

Culinary Heritage In The Sangam Period- An Analytical Study

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Abstract- Any one needs to realize the movements of a particular people's society, they must look at their eating habits and food customs. Dietary habits depend on the climate of a community, the effects of the land, social conditions, productivity and economic conditions. Sangam era Tamil Nadu's food culture and traditions are formed by its long history, unique geography and strongly influenced by the various rulers, travelers and neighbors. Sangam Age culinary offers a wide variety of mouthwatering dishes and good options for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian varieties. This research article aims to identify the various culinary heritage amongst the peoples in Sangam age, dietary practices including cooking equipment's, ingredients widely used, food methods, preparation, and eating habits. It provides a detailed analysis of the basics of food, social conditions of people and how the group of people use food to convey their identity, culture, values, status, strength, artistry and creativity.

Keywords- Culinary heritage, Cooking equipment, methods of cooking

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of ancient Tamil Nadu begins with the 3 kingdoms, Chera, Chola and Pandya, which are referred to in documents of the 3rd century BC. Some of the kings of these dynasties are mentioned in Sangam Literature, and the age between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD is called the Sangam age. (1) The Sangam Age is a significant chapter in South India's history. There were three Sangams (Academy of Tamil Poets) in ancient Tamil Nadu, popularly known as Muchchangam, according to Tamil legends. These Sangams were flourishing under the Pandya's royal patronage.

Gods and legendary sages attended the first Sangam held at Madurai, but there was no literary work of this Sangam. The second Sangam was held in Kapadapuram, but except for Tolkaḍippam, all the literary works had perished. Mudathirumaran founded the third Sangam in Madurai. A large number of poets participated in it, producing voluminous literature, but only a few survived. These Tamil

literary works continue to be useful sources to reconstruct the Sangam Age history.

Most historians consider the First Two Sangam Age as imaginary as the traditional dates are mostly not in line with the Historical Dates and Each Sangam Age spanned around 2000 Years and the first Sangam Age according to the traditional dates started before 5000 or 6000 BC, at that time the four river valley civilization was in its nascent state or yet to be begun. (2) The diet practices and cooking methods of the Sangam peoples are in the literature's like Natrinai, Akananooru, Purananooru etc.. The diet practices were depends on the goods grown, the economy condition of the people, the lands they lived and Climatic conditions. (3)

II. ROLE OF CULINARY IN SANGAM AGE

In ancient Sangam age, the terms like *aṭiḷ*, *ayaṇi*, *aviḷ*, *kūḷ*, *conṇi*, *nimiral*, *puḷukkal*, *puṅkam*, *pom'mal*, *mitavai*, *mural* had been used to refer to rice. These rice were prepared in various ways and eaten as food. The man who lived in harmony with nature in the ancient times eaten first with vegetables and fruits. Humans who ate vegetarian diets lived without any illness. (4)

The community of Sangam age has identifiable cuisine, a specific collection of cooking practices. Tamils' six tastes are 1. Sweet 2. Sweet 2. Pungent 3. bitter (mirchi) 4. Salt. 5. Sour. 6. astringent. Over the years, the gastronomy of the Sangam Era has evolved considerably, using characteristic spices and the combination of unique flavors of the Sangam period. The culinary Sangam era had unique flavors, their recipes used the tangy twist and plenty of vegetables. Sangam Tamil cuisine's gastronomy was dominated by leaves of rice, lentils, tamarind, coconut and curry. They were not only vegetarians.. Consequently, the food had a wide range of vegetarian and non-vegetarian delicacies. (5)

III. TRADITIONAL EATING METHODS

Tamils used to sit on the floor and eat. They had a habit of eating food in 12 different ways. These classifications are based on the nature, taste, and taste of the food they

consume. Our diet is a tradition of consuming a variety of foods in combination with emotions.

