



## **Research for the Sustainable Development of the Megacities of Tomorrow - Energy and Climate efficient Structures in Urban Growth Centres**

**Hyderabad as a Megacity of Tomorrow: Climate and Energy in a Complex Transition towards Sustainable Hyderabad – Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies by Changing Institutions, Governance Structures, Lifestyles and Consumption Patterns**

Project funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany.

**CHANGING FOOD CULTURE IN  
GLOBALISING HYDERABAD**

**Rebecca Hofmann and Christoph Dittrich**

# **Analysis and Action for Sustainable Development of Hyderabad**

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# Changing Food Culture in Globalising Hyderabad

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## **Background Study**

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### **Abstract**

The food culture of a city delivers various starting points for adaptation and mitigation strategies towards a low-carbon food system. This background study gives an ethnological inside of the changing eating behaviour in Hyderabad. After an exposition of traditional believes and habits, the scenario for a changing food culture is analysed from various perspectives. In the case of globalising Hyderabad, the urban setting undergoes profound changes with regard to the availability of goods, their prices and last but not least their valuation. Time allocation, convenience and new aspirations have become important incentives for altering dietary patterns. As the most active progenitors of change, the focus lies on the new emerging middle classes.

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## Introduction

“Mir-alam-mandi, the famous marketplace in the old city was bustling with life. Under the hidden sun and the seeking clouds, hundreds of people – men and women, boys and girls, Hindus and Muslims – were going about the mundane business of their weekly shopping. Haggling buyers and cajoling shopkeepers, happy vendors and disgruntled customers, satisfied buyers and tired sellers. Various permutations. Different combinations. Once common business. Food.

Food has always been a great binding agent in the lives of Hyderabadis.”

(Prologue to ‘Butterflies and barbed wired’ by Vanaja Banagiri)

The South Indian emerging mega city of Hyderabad is called the ‘food-centre’ of India and its Hyderabadi *biryani* is known far beyond the city borders (see Box 6). The passion for food, paired with a demographic composition representing India’s average population structure on a small-scale, makes the nearly seven million city of Hyderabad a perfect field for market research institutions as well as a playground for multinational companies who are keen to enter the Indian market with their products. Even without the modern food market segment, it is simply impossible to escape food in the city with its tea-stalls, hotels, bakeries and joints at every corner:

*“We are food crazy people. The second thing when you think of Hyderabad is food. The first perhaps being the Charminar, the third, the IT-sector.”* (A. upper middle class; 31.01.2009)

In this quotation, three major aspects are centralised which we have to consider when talking about changing food culture in Hyderabad:

- 1) *“The first perhaps being the Charminar (...)”*: Hyderabad has a rich history which is crucial for today’s unique Hyderabadi food culture as an amalgamation of local Telugu, Islamic Mughlai and various Indian cooking styles.
- 2) *“The second thing (...) is food.”*: As this report will show, food has a central place in people’s mindset, closely intertwined with religious and social views. It is the distinctive Hyderabadi feature with which the city dwellers delineate themselves from other Indians.
- 3) *“(...) the third, the IT-sector”*: During the last couple of years, Hyderabad moulted into one of the new leading IT-locations in India. Several ICT-industries have their headquarters in ‘HITEC-City’ and are the eponym of Hyderabad’s cognomen ‘Cyberabad’. This economic boom will contribute significantly to the city’s growth and

will draw highly educated people to the urban area with its jobs in the manufacturing, service and research industries. A new society with ‘global’ aspirations is on the fore.

### *Objective of the study*

Food in Hyderabad is not restricted to open spaces. When greeting friends, guests, or business clients, it is indispensable to invite them to a cup of tea and some *tiffins* (snacks, see Box 2). Food is incorporated into colloquial language and proverbs such as ‘Pora vankaya!’ (Go off, egg-plant!) or the question ‘Have you eaten?’ instead of asking ‘How are you?’. Thus, the transformation of eating behaviour can only be explained with a look at the overall change of lifestyle. To fully understand changing lifestyles, the people, as active and passive progenitors of change, have to be the object of the study. Along with changing lifestyles come new consumption patterns of food, energy and other local resources, all of which have strong implications for the population’s carbon-footprint. Already slight changes in consumer preferences have consequences for the whole food supply system (Pingali & Khwaja 2004), which again has an impact on climate change. Although the field work screened the whole range of society, the report’s focus lies on the new upcoming middle classes who, once the procurement of food is secured, bring quality and individual taste to the fore. Publications of recent years have stressed this two-step change in dietary habits: purchase of higher quality products and the amplification of purchased goods (Popkin 1999, Ericksen 2007). Hence, the study group are those who are economically able to choose what they consume. While the scientific world has not yet found a suitable definition of this upwardly mobile group, they agree on one fact: the strong heterogeneity and inconsistency of middle classes<sup>1</sup>. The middle class as such is all but economically, socially or culturally equal:

“Instead, heterogeneity and inconsistency are constituted with respect to particular social sub-groups (socio-economic, professional, occupational), different cultural frameworks (religious, country specific, political culture), a wide range of political impacts deriving from institutional settings and policies and, last but not least, personal preferences - none of which are

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<sup>1</sup> “The new middle classes can undoubtedly be described as a social field where there is an above average intensive and frequent contact with the outside, through the mass media as well as through professional contacts, through economic migration or through tourism. In this respect, there are above-average conditions for the formation of hybridized identities. In such a perspective, the new middle classes represent a focal point of cultural globalization. Compared to other social groups, the new middle classes are more exposed to cultural globalization and are particular agents of cultural globalization, thus adapting to external cultural influences as well as contributing to reshaping the own culture.” (Lange & Meier: 31)



stable over time. Hence, different groups of the new middle classes deserve to be analyzed in due detail.” (Lange & Meier: 31, 32)

It is self-evident that such a highly heterogeneous group is liable to a whole variety of influences and other decisive factors. Yet,

“It is this class, rather than the sophisticated super-elites of Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, and a few other cities, that is constructing a new middle-class ideology and consumption style for India, which cuts across older ethnic, regional, and caste boundaries.” (Appadurai 2008: 291)

India’s middle class is rapidly growing, giving reasons of both hopes and anxieties. When such a dynamic group changes its consumption patterns, its ecological (food-) foot print alters as well<sup>2</sup>. Thus, middle classes could constitute a huge agent in damaging local and global resources and in acting as climate contaminators as “consumerism as a social reality” (Reusswig et al. 2003: 1) substantially contributes to natural resource deterioration. However, they could also positively contribute to environmental protection and climate preservation through a sustainable way of life. Yet, so far, food consumption as the total amount of food consumed and the structure of dietary intake (animal products, processed products, etc.), is to a great extent responsible for cumulative global environmental pressures. The increase of food consumption and the dietary diversification, however, are restricted to aspiring middle classes. At the same time, masses of ‘poor involuntary climate protectors’ continue to be exposed to food insecurity, hunger, diet inflicted malnutrition and diseases (see Reusswig et al. 2005).

In the end, this study attempts to detect the conditions and dynamics of the changing food culture in globalising Hyderabad with regard to their implications for climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. By means of an inductive approach, the study intends to find the major motivations (aspirations and influencing factors) for giving up – or keeping – traditional habits in favour of more resource-intensive lifestyle patterns.

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<sup>2</sup> Lifestyles and consumption patterns have found their way into climate change discourses at the Rio Summit in 1992.

# 1. Food Culture

## *1.1. Food culture as a substantial aspect of food systems*

Food systems world wide are subject to social and economic dynamics. They are in a state of transition from a traditional to a global system. This is expressed through increases in processed and packaged food, corporate retailing and last but not least through urban consumers with new aspirations, to name but a few (Ericksen 2007:2). The food system of Hyderabad is currently caught in such dynamics. Corporate structures are starting to rule the market and lure people with a wide range of new products as well as the promise of a new shopping experience. Fast food giants like KFC, Subways, etc. are complementing this experience with the taste of the wide world and with a new eating scenery. An increasing number and frequency of food-related advertisements in print and TV media is bolstering this creation of a so far unknown culinary world.

Consumption as one of the four elements of a food system (production, exchange, distribution and consumption) constitutes the focus of this report. All four elements are embedded in a close web of activities which interact on various levels on which “social (including economic and political) and ‘natural’ (climate, resources) components” meet (Cannon 2002: 354). Accordingly, access to food is not only governed by affordability and allocation (see chapter frames) but also by preference, depending on the cultural and social background of the consumer. Every consumption starts with a decision process involving the selection of goods (Ericksen 2007: 5-7). This selection process is influenced by various means, including cultural conventions (age, gender, religious affiliation, taboos, prescriptions, etc.), social values, education and personal preferences. When debating personal preferences, it is important to keep in mind that social consumption entitlements are exposed to campaigns and advertisement by governmental, industrial and media agents. All aspects together are understood as food culture.

Food systems are ‘people centred’ (Cannon 2002: 356). As such, the following will illuminate the social role of food in society, before turning the attention to the heterogenous population of Hyderabad.

## ***1.2. Cultural aspects of nutrition transition***

This study was outlined on the assumption that, once basic nutritious needs are met, people will use their suffice money to substitute staples with higher valued products or to spend it on new forms of consumption such as eating out (see Cannon 2002: 353). This goes in line with the global trend of lifestlye transition moving from a production towards a consumption society. Pütz and Schröder (Gebhardt et al. 2007: 912) see the thrive for consumption as an accomplishment of satisfying psychological, social and cultural needs which were formerly satisfied through work. In the figurative expression by Nikolaus Heim (1994), we experience the replacement of the neoclassical ‘homo economicus’ by ‘homo culinaris’.

The changing eating behaviour brings about a transition in the nutritional condition which could have pronounced implications for people’s health and which nowadays is a characteristic phenomom of developing as well as for emerging economy countries. A person’s stage in the nutrition transition depends on how far they have moved away from a traditional diet and towards a diet common in the West. The transition is espically obvious in urban contexts: “Urban residents have vastly different lifestyles than rural residents. These lifestyles create their own patterns of food demand and time allocation. The consequences for diets, physical activity, and health have been enormous.” (Popkin 2000)

Hence, the study of dietary habits is almost like observing the human people in the creation process of culture. Lévi-Strauss pushed even further by interpreting food as a code for the structure of thought. As such, through food intake, the body becomes a ‘producer of symbols’ (Heim, 1994). Food itself serves as a langugage, as a system which enables communication. A higher purchasing power in addition to increasing choices therefore lead to the possibility of expressing one’s personal likings, this way building one’s individual identity. Thereby, the chosen food acts as a message: ‘This is who I am.’ The chosen place, where the message is produced, helps to further define oneself. Whereas this identity is seemingly based on individual choices, underneath, other powers are working to influence consumption behaviour. These powers can be the range of products in supermarkets or even unconscious decisions, for example led by the presumption of becoming someone else if certain products were consumed.

## 2 'We are food-crazy people' in Hyderabad

### 2.1. *Tracing Hyderabad's famous cuisine in history*

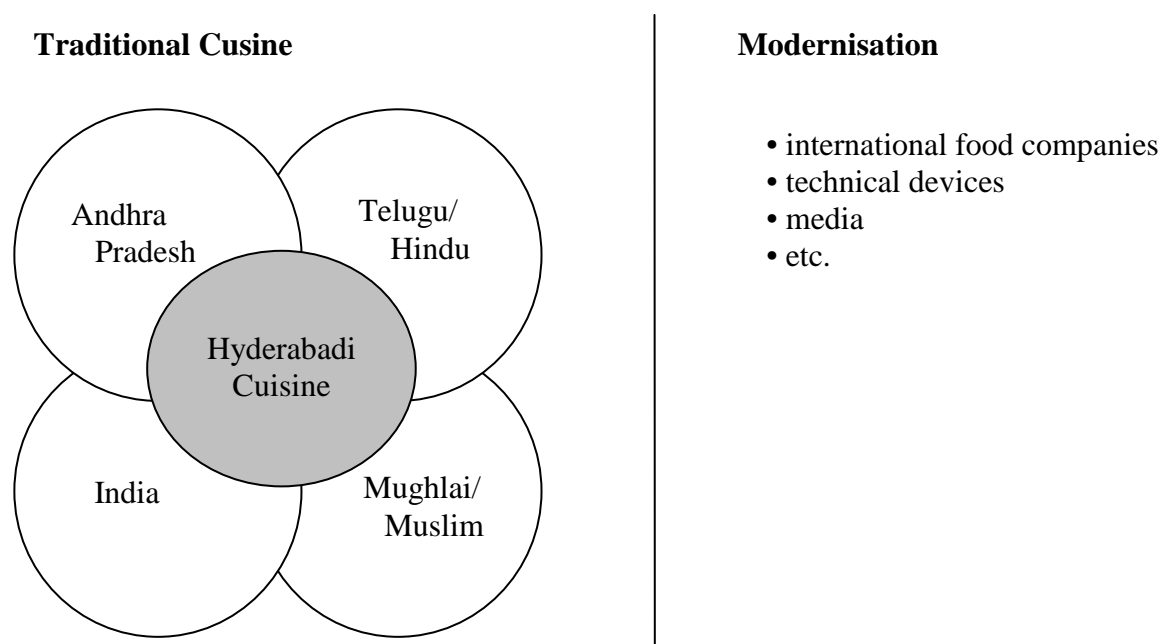
"*Food itself is in history*" (A., upper middle class; 31.01.2009), in this case in the history of Hyderabad. The city's historical past does not only explain Hyderabad's manifold cuisine of today, but also laid the foundation for the passion which Hyderabadis feel for their food. The local telugu cuisine of the Deccan highlands was influenced by 400 years (15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century) of muslim rule. The sour palates of tamarind, lemon and pomegranate, characteristic for telugu rice and vegetables dishes were enriched with tastes of Persia such as saffron, cinnamon, cardamom and almonds. In addition, the Islamic Nizam rulers established an elaborated non-veg cuisine. Out of the two cultural currents, new concoctions such as *dalcha*, a dish of lentils with meat emerged. Beyond that, the Arabian emperors cultivated eggplants and potatoes, vegetables which have become indispensable in the contemporary Hyderabadi cuisine<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, under the Nizam culture, which always has enjoyed food, the preparation of royal food, the so-called *nawabi* cuisine (p.e. Dahari, Nahari, Biryani) became to be an art and even their flag displayed a *kulcha*, which is embedded in several myths. This love for food is not constrained to recipes, but extended to food culture itself. With the arabian rule, many Iranians and Iraqis came to the flourishing city and established Irani-hotels which were known for their good quality tea, offered with double-roti (bread buns), samosas and other snacks, guaranteeing cheap food for daily workers and others. These Irani hotels also were the first to offer parcel-service!

