CHAPTER -IV

FOOD AND DRINK

Food is no doubt a wider term but we also come across a
similar word in Sanskrit like 'Āhāra' which denotes food in extensive
sense.

In the early Buddhist literature the denotation of the
term 'Āhāra' has so far been extended to signify four kinds of food and nutrition, i.e., (i) the food that is masticated (Kabaliññā-
rāhāra) i.e. food for stomach, (ii) the food consisting in sensi-
ble (Phassāhāra) i.e. food for the senses (iii) the cognitions and notions (Viññānāhāra) i.e. food for the intellect and spirit (iv) mental reactions (Monosaññocana) i.e. food for the mind.

Food according to Vātsyāyana refers to two meals for
men viz. one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

In this connection we may refer to the charity of the food consisting of different varieties of cereals in ancient times. It indicates also the food habit. The Edicts of Asoka in general, the Pillar Edict VII and the Edict Second Queen's donation in particular bear eloquent testimony to this practice.

In the Queen Edict it is mentioned, "Whatever donation has been made by the Second Queen, be it a mango grove, charity-halls, is to be accounted as the act of the Queen".

In the Pācititiya Dharma it is pointed out that rest houses should be made throughout the country in some of which a constant supply of rice is to be provided for travellers.

In respect of purity of food great importance was attached to it also from ancient times. In the Chāṇḍyogya Upaniṣad it is said "When there is purity of food, then the mind becomes pure and when the mind is pure then follows firm remembrance (of the real self), when the last is secured all knots (that binds the soul to the world) are loosened".

It appears from these discussions that from ancient times food has been essential to sustain life.

In Bengal there are favourable natural conditions for production of various types of agricultural food crops like paddy, Barley, fruits, vegetables, pulses, spices and varied other things.

2 S.B.E. XIII P. 38, Jātaka-31, Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutta 1.10,11.5.
3 Āhāraśuddhau sattavasūḍāhiḥ Sattavaśudhvādhruba Smrty Smrtilambhe Serbbagrenthinām Vipramokṣaḥ Chāṇḍyogya VII 26.2.
The fertile soils specially of the lower Gangetic plains are being watered in almost all the seasons for producing various crops. The early inhabitants of Bengal used to remain satisfied due to the abundance of agricultural crops produced through the nature. So it is said¹ "A land with such cogenial climatic conditions, a land smiling in all seasons with her vegetations of different food crops, fruits, flowers and vegetables and a land abounding with milk and honey, fish and flesh and profuse agricultural and mineral wealth, Bengal has for ages been regarded in consequence as - "Sonār Bāṅglā" or as being a veritable land of gold, an El Dorado."

It may be pointed out in this connection that in ancient Bengal no one could ordinarily think of scarcity in earning his daily livelihood except in times of famine and distress. An inscription² written in Asokan Brāhma script of about 3rd century B.C. at Mohāsthānagarh in Northern Bengal may be referred to here. It says that inhabitants could get their essential food grains from Government stores situated in Purṇāgarā or Purṇānarā.

Mention may be made in this connection that agriculture was the principal source of occupation in ancient Bengal. The ancient people were wise in cultivation. The Bengali cultivators were the tillers of the soil with the aid of astrological observations from

¹ T.N. Chakrabarty, Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal, PP.2-3.
² Sukātayikāya(api gaṇḍakaih dhānayaḥ eṣaḥ Koṣṭagāraḥ Koṣaḥ D.C. Sircar, Select Inscription, P. 83.
the hoary past. The Krṣiparāśara⁰ refers to the peculiar situation of the planets as bringing scarcity and drought seen during the rainy season to help the cultivators to sow their seeds in time.

Though it is very difficult to have a comprehensive account of food habit of the people of ancient Bengal from the data available in the inscriptions, (as the inscriptions of Bengal supply only a few broad and stray or fragmentary pieces of informations), references scattered in early Bengali literature corroborate the epigraphic data and thus give us a fair idea in this respect. Besides these, the evidence furnished by some interesting terracotta, plaques discovered in course of excavation at Pāhārpur, Maināmatī etc., and the testimony of some interesting images of male and female Hindu deities also supply us with some positive data with regard to the use of food in ancient Bengal.

We may state in this connection that there might also be variations of foodstuff and drinks and also there existed different methods of cooking according to the differences of geographical positions in ancient Bengal. Yet a comprehensive idea may be had from the study of the dietary system of the different parts of Bengal.

1 Kujopṛṣṭagobhānuḥ Samudramapi Śoṣayet
Sadya nikṛtoyevṛṣṭīṁ citrā madhyagato Bhṛgu
angārako yadā śiśe tadāṇgaraccayi maḥī
Sa ebe rabinā yuktāḥ samudramapi śoṣayet
Krṣiparāśara.
Paddy (Dhānya) was the most important foodgrains cultivated in ancient Bengal, as the warm and temperate climate of Bengal helped to produce this in abundant quantity. So boiled rice (Siddha anna) must have been, as at present, the most commonly used and in all probability the chief staple food of rich and poor in their everyday life.

There are large number of references in the early inscriptions of Bengal to free gifts of land especially paddy field to pious Brāhmīns. The gift of land has been eulogised as the meritorious of all gifts from ancient times. From the ancient times of Bengal the kings used to make gifts of land or bestowed a nibandha. At the time of this granting they usually executed a writing (about the gift) for the information of the inhabitants of the country.

Hence the concluding lines of almost all the inscriptions of Bengal contain the laudatory and imprecatory verses in respect of the implementation of gifts.

1 The Dhēnāidāhā Copper-Plate Inscription of Kumāra Guptā I ... etc. C.B.I. P. 41.
2 (i) Vas. Dh.S. 29.16, (ii) Vr. 7, (iii) Mahābhārata Anuśāsana 62.19 (iv) Yadēnāh Kurute Kīmicitraja-bhūmimābā ....... Pnvan .......
   Mucyate sarva päpethyastamoḥya iba candraṁāh
   Vanaparva ( 33.78-79).
3 Vahubhirvasudā dattā Rañabhissagarādibhiḥ
   Yasya Yasya yadā bhūmīstasaḥ stasya tadā phalaṁ
Khālimpur Copper-Plate of DharmaPāla and others, C.B.I. P. 101.
In the Dhanaidaha Copper-Plate Inscriptions of Kumārgupta 1 (432-33 A.D.) we find that the king made gift of land to pious Brāhmaṇas with its area measuring 8 x 9 reeds. These have been donated to Chandogya Brāhmaṇa Vārahavāmin, an inhabitant of Bhāṭraṅgaṭaka.

