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SATVIC TEMPLE FOOD FOR SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examines Satvic temple food as a traditional plant-based food system that may support sustainable hospitality, mental well-being, community cohesion, and ecological responsibility. It aims to connect temple food practices with contemporary debates on nutrition, wellness, culture, and responsible food-service design.

Design/methodology: The study used a qualitative ethnographic design supported by descriptive nutritional and sustainability assessment. Methods included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, recipe and menu documentation, nutritional interpretation, and simplified environmental assessment across temple kitchens, Ayurvedic cooking settings, and Satvic lifestyle communities in India.

Findings: The findings indicate that Satvic temple food combines plant-forward dishes, ritual preparation, communal serving, seasonal ingredients, and low-waste practices. These features may support emotional calmness, digestive comfort, social belonging, and reduced ecological burden when interpreted as an integrated hospitality and food-service system.

Research limitations/Implications: The study is exploratory, case-based, and context-specific, so the findings should not be treated as statistically generalizable. However, the results are useful for hospitality management, wellness tourism, institutional catering, culinary education, public health, food sustainability, and traditional knowledge studies.

Novelty/Originality of the study: This study advances knowledge by presenting Satvic temple food not only as religious cuisine or cultural heritage, but also as a practical model for sustainable, mental-health-supportive hospitality. It integrates spirituality, nutrition, social care, and ecological restraint within one food-service framework.

KEYWORDS: Culinary arts; Gastronomy; Hospitality; Mental well-being; Sustainable food systems.

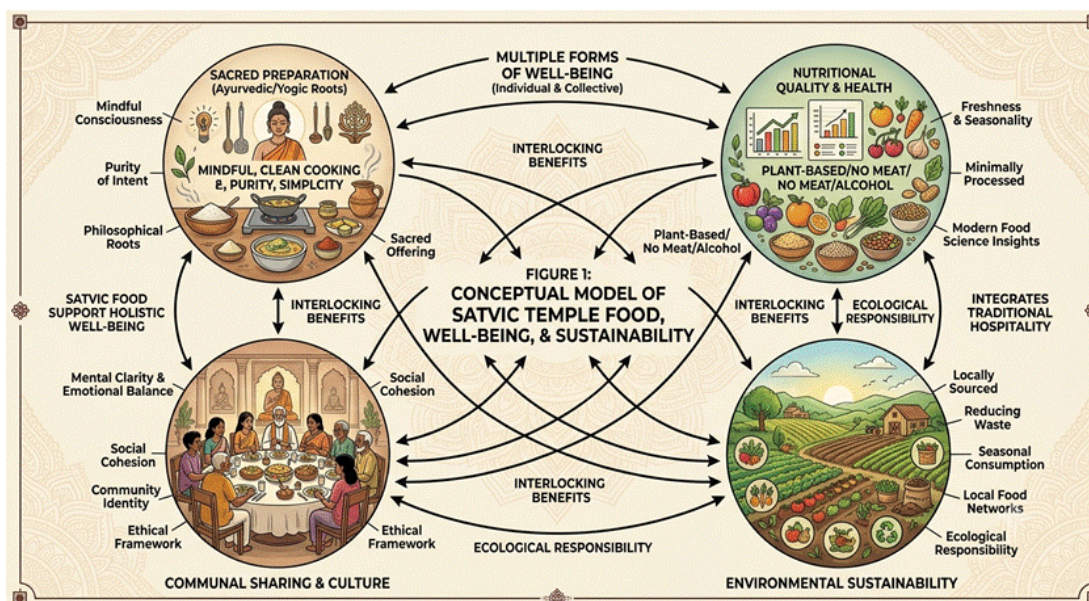
INTRODUCTION

Satvic temple food is a traditional plant-based dietary pattern rooted in Ayurveda and yoga, where food is understood as nourishing both the body and the mind through qualities of purity, simplicity, and balance (sattva). It typically relies on fresh, seasonal, minimally processed plant foods and avoids meat, alcohol, onion, and garlic, aligning with broader ethical commitments to non-violence and self-discipline. In many Indian temples, such food is prepared as an offering and then shared as prasada, turning everyday eating into a collective spiritual and social experience that links nutrition, devotion, and community identity.

