

RETAINING RITUALS OF LOCAL CULTURE WITH INDIGENOUS COMMODITIES IN UTTARAKHAND: EMERGING ISSUES AND ROLE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The rituals and festivals of Uttarakhand are very colourful and distinctive, and are the blend of various natural, social and cultural factors. Though, cross culture around the world because of globalization left its impact on every minor component of rituals. The people of Uttarakhand celebrate all the major Indian festivals along with their harmonizing food. The Culture of Uttarakhand has its roots in pre-history and has passed through the millennia, incorporating the influences of changed food habits. The essence of the past remained unchanged with worship for Nature and the celebration of life being its fundamental belief.

The people of Uttarakhand also feel the need of change in life style along with the world. It not merely affects the work habits, but the food habit accordingly. Lots of modifications have been observed in the required commodities for the food production units. It resulted the import and production of versatile cereals and amusement of own indigenous commodities. Some of the prime commodities and ritual foods are now about to extinction. There is a need of research and development for the regional recipes, which could save the nutritional aspects of indigenous commodities and food. This paper exposes the fact about versatile use of our indigenous commodity, product and food. This paper also elucidates the importance of food matching with rituals of particular region.

KEYWORDS: Rituals, Globalization, Harmonizing Food, Change in Life Style, Indigenous Commodities and Food, Research and Development for the recipes.

Introduction

The foods of a region and state represent the rituals and festival. The applications of indigenous commodities in food also symbolize the production capacity of that land. They

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play a major role in local diet as a need not only for taste but also for the physical fitness along with climatic conditions. In the epoch of development and urbanization, everybody admits a need of change in life style to make compatible along with the world. Hence people leave their own places for a while and move towards urban-life and adopt themselves to fit in a global community.

Globalization has influenced many aspects of human activity, including food production and consumption (Lang, 1999; Wilhelmina, et al., 2010). Globalization, it may be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens, 1990). Human mobility, which includes movements associated with migration, immigration and tourism, has significant impact on globalization of food (Inglis & Gimlin, 2009). The concept of globalization is highly relevant for studies of food in the context of tourism. The modification and development in the original recipes results "hybrid food culture", in which the essence of originality gradually disappears. The phenomenon is not measurable in a short period of time, but the results come after a generation. Consequently the food which is attached to any custom or festival gets a replacement by the modified or hybrid or even totally changed item.

Role of Indigenous Crops

Indigenous crops play important role in human nutrition, preventing diseases and contributing to the development and prosperity along with retaining the regional culture. Native fruits and vegetables are rich source of vitamins, minerals, proteins and carbohydrates that are essential in human diet. Spices and crops enhance aesthetic value of our environment while medicinal crops yield pharmaceutical constituents (Tuteja, 2013). The indigenous food commodity comprises a vast range of cereals, grains, spices, lentils, herbs, fruits, flowers and many more to be added. All of these products play their major roles to sustain the traditions and customs attached with the prepared food. The natives of state used to have a fixed pattern of agriculture and follow a routine work for harvesting and storage of these commodities. Their uses in food preparation go through with the season and gives glance of tradition application in customs and festivals.

Study Area

Uttarakhand is a region with great ethnic diversity. Though nobody can be called a native here, there are tribes and villages of people who have no other place to relate to. They are mostly dependent on agriculture and handicrafts. The economy revolves around the fairs that are held all round the year. Uttarakhand is divided into two major regions called Garhwal and Kumaon, on the basis of linguistic and geographic diversity. Uttarakhand boast of apart from the Garhwali and Kumaoni people, the other tribes that exist in Uttarakhand are Jadh, Marcha,

Tolcha, Shauka, Buksha, Tharu, Jaunsari, Bhotia, Raji and Gujjar (Majumdar and Madan, 1970; Pati, 1991). These people around Uttarakhand are engaged in different occupations. Caste wise, people in Uttarakhand can be divided into Kol-Doms, Khasi Rajput, Khasi Brahmin, Immigrant Rajput, Immigrant Brahmin and lastly people who don't believe in caste systems such as Bhotias and other such tribes. Apart from the local tribes, people of Uttarakhand also comprise of Punjabis, Nepalis, Bengalis and Tibetans. Uttarakhand people follow many religions. But the majority of the population follows Hinduism which is followed by Islam. The other religions adopted by people at Uttarakhand are Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism.

