the thirst for existence and all the things of this life."

From the above quotations we all are clear the reason why the Buddha’s disciples who are not allowed to eat meat. However, for a long time until now the meat eating is the problem has often stimulated controversy about point of view of the two Buddhist traditions – Theravāda and Mahāyāna. For Theravāda Buddhist monks who are holding three cases or threefold purity meat may be used: not seen, not heard, and not suspected to have been killed on purpose for a monk; for Mahāyāna Buddhist monks who are vegetarians due to compassion and love for not only humans but also animals, they try to practice the Bodhisattva path. In the researcher’s opinion, we should stop debating controversies, because the "middle path" that was taught by the Buddha will be neither vegetarianism nor non-vegetarianism. This is to say that Lord Buddha has only attached importance to the serious practice of his teachings more than study in order to accumulate knowledge and to debate. For those who are arguing, though they are vegetarians or non-vegetarians, they are not Lord Buddha’s disciples. Further, the purpose of liberation is to eliminate craving, grasping, and ignorance and āhāra that should be observed thus. When craving and grasping are eradicated, one

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87 M. Ii, 369, sutta No. 55.
can begin realizing what the value and importance of āhāra and nourishment are. Especially, if for those who are following the Bodhisattva path, cultivate compassionate, respect for not only the living of humans but also all kind of animals, at that time they themselves will figure out what kinds of food for them to eat and how to eat rightly. In doing so, there is not any aroused controversy in their minds.

In short, the above studies as mentioned, though they have not directly discussed the Buddha’s teachings on āhāra, they have put forth and been close to the specific sense of āhāra as recorded in the Nikāyas. This will be studied in details in the fourth chapter.

2.3. Concept of āhāra in different religions

As mentioned, the world’s major religions are known as Hinduism, Buddhism Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. There are almost as many ways to define religion as there are religions, but scholars basically tend to think about it in two ways. Some concentrate on the functions of religions in societies while others focus on grasping its mysterious, universal essence.

Indeed, the function of religion is to explain inexplicable, thus providing humans with a sense of comfort in a chaotic world. Food (āhāra,) because it sustains life, is an important part of religious symbols, rituals, customs, taboo, fast, and diet, those acts of daily life intended to bring about an orderly relationship with the spiritual or supernatural realm.88

2.3.1. Hinduism

Hinduism is considered the world’s oldest religion, and, like Judaism, it is the basis of other religions such as Buddhism. Although Hinduism was once popular throughout much of Asia, most Hindus now

88 Food and Culture, ibid., p. 85.
live in India, its birthplace. Food plays a very important role in the social and ritual life of the Hindus. Food is mentioned in the early Hindu sacred writings known as the Vedas. The oldest Upanisads, which precede Buddhism, contain many passages about food in a metaphysical way.\(^8^9\) The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad says (V, 12.1): pūyati vā annam rте prāṇāт; ...

Indeed, food in India involves cultural characteristics not commonly associated with food in the contemporary West, for the subject routinely concerns matters of this world as well as the otherworld. Food is integral to India’s cultural philosophy, since it comprehensively reflects the essence and experience of Indians at personal and collective levels. Food in India is never merely a material substance of ingestion, nor only a transactional commodity. It is synonymous with life and all its goals, including the subtlest and the highest. This food asserts such a life-guiding presence that it concerns, one way or another, the thought and practice of the entire Indic civilization.\(^9^0\) Food among the Hindus is “self-evident” because it is a dimension of none other than the Creator himself and is integral to the formation of cosmos. A cosmic “logic” thus controls the production and circulation of food within creation, and it is a manifestation of Brahman, the ultimate Reality. To the Hindu, food also does not “represent” Brahman, but it is actually a part of this ultimate reality, Brahman. In this world and beyond, the cosmic moral order (dharma) regulates the availability of food to all creatures. Hindus regard such a truth as self-evident, requiring no further proof and admitting no

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doubts. When body and self are concerned, food is considered as one of
the five “sheaths” (annamayakosa) which “clothes” the soul (jīva; the
other four sheaths being those of life-breath, mind, understanding, and
bliss.) Thus, food directly matters to the formation of a Hindu’s inner
being and its becoming from one birth to the next.  

