**Part A:**

**Family Meals Description of a Typical Family Meal in My Household-**

Family dinners in my home often take place at about 9:00 p.m., when my dad gets home from work. Usually, my mother prepares the food, with my dad and I helping in on occasionally. To accommodate a wide range of members, we all have different preferences but our everyday meal usually includes hot chicken curry, an Indian vegetarian dish, lentil curry with rice, naan bread, and ice cream for dessert. we eat in the dining room and use simple cutlery and utensils while chatting about our everyday activities, interests, and future plans.

**Comparison with the Idealized and Romanticized Version of the Family Meal**

When comparing this with the perfect family dinner that Willa Zhen writes about in "Food Studies: A Hands-On Guide," there are some parallels and some variances. Zhen criticises the idealised portrayal of peaceful family meals, such as those in Norman Rockwell's "Freedom from Want," pointing out that actual family meals frequently involve conflict and strain (Zhen, 2019, p. 64). This matches my experience, which is that arguments and discontent can occasionally result from different eating choices and conversations. Zhen also emphasises how modern lifestyles (Swedish lifestyle examples) have led to a move away from daily handmade dinners and towards convenience or quick food (Zhen, 2019, p. 66). In keeping with these modern times, my family occasionally orders restaurants or makes easy dinners to accommodate our hectic schedules.

In conclusion, unlike the ideal scenario, our family dinners are simpler and less formal, yet we coincide on having differences in point of view sometimes. In keeping with Zhen's views regarding the changing nature of family eating in modern times, sometimes we fill fast food in place of homemade food to manage our busy lifestyles.

**Part B:**

**How is your typical family meal a ritual?**

Our family dinner is a cherished tradition that celebrates our heritage and strengthens our connection. Every evening, we establish a rhythm of togetherness around the table, echoing Emile Durkheim's idea that rituals promote commonality and social solidarity, or "we-ness" (Guptill et al., 2017, p. 20). This routine provides predictability and comfort. A key part of our dinner ritual is offering prayers to God before eating, which is very common in India, similar to the symbolic rituals in Christian and Roman Catholic traditions we read this week, where food holds profound significance (Guptill et al., 2017, p. 20). This practice creates equality and unity, aligning with the idea that food rituals create a sense of community, like breaking bread in religious practices. Our dinner conversations are important for sharing stories, offering support, and resolving minor issues. These discussions strengthen our social bonds and keep us connected, as mentioned in the weekly reading, with emphasis on how eating rituals foster a sense of belonging (Guptill et al., 2017). The recipes we use, passed down through generations, highlight our Indian culture and tradition, keeping us linked to our roots. This is similar to how different Thanksgiving dinner variations connect people to their ethnic identities, as mentioned in the film "What's Cooking?" (Guptill et al., 2017, p. 25).

We modify to maintain the essence of our ritual despite challenges like busy schedules and personal preferences. The essential components of sharing meals and discussion are preserved in even shorter versions with close family members. This reflects the idea of adapting evolving rituals while retaining their fundamental meaning.

**How do rituals contribute to social solidarity?**

According to Emile Durkheim, rituals create a sense of "we-ness" among groups, which strengthens social cohesion. Rituals, with their highly planned and repetitive behaviours, generate strong sentiments of connection between participants and other past and future members, who will presumably take the lead (Guptill et al., 2017, p. 20). Our family's habit of being together for meals and praying before promotes interaction and conversation, strengthening our sense of self and oneness. Our common mealtime habits and shared obligations both establish and maintain unique social identities while also providing opportunities for social transformation. This is evident in how we adapt our meal rituals to accommodate busy schedules and individual preferences, reflecting the evolving nature of family dining in modern society.

**References -**

* **Zhen, W. (2019)**. Food Studies: A Hands-On Guide (Chapter 3, "Food, Identity, and Culture," pp. 61-70). London: Bloomsbury Academic. Retrieved from Bloomsbury Collections. http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474298728
* **Guptill, A. E., Copelton, D. A., & Lucas, J. W. (2017)**. Food & Society: Principles and Paradoxes (pp. 17-30). Polity Press.