



Indigenous varieties of plant based food and dietary habits of tribal women in Chhattisgarh

Poonam Xess, Garima Tiwari*

Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, (C.G.), India

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Abstract

Human progress has been directly linked to the development of traditional culinary culture. Geographical conditions, climate, seasonal variations, soil type, water source, forest region, agriculture, immigrants, the consequences of invaders, and the work habits of locals all have a role. Generally, at household level, cultural norms, practices, and socio-economic factors determine the extent of dietary habits among women. For women and their families, poor personal hygiene and health habits can have serious consequences. For this purpose, study has been conducted by reviewing relevant articles and research papers through which the study has been carried out to understand relation between the traditional food from forest and dietary habits of tribal women. Among tribal women their food choice and dietary habits are not solely based on biological needs, but it is with relation to the psychological and emotional needs also. Due to the culture dimension, tribal women select their kind of food choices for the connectivity to the society. Therefore, the sociocultural, socio economic condition and customs are essential to the shaping of dietary practices among tribal women.

*Corresponding Author: Garima Tiwari ✉ gtmidterm@gmail.com

Introduction

Traditional culinary culture is a trial system that develops over many generations. Food has a greater meaning than simply satisfying hunger and is essential to practically every element of tribal women's lives, including family, friends, festivals, and religious rites. Traditional foods are beneficial for sustaining and defending health which is also giving indigenous women the best nutrients possible. Traditional food culture is the good approach to adopt eco-friendly habits and make better utilization of the natural resources at hand to enhance the daily supplement diet of tribal women (Vecchio *et al.*, 2014). After a detailed analysis of how man and the surroundings interact, traditional foods are created depending on seasonal changes. Compared to their peers in rural areas, tribal women are more susceptible to undernutrition. It is not surprising that women's health varies widely from State to State given the wide variations in culture, religion, and degrees of development among the Indian States (Rao *et al.*, 2010). The food habits of tribal women strongly impact their health state. The notions of mind, body, and soul held by local communities have an impact on dietary practices as well. The selection of food also reflects the cultural norms and worldview of the nearby community (Das *et al.*, 2021).

Foods including vegetables, tubers, and wild fruits, all are wholesome and nutritious, are abundant in Chhattisgarh. Secluded region local people also pick fruits, roots, tubers, leaves, and flowers from the forest to supplement their diets, because the state has a broad forest cover and a rich flora. These provide the traditional, distinctive natural flavors and health advantages to tribal women. Using a multitude of naturally occurring resources, Chhattisgarh's modern food culture promotes better nutrition and overall health. Due to the abundance of flora in the state, people have acquired the knowledge necessary to meet their requirements using the forest's resources.

Materials and methods

We have gathered information from the relevant 20 pertinent research papers, articles for review, also

from the Katghora Forest Division's forest office. The data has been collected to understand the relation between the traditional food from forest and dietary habits of tribal women (Fig. 1).

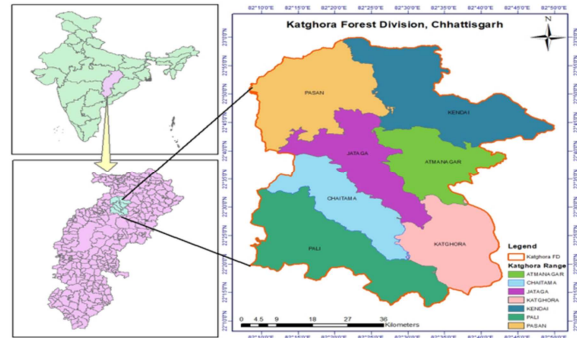


Fig. 1. Study area. (Source: Katghora forest division office)

Results and discussion

Traditional diets of tribal women

Tribal women can manage their health conditions by having a knowledge and understanding of utilizing natural plant resources, even without appropriate access to contemporary medical facilities. Tribal women's food culture aims to meet all of the community's nutritional and health needs, not just to sate people's hunger. The state's extensive forest cover is a fantastic resource for storing a different type of leaves, delicious wild tubers, and roots that the tribal women use to enhance their diets and give their cuisine a special flavor and therapeutic value (Table 1). Numerous traditional nutritional components are gradually disappearing from meal plates around the world, and tribal women's diets are restricted to a small number of ingredient variants.

