



Study on Wastage of Foods in Indian Functions

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Abstract

India, a country known for its cultural richness and grand celebrations, particularly weddings and social functions, faces a paradoxical issue of significant food wastage amidst widespread hunger and poverty. These events are often characterized by large-scale food preparation, extensive buffets and extravagant menus, leading to the disposal of vast quantities of edible food. This research paper examines the underlying causes of food wastage at Indian weddings and functions, including social norms, overestimation of guest attendance and lack of systematic food distribution mechanisms. It also explores the socio – economic and environmental consequences of this wastage, such as loss of resources, increased carbon footprint and the ethical dilemma of food being discarded while millions remain undernourished. Through a review of existing literature, case studies and interviews with event organizers and NGOs, the paper highlights actionable strategies including responsible catering practices, awareness campaigns, policy recommendations, and the role of food rescue organizations. The study emphasizes the urgent need for a cultural shift towards sustainable and conscious celebrations practices to address this critical issue.

Keywords: Food wastage, Indian weddings, sustainable events, hunger, social practices, food donation, environmental impact, waste management, cultural norms, food security.

1. Introduction

Food plays a key role in Indian culture, representing hospitality, fortune, and celebration. Indian weddings and social events are famous for their opulent meals, which frequently include a wide array of foods provided to guests as a sign of respect and hospitality. The magnificence of this, though, often leads to significant food waste. According to studies and reports, between 20 and 40 percent of the cuisine prepared for such events is not consumed, which has serious social, economic, and environmental repercussions.

When hosting weddings and other big events, people frequently overestimate the amount of food they need to guarantee a plentiful supply and prevent humiliation. Consequently, excess food is thrown away rather than being reused or redistributed. This waste shows not only bad planning but also social values that equate luxury with position. Millions of people in India, on the other hand, are still experiencing starvation and malnutrition, highlighting the disparity between abundance and scarcity.

The issue of food waste during Indian weddings and social events has gained more attention in recent years. Weddings are considered one of the most important and happy events in a person's life in India, which is famous for its rich cultural traditions. They are a huge social occasion that includes relatives, friends, and the community, rather than just the

union of two people. Families frequently prepare elaborate feasts with dozens of dishes, from appetizers to sweets, in order to symbolize hospitality and wealth. Although this custom demonstrates cultural pride and generosity, it also results in significant food waste.

Hundreds or even thousands of visitors are served at these occasions with enormous amounts of food. However, a large amount of the food ends up being discarded as a result of inaccurate forecasting, menu replication, or customers leaving food unfinished. According to several NGOs and food recovery groups, millions of tons of food are wasted in India every year, and a large portion of this waste happens at significant events like weddings and banquets. This occurs in a nation, ironically, where a large proportion of the population is still suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Food waste at weddings is not only a moral problem, but also an economic and environmental one. Food that is thrown away results in the waste of the resources used in its production, transportation, and preparation, including water, energy, and labor. Additionally, the breakdown of food waste releases greenhouse gases, which exacerbates climate change. Families frequently overproduce food in response to the societal pressure to throw extravagant parties and flaunt wealth, regardless of the consequences.

The notion of sustainable celebrations is gradually gaining

traction nowadays. To gather extra food from events and give it to those in need, a number of groups have launched programs. To cut down on waste through improved planning, portion management, and mindful consumption, more must be done at the community level. Promoting mindful habits can help maintain a healthy equilibrium between tradition, celebration, and sustainability.