There are also many references to land grants both agricultural and religious, but these two kinds of land should not be mixed up together. Thus in the Baigrām Copper-Plate Inscription 2 (448 A.D.), it appears that there should not be any conflict of the self-agricultural land with that of perpetual endowment.

Similar instances may be available from the Faridpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Dharmādityā 3 regnal year 3 that a cultivated Land Grant was made to the pious Brāhmaṇa named Candrasvāmin, who belonged to lineage of Bharadvāja, of the Vājaseneya School of the Vedas and was well versed in the six Vedāṅgas.

1 Astaka-Navaka-nalabhya-amaṇapaviṇāhya - Kṣetraṇasparmekāṃ Dattaṃ Line - 11, Dhanāidaha Copper-Plate Inscription of Kumāragupta I. C.B.I. P. 42.
3 Bhāradvāja-Sagotra-Vājaseneya - Salahgādhayeṇaśya Candrasvāminasya ... Pratipāditaṃti ... Line 18-20 Faridpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Dharmāditya, C.B.I. P. 76
Again in the Faridpur Copper-Plate Inscription of the time of Dharmaditya\(^1\) Vasudāyasvāmin headed by Chief scribe Nayasena, and the village heads fed by the headman Somadhoṣa said, "I wish through your honour's favour to buy at proper price from your honour's cultivated lands with portions ......."\(^2\)

Thus as these inscriptions specifically refer to Land Grants, we may come to the conclusion that agriculture was the mainstay of occupation in ancient Bengal.

The word 'Tillers of the soil' is found in the Kālimpur Copper-Plate of Dharmapāla.\(^3\) It may be assumed that the inhabitants in this period used to live only by cultivation.

As we have mentioned earlier that rice was a chief staple food so production of foodgrains might have been cultivated by the people in ancient Bengal.

In the Ānulia Copper-Plate Inscription of King Laksmanaṇa\(^4\) it has been mentioned that King Laksmanamaṇa Sena made a gift of large number of villages having excellent field of Śāli paddy\(^5\) to many pious Brahmans.

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1 Vasudāyasvāmin .... Khaṇḍalakāthi Line 6-9, C.B.I.P. 80
2 Cf. R. Mukherjee- Corpus of Bengal Inscription P. 81.
3 Sakarāṇa Prativasāinā Kṣetrakaraṇa, Line 48
4 Kālimpur Copper-Plate of Dharmapāla. C.B.I. P. 100.
5 Śāli rice, better type of rice produced from paddy which grown in later autumn, is now known in Bengal as 'Āmana Dhana'.

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In the Edilpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Kesavasena there is a reference to the fact that the King Kesavasena bestowed villages to Brāhmaṇas containing cultivable fields where only paddy was produced. In the Rāma-caritam of Sandhyākarnandin we find also references to paddy fields.

In one of the early Sanskrit work Hāralatā, written by Aniruddhaṭaṭṭa, preceptor of King Vallālasena, an illustrious king of Sena dynasty of Bengal, it is stated that the name Śāli was applied to paddy which became ripened during later autumn (i.e. Hemanta) and the expression 'Vrihi' appeared to have indicated the paddy which became ripe in the early autumn (i.e. Saratkāla).

The name 'Borovva' or Boradhāna as it is popular known in Bengal, is applied to a variety of Vrihi dhānya or a variety of paddy of the Vrihi class.

Although there is no reference to wheat or Barley in the inscriptions of Bengal, they are mentioned in Saduktikarnāmṛta of Śrīchārādēsa as agricultural crops next to the paddy. We may refer

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1 Etenonnatavaṃsāṅkaṭa - bhūvah sro-tasvatīsaikata - krīḍālolaṃmarālakashalakalat - Kvāṇa - Françītotsavāḥ
Verse 24, Edilpur Copper-Plate of Kesavasena, C.B.I. P. 336.

2 Bahu - Dhānya - rāja - Sālīsa - Sālīsa - bala - Kṣetrotkataḥ Karvvaṭāḥ
Verse 17, Chapt. III.

3 "Śarā - Pakva-dhānya Vrīhiḥ, haimantikam Śāliḥ"
Verse 24, Edilpur Copper-Plate of Kesavasena, C.B.I. P. 336.

4 Vaidyaka Sabdasindhu P. 1009.
to a verse from Saduktikarpāṃṛta,\(^1\) that paddy and Barley were also sown in agricultural fields, during rainy season.

Cakradatta\(^2\) mentions in his treaties the name of several kinds of paddy like Rakta Śāli, Saṣṭika, Nīvāra and Śyāma. The name Nīvāra\(^3\) is used to denote a special class of paddy. It denotes also a wild variety of paddy. Saṣṭikā or Saṣṭika\(^4\) is the name of a class of paddy which becomes ripe for reaping in course of sixty days. It is normally known in Bengal as Seṭe dhāna, Śyāmāka or Śyāmā is the name of another class of paddy, Kaṅku or Kaṅgu is also known as another variety of paddy.

Yavaka is the name of a class of Borodhānya,\(^5\) we may refer to another two varieties of paddy 'Śūka-dhānya' and 'Samichānya' as found in the commentary of Cakradatta's Cikitsā-Śaṁgṛaha.

From the above description it is quite clear that Bengal was famous for the production of different types of paddy.

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\(^1\) Ete Karvurit - ātāpās - tata-itah samjāyamān - āmbuda ochedaih
Sampratī Ketāki dala - milad - darbhātityeyodoyāḥ
grām- āntdgata - Śalibija yavas - āślesa - praurṣyam -
manogovāhāyata - īti - garbhitadīśo - ramryāh Sakhevāsarāḥ
Saduktikarpāṃṛta - Śrīcaradāsa ( 2,165,5)

\(^2\) Cikitsā-Śaṁgṛaha - Cakradatta.

\(^3\) Bhavaprakāśa PP 636-37.

\(^4\) Saṣṭi - dina - Pakva - Śāli - dhānya - Viśeṣa, Vaidaka Sabdasindhu P. 1088.

\(^5\) Vaidyaka Sabdasindhu, P. 857.
Grains of rice seem to have been husked out from paddy by hurling on it with the help of one's hands a kind of heavy pestle, and again the pestle seems to have been used again while the paddy would be husked in a kind of mortar. We may refer in this connection to a verse from Saduktikarnamrta composed by Sarana, that the household ladies in the family of a poor man used to husk rice in silvery moonlight and at the time of husking they used to sing favourite folk songs.