The state of Chhattisgarh is heavily forested, because rural and tribal areas are where the majority of the state's residents reside. Utilizing wild tubers and plant roots is a skill acquired by tribal women. In Chhattisgarh, tribal women grow a variety of tubers, like *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*, *Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott, *Curcuma amada* Roxb, *Curcuma angustifolia* Roxb, and others. Commonly, tubers are peeled, boiled in water, and then sliced into little pieces. Then it is fried on a pan in a small

amount of oil with spices like mustard, cumin seed, asafoetida, ginger, and coriander. Additionally, sweet foods are made from tubers like *Curcuma angustifolia* Roxb and *Pueraria tuberosa* (Roxb. ex Willd). These not only add variety to the tribal women's diet, but also, have therapeutic qualities that promote longevity and seasonal immunity.

Tribal women contribute to food systems through forests and fisheries which act as value addition for agriculture. Additionally, this improves the variety and nutritious value of foods, not just for disadvantaged families but also, for all the households (Agarwal, 2018).

Role of tribal women in dietary habits

Dietary diversity, or the consumption of a wide variety of foods, has been recognized as food-based therapies for indigenous women to minimize the complicated impacts of malnutrition. It has really been introduced as the indicators for tribal women in

addition to wasting, stunting, nutritional deficiencies, and obesity rates to track the trends of this triple burden of malnutrition. Traditionally indigenous tribal women are decreased in numbers from the populations who were present in a country or geographic area at the time of invasion, colonization, or the drawing of existing state lines. Tribal women have their own beliefs, customs, cultures, dialects, practices, and institutions (Ghosh-Jerath *et al.*, 2018). The certainty that indigenous women still have a thorough historical grasp of the food resources in their native region is perhaps the most crucial factor. Food sources that are usually known as indigenous foods are demonstrated which contains highly nutrient value foods when compared to nonnative versions. Even though the contribution of local foods varies every year and is affected by unanticipated climate changes. These indigenous varieties of foods are essential for household nutrition, food security, and income generation. They additionally diversify regional food systems (Ghosh-Jerath *et al.*, 2018).

Table 1. Some indigenous varieties of plant foods found in Chhattisgarh (Source: Katghora Forest Division)

SL	Common name	Scientific name	Family	Part used	Uses	Tribes consume
1	Gataran	<i>Caesalpinia crista</i>	Fabaceae	Leaf, root	Dysentery	Gond Korwa
2	Bhuineem	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Acanthaceae	Leaf	Fever	Baiga Gond
3	bhaskataiya	<i>Solanum virginianum</i>	Solanaceae	Fruit	Teeth pain	Gond Kondh
4	Kachnnar	<i>Bauhinia variegata</i>	Fabaceae	Leaf	Vegetable, wound-healing, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant	Oraon Birhor Kharia
5	Bohar	<i>Cordia dichotoma</i>	Boraginaceae	Leaf Fruit	Vegetable, fever, headache, and joint pain	Gond Baiga
6	Aloe vera	<i>Aloe barbadensis</i>	Liliaceae	leaf	Easy in delivery, Amenorrhea, Dysmenorrhea	All tribes
7	Khilbiri		Caesalpiniaceae	Leaf, shoots, young twigs, roots, rhizomes, tubers, flowers, fruits, seeds	Vegetable,	Oraon Kharia Majhi
8	Bael	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Rutaceae	Juice	Dysentery	All tribes
9	Palash	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Fabaceae	Bark	Dysentery	All tribes
10	Peepli	<i>Piper longum</i>	Piperaceae	Root	Fever	Korwa Hill korwa
11	Pathar chitwar	<i>Bryophyllum pinnata</i>	Crassulaceae	Root	Kidney stone, diarrhea, fever	All tribes
12	Arjun	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	Combretaceae	Bark	Dysentery	All tribes
13	Guduchi	<i>Tinospora cardifolia</i>	menispermaceae	Stem	Immunity	Gond
14	perivinckle	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Apocynaceae	Root	Preventing brain disorders. Tonsillitis. Sore throat.	All tribes

