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A study on perception, habits and knowledge systems about traditional food relating to health and nutrition among ADI women living in diverse socio-economic systems of Kalahandi district, Orissa

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ABSTRACT

Tribal societies of India comprise of an important ethnic group but happen to live their lives in geographical isolation, social ignorance and economic backwardness despite their rich culture. The present study was conducted by taking 100 samples between the age group of 20-80 years. Questionnaire method was used for data collection and data analysis was done through frequency and percentage. Therefore, it was of immense need to explore, analyse and document the ethnic foods consumed by Adi women. Results of the study revealed that farming was the major occupation of the tribes. Salap and dates wine were the common beverage among women where as Kang, Gurji, Kushla and Bamboo shoots were common delicacies. In general, rice was considered as the energy giving food (68%) and salt water (53%) as the digestive solution with general preference for fermented food (26%). Mahua oil was the commonest medium of cooking (57%) with boiling and frying as the most popular cooking method (93%) food products was preserved using drying and salting (79%) method.

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Key words : Food, Adi women, Salap, Dates wine

INTRODUCTION

Tribal society in India is characterised by poverty, subsistence, economy and general backwardness. From centuries they lived their own secluded and traditional life in isolated and sparsely populated hilly regions and forest areas. Even today most of them are geographically isolated and economically weak, socially ignorant and politically indifferent, but culturally rich, behaviourally simple and trust worthy leading their life in the lap of nature. In addition to their economic, social, cultural environment and political administration problem, they also face nutritional and health related problems (Mishra and Tiru, 2007).

Indeed, most traditional societies have belief systems and practices that demonstrate such an interest. The tribal people and ethnic races throughout the world have their own culture, customs, religious rites, taboos, legends, witchcraft, foods and systems of medical practices. They know enormous use of wild plants for their basic needs system, livelihood and have unique understanding of forest

resources (Prusti and Behera, 2008).

Use of traditional foods by the traditional communities primarily by women include continuation of traditional conservation of forest and kitchen garden plants species collecting and using the forest based plant in daily diet and medicines. One major source of food security of tribes comes from what is known as shifting cultivation or more appropriately swiddening. Shifting cultivation and its practices are said to be pernicious and eco-hostile from the stand point of dependence of tribal people on forest and hill slope (Rout, 2005).

There is often little differentiation between the traditional foods and medicines as consumed by various tribes of Kalahandi, Orissa. Traditional food is used to maintain the good health and traditional medicines to cure some diseases. In few cases tribal women use more than 70 ethnic vegetables to prepare varieties of ethnic foods. Since almost tribal including Adi of Kalahandi are non-vegetarian in food habits and many non-vegetarian