

Vijayanagara Empire: Food of Its Time

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Abstract

Vijayanagara Empire which was known for its grandeur, richness, and culture, was also known for its diverse cuisine.

Keywords: Vijayanagara, Food, Betel leaf

Introduction:

The Vijayanagara Empire was established in 1336 by Hari Hara Raya and Bukka Raya. The empire was renowned for its opulence, magnificence, and prosperity, as well as its diverse cuisine. As the empire expanded to regions like Malabar, Tulunadu, Coastal Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Coastal Andhra, and Tamil regions, the culinary habits of the people also grew richer and more varied. According to the accounts of travelers, literary evidence, and epigraphy, the people of the Vijayanagara Empire savored a wide range of foods. This included coconuts, beetle leaves, lemon rice, dosas, an array of sweets, spices, and non-vegetarian items.

Sources:

Literary evidence such as Sri Krishna Deva Raya's "Amuktamalyada," Allasani Peddana's "Manucharithra," Srinadha's Kasikhandam, Bheemeswara Puranam, and Haravilasam, along with Durjati Kalahasthiswara Mahathyam and the writings of travelers like Abdur Razzak and Domingo Paes, provide a lot of information about the food of the Vijayanagara people. Inscriptions issued by various Vijayanagara kings in temples, particularly Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, Vitthala Temple, Virupaksha Temple of Hampi, and many South Indian temples, give information about the various kinds of prasada offered to the presiding deities. Agriculture, Crops, and Trade:

As food habits depend on the pattern of agriculture and a variety of crops, kings of the Vijayanagara Empire gave a lot of boost to the agriculture sector by providing irrigation facilities through the building of tanks like the Nagalapuram Tank, Kambham Tank, Narasambudi Tank, and a barrage across Tungabhadra river, digging of canals in the empire and the responsibility of conversion of forest land into agriculture land was given to the Amaranayakas. Major rivers like Kaveri, Tungabhadra, Krishna, and many smaller rivers used to flow through the empire which resulted in the creation of river plains and fertile lands. As these rivers are non-perennial crops in the river plains used to harvest once a year.

Fertile lands with irrigation facilities were used for the cultivation of RICE, SUGAR CANE, BETEL LEAVES, AND COCONUT TREES. Rice was considered the food of the elite people as jowar and ragi were preferred by the commoners. Land was divided into two types neerambhika (irrigated-maagani) and kadambara (rainfed-metta). In the rice itself, varieties like teegamallelu, kusumalu, sampengalu and rajanalu existed. Various oil seeds like mustard, sunflower, and sesame are used by the people. After

defeating the Bijapur kings Krishna Deva Raya destroyed the forts of the rulers and ordered to sowing of castor Oil seeds.

Malabar was known for its spices like pepper (extensively used by foreigners to store meat during the winters), cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, and ginger. People of South India used these spices in their food and many foreign traders visited India for these spices which used to generate extensive revenue.

Vegetarian Food:

From the writings of Domingo Paes In the society Jains, Lingayats, Brahmanas and Vaisyas ate only vegetarian food and continued as vegetarians.

In the AMUKHTHAMALYADA Sri Krishnadeva Raya mentioned the food offered to the guests by Brahmanas in the Srivalliputtur. This food is served on the banana leaf and contains food items like rice, dal (pappu), sweet charu, ghee, payasam, and curd and is honored with tambula in the end. After the completion of the meal sugar cane juice, buttermilk, and fruit juices are used to drink. Many foreign travelers mentioned the existence of abundant cattle in the Indian villages which resulted In the consumption of more milk and milk products compared to grains by the commoners as they needed to pay a lot of agriculture tax.

In the ghatikachala mahatyam tenali Ramakrishna mentioned ooragaya and oorapandu(pickles) made by fermenting the vegetables and fruits in a mixture of salt, oil, and pepper. In India, Chillies were introduced in the 17th century by the Portuguese. Extensive Usage of tamarind and chilies in south Indian food was absent until the 17th century.

With the Persian influence of the Bahmanis and the Delhi sultanate chapatis and rotis started to be included in the royal menu of Vijayanagara kings.

Betal Leaf:

From the writings of Persian ambassador Abdur Razzak betel leaf was used for all ceremonies. It was used for removing bad odor from the mouth after meals and extensively offered by queens, courtesans, devadasis, and prostitutes to allure the men. In the presence of the king, no one except the dancing women was allowed to use betel leaves. Rajanatha Dindima' "Achutharamabhyudayam" mentioned in the design of tambula karandakha (betel box) women of Viratha and Saurashtra were experts. Hampi Road running in front of the Jaina temple was known as Pan Supari Bazaar.