Some early Bengali texts also refer to 'Cipitaka' made from this dhanya in ancient Bengal. That is boiled soft rice seems also to have been flattened by pressing it gently and then dried in the Sun for making cipitaka. The extensive use of the word Cipitaka which means food may also be found in modern Bengal. There are references to the custom of partaking flattened rice or Cipitaka along with sweets containing the kernel of the cocoanut fruit on the night of the full-moon (Kojagari Purnima) in the month of Asvina (i.e. roughly the period in between the middle of September and the middle of October), in some early works of Hindu canon of Bengal school like Kalaviveka and Krtya-tattvarnava.

Saduktikarnamrta (5.1.3) By Šarana.

2 Kalaviveka and Krtya-tattvarnava Ed. by Pramatha Nath Tarkabhusana.

3 Ibid.
The practice of making 'lāja' or frying paddy does not appear to be unknown in early Bengal. There are in consequence many references in the Smṛti Works. The writers of ancient Bengal like Halayudha, the author of Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva, Raghunandana and so on refer to 'lāja homa' or offering of fried paddy (lāja) given as oblations to burning flame of a sacred sacrificial fire in connection with the rules prescribed for auspicious social rites like marriage (Vivāha). In the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa we also find the same reference to lāja and śamā. At the time of marriage the bride while going round the fire each time is required to throw fried grain. It may be noted in this connection that at the time of leading the bride round the fire the offerings of fried grain are repeated thrice, so that when the offering prescribed here for the 4th time is made, it follows immediately on the third offering of lājas. The Gobhila Grāhya Sūtra prescribes that the fried grain to be offered into fire may be mixed with tendrils of the śamā plant.

In the terracotta plaques found at Pāhārpur we find purely rural scenes such as that of a cultivator carrying his plough. In one of the plaques it is also found that a man is carrying a basket.

1 Halayudha - Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva.
4 II. 1.14.
5 K.N.Dikhit's Excavation at Pāhārpur, Bengal, published in the Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 55 (Delhi) Chapter 5, P. 27, Plate XLIXF.
on a sling and holding his axe in his right hand. There can be no doubt that the process of cultivation followed in general by the peasants of ancient Bengal was essentially the same that we find to-day in modern Bengal. It may be assumed that the cultivators in ancient Bengal seem to have used the plough for tilling the soil which produced food grains like paddy, Barley, wheat, cereals etc.

Food grains are also supplemented by māśa, mudga and tila.¹ Māśaka or māśa is the name which denotes a class of kidney bean. Mudga is the name commonly applied to a class of pulse known as the green grain. Tila is the name commonly given to Sesamum seeds. We may refer also to the common foodgrains as used by the people of ancient Bengal in a verse written by the poet in the Saduktikarnāmṛta.²

A careful study of Cakradatta's 'Cikitsā Samgraha'³ informs us the fact that the oiled juice of pulses like 'Mudga', 'Masura' were used as medicated diet by some persons suffering from some classes of ailments.

The boiled juice or essence of five pulses like 'Kulattha', 'Mudga', 'Adhaka', 'Māsaka' and 'Niśpāva' called "Pañcamṛtyūṣa"⁴ has been recommended as a medicated drink by Cakradatta in his Cikitsā Samgraha for persons suffering from debility of body.

1 Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa - Hāralatā.
3 Mudgān maṣuraṁ - ṣcanaṇāṁ samuṣṭaṇāṁ, āhāra - kāle yuṣārthe jveritāya Pradāpayet - Cakradatta's cikitsā saṁgraha, Jvarādiḥkāraḥ Section PP. 4-5.
4 "Kulittha - mudgadhaka - maṣakānāṁ niśpāva - yuktācakṛtohi Yūṣāḥ Vajiyaka Saṁdāṇīndu - P. 650.
Rice mixed with pulses was prepared and called Khichuri. 'Payasa' a Paramānna, which was prepared by cooking rice in milk, was used as food by the people of ancient Bengal.

Foodgrains are supplemented by vegetable leaves and vegetables. It is one of the principal items of food with the people of Bengal.

We refer to a verse, quoted by Kedāra Bhaṭṭa in the Vṛttaratnākara work on prasody in Sanskrit written near about circa 1200 A.D. In the quoted verse we find a description of the articles usually consumed as food in their everyday life by the poor villagers in ancient Bengal. It may be assumed that an ordinary poor householder having modest pecuniary means, who generally lived in the rural areas in ancient Bengal, would be satisfied with a simple menu in the matter of his food in his everyday life for the simple reason that such simple meal would cost him very little. It further informs us that they would feel themselves quite happy if they could satisfy their appetite by partaking to his heart's content boiled husked rice made from fresh grown paddy with some quantity of boiled or fried or cooked tender leaves of the mustard seed plants ( tarunāṁ sarṣapa śākaṁ ).

1 T.N. Chakrabarty - Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal, P. 35.
3 Tarunāṁ sarṣapa śākaṁ navaudanāni picchilāni ca dadhīni alpa - vyayena Sundari grāmya jano miṣṭamaśnāti Vṛttaratnākara - Kedāra Bhaṭṭa.
The word 'Sāka' was generally used to denote the leaves and tender slender branches of some edible plants and creepers. It also indicates "Pot herb".

The housewives of ancient Bengal used to cook their daily food with pot herbs (Śāka). Sākapatra or leaves of edible pot herbs and some common vegetable, which were used for making curry, sauces and vegetable soups in the kitchen in ancient Bengal are mentioned in one of the verses of Deopara inscription of Vijayasena.

King Vijayasena used to distribute large wealth to the Brāhmaṇas. But the wives of the Brāhmaṇas did not know how to make use of these wealth, so their simple wives had to be trained by the wives of the people living in the cities and towns in ancient Bengal to recognise pearls, emeralds, silver, coins, jewels, gold from their similarity respectively with seeds of cotton, leaves of 'Śāka' bottle gourd flowers of the pumpkin, gourd creeper.

The Karppāsa tree, a tree producing a milk white cotton, is distinguished from the Śalmaṭī or silk cotton tree.

