

Received : November, 2010; Accepted : December, 2010

## 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

SUNITA MISHRA AND SAROJINI PADHAN

### 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.

Mishra, Sunita and Padhan, Sarojini (2011). 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, *Food Sci. Res. J.*, 2 (1) : 8-11.

**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

traditional foods are prepared from various sources like fish, crab, pork, duck, chicken and hunted wild animals. The foods are prepared in two major forms *i.e.* one from fresh meat added with potato and second dried meat boiled with varieties of leafy vegetable bamboo shoots. These foods are very rich in the nutrient and also play pivotal role in managing the health and avoiding ailment and diseases (Mishra and Singh, 2007).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the year 2007-2008 on one hundred Adi women of Kalahandi district, Orissa. The study was carried out in five villages *i.e.* Kurupadar, Gadadi, Jurakhaman, Nagjhari and Sakush of Madanpur Rampur block. The type of study was purposive with the aim to know the perception, habits and knowledge systems about traditional food relating to health and nutrition among Adi women living in diverse socio-economic system.

### Sample selection:

Simple random sampling method was employed for sample selection.

### Sample size:

The size of the study sample was restricted to 100 samples.

### Tools of study:

The main tool used in the study was pre-designed questionnaire which consisted of general, specific information, booklet regarding food preparation and sanitary handling of health aspects required for study.

### Pre-testing of schedule:

The schedule was pre-tested on 20 respondents for validity. This mini study was helpful for important modification in schedule for exclusion and inclusion of certain questions which are sources of valuable information. The data were collected by filling up the questionnaire by interview method while collecting the data. Efforts were made to maintain the accuracy, preciseness and relevancy of the answers.

### Analysis of data:

The analysis of data was done through master chart and usual statistical methods were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fig. 1 depicts that most (35%) of the respondents

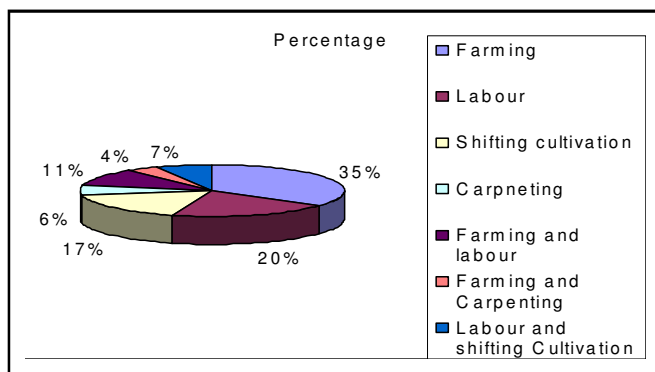


Fig. 1: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their occupation

adopt farming as their major occupation, while 20 % respondents were engaged in labour work; where as shifting cultivation was adopted by 17% respondents. The rest were involved in farming and labour, farming and carpenting, labourer shifting cultivation.

Fig. 2 shows that most of the respondents were in between the income range of rupees 1000-2000 (35%) while 31% respondents were in the income range up to 1000, 25% respondents were in the income range of 2000-4000 and 9% respondents were in between the family income of 4000-6000.

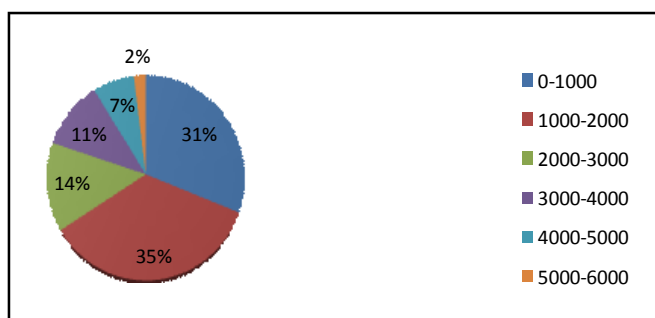


Fig. 2 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their income

Fig. 3 indicates that most of the respondents used Mahua oil (57%), while 13% respondents used sesame oil and Mahua oil and only 30% respondents used all the above.

The data of Fig. 4 show that most of the respondents used frying, boiling and drying method (56%) as a source of preparing food, while 44% respondents used all these above methods.

Most of the respondents preferred rice for better growth (42%) while 39% respondents preferred both rice and dal and only 19 respondents preferred all these ingredients (Fig. 5)

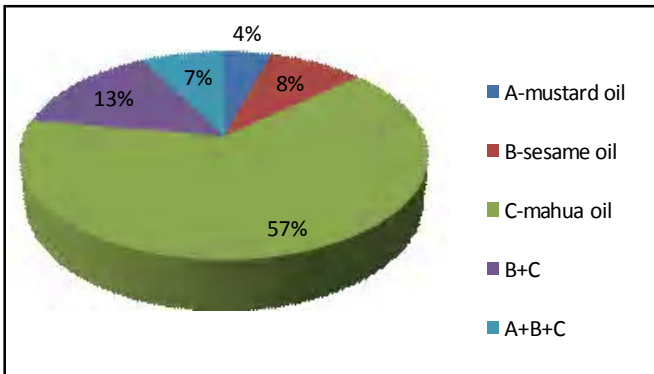


Fig. 3 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their medium of cooking

