

Concept of Food Beyond Survival

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Introduction

Food is a need for the survival of all the living beings. The intake of food nowadays by the people is largely different from that of ancient days. The Bible is a holy text for Christians. In the Old and the New Testament, food is said to serve human beings in different occasions. In fact, food is a concept beyond survival. There was more divinity when the people had the food given by God. Food is depicted as a sign of glory, a means to restore faith in the minds of the people. Many multitudes were highly benefitted when they were in starvation because they followed the teachings of God. Even the people who complained for various reasons were made to understand the greatness of God through food. The inner qualities of human beings are brought to the forefront and those qualities can be understood by the kind of the dish and different styles of cooking. The greediness of people by going against God's instructions is clearly stated in certain chapters in the Bible.

Objectives

To examine the purpose of food, during the time multitudes were in support and against God.

To understand the concept of food, then and now.

To examine the inner qualities of the people.

To compare the food intake of the ancients with that of the present day.

Significance of the Paper

The paper examines the kind of food eaten by the people in the ancient world. The paper analyses the effect of food in the present-day world. The paper ascertains the way of living of the people by the consumption of various kinds of food. The paper discusses the problems faced then and now where there were availability and lack of food.

Methods

The paper has adopted 'The Bible' for textual analysis.

The paper compares the way of living of people, then and now with reference to food.

Background of the Study

The paper has a background of food and its reference with 'The Bible'. It is described in the Bible that many people followed the teachings of God. The grace made known by the impartiality of God. There are many incidents in which food serves as the factor in which the people understand the greatness of God.

Food in the Old Testament

The fall of Man

The fruit of knowledge which was forbidden was the reason for the fall of mankind. The very first man and woman created have sinned, as they went against God's words. Their want to be equal to God has led to the eventual fall from the Garden of Eden.

The greatness of the Almighty:

The Lord is said to have heard all the complaints of the people while the Israelite community has set their journey from Elim to reach Canaan. The Lord dropped manna for them. Then the Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them that at twilight they will have meat to eat and, in the morning, they will have all the bread they want. Then they will know that I, the Lord, am their God" (*Today's English Version*, Exod.16.12). The quails were dropped in the evening.

Through this, it is understood that The Lord satisfies people with the food they want. In fact, they are given in plenty despite their complaints. This proves the greatness of the Lord. The long-lasting life of food:

The Manna showered by the Lord is the long-lasting food which satisfied the people beyond the limit. The Lord's abundant mercy can be understood by it. Moses says to Aaron to save some Manna so that even the descendants may come to know about his mercy. "The Israelites ate manna for next forty years, until they reached the land of Canaan, where they settled" (Exod.16.35).

Food as a Factor Affecting Family

Togetherness should be an essential factor among the family. Any discord in the family leads to negative outcomes. In the case of Jacob and Esau, the brotherly relation between them is not equal. Blessings from parents are always a boon to an individual. Jacob, in order to get his father's blessings, he was ready to disguise as his hirsute brother Esau. Isaac (a blind old man), the father of the two, wants Esau to go to the country and kill an animal which in turn would be served to Isaac because he likes it. "Take your bow and arrows, go out into the country, and kill

an animal for me. / Cook me some of that tasty food that I like and bring it to me. After I have eaten it, I will give my final blessing before I die” (Gen.27. 3-4).

Rebecca, Isaac’s wife, listens to the conversation between the father and the son. She understands that Esau will get the blessings of his father before Isaac dies. To avoid this, Jacob is instructed by Rebecca to go to the flock and pick two fat young goats. Rebecca puts on Jacob the best clothes of Esau so that his father would not identify he is Jacob. Isaac, initially has a doubt and later when Jacob came up to kiss him, Isaac smelt his clothes. Jacob gets Isaac’s blessing after Isaac is satisfied eating the tasty food. Isaac blesses, “May nations be your servants, and may people bow down before you. May you rule over all your relatives and may your mother’s descendants bow down before you. May those you curse you be cursed and may those who bless you be blessed” (Gen. 26.29).

Esau is helpless when he comes to know that Jacob has cheated on him. He cries out loud when he realizes that his father cannot bless him as already Jacob has received his blessing. In this, the deserving son do not gain anything even though he did as his father said. The cheating attitude among the family members is brought out through Rebecca and Jacob.

Elijah is Helped

Elijah, a prophet from Tishbe in Gilead, said to King Ahab that there will not be rain for two to three years. He was helped by the Lord. He did as the Lord instructed him to do so. He hid himself near the brook of Cherith, east of the Jordon. There the brook supplied him with water and ravens brought him bread and meat.

Elijah Helps the Widow

The Lord instructed Elijah to go to Zarephath, near Sidon, as the brook dried up due to lack of rain. He requests for water and bread to a widow gathering firewood, as the Lord has commanded her. She replies that she has only a handful of flour in a bowl and a drop of olive oil in a jar. He asks her to prepare and bring the first loaf to him and then prepare the rest for her and for her son. She did as Elijah said. And “as the Lord had promised through Elijah, the bowl did not run out of flour nor did the jar run out of oil” (1 Kings. 17.16).

Elisha Helps a Poor Widow

Elisha helps a widow, who was a member of a group of prophets. She asks help as her sons life is in danger. Her husband has died. A man he owed money comes to take away her two sons as slaves in payment for her husband’s debt. She answers that she has nothing except a small jar of olive oil in her home when asked by Elisha. She pours the oil into the jars and filled

it. Elisha tells her to “Sell the olive-oil and pay all your debts, and there will be enough money left over for you and your sons to live on” (2 Kings. 4.7).