2. Review of Literature

- **(Brian Lipinski, Craig Hanson, James Lomax, Lisa Kitinoja, Richard Waite and Tim Searchinger, Reducing Food Loss and Waste)** Food waste and loss have several detrimental environmental and economic consequences. They symbolize wasted investment that may raise consumer costs and lower farmers' earnings.
- **Assessment of the state of food waste treatment in the United States and J.W. Levis a*, M.A. Barlaz a, N.J. Themelis b, P. Ulloa b,** The household and ICI sectors are responsible for the majority of food waste in Canada. The easiest material to gather is that produced by huge producers of somewhat pure material, such as those found in the ICI industry (e.g. grocery stores, farmers). large restaurants, the food industry, the markets, The Utkal Historical Research Journal, ISSN: 0976-2132, Vol.-36, No.1(III), 2023, 361. The waste producer must be trained and dedicated in order to guarantee a feedstock that is mostly free of impurities in all cases.
- **According to Prem Vrat "Management of Material Waste,"** waste in any form has an impact on the environment, the economy, and energy. Effective and efficient waste management will have an impact on a trio of energy, environment, and economics.
- **With India's, (Asit K. Biswas, Rajiv Gupta)** points out. The unnecessary hunger and waste are inexcusable in light of the remarkable economic success. Rajiv Gupta and Asit K. Biswas also note that there are over 10 million weddings every year. Every year in India, about one-fifth of the food used at weddings is eventually thrown away, resulting in a significant waste and this figure. Are exclusively during marriages.
- The study and policy implementations pertaining to are highlighted by **Monika Agarwal, Sushant Agarwal, Subia Ahmad, Ruchika Singh, and K. M. Jayhari.** Food waste reduction and reuse are quite rare.
- **According to Lundqvist J. (2012),** a significant amount of money must be spent in waste reduction. as much as has been invested in aspects of food production. He emphasizes the application of the 3R model to reduce food waste: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

3. Research Design

a) Statement of the Problem:

The massive waste of food during weddings and other occasions in a nation like India, where food is seen as a representation of wealth and a heavenly blessing, is a major concern. There is a significant discrepancy between social activities. The opulence and warmth of Indian weddings are well-known, and they frequently include large menus and opulent buffets designed to wow visitors and display one's social standing. But this cultural propensity for excess has led to an increasing issue with food waste. After such festivals, large amounts of food, occasionally totalling hundreds of kilograms each event, are thrown away.

The problem is about more than just excess; it also highlights underlying social, economic, and cultural issues. Hosts

frequently prepare much more food than is necessary because they want to show off their wealth and generosity. The issue is made worse by inadequate preparation, erratic guest attendance, and a lack of knowledge about portion management and redistribution. Consequently, millions of Indians still experience hunger and malnutrition, while edible food that might have fed hundreds of hungry people is wasted every day.

Additionally, food waste at these gatherings exacerbates more general environmental concerns. Increased food waste, which puts strain on municipal infrastructure and raises greenhouse gas emissions, is caused by the disposal of significant amounts of food. Moreover, the water, energy, and resources that go into producing, moving, and cooking the wasted food are squandered, putting undue pressure on the economy and the environment.

The problem is made worse by the lack of adequate food management procedures, donation channels, and knowledge among the general public, event organizers, and caterers. Although several food banks and non-governmental organizations have started initiatives to collect and redistribute excess food, these practices are not yet common or institutionalized.

For this reason, the issue of food waste at Indian weddings and events is a serious social issue that needs to be addressed right away. It emphasizes the necessity for improved preparation, environmentally friendly catering methods, and shared accountability in order to maintain the festive atmosphere of celebrations while avoiding waste. It is essential to address this issue in order to ensure food security, advance sustainability, and cultivate a mindset of mindful consumption in Indian society.

b) Research Gap:

Even though the problem of food waste in India has been covered in a number of studies, reports, and publications, there are still notable research gaps, especially in the area of waste at Weddings and social gatherings. The majority of the current literature concentrates on food loss in the supply chain, home consumption, or restaurants, but the event and celebration the field has not been given much scholarly focus, particularly in the area of weddings. The following gaps have been identified:

- **Absence of Quantitative Research and Complete Data:** It's difficult to determine the precise amount of food that goes to waste at Indian weddings and social gatherings because there isn't enough comprehensive empirical research that quantifies it. The majority of the data available comes from the media or non-governmental groups, which are frequently estimates rather than scientifically measured numbers.
- **A Limited Number of Comparisons across Regions and Cultures:** In India, cultural traditions, wedding rituals, and cuisine habits differ greatly from state to state. But very few studies have compared waste patterns across regions in order to identify the impact of cultural, economic, or religious variables on waste production.
- **Not Enough Study of Psychological and Behavioural Aspects:** The influence of guests' and hosts' attitudes, views of social standing, and concerns about food scarcity on excessive preparation and waste is not well studied. There is still a lack of research on behavioural factors, like plate waste and portion size decisions.
- **There are not Enough Research on Food Management Methods:** The function of event organizers, caterers, and

food providers in managing or minimizing food waste has not been the subject of extensive academic study. There is not a lot of data on how current catering methods might be improved in order to reduce food waste.