Defined by such a distinct cultural ideology, food is “meaningful”
to the Hindu throughout his life. It is known that, multiple schemes of
food classification establish the rules about appropriate eating and
feeding practices. The internal states of one’s being, within this world
and beyond, remain intimately connected to the moral quality and
condition of what one eats. Whatever one eats has manifest and hidden,
and immediate and remote, consequences on one’s body and being.

Food for Hindus is therefore never simply a material substance; it
is never only what the eyes see. The unseen karma and dharma of the
giver and receiver energize it, circulate it, and color it.

Thus if food expresses the cosmic truth, showing its ultimate control
by the dharma-based principles of cosmic creation and maintenance, it also
expresses itself with intricate social-ritual (karma-dharma) distinctions,
classifications, and customary actions, releasing discourses on meaningful
action concerning how food, body, and self need to be handled in each
other’s terms to achieve the Hindu goal of liberation.

Food is self-evident to the Hindu in another way. It is for the
coveted pursuit of one’s own liberation. Food here is the necessary
“helper” until all exchanges cease between self (prāṇa,) body, and the
world; even the renouncer feeds himself until the absolute Brahman is
realized. Within the worldly life (samsāra,) however, food plays a double
role - enlightening when approached with austerity and self-control and

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92 Ibid., p. 5.
93 Ibid., p. 6.
degrading when sought for sensual indulgence. Sensual food becomes a part of the hall of Maya's mirrors, deluding and destroying the indulgent. Unscrupulous pursuit of food and eating in daily life is known to invite diseases and shorten life. Under extreme austerities (tapas,) on the other hand, any eating is considered a hindrance.94

If a saint renders food auspicious and blessed, an ordinary person’s covetousness, accumulated karmas, ignorance, and moral lapses as surely taint it. Even a saint's lapse pursues him from one birth to the next until rectified.

Based on the “thread-soul” ideology where food becomes simultaneously a moral and material essence, Hindu pursues its comprehensive gastrosemantics in terms of three major cultural models and their corresponding discourses. The first discourse on food - ontological and experiential - is concerned with the cultural “givens” within the “worldly” sphere (including food’s classifications, taboos, intrinsic qualities, normal meal patterns, dietary restrictions, and notions of sufficiency and insufficiency.) The second discourse - transactional and therapeutic - concerns itself with the maintenance and promotion of comprehensive body-soul “wellness” (including the prevention and cure of various diseases by diet and “medicine”) by recognizing interdependence among different intrinsic properties of foods, the eater and his actions of giving and receiving. The third discourse - world-critical - shows the limits of the first two as it concerns itself with such ultimate issues as the reality or illusion of the world, and the roles (inner,” or spiritual and “outer,” or physical) of foods in enhancing one’s spiritual knowledge (jñāna) and “inner sight” (antaradrṣṭi) for attaining liberation (mokṣa).95

94 Ibid., p. 7.
95 Ibid., pp.7-8.
The three food discourses, in other terms, are concerned with (a) worldly life and becoming, (b) healing and happiness, and (c) self-control and salvation. Each discourse deals with issues of cognition and experience, self and cosmos, and ideology and action. Each discourse is characterized by its own distinct praxis - the first does so by keeping the soul-Brahman principle at the center of all spiritual paths and pursuits (yogas); the second by following dietary and ritual regulations organized along one's physical state and social stages in life (e.g., varnāśramadharma), for fulfilling dharma and achieving personal health and “wellness”; and the third by pursuing fasting, austerities and renunciation for attaining liberation. Finally, and most importantly, the three discourses overlap and work interdependently within a Hindu’s life; they exhibit contextually varying distinctions - but no immutable dichotomies - along thought, feeling, and action.

In foods reside all the major constituents and “essences” that cause physical ailments and influence personal temperament, emotional fluctuations, longevity, and salvation. With foods the Indian regulates his mental states and aesthetic feelings, and secures spiritual gains. To the spiritually adept, foods reveal as well as filter the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. The discerning know, as Mahatma Gandhi used to say, that food can either aggravate or subdue the primary sources of worldly bondage - anger, lust, greed and infatuation.