Food in the New Testament Celebration

Celebration is often carried out by serving food to the relatives, friends, etc. In the parable of the prodigal son, a father who has two sons celebrates the return of his younger son. The younger son expects a scorn from his father for wasting all the money, which was the property granted, on gambling and prostitutes. He realizes the goodness in his father when he accepts him. The father tells his servants to arrange for a feast.

“Then go and get the prize calf and kill it and let us celebrate with a feast!

For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’ And so the feasting began” (Luke. 15.23-24).

Through this celebration one comes to know that the goodness is within the human beings, so that the quality of forgiveness is explicitly stated in the case of the father in the parable. The celebration can also be looked at the perspective that human beings are ready to accept others though they are wrong.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

Jesus feeds a large crowd who followed him because they had seen his miracles of healing. He already had an idea on how to feed the five thousand men. Andrew, his disciple, said that a boy had ‘five loaves of barley bread and two fish’. “Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and distributed it to the people there. He did the same with the fish, and they had as much as they wanted” (John. 6.11).

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand People

Jesus always had a large crowd after him. Jesus felt sorry for those people who haven’t eaten anything for three days. He asked his disciples how much bread they have got. They had seven loaves of bread and few small fish. He gave thanks to God and distributed it among the disciples. They ate and were satisfied, and they had seven baskets full of pieces left over.

The Wedding in Cana

In the town of Cana in Galilee, Jesus attended a wedding. Jesus’ mother said that there was no wine left. The moment he knew the time has come to do the miracle, Jesus said to fill the jars with water. He turned water into wine so that the guests would have it in plenty. That was his first miracle performed in Cana in Galilee

The Lord's Supper

Jesus dined together with his disciples during the Passover meal. He knows that somebody would betray him among the group. He said that the one who dips his bread in the dish with him would betray him. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave to his disciples. He said, "Take it, this is my body" (Mark. 14.22). The same he did for the cup and said, "This is my blood, which is poured out for many, my blood which seals God's covenant" (Mark. 14.24).

Methods

Textual Analysis

In the Old and the New Testament, the concept of food beyond survival is clearly stated. In the Old Testament, the ambition to become equal to God is brought out by the want for eating the fruit of knowledge. The manna and the quail dropped by God shows the forgiving nature of God. Whereas, it shows the evil nature of man because they pile up even when food is not needed for them as instructed by Moses. The growth of worms on the stale food suggests that anything done with a view of greediness will lead to waste. The cheating attitude of the mother is depicted in such a way that she cooks the goats taken from the flock instead of animal from the country. This shows that she does not respect her husband's words. Her son, Jacob, is also not shameful for deceiving his father and his brother. The goats taken for cooking instead of an animal from the country clearly proves that the respect which they pretend to Isaac is of a low manner and is deceiving, because Isaac did not know that those are goats. The Lord helps the prophet Elijah by making birds as a tool to give him food. This shows the faith of man will make him hopeful. The widow trusts in the words of Elijah. Elisha helps the poor widow so that she can lead a decent life with her sons, by selling the resource which she has, in order to earn money.

In the New Testament, food is an aspect used to explicitly show the goodness, in the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus never leaves those people who believed in him. He considers them and distributes food by giving thanks to God. This shows that he fulfills the purpose of God. The miracle performed at the wedding in Cana is a sign of his glory. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives an opportunity for Judas to repent. He taught that humility would come only when one becomes a servant to all. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and asked them to do the same with one another, which shows the humbleness in him.

Food, Then and Now

In the Bible, the inner qualities of human beings are understood through food. Food was even a negative influence as it was the reason for the fall of mankind. The patience of God, the cunning trait of the wife of Isaac is aptly described and is made clear to the readers. Moreover,

the forgiving nature of God, the glory and humility of Jesus, the faith of man can be comprehended. So, food was eaten for survival purposes but the purity of God, the kindness of men serves a larger purpose than the survival. Food was either a positive or negative impact on the lives of people.

Nowadays, the lifestyle has changed. People mostly do not know the speciality of certain foods. Food cooked in a traditional style is eaten only during occasions in fast-moving city areas. The benefits of nutritious food are not known. Many people suffer from illness as they eat fried foods because of its taste. Most of them are not health conscious due to the new trends followed in today's milieu. Advertisements of fast foods have a negative impact on the eating habits of people. Chemicals are being sprayed or injected into the foods to make it look more natural. People are often lured by the appearance and the taste. Food is distributed among the needy. Many people who are in poverty are not recognised. There are still people starving and dying. Few well-off people do not understand the value of food.

Conclusion

In the Bible, food is described in various situations and it serves many purposes. Though the need for food is for survival, many other aspects are also highlighted. People in the present world, do not understand or are not aware of the benefits of eating good food. This in turn leads to various diseases. The life span of human beings nowadays is shorter than those of the ancient days. Westernization has blinded people in many ways. The traditional food, the traditional cooking is almost fading from the fast-moving world.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:1 January 2019

Editors: Dr. V. Sangeetha, Dr. B. J. Geetha, Dr. K. Sindhu, Dr. S. Boopathi and Ms. S. Sneha Sri

Food in Literature: Papers Presented in National Seminar on Food in Literature, 2019

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