*Review Article*

Understanding the Dietary Nutrition and its Health Implications in Historical Food Practices

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ABSTRACT

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| Food habits, shaped by multiple motives and stimuli, are increasingly complex aspects of human behavior, often prioritizing cultural significance over nutritional value. Traditional diets, deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts, offer significant health benefits and sustainable solutions to contemporary health challenges. These diets, such as those practiced in India and among indigenous communities, emphasize locally available, nutrient-rich foods that combat non-communicable diseases and promote overall well-being. The integration of traditional food systems into modern dietary practices can enhance food security and address the global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change by promoting biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practices. Nutrition education is critical for individuals, communities, and public health, empowering people to make informed food choices, improve dietary habits, and reduce the risk of malnutrition and diet-related diseases. By providing knowledge and skills, nutrition education helps individuals cultivate healthy eating behaviors that can last a lifetime. Traditional knowledge systems like Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine advocate for individualized diets that consider personal and environmental factors, further supporting health and wellness. The revival of these dietary practices not only preserves cultural heritage but also offers a promising pathway to manage lifestyle diseases and improve community health outcomes. |

**Keywords:** Traditional Diets, Nutritional Practices, Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Food Systems, Health Benefits, Indigenous Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

Food practices have been a cornerstone of Indian culture, deeply influencing health, social structures, and community bonding throughout history. The evolution of Indian food culture, from prehistoric times to the present, highlights its role in sustaining life and fostering communal ties. In ancient times, food was seen as a divine gift, promoting social cohesion through communal eating, as seen in practices like Annadanam, which is considered a high form of charity (Prasad & Veerabadhran, 2024). The diversity of Indian cuisine is largely shaped by geography and climate, with each region developing unique culinary traditions based on locally grown and harvested ingredients. This regional diversity is further enriched by historical interactions with various invaders and traders, such as the Greeks, Mughals, and Portuguese, who introduced new ingredients and cooking techniques (Ghosh, 2022). Indian dietary practices, documented through religious texts and historical artifacts, emphasize the importance of vegetarianism and food-related rituals that advocate for harmonious living with nature, significantly impacting health and nutrition (Prakash, 2020). The use of indigenous plants like lentils and spices such as turmeric and pepper has been central to Indian diets for millennia, reflecting the country's agricultural bounty and its role as a hub in global trade networks (Sen, 2015). Food in India is intricately linked to identity, gender, and power, with culinary practices reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics. This convergence of ingredients, ideas, and ideologies underscores the complex history of Indian cuisine and its enduring significance in shaping national culture (Banerjee-Dube, 2016).

Historical food practices and their nutritional implications, emphasizing how these traditions can inform modern dietary recommendations. It highlights the role of traditional diets, such as those in India, which are rich in whole grains, pulses, and fermented foods, offering significant health benefits and disease prevention potential. The study underscores the importance of traditional and indigenous food systems, which have historically maintained a balance with nature and offer a wealth of underutilized knowledge that can improve human nutrition and address global health challenges like obesity and undernutrition. By integrating traditional dietary practices with modern scientific insights, the paper suggests a promising pathway to combat modern health issues while preserving cultural heritage. It points out the nutritional benefits of indigenous foods, such as those of the First Nations people in Australia, which are high in protein, minerals, and beneficial compounds, contributing to sustainable agriculture and health. The research advocates for revisiting and incorporating historical dietary wisdom into contemporary nutrition guidelines to promote health and well-being.