As such, Hyderabadi cuisine combines the sourness of the Telugu speaking people, the rather sweet ingredients of the Arabian world, all spiced up with the chillies of the South of India. However, it does not stop there, in addition, we can find all the elements of the Indian subcontinent and beyond, carried into town by labourers and marketeers as Hyderabad became a trade centre for diamonds, pearls and printed fabric. And while the british colonialists left surprisingly little of their eating culture behind, the mobility of modern people keeps enriching and changing the local cuisine until today, enhanced by those who go overseas to study or work for a while and who bring back new tastes and recipes, but also

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, the potato was grown only around the three British Presidency towns of colonial India (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras). In the case of Hyderabad, the British Resident of Hyderabad ordered them for his horticultural garden. Soon, many Muslim people developed an appetite for the tuber plant (Dalrymple 2002: 330).

new demands.: “Our food culture is heavily influenced by the cross-culture due to huge migration waves into the city from other states.” (A., upper middle class; 31.01.2009) As Appadurai observes, the construction of a national cuisine in India is mainly a postindustrial, postcolonial process in which regional cuisines constitute a crucial factor. Today's middle class has overcome traditional borders of religion and caste and is thus inventing a national cuisine free of moral and medical constraints, however subjugated by new driving forces of ‘modernity’. This transformation also counts for preparation methods and eating habits, of which some customary ideas will be shortly shown in the following.



**Figure 1: The Amalgamation of the Hyderabadi Cuisine;** own draft, 2009.

**Box 1: Hyderabadi Food**

Hyderabad is mostly known for its *biryani*, but this is by far not the only achievement of the nizam kitchens. Visiting Hyderabad, one should not miss the *kababs*, the *nahari* (a soup of sheep’s trotters) to name just a view. Even the everyday meal consists of several courses: A typical meal is based on rice or chapatti served with a pickle or powder, followed by one or two (if the economic status allows, even more) curries, veg or non-veg, accompanied by *rasam* (tomato based soups) or *sambar* (*dal* based soup). The lentil based *dal* is considered a

substantial part of a whole meal as well as the compulsory curd to finish the meal off.

Another speciality in Hyderabad are sweets. Be it sweet almond milk, *kulfi sticks* (almond-milk ice-cream), the various halwas, *laddu* (sweet balls made of pulses and dried fruits) or any kind of pure ghee sweets, which are sold in hundreds of sweet shops, abducting one to the land of plenty.



Sweet Shop. own source, Dec. 2008.

## ***2.2. Food preparation and eating habits***

The importance of food and its attentive handling also shows in the care with which meals are prepared. According to Vedic traditions, the finest and rarest product of food processing is *manas*, which is thought or mind. More recently, Lupton (1996: 2; in: Atkins & Bowler 2001: 3) explained:

“Cooking is a moral process, transforming raw matter from ‘nature’ to the state of ‘culture’, and thereby taming and domesticating it...Food is therefore ‘civilised’ by cooking, not simply at the level of practice, but at the level of imagination.”

While he talks about the transformation of nature into culture, Hyderabadis themselves see their cuisine as a form of art. Preparing traditional local dishes takes a lot of time and patience. The preparation of *haleem* (mash of meat and grains, see Box 3) takes the whole night, *biryani* has to cook for several hours, *masalas* (spice mixtures) can contain over a dozen different ingredients. “Generally, *Hyderabadi cooking you have to do very patiently.*

*It's very slow cooking. In the past, the way of cooking was very slow, it was an experience itself. Everything was cooked at the right time to the right point, this led to a close attachment to food.*” (A., upper middle class; 31.01.2009) Including the preparation of everyday meals like a chutney and one or two curries is very time-consuming. Even *tiffins* are work-intensive in their preparation, especially as most ingredients are bought semi-processed, which means that grains have to be cleaned, ground (often enough with a simple stone grinder), soaked and kneded into a dough. In addition, most women make their own curd, butter and sometimes even ghee. If women wish to provide their family according to the tradition, they have to put aside several hours a day for the kitchen work. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that many women resort to the abundant offer of ready-made masalas, milled tiffin-flour or even ready-made tiffin-dough, especially when women are working. Still, some working women nevertheless believe in the positive health effects of home-cooking and therefore do not hesitate to get up in the early morning hours to prepare the family's breakfast-tiffins.

### **Box 2: Tiffins**

The term was originally used for the Anglo-Indian luncheon. It derives from

1. the English slang noun *tiffing* (eating or drinking out of meal times)
2. the verb *to tiff* (to eat the midday meal).

Dinner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became a heavy evening meal, so a light snack was customary for lunch (Achaya 1998: 178). The meaning today varies only slightly and can mean breakfast or lunch snacks. Curiously, the same food consumed in the afternoon or evening is either named ‘snack’ or ‘chat’. Typical tiffins are *dosas*, *upma* (porridge of wheat grits with vegetables), *idlies* (steamed rice cakes), *vadas* (doughnuts made of pulses and rice flour), eaten with a spicy peanut chutney and rasam.

Embedded in traditional preparation methods are certain aspects of food safety. Principles concerning the freshness of food are deeply enrooted in believes: “*Indian food should not be stored for more than two or three hours. We can store it in the fridge, but it's not good for the health.*” (Middle class women, 21.12.2008) Following this principle, in traditional families, women ususally cook twice a day, at least rice is cooked again in the evening. Vegetables and

other ingredients are vigorously cleaned. No matter how cramped the living space may be, the kitchen is always set apart and kept very clean. Kitchens are as “*sacred as the puja room*” (S. R., 03.02.2009). Therefore, “*whatever is cooked at home, is sacred.*” (ibid.) Handling food with care, thereby assuring food safety, to a certain extent, is immanent in every food culture. Food safety is of much concern in developing countries. Mr. Subba Rao from the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) points out that practices are generally much better than the awareness: “*It is simply a cultural practice to wash hands before eating, people are not always aware that it is necessary from a health perspective, too.*” (S. R., 03.02.2009) He also includes food processing at the household-level as an important aspect of food safety as it hinders too much adulteration through food industries. On the other hand, some advises which seem ‘natural’ to us are not practiced, for example washing vegetables under running water or cleaning hands with soap. Efforts of the health ministry to counter-educate have partly had a positive impact, for example, in the use of purified water for the preparation of *rasam* as it is not boiled during the process.

The space of the kitchen and all related tasks are traditionally in the womens’ hand. In Telugu, they have an equivalent of the German dictum: “*Liebe geht durch den Magen*”. Women are judged by how good they care for their husband and children. Many women claim to cook their husband’s or childrens’ favourite foods as their means of giving love and to be loved<sup>4</sup>. Thus, when children grow older and develop a liking for fatty and ready-made foods, women would rather concede than risking deprivation of their childrens’ love. Under such circumstances, the influence children have in changing food culture is obvious. Whilst many young and better educated women demonstrate a new self-consciousness, in yet most cases, they nevertheless agonise the inner conflict between the traditional and the modern world: “*I want to proceed with my development, but I have the responsibility for my children and my family. This responsibility traditionally lies with the women. But now we try to change that. However, the mens’ psyche hasn’t changed yet, only the need for a double salary. Thus, women are under double pressure. It takes time to adjust, and sometimes men are forced to co-operate.*” (S., lower middle class; 12.01.2009) The secondary role women play in the traditional Indian society is demonstrated in the custom of women first serving the men, before they eat. However, this is changing, too and many households appreciate a meal together where “*things are talked through*” (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009). For western

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<sup>4</sup> The far reaching consequences of this sense of duty in women can be read almost daily in the news, for example, a wife at the age of 22 committed suicide as her family in law asked for a higher dowry due to obesity. The young wife did not even blame them for her misfortune (The Hindu, 24.11.2008).



standards a little unusual is the habit of hand-feeding children for quite a long time. Up until the age of ten or eleven (girls usually longer than boys) they enjoy this special treat, which does not mean that they are unable to eat properly as they have to do at school. It mirrors the deep affection and special status children hold in India<sup>5</sup>. Growing up, they are fed with riceballs, held together by ghee, sometimes with a little rasam, slowly accompanied by small amounts of curry. This way, they slowly get acculturated to the spicyness of the local cuisine. The mother’s role is taken very seriously, yet while Harbottle (2000: 26) sees domestic food-work as an important source of power which is partly well guarded by the women, others opt for a ‘simpler’ reasoning: *“Mother feeding is best. Therefore, the women stay at home and bring up the children. They shouldn’t expect to be equal with men. In the absence of men, women have to look after the children. If a woman has a job, she leaves the kids with a servant, but a servant can’t bring up children as good as mothers.”* (I., upper middle class; 15.12.2008)

### ***2.3. Cultural values of food***

*“Hyderabadi cuisine is intertwined with the art and culture of the city.”* (J. A., 08.02.2009) Thus, food has to be seen in relation with the locality, its past and its present. Within this set, values and tastes are subject to ceaseless changes. At the same time, food carries certain markers and identifying symbols, for example: *“Traditional food for us is like a link to identity, to the past.”* (female students, 19.01.2009) Through the intake of food, we perform an intentional but unconscious creation of identity (see Harbottle 2004). We feed our souls and re-invent ourselves with every meal. Everyone knows the connection of food with memories, how the smell of a certain dish can carry us away to places of childhood. The following is an intent to explore the strong bond between food and identity in the case of Hyderabad.

#### **2.3.1. Anam Brahman**

‘Anam Brahman’, ‘food is God’, is the dictum, which explains the importance of food in the hinduistic society of Hyderabad. *“Food is like God to us. It is a gift given by God.”* (male Hindu, 12 yrs., Jan. 2009) *“Partaking in food is interacting with God.”* (Ch., upper middle class; 07.02.2009) This suggests the strong connection between food and people, as explained in the Bhagavad Gita (religious sanscrit scripture). It says the eater, the food he consumes and

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<sup>5</sup> Feeding each other is part of the wedding ceremony, too. Here, as well, it symbolises affection and trust for each other.

the universe he lives in, must all be in harmony. *Prasad*, left-over food is offered to the gods and throughout the year, a vast number of days are devoted to certain gods and goddesses with which certain foods are associated (Achaya 1998). The Hindu god Vinkaya, for example, is honoured with the preparation of dal and unripe tamarind. “*They offer it to him and he loves it.*” (Tribal women, 16.12.2008) On Fridays, an auspicious day for women, they have some sweet dish as sweets are associated with godly food.

### 2.3.2. Halal and Haram – allowed and prohibited aliments

The Islam, too, follows a strict ‘eating-calender’ where some months are reserved for certain consumption habits and foods. Well-known is the abstinence from food and drinks during the daylight hours of Ramzan (also Ramadan). This is also the time for the famous hyderabadi Haleem whose smell lingers all over the city (see Box 3). During the month of Moharram (also Muharram), the death of Mohammed’s grandson Imam Hussain is remembered. It is a time of mourning and only vegetarian food is eaten. The thirst Hussain had to suffer, is commemorated by distributing *sheerbat* (a cold lemon drink with rose water) to the public, p.e. at bus stops.

Eating “*traditional food according to the religion, to what the prophet says*” (students of a Government Junior Highschool, 22.12.2008) is valued even among those, who do not have the economic assets to fully comply with religious eating habits. To nevertheless observe what custom dictates, they use cheaper ingredients, mix milk with water for the preparation of *sherkuma*, etc. “*To prepare nawabi food and other traditional specialities requires time and money.*” (Muslim slum dweller, 15.12.2008)

#### Box 3: Haleem

This stew of pounded wheat, up to five kinds of dal and mutton, cooked in milk and ghee, has seen an incredible success story over the last couple of years. It started off as a nutritious food for ramzan, but is now available year round, even though the season still booms around ramzan. Especially old traditional restaurants such as the Medina Café in the old town are famous for it. But it has long ago left its Muslim borders and has become a popular snack during ramzan. A couple of restaurants have successfully started to export it to larger Muslim communities, p.e. in Chicago.

The name *Haleem* literally means patience, a characteristic truly needed for its preparation (it has to cook for a night) and the Hyderabadi cuisine in general. An entire haleem industry has developed, similar to the export of biryani.

### 2.3.3. Atithi Devo Bhava

A further significant characteristic of Hyderabadi food culture is called ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’, which can be translated into ‘Guest is God’. The principle of ‘serving a guest is serving God’ is taken very seriously and one of the most impressive features of local hospitality. *“In India, this [serving guests, R.H.] is considered a great privilege and is taken with a sense of pride. Feeding others is a socio-psychological pleasure. So, even people who don’t have enough money to feed themselves will offer you something. And if you decline, it’s an insult. There is a telugu saying ‘you’ve come to my home, but have not eaten anything, how can that be?’”* (Ch., upper middle class; 07.02.2009) This feeding or sharing of food is an important bonding element and overcomes religious and other backgrounds, in the words of one informant: *“Eating for yourself is simply for nourishment.”* (ibd.)

In the Islamic context, it is considered a ‘holy duty’ of providing guests with food and protection. People with little or no disposable money interpret it from a different angle: *“Allah says when you eat together, you will get more money and work. When you eat seperately, you will get no fortune.”* (Charminar Slum, 15.12.2008)

### 2.3.4. Hyderabad’s food-scape

One simply cannot escape food in this city. It seems to be the literal lifeline, turning the streets and alleys into the social space for city dwellers. The range goes from people selling roasted peanuts or cut melon on the roadside, from mobile bikevendors selling *idlies* and *vadas*, to small tea stalls, chat booths, tiffin and curry points. From irani hotels, bakeries, an abundance of sweet shops right up to high class restaurants. These often have special mottos, such as the ‘Café Latte’, which brings a touch of Hollywood and where you can bring your own DVD to watch while eating. Or ‘Amaravathi’s Night Flight’, where you can dine in an environment which resembles the cabin of an airplane.

