

Social life and food habits pattern among *Adivasi* women of Kalahandi district, Orissa

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ABSTRACT

Adivasi tribes have traditionally depended on harvests of forest wildlife, forest products from shifting land for their food as well as for cultural definition and social connection due to modernization. The main objective of the study was to the study social life style pattern among *Adivasi* women living in Kalahandi region. A sample of 100 respondents were purposively selected from 4 blocks viz., Madanpur Rampur, Lanjigadh, Narla and Thuamul Rampur of Kalahandi district, Orissa. Questionnaire method was used for data collection and data analysis was done through frequency and percentage. The result revealed that most of the respondents celebrate different festivals and most of them wear ornaments made up of beads and other metals in festive occasion. A fair number of respondents consumed different liquor and peetha prepared by their own. This paper tries to document the various festivals, ornaments, peetha and liquor used as a social prestige for the *Adivasi* women in their community.

KEW WORDS : Harvest, Festivals, Modernization, Peetha, Social life, Food habits

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INTRODUCTION

The term *Adivasi* is a Hindi word that comes from Sanskrit language. It is a combination of two words, *Adi* - which means first or the early, and *vasi* - meaning dwellers or settlers or inhabitants. Together it means the first settlers, or early inhabitants or early dwellers. This term is commonly used for groups otherwise categorized as "scheduled tribes" in the constitution of India. However, the Hindi term is "*Anusuchit-Jana-Jati*". *Anusuchit* meaning scheduled, *Jana* means people and *Jati*, race or races, initially termed as *Ban Jati*, meaning forest races. Interestingly both of these terms used either in English or Hindi earlier and later as well do not have the same meaning as *Adivasi* (Mundu, 2006).

In Orissa there are 62 tribal communities with 112 sub-tribes/ sections recognized by Government of India. Each tribal community has distinctive characteristic features reflected in their social, economic, political and religious systems. Each possesses its own unique culture which differentiates one from the other. For instance, in economic considerations, all tribal groups do not enjoy the same status. They earn their livelihood through settled

cultivation, shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produce, food gathering, hunting, fishing, manufacture of handicrafts and art objects, labour in agricultural as well as non-agricultural sectors, service in government and non-government organizations, petty business, skilled, semi skilled and unskilled labour, etc. therefore, their economic condition is not uniform. Generally, speaking, their economy is mostly subsistence-oriented. Some communities have better economic status whereas others are backward and still others are very backward (Mohanty, 2007). They live mostly in relatively isolated and inaccessible tracts which are eco-inhospitable. They usually in habitat in the areas full of mountains, hills, forests, terrains and undulating plateaus. They have their own ethos, ideologies, world view, value orientations etc. which guide them for sustenance amidst challenging situations and various oddities (Mishra, 2007).

The tribal people of Orissa observe a string of festivals. Some are closed affairs, relating to a birth or death within the family or a daughter attaining puberty. Others relate to sowing or harvest time and involve the entire community. Mostly a festival is an occasion for good

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Mahua liquor; a game roasted on the spirit and a night of song and dance is revelry. But that is not the end, there is an animal sacrifice too, for the deities and spirits must be appeased first, particularly the malevolent ones, so they don't unleash drought or sickness on the land. The tribal life is full of ceremonies and festivals. The ceremonies and festivals are classified into two parts. One is relating to their individual families and the other that relates to the village or community as a whole. The ceremonies and rites relating to child marriage and death are observed family wise where as these relating to various agricultural cycles. First eating of new fruits, hunting etc. are observed by village as community as a whole. Some of the important festivals observed by the Koraput region are *bali jatra*, *chaitra parab*, *push para*, *dasahara* and *ratha yatra*. Dance and music are integral part of tribal culture. All ceremonies, festivals and social occasions include music, dance, and drinking of liquor. They satisfy their inner urge through songs and dances. These dances are performed during ceremonies, festivals, marriage and when some important persons visit to their house (Pattnaik, 2007).

The tribes of Orissa are addicted to alcoholic drinks. In addition to the juice of Sago palm trees which is their favorite drink, they consume varieties of wines. They distil liquor from Mahua flower, rice, molasses, banana, mango, orange, jackfruit, pineapple, blackberry and a few sweet fruits containing starch. Each family of the tribal community is proud of possessing juice giving *Salap trees*. Now a days, some of them sell *Salap juice* to the neighboring schedule caste people for money. By and large, the tribes use *Salap* in traditional socio-religious functions to entertain their guests and friends. On one hand, drinks are unavoidable in marriage, life cycle rituals, ceremonies and social functions and on the other hand it is the major cause of their economic backwardness (Sahoo, 2007)

Adivasi tribes have traditionally depended on harvests of forest wildlife, forest product from shifting land for their food as well as for cultural definition and social connection due to modernization. They appear to be a decline in the collection and use of traditional foods rising question about nutrition and health security. Therefore, there is an immense need to explore, analyze and the document the ethnic foods consumed by *Adivasi* women and its associated dynamics to understand the indigenous food, associated social life style pattern of *Adivasi* women.