At the same time, global interest in plant-based diets and sustainable food systems has increased, driven by concerns about non-communicable diseases, climate change, and resource use. Recent reviews and cohort studies indicate that plant-predominant dietary patterns are associated with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity, and are often richer in fibre and micronutrients than typical Western diets. Environmental assessments likewise show that diets high in grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables generally have lower greenhouse-gas emissions and land use than diets high in ruminant meat and other animal products. These developments highlight a central problem: modern food-service systems in hospitality and public catering are under pressure to deliver health, sustainability, and guest satisfaction, yet often lack culturally grounded models that integrate these aims in daily practice.

The motivation for this study is to explore Satvic temple food as one such model, examining how a living religious food tradition might inform contemporary debates on sustainable diets, mental well-being, and hospitality innovation. While many policy and academic discussions draw on Western-centric frameworks, temple kitchens in India have long operated large-scale, plant-based, low-waste food systems that embed gratitude rituals, communal dining, and ethical principles into routine operations. Conceptually, the study builds on evidence that plant-based diets can support cardiometabolic health and reduce environmental footprints, on Ayurvedic views of sattva and mindful eating, and on emerging research in nutritional psychiatry that links diet quality and gut health to mental health outcomes. By bringing these strands together, the introduction proposes a framework in which sacred preparation,

communal sharing, nutritional quality, and ecological responsibility are treated as interconnected elements of a single food system.



Existing research has advanced each of these themes but usually in isolation: plant-based health outcomes, environmental impacts of diets, spiritual food practices, and hospitality sustainability strategies are typically studied as separate topics. There is limited interdisciplinary work that examines Satvic temple food specifically as a practical system that links plant-based nutrition, communal service, spiritual meaning, and low-waste kitchen operations. In particular, the role of temple-based food cultures in supporting mental well-being—through predictable meal rhythms, collective rituals, and a calm dining atmosphere—remains underexplored, even though nutritional psychiatry suggests that diet quality and gut-brain pathways may influence mood and stress. This gap points to a need for research that treats temple kitchens as “living laboratories” of sustainable and psychologically supportive food service rather than only as religious curiosities.

Accordingly, the study is guided by three objectives that together define its contribution to the discourse. First, it seeks to describe and interpret Satvic temple food as a cultural and spiritual tradition, focusing on its values, rituals, and social functions in contemporary temple contexts. Second, it aims to assess Satvic temple food as a sustainable dietary model by considering its nutritional profile, its potential health implications as a plant-based pattern, and its environmental and operational characteristics in temple kitchens. Third, it examines how core principles from Satvic temple food—such as plant-forward simplicity, mindful preparation, gratitude rituals, and communal sharing—can be adapted, with cultural

sensitivity, to modern hospitality and wellness-oriented food services, including their potential relevance for mental well-being and guest experience. By addressing these objectives, the research contributes a novel, Satvic temple food-centred framework that connects traditional religious practice with current concerns about health, sustainability, and hospitality design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last decade, research on plant-based diets has consistently reported associations with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity, and with improvements in cardiometabolic markers such as blood lipids and blood pressure. Umbrella reviews and meta-analyses suggest that plant-predominant diets, when well planned, tend to be rich in fibre, unsaturated fats, and micronutrients, which may contribute to these protective effects. In parallel, environmental studies using life-cycle assessment methods indicate that shifting from animal-heavy diets to plant-forward patterns can substantially reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, land demand, and in many cases water use, positioning plant-based eating as a key strategy for sustainable food systems.

Within this context, the notion of “sustainable healthy diets” has gained prominence, integrating nutritional adequacy, environmental impact, cultural relevance, and affordability. International reports and academic analyses argue that traditional dietary patterns, when not heavily industrialized, often embody such sustainability principles by aligning locally available foods, seasonal cycles, and culinary heritage with health outcomes. Religious and ritual food practices, including Hindu temple offerings and Sikh langar, have been studied as forms of organized communal feeding that promote social cohesion, symbolic equality, and care for vulnerable groups through shared meals and voluntary service. These observations suggest that temple-based systems may offer practical insights for designing inclusive and value-driven food services beyond strictly religious settings.

