

Study on indigenous food processing practices among Banjara women

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ABSTRACT : The investigation was carried out to identify the processed foods prepared by the Banjara women. The indigenous practices for preparation of these foods were also documented. The study was carried out in Pusad Panchayat Samiti of Yavatmal district of Maharashtra state. For the study, 4 villages were selected viz., Devthana, Bori, Limbi and Aregaon. Many Banjara tandas are situated in these villages and they are scattered. Totally 120 Banjara women veterans (old age women) were selected for the study. After identification of the practices the inventory was made to document the indigenous food practices. Chilwa, Dalya, Fla, Chemotyar Batti, Papda, Soji, Muthia, Salai, Thapda, Khardya, Pindya, Lapsi, Lapda, Kurde, Shengolya, Galwali, Shav, Laptti, Laptti Sar, Wda, Ghugrya, Chola were the indigenous processed foods identified. In the second instance, the indigenous food processing practices of the Banjara community were identified and documented. After identification of the practices, it was concluded that most of the respondents had medium level of knowledge about food processing practices as they were far away from the traditional old indigenous practices.

KEY WORDS : Indigenous knowledge, Processed food, Banjara women

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INTRODUCTION

India has a traditional and cultural background over thousand years. There is a rich store of indigenous knowledge in food preparation with its processing on scientific basis. The Banjara are the largest and historic formed group in India and also known as Lambadi or Lambani. Banjara people are the people who speak Lambadi or lambani. Rural women as a part of society are mostly engaged in laborious work involved in farming in addition to their household duties (Shirohi, 1985). The value of such indigenous food preparation and its

processing knowledge cannot be ignored as it facilitates sustainable nutritional development. The indigenous food preparation, its processing knowledge and modern scientific knowledge put together may be useful for effective adoption of food preparation and processing practices by the people. The seasonal nature of food production and gathering (Mutyaba, 1998) in the country creates a need to store and preserve foods during periods of massive food production. In addition, short self-life of some foods creates a need to process them before storage using indigenous technologies such as drying or smoking. Processing of such foods using

indigenous practices and technologies could enhance food availability to household in periods of scarcity (Mukiibi, 2001).

One of the most fascinating tribes of our country is the Banjara whose colourful dresses and ornaments make them out to be distinct cultural groups. According to Gazetteer, Banjara are known as Labana from their former occupation of carrying salt. Their community organization was called Tanda. These Tanda were used to carry grains for large armies.

Every community has its own specialty and so Banjara community also has its specialty in food practices, which are prepared and served during occasions like wedding; festivals, etc. (Anonymous, 2010 and 2011).

The concept of indigenous knowledge is reflected in the day as Loise Breneiers (1997) observed working with indigenous knowledge. He defines indigenous knowledge as the unique traditional and local knowledge existing within and developed around specific condition of women and men indigenous to particular geographical area. Indigenous knowledge is dynamic; it is the result of continuous process of experimentation innovation and adoption which enables it as blend with science and technology as well. Indigenous knowledge should be for their integrated in work of scientists as complementary contribution to all efforts of science and technology units' research for solution and strategies to combat poverty and to general sustainability in development. Indigenous knowledge is an important part of the lives of the poor. It is a key element of the social and capital of the poor. Their main asset to invest in the struggled for survival to produce food to provide potential contribution of indigenous knowledge locally manageably sustainable and cost effective survival strategies should not be neglected. Keeping this in view, the investigation was carried out with the following specific objectives:

- To study the personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of Banjara women.
- To study the indigenous knowledge about food processing practices possessed by the women of Banjara community.
- To study the correlation between personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of Banjara women with their knowledge about indigenous food processing practices.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive and diagnostic design of social research has been used in the present study. The study was carried out in Pusad Taluka of Yavatmal district in Maharashtra. Pusad Taluka consists of 189 villages out of which four villages were purposively selected namely, Devthana, Bori, Limbi and Aregaon. Totally 120 Banjara women having age above 60 years were selected for the study. The purpose behind this was that these women have abundant knowledge about the

traditional food processing methods of Banjara community. These women were contacted and interviewed individually as well as their group discussions were also held to identify the knowledge about indigenous processed food practices and the inventory or documentation was made. The investigation was carried out by the personal interview method with the help of structured interview schedule. Frequencies, percentages and co-relation were used to analyze the data.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The experimental findings obtained from the present study have been discussed in following heads:

General profile of the respondents:

In set of independent variables, the socio-economic and psychological characteristics were selected and some have been presented in Table 1.