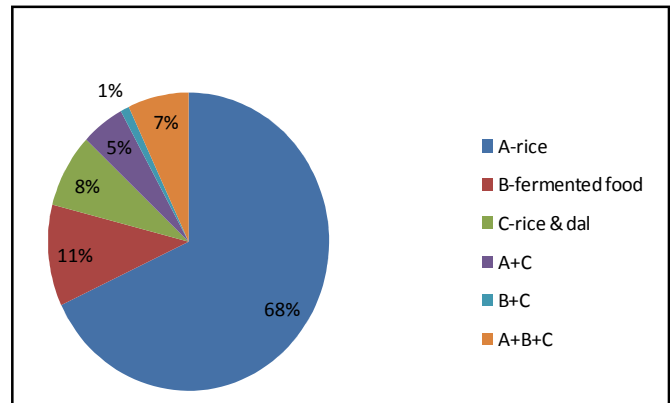


Fig. 6 : Traditional food knowledge

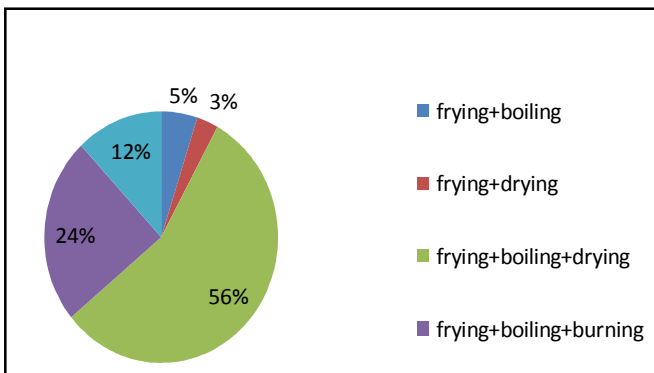


Fig. 4 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their method of preparing food

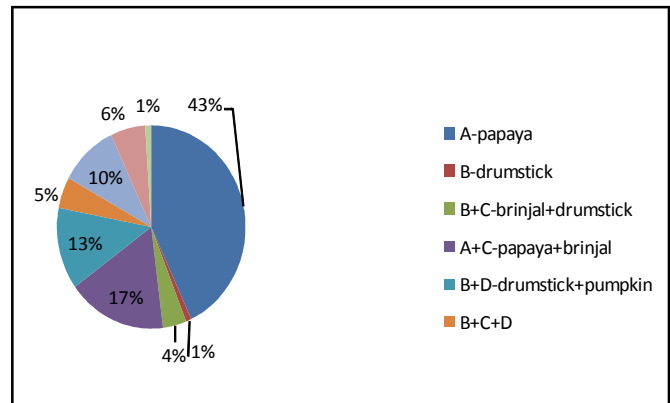


Fig. 7 : Food preferred for good eyes

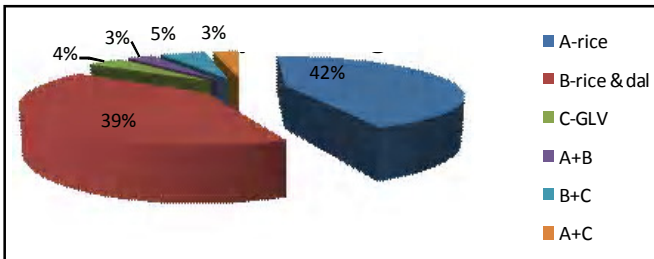


Fig. 5 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their traditional knowledge

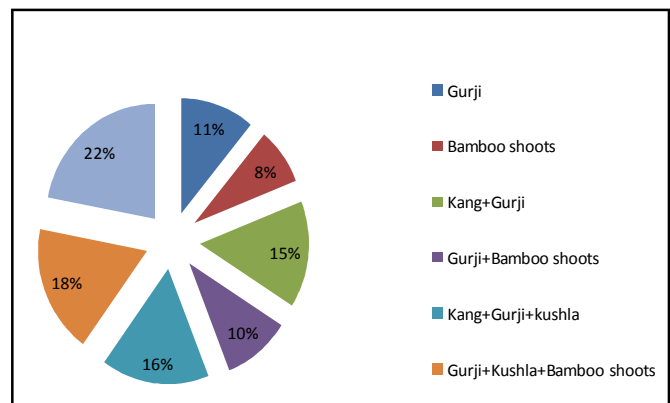


Fig. 8 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their consumption of traditional food

The data of Fig. 6 show that most of the respondents preferred rice for energy yielding food (68%) while 11% respondents preferred fermented food and only 21% respondents liked to consume all these above.

Fig. 7 shows that most of the respondents preferred to consume papaya for good eyes (43%), while 17% respondents preferred papaya and brinjal and 40% respondents preferred all these above.

The pie chart (FIG. 8) shows that most of the respondents consumed Kang, Gurji, Kushla and Bamboo shoots (22%) while 18% respondents consumed only Gurji,

**Conclusion:**

From the above study it was found that most of the respondent's major occupation was farming and they used frying and boiling methods for cooking purposes and for preparing food. Adi women preferred frying, boiling, burning and drying methods. Maximum number of respondents preferred rice for energy yielding and better

growth, papaya for good eyes. Most of the respondents preferred to consume foods in fermented form. Traditional knowledge of Adi women and their practices of ethnic foods preparation have much relevance to the sustainable food and nutritional security of tribal societies and ecosystems, they preferred mostly Jhum (swidden) crop cycle.

Hence, based on the research conclusion the following policies could be framed, to make Adi women self reliant in food, nutrition, health, and their sustainable development.

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### Address for correspondence :

**SUNITA MISHRA**

Department of Human Development and Food Science,  
School of Home Science,  
Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University,  
LUCKNOW (U.P.) INDIA

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### Authors' affiliations :

**SAROJINI PADHAN**

Department of Human Development and Food Science,  
School of Home Science,  
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University,  
LUCKNOW (U.P.) INDIA

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