Ayurvedic and yogic dietary literature provides another important strand, especially the classification of foods into sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic categories based on their perceived effects on mind and body. Contemporary interpretations describe sattvic foods as fresh, light, plant-based, and minimally processed, often recommending them for promoting clarity, calmness, and spiritual focus. Although much of this literature is conceptual or practice-oriented rather than empirical, it provides a framework in which food choices are explicitly linked to mental states and ethical commitments. This traditional framework intersects with

growing scientific interest in how diet influences mental health, providing a culturally specific lens through which to interpret emerging evidence.

Nutritional psychiatry and gut–brain-axis research have expanded rapidly, with reviews and meta-analyses indicating that overall diet quality is associated with risks of depression and other common mental disorders. Studies highlight potential mechanisms involving inflammation, oxidative stress, gut microbiota, and neuroplasticity, and point to fibre-rich, minimally processed plant foods as components of diets that may support better mental health outcomes. However, most of this work focuses on broad dietary patterns in general populations rather than on structured, ritualized food systems like temple kitchens. As a result, the interaction between dietary quality, communal rituals, and social context in spiritual settings remains a relatively unexplored dimension of nutritional psychiatry.

In hospitality and food-service research, recent work has examined sustainability transitions in hotels, restaurants, and institutional catering, including strategies such as plant-forward menu design, local sourcing, and food-waste reduction. Studies on green or wellness-oriented hospitality often emphasize operational tools, guest communication, and branding, but pay less attention to how long-established religious food systems integrate ethics, community, and environmental care into everyday practice. Case studies of Indian temple kitchens and other large-scale religious feeding programmers note their ability to serve high volumes of simple, plant-based meals with limited waste and strong volunteer participation, yet these observations are rarely framed in terms of contemporary concepts such as circular economy or regenerative hospitality.

Scholarly work focused specifically on Satvic temple food is limited and scattered across disciplines, often emphasizing symbolic and ritual aspects rather than detailed nutritional or sustainability analysis. Many accounts document the rules for preparing and offering prasada, the role of temple kitchens in reinforcing devotional identities, and the ethos of equality in shared dining spaces, but stop short of evaluating these systems as models of sustainable and health-supportive food service. There is also little empirical research on how temple-based food practices might influence mental well-being, despite conceptual overlaps with nutritional psychiatry and long-standing claims that sattvic diets support calmness and focus. This reveals a clear gap: the absence of integrated studies that treat Satvic temple food as a holistic system connecting plant-based nutrition, environmental responsibility, spiritual practice, and mental and social well-being.

The present study addresses this gap by proposing an interdisciplinary examination of Satvic temple food that draws on nutrition science, sustainability research, religious and anthropological studies, and hospitality management. The central hypothesis is that Satvic temple food, defined by fresh, minimally processed, locally oriented plant-based dishes prepared within a spiritual framework, supports individual and collective well-being while reducing ecological impact through lower resource use and waste. A further hypothesis is that the structured routines, gratitude rituals, and communal dining formats of temple kitchens contribute to mental and social well-being, offering design cues for wellness-oriented hospitality and public food programmes. By articulating and testing these hypotheses, the research contributes a novel perspective that positions Satvic temple food as a living, adaptable model for sustainable and mentally supportive food-service design, thereby extending current discourse on sustainable diets and hospitality beyond purely secular or technocratic approaches.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods qualitative–quantitative approach to understand Satvic temple food systems as integrated service environments rather than as isolated dishes. The overall design combined ethnographic fieldwork, descriptive nutritional analysis, and a simplified sustainability assessment, so that ritual practice, social organisation, nutrient profile, and material flows could be examined together as one operational system. This approach was selected because the research questions required evidence about meanings and experiences as well as about foods, ingredients, and resource use.

Research approach and design

The research was exploratory and case-based, using multiple case studies across different Satvic and sacred food settings. The primary approach was ethnographic, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews, supported by documentary review and descriptive analysis of central dishes and kitchen practices. The mixed-methods strategy was not adopted for variety alone but because the study assumed that Satvic temple food functions as a composite environment in which nourishment, ritual offering, social practice, cultural memory, and ecological processes are inseparable. The aim was to generate an in-depth, contextually grounded understanding rather than statistically generalisable results.