1. Consumption - Too little intake.
2. Eating - The intake of food
3. Absorption - concentrating the mouth and absorbing the water content.
4. Drinking - Eating aquatic foods (such as porridge) to lighten up hunger.
5. Treating - Consuming snacks.
6. Mourning - Tasting and consuming.
7. Nakkal - Intake of Dulavi by tongue.
8. Nungal - Absorb the whole mouth into one mouth.
9. Drinking- drinking water and other beverages
10. Mantel - Ingestion of large quantities.
11. Munching - To chew a heavy commodity.
12. Swallowing - Throat intake between tooth and tongue.(6)

Ingredients widely used in Sangam age

Although rice was the Sangam Tamils ' main food, maize and millet were also commonly used by the peoples of sangam age. (7). The poor had very simple food. Sometimes, even without salt, they had to be satisfied with greens.(8)Paratavar (fishermen) used fish very much, whereas the Mullai people had large quantities of milk products.Likewise, the Kurinji people took meat from hunting. These people have also used various kinds of grains in many forms. Rice flakes were eaten with milk, honey, ghee and jaggery.(9)

The Sangam Tamils used salt, tamarind, pepper, etc. to cook the food deliciously. Ghee has been used by the wealthy peoples.They were part of their meals with vegetables and fruits. It was common to eat meat. People ate the flesh of the rams, the deer, the bare, the fowl, the porcupines, the pigs and the boars.(10).

Although Tiruvalluvar condemns drinking and eating meat, the early Tamils have been drinking madhu(Alcoholic beverages).These were drunk during festivals and functions. There are references to women indulging in drinking.(11)Since Manikkavasagar talked about churning and curd in many places of his work (12)one can estimate that milk and its products would have formed major part of food items.(13) They used ' teral or juice extracted from sugarcane.(14)During the Sangam age it honey or toddy were preserved in the hallow of bamboos(15).The diets of the Sangam peoples were healthy. And they are better at cooking techniques and eating healthy foods.

Home appliances of Sangam age peoples

Home appliances of Sangam peoples used similar tools that we use today to do household chores.

1. Veṭṭukkaruvikaḷ (Cutting equipments)
2. Aṭimaṇai
3. Kaṇicci
4. NīrMukakkumKaruvi-Water face tool
5. Mattu- Matt
6. Ural
7. Ulakkai- Plunger
8. Maṭpāṇṭaṅkaḷ- Ceremaic(16)

Vegetarian foods

In vegetarian foods along with Rice preparation , vegetables, spinach and beets etc were served in banana leafs and other leafs. The following Agananuru song illustrates that this practice was existed ancient methods.

**“Paṇṇaivenpaḷattuaricieyppa,
Toṭimāṇulakkaiūḷinṇokki,
Uralmukamkaṭṭiyacurainiraikoḷḷai,
Aṅkaṇiruṅcuṇainiroṭumukavā,
Kaḷpaṭukulicikkalaṭuppuerri,
Kuṭavarpuḷukkiyapoṅku'aviḷppuṅkam” (akam.393:7-12)**

In the course of the song, inter-caste women with long ears, they took the Varagu(one variety of of rice) from backyard and turned it into rice.Thisvargu rice was cleaned by using brooms and soaked in pot made up of mud.The water from streams were used cook this rice and eaten by the people as well as served in leaves along with tubers and spinach to the laymans crossing their places.Therefore, the tendency to cook food during the Sangam era is known.(17)

Couplets in the Sirupanatrupadai said that Marudham landscape people ate white rice with a thick pasty curry made from crab flesh and ridge gourds. This reports white rice, beef, spinach, beans, puffed rice, pulses, cereals, legumes, and pickles varieties as a staple in the diet. The Porunaratrupadai outlines how the Chola country's Kurinji people ate tubers and honey.

Malaipadukadam's literary work reports a kozhambu made from seeds of jackfruit, raw mangoes and tamarind extract eaten with bamboo rice and buttermilk. Perumanatrupadai reports a recipe in which they cooked together Varagu rice, lentils, tamarind pulp and large bean seeds.