Uttarakhand has a cultured and colourful society. The religious, social and cultural urges of the people of Uttarakhand find an expression in various fairs and festivals, which are in turn closely linked to the social and economic activities of the region.

Background of Uttarakhand Indigenous Commodities

Agriculture is one of the most significant sectors of the economy of Uttarakhand and Agro food processing is one of the most important industries of the state. To boost the agro food processing industries agri-exports zones have been setup in the state for leechi, horticulture, herbs, medicinal plants and basmati rice. Fruits like apple, orange, pear, peach and plum are grown widely in the state giving immense opportunity for food processing industry. Agriculture is largely rain-fed and traditional farming systems like the 'Barahanja' (twelve grains grown together and harvested at different times) have sustained man an animal over centuries. Traditional farming systems are highlighted by the use of forest leaf litter for compost making exchange of seeds and indigenous traditional knowledge. However the mountains terrain, large Forest cover and fragmented holdings have enforced a system of agriculture that is mainly 'subsistence'. Due to this marginality, most of Uttarakhand remained untouched by modern agriculture systems.

Indigenous people have a vast knowledge of, and capacity for, developing innovative practices and products from their environment. Indigenous knowledge grows from close interdependence between knowledge, land, environment and other aspects of culture in indigenous societies, and the oral transmission of knowledge in accordance with well understood cultural principles and rules regarding secrecy and sacredness that govern the management of knowledge (Tripathi, 2000). Maintaining traditional knowledge in the face of extensive modern commodities and diminishing folklore is imperative (Abbas, 1992) as such wisdom in the past has proved to be the key for inventing wonder food for modern palates.

This exclusion in turn, led to the preservation and cultivation of diverse varieties of food grains which are now almost extinct elsewhere. The crop diversity in Uttarakhand is very high and about fourty different crop species comprising cereals, pseudo cereals, millets, pulses, oilseeds etc. and their cultivation is according to altitudinal gradient and ecology of the region.

Indigenous crops of the area play vital role as food security in this region. Such crops are considered as 'motanaj' raw food or poor man's diet. Variety of millets viz. **mandwa** or **ragi** (finger millet); **jhangora** (barnyard millet); **kauni** (fox tail millet); **chaulai** (amaranth); **bathwa** (chenopodium) and **oggal** (buckwheat) having high nutritive food value found in the state. (Rawat and Bhatt, 2002).

Food Culture of Uttarakhand

Food culture varies across Uttarakhand and is governed largely by the accessibility of the area concerned. To meet the requirement of food for subsistence, local communities have identified a large number of plant species from the wild natural stand. In order to ensure the food and nutritional requirement local farming communities have encouraged the utilization of cultivated as well as wild edible plant species, available in the surrounding environment (Arora and Pandey, 1996). Villages at higher altitude rarely have access to fresh vegetables and fruit, so meat- often sundried- is an important constituent of the diet, along with plenty of locally brewed liquor to ward off the winter chills. Coarse, local grains such as "**mandua**" and "**barley**" are consumed more than wheat or rice, both of which are scarce. Wild edible plants constitute a large portion of food consumed by local inhabitants in tribal and hilly areas. Local people have wonderful skill to identify these, their palatability, products and preparations. In the lower hills, vegetables and lowland grains like wheat, rice and lentils are consumed more commonly; the incidence of vegetarianism is also much higher than in the colder parts of the state. The use of dairy products is fairly limited, and it can be easily seen the endless glasses of tea which make up a normal day in the life of a Pahari villager.