Research locations and objects

Fieldwork was carried out in four broad categories of sites where Satvic and sacred food practices are actively maintained: large temple kitchens associated with Mahaprasad

traditions, ISKCON communities with codified Krishna-conscious cuisine, traditional Ayurvedic cooking schools, and contemporary Satvic lifestyle communities. These sites were chosen because they represent living traditions in which Satvic principles are enacted in daily life, not only preserved as historical memory. The primary research objects were the food-service systems themselves: sequences of preparation, offering, distribution, and communal eating, rather than only individual recipes or ingredients.

Site selection criteria and sampling

Site selection followed practical and conceptual criteria aligned with the research aims. First, there had to be clear continuity of Satvic or sacred practice, visible in routine food preparation and communal eating. Second, access had to be feasible through cooperation with temple authorities, community leaders, or institutional gatekeepers, given the cultural sensitivity of kitchens and ritual spaces. Third, the sample of sites was selected to reflect diversity in organisational form and setting (temple, devotional community, educational institution, lifestyle community), so that continuity and variation within the tradition could be compared. Within each site, purposive sampling was used to identify participants with relevant roles and knowledge, such as hereditary cooks, priests, devotees, Ayurvedic practitioners, lifestyle facilitators, and artisans.

Ethnographic observation

The first and foundational phase of the study consisted of qualitative ethnographic fieldwork. Participant observation was conducted in kitchens, food preparation areas, offering spaces, distribution points, and communal dining halls, focusing on how food practices were embedded in ritual, labour, spatial organisation, sensory atmosphere, and social interaction. Observation covered domains such as timing and sequencing of cooking; division of labour among different categories of participants; use of earthen pots, wood-fired stoves, or other traditional heat sources; handling of grains, legumes, vegetables, dairy, and spices; and the ritual actions that differentiated sacred preparation from ordinary cooking. Spatial flows from kitchen to sanctified offering and then to communal distribution were documented, along with bodily and emotional atmospheres during shared meals.

The researcher adopted a participant-as-observer role where culturally appropriate, assisting with basic permitted tasks while maintaining systematic observation. This positioning helped to build trust, allowed closer access to routine kitchen activities, and made it possible to appreciate embodied skills and tacit knowledge involved in sacred preparation. Detailed field notes were kept throughout, including descriptive observations, reflections on recurring themes, documentation of material culture, and interpretive memos linking observed practices

to the broader research questions. The observed movement of food from preparation to offering, redistribution, and communal consumption is represented schematically in Fig. 2, placed in the Methods section after the description of interviews and documentary materials.

Interviews and documentary materials

To complement observation, approximately fifty semi-structured interviews were conducted across the selected sites with different categories of participants, including hereditary temple cooks, priests, long-term devotees, Ayurvedic practitioners, Satvic lifestyle practitioners, and pottery artisans. This diversity reflected the multi-layered expertise involved in sacred food systems, encompassing ritual knowledge, culinary inheritance, therapeutic interpretation, artisanal production, and lived experience of consuming consecrated food. A common guide of themes structured the interviews, covering understandings of sacred food, perceived health and emotional effects, ideas of purity and discipline, reasons for ingredient choices, views on waste and sustainability, intergenerational culinary transmission, and experiences of equality, belonging, and service in communal settings. At the same time, the semi-structured format allowed participants to speak in their own terms and emphasise aspects most meaningful in their context.

Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred languages wherever possible and translated into English for analysis when needed, to reduce distortion and improve accessibility. All interviews were audio-recorded where permitted, transcribed, and anonymised. Documentary materials such as temple guidelines, institutional pamphlets, teaching notes from Ayurvedic schools, and lifestyle community documents were collected where available, to triangulate observational and interview data.

Nutritional and sustainability analysis

Descriptive nutritional analysis was undertaken to characterise the nutrient profile of central dishes and meal patterns observed across sites. Representative dishes were selected based on frequency of consumption and ritual centrality, and their ingredient lists and preparation methods were translated into approximate nutrient profiles using standard food composition tables. The objective was to describe typical macronutrient and fibre content and to identify characteristic features such as plant-based protein sources and use of particular spices, rather than to conduct clinical assessment of individual participants.

A simplified sustainability assessment was implemented to interpret the ecological implications of ingredient choices, fuel use, material flows, and waste management. Drawing on field observations and secondary data, the study classified key components such as local versus non-local ingredients, reliance on renewable or traditional fuels, patterns of reuse of

vessels and utensils, and practices for handling leftovers and waste. A basic life-cycle perspective was applied at the system level, focusing on relative patterns (for example, reliance on plant-based staples and low packaging) rather than detailed engineering-grade calculations.