Some customary eating facilities have been part of the cityscape for quite some years, undergoing some changes such as the bakeries, where Muslims traditionally sold their bread. Over the course of time, most of them reached café-like ambiences, selling the all over popular *puffs* and a multitude of other savouries. In the last decade, a whole new kind of food has appeared in the urban space and quickly found its way through the angled road system. *Fast food* first entered the Indian market in the form of Chinese noodles and spring roles not even ten years ago. As the taste was spiced up to Indian liking, it quickly became a popular snack and is today part of the regular menu. A fairly new addition is the whole scheme of

Western or American fast food, easy to find in the various American fast food chains like McDonalds, KFC or Subway. Cafés, restaurants and snack bars form the face of a city and give it a characteristic trace. One city dweller sums up: *“Street food tells us a lot about the city. About its flavour, its people, pulling over to have chat.”* (A., upper middle class; 31.01.2009)<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3.5. 'You are what/where/how you eat' – the social valuations of eating habits

“To the somewhat austere Hindu dining ambience the Muslims brought a refined and courtly etiquette of both group and individual dining, and of sharing food in fellowship. (...) Muslims influenced both the style and substance of Indian food.” (Achaya, 1998: 154)

*“It’s all about food. Families get together and eat. Issues are settled over food.”* (Ch., upper middle class; 07.02.2009) *“Especially the Sunday is a family day: those who work during the week enjoy cooking special food for their children at home. Those who don’t work, go out to have a ‘holiday’ from cooking and to have more time with the children.”* (Middle class women, 21.12.2008)

Yet, the domain of food and eating goes beyond the family space. In general, food culture has to be seen in the context of its performers and their definition of food. For example, a full meal only is considered as such, if it contains rice. It is the main staple and without a doubt the ingredient that fills the stomach: *“It’s [our food, R.H.] a complete mix and match style cuisine with rice as the staple food. All our food is centred around rice, let it be sambar, rasam, curries, curd or even all the things made with rice flour!”* (A., middle class; 31.01.2009) This definition of a full meal can have interesting implications, for example for devoted Hindus who, on fasting days eat only one meal. Yet, this does not mean that they do not eat anything else. Everything without rice, snacks for example, do not count as food and can thus be eaten without braking the vow.

Another interesting question is wether or not meat rises in its status. While in other cultures, meat carries high social prestige and is aimed for with rising purchasing power, the question in a hinduistic context is less easy to answer. Vegetarianism is estimated as the the diet of ‘thinkers’ (customarily, the priestly brahmin caste is vegetarian) and even though the West suggest a different value creation, meat in India is not necessarily gaining status (see box 5).

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<sup>6</sup> Here, it is important to note that public spaces used to be reserved for the male population only. Women are not meant to be out on the street, especially not Muslim women. Restaurants are subdivided into a male and a family section. Of late, however, this is changing and women, mostly younger ones are conquering public spaces (as will be shown further down).

However, with the strong Muslim presence in Hyderabad, non-veg dishes are more pronounced.

#### **Box 4: Rice**

The earliest evidence of cultivated rice in India’s North and West dates from 2300 to 1900 BC. In the Deccan, it was cultivated much later, starting from 1400 to 1000 BC (Achaya 1998: 185). In spite of the time delay, rice is the main staple in the South today, whereas it is seen rather as a side dish in the wheat eating North. Andhra Pradesh is known as the rice bowl of (South) India, not only due to its high production: “*The Hyderabad population is totally rice eating. There is only little wheat consumption in urban areas. People will only switch over to alternatives if there is a scarcity of rice. People here are accustomed to rice, because it is available. The rich and poor, they all just eat rice. Only the quality differs.*” (Food Corporation of India, 23.01.2009) The promotion of rice as the main food can be ascribed to the Green Revolution in the 1990s. Before that, people mostly fed on cereals such as millet and jowar. Rice was reserved for the rich land lords until extensive irrigation made it available for common people, too. As rice is easier to prepare than conventional cereals, it quickly took over as the main staple food. With growing production, rice was vested with strong social values: “*People are generally attracted more to the white and fine rice, as it looks ‘richer’, it used to be the rich peoples’ food.*” (A.D., 03.02.2009) Small, polished rice (for example basmati) holds the highest status and is considered the tastiest, while at the same time it is the costliest form. Thus, it is reserved for special occasions such as weddings and funerals or the preparation of *biryani*. Until recently, this valuation was bound to urban culture, but has now reached villages, too. It is curious, however, that while the majority rejects unpolished rice as sticky and black, in the higher segments of society, the awareness of the benefits of unpolished rice is coming back and growing stronger. Rice consumption is generally cut back and slowly gives way to tiffins for breakfast or even bread and jam. Nevertheless, Hyderabadis are rice-eaters, which becomes obvious in their definition of a real meal, which has to contain rice: “*If I don’t eat rice, it is as if I don’t eat anything. Even when I had pizza, I need some rice afterwards. Rice makes me feel relaxed, comfortable and satisfied.*” (J. R., male student, 27.11.2008) As such, rice plays an important role in the South Indian calendar with the three days celebrations of Sankranti (also Pongal) in January as a major event. During this rice festival, which cherishes the new harvest season, the sky is full of kites, the streets are decorated with elaborate ‘rangolis’ (designs drawn with rice powder) and many special snacks and sweets are prepared.

#### **Box 5: Non-veg diet**

Andhra Pradesh counts with about 60% of meat eating people to one of the few predominantly non-vegetarian states of India. Still, the majority of people eat meat hardly more often than once a week, usually on Sundays. In lower classes meat usually means chicken, while mutton is more costly and thus carries a higher status. However, meat does not have the same prestige as in other parts of the world. Eating meat in the Hindu context is associated with those castes who

accomplish physical work and who have a low educational level. Dalits are typically denounced as meat eaters. As such, it might have prestige in the working class, but not among 'thinkers'. Similar misconceptions are sometimes instrumentalised to express the mistrust between the Hindu and the muslim population, lately fuelled by bombings and other terroristic activities. One informant sees in Muslim children, growing up watching the slaughter of animals, the reason why Muslims are cold hearted and brutal. Yet, not eating meat itself makes them violent, but the act of slaughtering. On the other hand show Muslims respect towards their Hindu co-habitants: *"They eat non-veg on a regular basis, often beef. But they don't come out with it, they don't say it in public."* (S. Rao, 03.02.2009) Atkins and Bowler (2001), rightfully name vegetarianism foremost a monetary issue, maybe a religious, but not a moral one. Yet, the prestige of meat is not always just connected to its economic value. The taste-craving Hyderabadis mentioned repeatedly the markedly good flavour of non-veg meals. As one women explained, this is due to the higher use of oil and spices in meat dishes. Even Brahmins, who traditionally are vegetarian succumb their personal preferences, especially the younger ones: *"They like the taste and don't see anything bad about it. They have a different attitude. Some, like me, even eat beef, but we would lie about it to the olders and the public."* (R. R., 16.01.2009) Children grwoing up with a vegetarian diet, increasingly break the taboo in eating egg-puffs in bakeries. Some middle class people seek to imitate Brahmins and become vegetarians in order to gain the same social status as the members of the priestly caste. These 'new' vegetarians are joined by a few people from the higher segments and with better access to education who abstain from meat due to health reasons. To change to a vegetarian diet for climate protection reasons has not yet been heard of.

As mentioned earlier, food is an essential part of constructing identity and forming a lifestyle. In migrants, traditional food habits tend to be more persistant than the mother-tongue. Thus, local foods can be seen as a local language or slang. The *hyderabadi biryani* (see Box 6) is a source of immense pride and serves as a binding common among the multi-facette of the city's demography. *"Food culture in Hyderabad is characterised by its distinctiveness and exquisiteness, by the Nawabi and Deccan food."* (Female students, 19.01.2009) Yet, *"the most important thing when talking about traditional Hyderabadi cusine is that it has entirely changed. People don't know how to cook it anymore."* (J. A., 08.02.2009) The fields of change, its circumstances and driving forces will be analysed in the second part of this report.

### **Box 6: Biryani**

Biryani is the most famous of the nawabi dishes. Hyderabadis are particularly proud of their version (the raw meat and the rice are cooked together), which resembles the rich cultural history of the city: *"You can find it in every city, but it tastes different everywhere."* (Javed Akabar, 08.02.2009) Thus, travellers in the past were astonished by the sheer quantity of biryani variations.



A whole bunch of basic ingredients make up the masala. Spices are cooked in water, then taken out and grinded to a masala mix in which the meat is soaked for at least seven or eight hours. The water is later used to boil the rice and the meat, layered in a pot which was traditionally sealed with dough. Judging the ingredients, it is truly a child of the amalgamation process of telugu and mughlai palates. The preparation process needs a lot of endurance and seems to be the culmination of years of experience. According to a biryani connoisseur, there lives one man in the old city (Charminar) who is known for making the best biryani in town. He only works for functions of the rich as he is too expensive for restaurants. The picture shows how such a traditional meal is subject to globalising processes, bringing something ancient to the modern world.

### **3. The transformation of Hyderabad's food scenario**

#### ***3.1. Determinants of change***

Urban eating habits differ more and more from villages, a dynamic which picked up speed in the last couple of years. This is due to a greater availability and a generally more open environment in which people are keen to experience new things. Be it that people veer away from their veg diet, try out international foods, etc.: "*It's the city culture which is patronising those changes.*" (R. M., 28.01.2009). Part of the urban setting are the various working opportunities which are attractive to rural residents and which are accountable for a modifying food culture: "*Lots of people are coming from the rural area to work in the city, leaving their families behind. They work in the IT sector or in government jobs. These people eat off fast food joints. They eat there, because they don't have a family, live in shared appartements with six people, or work nightshifts, many of them are bachelors.*" (R. M., upper middle class; 28.01.2009) What determines change is a puzzle of various pieces, some of which will be outlined in the following.

##### **3.1.1. Growing affluence and product diversification at the loss of time and the rise of prices**

In India, globalisation started in 1991 with the liberalisation of its economy. The barriers to a huge market were lowered and transnational companies happily used the opportunity to spread their worldwide popular brands of fast foods, processed foods and the like. While in the beginning, they catered only a small segment of 'global Indians' (Bharadwaj, et al. 2005), some companies soon recognised the potential of the fast growing middle classes. The proportion of the 'aspiring' India as eager consumers is not to underestimate. When people are more affluent, their food baskets become more diversified, especially in an urban environment where a wide range of products is easily available and where people get bombarded with outer influences through media, severe advertising of companies and a 'global' community (with foreigners working for city based firms as well as homecomers). In the last five to ten years, Hyderabad has seen an economic boom incomparable with anything before. Along with it, the section of affluent city dwellers or families with double income, buying products exceeding the basics, has grown immensely. As mentioned before, availability, time allocation and prices are important determinants of changing eating habits.



Therefore, they will be described in the following, however, from the consumers' point of view.

### 3.1.1.1. Availability

Hyderabadis are curious about the outside world and thus experiment with the offer: *“There is a huge availability of new foods and we like to experience new things.”* (Junior college girls, lower class; 22.12.2008) In supermarkets, one can find brussels sprouts, cabbage turnip, iceberg lettuce and zucchini in a fridge, labelled ‘exotic vegetables’. Such vegetables are known from travels or recipes and have the air of cosmopolitanism (even though they are not the freshest due to an discontinuous cold chain in grocery stores where power cuts are a daily occurrence). The blatant increase in the demand and availability of fruits and vegetables from more temperate (American and European) zones would not be possible without increasing imports of these foods and cool storing with consequences for the emission balance. Other imported products can be found in the ‘international section’ of supermarkets or in ‘specialty shops’: Nutella, Rocher, Ritter Sport, Milka, Hershey's and other foreign products are displayed, mirroring Hyderabad's entry into the global consumption community.



**Figure 2:** ,Modern' sweet shop, Hyderabad; own source, November 2008.

Shopping centres and hyper markets are mushrooming all over the city, especially in more affluent areas. With them, the array of products diversifies permanently. Noticeable is the enlarged offer of dairy products with several kinds of cheese and curd available, whose

demand is backed up by an increasing number of households with refrigerators. The growing consumerism is further promoted by special offers such as 'buy one, get two', 'get free vermicelli with one sack of rice'. The amplification of the product choice also can be seen in the range of restaurants. It seems that nearly every day a new restaurant opens which invites to a new culinary experience. Interestingly, restaurant managers also point out that they have to offer quite an enlarged menu as people want to have more choices what to eat.

### **3.1.1.2. Time allocation**

*"Because of the fast life we are taking new food. It has to be easy to prepare and time saving."* (Girl student, 21 yrs. old; Dec. 2008) One side effect of higher incomes is the loss of time. Thus, time wants to be spend in a high quality manner, which in the new urban context means meeting friends for shopping, having coffee or some snacks together. This has several implications for the eating behaviour, for example the turn to convenience or 'power food' as well as ready made foods, including curry points, or fast food joints. Time management has to be adjusted to new working schedules which, in the IT sector and call centre industries are bound to the working hours of America and Europe. The workforce of women is growing, too, leaving them little time to prepare full meals, thus making them allegiant clients of curry points. Often enough, they give their children pocket money to buy bakery items and fast food, which even young kids link with the accelerated pace of life. Thus, fast food combines all elements which become important in a fast developing urban setting: *"It's easy, available, affordable and convenient."* (C. T., 02.02.2009)

### **3.1.1.3. Costs**

However, as rapid as lifestyles are changing, prices are too. This will not affect the higher segments of society, but causes severe stress for the lower income parts and might even reach higher middle classes. The continuous increase in prices of aliments is of striking concern. Loud uproar was caused by rising prices of tomatoes and onions, both undispendible for the local kitchen. Other basic foods such as rice, dal, vegetables and diary products followed the global trend and have drastically gone up in prices over the last three years. This led to a price level on which meat is no longer the outstanding luxury good, but where vegetables and fruits are neither affordable for all anymore. Several factors, on the global and the local level, determine food prices and are responsible for their fluctuations, but cannot be discussed in detail here<sup>7</sup>. Yet, one reason certainly lies in the growing demand. Wheat for