Though the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain on the subcontinent may largely continue to share the preceding profile of food praxis (and we have employed the word “Indian” in such a comprehensive sense), we must emphasize that each stakes a claim to a distinct philosophical ideology and “food culture.” And this means that, once considered in detail, their gastrosemantic discourses will also be distinctly different.
Thus, if food and eating constitute a “multi-form” but single Ultimate Reality to the Hindu, they are subjects of severe austerity and denial for the Jains; and largely a practical matter of maintaining life (without extremes) for the Buddhist. If the Hindu approaches eating with self-control, the Jain finds eating ideologically risky (if necessary) and the Buddhist approaches it as a part of his “middle path.” Still, for all the three, food may variously enter the issues of being and becoming, healing and social sharing, and self-discipline.  

From the above brief presentation, India’s distinct models and experiences of food provide us with certain distinct properties of India’s cultural accounting of itself as a civilization. Food illuminates India’s ideality, morality, reflexivity, materiality, and cosmology in various ways, showing us the depth as well as sweep of such a scheme. Conjoining materiality, practice, and experience, food in Hindu India stamps one’s being and becoming; it runs through the personal, social, pragmatic, spiritual, and ideal domains.

### 2.3.2. Christianity

The three dominant Christian branches are Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Protestantism.

Most Christians now observe no food taboos, and Christianity remains remarkable for its lack of such rules. In the nineteenth century, Adventists in the United States rediscovered the prohibition of *Acts* 15 on blood and went beyond it to vegetarianism; many Christians, especially Protestant evangelicals, Mormons, and Christian Scientists, adopted a taboo on alcohol; but most Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christians remained free, in theory to eat and to drink anything.  

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96 Ibid., p. 9.
Building upon the blessing of bread and wine from Jewish mealtime, Sabbath, and Passover rituals, Christians have often made the sharing of bread and wine during Communion (or Eucharist) into the center of their ritual lives. During the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic theology defined this ritual meal as the miracle of transubstantiation, during which bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the incarnation of God; Thomas Aquinas taught that the substance of Christ's body is then concealed under the appearance of bread and wine by another miracle in order to prevent disgust among the communicants. Although Protestants later rejected this doctrine, it still prevails among Catholics. One famous convert to Catholicism, the English writer Evelyn Waugh, was said to have converted because only Catholics offered the opportunity to "eat God." 98

Few symbolic foods are used by Christians today, but the Easter egg and its chocolate and candy variants are widely recognized; as in the Passover meal, the egg indicates the primordial roots of Easter in spring festivals of rebirth. Ethnic groups like the Italians, many of whom seek a meal of twelve types of seafood on Christmas Eve, often associate particular foods with Christian holidays. Some Protestants in the United States have substituted grape juice, which was invented for this purpose by a Methodist named Welch, for sacramental wine in many churches. Meanwhile, Protestants have made a virtual sacrament of coffee, with after-worship coffee hours following services at most churches. The coffeepot has become the unofficial symbol of Alcoholics Anonymous, a nondenominational spiritual group that grew from the Protestants ethos. 99

Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians fast for forty days called Lent, between Ash Wednesday and Easter, every spring; among Catholics,
the rules of this fast have been relaxed in recent years. Lent involves no
periods of complete denial of food and drink, but only abstinence from
meat on certain days and a commitment to eat less every day. Among the
devout, there is a tradition of voluntarily giving up a favorite food or drink,
both to repent for sin and to provide money for charity. A celebration
called Mardi Gras (French for “fat Tuesday”) or Carnival often precedes
the beginning of Lent, especially in Latin countries.100

In many religions, monks, nuns, and ascetics use restricted diets as a
means to heighten awareness in prayer or meditation and to lessen the
passions of the body. Under the Christian Rule of St. Benedict, each
monk was allowed one pound of bread per day and a pint of wine, but
meat was not recommended except for the sick.