Figure 1: Satvic Food Preparation and Service Environments (Source: Author's Fieldwork).

ation view should be clear and favorable to read. Acceptable figure formats are .ai, .eps, .jpeg, .bmp, Authors must edit or adjust to get a good image quality. The table or model illustrations must be final nks with MS Excel or other software applications. In case of a figure or a table has been published —even by an author of the manuscript being submitted for review, the copyright holder's written igement, and permission for its frissues are often required. Please follow APA guidelines for table and a composite environment where nourishment and ritual are inseparable. (Refer to Methods section for details).

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Table 1: Key Characteristics of Sample Sites

No	Item	Temple Kitchens	ISKCON Communities	Traditional Ayurvedic Schools
1	Food Philosophy Ritual offering (Mahaprasad)	High/ Integral	Codified cuisine	Therapeutic use
2	Ritual Centrality High/Integral	High/ Integral	High/ Codified	Moderate
3	Communal Eating Formats Floor seating (Langar)	Floor seating (Langar)	Floor seating/ tables	Individual/ Group
4	Waste Practices Composting/Reuse (Leaf plates)	Managed waste	Managed waste	Standard practices

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Source: Purposive Sampling and Interviews.

Data analysis and integration

Qualitative data from observation, interviews, and documents were analysed thematically, identifying recurring patterns and contrasts in how sacred food was prepared, experienced,

and interpreted across sites. Themes such as notions of purity, discipline, equality, gratitude, and ecological restraint were traced across contexts. Quantitative descriptors from nutritional and sustainability analysis were integrated with qualitative insights to build composite case portraits of each setting. The mixed-methods design was thus justified by the need to converge multiple forms of evidence to treat Satvic food as a coherent food-service system.

Ethical considerations

The research involved adult participants in religious and community settings and was conducted under an approved ethical protocol recorded in the thesis documentation. Before participation, interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, intended uses of the information, and measures to protect confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews, and procedures were adapted where literacy, language, or local circumstances required flexibility, within the approved protocol. Special care was taken to respect sacred and culturally sensitive aspects of the sites: access restrictions, photography prohibitions, ritual boundaries, norms of purity, and local expectations about conduct were observed throughout. No sensitive ritual activity was documented without explicit permission. Identifying details were removed from transcripts and reports, pseudonyms or generic descriptors were used, and research materials were stored securely.

Limitations of the method

Several methodological limitations were recognised. The study relied on selected case-study sites in India, providing analytical depth but limiting statistical generalisability to all temple food systems or all Satvic practices. The research was exploratory and descriptive rather than experimental, so it could not establish direct causal links between Satvic practices and health or psychological outcomes. Nutritional analysis focused on dishes and meal patterns rather than long-term intake or biomarkers, and the sustainability assessment used simplified life-cycle modelling based on available datasets and field observations, which involved assumptions and approximations. The method also did not include intervention trials in secular hospitality settings, so any application of Satvic-inspired principles outside sacred contexts remains a design hypothesis rather than a tested model.

Despite these limitations, the combined methods provided a robust and context-sensitive way to examine Satvic temple food as a system linking nutrition, ritual, social cohesion, and ecological restraint. The design also generated practical implications for hotels, resorts,

retreats, institutional caterers, and community food providers, by identifying specific, adaptable features such as plant-centric menus built around simple repeatable dishes, careful use of spices, communal seating formats, slower meal rhythms, gratitude-framing rituals, and waste-conscious service design.