Age:

From Table , it has been observed that 51.00 per cent of the respondents were in middle age category *i.e.* between 36-50 years of age level, followed by 43.00 per cent of them in old age category *i.e.* above 50 years and 06.00 per cent in young age category. Therefore, it could be concluded that majority of the Banjara women were middle aged. The above findings are in accordance with the observation of Dhanorkar (1998) and Ingle (2002) .

Education :

A perusal of data furnished in Table 1 also indicates that majority of respondents (68.33%) were illiterate. The percentage of Middle School level respondents was found to be 15.00 per cent. It was also seen that only 13.55 per cent of them were having the education upto Primary School level. It was interesting to note that 1.66 per cent of respondents were educated up to each High School and College level. Therefore, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents were illiterate. The finding of the present study corroborates with the observation of Dhanorkar (1998) who reported that majority of the Banjara women were illiterate.

Occupation :

It is evident from Table 1, that more than one third of respondents (37.50%) were having farming + labour as their occupation while one third (33.40%) of the respondents had household work as their occupation whereas over two fifth of the respondents (22.50%) had occupation as farming and only 6.60 per cent of the respondents had job work. Therefore, it can be said that due to lack of education and inadequate employment opportunities, Banjara women were mostly engaged in non productive farming and labour work and remaining were engaged in household work. The findings of

Sr. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage	
1.	Age			
	Young	08	06.00	
	Middle	61	51.00	
	Old	51	43.00	
	2. Education	Illiterate	82	68.33
		Primary School	16	13.55
Secondary School		18	15.00	
High School		02	1.66	
College		02	1.66	
3. Occupation		Farming	27	22.50
	Labour	45	37.50	
	Household	40	33.40	
	Job	08	6.60	
4. Annual income (Rs.)	Up to 10,000 (BPL)	80	66.66	
	10,000 to 20,000	30	25.00	
	20,001 to 30,000	08	06.66	
	Above 40,000	02	01.68	
5. Social participation	Low	00	00.00	
	Medium	82	68.33	
	High	38	31.66	
6. Extension contact	Low	30	25.00	
	Medium	60	50.00	
	High	30	25.00	
7. Socio-economics status	Very low	39	32.00	
	Low	42	35.10	
	Medium	29	24.70	
	Medium -high	09	07.50	
	High	01	00.80	
8. Attitude towards	Unfavourable	011	09.16	
	Favourable	100	83.90	
	Highly favourable	009	07.50	

the present study are in line with the observation made by Trifle and Deshpande (1998); Ingle (2002) and Dhanorkar (1998) who have reported that most of the women practiced mixed occupation *viz.*, Farming + Labour + Household + Job for their livelihood.

Annual income :

As far as annual income of the selected respondents was concerned, it was noted that majority of the respondents (66.66 %) had income up to Rs. 10,000 whereas 25 per cent of them belonged to lower income group *i.e.* up to Rs. 20,000.

The annual income from all sources, only 6.66 per cent of them could earn income between Rs. 20,001 to 30,000/-. The percentage of respondents earning annual income above Rs. 40,000/- was meagre (1.68 %). Therefore, it is concluded that majority of the Banjara women belonged to the lower income group *i.e.* up to 10,000/- and thus, the economic level of the Banjara women was poor and were below the poverty line (BPL). The above findings are in conformity with observations of Kapgate and Ingle (1990) and Ingle (2002). They reported in their study that the economic level of the Banjara women was poor and more than 75 per cent of respondents were below the poverty line.

Social participation :

It can be seen from the table that overwhelming majority (68.33%) of the respondents had participation in social organization to a moderate extent. Remainders were spread over in high category (31.66%). Therefore, it is inferred that majority of the respondents had moderate level of social participation. The findings of the present study are in accordance with the results reported by Kapgate and Ingle (1990) and Ingle (2002) who concluded that social participation of most of the Banjara women who resided in the remote areas was very poor.

