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Culinary Terms in Kashmiri: A Reflection of the Past and Present

Aejaz Mohammed Sheikh *
Shabina **

Abstract

Besides the scenic beauty, Kashmir valley also possesses a rich cultural heritage. The diversity of Kashmir Culture owes to a wide array of influences from different religious currents and civilizations. As such Kashmiri language has a rich share of cultural lexicon covering various dimensions of Kashmiri culture. The present paper is an attempt to look into the culinary terminology of Kashmiri.

Key Words: Culinary, Civilization, Culture, Derivation, Root

Introduction

Kashmir valley is famous throughout the globe for its scenic beauty and cultural heritage. Its culture is very diverse, multicolored and multifaceted and has been heavily influenced by various cultural and religious currents that have swept Kashmir valley from time to time. The influence of Chinese, Indian, Central Asian and Persian civilizations and cultures is very vividly felt today also. Kashmir has also witnessed three great religions of the world, namely, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam which have left an indelible impact on the culture of Kashmir. Given this backdrop, the present paper aims to study the culinary terms of Kashmir and the changes they have undergone over the years. In this regard, the domains like cooking and kitchen, utensils used in cooking, spices used in cooking, and 'wa:zwa:n' (Kashmiri feast on marriage ceremonies) have been taken into consideration.

1. Cooking and Kitchen

Traditionally, cooking in Kashmir is, mostly, done on /da:n/, which is an oblong clay oven. It has a floor-level hole, through which firewood is fed and has usually three holes on the top, on which the food, in different pots, pans and vessels, etc., is heated or cooked. However, nowadays, due to the impact of factors like modernization etc., its use is dwindling day by day and its place is gradually being taken by latest gadgets like LPG stoves, heaters, induction heaters, etc. It is pertinent to mention here that Kashmiri kitchen has undergone a tremendous change in the last couple of decades. Not only the cooking tools but the habits and manner of eating and the nature of dishes have also felt the impact of processes like modernization and globalization. A number of dishes like biryani, keema, pizza, etc., have also been added to the kitchen preparations. The sweet dishes, cold and soft drinks, coffee (hot, cold, black) are also becoming a regular feature of daily preparations. Dining table is fast replacing the traditional use of /dastark^ha:n/ (sheet of cloth spread on the floor on which the cooked items are served) and the terms like lunch, dinner, breakfast are taking over the traditional terms like /kodz/, /ka:l/, etc. The use of /samava:r/, the traditional kettle used to serve Kashmiri tea, has greatly

* Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir

**Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir

diminished and is being gradually replaced by modern day kettles. Similarly, /ts^həni ledʒ/, the clay pot, used to store burnt coal and /kr^hu:ts^h/, long ladle like item made of iron, for extracting the burnt coal from /da:n/ have now almost disappeared from the Kashmiri kitchen.

2. Utensils Used in Cooking

The discussion of culinary terms is not complete without giving an account of the utensils that are used during cooking. There are a number of utensils that make up the ornamentation of a Kashmiri kitchen.

A partial list of these utensils is given below:

/tə:v/	Frying pan
/samava:r/	Kettle
/ʃabətʃ(bəʃ kʰəz)/	Bowl
/ʃulitʃ (ləkət kʰəz)/	Bowl
/ʃəbur/	Bowl
/d̪e:g/	Cauldron
/gila:s/	Glass
/p̪a:li/	Cup
/d̪iqtʃi/	Cooking pot
/d̪iqtʃi və:r/	Small cooking pot
/ledʒ/	Cooking pot
/ledʒ və:r/	Small cooking pot
/pət̪li/	Pot
/pət̪li və:r/	Pot
/bati qādʒ/	Lunch box
/kʰəz/	Bowl
/ʃu:r/	Bowl
/masa:li d̪abi/	Spice box
/ʃəbur/	Bowl
/bati tsa:lan/	Spoon/spatula
/kaʃə:r/	Bowl
/ʃʌʃʃi/	Ladle
/ka:ʃvi/	Big spoon
/buʃka:bi/	Bowl
/p̪ali nə:r/	Cup basket
/tili və:r/	Oil pot
/kr ^h əʃd̪/	Small ladle (used for pouring iol)
/midʒi kr ^h əʃd̪/	Grater
/tsa:lan/	Spatula
/vək ^h ul/	stone-mortar
/ka:dʒ vat ^h /	Pestle
/ʃ ^h omp ^h /,/d̪io:n/	Churning stick
/d̪ak ^h ni/	Lid

In addition to these, a range of new items has become part of Kashmiri kitchen over the years. Some of these are:

- cup,

- plate,
- mug,
- coffee mug,
- tea set,
- kettle,
- flask,
- electric kettle,
- rice cooker,
- juicer,
- food processor,
- tray,
- oven,
- fridge,
- water filter,
- toaster.

3. Spices Used in Cooking

Spices form an integral part of cooking process and are used in an appropriate range to add flavour to the food items. In Kashmir, people are very fond of spicy foods, and that is why people were very much fond of /vari/ (mixture of spices/ masala cake) which used to be made in every household. There are a number of spices that are used in the making of a delicious food. Some of the spices are listed below:

/pudni/, /p ^h u:t ^h ni/	Dry mint leaves
/da:nival/	Coriander
/kōŋ/	Saffron
/rōŋ/	Clove
/lidər/	Turmeric powder
/z ^h u:r/	Cumin seeds
/ruhan/	Garlic
/maval/	Dry cockscomb flower
/da:ltʃi:n/	Cinnamon
/pr'a:n/	Shallots
/gandʃi/	Onion
/dʒa:ven/	Carom seeds
/marəts/	Black pepper
/bə:dʃa:n/	Fennel
/ʃōt ^h /	Ginger
/sabəz ə:li/	Green cardamom
/bəđi ə:l/	Black cardamom
/kalo:ndzi/	Black caraway/Black cumin

There has also been a change in the application of some spices like /maval/ (dry cockscomb flower) and /kōŋ/ (saffron). These were traditionally used for adding colour and aroma to various preparations and dishes, but, nowadays, artificial and food grade colors are commonly used for this purpose.

