

# Book Review

S. Inayet Ali Zaidi

Name of the Book: Pak Shaster(cookbook),

Name of the Author: Dr. Vikram Singh Bhati

Name of the Publisher: Rajasthani Sodh Sansthan +  
Mehrangarh Museum Trust

PP-1-73, Price- Rs. 400

History is a subject of wide range which needs constant efforts to explore new sources to know about various aspects of world civilizations. As much as one goes into deep, one finds variety of information about the ways of life of people and the universe. In comparison to many developed capitalist societies, less attention has been paid to know about the South Asian society, heritage and culture. With a passage of time and socio-economic development, new vistas of Indian heritage and culture are drawing attention and generating interests in the scholars. Hospitality is one of the new vistas. Food, Cuisine and culinary art are the most important and integrated part of the hospitality. In the recent times of globalization, food globalization is not lagging behind. In the cut-throat competition in the food industry; the chefs and connoisseurs are encouraging the scholars working on food heritage to explore, develop and produce new recipes and bring them into limelight. Recently in November 2017, World Food India, Food Festival was celebrated at India gate, New Delhi, where many prominent Indian chefs not having much knowledge about the history of *khichdi* participated in cooking *khichdi* in a large scale and it succeeded to make a place in Guinness World Record. Similarly mangoes festival celebrated every year in mangoes season. These festivals are celebrated to make cuisine and culinary popular among the tourists. Result is positive. Consequently day by day new manuscripts on cuisine and culinary are seeing light of the day. Many Indian archives seem to be rich enough in preserving historical manuscripts but very few are known to be on recipes. As the editor of

this book says that in his *Sansthan* there are about 17,500 preserved manuscripts but among them only one on *Pak-Shastra* is available. It is in Mewari dialect cum Rajasthani language. Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar, who died in 1885 A.D., is known to have taken interest in compiling the book on cuisine and culinary. It was copied in 1918 by Bhatt Lilapat. In the end of the copied version the name of Joshi Chutrbhuj Khandelwal is mentioned as one of the cooks of non-vegetarian dish. It has a large number of non-vegetarian and vegetarian recipes with some interesting discourses related to hospitality and cultural traditions of Rajasthan. To cite a few, for instance main recipes are accompanied by a number of complementary recipes like, *chatni*, *achar* (Pickles), fruit jams, desserts (*seera*), *churma*, *aamras* (mango juice) sweet bread, sweet-sour bread, *nan* and *kali roti* (black bread). Detailed process of cooking along with ingredients of a dish is explained.

As the editor says that the recipes are not arranged in a systematic manner like vegetarian and non-vegetarian categories. The editor has tried to put these dishes into order such as dessert, vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. As per the food habit of the local people of Rajasthan, sweet dish is served first in the very beginning of meal. Thus the editor too in his arrangement of the dishes has begun from sweet dishes like the recipe of *seera*, *churma*, *dood* (milk) *ki kheer*, *dood* (milk) *pera*, *aamras* etc. In subsequent order, recipes of different kind of *rotis* (breads), like *meethi roti* (sweet bread), *khatti meethi roti*, (sour-sweet roti), *chura-bura ki roti*, *kaali roti* (recipe of black roti), *roti* cooked on fire, and on steams etc. Recipes of *puri* (deep fried small sized *roti*), *achar* (pickles), *chatni* and fruit jams are also narrated. Varieties of the most popular dish like *khichri* are also part of this cookery book. Different kinds of meat *pulao*, particularly *Rajsi* (royal) meat *pulao*, *Ganga-Jamni pulao* are mentioned in detail. During the period different kinds

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\* Former Co-ordinator, Department of Tourism, Hotel, Hospitality and Heritage Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. Email: sizaidi@jmi.ac.in

of meats such as mutton, *kukra* (chicken), venison, pork, rabbit meat and fish curry were in vogue to eat. Ingredients and other spices used in these preparations were costly and within the reach of elite or people of royal lineage. Thus it would be interesting to look into this book along with recently published book, *Nuskha-i Shahjahani*.

On several aspects of the people of Rajasthan and particularly on the lifestyle of Rajputs one finds 'Sanskritizing' impact of the Mughal culture. Culinary and cuisine are not exception. Words like *roti* is of Turkish origin, *nan* and *seera* (colloquial of *sheera*) are of Persian origin. *Pyaz* (onion) from central Asia or Iran have crept into Rajasthani cookery through the Mughal culinary technological art. Rajput nobles and their *tabinion* (followers) who served with the Mughals in the different region of India brought with them several eating habits inculcated by the variety of spices. Word *kaanda*, a Marathi origin which is also used in the region of Rajasthan obviously it was imported by the Rajputs and their followers to their native places.

One does come across cases of food technology. Preparation of *achar* of different varieties, *murabba* and preservation of mango juice for a long period of one year are furnished by many contemporary and travellers. Ibn Batutta (14<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan traveller) in his book *Rehla* has given a detailed graphic description of ripe and unripe mangoes. The manner in which *achar* of unripe mangoes is prepared and eaten by the South Asian people with their main dishes is an interesting part of eating manners of Indians in his discourse. Similarly Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605-1627A.D.) who

was very fond of mangoes wrote in his autobiography, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*.

"Mangoes used not to be in season in the country of Hindustan after the month of *Tir* (June-July), (but) Muqarrab Khan (noble) had established gardens in the *parganah* (territorial unit) of Kairana (town near Saharanpur, UP) which is the native place of his ancestors, and looked after the mangoes there in such a manner as to prolong the season for more than two months, and sent them every day fresh into the special fruit store house. As this was altogether an unusual thing to be accomplished, it has been recorded here."

In the *Pak Shastr* too detailed description of preparation and preservation of mango juice for a year is furnished. (p. 4). Ingredients and spices used for the preservation are given in proportion of quantity of mango juice of two *ser*s (1.866210 kg): *sugar-ser-6*, cardamom (*ilaichi*) equivalent to the weight of Rs. 2, saffron and *javitri* (spice) *rupya 1 bhar* each, juice of mangoes 2 *ser*s. Thereafter the method of preparation is explained.

However, the book *Paak Shaster* is important from many points of view such historical treatises show Indian civilization socially and culturally was developed like many other civilizations of the world. It should be an essential part of cuisine and culinary syllabus or course structure of every department where it is taught. Dishes discussed in the book should be revived with practical exercises in the kitchen labs of the department of Hotel and Hospitality studies. These innovative dishes should be introduced in the hotel and hospitality market. Finally, Dr. Bhati deserves appreciations to bring this treatise to the lime light.