Extension contact :

It was observed that majority of the respondents (50.00 %) had medium level of extension contact while one fourth of them (25.00 %) had both, low and high level of extension contact. Therefore, it is concluded that majority of the respondents had moderate level of extension contact. The findings of present study corroborate the observation made by Kulkarni and Bhusare (1990) who reported that the respondents of their investigation had low level of extension contact with extension agents.

Socio – economic status :

It was observed from Table 1 that about one third of respondents (32.00 %) had very low level of socio-economic status. Relatively a few respondents (24.70% and 7.50%) were found in medium and medium high level of socio-economic status, respectively. However, the percentage of respondents having high level of socio-economic status was found to be very negligible (0.80%). Therefore, it is can be inferred that majority of respondents had very low to low level of socio-economic status.

Attitude towards indigenous knowledge about food processing practices:

It was noted that more than three fourth of the respondents (83.9%) had favourable attitude towards indigenous knowledge. The percentage of respondents having unfavourable attitude towards indigenous knowledge was

almost negligible (9.16%) whereas only 7.5 per cent of respondents were having highly favourable attitude towards indigenous knowledge. It is, therefore, inferred that majority of the selected respondents held favourable attitude towards indigenous knowledge. The findings of the present study are in line with the Tribhuvan (1997) who has reported that most of the Banjara women had positive attitude towards indigenous knowledge.

Identification of indigenous food processing practices of Banjara women :

The information with regards to the identification and documentation of the indigenous processed food practices of Banjara women, has been presented in Table 2. It was revealed that in all 25 indigenous vegetarian and non-vegetarian items have been identified which were found in vogue among the Banjara women in the study area and documented in the form of inventory.

From Table 2 it can be stated that, Chilwa recipe is prepared by using granulated sorghum flour mixed with sugar. They use to consume this recipe during winter season. It may be due to the reason that in these seasons the high energy foods are normally consumed. By consuming granulated

sorghum flour and sugar it can be gained. The second recipe reported by the selected women was Dalya, which is prepared by using the granulated sorghum flour mixed with salt. Fla was another recipe, prepared by using sorghum flour mixed with water. The recipe is consumed during the rainy season and on the occasion of Pola festival. It also provides energy to the body. Chemotyar Batti, a non-vegetarian recipe is prepared by using Chemotyar leaves and sorghum flour. They replied that sometimes wheat flour is not available in all the seasons and then they used to prepare Chemotyar Batti Papda another recipe, by using sorghum flour mixed with water. They told that this recipe is prepared in summer season. In any season, this recipe can be consumed. Soji, which is prepared by using sorghum flour, water and salt with some quantity of oil, also can be consumed in all seasons. Muthia is prepared by using the wheat flour, seed of Movda and jaggery. In any season, this recipe can be consumed. It may be due to the reason that it is available in all seasons and it is very easy to prepare. Salai is very traditional recipe in Banjara community. It is very famous non-vegetarian recipe and is prepared by using the goat blood. The goat blood is firstly mixed with sorghum flour then it is cooked. This recipe is prepared on the occasions like, Pola and Holi festivals and even on other

Table 2: Identification and documentation of indigenous food processing practices