Alābu puspa is the name of the flower of the bottle gourd creeper. It may be noted that the leaves and branches and flowers and fruits of the 'Alābu' creeper are also even now used as

1  Muktāh Karppāsa bijair-maarakaṁ śakalaṁ śāka patraiṁ alābu puspair rūpyāṁ, ratnam parinatibhi, dūraiṁ kukṣibhirddācināṁyā
Kuśmāndi-vailaṁ vikasita - kusumaṁ kāṁchanaṁ nāgārībhīṁ śīkṣyante yat - Prasādaṁ vībhava - juṣām yoṣitaṁ śrotīyāṁyāṁ
2  T.N.Chakraborty - Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal, P. 58.
3  Ibid.
common vegetables for making different kinds of curry in the kitchen of Bengal. Further this inscription states that the leaves, flowers and fruits of the Kusmanda creepers\(^1\) were used in ancient Bengal as common vegetables. Its fruits are known as pumpkin gourds.

In this connection it may be noted here that the sākas are offered in sacred oblations (Pīṇḍa), it is so called because balls of rice are offered to the pitṛs\(^2\) as their food in order to satisfy the soul of a deceased during the period of ten days after his or her death from this world as it appears to have been referred to in the book Hāralata\(^3\) edited by Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa.

The word 'Pīṇḍa' means the 'Balls of rice' offered to the souls of the deceased ancestors for their satisfaction. According to Jaimini (IV. 4.19.21) Pīṇḍapitṛyajña is an independent and not a mere subordinate part of the dāra sacrifice. It consists of a mixture of some edible fruits (Phala), some esculent roots (Mūla), some edible pot herbs (Sāka), milk (Payas) and molasses (Gūḍa). Further we may learn from this verse that this pinda consists of offering boiled rice made from paddy with the mixture of Tila or Sesame seeds. When these are not made available, crushed powder of fried barley (Saktu) may be offered in lieu thereof. It is also significant that Pīṇḍa may

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1 T.N. Chakraborty - Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal, P. 58
3 Phala - mūlaś-ca payasā śākena ca guḍena ca tīla - misrāntau darbheśu Pīṇḍam daśāṅato haret
   Śālinā Saktubhirvāpi śākair vāpyatha nirvapet
   Prathame hani yad dravyamūrtadeva ayūd daśāṅikaṁ
be offered with some edible pot herbs or śākas. This was the customary rule prevalent in Hindu society of ancient Bengal for the period of ten days.

The offering of Piṇḍas to the departed soul with so many articles as foodgrains as mentioned by Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa throws a flood of light on the food habits of the people of ancient Bengal. It may be presumed that men and women of ancient Bengal seems to have used as their diet many edible fruits (Phala), esculent (Mūla), edible pot herbs, boiled rice (anna), Milk (Payaś), molasses (Guda), crushed powder of fried gram (Caṇaka).

The śākas or edible pot herbs is described in many inscriptions of Bengal as Trṇa Pūti Gocaraparyantah. It indicates nothing but the grass and the Pūti plant. The word 'Yuti' is sometimes substituted for Pūti and the 'Trṇa Yuti Gocara paryantah' is interpreted as 'Trṇa Yuti' or Trṇa Yukta which is interpreted as being covered with grass. Pūti is the name of a class of scented grass.

1 Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa - Hāralatā, P. 169-70.
2 "Trṇa Pūti Gocaraparyantah" -
   (i) Nālandā Copper-Plate Inscription of Devapāla
   (iii) The Rāmpāla Copper-Plate of Śricandra - Line - 23
   (iv) The Mūdhainagar Copper-Plate of Lakṣmānasena - Line 45.
   (v) The Naihaṭī Copper-Plate of Vaiḷālasena - Line 48.
   (vi) The Gobindapur Copper-Plate of Lakṣmānasena - Line 41.
   (vii) The Calcutta Sāhitya Pariṣat Inscription of Viśvarūpasena - Line 60. .... etc. C.B.I.
Putika, which is also referred to in the Tandya Brâhmaṇa is the name of a common creeper in Bengal, used as common pot herbs along with some vegetables for making curry in the kitchens of Bengal. Putika seems to represent soma, when soma sacrifices are rarely performed in the Deccan. It generally grows in the hills of the Deccan.

We find an illustrative description of various common trees and plants of Varendri, in the Rāmacaritā, composed by Sandhyākarnandi, during the reign of King Madanapāla of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal. In the third chapter of this book, the poet refers to various trees, plants, roots etc. Kanda generally denotes a bulbous or a tuberous root. Among edible roots, which are even now used as vegetables for cooking some kinds of curry in kitchens of Bengal, we may refer to the names of 'Varahi Kanda', a king of potato, 'Māna Kanda' or 'Māna Kachu' etc. Sriphala generally indicates to the Vilva tree or wood apple tree. The name Sriphala is also used to denote the Amalaka tree. Lakuca is the name of a tree producing a kind of bread fruit. Lavali is also the name of a tree producing a kind of delicious fruit. Sandhyākarnandi also

1 Yadi somam na vindeyuh putikānabhisumuyuryadi na pūtikānarjunāni ca, Tāṇḍya Brāhmana IX. 5.3.
3 Paramavrālavālāvalāyamavralakalakānta kujaṁmukhaṁ Praṭhulakucā śrīphalakampanamahitaṁlośanāṁ āvālaṁ lavaṁ kāṁ Chapter III Verse 12 R.C.
4 Vaidyako, Sabāsindhu P. 199.
5 Ibid - 1075.
refers to 'Nāgarāṅga' tree or orange trees in his book Rāmacarita. Further this book refers to the names of Karuṇa trees and Priyāla plants. Karuṇa is the name of a class of lemon tree. Priyāla is the name of a vine plant and it is also the name of a tree producing a kind of sweet fruit.

The next verse of this hook refers to also that there were in Varendi excellent paddy plants of various kinds, fine bamboos and sugarcane plants.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the Northern Bengal or the ancient Pundra country had given its name to a special variety of sugarcane named 'Paundrāka'. The early Sanskrit literature of Bengal corroborates also the molasses which were made by boiling the juice of sugarcane.