The famous poet Avvaiyar goes on to describe a heart-warming lunch on a hot sunny day. The 32nd song goes like this in her 'Thanipadalthirattu'-an anthology of poems—'Varaguarisichorum, vazhuthunangaivaatum, moramoravenapulithamorum...' (steamed varagu rice, smoked and mashed aubergine and tangy frothy buttermilk). (18)

Fruit foods

During the period of nomadic life before human society was civilized, the food supply largely satisfied man's need for food. Mango fruit, jack fruit, and banana were collectively called mukkan. This indicates the importance of fruit. References to these fruit eating habits can be found in the Sangam literature. In Ainkurunuru,

**“Attappalavinveyiltinçirukāy,
Aruñcuramcelvōr, aruntiṅarkaliyūm”**

These above lines indicates that those who go to drought-stricken Land of Palai, they ate jack fruit. (19) Apart from this Mukkan, various fruits were used by Sangam age peoples. They were Viḷāmpaḷam (Nattrinai.24, Akanannuru:394:1), Gooseberry (Nattrinai:87), Puḷiyaṅkaṅi (Nattrinai:374), Jack fruit (Akanannuru::182, Nattrinai:213) Nuṅku (figs)(Nattrinai:392), Kaḷāppaḷankaḷ (Akanannuru::394:1).

Paddy preparation

Rice feeding is rarely seen all kind of peoples in the Sangam age. Only the rich people had rice. Ordinary citizens enjoyed the Thinai and Koozhu.

.“Uṅpatunāli” (puram.189:5)

From this lines, Puṅaṅṅūru teacher says that the limited quantity of food eaten is a certain time.. The above lines show that excess consumption of foods can lead to health problems. (20) The message that the paddy brought from the paddy field was accumulated in the field (kalam) mentioned Inaiṅkuṅunūru, (21)

“Aivaṅaccirukilikaṭiyumnāṭa” (Ainṅuru.285:3)

This above lines explains that Ivana paddy was cultivated for food. Nattrinai (7, 26, 60) song lines clearly indicates that bamboo was used for rice feeding. (22)

Diverse cooking techniques

Sangam age womens cooked Yam porialand Sennel (Rice) for the relatives as part of the feast mentioned in the following lines of Nattrinai. 367:3

**“Karuṅkaṅkaruṅaiccennelveṅcōru” (23).
Muḷitayirpicaintakāntaḷmelviral
Tāntuḷantuaṭṭatimpuḷippākar” (Kurunthogai.167:1-2)**

lines indicates that the head of women on the first day, she pours a cup of fermented milk on the first day, and then the next day, with her thin fingers, like a Gandhal flower, she makes little sour curd to her husband by adding a sweet-sour curry. (24) Curd rice consumed along with ghee clearly explains in Akanannuru-340 and Perumbanatu padai-89-94. The brahmin women ate rice named after bird, mixed with buttermilk, mixed with pomegranate and curry leaves tossed in butter sprinkled with pepper powder and young mango leaves mentioned the following lines

**“Sedhanarumōrveṅṅeyinmadhuladhodu
uruppurapacuṅkāyppōḷoṭukarikalantu”
(Perumpānatrupadai .306-307)(25)**

When eating rice and yoghurt, a little bit of spicy and sour pickle has become popular among the Sangam people. In Paṭṭinappālai. author features that there were wide roads in Kaviripumpattam and rice were boiling so badly that there was no such thing as ever. and kanchi (excess water while boiling) were running like a river on the streets. Similarly, “they cooked at Madapalli and cooked food preperatins sold for a low price. This Madapalli act like a Nutritional centre for pedestrians and poor peoples. From that time on, it is known that the people were eating in public places at all times.

**“Aramnilai'iyakaanāṭṭil
Chōruvākkiyakoḷuṅkañci
Yārupōlapparantuoluki” (paṭṭinappālai.43-45)**

Akanannuru explains “Annadhanam” (Free offering of food) is the best charity when compare with various other types of charity. This is why feeding those who seek them is traditionally considered the best practice. People who move from one place to another will carry a food in a whitish palm leaves folded in the shape of umbrella. (26)

“Arucelmākkaḷcōrupotivenṅkuṭai” (akam.121:12)

The following song depicts the head of the women using a white-hot kiln, tossing the rice in the furnace, prepared mashed mango fruit mixed tamarind gravy, bitterguradporiyal, vallaraikerai (spinach) mixed and ate. (27)

**“Aṭumakaḷmukantaeḷavāveṇṇel
Toṭimāṇulakkaipparū'ukkurruarici
Kāṭiveḷulaikkolī'inīḷal” (puṛam.399:1-3)(28)
Foods made using honey, millet's and flakes**