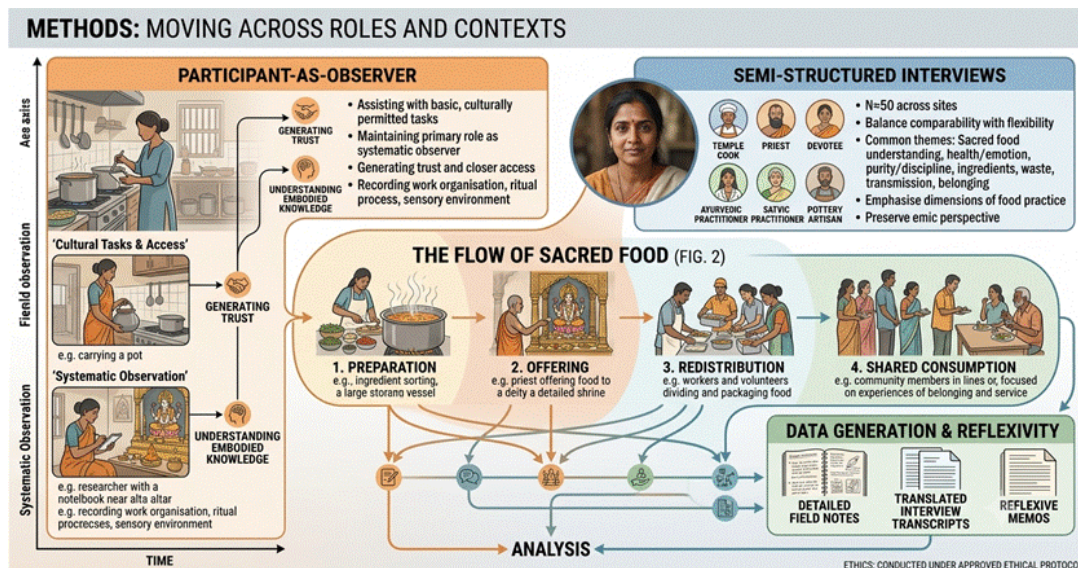


Figure 2: The observed movement of food, integrating participant-as-observer insights and interview data across the sacred food system.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

This study found that Satvic temple food systems operate as integrated service environments in which nourishment, ritual, social cohesion, and ecological restraint are deliberately woven together rather than treated as separate goals. In practical terms, plant-forward menus, ritualised preparation, communal eating formats, and low-waste practices consistently appeared in combination, suggesting that the overall service design—how food is prepared, framed, and shared—plays as important a role as the nutritional profile of individual dishes. These findings support the view that temple food systems can be understood as applied models of sustainable and mental-health-supportive hospitality rather than as isolated cultural curiosities.

The results align with wider literature showing that well-planned plant-based diets are associated with favourable cardiometabolic profiles and reduced environmental impacts (Clune et al., 2017; Scarborough et al., 2023). At the same time, this study extends earlier research by demonstrating how plant-based, low-footprint foods are embedded in structured ritual routines, gratitude practices, and shared dining spaces that participants described as calming, equalising, and emotionally supportive (Basu, 2026). In contrast to many secular hospitality settings where nutrition, guest experience, and sustainability are managed as

separate initiatives, Satvic temple kitchens integrate these dimensions through coherent daily routines. This convergence offers a distinctive contribution: the system illustrates how design choices in menu planning, kitchen organisation, and service choreography can simultaneously support physical nourishment, psychosocial well-being, and ecological responsibility. The ethnographic findings showed that participants consistently associated *prasad* with feelings of relief, belonging, and trust, even when the dishes themselves were simple and repetitive. These accounts resonate with emerging work in nutritional psychiatry and gut–brain research, which links overall diet quality, fibre-rich foods, and bioactive compounds to mood and mental health (Dinan & Cryan, 2017; Jacka et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2016; Martel et al., 2021). However, unlike controlled clinical trials such as the SMILES intervention, which primarily measure the effects of dietary change on depression within individualised counselling frameworks (Jacka et al., 2017), Satvic temple systems embed diet within collective rituals and service-oriented identities. This study therefore confirms that plant-based, minimally processed foods can support a health-promoting dietary pattern, but it also suggests that context—ritual meaning, shared labour, and communal eating—may amplify or shape perceived benefits.

The nutritional analysis found that core Satvic dishes, such as grain–legume combinations and vegetable-based preparations, were generally high in fibre and based on whole ingredients rather than ultra-processed products, echoing broader findings that such patterns support metabolic stability and gut health (Dinan & Cryan, 2017; Kelly et al., 2016; Martel et al., 2021). These dishes also made extensive use of traditional spices and cooking methods associated in the literature with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties (Martel et al., 2021). Unlike many contemporary “health” menus that emphasise novelty and variety, temple kitchens rely on a relatively narrow but well-structured repertoire, prepared with high repetition and consistency. When compared with modern therapeutic or functional food approaches, this suggests that simplicity, routine, and cultural familiarity can coexist with nutritional adequacy and may even support adherence and psychological comfort.