Sandyākarnandi refers also in his book the Dhātri, or Āmalaki trees, Priyāgu and ela creepers. This indicates the existence of so many trees and fruits in ancient Bengal. Dhātri meaning foster, is a name of the fruit of the Āmalaka or the Āmalaki

1 Pravaladvikramakandalaśobhādharamikṣapāmrtaughamcaṁ .......
   .... Kiñeśa bahunāgaraṅgaṅjitavantaṁ Vāsavyānāṁ
   Verse 13 - Chapter III - R.C.
2 .... Karuṇamahitamagandham Priyālayā baddha - jīvanāṁ dadhatim
   Verse 16 - Chapter III - R.C.
3 Vaidyaka Sabdasindhu P. 714.
4 ... Īkṣvākuśekharābharaṇāṁ. Verse 17 Chapter III - R.C.
5 Vaidyakasabdasindhu P. 131.
6 ... Dhātrimapi Priyāngoratanu Sadelodbhaṃ kṣettrāṃ
   Chapter III Verse 18, R.C.
7 'Dhātri drākṣā - Sitanāṁ' Cakradatta-Cikitsā Samgraha.
tree, because the juice of this fruit is said to be a veritable storehouse of the life giving energy. In 'Rasâyanaâdhikâra' section of his book, the author prescribes the boiled juice of 'Triphala' as a sort of purgative for persons suffering from constipation. The name 'Triphala' or tri-phali is a combination of the 'Amalaka' fruit, haritaki (a green vegetable) and 'Vibhitaka' (the tree terminalia bellerica).

In the early inscriptions of Bengal there are references to Amra or mango tree and 'Panasa' or jack fruit trees. At the time of offering Land Grant to Brâhmaṇas the compound word 'Sāmra Madhukah' meaning along with mango and madhuka trees may be found in many inscriptions. The compound word 'Sāmra Panasā' meaning "along with mango and panasa trees" is similarly found in many early copper-plate inscriptions of Bengal. According to this description it may be assumed that ripe mango fruits seem to have been regarded in ancient Bengal as the most fragrant and palatable edible fruit.

3 Ibid, P. 978.
4 (i) The Mānholi Copper-Plate Inscription of Madanapâla. Line 40.
   (ii) The Bhāgalpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Nārāyanâpâla "41.
   (iii) The Rāmguṇj Copper-Plate Inscription of Īśvara Ghosa Line 22-23
5 (i) Râmpâla Copper-Plate of Śricandra - Line 24.
   (ii) Belava Copper-Plate of Bhojavarman - Line 58.
   (iii) Barrackpur Copper-Plate of Vijayasena - Line 34.
   etc. etc. C.B.I.
These mango trees were also planted by the early kings for providing the passers by with shadow and fruits. In this connection we may refer to the Edicts of Asoka, which refer to the plantation of trees. The budding flowers and the fruits of the mango trees are also praised by the Bengali poet Umāpatidhara in his work Saduktikarnāmṛta.

We may state that various kinds of jellies and jams were also prepared from mango even in ancient Bengal.

Jack fruit seems to have been a common and favourite fruit in ancient Bengal. The poet Umāpatidhara states that Panasa or the jack fruit is condemned as being injurious to human health in its ultimate effects. At the outset, a ripe jack fruit thus seems to be pleasing to our taste and quite satisfactory for appeasing our appetite, but it seems to be harmful in the long run. Green jack fruit is also used as a favourite vegetable to prepare a kind of curry in the kitchens of Bengal.

2 Sugandhīḥ kṛpi syāt-kusuma- saṃayekepi viṭapi... Puna - rjagatyekatraiva sphurati sahakāre Parimalah, Saduktikarnāmṛta 4.53.5
3 Prthutvat - Saurbhyaṇ - madhuratara - bhāvāt ca patitaiḥ Ksudhā taptaiḥ kukṣibharibhir - iha sevā tava kṛtā tadātvamughāhāraṇudivasasam asvāsthyā - janaṁ na draṭā tesmaḥbhīḥ panasa Pariṇāme virasatā Saduktikarnāmṛta - 4.58.4.
Kadali patra or the leaves of plantain tree is mentioned in connection with the canons prescribed for taking meals to be observed during asouca either by birth or death. Aniruddha Bhatta in his Haśrala\textsuperscript{1} refers to the use of these plantain leaves at the time of serving meals.

The Khālimpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Dharmapāla (770-810 A.D.)\textsuperscript{2} refers to the Date Palm, which marked the boundary of the village Krauṇḍascabhra. The temple of Goddess of learning and a date palm tree indicated the north direction. The Palmyra tree, which is even now very commonly found in Bengal is also referred to in one of the verses of Rāmacaritaṁ of Sandhyākarnandi. It is stated in the book\textsuperscript{3} that the rows of palmyra trees are planted on the banks of numerous large lakes or tanks, which were excavated at the time of Rāmpāla's regime. It is famous for its sweet juice of its ripe fruits and the liquid juice of its tender green fruits. It may be stated in this connection that the juice of the palmyra tree is used even now in Bengal as a sweet drink and sometime it is transformed into an intoxicating drink, which is known as Tādi or Toddy. It may also be noted that a kind of molasses is also prepared by boiling the juice of this tree.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Etenastu tabat tajjasabhajanaṁ Kadalipatradisvapi bhojanaṁ nāstīti darśayati - Haśralaṁ P. 159.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Uttarena Kādambari devakulikā Kharj jura Vṛkṣāśca - Line 32 Khālimpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Dharmapāla, C.B.I. P. 99.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Sa viśālāśailamālāśabandhamambudhi sākāṣat api pūrtaṁ puṣkarini bhūtaṁ racayambabhūva bhūpaḷaḥ R.C. Chap. III Verse - 42.
\end{itemize}
The phrase 'Sa guraka nārikelāḥ' or 'Sa Guvāka nārikela' meaning "Along with betelnut and cocoanut trees" is found in connection with pious gifts of land in many early inscriptions of Bengal.

The Nārikela is regarded as one of the best kinds of edible fruit. The green cocoanut quenches the thirst of the people so it is called payodhara. Common people of ancient Bengal were accustomed to eat the kernel of the cocoanut. Various kinds of sweets from the kernel of cocoanut are also now-a-days prepared in Bengal with the help of molasses or sugar. It appears from a study of the Kālaviveka and the 'Krṣyatattvārṇava' that such simple sweets were probably used in the society of Bengal on the night of 'Kojāgarī Pūrṇima', that is to say on the night of the full moon in the month of Āśvina.

Sandhyākara Nandi refers to also Nārikela or cocoanut tree in his book Rāmacaritām. Mention may be made in this connection that the plantation of cocoanut trees were done in the ancient days of Bengal for consuming cocoanut as a food.

1 (i) The Barrackpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Vijayasena, Line-35
(ii) The Govindapur Copper-Plate Inscription of Laksmanasena- L. 40.
(iii) The Tarapandighi Copper-Plate Inscription of Lakṣmanasena L.39.
(iv) The Mādhāinagar Copper-Plate Inscription of Lakṣmanasena, L.44.
(v) The Edilpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Kesavasena, Line-52 etc. cf. N.G. Majumdar, I.B., R. Mukherjee - C.B.I.