# Historical Perspectives on Food Practices

The dietary habits of ancient Indian civilizations, particularly during the Harappan period, were diverse and sophisticated, as evidenced by archaeological findings from sites like Mehrgarh and Harappa. The inhabitants of these regions cultivated a variety of grains, including wheat and barley, which were staples in their diet. Barley, in particular, was highly valued for its nutritional benefits and was consumed in various forms, such as chapattis, which are still popular in some parts of India today (Pandey & Kunwar, 2023). The Mehrgarh site, dating back to the Neolithic period, provides evidence of early agricultural practices, including the domestication of wheat, rice, and barley, as well as the use of storage jars for seeds, indicating a well-developed agrarian society (Iqbal & Baloch, 2018). Additionally, the Harappan diet included pulses like lentils and mung beans, and dairy products, reflecting a balanced nutritional intake (Lawler, 2012). The discovery of multigrain 'laddoos' at Harappan sites further underscores the complexity and richness of their diet, which included high-protein foods (Lal et al., 2022). The use of spices such as ginger and turmeric suggests that the culinary practices of the Indus Valley civilization were not only diverse but also sophisticated, resembling modern Indian cuisine in some aspects (Lawler, 2012).

Geography and climate significantly influence food availability and consumption patterns, particularly in regions like India, where ancient agricultural practices are deeply intertwined with local ecosystems. The monsoon season, for instance, plays a pivotal role in shaping the culinary landscape, as it brings forth a variety of indigenous foods that are both culturally significant and nutritionally beneficial. During this period, traditional dishes such as the Maharashtrian 'Vagheteyachi bhaji' and Chattisgarh's 'Hareli' are celebrated, highlighting the reliance on seasonal produce and the use of spices with medicinal properties to combat seasonal ailments (Singh, 2024). The agricultural calendar, dictated by seasonal changes, affects the availability of both plant and animal products, thereby influencing dietary choices and nutritional status (André & Rodrigues, 2012). Regional diversity further impacts dietary patterns, as seen in the varied factors affecting dietary diversity across different Indian states. For example, in Gujarat, crop diversity and cash crop cultivation enhance dietary diversity, while in Haryana, education and market sales play a crucial role (Singh et al., 2020). Additionally, socio-economic factors such as household size, education, and access to public distribution systems also contribute to dietary diversity, with larger, better-educated households generally enjoying more diverse diets (Parappurathu et al., 2015). These regional and seasonal variations underscore the complexity of food systems and the need for tailored policies to improve nutrition security, taking into account the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of each area (Khanna, 2022).

During the Vedic period, food practices were deeply intertwined with religious, social, and philosophical dimensions, as reflected in ancient texts like the Rigveda. The Rigveda, one of the oldest Indo-European texts, contains hymns that highlight the significance of food in ritualistic and cosmic contexts, portraying it as a divine substance essential for sustaining life and maintaining cosmic order (Guha, 2016;Geldner, 1954). The Vedic ideology, as discussed in these texts, often emphasized the hierarchical nature of food consumption, where power dynamics were mirrored in the act of eating, symbolizing dominance and control over resources (Smith, 1990). Grains and lentils, such as barley and rice, were particularly important, serving not only as staple foods but also as offerings in religious ceremonies, symbolizing prosperity and fertility (Prasad & Veerabadhran, 2024). The Upanishads and other philosophical texts further elaborate on the role of food in shaping moral and social life, linking it to the concept of Prana, or life force, and its impact on mental purity and vitality (Prasad & Veerabadhran, 2024;Singh, 2020). These texts also explore the classification of food based on its effects on the Gunas, or qualities, promoting Sattvika foods that enhance longevity and happiness (Prasad & Veerabadhran, 2024). The practice of Annadanam, or the giving of food, is extolled as a supreme form of charity, reflecting the ethos of generosity and hospitality that permeated Vedic society (Prasad & Veerabadhran, 2024).