METHODS

The present study was conducted in the year 2009-2010 on 100 *Adivasi* women between the age ranges of 20-80 years from Kalahandi district, Orissa. The study



Fig. A : Location map of study area

was carried out in 4 blocks like Madanpur Rampur, Lanjigarh, Narla and Thuamul Rampur block. The type of study was purposive with the aim to know the social life style pattern of *Adivasi* women living in diverse socio-economic system. Purposive sampling method was employed for sample selection. The main tool used in the study was pre-designed questionnaire which consisted of general and specific information. The information collected was tabulated and interpretation was made by appropriate statistical analysis.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The pie chart (Fig. 1) revealed that most of the respondents (49%) celebrated Dharnipuja, Nuakhai, Chaitra, Bhai jiuanta, Makaramela, Podmara jatra, Phuspuni, Bihan puja, Dasahara where as 27 per cent respondents celebrated Semijatra, Dasahara, Mandiarani, Chaitra, Nuakhai, Podmara yatra, Rath yatra, Phuspuni, Aam nua, Dharni puja and only 24 per cent respondents celebrated Chaitra, Dharni puja+Nuakhai+Rath yatra+Phuspuni+Bihan puja+Kandul jatra+Aam nua+Dasahara

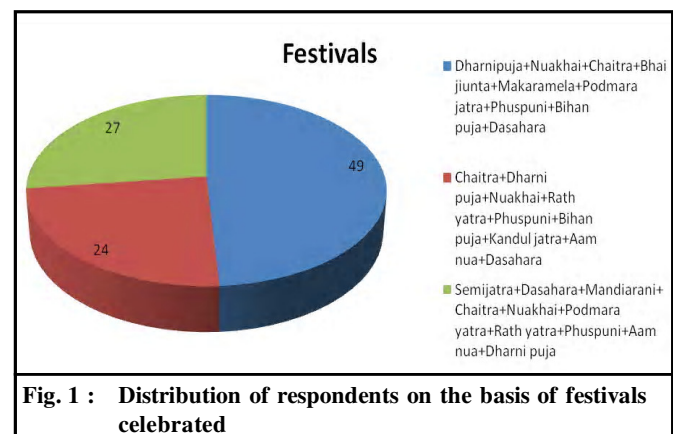
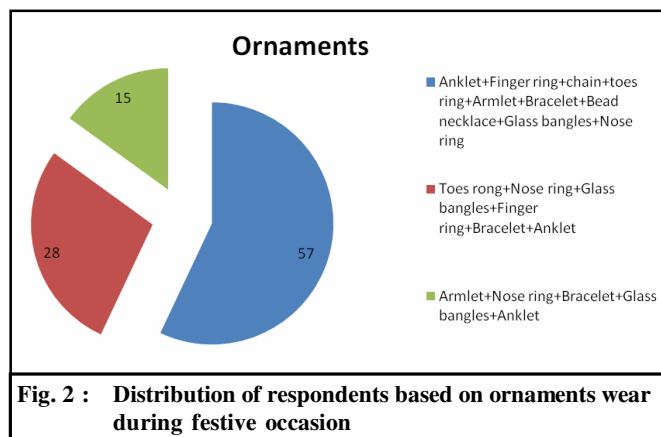


Fig. 1 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of festivals celebrated

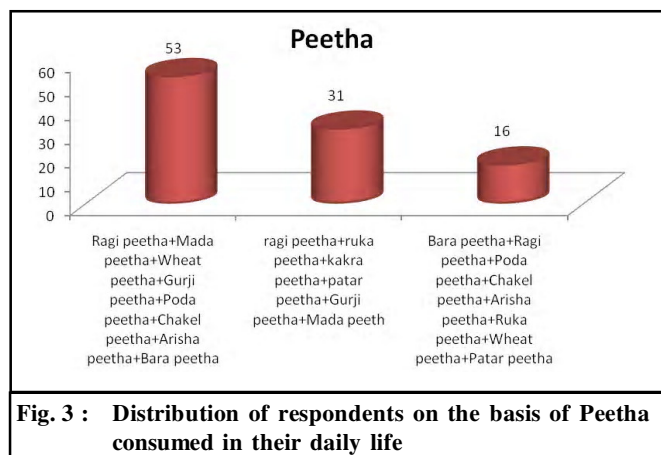
The results revealed that majority of respondents celebrate Dharnipuja, Nuakhai, Chaitra, Bhai jiunta, Makaramela, Podmara jatra, Phuspuni, Bihan puja, Dasahara. The above result was supported by the studies conducted by Ota and Mohanty (2008).