- **Food Redistribution System Evaluation Deficiency:** Despite the fact that NGOs and volunteer organizations like Feeding India and the Robin Hood Army are actively engaged in redistributing surplus food, there is insufficient data on their efficacy, reach, logistical difficulties, and long-term viability.
- **Lack of Regulatory and Policy Analysis:** There is little academic study of the laws, municipal regulations, or legislative frameworks that govern food management at social gatherings, despite the rising worries about food waste.
- **Little Attention Paid to Environmental Impact Assessment:** There has been little study on the environmental effects of food waste from weddings and other big events, including carbon footprint, methane emissions, and waste management challenges.
- **The Need for Sustainable and Creative Solutions:** Studies on the use of technology, digital tools, and behavioural therapies (such as portion control systems or awareness campaigns) to minimize food waste are still in their early stages. In the Indian setting, it's a budding phase.

c) Objectives of the Study:

This study's primary goal is to investigate the causes, effects, and potential remedies for the issue of food waste at Indian weddings and social gatherings. The goal of the study is to raise public knowledge and promote sustainable practices that might lower waste while preserving the cultural heart of Indian festivities.

The particular goals are the following:

- To determine the primary causes of food waste during Indian weddings and social events, taking into account social, cultural, and behavioural variables.
- To examine how hosts, caterers, and event planners contribute to the preparation, administration, and disposal of food at major events.
- To examine the financial, social, and environmental effects of food waste in wedding and event venues.
- To ascertain the level of knowledge and opinions that people and communities hold regarding the management and redistribution of food waste.
- To research current methods of food recovery and donation and evaluate how well they minimize waste at events.
- To provide realistic strategies and policy suggestions for reducing food waste and encouraging sensible food consumption at social events.
- To promote environmentally responsible and ethical event management practices that take cultural customs into account.

d) Type of Research:

- **Descriptive Research:** The goal of this kind of study is to characterize the nature and quantity of food waste at Indian weddings and social gatherings. By watching current practices, behaviours, and management systems, it aims to ascertain the what, quantity, and causes of food waste. Data to characterize the actual situation can be gathered through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews of hosts, caterers, and attendees.

- **Investigative Research:** The study also employs an exploratory methodology because the subject of food waste at weddings has not been thoroughly researched. It attempts to investigate the underlying reasons, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals that contribute to excessive planning and food waste. This facilitates the development of novel concepts and ideas for long-term solutions and prospective research.
- **Qualitative Factor:** The qualitative component of the study focuses on the social and cultural aspects of food waste, such as customs, values, and the status symbol of plenty at Indian weddings. To thoroughly investigate these issues, interviews and focus group discussions can be carried out.
- **Quantitative Factor:** The quantitative component includes numerical data collection and analysis, such as the quantity of food that is made, eaten, and wasted, as well as statistical analysis to gauge understanding levels and behavioural patterns using survey responses.
- **In Nature, Applied Research:** In addition to its applied research orientation, the study seeks to identify concrete strategies and policies to lessen food waste through improved planning, awareness, and policy action. To sum up, this study is an exploratory and descriptive investigation that uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the reasons, effects, and potential solutions of food waste at social events and weddings in India.

e) Research Limitation:

There are a few restrictions that may have an impact on the scope, validity, and generalizability of the findings from this study on food waste at Indian weddings and social events. These restrictions are intrinsic to the character of event-based investigations and social research:

Restricted Sample Size: The study may only cover a small number of weddings, events, and respondents due to time, logistical, and accessibility limitations. It's possible that this doesn't accurately reflect all regions, cultures, or communities throughout India.

Geographical Restrictions: The study could concentrate on urban areas or certain cities with better access to events. The applicability of the findings may be constrained by the exclusion of distant or rural areas with distinct wedding customs and rituals.

Respondent Bias: Participants, such as hosts or caterers, may underreport the amount of food wasted because of social desirability or fear of criticism. Furthermore, visitors may provide socially acceptable responses as opposed to truthful ones.

Event Variability: Every wedding and social event has a different size, cost, cuisine, and cultural traditions. Due to these discrepancies, data cannot be standardized, and consistent conclusions cannot be made across all occurrences.

Time Constraints: It takes a lot of time to gather comprehensive primary data by observing numerous events. Only a small number of events may be examined in depth due to the short study period.

Issues in Collecting Data: It may not always be possible to directly quantify the food that is made, eaten, and thrown away. Relying on reports or predictions made by organizers and caterers might result in minor inaccuracies.

