

A Study on the Differences in Cuisines of Rice in Sri Lankan Society

Hewawasan, H. H. N. S.

Department of History, University of Kelaniya.

din.xperia.13@gmail.com

Rice is the staple food in Sri Lanka. In various occasions rice is being prepared in various methods to fulfil several needs. The research problem of this paper is to examine the causes behind the differences in cuisines of Rice in Sri Lankan Society. The methodology is referencing primary and secondary literary sources. In ancient days, pre historic men satisfied their need for food by hunting animals. Yet, after they started animal domestication and agriculture, the human beings were practised to follow a new appetite. Since pre historic era, "grains" played a major role in the food culture in Sri Lanka. Among them, the priority was always given to rice. In the lifestyles of Sri Lankans, "Rice" was important for various purposes: "*DiyaBatha*" and "gruel" made from rice served as a medicine. Furthermore, "Milkrice" too deserves an integral place in Sri Lankan food Culture. However, depending on the occasion and the purpose, rice was called in different names: Rice prepared at wedding ceremonies is known to be "*MagulBatha*" whereas the rice prepared in a house after a funeral is called as "*Mala Batha*." In addition, rice offered to demons and various evil spirits is named as "*PideniBatha*." Moreover, depending on the ingredients and the method used while preparing, the name of the "gruel" faced slight changes as well. i.e. "*Diyakandha*," "*Lunukandha*," "*Behethkandha*" etc. In ancient society, another prioritized food which attracted the attention of the elite class was food made from Ghee. Ghee Rice was offered to monks and the king as well. Likewise, "*El Wee*" too, had a prominent place in the elite class food. On the contrary, "raw rice" was considered to be taken by the poor. According to the literary sources, "*Pasibatha*," "*Kaasibatha*," "*Ambulbatha*," "*SunsalBatha*" etc. were differed in the methods of preparing, purposes and social rituals. Thus, it can be identified that several cuisines of Rice differs depending on several facts such as time, occasion, social classes, health status etc.

Key words: Agriculture, Animal Domestication, Cuisine, Grains, Rice