

**Exploring meat-eating practices
in Mumbai and Sydney
with a view towards encouraging a
reduced-meat diet**

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by Tani Khara

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the degree of

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Tani Khara, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Sustainable Futures, in the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory study focuses on understanding meat-eating practices in urban Australia and urban India, with a view towards encouraging a reduced-meat diet in both countries.

Australia has one of the world's highest levels of meat consumption—approximately 95 kilograms per capita annually. On the other hand, although meat consumption in India is relatively low (approximately four kilograms per capita annually), it is rising in response to growing levels of urbanisation, increasing disposable incomes and exposure to new global norms. A growing body of research has called for a reduction in global meat consumption and a shift towards plant-based diets for reasons relating to health and sustainability. Given this, this research develops an understanding of meat-eating practices and uses these insights as a basis for recommending more sustainable dietary practices in established and emerging markets like Australia and India.

This research used Shove, Pantzar and Watson's model of Social Practice Theory to understand meat-eating practices. In both countries, semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews were the main mode of data gathering. These were supplemented by observations of eating practices in various public places as well as data triangulation through secondary sources.

The key findings highlight that globalisation, changes to household structures, and exposure to new eating practices have encouraged a shift in meat-eating practices over time, in both countries. In India, many people discussed wanting to experiment with new meat-based dishes as meat eating has become synonymous with meanings of progression, social status, and health. In Australia, the opposite seems to have occurred as people are gradually moving away from diets heavy in red meats towards foods considered healthier, more ethical, and more environmentally friendly. In both countries, however, these new eating practices conflict with older meat-eating practices. In India, meat eating sits in contrast with long-standing socio-cultural practices that advocate vegetarianism. In Australia, norms of

masculinity and meat being perceived as a necessary dietary requirement have discouraged many people from further cutting back on meat consumption and increasing their consumption of plant-based foods.

Given these findings, this thesis concludes by outlining proposed intervention strategies designed to make plant-based eating more appealing and relevant in each country. In India, suggested interventions relate to making plant-based eating socially relevant again amidst the new globalised urban culture. In the Australian context, recommendations relate to continuing to dismantle masculine norms and widening the circle of empathy to include farm animals.

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