Ayurveda, an ancient Indian medical system developed between 2500–500 BC, offers a holistic approach to health by emphasizing the interconnectedness of the body, mind, and spirit. Central to Ayurvedic principles is the concept of balance, which is achieved through personalized nutrition, lifestyle practices, and seasonal adjustments. The system categorizes individuals into three primary Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—each representing different bodily energies that influence health. Dietary recommendations are tailored to these Doshas, with specific foods being considered either wholesome (Hita) or unwholesome (Ahita) based on their effects on an individual's constitution, or Prakriti. For instance, a Vata Prakriti person should avoid dry and cold foods, while a Kapha Prakriti individual might benefit from them (Sen et al., 2024;Priyanshu et al., 2024). Ayurveda also stresses the importance of seasonal eating, aligning dietary choices with environmental conditions to maintain the balance of the Doshas throughout the year. This is achieved through practices like Ritucharya, which involves adapting one's diet and lifestyle to the changing seasons to prevent the accumulation and aggravation of Doshas (Singh & Zambare, 2024;Chisti et al., 2023). Furthermore, Ayurveda underscores the role of Agni, or digestive fire, in health, advocating for diets that support optimal digestion and prevent malnutrition-related diseases (Roji & Paliwal, 2023). By integrating these principles, Ayurveda promotes a sustainable and balanced way of living, aiming to prevent disease and enhance overall well-being through mindful eating and lifestyle choices (Sen et al., 2024;Singh & Zambare, 2024).

# Nutritional Implications of Historical Food Practices

Traditional Indian diets are characterized by their reliance on whole foods, seasonal ingredients, and minimal processing, contributing to their nutrient density and potential health benefits. Historically, these diets have been rich in diverse, unrefined foods, as documented through various cultural artifacts and practices, which have significantly influenced the health and nutrition of the Indian population (Prakash, 2020). The traditional dietary practices in regions like the Uttarakhand hills emphasize high household production and dietary diversity, which are crucial in combating malnutrition and food-related non-communicable diseases (Bisht, 2018). In Southwest India, traditional practices involve the use of a variety of plant species for both nutritional and medicinal purposes, often tied to specific seasons and cultural rituals, highlighting the integration of food and medicine in these diets (Bhagya et al., 2013). Furthermore, the historical use of multigrain foods, such as the high-protein laddoos found at the Harappan site, underscores the ancient emphasis on nutrient-dense foods that could address hidden hunger and health disorders (Lal et al., 2022). The shift towards refined and processed foods in recent decades has altered these traditional patterns, but the foundational principles of these diets—emphasizing whole, functional foods—remain relevant for promoting health and preventing chronic diseases (Lipski, 2010).

Traditional foods such as millets, legumes, and dairy products have been staples in historical diets, offering a range of health benefits due to their rich nutrient profiles. Millets, for instance, have been a dietary cornerstone in regions like Africa and Asia for millennia. They are highly nutritious, containing essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, which contribute to reducing oxidative stress and lowering the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular issues, diabetes, and cancer (Mishra et al., 2022;Kakran & Rani, 2024). Millets like pearl millet, finger millet, and foxtail millet are particularly noted for their high protein content, surpassing that of common staples like wheat (Kakran & Rani, 2024). Millets are gluten-free and rich in dietary fiber, making them suitable for various dietary needs (Rathore et al., 2023). Legumes, such as tur dal, are another traditional food rich in protein, iron, and other essential nutrients, playing a crucial role in the diets of many indigenous communities in India (Kapoor et al., 2022). These foods are not only nutrient-dense but also contribute to food security and biodiversity, as they are often cultivated in challenging agro-climatic conditions (Kapoor et al., 2022;Kakran & Rani, 2024). Dairy products, although not extensively covered in the provided contexts, are traditionally known for their calcium and protein content, supporting bone health and overall nutrition.