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<sup>7</sup> For general information see Braun, Joachim von (May 2008): *High Food Prices: The What, Who, and How of Proposed Policy Actions*. PDF available at <http://www.ifpri.org/PUBS/ib/FoodPricesPolicyAction.pdf>. Two major arguments, the vast speculation

chapatti flour or lately also in the form of bread is on the rise and so are dairy products. On the other hand, many women claim to have turned to wheat chapatti, because wheat is cheaper than jowar, which they would still prefer. And yet again, younger generations seem to have developed a preferred liking for wheat chapatti. It is therefore not always clear if the demand affects the market or if the market and its offer dictates the demand, especially when marketing strategies are taken into account. That advertisement and general trends are a decisive factor in consumption dynamics shows the reactivation of said jowar, which is currently promoted as traditional health food and sold in supermarkets for, in spite of local production, ridiculous high prices. Older people who have grown up in villages eating jowar as a staple food are very agitated that they have to pay so much for it, only because it has a healthy or organic label attached. For them, it is incomprehensible how food as a livelihood could have "*become a business*" (tribal women, 16.12.2008). Many consumers see a direct connection between the price rise and the deterioration of quality, because food became a profit-making business: "*With new techniques applied to grow food, the food gets more costly and it doesn't have energy anymore due to chemicals.*" (Slum women, 15.12.2008) They acknowledge the broader diversity of products but attribute a poorer quality to available food in general: "*Old food was more energetic, but we had less varieties. Now, food has less energy and is costlier.*" (Tribal women, 16.12.2008) On the other end of the income range are those who are lured by a different shopping experience, even though they pay more. One example is the City Centre in Banjara Hills. Here, people are caught by the American concept of One Dollar Stores, where you can find anything from crockery to groceries, all for 120 Rs. Yet, 120 Rs. is not only more than the conversion of one US-\$, but also quite a high price for products like Snicker or Mars bars! By trend, food has become more expensive, but the level of disposable income also has increased, levelling out higher food prices to some extent. However, food prices are still soaring up, risking the food security of those who are already struggling to make ends meet. A majority of the population still has to spend some 60 to 80% of their income on food (R., 05.02.2009). The percentage is even higher if they do not have any coping strategies, such as relatives in villages who supply them with certain

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with crops and the competition between food and biofuel cultivation were intensively discussed. For more information on the speculation with agricultural products, see IFPRI Forum (July 2008): *Speculation and World Food Markets*. PDF available at: <http://www.ifpri.org/PUBS/newsletters/IFPRIForum/if22.pdf>, or Roble, M. et al. (February 2009): *When Speculation matters*. PDF available at: <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/ib/ib57.pdf>. For information regarding biofuel see Rosegrant, Mark (May 2008): *Biofuels and Grain Prices: Impacts and Policy Responses*. Available at <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/testimony/rosegrant20080507.asp>.

agricultural products<sup>8</sup> or women who are working as house servants and bring home the left-overs from the family or corporation they work for. The public distribution system also alleviates some of the burden with fruits and vegetables at cheaper rates<sup>9</sup>.

To sum up, diet diversification is one strong symbol of wealth, evident in the valuation of several curries included in a meal or in statements like: *“Muslims generally eat many items. Their and the Brahmins food is best, because they use the best quality ingredients and more varieties, which makes it more expensive. The basic ingredients are the same for all castes, the different lies in the quality and variety, as well as in the way of preparation.”* (Upper middle class Muslims, 15.12.2008) Quality and variety clearly matter, whereat first comes variety or pure quantity, which shows in functions of less affluent people: *“It's all about: we can afford that much, we can offer that many things. Quality is a lower value, quantity counts. Separate stalls at functions are a sign of wealth and cosmopolitan life.”* (Lower middle class women, 21.12.2008) With increasing wealth comes the desire to show off a cosmopolitan lifestyle. What lies behind such ambitions will clarify following chapter.

### **3.1.2. Altering aspirations and the quest for a new identity**

“[C]ulinary difference and gastronomic consumption are symbols of changing Indian social order in which eating becomes a moral quest for a new self.” (Srinivas, 2006: 1) This new self is far from being homogenous, but has manifold faces. In the urban setting of Hyderabad, it very much depends on the religious background, the economic position and a person's global exposure. The quest for a new self does not mean total dissociation with traditional bounds. In fact, in most cases, it is a matter of a hybrid construction, caught between habits acquired in a certain cultural environment and the desire to be part of a ‘modern’ or ‘global’ world. Through the incorporation of food, some might hope to come closer to another self (“Man ist, was man isst” (one becomes what one eats)). In this context, several questions have to be answered: What is the incentive to go to American fast food restaurants? What do people seek when opting for a KFC burger? Mr. Subba Rao (03.02.2009), who has been observing the changing eating habits in Hyderabad over the years, tried following answer: *“The way McDonalds and KFC are promoted, it is shown as new and something for the rich. The ads*

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<sup>8</sup> It is quite common for urban dwellers to go to the villages to visit their relatives and to bring back huge amounts of unprocessed basic foods such as rice, pulses, chillies, etc. In the city, the staples are dried, fanned, etc., whatever is necessary to conserve them.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on prices and the public distribution system, see [http://budget.ap.gov.in/es2k\\_ppds.htm](http://budget.ap.gov.in/es2k_ppds.htm), for a more critical account, see <http://planningcommission.gov.in/plans/mta/mta-9702/mta-ch8.pdf>.

*imply that it is something to cater rich people.*" A twelve year old boy offers a different explanation: *"As our country is growing modern, we eat different kinds of food."* Thus, is American interchangeable with 'modern' or is it simple curiosity and the interest to try something new as some middle class college girls said? They could be driven by the desire to be part of an otherwise unreachable world or the intent to distinguish themselves from the broad masses of less affluent people. Such a construction of identity, of course, is not only highly influenced from the outside, but also limited to given parameters, for example the disposable monetary assets. Nevertheless, the symbolic valuation of consumer goods embraces all classes and does not stop at economic borders: *"Even slum people eat fast food. They see the outside world, are pressured from friends, and, of course, see all the advertisement and role models"* (A. D., 03.02.2009), as such, they *"eat burgers not to become western, but to imitate the rich."* (R., 03.02.2009) Still, most lower class people are very aware of their economic limit and do not even dare to dream about the 'rich people's food'. This economic gap is filled by bakeries who followed the passion for burgers and pizza and satisfy the demand of less well equipped purses. Hence, the food one embodies acts as a message as to 'this is who I am'. Where and to whom this message is given serves as a further differentiator: *"According to your class, you want to be different from the mass and you try to show it through your dress, style, attitude, and eating behaviour. For example, if you eat on the road, you have a low status. It's due to the hygienic conditions, but also because you eat with lower section people. You just don't want to eat the same food as lower class people."* (S., lower middle class, 19.01.2009)



**Figure 3: Sheraton Hotel, Hyderabad;** own source, November 2008.

Many are driven by the desire *"to taste foreign dishes such as we have seen on Discovery Channel"* (lower class college girls, Dec. 2008), while in many cases they cannot even name

these dishes. It is their only possibility to break out of their limited economic reality. At the same time, for many informants, their mother's cuisine remains the best. The same is true for traditional food in general as one informant attested: *"In traditional food we don't use preservatives, therefore it's much more valuable than supermarkets' food. So people want to eat traditional food and now you have, parallel to western fast food, a whole series of stalls, hotels, joints, etc. offering traditional food. Although they might not look as attractive, people go there. Traditional food also finds its way back as 'ethnic food'. This concept is fairly new, but in the end, it's simply taking traditional food and wrapping it in 'proper' packages. However, due to the packaging, they can sell it for higher prices."* (R. M., upper middle class; 28.01.2009) Thus, the 'wrapping', which can mean the facilities, the ambience or the packing of products becomes more important than the content itself. Nevertheless, the majority of people, especially from the younger generation, declares that taste is the crucial factor in food, at least in traditional food. Taste, meanwhile, is culturally shaped and socially controlled. Taste in the Hyderabadi context means spiciness, the element with which foods are rated and without which food is marked as stale: *"When I make chinese noodles, I put in masala, because otherwise it has a blunt taste."* (girl college student, 20 yrs. old, 19.01.2009) Hence, foreign food is adjusted to local preferences, a process for which the principle of glocalisation<sup>10</sup> stands and which in the Indian context can be seen as 'Indianisation' (Box 7).

### **Box 7: Indianisation**

In the globalising India, rather than to speak of 'Westernisation', the Indianisation should be considered, meaning a process which is caught between adventure and nostalgia, demonstrating a paradoxical duality. It is a "balancing act of managing tradition and change" (Srinivas 2006: 2), in which cultural elements are hybridised with modern forms. In reference to eating culture, Indianisation shows in the adjustment of recipes and foods to the local palate. For example, the four-star Golconda Hotel in Hyderabad engages a German chef for its 'German week'. While the idea is to offer typical German dishes, the chef *"spices them up to meet the Indian taste"* (R. D., 26.11.2008). This principle is taken even further by new amalgations such as 'chizza' (Italian pizza fused with Asian flavours) or the recipe for chocolate sandwiches with *sevpuri* (deep-fried strands of pulse flour).

<sup>10</sup> Glocalisation is usually defined as 'global thinking, local acting'.

It also turned out that new products do not sell without attuning to Indian preferences. For example, one instant pasta brand praises its products with “ingredients which are signature to Indian dishes – primarily tomato, capsicum, onion and garlic” (advertisement for ‘Tangy Tomato’, a ‘Sunfeast Pasta Treat’ in the Deccan Chronicle, 03.02.2009). Thus, speaking of modern developments in India, we should keep in mind the concept of Indianisation. In opposition to the western definition of modernity: ‘progress’, the adjustment of new products to culturally determined preferences (and vice versa) could be what Indians call modernity.

Talking about the nature of food, many informants mentioned the use of preservatives and how they lower the quality of food. While some prefer to go to supermarkets, because vegetables there are well-proportioned and spotless, others know that to make such growth possible, the appliance of chemicals is necessary. This, however, diminishes the taste as well as the health factors of such foods. Keeping this in mind, it is nevertheless conspicuous to what extent lower middle class and slum people connect tasty with healthy food and categorise it into:

1. Village food which is healthy and tasty as it is natural, gives energy and keeps people strong.
2. Urban food which is unhealthy, stale in taste and unnatural due to chemicals and pesticides. What is more, food treated this way, gives even children white hair. The food in the city gives no energy, it leaves people weak and sick.

Energy is the outstanding value of food. To the lack of energy, people attribute their back pains and other discomfort, which hinders them to accomplish the same amount of work village people can perform. The concept of purity, important in Indian traditions, seems to have undergone a ‘modernisation’. Purity today does not refer to religious purity where food eaten by Brahmins was not to be touched by any lower caste people. It rather addresses a ‘natural’, ‘unpolluted’, ‘chemical-free’, thus, organic food. Organic food is named by many scientists as a very potential contributor to climate protection (see also Osswald, N. (2009): The Market

for Organic Food in Hyderabad: Consumer Attitudes and Marketing Opportunities).<sup>11</sup> However, for lower class people it is inconceivable that food can grow organically because the soil, the water and the air are polluted beyond remedy. And at the same time, to most of that income section polished foods look more appetizing. On the other end of the economic ladder are those for who *“organic food is fashionable. The younger generation goes back to unpolished rice and whole grain bread which the organic stores offer. They want to balance out the traditional oil floating curries. It came en-vogue four to five years ago.”* (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009) People in Hyderabad choose organic food for health reasons and are not aware of its environmentally friendly cultivation. Also, an awareness of its climate protective traits has yet to be created.

To sum up, before modern development was initiated, food used to be a marker of religion and caste. Nowadays, we are moving towards a global consumer society in which food intake functions to delineate certain (secular) lifestyle groups.

### 3.1.3. Structural conditions

The frame in which change takes place also includes the structural set-up, hence government policies, economic realities, etc. Generally, hyderabadi people see the government's role in the food sector at the most in providing food for the poor through the meal scheme at public primary schools, fair price shops and rythu bazaars, all of which will be quickly outlined in the following:

#### 1. Midday meal scheme

The Government of India made it mandatory for every school-going child to have one warm meal a day. The meal scheme was implemented in order to meet the minimum nutrition requirement of lower class children, thus backing up their learning capacity at school and keeping their parents from sending them to work instead of to class. In the beginning, the meals were delivered to the homes of children in need. Unfortunately, a lot of misuse and corruption took place. Often enough, the childrens' food was sold on the black market and the intention to bring more children to school was not achieved either. In 2001, a Supreme Court Order finally introduced the current scheme to guarantee school attendance of lower class children. The government provides for its primary schools (private schools are exempted)

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<sup>11</sup> Cummins, R. 2008, available at: <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/06/13/9601>, for a critical dispute, see: Goodall, Ch. 2007, available at: <http://www.carboncommentary.com/2007/09/15/7>.



100 grammes of rice and dal for every child on a daily basis. On top of that, for each child, three rupees are given to pay for expenses such as vegetables, spices, facilities, cooking fuel and the like. Once a week, the children receive an egg or fruit and biscuits. Self help groups, composed of parents and people from the neighbourhood usually take over the preparation. For many children, it is the first meal of the day. Parents either do not have the means to provide breakfast or go hunt for work early in the morning. However, while officials claim that vegetables and fruits constitute a substantial part of the meal, the reality speaks a different language: *“When the midday meal scheme started, it was to fight the undernourishment of lower class people. To give them energy, they were given proteins and carbohydrates in the form of rice and dal. Now, we have sufficient energy intake, but a lack of vitamins. However, the Government law is still on energy food.”* (R. R., nutritionist; 02.02.2009) Concerning the type of food provided, the principle of a government school suggests: *“My idea is that we should have less food, but of better quality. In this way, at least those who don't have breakfast at home, get good quality food. But as it is now, sometimes 50% of the food goes back, because it is of such poor quality and just too much rice. Children now get an egg and one banana per week. These are both items they don't get at home. But in order to get that, we have to be happy with the food we get throughout the week.”* (Principle of a Government School, 22.12.2008) She further laments that *“the food should at least be hygienic, but it's tasteless rice, not boiled properly or dal with more water than pulses.”* (ibid.) Once a month, a government official inspects the schools partaking in the meal scheme, but suspicions are that reports are filled according to governmental expectations, not always registering the truth. At last, the meal scheme might be based on good intentions, but nevertheless, what is really needed is not taken into full consideration, so that still *“some children just come to school for the meal and then go off to work at a teastall or something.”* (S. K., 05.02.2009)

## 2. Fair price shops and other government packages

In April 2008, the State Government of Andhra Pradesh re-launched the so-called 'two rupee rice' scheme, under which white ration card holders (people living below poverty line, BPL) receive up to twenty kilos of rice per month for a two rupee kilo price in government-run fair price shops<sup>12</sup>. Many see in the scheme merely a strategy to win over voters. Doubters see their suspicions strengthened through rumours such as free rice or a 100 Rupee package containing a mix of healthy foods which the government plans to install. Such promises are given ahead

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<sup>12</sup> The programme was first installed in 1983, when the Telugu Desam Party came to power in Andhra Pradesh, but was skipped under the reign of other parties.

of every upcoming election (in this case in the spring of 2009) and are hardly ever held. In addition, if such a scheme does run, it should be carefully examined as to what benefits it really brings, regarding the composition of food, its quality and quantity. Most white card holders, for example, complain about the quality of the two rupee rice and the lack of choice as they cannot afford other varieties but the subsidized one. Yet, this is not enough, people also have their doubts about the forthrightness of fair price shops: *“No conscience, only corruption exists.”* (S., lower middle class; 12.01.2009)

### 3. Rythu bazaars

To eliminate middlemen, the Indian Government established rythu bazaars where agricultural products are checked for quality and offered at fixed prices. However, these prices are not necessarily cheaper than what street vendors or kirana stores can offer. Besides, the nearly seven million city of Hyderabad has only nine rythu bazaars which means that they serve merely a couple of hundred people from the surrounding areas and not the mass-market.