2 - Phalitanca nārikelavāsinyeṣeti jagati sādramukhāṁ
Chap. R.C. Verse - 19.
The practice of chewing betels or leaves of betel creeper along with betel nuts and a small quantity of dissolved liquid lime specially after meals seems to have been well known in ancient Bengal.

In ancient Grhya and Dharmaśūtra no mention is made in respect of Tambūla or Mukhobhāsa. Tambūla was probably introduced sometime before or about the beginning of the Christian era in South India and then spread northwards. In the Laghuḥārita, Laghu Āśvalāyana, and Anuśāsana, chewing of Tambūla after dinner is mentioned. We also find in the Raghuvamsa of Kālidāsa that at the time of planting betelnut plants are surrounded by betel creepers. In the Vṛhatṣaṁhitā of Varāhamihira the virtues of Tambūla and its ingredients are described. In the Kādambarī (Para 85) the royal palace is compared to the house of the dealer in betel leaves in which Lāvali, cloves, cardamans, kāṅkola are stored. In the Nityācāryapaddhati, it is described that the Tambūla comprised of nine ingredients viz. betelnut, betel leaves, camphor, cardamons clove, kāṅkola, copra and mātulunga fruit.

5. Raghuvamsa - Canto - VI 64. "Tambulavalli parinayapagāvelālatālinīgita Candanāsu" 77.35-37.
We may refer to Kāmasūtra in this connection where we find that a person after performing the brushing of the teeth with the help of a looking glass and partaking of Tambūla for rendering his breath fragrant, should set about for undertaking his daily business.

We find in the several inscriptions of Bengal as mentioned earlier about the plantation of betel creepers. It seems to be interesting one that the phrase "Varajāyasa metā" occurs in the Calcutta Sāhitya Pariṣat inscription of Viśvarūpasena. This phrase may be interpreted as meaning "Along with plantation of betel creepers". It may be assumed from the evidence of this inscription that the practice of chewing betel creepers was prevalent in ancient Bengal.

Tambūla or betel is accordingly mentioned in a verse written by the poet Karnāṭadeva in Śrīdharāsa's Saduktikārṇāmṛta in connection with the description of a pregnant woman. The poet Amara in the Saduktikārṇāmṛta refers to 'Tambūla rāga' in connection with the description of a colour of the reddened angry eyes of one's beloved.

1 Kāmasūtra - I. 4.16, III 4.40, IV. 1.36, V.2.21,24, VI 1.29 etc.
2 .... Nutanavarjacatusṭayasameta -
   The Calcutta Sāhitya Pariṣat Inscription of Viśvarūpasena,
3 Saduktikārṇāmṛta -.2.10.4.
4 Ibid. 2.24.4.
We may refer to some of the stray cases of using Tambūla in ancient society of Bengal.

Rājā Gopicandra had ninetynine attendants in his court to serve betel leaves.¹

In the "Caryācaryaviniścayah"² it is stated that Sabara and Sabari took Tambūla and slept until morning. Betels were taken with Cuvāka, Khadira, lime and Karpūra.

In modern times Tambūla is also recognised as possessing 13 guṇas, either because it contains thirteen ingredients or because it effects thirteen good results.⁴

We may state in this connection that the caste named 'Barui' which we find to-day in Hindu society in Bengal is in all probability derived from the word 'Baraja' due to their plantation of betel creepers in 'Barajas' since past.

² Hiya tambolā mahāsuhe kāpurā khāi suṇa nairāmoṇi kaṇṭhe
Laiā mahāsuhe rāṭi pohāi - Caryāpada 28
"δικ. "Boudhāgaṇ 0 dohā" - Ed. MM. H.P. Sastri, P. 44.
³ Timbulam kaṭrutikānusāpaḥmadhuram kaśāmaśāyaśvitaṃ vātaghnaṃ
kaphanāsanaṃ kṛmihariṃ durgandhi vidhvāṃsakaṃ
Vaktrasābharaṇaṃ viśudhikaraṇaṃ kāmaguisāmadipamaṃ Tambūlasya sakhe
dita trayodaśa guṇāṇ svargeapi te durlabhāḥ 'Subhāṣita'.
Next we may turn to discuss about Guvāka tree as we mentioned before in the phrase 'Saguvāka Nārikela'. It is the name of the betel nut or the areca nut tree. It may be mentioned that like the cocoanut and palmyra trees, the areca nut trees seem to have been widely cultivated in ancient Bengal. Not only in gardens, but also it was cultivated in the open courtyards within the compounds of many residential houses in ancient Bengal.

Dhyoyi in his Pavanadūta refers to the plantation of betel nut trees. It is stated in this work that the ladies living in the inner apartments of the dwelling houses used to plant the betel nut trees in front of their courtyards.

In this connection we may state that it is one of auspicious sign to offer Guvāka at the time of any charitable acts. Thus in the Calcutta Sāhitya Parisaṁ Inscription we find many references in this respect.

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2 (a) ... tathaitadvāstubhamou kalanasaṭā - Guvākāṣata .... Line - 50 The Calcutta Sahitya Parisat Inscription of Visvarupasena, C.B.I. (b) ... Somāṣe samutsārgitabhūsamandhena - guvākamūlya sameta .. Line 55 - Ibid. (c) ... Kumāraśrīśuryapradatta nālabhū .... u - 7 guvākavāstubhū .... Line - 54 Ibid.
Food grains were supplemented by vegetables. It was one of the principal items of food with the people of Bengal, while discussing the use of food and drink of ancient Bengal as found in inscriptions, we may refer to some of the vegetables as found in early Bengali literary works.

In the 'Cikitsā Saṃgraha' composed by Cakrapāṇidatta we find references to the usefulness of various types of vegetables which may be briefly stated below:

**Patala**: It is one of the delicious vegetables in Bengal. Cakrapāṇidatta in his Cikitsā Saṃgraha gives numerous references about the use of this vegetable for medical purpose. The Patala creepers is also prescribed by Cakradatta as a medicated food. The book further informs us the use of so many vegetables like 'Vārtāku', 'Mūlaka' etc.

**Vārtāku**: It is otherwise known as Beguna which is extensively used in Bengal. It is also known by another name 'Sāka bilva'. It was generally used for making curry in ancient Bengal.