2.3.3. Judaism

The Jewish religion, estimated to be 4,000 years old, started when
Abraham received God’s earliest covenant with the Jews, it had no
homeland until the birth of Israel in 1948.101 The cornerstone of the
Jewish religion is the Hebrew Bible, particularly the first five books of
the Bible, the Pentateuch, also known as the books of Moses, or the
Torah. It consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and
Deuteronomy. The Torah chronicles the beginnings of Judaism and
contains the basic laws that express the will of God to the Jews.102

The Torah not only sets down the Ten Commandments, but also

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100 Ibid., p. 3171.
101 Food and Culture, ibid., p. 86.
102 Ibid.
103 The Ten Commandments (alternatively called the Decalogue) are a list of religious and moral
imperatives, which are said to have been spoken by God to Moses on Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb
and engraved on two stone tablets. There are two very different lists, sometimes differentiated as the
Ethical Decalogue and the Ritual Decalogue: (1) “I am the LORD your God who brought you out
of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me....” (2) “Do
not make an image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above...”, (3) “Do not swear falsely by
the name of the LORD...,” (4) “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,” (5) “Honor your
describes the right way to prepare food, give to charity, and conduct one's life in all ways.  

No religion has such a complex set of food taboos as Judaism. Jewish dietary law begins with the Torah which according to Orthodox Jews was given to Moses on Sinai; modern scholars date the final version of the Torah to the Babylonian exile, after 486 BCE. Since Roman times, rabbis have greatly expanded the food taboos of the Jews through commentary designed to show how the laws of the Torah may be kept.

The oldest among Jewish food taboos is the prohibition on eating blood. From this prohibition grew the practice of kosher butchering, which emphasizes killing the animal with a quick cut of the neck and draining its blood. Jews also salt and boil meat to remove blood, broil organ meats in which the blood collects, and cook meat very thoroughly to eliminate blood. The taboo on blood and the laws of butchering mean that no animal killed by hunting can be eaten by an observant Jew. Observant Jews not only abstain from cheeseburgers and avoid milk for some time after eating meat but also maintain two sets of dishes, pots, and utensils for meat and dairy meals.

The Jewish taboo on pork has become famous because the pig is so popular as a source of protein in Europe and in Asia, but Jews also abstain from a long list of animals found in Leviticus 11 and further defined by the rabbis. Only animals that have hooves but also part the hoof (like cows and sheep, unlike horses) and chew the cud (ruminants, capable of eating grass) can be eaten. These restrictions eliminate such common food animals as rabbits, dogs, bears, horses, and camels as well as pigs, which divide the

__father and your mother...", (6) "Do not murder," (7) "Do not commit adultery," (8) "Do not steal," (9) "Do not bear false witness against your neighbor," and (10) "Do not covet your neighbor's wife."

104 Ibid.
105 Lindsay Jones, Encyclopedia of Religion, ibid., p. 3167.
106 Ibid.
hoof but do not chew the cud. Predatory birds and swarming insects are also forbidden. Among sea creatures, only fish with fins and scales can be eaten; clams, lobsters, eels, squid, scallops, shark, sturgeon (with their caviar,) porpoise, and whale are all forbidden, and swordfish are an object of dispute, since they are scaled only as juveniles.\textsuperscript{107}

During the eight days of Passover\textsuperscript{108} the spring holiday commemorates the deliverance of ancient Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jews observe a taboo on leaven, which is ordinarily ubiquitous in bread and other products containing wheat. Not all prepared foods that are certified by rabbinical boards as kosher are also kosher for Passover, because some kosher foods may have been prepared with or in the presence of leaven.\textsuperscript{109}

Jewish food taboos have undoubtedly had one effect announced in the Torah: they have fostered solidarity among Jews by separating Jews from others, making “a distinction between the clean and the unclean” (Lev. 11:47) so that Israel may be “holy” as its God is holy.\textsuperscript{110}

The story of Eden implicates a fruit in the beginning of death and of agricultural work (through the curse on Adam.) According to Genesis, people were vegetarians in Eden but became carnivorous in the aftermath of the Flood; the offering of blood to God in the Temple remained as testimony that animal life still belonged to the creator. Jewish practice included a sacrificial lamb at Passover until the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. Foods celebrated in Jewish stories include the manna, said to resemble coriander seed, that fell from heaven each day to feed Israel during its wandering in the wilderness and the cakes brought by ravens to feed the prophet Elijah when he fled into the desert from the wrath of Jezebel. According to Orthodox Jews, the coming of the Messiah will