Apart from the above outlined governmental institutions, typical official campaigns include the food pyramide, based on energy food, vitamins and minerals; safe drinking water with chlorine tables given free of cost, advises for the treatment of diarrhoea, the condemnation of alcohol, cigarettes<sup>13</sup> and *pan*, as well as finely outlined information on diabetes and the danger of diseases transferred from flies. *“Campaigns for high-risk groups such as pregnant women and kids exist, but once they reach the people, they are diluted through the process of bureaucratic passing down. This leaves end-users often unaware of such programmes and campaigns.”* (R. R., 16.01.2009)

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<sup>13</sup> Smoking cigarettes in public spaces was banned in October 2008 and is prosecuted with a 200 Rs. fine.



Figure 4: Industrial Exhibition, Nampally/Hyderabad; own Source, January 2009.



Figure 5: Anti-fly promotion. Tent of the Ministry of Health; industrial exhibition in Nampally, Hyderabad; own source, January 2009.

Most of these educational measures are frankly inefficient and some advices are simply not compatible with economic realities of lower class people. One example is the promotion of milk and eggs, where good quality eggs are too expensive for many. Another important structural change comes along with the rise of cash crops. While Andhra Pradesh is still called the rice bowl of India, paddy farming is reduced to some four or six districts, abandoned in the favour of commercial crops such as tobacco, cotton or chillies. A. Dubey (03.02.2009) of

the National Institute of Nutrition explains: “*The general output of rice is very much reduced. Therefore, the Government of India applied a new strategy: they promote wheat now. We have an abundance of wheat, grown in the North. The barns are full of it. This is given to South India heavily subsidised. However, wheat is not our staple food!*” As such, the impact of a modified framework can go as far as the reorganisation of culture<sup>14</sup>. The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) in Hyderabad, working under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, tries to countervail the penetration of wheat and plays a very active role in promoting more nutritious diets for Indians. One of their latest project is to “*popularise millets such as ragi and jowar. They are easily grown and suitable for the climatic conditions here. They have more nutrients, fibre and are culturally preferable [to wheat, R.H.]*” (A. D., 03.02.2009)

Additionally to the given frame of change, in the amplified space of today's world, we find polysemic consumption choices. These lead to pluralistic fields of change which will be characterised in the following.

### ***3.2. Fields of changing food culture***

Multinational corporations with years of experience on an international platform in conquering foreign markets have entered India since 1991. The import of processed food increased along with the extension of the existing food industry (Vepa n.y.). It was the creation of a global consumer society where “food consumption, is a major part of their entry into the global world” (Srinivas 2006: 4). Changing eating patterns in Hyderabad have to take its highly heterogeneous social setting into account. While children and adolescents usually count as the most volatile and thus susceptible to change, the hyderabadi context is characterised by the presence of upward moving young professionals and working women as strong forces behind altering eating habits. One major element of change is the new habit of eating out as will be explained further down.

#### **3.2.1. Products**

The valuation of aliments undergoes alterations over time. Millets and cereals such as *jowar* and *ragi* are considered ‘old’, ‘traditional’ food and were taken off the menu for quite some years. However, they slowly re-emerge with the new health wave. *Idlies*, *wadas* and *dosas*

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<sup>14</sup> This can be observed ahead of every political selection, where programmes and campaigns are instrumentalised for vote catching.

used to be reserved for special occasions, but have become everyday food, which is not least due to the availability of ready-made mixes, sparing housewives the arduous preparation. The royal cuisine, the *nawabi* food, too has lost some of its status and had to give way to non-Indian foods (chinese, western fast food). While the staple foods such as rice, dal and vegetables presumably will not change, other products gained or lost popularity. For example, the intake of wheat and dairy products has increased over time. Wheat consumption includes *puri* (puffed, deep-fried wheat bread), pizza, burger buns, sandwiches and bread. Wheat flour is no longer confined to the preparation of rotis, which always have been popular among the muslim population. Bread is more and more discovered as a quick breakfast alternative, usually toasted and with some butter<sup>15</sup>. The consumption of dairy products has increased as more households are equipped with refrigerators. A second factor is the growing popularity of cheese. While ghee is indispensable in the childrens' diet, the conventional fat in the Indian kitchen is oil. Sunflower oil is the most commonly used, taking turns with peanut oil, while olive oil is still regarded as luxurious and only the better off segment can afford it. Yet, its presence in economically lower areas is noticeably increasing. When talking about the Hyderabadi eating culture, the habit of eating *pan* must not be forgotten. Betel leaves stuffed with spices are said to help the digestion and refresh the mouth. Also, *pan* constitutes the end of a meal, is offered to guests or is consumed in between to reduce the hungry feeling. Other stimulants are cigarettes and alcohol, whereat both are stigmatized, yet high in consumption. Consuming alcohol is traditionally restricted to lower class people and dalits. Nowadays however, the consumption of alcohol draws through all income groups, be it lower class men wasting their monthly salaries on beer and cheap liquor or members of the higher stratum for who a glass of wine shows off their cosmopolitanism. It is curious that drinking women are accepted only in upper classes where it is part of their lifestyle whereas otherwise drinking women are very much disdained.

As suggested earlier, with products, statements can be given. Serving guests Sprite or a Thumps Up coke in a slum not only shows the slum dweller's partaking in the global consumerism, but also fulfills the principle of honouring guests. Especially branded products serve as a symbolic language. Through intense marketing, children often times know foods only by their branded name. This notably counts for sweets and snacks, where potato chips, for example, are equated with 'Lays'.

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<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, cornflakes were for a long time not recognised as a typical western breakfast food and had difficulties to enter the Indian market until they found an entry door in health and weight campaigns such as 'Special K' for the modern urban women (Goel 2008).





**Figure 6: Branded Products as part of ‘my favourite food’. Drawings of 11 yrs. old school children, middle class; own source, January 2009.**

Next to branded products, convenience food is upsurging in various forms. Already cut vegetables as offered in many supermarkets can be a fair compromise between the wish to save time and nevertheless have home cooked meals, at least for those who can afford it. Ready-made ginger-garlic paste, powders and typical masalas found their way into Indian kitchens the easiest. They are seen as basic ingredients which are often used and otherwise take a lot of preparation time. Recently, pre-made doughs or even pre-boiled dal emerged in the shelves, but they have not yet reached the same implicitness. The consumption of ready-made foods also depends on the available economic assets. Pre-mixes are considered a proper nourishment and its consumption has become quite normal in small families, where cooking is seen a waste of time. However, the incidental costs of feeding a larger family are generally too high, at least for most middle class households. Ready-made meals in the form of functional foods, however, found a new niche in a market, where time and health matter. *Andhra Pradesh Foods*, for example, sell their pre-mixes with added vitamins and minerals for *upma*, *khichidi* and *halwa* as “useful for general health and fitness”, which “promotes overall growth and mental activeness”, while it is “low in cholesterol and fat levels” (pamphlet of *Andhra Pradesh Foods*, 2009). Convenience food is more and more turned into service products, which combine various food values such as taste, healthiness and convenience. Interesting from an energy-saving point of view is the fact that the whole assortment of frozen foods has not yet caught: “It’s not really a concept here. We are all about fresh food and until recently we didn’t even have the means to keep frozen food. Lots of people don’t even know about it.” (R. R., 19.01.2009) Meat and snacks (samosas, cutlets,

etc.) are the only items which are occasionally bought by bachelors or upper class people as party snacks.

In spite of the increasing consumption of convenience food, many people demonise the modern comforts and see the taste in ready-made masalas gone. Taste seems to have become very important in a world where people can choose their aliments according to their preferences. For example, some see the secret of the popularity of fast food in the fact that it is a taste which you cannot get at home. Some even connect positive feelings with it: "*Fast food can give me a happiness*" (christian female, 12 yrs., Dec. 2008). Thus, even though they estimate fast food to be less hygienic and unhealthy, they do not draw the consequences and abstain from it.

In general, the requirements of products have risen. Children prefer industrialised sweets over local sweets most of the time. An exemption are *gulab jamun* and *jilebi*, which are in their given status comparable to our roasted almonds or gingerbread on fairs. As was described in chapter 3.1.1., the assortment of products was augmented (at the cost of some vegetables who fell into oblivion) and "*today, you can walk to a supermarket and see vegetables that we never grew up eating*" (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009). One of the leading upcoming products is soya. Every kind of soy product can be found in the shelves of supermarkets. Due to heavy advertisement, soya finds its way in people's food basket as part of a healthy nourishment. Other products bring it to popularity under a new name. Salad is such an example: shredded carrots or cucumbers with lemon juice and curd have been part of the traditional diet. Under the western name of salad, paired with new beauty ideals and health concepts, it had such a boost that some restaurants already specialised in salads!

It can be summarized that people in general have developed an awareness for good quality food and are willing to spend more money on it. Yet, the definition of quality depends on the social setting (age, economical and educational background). Slum and pavement dwellers are foremost worried about an adequate nutritional intake. Nevertheless, the striving for processed and other 'modern' products such as burgers and snacks begins as soon as the basic needs are covered. On the other hand, a recurrence of 'traditional' foods in higher economic and educational sections can be observed.

### **3.2.2. Preparation**

Radha S. is 69 years old. Her daughter Reshma R. is 31. For carrot chutney, they both use the same ingredients. Yet, their preparation differs: Radha pestles the paste for some 15 minutes in a stone mortar, while Reshma switches on the electronic mixer and uses the time to clean

the cutting board and knife. With the emergence of microwaves, electric mixers, toasters etc., the whole art of preparation has changed towards more convenience, leading to a countable increase in energy consumption. Of negative cultural value is the loss of knowledge regarding traditional preparation methods. *“The perfection is lost. For example the way how to prepare jowar roti which is quite a different style as wheat roti and more difficult, too.”* (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) Other practices, too, are about to drift into oblivion. Amongst these is the use of boiled rice water. Some older women mentioned how they used to scull and wash rice, store the water for one day, boil it up and prepare rice with it, *“it was the healthiest and tastiest food!”* (Middle class women; 21.12.2008) Older women also lament the loss of taste which they attribute to modern preparation methods such as using metal pots and cooking gas. Some of them still keep traditional earthen pots which were used on a wooden fire. Otherwise, technology led to new consumption patterns as we have seen in the increasing intake of milk due to more households with refrigerators. Due to their cooling capacity, they also led to a re-evaluation of the use of traditionally stigmatized left-overs. Some women even deliberately prepare enough to last for two or three days to save time and work.

### 3.2.3. The alteration of eating habits

*“In my grandparents generation they eat dumpalu and drink ragi java. In my parents generation they eat white rice and curries. In my generation, present generation we all eat pizzas, burgers, noodles etc.”* (Hindu male 12 yrs., Jan. 2008). While younger people seem to take it as a natural process that things change, members of the older generations feel that some identifying traits will be lost: *“At least, my generation has experienced some of those traditions. We have grandparents or parents who come from the villages, so we would go there for holidays and experience the very traditional way of life. Younger generations don't have that opportunity. For them, home food is the traditional experience. And due to so many years of urbanisation, their food is much more eclectic and there might only be some traditional meals.”* (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) It is a clear generational conflict, yet, transformation is taking place in all directions, not just in one or two. As food is freed from moral and social restrictions, it enters a new stage in which it is endowed with new social attributes and valuations (Appadurai 2008). A good example of it is the new passion of eating out: whilst who you eat with or not, used to have a strong in- or excluding symbolic meaning of rank, it no longer matters what religion or caste you are, all eat in the same room. This is even more pronounced in new restaurants and fast food outlets where the separation of males and families is nullified, too, and where thus economic means are the only differentiating



factor. Or one simply has to look in family homes, where no longer men are served first, but where the whole family sits together over dinner.

Thus, eating habits are strict and flexible at the same time. 'You are what you eat' still holds truth but has to be looked at according to the time being, the locality and other influencing factors. Following example will identify what this means: Salina has a 22 years old son who works in the IT sector. As the IT branch in India is aligned with the USA, working hours are from noon till midnight. His caring mother adjusted her eating behaviour accordingly, meaning that they have dinner just before midnight (S., dalit; 05.12.2008).

Another crucial aspect of altering eating habits are pointed out by Sudershan and Subba Rao (2008: 155): "Energy intake of people has gone up with shifts away from meals to snacks and from at-home to away-from-home meals." Considering the definition of snacks, which curiously includes pizza and burgers, the soaring occurrence of obese children and adolescents comes with little surprise. In addition, the shift from meals to snacks also accounts for breakfast and lunch. Aside from an unbalanced diet, this also brings about a very high overall calorie intake. Yet, some parents think that food intake bit by bit is healthier and therefore give their children small meals throughout the day. Often enough, these 'small' meals consist of Maggi noodles or stuffed puffs and moreover are consumed in front of the TV. Dr. Laxmaiah from the National Institute of Nutrition in Hyderabad gives one explanation: "*Children suffer from a lot of pressure. Parents want them to become an engineer or the like and urge them to study very hard. They get them up early in the morning for coaching classes. Then the children go to college and in the evening maybe again to coaching class. Their only recreation is watching TV. And doing that, they are snacking.*" (Laxmaiah, 03.02.2009) However, it is not only the kids who spend hours a day in front of the TV. Housewives indulge in cookery programmes, men turn on the TV as soon as they come home from work, some snacks at hand. This habit is turning into a major source of obesity in young people, because "*when you watch TV, you don't know how much you consume.*" (C. T., 02.02.2009) Generally, snacking has become a preferred form of spending leisure time among the young. They indulge in roasted corn cobs or *bhel puri* on the road. Those who can afford a two-wheeler meet their friends at popular chats or western fast food outlets. It does not need further explanation that these new recreational activities are not beneficial for the mitigation of climate change.