Sr. No.	Indigenous practices	Ingredients	Season
1.	Chilwa	Granulated sorghum + Oil + Sugar	Winter
2.	Dalya	Granulated sorghum +Salt + Water	Summer
3.	Fla	Sorghum flour + Boiled water + Oil	Pola festival
4.	Chemotyar Batti	Sorghum flour + Chemotyar leaves	Rainy
5.	Papda	Sorghum flour + Boiled water	Summer
6.	Soji	Sorghum flour +Salt + Water	Rainy
7.	Muthia	Sorghum flour + Boiled water	Summer
8.	Salai	Sorghum flour + Goat blood	Holi, Pola
9.	Thapda	Bengal gram + Sorghum flour	Rainy
10.	Khardya	Barli + Salt	Summer
11.	Pindya	Chapati+ Sugar + Ghee	Tiz festival
12.	Lapsi	Wheat flour + Sugar +Water	For lactating women
13.	Lapda	Wheat flour+ Salt + Oil + Water	Any festival and special for guest
14.	Kurde	Wheat flour + Salt	Summer
15.	Shengolya	Wheat flour+ Salt + Turmeric + Chilli	Winter
16.	Galwali	Wheat flour+ Sugar	With Puran poli in any festival
17.	Shav	Wheat flour+ Sugar + Water	Divali, Holi
18.	Laptti	Wheat flour+ Sugar	Divali, Holi festival
19.	Chakolya	Wheat flour + Salt + Chilli	Any season
20.	Wadya	Green gram +Bengal gram+ Kidney bean	Summer
21.	Pattodi	Bengal gram +Chilli+ Salt	Programme
22.	Sar	Bengal Gram +Boiled water	Holi, Pola, Diwali
23.	Wda	Green flour + Kidney bean	Programme
24.	Ghugrya	Wheat +Sorghum +Red gram	Summer, Rainy
25.	Chola	Red gram +Green gram	Winter, Rainy

functions. Thapda is prepared by using the Bengal gram and sorghum flour. It is prepared for a change in regular food, also to bring taste in routine diet. It is prepared in all seasons. Pindya is prepared by using the Chapati and Ghee. They used to consume this recipe during the “Tiz” festival. It may be due to the reason that it is prepared only for the worship of “Galgor” and after they distribute this recipe to all girls living on tandas or this programme. Kurdya, Khardya and Shev are the vegetarian recipes prepared from wheat flour (or barley flour) and salt. The respondents replied that this recipe is prepared in all seasons. They used to store it for future use. The recipes *Lapsi* and *Laptti* are prepared by using the wheat flour and sugar. This recipe is used for worship the god. This is prepared for Pola, Diwali and Holi festival also. Lapda is very famous vegetarian recipe in Banjara community. This is prepared by using wheat flour and salt. This recipe is mostly used for guests. It provides energy to the body. Another recipe Shengolya is prepared by using the wheat flour and chilli. They use to consume this recipe during winter season. It may be due to the reason that in this season the high energy foods are normally consumed. Another sweat recipe reported by the selected women was Galwali, which is prepared by using wheat flour and sugar. This recipe is prepared with Lapda. In any season, this recipe can be consumed, especially on the occasion of Dushra, Pola, Holi and Diwali festivals. They had strong belief that it makes legs strong. Dhokla is another recipe, prepared by using sorghum flour, salt and red gram mixed with water. They told that this recipe is prepared in summer season. It also provides energy to the body. Wadya is stored food. This is prepared by using the green gram and Bengal gram. It may be due to the reason that it is available in all the seasons and was very easy to prepare. Another recipe reported by the selected women was Pattodi, which is prepared by using Bengal gram and chilli. The selected respondents replied that sometimes the vegetables are not available in all the seasons and then they prepare this recipe. Wada is the recipe which is prepared during the season of picking of cotton. Sar is prepared by using Bengal gram and chilli. This recipe is consumed with puranpoli for the change in test. Ghugrya is another recipe, prepared by using sorghum, wheat and red gram mixed with water. They told that this recipe is prepared in summer and rainy seasons. Chola is prepared by using red gram and green gram mixed with boiled water. The respondents under this study replied that this recipe is prepared in summer season. It may be due to the reason that it was available in all the seasons and it very easy to prepare.

Practice wise knowledge of indigenous food processing practices by Banjara women :

It can be observed from Table 3 that cent per cent respondents had knowledge about the recipes Chilwa, Fla, Muthia, Salai, Pindya, Shav, Wadya and Sar. Further, it was noted that the knowledge of indigenous food processing

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to indigenous possessed by them