Restricted Availability of Information on Food Redistribution: Detailed operational data on quantity, coverage, and effectiveness may not always be available to

the public, which might have an impact on analysis, even if NGOs and volunteer groups do gather excess food.

Cultural Awareness: Social events and weddings are culturally sensitive and private occasions. Researchers must exercise caution in order to avoid meddling with events, which may restrict the depth of observation.

In spite of these constraints, the study seeks to offer a valuable insight into the causes, effects, and remedies for food waste during Indian weddings and events. Being aware of these constraints allows us to put our results into context and point out areas where future study might benefit from more thorough data gathering and a larger scope.

f) Sample & Population Size:

All persons who are directly involved in or impacted by the preparation, consumption, and management of food at Indian weddings and social gatherings are included in the study's population. This comprises:

- i). Families planning weddings or events and their hosts
- ii). Food arrangements are handled by event organizers and caterers.
- iii). The people who are at the events
- iv). Food redistribution by NGOs or volunteers

We have used purposive sampling to choose a sample size of 50 respondents for this study. Participants selected by this sampling approach are guaranteed to have personal experience with or familiarity with food waste at these events, which increases the data's relevance and value.

g) Sampling Technique:

The method of purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is employed in this research. In purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, respondents are chosen based on particular characteristics or expertise that are pertinent to the study questions.

Reason for Employing Purposive Sampling:

- The research concentrates on people who have firsthand experience with food preparation, consumption, or distribution during weddings and social events.
- The participants are chosen intentionally so that the data gathered is useful, trustworthy, and helpful.
- With this approach, the researcher can incorporate a diverse group of stakeholders, including:
 - Hosts and organizers who arrange and prepare meals
 - Event planners and caterers in charge of food supply and service
 - Visitors that cause food waste at the plate level
 - Representatives from NGOs or volunteers who are engaged in food redistribution

Benefits

- Makes sure that only pertinent respondents with real-world experience of food waste are included.
- Effective for exploratory and descriptive investigations where generalization is not the main objective.

h) Data Type and Collection

i). Data Type

To have a thorough grasp of food waste at Indian weddings and social events, the research employs both main and secondary data:

A. Main Data

Obtained straight from respondents in order to get firsthand data.

It contains quantitative information (e.g., including the amount of food made, the proportion wasted, and the number of events), as well as qualitative information (e.g., the quality of the food, the enjoyment level). e.g., knowledge of food waste, cultural norms, attitudes, and ideas.

B. Secondary Information:

Derived from current sources like:

- Journals, books, and research articles on food waste and event management
- Government data and reports on waste and solid waste management
- Case studies and NGO reports on food redistribution
- Prior research, news pieces, and online databases on food waste

ii). Approaches to Data Collection:

Methods for Collecting Primary Data

Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was given to hosts, caterers, visitors, and NGO volunteers. Uses a mix of close-ended and few open-ended questions in order to get both quantitative and qualitative information.

Techniques for Gathering Secondary Data: Looking through published books, journals, NGO reports, government documents, and online resources. Aids in offering context, background knowledge, and a comparison with the main data results.

iii). Justification for the Data Types and Collection:

The direct insights from stakeholders offered by primary data allow for a precise assessment of food waste and an understanding of behavioural and cultural variables. Secondary data provides a solid foundation for analysis by offering background information, trends, and previously identified causes or solutions. Combining both data types results in a mixed-method approach, which improves the study's reliability, completeness, and validity.

4. Data Analysis

i). Respondent's Surveys

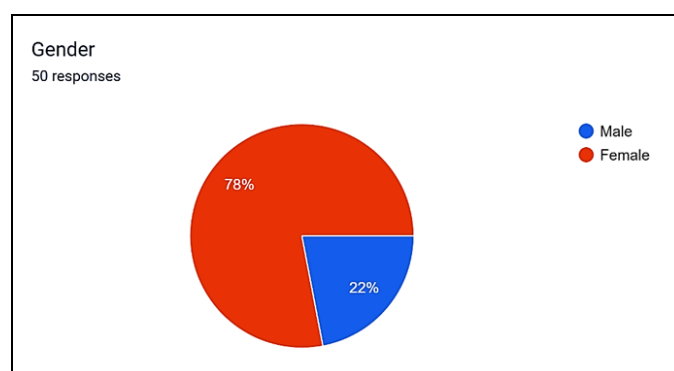


Fig 1

The above pie chart shows the gender of the respondent for the topic of wastage of food at Indian weddings and functions. Here the male respondents are about 22% percentage, the females are about 78% for following data out of 50 respondents of this research.

ii). Type of Culture which Encourages Food Preparation.