### **3.2.3.1. Children - adolescents - students and their eagerness to consume**

*“The palate of youngsters has completely changed. Often, they have not ever tasted the real traditional food.”* (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) For younger people, taste and the symbolic meaning of food are more important than aspects such as health or cultural heritage. Therefore, children and teens are the prevailing targets of food advertisement. Perceived values reach down to a very young age and they are thus very susceptible to social pressure which can be observed in schoolyards where lunch boxes can be decisive for one's reputation and the social integration. Biscuits, bread and jam displace *idlies*, *vadas*, etc. *“People think that new foods are indicating their status in society.”* (girl, 21yrs., middle class; Dec. 2008) But it is not only about new foods, the scenery and the circumstances of food intake also play a role in the eating culture, as one mother had to experience: *“I can't eat with coultry, therefore, my son doesn't want to go out for food with me. He says, it's a sign of lacking education. He also wants me to wear nice cloths and all.”* (S., lower middle class; 12.01.2009)

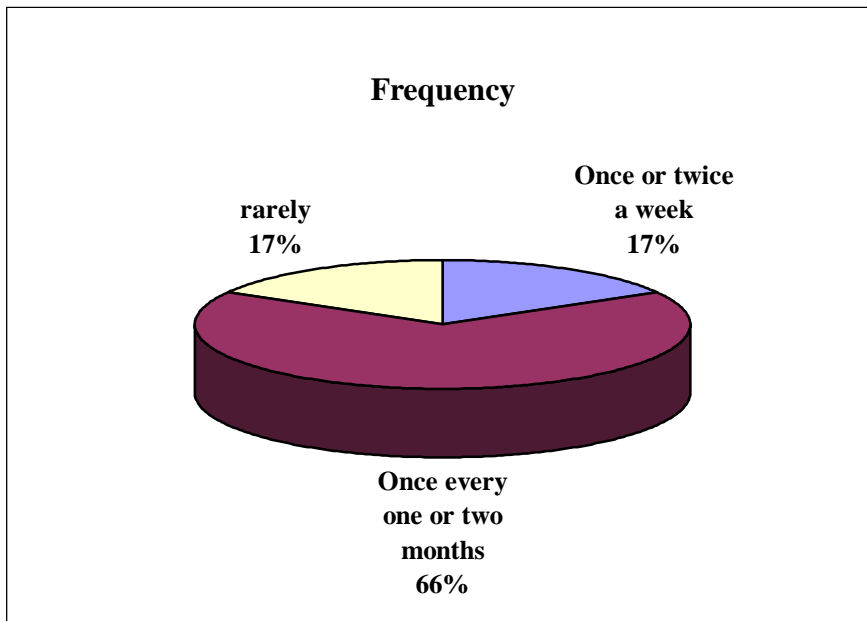


**Figure 7: School Lunch.** While some children secretly throw away their idlies, others impress with Maggi noodles, bread and jam or biscuits and sweets. **Right: Children at lunch in the schoolyard. Left: Kindergarden kids eating idlies, bread and noodles. Hyderabad; own source, December 2009.**

The new demands are instrumentalised by some parents as means of rewarding their offspring. They take them out to McDonalds for good school grades, etc. When they grow a little older, adolescents want to free themselves from their parents' influence and one way to do so is through own dietary choices. Such choices are made possible by the pocket money their parents give them. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that approximately 51% of

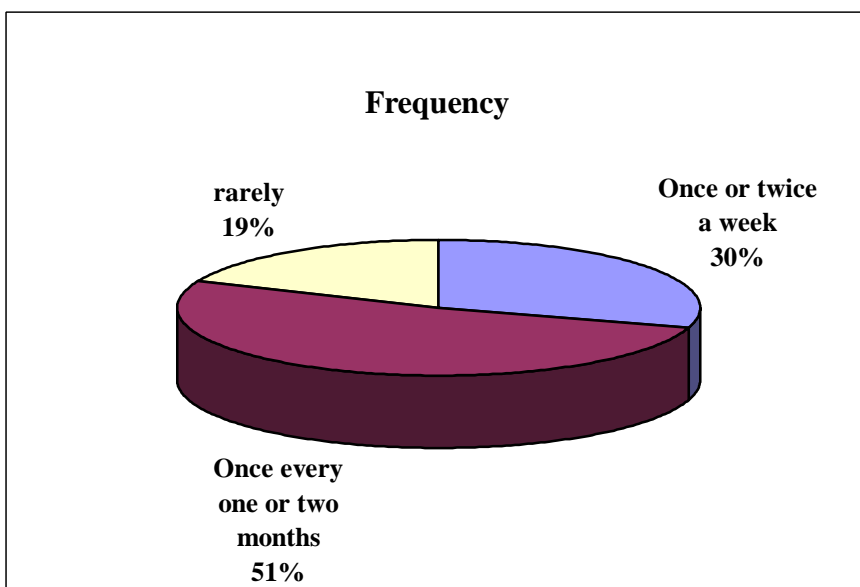
adolescent girls in Hyderabad consume instant foods 3-4 times a week, nearly 68% report daily consumption of bakery items and 48% consume soft-drinks once or twice a week (Sudershan & Subba Rao 2008: 155). Following tables show how with increasing age also the frequency rises:

**Table 1: The frequency of fast food consumption among 9-11 years old (survey at middle school)**



Own draft and source, December 2008.

**Table 2: The frequency of fast food consumption among 10-14 years old (survey at middle school)**



Own draft and source, December 2008.

For those who were raised more traditionally, eating habits undergo severe changes when they leave their parental home to go to university. Especially for boys, this means an experimental stage as they never learned nor were interested in cooking. At the same time, this is when adolescents usually start to imitate their mother's cuisine as a bonding element to childhood memories, as a source of identification and demarcation towards others. They frequently call home and ask their mothers' advice. Nevertheless, students of today, with increased social pressure and more money at their command, are predestined to take advantage of the city's vast eating-out offer.

One twelve-years old Hindu girl gave following roundup of changing food culture: *"My grandparents and parents prefer leafy vegetables. I ask for oily food. I do love biscuits, chocolates, wafers, chips and many others. I drink milk. They drink buttermilk instead of milk. They make balls out of rice and eat where I don't. I love to eat using a spoon and a fork but they prefer to use fingers. My grandparents sit on the floor and eat, but I use a dining table while I eat."* (Hindu female, 12 yrs.; Dec. 2008)



**Figure 8: Breakfast Yesterday and Today. 10 yrs. old girl.** own source, January 2009.

### 3.2.3.2. The working force

The upheaval of India's social setting becomes evident in the changing constitution of the work force. The booming city of Hyderabad draws many bachelors pursuing careers in the IT sector. The new cosmopolitans between 20 and 30 either do not have any cooking abilities or opportunities, or do not want to spend their spare time in the kitchen. To illustrate the daily routine of this group serves the everyday life of Bradeep, 25 years old, and his flat mates. Bradeep studied informatics and now works for an international IT company. With 25,000 Rs per month, he earns a little more than the average and certainly quite well for his age. He goes to work from six pm till two am, serving American clients. He shares a small apartment with

four other bachelors who all work at similar timings. In their kitchen, they have no stove or gas port<sup>16</sup>. They eat out twice a day, seven days a week. During the week, they eat in or near the office, on week-ends they visit “*nice restaurants where you can relax and refresh*” (B., upper middle class; 27.11.2008). They prefer Indian restaurants but would go to a Pizza Corner or KFC once every two or three weeks for a change. Curiously, he still considers home cooked food as the tastiest and best, yet does not even think about preparing his own meals, because eating out of home is also his time to socialise. Like Bradeep and his friends, many middle aged people lead a life of erratic working hours, no regular meal times and too little exercise. In many cases, this leads to overweight or other health challenges. Diet counsellors confirm that most of their clients belong to the working class. Others, who have come to the city for work, have left their families behind in the villages and thus have no incentive to eat at home, but prefer the wide offer of outside food.

The deconstruction of the traditional Indian social setting is also demonstrated by working women: “*Women nowadays make careers in the IT-, the media- and corporate sector. They earn well, are independent and don't listen to their husbands anymore. And most of the husbands enjoy to be seen with their rich and successful wives in public.*” (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009) Nevertheless, many women bear the double burden of managing the household and contributing to the family's income at the same time. It was mentioned earlier that some working women do not concede to convenience food, but rather get up very early in the morning to secure a traditional nourishment of their family. They not always do it out of moral reasoning, but are forced to procure food this way as they lack sufficient money to do otherwise. Some of them feel the need to justify their burden: “*Rich women are lazy, therefore they buy pizza and burgers for their children.*” (I., middle class; 20.01.2009) In other families, the Hyderabad-style cooking is reserved for the week-ends, even though they prefer traditional food over ready-made food. For them, (and also for the working bachelors), curry points, whose meals are considered home-made food, are of inestimable value: “*For me as a working women, curry points are extremely convenient. You can have all the traditional food without spending much time. Sometimes they put in more oil or a heavier masala as I would, but otherwise it's a good and easy way to get South Indian food. And it's cheap.*” (N., middle class; 30.01.2009) This way, many working women became ‘plastic-bag housewives’. This dynamic working scenario with its ever increasing work force has been discovered as a new business niche by street vendors. They use the opportunity and cater the working class

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<sup>16</sup> Many of the newly built apartments do not even have enough space for a fully equipped kitchen.

near their offices. The majority of workers gratefully embraces their offer of local and more or less 'home-made' foods such as biryani or lemon rice. Moreover, these food stands are also less expensive than corporate canteens. With plastic banners, the owners of the push carts try to create a look more suitable to white-collar employees. Usually a little offroad, less well equipped stands cater lower working class people such as drivers, secretaries, etc. Huge popularity enjoy tiffin points which serve breakfast, sometimes as early in the morning as three or four o'clock to cater the employees of call centres and IT companies. The latest innovation is modelled on the famous 'dabbawalas' of Mumbai. In Hyderabad, 'Favmeal' similarly undertakes food delivery to the working class and hits the mark for workers with their credo: "Good Food + Right Price + On Time + Every Day". They offer home food-, restaurant food-, and mess food deliveries. So far, the area of service is restricted to Hitech City and Gachibowli, as well as to certain restaurants and messes, all of which belong to the upper segment. Delivery prices vary between 350 Rs/month (home food), 35 Rs/order (restaurant food) and 50 Rs/meal (mess food). In the future, the founders do not only plan to extent the service to other areas, including more restaurants from which to choose, but they even want to launch customised personal health diets (for more information, see [www.favmeal.com](http://www.favmeal.com)).

### **3.2.3.3. Middle class**

The third group in which pronounced changes of life style and eating behaviour take place is the middle class: *"The change taking place here is tremendous. But whereas ususally it's youngsters and college kids who bring it about, in Hyderabad it's also the group of the 30+ and 40+, those with new money. For them it's all about fashion, fitness and eating out. They are very aware of their cloths and fitness. These middle aged people compete on the so-called 'page 3-events' with the younger crowd in fashion, etc. It's very obvious in the womens' world: Even if the women aren't working, they are stepping out of their houses. The new trend is networking. There are more people with money and they meet up at places, mostly at restaurants. These changes took off three to four years ago. Some five years ago, once you were 40, you were entering a different social life, probably dedicated to some charitable work. Now you go to pubs, to movies with friends, to fashion shows!"* (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009) In general, social restrictions dilute more and more, people open up towards new lifestly definitions, in which even some men started to show interest in the women's world of food preparation.

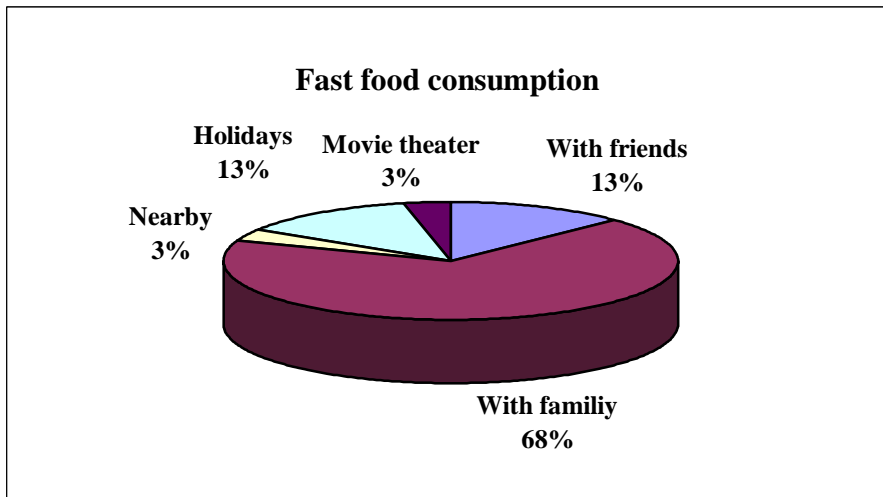
#### 3.2.3.4. Eating out

*“The passion for food is not decreasing, but only certain pockets of the society are still cooking, the others eat out.”* (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) Southern India has a long tradition of Irani hotels vending sweetened rice, sugar candies or meat preparations. They were followed some 40 years ago by *chat* food, which originated in Mumbai. In the 1980s, Chinese fast food (fried rice or noodles) started its successful presence in Hyderabad. After that, it took nearly 20 years until the first outlets of American fast food chains transformed the cityscape and started an development which has not yet slowed down. In June 2008, McDonalds opened its first ‘drive-thru’ outlet in Hyderabad, reacting to the increased possession of individual cars. The Indian restaurant industry today constitutes one of the largest in the world (Srinivas 2006: 6).