Sr. No.	Indigenous practices	Respondents (n= 120)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Chilwa	120	100
2.	Fla	120	100
3.	Muthia	120	100
4.	Salai	120	100
5.	Pindya	120	100
6.	Shav	120	100
7.	Wadya	120	100
8.	Sar	120	100
9.	Dalya	115	95.83
10.	Lapsi	115	95.83
11.	Galwali	115	95.83
12.	Papda	110	91.66
13.	Lapda	110	91.66
14.	Shengolya	110	91.66
15.	Laptti	110	91.66
16.	Chakolya	110	91.66
17.	Pattodi	110	91.66
18.	Chola	110	91.66
19.	Wda	110	91.66
20.	Ghugrya	108	90.00
21.	Thapda	106	88.83
22.	Soji	97	80.83
23.	Kurde	97	80.83
24.	Khardya	97	80.83
25.	Chemotyar Batti	77	64.16

practices like Galwali, Dalya, Lapsi was also possessed by over 90 per cent of the respondents, followed by 91 per cent of them having possessed knowledge about Papda, Lapda, Chakolya, Dhokla, Patodi, Chola, Shengolya, Wada and Laptti. Further, it was noted that over three fourth of the respondents 90 per cent had knowledge about the recipe, Ghugrya. Moreover, it was also noted that knowledge of food processing practices like Thapda was also possessed by 88.33 per cent of respondent and 80.83 per cent had knowledge about Soji; Khardya and Kurda. Further, it was noted that 64.16 per cent respondents also possessed the knowledge about Chemotyar Batti. It is concluded that most of the respondents had medium level of knowledge about food processing practices. Medium knowledge was quite obvious because they were far away from the traditional old indigenous practices. The various multi - disciplinary reasons have been reported by Dhanorkar (1998).

Knowledge of indigenous processed food practices :

Knowledge of indigenous processed food practices among Banjara women was assessed and is presented in

Table 4. It was observed that most of the respondents (80%) had medium level of knowledge about indigenous processed food practices.

Sr. No.	Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	05	04.00
2.	Medium	96	80.00
3.	High	19	16.00
	Total	120	100.00

Correlation co-efficients of selected characteristics with knowledge of indigenous processed food practices :

It was observed from Table 5 that among 8 independent variables studied, only three variables namely, occupation, annual income and socio-economic status were found to have highly positive significant correlation with knowledge of the respondents about indigenous processed food practices whereas the variables such as age, social participation and attitudes towards indigenous knowledge had significant correlation with knowledge of the respondents about food processing practices, but in negative direction. Hence, Null hypothesis for all these variables was rejected. The variable namely, education and extension contact did not establish any significant correlation and hence, the Null hypothesis for these two variables was accepted.

Sr. No.	Particulars	'r' value
1.	Age	-0.223**
2.	Education	0.135
3.	Occupation	0.440**
4.	Annual income	0.409**
5.	Social participation	-0.195**
6.	Extension contact	0.0012
7.	Socio-economic status	0.197**
8.	Attitude towards indigenous knowledge	-0.0171*

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Conclusion :

Majority of the Banjara women were middle aged and illiterate. Due to lack of education and inadequate employment opportunities, Banjara women were mostly engaged in non-productive farming and labour work and remaining were engaged in household work. Majority of the Banjara women belonged to the lower income group. Social participation of most of the Banjara women who resided in the remote areas was very poor. Therefore, it can be inferred that majority of

the respondents had very low to low level of socio-economic status and had low level of extension contacts with extension agents. The selected respondents held favourable attitude towards traditional knowledge about processed food. All the women selected from Pusad Taluka were adopting the most of indigenous food recipes of Banjara community. The food recipes of Banjara community widely used were Chilwa, Dalya, Fla, Chemotyar Batti, Papda, Soji, Muthia, Salai, Thapda, Khardya, Pindya, Lapsi, Lapda, Kurde, Shengolya, Galwali, Shav, Laptti, Laptti Sar, Wda, Ghugrya and Chola. These recipes are prepared by Banjara women because of their easy availability from the surroundings and these practices were mainly traditional and are based on experience. It is concluded that most of the respondents had medium level of knowledge about food processing practices. Cent per cent respondents had knowledge about Chilwa Fla Muthia, Salai, Pindya, Shav, Wadya and Sar. It was observed that most of the respondents had medium level of knowledge about indigenous processed food practices. It was also observed that among 8 independent variables studied, only three variables namely, occupation, annual income and socio-economic status were found positive significant. It could be suggested that these recipes will be helpful to next generation.

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