Diversification of food recipes is a major specialty of the region. Crops grown in the region and surrounding plant species are the sources of raw material for preparation of food recipes. The large number of crops and wild edible plant species are the contributing factors to a large number of traditional food recipes for the subsistence needs for local inhabitants. Traditional food of Uttarakhand can be divided into following categories in which **sugar**, **jagri** and **ghee** are main ingredients for sweet dishes and **salt**, **vegetable oil**, **chillies** and other spices are commonly used in each vegetable and other preparations. Traditional staple food recipes from cereals can be noted as **Chaulai ka bhaat** (Amaranth), **Kutu ki roti** (Buckwheat), **Jhangora ka bhaat** (Burnyard millet), **Jhangora ki roti** (Burnyard millet flour), **Madua ki roti** (Finger millet flower), **Lesuwa roti** (Finger millet and wheat flour), **Kauni ka bhaat** (Dehusked Foxtail millet), **Kauni ki roti** (Dehusked Foxtail millet), **Ginjada** (Dehusked Foxtail millet and black soyabean), **Tilkuta** (Rice, Black gram and sesame), **Meetha Bhaat** (Rice and Jagri), **Chhachhiya** (Rice and curd), **Chhola roti** (Wheat flour, jagri and ghee), **Chhoi** or **Chhabua** (Wheat flour, jagri and ghee), **Mash ki bedu roti** (Wheat flour, Black gram), **Gahat ki bedu roti** (Wheat flour, Horse gram), **Lobia ki bedu roti** (Wheat flour, Cow peas), **Gurush ki bedu roti** (Wheat flour and Rice bean), **Joula** or **Bhatia** (Rice, Black Soyabean).

Dishes made in the traditional recipes from pulses are **Bhat ke dubke** (Black seeded Soyabean), **Gahat ke dubke** (Horsegram), **Urad ka chaise** (Blackgram), **Lobia ka chaise** (Cowpeas), **Chutkani** (Black seeded soybean) and **Gahat ki dal** (Horsegram, heeng). Few of the traditional sweet dishes from Uttarakhand may be named as **Chaulai ki kheer** (Amaranth seeds in milk), **Chaulai ka halwa** (Amaranth seeds with coconut husk), **Ogal** or **phaphar ka halwa** (Buckwheat), **Jhangora ka halwa** (Barnyard millet in milk), **Kauni ki kheer** (Foxtail millet in milk), **Madua ki badi** (Finger millet and jagri), **Jhangora ka halwa** (Barnyard millet and jagri), **Chamchuda** (Rice), **Puwe** (Wheat flour), **Gehun ki khumani** (Wheat and milk), **Makka ki Khumani** (Maize and milk), **Makki ka chhabua** (Green Maize seeds), **Signal** (Rice and udal roots), **Til ka pin** (Sesame seeds), **Arsa** (Rice) **Leta** or **Lapsi** (Wheat flour and milk), **Methi ke laddu** (Fenugreek seeds and besan), **Kanaka** (Wheat and Milk) and **Kaddu ka halwa** (Matured pumpkin, cheese nuts). There are many recipes used as substitute of the items, which are meagerly produced in the region. (Mehta, Negi, Ojha: 2009). Each of the recipes plays the significant role in harmonization with the weather and changing climatic conditions.

The present study seeks for the scope to retain the traditional food recipes in the fast era of globalization, where everything needs an intention to change its present state of art.

The Effects on Modern Food Habits on Uttarakhand

Globalization killed the meaning of traditional food. By spreading too many restaurants in the cities the traditional food has changed effectively. Traditional shops nowadays are with no earnings due to the spread of junk food restaurants. Globalization can take the countries off their traditions by spreading the junk food, or sometimes they can trade the traditional food but in a fast food restaurants. Changing traditions can affect the cultures and the build of the new generations. Fast food restaurants like **KFC**, **McDonalds**, **Pizza Hut**, **Dominos**, **Café Coffee Day** are the examples, which affects the traditions in India and in Uttarakhand too because of their tempting foods in the restaurant. These foods neither suits with the climatic conditions of the state nor the nutritional value as of our requirement. Children are very influenced by these new food traditions easily. Traditional food are being affected in terms that people will no longer interest to eat from the traditional popular restaurants. In the Pahadi traditions, people used to gather for dinner and lunch. But after the spread of the junk food, every member in the family prefers to order or go to the nearest restaurant to have food.