The integration of historical food practices into modern nutrition guidelines can offer valuable insights, particularly through the lens of traditional Indian dietary concepts like the Thali. The Thali, a traditional Indian meal, exemplifies a balanced approach by incorporating a variety of food groups, including cereals, pulses, vegetables, curd, and fruits, which collectively provide essential macronutrients, micronutrients, and phytochemicals (Bharati & Kulkarni, 2020). This diversity not only meets nutritional needs but also supports gut microbiota diversity, which is crucial for maintaining physical and mental health (Shondelmyer et al., 2018). The Thali's emphasis on plant-based ingredients aligns with modern dietary recommendations that advocate for increased fiber and phytochemical intake to prevent chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and colon cancer (Shondelmyer et al., 2018). Furthermore, traditional Indian diets, rich in whole grains, nuts, and fermented foods, are recognized for their functional and nutraceutical properties, offering health benefits that modern science is beginning to validate (Gokhale et al., 2021). The shift away from these traditional practices towards more Westernized diets has been linked to rising obesity and chronic disease rates, highlighting the importance of revisiting these historical dietary patterns (Bharati & Kulkarni, 2020). The broader historical context of nutrition, as explored in prescientific origins, underscores the enduring relevance of traditional dietary wisdom in contemporary health practices (Grivetti, 1991). By understanding and integrating these historical insights, modern nutrition guidelines can be enriched, promoting not only nutritional sufficiency but also overall well-being and longevity (Schmid, 1997).

The adaptation of historical dietary practices in contemporary society faces significant challenges due to urbanization, globalization, and changing lifestyles. Globalization has led to the homogenization of food cultures, where traditional cuisines are often overshadowed by mass-produced, standardized alternatives, threatening cultural diversity and the sustainability of food systems (Mathew, 2024). Urbanization further complicates this by altering dietary patterns, especially in developing regions, where increased access to non-traditional foods has led to potentially obesogenic diets, contributing to rising obesity rates (Mendez & Popkin, 2004). The shift towards urban living often results in the marginalization of local cultural values and practices, as modern infrastructure and resources promote convenience over tradition (Lasaiba, 2024). Additionally, the global food production system prioritizes efficiency, which can marginalize indigenous crops and traditional farming methods, further eroding culinary heritage (Mathew, 2024). Despite these challenges, there are efforts to preserve traditional practices through education, community engagement, and sustainable food initiatives, such as promoting local farmers' markets and culinary tourism (Lasaiba, 2024;Mathew, 2024). Traditional health practices, like those found in Ayurvedic dietetics, offer valuable insights into managing lifestyle diseases, highlighting the importance of integrating historical knowledge with modern health strategies (Traditional Nutritional and Health Practices to Tackle the Lifestyle Diseases, 2022). The Mediterranean diet exemplifies how traditional dietary patterns can be adapted to modern needs, promoting sustainability and health (Fatati, 2015).

The World Health Organization (WHO) advocates for dietary diversity and nutrient-rich foods to prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs), aligning with traditional diets like the Indian Thali, which combines cereals, pulses, vegetables, and curd for balanced macronutrients and phytochemicals, and the Mediterranean diet, known for its heart-healthy profile (WHO, 2020; Bharati & Kulkarni, 2020). For example, the Indian Thali’s fermented foods, such as idli and dosa made from rice and lentils, enhance gut microbiota diversity, supporting digestion and reducing inflammation, aligning with WHO’s emphasis on functional foods. Global studies on the Japanese Okinawan diet, rich in vegetables, soy, and fish, show lower cardiovascular disease rates and increased longevity, supporting WHO’s plant-based, low-processed food recommendations (Willcox et al., 2014). Similarly, African traditional diets incorporating fermented millet porridges, like ogi, provide probiotics and micronutrients, reducing obesity and diabetes risk (Steyn & Mchiza, 2014). Integrating these global perspectives, practical examples, and WHO guidelines underscores the universal value of traditional diets in shaping sustainable, health-promoting nutritional recommendations.