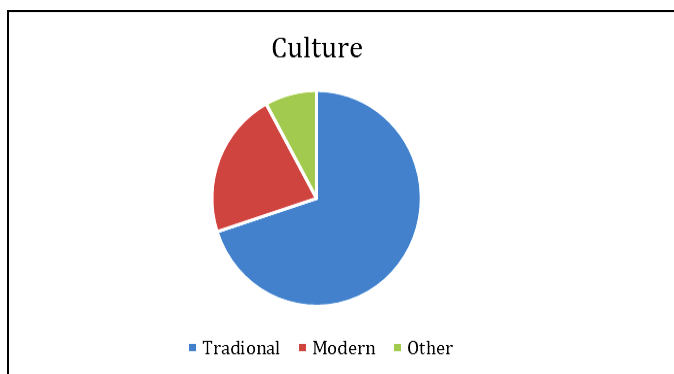


Fig 2

The above pie chart shows the type of culture which encourages excess food preparation. Here the traditional culture are about 70%, the modern culture are about 22% and the other culture are about 8%.

iii). Reason for Food Wastage

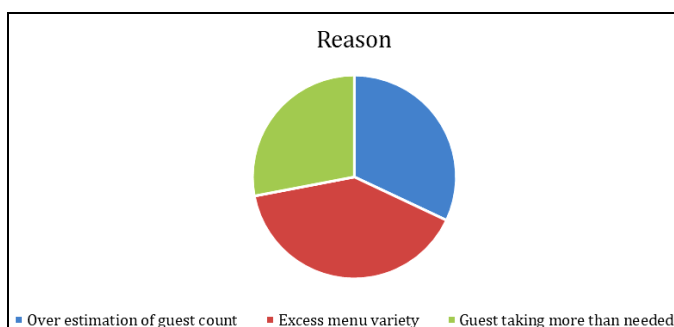


Fig 3

The above pie chart shows the reason for food wastage. Here the overestimation of guest count are about 32%, excess menu variety are about 40% and the guest taking more than needed are about 28%.

iv). Aware about Food Wastage Impact on Wedding Functions

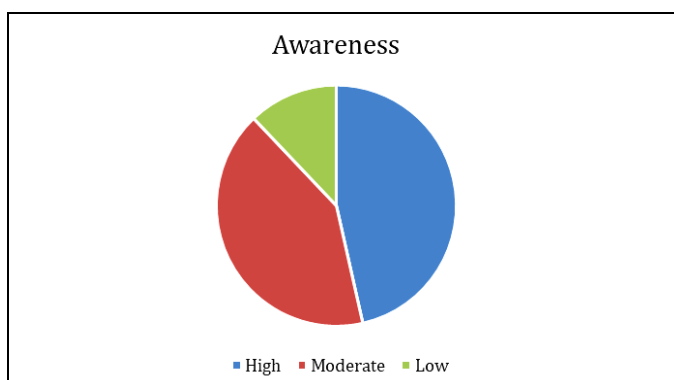


Fig 4

The above pie chart shows the awareness about food wastage impact on wedding functions. Here the people are highly aware about 46%, moderately aware about 42% and lowly aware about 12%.

v). Donate Leftover Food

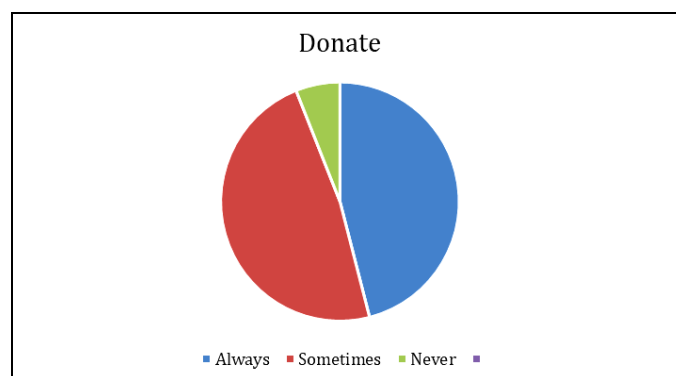


Fig 5

The above pie chart shows the donate of leftover food. Here the people donate food always are about 46%, sometimes are about 48% and never are about 6%.