The pie chart (Fig. 2) shows that maximum number of respondents (57%) wear anklet, finger ring, chain, toes ring, Armllet, Bracelet, Bead necklace+Glass bangles+Nose ring. 28 per cent respondents wear Toes ring, Nose ring, Glass bangles, Finger ring, Bracelet, Anklet and 15 per cent respondents wear Armllet, Nose ring, Bracelet, Glass bangles, Anklet during festive occasion. The amazing conglomeration and traditions, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the religion of the tribes have descended from antiquity and have been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every facet of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion. It is this aspect of their culture that gives meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure. The results are in line with the



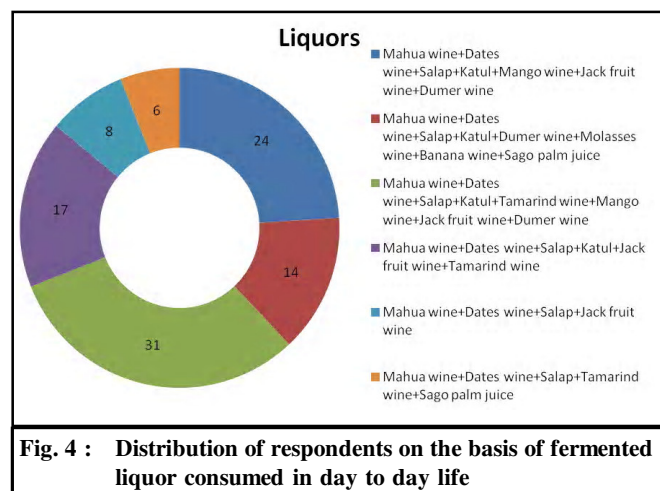
findings of Mohanty *et al.* (2006).

Fig. 3 revealed that a fair number of respondents (53%) consumed Ragi peetha, Mada peetha, Wheat peetha, Gurji peetha, Poda peetha, Chakel peetha, Arisha peetha, Bara peetha.



peetha, Gurji peetha, Poda peetha, Chakel peetha, Arisha peetha, Bara peetha whereas 31 per cent respondents consumed ragi peetha, ruka peetha, kakra peetha, patar peetha, Gurji peetha, Mada peetha and only 16 per cent respondents consumed Bara peetha, Ragi peetha, Poda peetha, Chakel peetha, Arisha peetha, Ruka peetha, Wheat peetha, Patar peetha in their daily life. The results support the studies conducted by Mishra and Singh (2007).

Fig. 4 shows that maximum number of respondents (31%) consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Katul, Tamarind wine, Mango wine, Jack fruit wine, Dumer wine where as 24 per cent respondents consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Katul, Mango wine, Jack fruit wine, Dumer wine. 17 per cent respondents consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Katul, Jack fruit wine, Tamarind wine, 14 per cent respondents consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Katul, Dumer wine, Molasses wine, Banana wine, Sago palm juice, where as a minimum number of respondents (8%) consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Jackfruit wine and only 6 per cent respondents consumed Mahua wine, Dates wine, Salap, Tamarind wine, Sago palm juice in their day to day life. Liquor helps in relief of pain and tension to the tribal women. So they consumed different type of liquor and which acts as a strengthening substance for the respondents. These findings are in line with the studies conducted by Mohanty (2004).



Conclusion:

The *Adivasi* women celebrate a number of festivals in their family. They wear different type of ornaments which were very traditional to them. Every festival has two sides- sacred and secular. These rituals and festivals also provide them an occasion to break the monotony of their struggle some routine life and enjoy moments of leisure and recreation by participating in eating delicious



festive dishes, drinking, dancing, and singing, marry making and socializing. They also consumed variety of peetha and liquor in their day to day life. Fermented foods and beverages are of great significance because they provide

and preserve vast quantities of nutritious foods in a wide diversity of flavours, aromas and textures that enrich the human diet. There is a need of intensive multi-institutional collaborative research and improvement efforts to develop liquor production technology by reducing the processing/fermentation duration, health risk-free, consistent-quality products in packed form. There is also an immense need to conserve the traditional culture by providing knowledge on conservation of traditional culture by use to with the use of daily use things.

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