# Cultural Significance of Food Practices

Traditional food practices in India play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and fostering community cohesion, as they are deeply intertwined with religious rituals and social customs. The festival of Chaṭha, for instance, exemplifies how food-related practices are central to cultural and religious expression. During this festival, the procurement, preparation, offering, and consumption of specific foods serve as a means of reinforcing cultural heritage and community bonds, transforming everyday sustenance into a religious and social bridge (Yadav et al., 2024). Furthermore, the preservation of culinary heritage amid globalization is vital for maintaining cultural identity. A study involving 696 participants highlighted that various determinants of food traditions significantly contribute to the collective identity, ensuring that the flavors of the past continue to influence future generations (Trung & Dao, 2024). Traditional Indian dietary practices, documented through historical texts and artifacts, emphasize the importance of vegetarianism and food rituals that promote harmony with nature and community health (Prakash, 2020). Rituals associated with food, such as the preparation of ghee and khichri, not only serve nutritional purposes but also carry symbolic meanings and are integral to religious and social ceremonies (Gautam, 2022). These practices underscore the role of food as a cultural phenomenon that extends beyond mere sustenance, acting as a metaphor for communal bonding and shared identity (Gautam, 2022). Traditional food practices in India are pivotal in maintaining cultural identity and community cohesion through their deep-rooted connections with religious beliefs, historical traditions, and social interactions.

Efforts to preserve traditional cooking methods and recipes as vital components of cultural heritage are multifaceted and involve various strategies across different regions. In the Himalayas, the rediscovery and promotion of lost cuisines are seen as integral to cultural identity and sustainable tourism. This involves documenting traditional culinary practices and integrating them into tourism strategies to benefit local economies while safeguarding cultural heritage (Sharma, 2024). Similarly, in India, the preservation of culinary heritage is challenged by globalization and urbanization, which threaten traditional recipes and cooking methods. Strategies for revival include community involvement and the use of technology to document and promote these practices (Gupta et al., 2024). The impact of globalization on traditional cuisines is also evident globally, where the standardization of tastes threatens local culinary identities. Efforts to counteract this include promoting local farmers' markets, organic farming, and culinary tourism, which help maintain cultural identity and promote sustainable food systems (Mathew, 2024). In the Philippines, local gatekeepers play a crucial role in preserving culinary heritage by using indigenous ingredients and traditional practices, despite challenges such as modernization and the loss of traditional knowledge (Rodriguez & Pedroso, 2024). In India, research highlights the importance of various determinants in maintaining food heritage, which fortifies cultural identity amid globalization (Trung & Dao, 2024).

Socioeconomic factors have historically played a significant role in shaping dietary choices among different classes within Indian society, as evidenced by various studies. In India, caste and socioeconomic status (SES) have been pivotal in determining food consumption patterns. Lower caste households often prioritize visible consumption over food, especially in regions where upper castes are wealthier, indicating a preference for status over nutritional needs (Bellet & Sihra, 2016). This behavior is further complicated by SES-related dietary patterns among adolescents, where higher SES is associated with greater dietary diversity but also increased consumption of unhealthy, high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) foods, leading to higher rates of obesity and cardiovascular disease biomarkers (Kalita et al., 2024). Additionally, cultural and social norms, particularly in rural areas like Rajasthan, influence food practices, with higher caste households consuming more expensive and nutritionally dense foods, while gender roles restrict women's access to food resources (Mohan & Gill, 2023). The psychological aspects of food preferences also reveal that lower SES individuals often choose less healthy options, trading healthiness for fillingness, which underscores the need for targeted interventions to address nutritional inequalities (Andretti et al., 2024). The complex interplay of caste, SES, and cultural norms in shaping dietary choices, necessitating culturally sensitive and gender-aware policies to mitigate these disparities (Gowder, 2024).