The simplified sustainability assessment indicated that Satvic temple food systems could operate with lower carbon and waste footprints than many conventional institutional catering models, especially because they depend on plant-based staples, local procurement, reusable vessels, and strong norms around redistributing leftovers (Clune et al., 2017; Scarborough et al., 2023). While the environmental data were descriptive rather than exhaustive, the observed practices closely match life-cycle assessment findings that plant-based diets and reduced packaging are linked to lower greenhouse-gas emissions and resource use (Clune et

al., 2017; Scarborough et al., 2023). In contrast to technologically intensive solutions sometimes promoted in sustainable hospitality, the temple systems relied on social discipline, ritual obligations, and inherited knowledge to minimise waste and shorten supply chains. This divergence highlights a key point of comparison: whereas many contemporary models frame sustainability as an add-on technology or certification, Satvic temple kitchens embody sustainability as a by-product of ethical and spiritual commitments integrated into daily routines.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Satvic temple cuisine can be interpreted as a holistic design for food service in which nutritional quality, psychosocial well-being, and environmental responsibility reinforce one another rather than compete. Compared with previous studies that treat diet, ritual, or sustainability as separate objects of analysis, this research contributes novelty by presenting Satvic temple food as a single, operational system with direct relevance for hospitality, public health, and food policy. It shows that the coherence of the meal environment—combining plant-based menus, gratitude rituals, communal seating, and waste-conscious practices—can generate forms of value that are difficult to achieve when these elements are pursued independently. For contemporary hospitality and institutional catering, the implication is that traditional Satvic systems offer not only inspiration for menu content but also concrete cues for redesigning service structures in ways that support integrated outcomes.

Implications of the research

Theoretical implications arise first for the understanding of sacred and traditional food systems within hospitality and nutrition scholarship. The study supports the argument that temple food traditions should be analysed as living “laboratories” of applied sustainability and social care, rather than only as heritage or symbolic practices (Basu, 2026). By demonstrating how ritual obligation, communal labour, and ethical norms structure daily operations, the research invites a rethinking of how concepts such as service quality, guest experience, and wellness are framed in hospitality literature. Instead of treating meaning and community as secondary to cost and efficiency, the Satvic model shows that meaning-making and collective responsibility can themselves function as organising principles for sustainable service design.

For research development, the study opens several avenues. It suggests that future interdisciplinary work can productively connect nutritional psychiatry, sustainable food systems, and hospitality management by focusing on environments where diet, social interaction, and ritual intersect (Dinan & Cryan, 2017; Jacka et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2016; Martel et al., 2021). The conceptual framework developed here—viewing Satvic kitchens as integrated service environments—can guide comparative studies of other sacred or traditional food systems, enabling researchers to examine whether similar integrative features appear in different cultural settings. This contributes to a broader discourse in which traditional knowledge is seen not as pre-modern residue but as a source of experimentally rich models for contemporary challenges.

For industry and community stakeholders, the implications are practical. Hotels, wellness retreats, and institutional caterers can draw on Satvic-inspired principles when designing plant-forward menus, communal or semi-communal seating arrangements, slower meal rhythms, gratitude-framing rituals, and waste-conscious service patterns. Rather than copying religious content, operators can adapt structural features: limited but consistent menus built around simple, repeatable dishes; strong emphasis on whole ingredients and anti-inflammatory spice profiles; routines that encourage shared timing of meals; and clear norms for redistribution of surplus food. For government and policy actors, the study suggests that programmers promoting sustainable diets and mental-health-supportive environments can benefit from incorporating insights from sacred and community-based kitchens, especially in contexts where public trust in traditional institutions remains strong. In this way, the research assists decision-makers by demonstrating how integrated designs can deliver multiple co-benefits—health, social inclusion, and environmental restraint—within a single service framework.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine Satvic temple food systems as integrated models of sustainable and mental-health-supportive hospitality and found that they function as coherent service environments where plant-based nutrition, ritualised preparation, communal sharing, and low-waste practices operate together.