1 "Śākam Paṭala - vetrūgra - taṇḍuliyaḍikāṃhitam" ....

2 Paṭala patraḥ vārtākuṣa kulakaṇ kāravellakaṁ karkoṭakaṁ parapaṭakaṁ gojihvāṁ bāla mūlakaṁ
Cakradatta's Cikitsāsaṃgraha - Jvarādhikāraḥ Section
Ibid (PP. 4-5).

3 Vaidyaka Sabdasindu P. 964.
MŪLAKA: Mūlaka or radish is the name of a kind of vegetable commonly used by the people of Bengal for making curry especially during winter. It was also a favourite food of the inhabitants of ancient Bengal.

KĀRAVELLAKA: It is the name of a common vegetable having a somewhat bitter taste. It is known in Bengal as 'Kerelā or karalā'.

KARKOTAKA: It is the name of a kind of vegetable popularly known in Bengal as Kārole.¹

This medical book of ancient Bengal prescribes many fruits² like Kadalī, Tāla, Nārikela or Coconut as we have mentioned earlier, Śṛṅgātaka popularly known in Bengal as 'Pāṇīphala' denotes the triangular shaped fruit of an aquatic plant.

Cakrapāṇidatta also prescribes the usefulness of various leaves roots, barks, flowers³ etc. as food for the treatment of various diseases.

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1 Vaidyaka Śabdasindu - P. 964.
2 Śṛṅgātaka - phala - kaśeru - kadalī - phala tāla nārikelādi, anyadapi yacca vrṣayā madhuraṁ panaśā dīkaṁ jyāyaḥ
Cakradatta Cikitsā Saṃgraha -
3 Ibid.
Milk and its products played a dominant part in ordinary (general) diet.¹

The ancient literature² and the early inscriptions of Bengal refer to natural cow’s milk, goat’s milk. It appears from this study that condensed boiled milk, the cream of the boiled milk and the by products of milk curd, whey, casein, butter and clarified butter etc were used as food by the people in ancient Bengal.

Mention may be made in this connection of the use of sweets in the ancient days of Bengal. There were also many references to the use of these sweets in the early inscriptions and literature of Bengal.

The phrase 'Sūrāmadhuka' meaning along with mango and Madhuka trees is found in many inscriptions.³

Madhu denotes honey. Its tawny colour and odour have been also described in literature.⁴ Honey produced by smaller bees was known kṣandra, while that derived from large bees was called Māṣīka.⁵

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¹ T.N. Chakrevarty - Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal, P. 35.
² "Chāgaaya-payasaḥ kuryyād anupānam abhāvataḥ "Śavām Gṛttena dugdhena catuhṢāṣṭī Guṇena ca" - Cekradatta Cikhyā Samgraham.
³ (i) The Mānholi Copper-Plate Inscription of Madanapāla (Line-40).
(ii) The Bhāgalpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla (Line-41) etc.
⁴ Brhat-Samhitā Varāhamihir - LXVII 64, LXXI. 4.
⁵ Dalhana's Commentary on Saṣruta 1, XLV. 133.
The word 'Modaka'\(^1\) seems to have been used in Hindu society in ancient Bengal to denote sweetmeats or any kind of sweet confectionery. The word 'Ladduka'\(^2\) seems also to have been used in Hindu society in ancient Bengal to denote a special kind of sweetmeat of a round shaped preparation made from the flour or rice, wheat, barley or grams fried in clarified butter, mixed with molasses or sugar, and finally done into round balls.

The word piṣṭaka seems to have been commonly used in Bengal to denote a sweet cake or bread made of wheat flour, sugar or gur and fried in clarified butter.

We may pointed out in this connection that an image of God Vināyaka\(^3\) in the 4th regnal year of King Mahipāla I of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal was discovered in the village of Nārāyanpur, 15 miles to the north east of Sub-division town of Chāndpur in the district of Tipperāh now in Benglādesh. The image is interesting on account of the fact that it depict tasting of sweet.

The elephant headed God Vināyaka is depicted as testing the sweets in his lower left hand with his trunk. From this description it is presumed that in the ancient days of Bengal the images were worshipped with offering of sweets.

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2 Ibid., P. 895.
Not only vegetables, creepers, plants, the importance of taking some fish and meat as food are found in the inscriptions and early literature of Bengal.

It may be noted in this connection that fish and meat were not usually eaten by Brāhmaṇas outside Bengal, but that practice was so common in ancient Bengal that Bhavadeva Bhāṭṭa had to defend it by a lengthy argument, and removed all kinds of restrictions imposed by early Smṛti writers of Bengal like Chhāgaloya, Yājñavalkya, Manu, Vyāsa and suggests, "all this meant for the prohibited (days) like Caturdāśi etc. .... So it is understood that there is no crime in eating fish and meat".

The Brāhād Dharma Purāṇa recommends that a Brāhmaṇa partakes of cooked fish like rohita, śapharia or śaphari, śakula (or sola) and other kinds of fish, which have scale on their bodies. Sarvānanda in his Tikāsarvasva, a commentary on the Nāmalingānusāsana of Amara Simha written in 1160 A.D. refers to the names of certain kinds of fish which were used as food by the people of ancient Bengal. Thus we find the names of rohita, madgura, sāla, rājiva, śakula, śaphari, nala-mīna and śṛṅgl. The author

1 PRP. PP 67-68.
2 R.C.Majumdar - History of Ancient Bengal, P. 457.
3 II. 5. 44-46.
4 The Nāmalingānusāsanas of Amara Simha with the commentary of Sarvānanda edited by T.Gaṇapati Śastry, Trivandrum, Part I, 1914, PP. 188-90.
5 Matsa rājastu rohitah. Ibid.
6 Madgurasya Priyāyām Śṛṅgl. Ibid.
7 Śṛṅgl. Ibid. P. 194.
also refers to his commentary the name of Timi or whale, which is
described as being a gigantic fish found in the deep water of the
ocean.\footnote{1}

The commentator further mentions the word 'Badiśa' meaning the fish hook used for catching fish by anglers.\footnote{2}

We may now refer two interesting plaques\footnote{3} indicating the use of fish. Among the Terracotta plaques found at Pāhārpur
Maināmati, one of these plaques has on it a carved representation showing how fishes were cut into pieces, and made ready for cooking.
Another Terracotta plaque contains carved representation showing how fishes were carried in baskets by the dealers for selling in a market.

Thus it conclusively proves that people were habituated of taking fish as food in ancient Bengal.