Globalization has significantly impacted local diets, leading to both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, globalization has increased the variety of foods available to consumers, as global media and multinational food corporations have facilitated the widespread availability of diverse food products and dining practices across different cultures and regions (Singh et al., 2024). This phenomenon, known as "glocalization," allows local foods and cuisines to be adopted globally, enriching the culinary landscape with a broader array of choices (Rubio, 2018). However, globalization has also led to dietary homogenization, where traditional eating patterns are increasingly replaced by globalized ultra-processed foods, contributing to the rise of chronic diseases worldwide (Rapinski et al., 2023). This shift is often driven by the industrialization of food production, which has led to a loss of traditional food references and a growing distrust among consumers towards processed foods (Contreras, 2019). Despite these challenges, there is a growing movement to preserve and promote traditional and regional cuisines as cultural heritage, as seen in initiatives like the Slow Food movement, which advocates for sustainable agricultural practices and the consumption of locally sourced foods (Singh et al., 2024). In Southern Bolivia, for example, traditional food systems are being sustained through adaptations and initiatives that rebuild the cultural prestige of local foods, highlighting a complex interplay between global influences and local food traditions (Turner, 2019). These dynamics underscore the need for policies that balance the benefits of increased food variety with the preservation of traditional diets, ensuring the sustainability of local food systems in the face of globalization (Rapinski et al., 2023;Turner, 2019).

# Contemporary Applications and Research

Movements advocating for the revival of traditional diets are gaining momentum as a response to modern health issues such as obesity and diabetes, emphasizing the health benefits and cultural significance of these diets. Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda, highlight the importance of individualized diets that consider factors like age, season, and constitution, promoting balance and wellness in the body (Doshi, 2023). These systems are part of a broader trend that recognizes the potential of traditional foods to address contemporary health challenges. For instance, traditional fermented condiments, rich in bioactive compounds, have shown promising anti-obesity and antidiabetic effects in various studies, suggesting their potential as functional foods in managing metabolic diseases (Laya et al., 2023). The consumption of traditional ethnic fermented foods is also seen as a sustainable approach to promoting human health, food safety, and security, leveraging their naturally associated microbial resources (Narzary et al., 2023). In India, traditional diets, which are predominantly vegetarian and rich in whole grains, pulses, and fermented foods, are being revisited for their nutraceutical potential and ability to prevent diseases (Gokhale et al., 2021). This revival is not only about health benefits but also involves cultural and identity aspects, as traditional foods are deeply intertwined with cultural practices and beliefs (Long, 2022).

Research on indigenous foods highlights their significant nutritional benefits and their potential role in promoting sustainable agriculture. Indigenous food systems, such as those of the First Nations people in Australia, offer high nutritional value, with native grains exhibiting higher protein and mineral content compared to conventional grains like brown rice, alongside beneficial unsaturated fats and phenolic compounds that may protect against non-communicable diseases (Birch et al., 2023). Similarly, Aboriginal food practices in Australia emphasize the health benefits of native plant-based foods, which possess antidiabetic, anticancer, and antioxidant properties, while also contributing to environmental sustainability through stress tolerance and ecosystem benefits (Lopes et al., 2023). In Canada, integrating traditional foods into nutrition programs for Indigenous adults has been shown to address health disparities and promote cultural values, underscoring the importance of culturally relevant and sustainable solutions (Amson et al., 2024). The Ho community in India relies on traditional foodways involving foraging and smallholder farming, which are crucial for maintaining bio-cultural knowledge and food justice, despite facing challenges from nutrition transitions and economic pressures (Kapoor et al., 2024). Globally, traditional and indigenous food systems are recognized for their ability to support human nutrition and environmental balance, offering a pathway to combat the global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change by enhancing food security and sustainable agricultural practices (“Local, Traditional and Indigenous Food Systems in the 21st Century to Combat Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change, 2nd Edition,” 2023).