In relation to the first objective—describing Satvic temple food as a cultural and spiritual tradition—the research showed that meals are framed as acts of devotion, gratitude, and equality, in which prasad symbolises a shared bond between participants, deities, and community (Basu, 2026). This framing shapes how food is prepared and distributed, turning dining into a collective ritual rather than a purely transactional event.

Regarding the second objective—assessing Satvic temple food as a sustainable dietary model—the analysis indicated that core dishes and meal patterns are plant-forward, minimally processed, and rich in whole grains, legumes, vegetables, and traditional spices. These patterns are consistent with broader evidence linking plant-based diets to improved cardiometabolic and environmental outcomes (Clune et al., 2017; Scarborough et al., 2023; Dinan & Cryan, 2017; Martel et al., 2021). The simplified sustainability assessment suggested that local sourcing, reusable vessels, and strong norms around redistribution of leftovers contribute to lower waste and shorter supply chains. While not claiming direct clinical or engineering-grade conclusions, the findings demonstrate that Satvic temple systems embody many features associated with sustainable, health-promoting diets.

Concerning the third objective—exploring how Satvic principles might inform contemporary hospitality and wellness-oriented food services—the study found that the coherence of temple food environments offers a valuable reference point. The combined ethnographic, nutritional, and sustainability findings suggest that Satvic-inspired designs could help hotels, retreats, and community kitchens create menus and service structures that support nourishment, psychosocial well-being, and ecological restraint simultaneously. The research thus accomplished its aim by demonstrating that Satvic temple food is not merely a cultural relic but a living operational framework with applicability beyond its devotional context.

Two sets of suggestions follow from these conclusions. For other researchers, the study underscores the need for intervention-based and comparative work that tests Satvic-inspired designs in secular settings and explores similar integrative models in other sacred or traditional food systems. For society, industry, and government, the findings encourage careful, respectful adaptation of Satvic principles—especially plant-centric simplicity, gratitude-oriented framing, communal rhythms, and waste-conscious practice—as part of broader strategies for sustainable and mentally supportive food environments.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

No single study can capture all aspects of Satvic temple food or its potential applications. The present research was limited by its exploratory, case-based design and by its focus on selected sites in India, which means that findings are analytically rich but not statistically generalisable to all temple traditions or Satvic practices. The nutritional assessment was descriptive, characterising dishes and meal patterns rather than measuring long-term intake, biomarkers, or clinical outcomes. Similarly, the sustainability assessment relied on simplified life-cycle thinking based on field observations and secondary data, rather than full quantitative modelling.

Another limitation is that the study did not directly test Satvic-inspired interventions in secular hospitality or public food settings. The coherence observed in temple systems may depend on devotional meaning, ritual discipline, and community norms that are not easily reproduced in commercial contexts. For this reason, the findings are best interpreted as generating strong conceptual and design hypotheses rather than definitive transferable models. Future research should therefore include pilot interventions in hotels, wellness retreats, hospitals, schools, and community kitchens, using guest well-being measures, nutritional biomarkers, environmental indicators, and qualitative feedback to assess how Satvic-inspired elements perform outside sacred contexts. More detailed biomedical and environmental studies could also examine specific pathways—such as inflammatory markers, gut microbiota, or fuel and packaging use—to deepen understanding of how these systems affect health and ecological outcomes. Comparative work with other sacred or traditional food systems would help clarify whether the integrative features identified here are unique or part of a wider pattern.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest with any current organisation in relation to this study. The research adhered to ethical standards applicable to studies involving human participants, including prior ethical approval, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Special care was taken to respect the sacred and culturally sensitive nature of the research settings, including observance of access restrictions, photography prohibitions, ritual boundaries, and local expectations. No animal testing, clinical experimentation, or other unethical practices were conducted.

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HUMAN ETHICS AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE DECLARATION

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection under the approved doctoral research protocol. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the intended use of the information, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained, according to local literacy, language, and contextual requirements, and participants were free to withdraw at any stage without consequence. No personally identifiable information is disclosed in the manuscript.

CONSENT TO PUBLISH

The author has approved the final version of the manuscript and consents to its publication. Where the manuscript includes information derived from interviews, observations, or other human participant data, appropriate permissions and consent for publication were obtained in accordance with the ethical protocol. No personally identifiable information is included, and all efforts have been made to protect participant confidentiality.

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