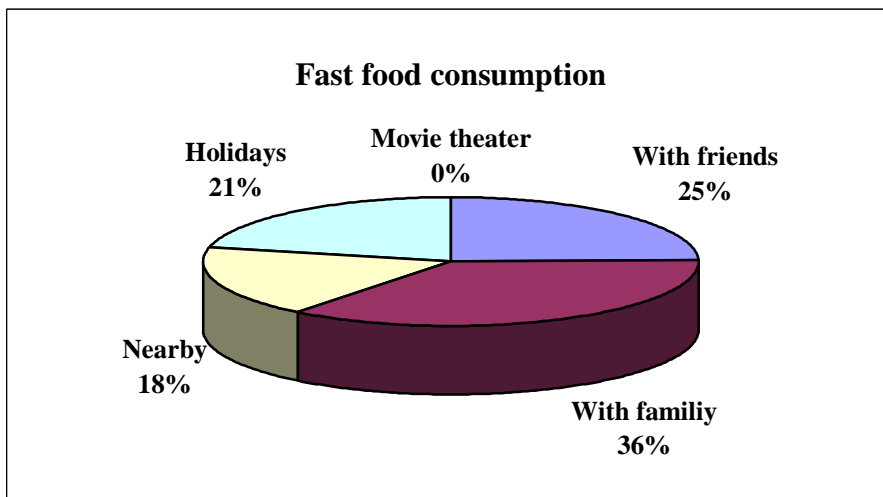
While for centuries, the treat of fine dining was reserved for upper class people, the affluent middle class is slowly turning into gastronomical experts. Going out for food has become the most striking trend in Hyderabad over the last couple of years, including on the lower economic levels, whose demands are satisfied by cheap bakeries. The objectives behind are multifaceted, some are curious for new tastes, some do it out of lacking time, and some *“want their eating habit to reflect their lifestyle”* (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009). A lifestyle in which people leave their houses and start out to discover a world beyond the India they have known so far. Public spaces are more and more captured as social spaces for new emerging consumer groups such as women and the urban youth. In the traditional Indian context, groups were defined by what they agree to eat together, yet this seems to give room to the commonly shared experience in the various eating establishments. Eating out is never a question of eating alone. It is no longer only the family certain occasions are celebrated with, but the ruling aspiration is to spend time with friends, to bond and network. People sitting with a book over a cup of coffee is a picture seen very rarely. The young and working meet for lunch, dinner or coffee to catch up with friends. Families spend their Sundays in food courts, because the working mother does not want to waste her time cooking. Yunxiangs Yan (2008: 501) states in her article on fast food consumption in Beijing, that “the transformation of fast-food establishments from eating place to social space is the key to understanding the popularity of fast-food”.

Following tables show the circumstances in which and with whom fast food is consumed by the youngsters:



**Table 3: Who do you eat fast food with? Survey among middle school children, age 9-11**

Own draft and source (survey December 2008).

**Table 4: Who do you eat fast food with? Survey among middle school children, age 12-14**

Own draft and source (survey December 2008).

People want to be seen. Especially among the upwards moving class is it part of their bourgeoisie lifestyle to try out every new restaurant. This can lead to the alienation of eating habits from taste toward a status giving rationale: *“Even if it’s not your taste, you have to be seen. It all comes back to you the next day when people talk.”* (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009) In general, people who dispose of more money than they need for their basics want to spend that money in an environment which has something to offer. This ambition is satisfied through the erection of shopping centres such as ‘Hyderabad Central’, ‘City Centre’, etc., where a couple of hours of shopping can be crowned in the food courts of either the shopping centres or in proper ones such as the Eat Street on the bank of Hussain Sagar. Eating



establishments also have to comply with certain standards, constructed by the increasingly cosmopolitan city dwellers who seek the adventure of experiencing 'exotic' foods: "*In Hyderabad, we have lots of special cuisines coming up now, on a national and international level. People eating out or having dinner parties try to experience different cuisines. Five star hotels like the Taj or Golden Dragon have specialised cuisines.*" (V. M., upper middle class; 12.01.2009) Yet, the demands reach beyond specialised cuisines. The menu, too, has to offer a broader palette than a couple of years ago to please the clients.

Especially young people are attracted to the 'clean', 'spotless' and 'modern' environment with gentle music playing in the background. In addition, the often air-conditioned rooms offer a cool and quiet refuge from the traffic noise and the hustle of Indian streets. Small corner bakeries have to imitate the interior of western fast food chains and enlarge their menu if they want to survive. It is not food that occupies the centre stage, but rather the experience itself. Unsweetened coffee is served in big mugs, brownies with ice-cream and toppings titillate one's palate. Western coffee culture is extremely popular and the Indian chain 'Coffee Day' with its armchairs and couches opens more and more outlets, especially near universities and shopping centres. Clients like the ambience, the service and the simple fact that it is a place where they can hang out for hours if they wish. Where they can relax, read magazines or newspapers. Important here is that boys and girls can sit together unlike in the traditional restaurants with their male and family sections. This argument plays a big role for women (especially for women of Muslim faith are not supposed to leave the house without the attendance of a male relative), who's elbowroom was traditionally restricted to the family home. Deciding on which restaurant to go to, what to order, where to sit, eating out symbolises to a certain extent liberty and freedom. It is an escape from the daily routine where western food is not on the menu. This also explains the popularity of non-Indian foods, such as Chinese, burgers and pizza. Yet, Indian tiffins did not lose much of their appeal, also, because outside food is usually prepared with more oil and spices, which attracts youngsters. As described above, with the overall availability at hand, college students leave their lunch boxes at home. In addition, they are often lured by offers such as get one free when you buy two. Workers save time and take individual and family parcels which are offered almost everywhere.

In general, 'feel-good locations' (Yan 2008) are adorned with high social prestige. Surprise and birthday parties in restaurants are "*en vogue*" (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009). Bars and nightclubs are frequented by a growing clientele. All together, the range of outside eating and drinking establishments seem to bring a cosmopolitan touch to the city. And while this touch

is imitated on many functions (with caviar, pink champagne and single malt whiskey as reported in 'The Times of India', 2008; see Sengupta & Srivastava 2008) on the other end of the range is the street food which is condemned by authorities and educated people as unhealthy. They are sceptical about the utilised oil and the lack of hygiene and moreover see it as the poor peoples' food which does not have any status. It is the food offered by those street vendors whose pushcarts do not have the least sanitary appliance, hence, the 'typical' Indian street food vendor. Nevertheless, it meets the Indian taste and every once in a while even white collar workers sneak out onto the streets to indulge in *mirchi-bhat* (deep-fried green chillies in batter) and other snacks.

People eat out with an ever increasing frequency which, of course, has strong implications for the balance of emissions. Many use their cars to go to restaurants near and far as the surrounding possibilities often times are no longer adequate locations. As pointed out before, people want to spend quality time in such facilities. In the hot climate, cooled air has become a premise of quality, which is accomplished by the intense use of air conditioners. For further use of electricity account the illuminated display of foods, and not least the growing demand for cold drinks.

### 3.2.4. Changing health and body concepts

"Your health is your wealth. What is health? Health is not merely absence of sickness or infirmity in the individual. It is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" (Public Health Museum Hyderabad, 27.01.2009). This holistic definition of health sounds almost philosophical, yet, in reality, what is considered healthy can be quite volatile and depends very much on the latest scientific achievements or, to the bigger extent, on trends in the media and official agenda<sup>17</sup>. Such trends deconstruct health, continuously displacing its definition. Depending on who you talk with, health can mean a balanced diet, chemical-free groceries or the physique. Yet, 'healthy' food can only be of concern when there is enough food. Many older and less affluent people still consider *rasam* and chilly powder as healthy, because it meant that they had at least some kind of side dish to go with their rice. Unpolished food and jowar, on the other hand, was despised as poor people's food and only recently gained in status due to health campaigns. While generally traditional food is estimated to be

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<sup>17</sup> Some official health advices might be meant well, but use dubious arguments, for example following statement: "Milk and its products are important articles of diet. They are present in the diets of all the larger and more vigorous races of the world." (Public Health Museum Hyderabad, 27.01.2009)

healthy among older generations, younger people have an increasing awareness about the excessive intake of oils. Still, a traditional full meal contains everything from carbohydrates (rice), vitamins (vegetable curries) and proteins (dal) to dairy products (curd) and only changing dietary patterns made it necessary to emphasise the values of 'good' food. New products can acquire the same healthy valuation depending on how they are presented on the market. It is dubious for Hyderabad that health concepts are mostly communicated through newspapers which package more or less relevant or irrelevant information in scientific terms without really explaining much. Yet, people tend to trust their 'media knowledge' without questioning it. A good example is the believe that Maggi soups are good for the health, mostly because they are named and merchandised as 'healthy soups'. That all the vegetables, which resemble the healthiest component of the meal in the TV and do not come automatically with the package but have to be added, does not seem to trouble anyone. Only higher class people have a knowledge based more on facts due to better access to education and information. Yet especially the working class, respectively double income families seem to fully count on the effects of healthy products.

The crucial role 'purity', as a form of hygiene, plays in the Indian context, can be exemplified with the definition of healthy food. Whilst a general health awareness led to the increased intake of fruits and vegetables, these are, despite of higher charges, preferably purchased in supermarkets, where they are spotless and wrapped in cellophane and thus count as clean. Organic food, on the other hand, is grown without the use of pesticides and therefore might look less 'clean' and therefore is valued as less healthy. Due to this obsession, even fast food can go as healthy nourishment, because the supposedly clean interior of fast food chains such as McDonalds values more than the nutritional facts of the food. Such thinking, of course, has far reaching consequences for street food vendors. People are rejected by the unhygienic situation of their food stalls and preparations, backed up by ministerial campaigns, cautioning against open food, which is, amongst other negative attributes, contaminated by flies. In a study in which one hundred students of a private high school were asked to name unhealthy aliments, stored food, fast food, oily and spicy as well as deep fried food were on top of the list<sup>18</sup>. Thus, it is not surprising that street food is often used synonymic for junk- and therefore unhealthy food (Sudershan & Subba Rao 2008: 155). The fear of insanitary circumstances is thus utilised by advertising campaigns and is drawn on even by non-food related products. For example, a couple of years ago, one advertisement praised its air

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<sup>18</sup> This study was conducted at the Sri Aurbindo International School (in Vidya Nagar, Hyderabad) as part of the field research for this report.

conditioners as a means to purify air which would contribute to a healthier and more hygienic home environment (Bharadwaj et al. 2005). As said above, in this context, the adulteration of chemicalised products plays a significant role in the perception of healthy food. Notwithstanding a larger variety of vegetables available, people feel they cannot live healthy due to the overall pollution. Especially lower class people see in chemicalised mass production a danger to their health: *“With the use of chemicals, vegetables and fruits grow larger and look better. And with growing demands, agriculturalists don't think of public health, they just think of their economic profit.”* (Slum women, 15.12.2008) The deterioration of food is taken very seriously not least owing to the equalisation of food with god ('anam brahman', see chapter 2.3.1.). Concerning public health, the nutrition transition, represented in the shift from meals to snacks, from traditional home-made food to processed food high in sugars and oils, in correlation to a lack of exercise, is accompanied by the deterioration of several health conditions. The most pressing issues are diabetes, hypertension and other diet-related chronic diseases (Popkin 1999). As one result of the nutrition transition, overweight and obesity are on the edge of becoming rampant conditions. They prevail in groups with higher socioeconomic status, in smaller families and are more pronounced among adolescents (A. Dubey and Raghunatha Rao, 03.02.2009; Laxmaiah et al. 2007). In general, this resembles a typical picture of an urban setting and indeed, the prevalence of overweight urban adolescents was found to be ten times higher than that of rural residents (Laxmaiah et al. 2007: 1388).

Despite growing obesity, the western concept of how a nice body has to look has also reached the Indian city. Girls are becoming aware of every fat pad on their body, also because their favourite clothing style, jeans and tops from the western hemisphere demand a thinner body. To counteract the intake of fatty food, fitness clubs are mushrooming all over the city, with slimming classes as an inherent part of their programme. Not surprising in an Indian context, even special yoga classes to reduce weight are offered. Personal fitness coaches and yoga instructors have become a must on the rich people's daily agenda. However, the wish to stay slim is not always driven by beauty ideals, many people show an increasing awareness of the positive contribution to their physical constitution if they exercise. Still, a well-trained body has become the obsession of many young people, challenged by statements like: *“Bodybuilding is easy, all you have to do is pump iron and skip biryani”* (Nanisetti in 'The Hindu', 17.01.2009). On the other side, low fat jam and margarine are slowly entering the market. However, without broad advertising, they have not yet caught on.

### ***3.3. Driving forces of change***

As was shown so far, the urban society of Hyderabad is open and dynamic with vertical and horizontal movements. Most well-off people have been overseas and wish to find a similar assortment of products and eating establishments in their hometown, too. In addition, modern industries, namely the IT sector create an awareness of worlds beyond India. This knowledge of the alluring other is boosted by the one favourite pastime next to eating: watching TV.

#### **3.3.1. Media**

The Indian TV has a myriad of channels, therefore it should not surprise that TV plays the leading role in affecting behavioural features of people. Nowadays, even slum dwellers own a TV set with cable network. *“The TV inside of the home is the window to the world. Especially TV serials are so popular in India and they are all validated now, the cloths, the food, the habits, the products seen in these serials. And these influences are translated into aspirations.”* (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) Consequently, sitcoms and films with people eating ‘trendy’ food such as burgers, pizza, etc. create new desires. What is more, Indian and international films, serials and documentaries display a world which for the new aspiring middle classes is not out of reach anymore<sup>19</sup>. Even villagers come to town with the sole intention to go to a western fast food restaurant and to experience what they have seen on TV. Advertisements for pizza, burgers, combos and special offers catch childrens’ attention. They are the consumer generation of tomorrow and hence exercise great influence on their parents’ purchasing behaviour. Therefore, they are targeted in particular, for example during cartoon shows which are interrupted by food advertisements. However, children are not the only victims of the media machinery. Women at home turn on the TV as soon as their children and husbands are out of the house. As early as 7:30 am, thousands of middle class women are glued to the TV to watch a new episode of a very popular morning show where a charming anchor prepares healthy juices and the like. As such, the TV programme can also serve as a source for (often times doubtful) knowledge of healthy diets and nutrition (see chapter 3.2.4.). In addition, the latest passion of many women are cooking programmes: *“Especially middle class housewives are glued to it. For example my aunt, she watches it with a passion. They have different recipies from all over India. And often enough, when I’m at a friend’s house and ask where they got that recipie from, they would answer from the recipie programme [sic!]. And it’s very*

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<sup>19</sup> Still, Indians are crazy for films and go to the movie theater on a regular basis. Hyderabad, with Tollywood, has its own film industry with an area that is exceeding Hollywood!