Seasonal Foods:

In the "Amukthamalyada" SriKrishna Devaraya mentioned interesting facts about the food habits. He said people used to eat food with respect to the season. In the summer people preferred jaggery fruit juice (made by mixing fruits like grapes, banana, mango, and spices like ginger, pepper). People used to keep coconuts inside the sand so that they can enjoy cool coconut water in the evenings. In the summer afternoon meals enjoyed with fish,mango

From the writings of tallapaka tiruvengalanathudu we can understood in the rainy season various varieties of leafy vegetables used to grown. Curries were made by using leafy vegetables like gongura, chenchali, tumma, lethta tagirisaku,fried tamarind leaves and mixing them with salt and pepper.

Non-Vegetarian Food:

Domingo paes has mentioned on the last day of navrathri festival along with continuous dancing 400 goats were given as sacrifice and people ate this meat.

Abdur razzak who came to the vijayanagara empire as an ambassador from Persia received two sheep, four pairs of chicken, 5 manika's of rice, one manika butter and sugar candy as guest of honour.

Nuniz indicated vijayanagara people ate everything except beef. Robert sewell in his writings has mentioned some of the tribes of vijayanagara empire used to ate sparrows, rats and even lizards.

Durjati in his kalahasthiswara mahastyam mentioned about the hunting and food habits of tribes. In the vijayanagara days hunting was a great game of entertainment for the rulers and kings used to eat the meat of hunted animals.

Food as Prasad(naivedyam) offered to the god:

Srinatha who was a poet in the reddy kingdom (which later became a part of Srikrishna devaraya empire) and contemporary of devaraya II in his haravilasam mentioned about prasadam like undrallu, booriyalu, kudumulu, laddulu, panakam as offerings to the Ganesha.

In the inscriptions issued by the vijayanagara kings various types of naivedya's were mentioned. Idden, dosas, chalimidi, purnapu kudumulu, amritha kalasalu, vennatlu, chakkilali, appallam, sarasattulu, amrutha gulikalu, pulivogira(lemon rice) and dhadhyodhanam(curd rice) were offered to the gods as naivedhya's.

An inscription of 1513 A.D., records a gift of gold vessel weighing 374 units made to tiruvengalanatha for offering milk after night worship by chinnadevi

In these inscriptions provisions like rice, oil, ghee, jaggery, pesalu, pulses, minumulu, pepper, jeelakarra, sonti, karakkayalu, ulavalu, cashew nuts, tamarind, mustard, menthulu, inguva etc

Inscriptions of the tirumala tirupati devasthanams mentioned about various prasadam offerings made by kings and donors. An inscription issued 1467 A.D., mentioned naivedyas like athirasapadi (ariselu) and vadaipadi (vadal). An inscription issued in 1469 A.D., mentioned about rajanna tirupponakam which was made up of rajanalu rice, ghee, dal, jaggery, hot milk and pepper. An inscription dated 1519 A.D., mentioned about the naivedyas like appalu, godhi, vadai, idli, dosa, sukhiyalu, atukulu, fruits and panakam etc.

Along with the solid food, juices were also offered to the sri venkateswara. An inscription issued in 1547 A.D., mentioned about panakam offered to the deity through the year on the night naivedya which was made up of sugar, elachi powder.

FOOD SERVING:

In the RAYAVACHAKAM Gajapati king Bahubalendra Mukunda Gajapati served personally to the guests who came to the pooja in the puri jagannadha utsav. Generally Kings used to eat in the golden plates and served with golden utensils by the most beautiful courtesans. In the households of the commoners women used to serve for the men.

In the recent excavations at hampi demonstrated plates were erect on the stones in a line for the soldiers for the community eating.

SUMMARY:

From the sources we can understand people of the vijayanagara Empire enjoyed rich variety of food. Even now food utilizing by the south Indian people was quite similar to the food mentioned in the literature, foreign traveler accounts and inscriptions. prasads and snacks of the Vijayanagara period like idly, dosa, sweet pongal and vada still dominating the south Indian food and continuing Intangible legacy. By analyzing the food habits of the present south Indian people we can understand the profound influence and impact of the vijayanagara culture on the current generation. HAMPI board game became a great success story in the recent board game industry with its inspiration if hotel industry used themes like FOOD OF THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE by serving exotic and authentic food it can be game changer in the food business industry.

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