It may be noted in this connection that an interesting stone image of Goddess Vārāhī\footnote{4} was discovered in the village Dhāravāsim in the district of Hooghly in West Bengal. The Goddess Vārāhī is here depicted as holding a fish in one of her hands while with the other hand she holds a vessel probably of a broken human skull.

\footnote{1} "Brhammatsya' bhijastimih" - Ibid.
\footnote{2} Ibid. P. 166.
\footnote{3} K.N. Dikshit - Excavation at Pāhārpur, Bengal. Published in the Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 55, Delhi 1938 Chap. 5, P. 65 Plate XLIX f.
\footnote{4} Image of Goddess Vārāhī - Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University.
Though no date is inscribed in this image, judging from the style of the sculpture it is presumed that it was the product of an artist during the reign of Pala dynasty in Bengal.

The use of meat is also found in the Terracotta plaques discovered in Bengal. Fowlers and hunters are found in the Terracotta plaques at Pāhārpur. There is no doubt that the fowlers and hunters belonging to the Sabara, Pulinda and Niśāda tribes lived by consuming the cooked and roasted fish, birds and animals like deer killed by them in course of hunting. In the plaques also there are representations of Sabara men and women. In the Terracotta plaques found at Pāhārpur, the Sabara women is depicted as holding a bow and a dagger in her hands or carrying in her hands a deer or some other wild animal which were hunted by Sabara male.¹

Like eating of meat, drinking of wine was also prevalent in ancient days of Bengal.

As regards intoxicating drink, the spirituous liquor made by distillation of rice, molasses, flour and honey were in common use.

¹ K.N. Diksit's Excavation at Pāhārpur, Bengal published in the memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India No. 55, Delhi 1938, Chapter 5, P. 65 Plate XLIX f.
We find in the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana that a nāgaraka in ancient times seems also to have used in Vātsyāyana’s age various kinds of exciting drinks and wines like sura, madhu, maireya and āsava. These intoxicating drinks would as a rule be taken from vessels of wood or metal called ‘Casaka’.

The early *Caryāpadas* refer to drinking at liquor shop. It is also stated that there were many ale houses in ancient Bengal. People, who were addicted to wine, seem to have visited such ale-houses. Further it is learnt from this song that Saundika’s wife sold the liquor after fermenting it by means of fine power of the root of tree.

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3. Eka se sūndini dui ghare sāndhaa
   Ciaña bākalaa bārunī bāndhaa
   Sahaje thira kārī bārunī sāndhe
   jeñ ajarāmara hoi diṭa kāndha(ndhah)
   daśami duārata cihna dekhaiā
   āila garāhaka apane bhaiā
   Causāṭhī ghādiye deṭa pasārā
   Paithela garāhaka māhi nisārā
   Eka sa dulī sarui nāla
   bhanahti viruā thira kāri cāla
It appears from the caryā-songs that a sign board was fixed at the door of the room in such alehouses so that the customers could easily know the prices of the wine. The song further informs us that intoxicating drinks were kept ready for sale in large pitchers.

Sarvānanda refers to 'Pāniya śālā' and Gaṇja also in his commentary Tikāsarvasava. The term Pāniyaśālā was probably used to denote shops selling various kinds of drink i.e. hot drink, cold or intoxicating drink. Besides wine, opium and leaves of hemp (Bhang) were used as intoxicants by some of the people of that time.

The word Gaṇja is explained by Sarvānanda also. It denoted alehouses or shops where intoxicating drinks were sold.

The Brhad Dharmapurāṇa says, "In times forbidden by the scriptures, a Brāhmaṇa should not worship Śiva with gold, blood, wine, human sacrifice, fish, meat". It indicates that wine was used at the time of worshipping the Tāntric Goddess.

We may next discuss a few instances from literature to indicate the food habits of the people of ancient Bengal.

2 'Madira-Sandhana-gehe' - Tikāsarvasva - Sarvānanda.
3 Brhatdharma Purāṇa - II.6.98.
Śrīharaṇa, the author of Naiṣadacarita, was probably a Bengalee by race. This book refers to the menu on the occasion of Damayanti's marriage, it gives us some idea of a rich banquet of Bengal. Guests were entertained with various types of cooked fish, many types of meats of mutton and deer, various kinds of sweet cakes and fragrant sweet drinks and betels. This description enumerates various kinds of foods and drinks offered to the guests by the rich people in the ancient Hindu society of Bengal.

I-tsin, one of the Chinese monks who lived in Tamralipti at the end of the 7th century A.D. once proposed to invite some priests; but he was told that the old custom was to prepare sufficient food or the people would smile if the food supplied by them only would be enough just to satisfy the stomach.

We may hold the same view that the tradition in Bengal was to cater food to the full satisfaction of each individual guest, so that they may leave sufficient quantity on their plates.

According to the traditional idea of partaking food, a full fledged meal should consist of every conceivable kind of food and drink. On the other hand a full fledged banquet requires a perfect and balanced menu, viz:

1 R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, P. 459.
2 A Record of the Buddhist Religion by I-tsin, translated by J. Takakusu, P. 40.
Which is to be chewed by teeth (Carbya)
Which is to be sucked (Cusya)
Which is to be consumed by licking (Lehya)
Which is to be drunk (Peya).

The following direction may be cited from Brhad Dharma Purana:

"At first rice mixed with ghee, then vegetables followed by soup etc. and lastly rice with milk should be taken. Salt must not be mixed with milk, nor molasses with sour".

According to a verse of the Viṣṇu-Grāṇa quoted by Hālāyudha in his Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva, one should first partake items which are sweet in taste and then the items prepared with salt. Foodstuff which are pungent (Katu) and bitter (Tikta) in taste should be taken last of all.

1 Upa-purāṇas II 431.
2 "Aṣṭiyāt tanmanā bhūtva pūrvvantu madhuraṁ rasaṁ,
As mentioned above we came to the conclusion that a man should partake of food and drink which are bitter in taste, and should finish his meal by consuming at last food and drinks which are essentially sweet in taste. (Madhureṇā samāpayet).

This is the practice followed commonly by people even now.

From the study of the foods and drinks as revealed in the inscriptions of Bengal we further learn that the combination of bitter and sweet articles of food was primarily based on scientific system since the bitter articles if taken at the outset would create further urge in taking further items of food by removing indifference towards taking food. This bitterness, that would be created, would be removed when we finish taking meal by taking sweet articles served as the last item of food.