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} A Jewish religious holiday when people remember the escape of the Jews from Egypt.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
include the return of manna from heaven and a great banquet.\textsuperscript{111}

Daily Jewish practice includes a ritual blessing over bread and wine performed at home. On the Sabbath, it is a \textit{mitzvah} (religious duty or good deed) to drink wine and to eat meat. Synagogue services now also commonly include a blessing and sharing of bread and wine. Holidays involve symbolic foods such as the \textit{matzoh} (unleavened bread) of Passover and the round loaves of bread and apples with honey that are eaten to promote continuity and good fortune at the New Year.\textsuperscript{112}

Jews undertake two briefer, but more intense fasts, also abstaining from drink and sex as well as from food: from sunset to the next sunset on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, which completes the New Year’s holiday in the fall, and during the summer on Tisha B’Av, to commemorate the destruction of the Temple.\textsuperscript{113}

\subsection*{2.3.4. Islam}

Islam is the dominant religion in the Middle East, northern Africa, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia of large numbers of people. Islam, which means “submission” (to the will of God,) is not only a religion but also a way of life. One who adheres to Islam is called a Muslim, “he who submits.”\textsuperscript{114} The \textit{Qur’an}, the book of revelations to prophet Muhammad, explicitly forbids eating animals that have died of themselves, blood, pork, and food over which the name of a god other than \textit{Allah} has been invoked (\textit{surah} 2:173). Islamic slaughtering rules resemble those of Judaism with regard to cutting the neck and drawing the blood, but many Muslims also refuse any meat not killed by a Muslim, since only then can they be assured that an invocation of \textit{Allah} has accompanied the slaughter. Though

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 3169.
\item\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 3171.
\item\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Food and Culture}, ibid., p. 97.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
abstinence from alcohol does not appear in the Qur'an, the traditions connecting such abstinence to the prophet Muhammad are so strong that most Muslims believe that their religion forbids all alcohol, even if (as in Muslim countries like Morocco or Turkey) there are public places in which Muslims drink. Many Muslims avoid mozzarella cheese because of the rennet, sometimes derived from the stomachs of pigs, involved in its manufacture.\textsuperscript{115}

Islam stands out among religions by involving no food or drinking in its ordinary services of worship. Eating plays an important ritual and social role in the fasting month of Ramadan, when each day ends at sunset with an iftar meal that breaks the fast; these meals traditionally begin with figs, following the example of the Prophet. In Muslim countries like Egypt, iftar meals stretch into the night and create a festive atmosphere during the month. One of the main holidays of Islam, the Ḥajj during the month of pilgrimage to Mecca, involves the sharing of food because each Muslim household is obligated to sacrifice a goat, sheep, ram, cow, camel and distribute one-third of the meat to the poor. The Muslim vision of Paradise involves both food and drink: the Qur'an often pictures those in Paradise enjoying “fountains” and “fruits, any that they may select,” with “flesh of fowls, any that they may desire.”

In short, examining connections between food and religions as mentioned helps to illumine how religion functions in cultures, and why religious experiences are powerful for believers. It can also underline the fact that food feeds many hungers. Scholars have only just begun to examine the myriad ways in which this is true for religious peoples. It is safe to say that most scholars of religion would agree that religions provide humans with meaning-making structures that often involve food. These structures reveal the essence of the sacred through eating, sacrificing, preparing, or serving food to believers.

They may serve as paradigms for all ordinary food ways as well. This
domestication of sacred food ways in turn helps to perpetuate the process of
meaning-making that is the function of religious practice and belief. Believers
may or may not reflect on the importance of food for their religious identity.
Knowledge of food’s centrality for meaning-making is not limited for believers
to theological abstraction.

The teachings on āhāra in Buddhism are different from those religions.
What the Buddha has taught on āhāra unfolds the truth of man and world, of
happiness and anguish, of cause and effect. All these are proved through the
specific teachings of Lord Buddha. This is mentioned in the next chapter.