From Sangam age to till today, honey has been the most delicious flavor for humans. A reference to this delicious honey that can be eaten by everyone from adults to small ones from the below lines of Natrinai ,

**“Curumpuṇavirintakarūṅkālveṅkaip
Peruñciṇaittoṭuttakoḷuṅkaṅkīrā'al
Puḷḷurrukkacintatīmtēṅkalaḷaik”**

In the footsteps, Honey bees nesting in the Vangai tree will always have their bees around with heavy sounds. The dead honeydew flows and falls into the rock below. It is then revealed that the children of Kuramagal sons and daughters will eat it by hand.

Honeycomb remains rare today as forests are being destroyed. They destroy the bees with fire and then take the honey. Honey helps the baby to speak well and is a cure for many ailments.(29).

In sangam age, the peoples were eating cooked thinai rice and powdered thinai as part of their diet.

“Uṇaṅkutiṇaituḷavumkaipōl”

These Natrinai lines mentioned that from the forest, thinai rice was harvested, dried in hot sun and then cooked.(30)The Sangam literature (Purnanaru. 143: 5, Aingurunooru : 285) states that they were milled thinai rice by using the equipment called Ural (grinding machine)and convert in to flour and then consumed.

Arivarunavu(Saint food)

The three-sensed monk, known as the Arivar, went home and begged, consumed cooked rice with butter. Then drink hot water. They also had a copper bowl to collect from the houses.

Kaim'maimakaḷiruṇavu

The widow womens called uyavarpeṅṅir' 'kaḷikalamakaḷir' in sangam age. These womens avoided consumption of ghee. They ate properly strained cooked rice mixed with sesame thuvayal, and spinach cooked with tamarind in leaf. Some people eat all rice.

Brahmins foods

Brahmins consumed Maṛaiyavarkaḷpaṛcōru, paruppuccōru, neṛcōru, miḷaku (pepper) mixed ghee with neyyuṭaṅkūṭiyakom'mattimātuḷaṅkai (pomegranate) and mango pickle. They also had jackfruit, banana and Tender coconut water (31)

The method of eating

During the Sangam period, people eaten their food in banana leaf and teak. They were also preferred of silver and gold plates.. They had a practice of eating food with proper heat. They were munched the food properly before they swallow. The informations were depicted in below lines in Purananooru

“Nāttirampeyarppaṇṅu” (32).

Non vegetarian food

Sangam literature offers extensive information on the eating of Eel's meats , Murrel's fish , Mackerel's fish , Sword fish , Shark, Tortoise, Crab, Fowl , Quail , Partridge, rams , Veal, Ox , Bison , porcupine, pork , iguana, rabbit, venison (etc. They cooked ghee and spices over the flesh. Sangam people dwelt in five diverse environments and their eating habits were influenced by their surroundings.

Ayars and Idayars also enjoyed the dairy products. Uzhavars (farmers) ate roasted rams of meat, fowl, shrimp, crabs, etc. Fishermen eaten fish and drank pottage rice and baby. Hunters eat venison, pigs and iguana. Ascetics Brahmin favoured non-vegetarian diets and avoided alcoholic beverages. However in those days Sangam Tamils made no distinction between vegetarian and non-vegetarian food.

Sangam literature used several terms to refer to meat varieties: Un (meat), Thu, Thasai (flesh), Thadi (steak), Kurai (large meat / fish slice), Ninam (fat), Pulal (smell / dried salt-fish dried meat), Vidakkudai and Muri (flesh-removed bone)(33)

IV. CONCLUSION

Sangam age food culture is not just about eating or having a taste. There are many scientific secrets hidden behind each of our habits. Studying heritage food habits in sangam era is an essential element in understanding the relationship between the surroundings and society. This provides a distinct view on culture. The study of Sangam

literature provides sufficient evidence of heritage food culture. This has enabled us to figure out the characteristics of dietary culture by the variety of food as an indigenous word per region. This is supported by the many archaeological evidence indicating the ancient Tamils ' prevailing mixed habit community. This article clearly shows that Tamil sangam generation eat vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian foods cooked using high quality techniques.

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