5. Findings

The following were the main results of the study, which included 50 subjects:

High Rate of Food Waste: At weddings and social gatherings, a lot of food is still left over. Particularly at buffet-style events, the food that is made is wasted on average between 25% and 40%.

Principal Waste Reasons: An overestimate of the number of attendees. Social pressure to provide luxurious and varied menus. Guests consuming more food than they are able to finish. The hosts and caterers were poorly coordinated and planned.

Ignorance: The majority of survey participants were not familiar with food redistribution schemes or NGOs that gather excess food. Just a few organizers took action to give away leftovers.

Cultural and Social Impact: To avoid shame or criticism, several hosts confessed to cooking more food. Indian society views providing lots of food as a sign of hospitality and rank.

Environmental Effect: When food is wasted and decomposes, it contributes to garbage accumulation and greenhouse gas emissions. Not many events used eco-friendly disposal methods or enforced segregation.

Economic Harm: According to hosts and caterers, food waste results in a substantial financial loss, particularly at expensive weddings.

Positive findings: Some city caterers are starting to use portion control and food donation strategies. Younger respondents expressed a higher level of awareness and willingness to cut down on waste at upcoming events.

According to the research, the primary causes of food waste in Indian weddings are societal practices, inadequate planning, and a lack of understanding. Better management, education, and cooperation between hosts, caterers, and NGOs are necessary to minimize food waste.

6. Suggestions

The study's findings lead to the following recommendations for decreasing food waste at Indian weddings and social events:

Adequate Preparation for Food Amounts: The number of attendees should be estimated by hosts and caterers. Instead of assumptions, food should be prepared according to confirmed attendance.

Simplifying the Menu: To minimize unnecessary preparation, restrict the number of meals. Concentrate on the quality of the product rather than the quantity.

Controlling Portions: Either provide smaller pieces or encourage guests to consume less. To reduce plate waste, buffet systems may incorporate smaller plates.

Food Redirection: Work with food donation organizations (such Robin Hood Army, Feeding India, etc.) and NGOs to distribute leftover food to the needy.

Campaigns for Awareness: Raise awareness of the consequences of food waste among the general public, hosts, and caterers. Through community programs, schools, and social media, raise awareness. Changes in Society and Culture Prioritize responsible celebration over displaying wealth through the amount of food. Urge families to consider food conservation to be a sign of respect rather than thriftiness.

Participation by the Government and Local Authorities: Authorities can implement regulations or strategies for handling extra food at big events. Promote environmentally responsible waste disposal and composting methods. Promoting Sustainable Event Management: Waste separation, composting, and philanthropic collaborations are examples of green practices that event planners and caterers should embrace.

Obligations of Guests: Visitors should only take what they can consume and refrain from leaving food on their plates. At social gatherings, campaigns can encourage mindful eating.

India can make marriages both magnificent and sustainable by improving planning, raising awareness, and promoting food redistribution. Reducing food waste is about more than just preserving food; it's also about valuing resources, people, and the environment.

7. Conclusion

The increasing problem of food waste at Indian weddings and social events is a reflection of evolving lifestyles as well as cultural practices. Due to excessive planning, inaccurate guest counts, and other factors, a large amount of food prepared for such occasions is not consumed, as demonstrated by the research. The urge to show off wealth and kindness. In most cases, there is little preparation for dealing with excess food, resulting in needless resource waste.

There are several effects from this waste. It raises moral questions, causes financial hardship for families, and causes environmental harm through the production of greenhouse gases and organic waste, as significant portions of the population are impacted. Malnutrition and hunger continue to plague the Indian populace. The study also reveals a dearth of knowledge and collaboration between hosts, caterers, and event planners on food redistribution and sustainable management techniques.

Nonetheless, the data reveal a positive trend as well. There is an increasing awareness among the population, particularly among the younger generation, of the need to reduce food waste and promote food donation programs. This demonstrates that change is possible through collective action, public awareness campaigns, and government backing.

Proper preparation, precise guest calculation, smaller menus, and strong cooperation with NGOs may make a significant impact in solving the issue. Additionally, the government, local authorities, and the event management industry should encourage regulations for environmentally friendly festivals and offer rewards for the redistribution of food.

The problem of food waste at Indian weddings, to sum up, is not simply about excessive food; it's about beliefs,

accountability, and treating food and the environment with respect. Indian weddings may become representations of compassion, sustainability, and social responsibility if society embraces mindful practices and moves away from lavish displays.

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