

Cultural prohibition of food in two societies assignment

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Some religious sects abstain, or are forbidden from consuming certain food and drink. Others restrict food and drink in their holy days, while some associate dietary and food preparation practices with rituals of the faith (Waibel 2004). These dietary practices are known as the cultural prohibition of food. In this essay will discuss the Islamic dietary laws and the Hindu dietary requirements that are practiced around the world. The Muslim cultural prohibition of food plays a very significant role in the lives of Muslims around the world .

The Islamic dietary laws are a matter of both social custom and religion (Campo 2009). In Islamic dietary laws, foods are categorized into different groups. These groups include those that are lawful (HALAL), those that are forbidden (HARAM) and those that are pure (tahir, tayibb) and those that are impure (rajis, najis). These divisions of what foods are lawful-pure and what foods are forbidden-impure are based on the QURAN and HADITH, the Islamic sources of revelation (Campo 2009). The Quran instructs people to eat only lawful and good things from the earth and not to “ follow in Satan’s footsteps” (Q 2: 168).

Other forbidden food such as the flesh of redators (animals with fangs or talons) is also included in the HADITH. The Muslim jurists consider meat from an animal that has not been correctly slaughtered as carrion (inedible). This includes animals that have been beaten to death, strangled, killed by a fall, or gored to death (Q 5: 3). Wine is also prohibited along with other intoxicating substances. All of these forbidden foods and substances are said to be impure and can prevent Muslims from fulfilling their religious duties

unless removed or avoided. Sometimes exceptions can be made when the situation is dire (Campo 2009).

Specific dietary rules can also apply when it comes to worshipping and other activities in Muslim life. Prayer, fasting during Ramadan, Almsgiving, and the Haj all involve restrictions and procedures concerning food that people are meant to abide by (Campo 2009). The offering of food is considered an important act of charity, but the food that is offered cannot be forbidden. Rules of etiquette are also recommended for special occasions involving hospitality and feasting as well as ordinary meals (Campo 2009). Hindu dietary requirements, like those of the Islamic dietary laws play a major role into the lives of many Hindus around the world.

According to Arjun Appadurai " The density, scope and taxonomic complexity of Hindu symbolic thought in regard to food is difficult to capture in a brief space" (Appadurai 1981). A love of nature and the importance of living a simple, natural life are the basis of Hinduism, which is a faith that originated in India (ElGindy 2010). The Hindu faith promotes a vegetarian lifestyle and encompasses a number of health beliefs and dietary practices. These practices arise from the idea of living in harmony with nature and having mercy and respect for all of God's creations (ElGindy 2010).

Devout Hindu's believe that all of God's creations including both humans and animals are worthy of respect and compassion. Therefore Hinduism promotes a vegetarian lifestyle with avoidance of eating animal meat or flesh (ElGindy 2010). However some Hindu's choose not to practice vegetarianism and may adhere to the Hindu dietary codes in different

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degrees of strictness. For example, some Hindu's avoid eating beef and pork (which are strictly prohibited in the Hindu diet code, especially beef because cows occupy a special place in the Hindu religion), but Will eat all other meats (ElGindy 2010).

Hindu's believe that food affects both the body and the mind and a proper diet is considered to be vital for spiritual development in Hinduism. The Hindu diet code divides food into three separate categories, based on the foods effect on the body and the temperament (ElGindy 2010). The first is known as Tamasic food. This is food that is leftover, stale, overripe, spoiled or other impure food, which is believed to produce negative emotions such as jealousy, anger and greed. The second is known as Rejasic food.

This is food that is believed to produce strong emotional qualities, passions and restlessness in the mind. The food in this category includes eggs, meat, fish, garlic, onions, spices, hot peppers, pickles and other pungent spicy foods. The last is known as Satvic food. This is the most desirable food and is food that is non-irritating to the stomach and purifying to the mind. The foods in this category include fruits, nuts, whole grains and vegetables.

These foods are believed to produce calmness and nobility (ElGindy 2010). Hindu's believe that for true service to God, purity of food is necessary to maintain the desirable state of mind that leads to enlightenment" (ElGindy 010). Food is consumed to achieve mind/body equilibrium and good pure food promotes a peaceful - non agitated-mind. " Sin or an agitated state of mind, prevents the journey to moksha (divine supreme knowledge, which leads to freedom from the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth" (ElGindy

2010). Religion is the major factor when it comes to the prohibition of food around the world.

Both the Muslim culture and the Hindu culture promote Holiness and pure lives through the prohibition of certain foods. A question of ethics arises from the practicing of such laws in both cultures. They also promote kindness and charity among people. There are many similarities between the two cultures in both the way they live their lives and the way in which they consume food according to their dietary laws and requirements. One major similarity is that both cultures categorize foods into groups, with certain foods being classified as being either pure or impure.

Another similarity then arises from this as there are similar foods that are classified as pure, good foods to eat in both societies , for example fruits and grains. Both cultures have specific foods that are orbidden, such as, meat that has not been slaughtered in accordance with specific rules for Muslims and Stale, leftover, overripe and spoiled food for Hindu's. The main similarity between the two cultures is that they both strive to live pure, spiritual lives through the practicing of their dietary laws.

For both cultures, if they do not abide by their dietary laws they cannot live fulfilled religious lives. As well as many similarities between the two cultures of Muslim and Hindu, there are also a few differences between the way in which they live their lives and dietary laws that they follow. One of the main differences between them is that Muslims can eat meat, as long as the animal has been slaughtered in the correct way, whereas Hindu's promote a

vegetarian lifestyle because they believe that all of God's creations are equal.

Although some Hindu's may choose to eat meat (apart from beef and pork), depending on the level of strictness in which they follow their dietary laws. Another difference is that Islamic dietary laws are a matter of social custom and religion. Special etiquette is required at social gatherings such as feasts, as well as ordinary meals, for example, "pronouncing the basmala, taking food and drink with the right hand and not reclining while eating" (Campo 2009). Another difference between Muslims and Hindus is that Hindus believe that food is good for both the body and the mind.

They believe that certain foods can create different emotions when consumed. For example, they believe that impure food can make someone angry, jealous and greedy (ElGindy 2010). The cultural prohibition of food in both the Muslim society and the Hindu society is a very strong element in the religious lives of those who practice these faiths. Firstly I would like to point out that ethics appear to be a major influencer into the practicing of dietary laws and codes in these religions.

This is because people of both religions strive to live a fulfilled spiritual life, which they cannot have if they eat foods, which are not considered as being pure. This brings me to my next point, which is, both Muslims and Hindu's classify foods into groups based on whether the food is pure or impure. In both societies people want to eat pure food and avoid impure food so that they can live a pure life. Certain rituals and rules apply to both cultures when it comes to how food is prepared before it is consumed.

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Sometimes in both cultures exceptions can be made to these laws in dire circumstances. In conclusion the cultural prohibition of food in the Muslim society and the Hindu society helps people to reach religious equilibrium, which is something that all people who practice the faith strive to achieve. From the research that have conducted into the study of the prohibition of food have found that both the Muslim faith and the Hindu faith follow similar morals and belief systems and place significant importance on the key ideas of holiness, pure, impure, kindness, generosity, equality and charity.