*clever, these programmes come at around half past eleven in the morning and in the late afternoon, for example at 5:30 pm, so just before eating time.*" (R. B., upper middle class; 07.02.2009) Especially younger women like to try new things, out of curiosity or because they want to experience something from the outside world which they only know from the TV: *"There is one show where the cook travels around the world and tries different foods and we try to prepare them at home. It's always an experiment, a change in our leisure cooking."* (Young middle class women, 17.12.2008) This desire is also acknowledged by newspapers, which advertise their food columns with words such as "The world on a platter" (Food Guide in the Deccan Chronicle, 22.11.2008). Through cooking shows and cookbooks, women can explore the cuisine of others and establish a feeling of belonging to the same world of taste (for a detailed discussion see Appadurai 2008). In general, recipes and other food related ideas are also transmitted to a large extent by the print media: *"We know a lot about food from magazines and columns"* (Upper middle class girls, 19.01.2009). *"The response to food is huge, restaurant reviews, recipes, etc. Food is something that sells well in newspapers. People even call the newspaper for information on new restaurants, on food festivals, etc."* (V. M., editor of Metropolitan Plus/The Hindu, 12.01.2009). Printed advertisements and food writings provide and shape ideologies and guide through the ever growing jungle of new products and restaurants<sup>20</sup>. The collection of recipes nearly has become an obligation for the modern Indian women: *„You have to have new things and new recipes!"* (V. M., 12.01.2009) The book market, however, provides more than enough new input. In book stores, whole mountains of recipe books await the eager reader. Especially middle class women are devoted readers of women's magazines, which direct their desires towards the latest trends. Whilst educated middle class women had long access to English writings, people with lower educational status are no longer excluded as the last couple of years has seen the rise of cookbooks and magazines in local languages, for example in Telugu and Urdu. The whole extent of the transforming diet habits lies not so much in cookbooks on local, Indian, international or specialty cuisines like nawabi or pure vegetarian dishes<sup>21</sup>. It rather is

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<sup>20</sup> For example, a closer look during three months at two English newspapers in Hyderabad ('The Hindu', 'Deccan Chronicle') unearth well over 20 articles and even more recipes from the international cuisine, including foreign cultural eating habits at special occasions such as to Thanksgiving or Christmas.

<sup>21</sup> Whilst one branch of recipe collections subdivides the art of cooking into various niches, another trend goes towards more universalism. Appadurai (2008: 300, 301) exemplifies this on the increase of books on a 'South Indian' cuisine, in which the regional cooking styles of the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayali people are thrown together. Such cooking books have a tendency to construct a new national cuisine while at the same time, they pin down the collective memory which is threatened with oblivion.

demonstrated with cookbooks for the use of left-overs, which was thought of being impure after a couple of hours and thus was seen as a contamination of the soul and body. With many households disposing of a fridge, a re-thinking took place as the destructive climate conditions in the subtropics can now be diminished. Microwave cooking, as well, becomes a tempting concept for working women and is fuelled by specialised cookbooks. As until now, given the time saving argument, hardly any family with enough disposable money will care about the augmented energy use.



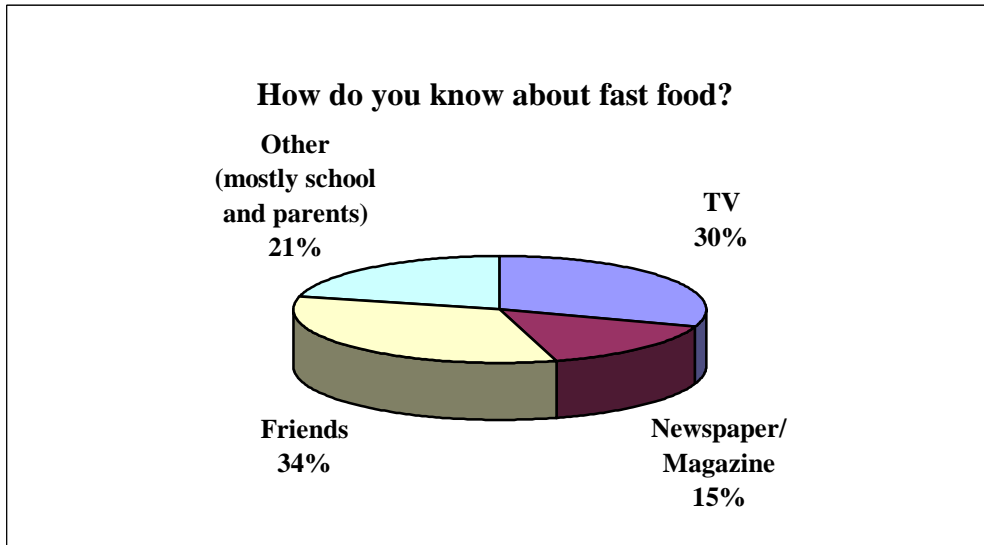
**Figure 9: Cookbook section of a book store in the City Centre; Banjara Hills, Hyderabad; own source, December 2008.**

### 3.3.2. New lifestyle concepts

As has been demonstrated throughout the report, the city of Hyderabad has always welcomed foreigners within its dominion. Yet, in recent years, initiated by the IT-boom, “*it has become even more cosmopolitan than it used to be throughout the history.*” (R. B., upper class; 07.02.2009) People working in an interethnic environment lose their reservations towards the alien, while “*people coming back from overseas bring new tastes with them.*” (Sh., upper class; 08.12.2008) With growing knowledge of the outside world, new aspirations start to rule, leading to increased social pressure. Sometimes, this even reaches the older generation, which usually is less flexible in their eating habits: “*My parents and grandparents eat the modern food very rarely and eat the Indian culture food very much, but as the country is growing modern, they are also trying to grow modern.*” (12 yrs. boy, middle class; Jan. 2009)

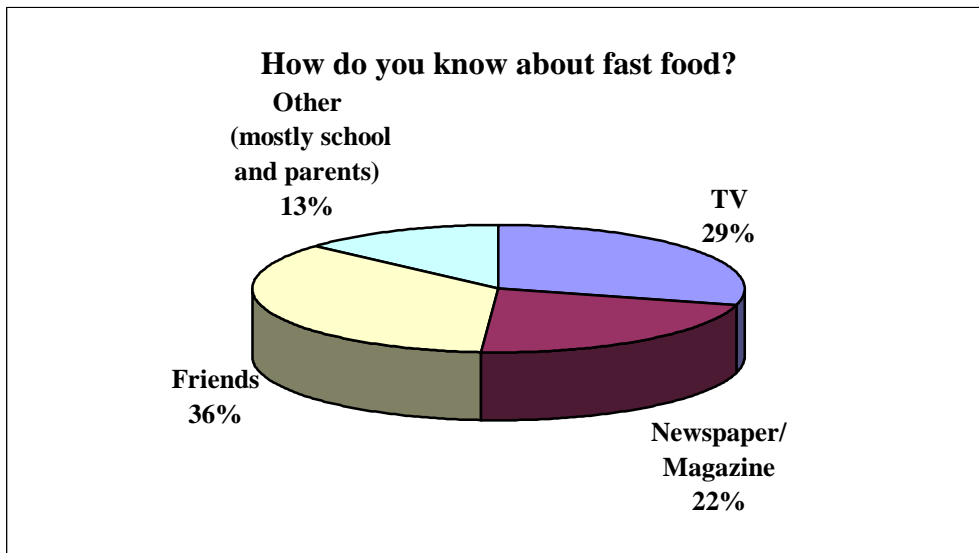
Such a cultural reshuffle is further pushed by the acceleration of life in general: *“The pace of life is picking up. The Hyderabadi culture was known to be laid back, that doesn't hold truth anymore.”* (A., upper middle class; 31.01.2009)

**Table 5: How do you know about fast food? Survey among middle school kids, age 9-11**



Own draft and source, survey December 2008.

**Table 6: How do you know about fast food? Survey among high school kids, age 12-14**



Own draft and source, survey December 2008.



## Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of this study was the analysis of the changing food culture of Hyderabad. In doing this, the attention was turned to the social aspects as well as to the cultural backgrounds of this change which are necessary to comprehend the processes underneath. It was also focused on detecting the starting points for adaptation and mitigation strategies towards a low-carbon food system. One result was that change cannot be regarded as a lineal development but, in fact, implies a multidimensional process. In this process, the propensity to consume becomes more and more pronounced, bringing out both quantitative and qualitative facets. Higher incomes and a greater availability provide the foundation for increasing consumerism. New aspirations and lifestyle patterns further encourage and shape people's behaviour. The latter two are communicated to the outside world with food as the medium. Concerning this, it is interesting that the changes in Hyderabad's food culture seem to be following two different trends:

1. Families who practice mostly traditional cooking, but who introduce new elements such as bread, cornflakes, chips and other aliments to their diet.
2. Families who want to stay with a traditional diet as well, but whose cuisine relies on new products (such as ready-made mixes for curries and other traditional dishes) due to a lack of time or other convenience reasons.

Yet, in general, eating habits, as much as preparation practices and food values are dynamic elements of a food culture. Thus, they are subject to fluctuations. In the world of food, limitations (religion, caste, etc.) are overcome much easier than in other areas, such as marriages, for example, which still show a high persistence of social restrictions (Appadurai 2008). With such flexible boundaries, consumption habits could be directed in a certain way, with the aim to mitigate climate change. As eating habits are formed from childhood on, the education leading to low-emission lifestyles should start at an early age. This complies with the recommendations put forward by the National Institute of Nutrition which undertook an educational programme on nutrition including literate slum dwellers and governmental schools (Subba Rao et al. 2006 & 2007). As a matter of fact, some campaigns already exist. The British Library, for example, recently implemented a contest looking for the best climate saving ideas. Education measures regarding this matter "should be culture specific and should respond to technological, economic and social situations that prevail in a particular society or cultural groups." (Sudershan et al. 2008 : 507) As such, in a first step, these cultural terms have to be extracted. The purchasing behaviour, to name one, represents a field on which

mitigation strategies could potentially be imposed. Supermarkets, for example, “*are attractive due to their display of food. It’s a feast to your eyes, like window-shopping. People like the commercial way of displaying things. And the advertisement tells us that the fruits and vegetables are all fresh.*” (R., 03.02.2009) This display of food, however, uses a lot of energy; not only for the production of the cellophane wrapping, but also for the illumination of the products. The evaluation of supermarket food is a good example for the multiplural mindset of the hyderabadi population. Those who go to supermarkets because: “[t]he combination of choice, convenience and safety as offered by supermarkets has huge appeal for the burgeoning middle class” (Pingali & Khwaja 2004: 17) face those who ascribe the shiny supermarket food an unhealthy nature due to its chemicalisation. This discrepancy proves the necessity to adjust awareness campaigns according to the targeted group. Given the results of present studies, several possible starting points for climate mitigation emerge, for instance, the growing group of middle class people. As has been discussed in this report, they are keen to define themselves as the cosmopolitans of tomorrow. As such, this group could constitute a huge agent in climate protection. Small steps have already been taken in this direction. The restaurant ‘Our Place’, for example, situated in the prosper Banjara Hills, presents itself as an award-wining eco friendly place.

The other group prone to change is the group of the younger generations. They bring in their profound optimism, especially those from middle classes. If climate adequate lifestyles are promoted as the responsibility of global citizens, this highly influenceable group can be directed towards sustainable consumerism. However, up to now, there is a tendency towards resource-intensive consumption patterns, such as the consumption of processed foods. Their production requires a high input of energy. The increased intake of dairy products, for example, contributes to an increase in methane emissions. Also, these products have to be transported in re Fridgerated lorries and stored in cold rooms. So do cold drinks, the new preference of the youth. Another energy-intensive field of food is presented by the new microwaving products which have become a symbol of time saving alimantation.

Another area to which mitigation strategies could be applied is ‘natural’ (therefore healthy) food. As pointed out in this report, ‘natural’ can be used interchangeably with ‘hygienic’ or ‘chemical-free’ food. In this context, several possibilities for climate adaptation can be implicated. Street food vendors with their low-emission food procurement could be strengthened as an adequate alternative to supermarkets and fast food joints. However, this would first require the establishment of standards regarding sanitary conditions. If that was accomplished, features such as the face-to-face relationship between vendor and consumer,

the cultural value of street vending, or the spectacle of watching your food being prepared would come to the fore and give a more positive valuation to this food sector. This cultural value as well as the face-to-face relationship also apply to kirana stores. Thus, they could contribute to a low-emission urban food provision, as well.

Taking into account the existing fear of chemicalised products, organic food with its resource-conserving capacities could take root if promoted appropriately. The Deccan Development Society (DDS) is engaged in the organic production of traditional aliments in Andhra Pradesh. Their 'Organic Mobile' sells cereals, millets, grams, lentils and the like in Hyderabad. Their products are ecologically sound and of high nutritional value. They are adapt to the local climate and do not stress local resources to excess. Furthermore, they are in concord with cultural traditions and are socially sustainable as they are produced by rural women's associations ([www.ddsindia.com/www/default.asp](http://www.ddsindia.com/www/default.asp), for further information, see [www.ddsindia.com](http://www.ddsindia.com)). What they hawk, at present, is re-emerging from the oblivion and is re-discovered as healthy foods. The volatility of product valencies could be used to promote social prestige for low-emission foods, for instance through awareness campaigns and advertising. This way, an empowerment of the consumer can take place with a capacity building in the field of consumption behaviour which includes concepts of sustainability, low-carbon lifestyles and a low-carbon food security. For this purpose, the raising of public awareness should be of foremost concern. For those who do not have unlimited access to information, educational activities taking place in anganwadi centres (grass-root level women and child health centres) could be suitable. These centres are the preferred sources for information for lower class people (Subba Rao et al. 2007: 448). Staying with horticultural products, urban agriculture could be a successful part of both climate adaptation and mitigation activities. Almost every household could contribute to a 'greener' city with kitchen gardens and, at the same time, add to the urban food security (for general information, see RUAF – Resource centres on urban agriculture and food security at: [www.ruaf.org](http://www.ruaf.org), for Hyderabad-specific information, see [www.ruaf.org/node/507](http://www.ruaf.org/node/507)).

As a concluding remark, I would like to point out that in some segments of society it has become 'modern' to be 'traditional'. This fact should be taken into account for the development of mitigation strategies as it offers a chance to further promote a climate neutral and energy efficient food culture.

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