4. /wa:zwa:n/

Kashmir is, indeed, world famous for its well known flavorsome /wɑ:zwa:n/. /wɑ:zwa:n/ is an elaborate, overwhelmingly generous meal which is usually prepared on the occasion of a Kashmiri, especially Muslim wedding. What makes this Kashmir Cuisine special is the detailed preparation and traditional presentation of sumptuous meal, which comprises of 20 to 40 dishes. It provides the choicest selection of vegetarian and non vegetarian food in multiple flavors. In nutshell, it is a multi-course meal in which meat forms the main ingredient, although other elements like chicken, fish and vegetables are also present. The preparation and presentation of Wazwan needs a team of skilled cooks. The head of the cooking team is known as 'wɔsti wɑ:zi' (master chef) who is assisted by a number of assistants i.e. wɑ:zɑ:s.

As said earlier, a number of dishes are prepared in a /wɑ:zwa:n/. Some of the important dishes prepared in a /wɑ:zwa:n/ are as under:

- /sɑp^he:d kɔkur/ or /zɑ:p^hrɑ:n^h kɔkur/ (chicken-white soup or dipped with saffron)
- /dɑni p^hol/ (meat piece)
- /tɑbɑk^h mɑ:z/ (fried lamb ribs)
- /gɑ:dʒi kʊp^hti/ (minced fish balls)
- /dɑ:nival kɔrmi/ (lamb in a yogurt-based gravy)
- /ɑ:b gɔ:f/ (lamb curry cooked in milk)
- /mɑrtsi-wɑ:ɡɑn kɔrmi/ (lamb meat preparation with chilly-based gravy)
- /met^hi mɑ:z/ (meat mixture)
- /risti/ (mutton balls)
- /rɔ:ɡɑn dʒɔ:f/ (tender meat of lamb)
- /si:k^h kɑbɑ:b/ (spicy ground lamb on skewers)
- /jɑk^hin/ (meat prepared in curd)
- /gɔ:fɑ:b/ (soft mutton meat balls cooked in a gravy of fresh curd)

However, seven dishes form an inseparable part of this feast. They are /tɑbɑk^h mɑ:z/, /rɔ:ɡɑn dʒɔ:f/, /risti/, /ɑ:b gɔ:f/, /dɑ:nival kɔrmi/, /mɑrtsi-wɑ:ɡɑn kɔrmi/ and /gɔ:fɑ:b/.

Besides, some vegetarian dishes are also prepared in a /wɑ:zwa:n/. Some of them are as under:

- /dɑm ɔ:lu:/ (a potato dish)
- /tsɔki vɑ:ɡɑn/ (brinjal with a sour gravy)
- /ɔ:lu: bʊk^hɑ:r/ (chutney made with fresh plums, onions, sugar, lime juice and spices)
- /rɑ:zmɑh gɔɡdʒi/ (turnip with pulses)
- /nɑdir^h jɑk^hin/ (yakhni made of lotus stems)
- /tsɑ:mɑn/ (cheese)
- /kɑnkɪtʃ/ (mushroom)

A /wɑ:zwa:n/ is regarded as incomplete without /pɔlɑ:v/, a sweet rice dish which is prepared in ghee along with a host of dry fruits. Yoghurt garnished with Kashmiri saffron, salads, Kashmiri pickles and dips are also vital components of a /wɑ:zwa:n/. It needs to be noted that a variety of salads like 'mudʒi tseʃin', 'ɔ:li tseʃin', 'gɑndʒi tseʃin', 'du:n^h tseʃin', i.e., salads made from radish, gourd, onion, and walnut, respectively have been added to the menu of /wɑ:zwa:n/ in recent times.

Different cuisines used during the preparation of wɑ:zwa:n include /ʃɔt^h/ (dried ginger), /dɑ:ltʃi:n/ (cinnamon), /ɔ:li/ (cardamom), /bɔ:dɑ:n/ (fennel), etc.

/p^hi:ri:n/ and /hɔlvɪ/ are the common desserts which are usually served after meals. However, cold drinks, juices, ice-creams and other sweet dishes have also gained currency during past few years.

A cursory look at the various dishes of the /wɑ:zwa:n/ reveals that it has been highly influenced by various cultures and civilizations which have come into contact with Kashmir during different periods. Among these the Indic, Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Central Asian and Afghan

influences are quite evident. The origin of some of the dishes of Wazwan can be traced as follows:

<u>Dish</u>	<u>Source</u>
/kaba:b/	Arabic
/ro:gan dʒo:f/	Persian
/kɔrmi/	Turkish
/dam ə:lu:/	Indian
/həlvi/	Arabic

5. Conclusion

As is evident from the above discussion Kashmiri is very rich in culinary terms which depict the multifaceted nature of Kashmiri culture. The culinary practices and terms have been heavily influenced by various cultures, civilizations and religions. However, they have not remained immune to the global developments and influences. It can be easily ascertained by the fact that new culinary items, practices and terms have gained currency in the culinary lexicon of Kashmiri language over the years. Even some earlier items and terms have become obsolete and may become a talk of the past in the coming years.

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