					Intestinal swelling (inflammation). Toothache. Chest pain. Wounds. High blood pressure. micturition or urination, , gastric reflux disorder, treat diarrhea, excessive thirst, liver diseases, asthma, TB, wt. loss, anemia	Gond Baiga Korwa
15	Teekhur	<i>Curcuma angustifolia</i>	Zingiberaceae	Rhizome	antiatherogenic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-reproductive, CNS stimulant, hypoglycemic, anticarcinogenic and hair growth promoter.	All tribes
16	Bhelwa	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i>	Anacardiaceae	Fruit	bleeding piles, dysentery with mucus, irritability of the stomach, excessive perspiration, skin infections, cough and indigestion	Hill korwa
17	Nagkesari	<i>Mesua ferrea</i>	Calophyllaceae	Flower	Vegetable, inflammatory diseases, diabetes, and cancer, boost the immune system, and increase breast milk production	All tribes
18	Moringa	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Moringaceae	Leaf Fruit	neurological, gastrointestinal, respiratory, metabolic, kidney, and liver disorders	All tribes
19	Bachh	<i>Acorus calamus</i>	Acoraceae	Rhizome	diarrhea and dysentery	Gond Baiga Gond Majhi
20	Shankarjata	<i>Tacca leontopetaloides</i>	Dioscoreaceae	Tuber	burning sensation, constipation, lepsory, worm infection, skin diseases, fever, asthma, bronchitis, inflammatians and anaemia	Gond Baiga Gond Majhi
21	Keukanda	<i>Costus speciosus</i>	Zingiberaceae	Roots	diabetes, gall stones and relieve asthma	All tribes
22	Kathal	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	Moraceae	Leaf Bark	Tooth problem, intestinal pain, blood purifier	Gond
23	Ramdatur	<i>Smilax perfoliata</i>	Smilacaceae	Stem Shoot	Skin disease, fever	Dhanwar Savri
24	Gulbakavli	<i>Hedychium coronarium</i>	Zingiberaceae	Rhizome	Antidiuretic	Gond Birhor Korwa
25	Gudmar	<i>Gymnema sylvestre</i>	Apocynaceae	Leaf	Snake bite	All tribes
26	Karla	<i>Lepidagathis cristata</i>	Acanthaceae	Leaf	TB	Gond
27	Charota	<i>Cassia obtusifolia</i>	Leguminosae	Root	Kidney stone	All tribes
28	Bhasampatti	<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i>	Crassulaceae	Leaf	Asthma	All tribes
29	Gimmikand	<i>Amorphophallus campanulatus</i>	Araceae	Tuber	Constipation	Dhanwar
30	Isabgol	<i>Plantago ovata</i>	Plantaginaceae	Husk/Seed	Digestion, intestinal worms, enhances immunity	All tribes
31	Kalmegh	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Acanthaceae	Whole Plant	Dysentery, diabetes	All tribes
32	bael	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Rutaceae	Fruit Bark	Constipation	Gond Majhi
33	Senna	<i>Cassia angustifolia</i>	Fabaceae	Leaf	Respiratory and digestive disorders, blood circulation, cold and cough	All tribes
34	Mulethi	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>	Fabaceae	Stem	Mental weakness, blood pressure	Gond
35	Jatamansi	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i>	Valerianaceae	Rhizome		

Numerous studies have found a clear link between gender and inequality, especially where the resources are limited, and women's nutritional status is severely

compromised. Meals are typically prepared and served by women in traditional families, although the male family member still exercises control over the

ladies (Das *et al.*, 2021). The collection of different plant-based remedies from locally accessible sources is more compatible with females than males (Xess *et al.*, 2023). The ideas that people and society hold about food are referred to as food beliefs. This exemplifies how socially and culturally learned information about food is kept by successive generations and transmitted to the following generation (Das *et al.*, 2021).

Conclusion

Traditional knowledge is playing a vital role in tribal women health and dietary habits from generation to generation. Traditional knowledge and dietary practices provide better health and medic facilities to tribal people. It helps to cure various health diseases, issues and helps to maintain tribal women dietary habits and health management system. But in Chhattisgarh tribal women are at a significant disadvantage due to ignorance and literacy rate. Though tribal women are less literate their traditional knowledge and health care activities provide them a better healthy lifestyle.

In tribal areas, proper collection and documentation of tribal knowledge is not done therefore it creates a generation conflict because new generation are not ready to learn and practice the traditional knowledge. So, through proper collection and documentation of traditional knowledge tribal can embrace the interest of learning and practicing the traditional practices and it will create the awareness of traditional knowledge and dietary habits among the new generations and also helpful for the conservation of the indigenous health status.

In this review paper we have pen down the various traditional knowledge and practices in the documentation form so that a proper diet potential can be established. This will help in the economic exploration for the tribal women and it will promote and update the traditional knowledge and practices. It will develop the women folk for poverty reduction, livelihood and socio-economic betterment. It will help indigenous women to learn and make utilization of

local natural resources rather than relying on outside sources for sustenance.

For the economic exploration tribal women have to embrace the technical and scientific approaches. The tribal community and self-help groups can be made to create earnings and source of income through processing and marketing of traditional wild foods, knowledge and practices. Various training programs must be conducted to create awareness and conserve traditional knowledge and make tribal women financially capable. And this will be one of the simplest and most effective strategies to build a healthy society and to preserve, revive and adhere the traditional dietary habits.

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