Integrating traditional food practices into public health strategies can significantly enhance dietary habits and address various health challenges. Traditional and indigenous food systems, which have historically maintained a balance with nature, offer a wealth of underutilized knowledge that can improve human nutrition and mitigate the global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change (“Local, Traditional and Indigenous Food Systems in the 21st Century to Combat Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change, 2nd Edition,” 2023). These systems emphasize the importance of biodiversity and the consumption of locally available foods, which can combat nutrient deficiencies and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by promoting dietary diversity (Johns & Eyzaguirre, 2006). For instance, the revival of traditional plant-based foods, as seen in Native American communities, provides bioactive compounds with diverse health benefits, offering a sustainable strategy to address NCDs (Sarkar et al., 2020). The Mediterranean diet exemplifies how traditional dishes can be part of a healthy lifestyle, combining nutritional benefits with cultural identity, thus preventing chronic diseases (Troncoso-Pantoja, 2019). The Traditional Foods Project among American Indian/Alaska Native communities highlights the effectiveness of integrating cultural and historical elements into public health interventions. This approach not only promotes health and prevents type 2 diabetes but also strengthens community engagement and food sovereignty, demonstrating the importance of culturally tailored programs (DeBruyn et al., 2020).

Policies that promote local agriculture and access to traditional foods are crucial for enhancing community health, as they address economic, environmental, and social dimensions. In Europe, the European Green Deal emphasizes the importance of local food systems (LFS) in diversifying rural economies and supporting socio-economic viability, particularly in Latvia, where most food is sold domestically (Proskina et al., 2022). In the United States, federal and state policies have expanded significantly since the 2008 Farm Bill, focusing on overcoming barriers such as scaling up small farms and improving infrastructure for local food sales (Martinez, 2016). Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) models in the U.S. have shown health benefits by improving diet quality and fostering community relationships, though challenges like cost and convenience remain (Harmon, 2014). Short value chain models, including farmers markets and produce prescription programs, have been effective in increasing fruit and vegetable intake among low-income populations, though barriers such as limited accessibility and cultural incongruence persist (Garrity et al., 2024). In rural First Nation communities, integrating traditional and market-based foods can enhance food security and community resilience, suggesting that policies should support local food systems that reflect unique ecological and cultural contexts (Stroink & Nelson, 2012).

# Conclusion

Nutritional implications and cultural significance of historical food practices, emphasizing their contemporary relevance. Traditional diets, such as the Indian Thali, are highlighted for their balanced approach, incorporating diverse food groups that provide essential nutrients and phytochemicals, supporting gut health and preventing chronic diseases like diabetes and cancer. Foods like millets and legumes, staples in historical diets, are noted for their rich nutrient profiles, offering health benefits such as reducing oxidative stress and supporting food security and biodiversity. The paper also discusses the challenges posed by urbanization and globalization, which threaten these traditional practices by promoting homogenized diets and marginalizing indigenous crops. Despite these challenges, there are efforts to preserve traditional practices through education and sustainable food initiatives, highlighting their potential to enrich modern nutrition guidelines and promote overall well-being. By integrating historical dietary wisdom with modern insights, the paper advocates for a holistic approach to addressing contemporary health issues while preserving cultural heritage.

Future research directions in the study of diets and their impacts on health and culture could benefit from a multifaceted approach that examines specific regional diets and populations maintaining traditional practices today. For instance, exploring the dietary habits of indigenous communities like the Oraons in India, who have unique food consumption patterns including the use of fermented beverages like handia, could provide insights into the nutritional and cultural significance of traditional diets and their evolution due to external influences (Bisai et al., 2023). Similarly, the postpartum dietary practices in Northern and Southern India, which emphasize nutrient-rich foods to support maternal health, highlight the importance of understanding regional culinary traditions and their health implications (Jaiswal & Roy, n.d.). Additionally, the Traditional Eastern diet, known for its health benefits and potential environmental impacts, presents an opportunity to study its role in promoting sustainable food practices and its effects on community health (Zain et al., 2022). The concept of Eco-Regions, which integrates sustainable and healthy diets, also offers a promising area for research, particularly in understanding the mental health and social well-being associated with these dietary practices (Elsner et al., 2022). By focusing on these diverse dietary practices and their socio-cultural contexts, future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of how traditional diets can be preserved and adapted to meet contemporary health and environmental challenges.

# Declarations

**Conflict of Interest:**

No conflict of Interest.

# DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

It is not applicable.

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