People are not only even habituated to the restaurants; the multi-national companies reached to the home of food-lovers. Now-a-days, it can be easily seen that the kitchen cabinet is loaded with **Tomato sauce**, **Jams**, **Squash**, **Tinned** and **Bottles** food items and even **ready-made masalas**. The refrigerators are loaded with butter, cheese and semi-finished packed foods.

Outcomes of Changes by the Food Habits

As mentioned in earlier, we see the results of the gradual changes after a generation in any culture. It happens also with the food culture. The hill state, Uttarakhand can never be considered as an exception. The food habit and preparation of various dishes depend upon the availability of crops and surrounding vegetation. Crops grown in the region and surrounding plant species are the sources of raw material for preparation of food recipes. The large number of crops and wild edible plant species are the contributing factors to a large number of traditional food recipes for subsistence need for local inhabitants. Traditional foods of Uttarakhand are a very good combination of available millets, pulses and other material.

The productivity of pulses is recorded gradually reduced in the region. Pulses are grown as mixed with major cereals and minor millets crops. There are a total of fifteen pulses and grain legumes grown in the region, but some pulses such as **black soyabean** (bhat), **horsegram**, **blackgram** and **cowpeas** are produced well in the hill terraces (Mehta, Negi, Ojha: 2009).

There are various reasons for low productivity of the staple food in this region. Not proper attention of the state government is one of the prime factors for deviation of the cultivation of staple crops. The Government's effort for promotional policies in the production of staple traditional crops is very negligible. Fast urbanization of this hilly state also demotivates the farmers, as they are not able to recover the cost incurred in production of the crops, which are considered as out of demand. They easily turn towards the agriculture, which yields comparatively higher profit margin. The cultivation of hybrid variety of paddy, wheat and spices are now-a-days seen in the outer-skirts of city and even in the villages. This also turned down the food habits of people of Uttarakhand.

Globalization, in the form of modern food trend is the main culprit for harming the rituals of natives of any place in India. The extreme hill regions are not left untouched from its ill effects. The natives use to visit across the world for their livelihood and catch the cross culture very easily, as it is required for that time. But when they come back to their land, they carry the changed food habits. The **flours of maze, amaranth, finger millet, foxtail millet, buckwheat** etc are replaced with **wheat flour** and sometimes **refined wheat flour** (maida). The high fiber content in food is considered as rough texture; and therefore their substitute is being searched for. **Mustard oil** is replaced by **olive oil, palm oil or sun-flour oil**. **Jhangora rice** preparation is substituted by polished rice available in market. The world famous **Basmati rice** of Dehradun is at the edge of extinction. Even the locals of Dehradun are not able to get the same rice, what they used to grow a decade ago. Fortunately it was a part of daily diet.

The advertisements on television and through various media do play the major role in changing the mind set of new generation for making then health conscious and body figure. Junk foods like **pizza, burger, sandwich, potato and cheese fries** are very popular not only in cities, but they extend towards the rural and sub-urban areas.

Now advertisements teach about Cadbury celebrations for all festivals and occasions. Cheese fries are replacing **puwa** and **pakodies**. **Chutney**, undoubtedly the main digestives and accompaniments with Indian foods are swapped by **Ketchups** and other **tomato dips**. We can often see the now exchanging the readymade sweet products and mithaies in the festivals of **Holi** and **Deewali**. Hardly anybody bothers to prepare the products in the kitchen. **Urad-dal badi**, **moongodi** or **puwa** are difficult to be find-out in maximum home even in the festivals. Yes, **potato-chips**, **nuggets** or **dry snacks**-preparation like **Farsan** used to welcome the guest in friends and relatives home. The bottled **cold drinks** and **soft drinks** sold by multinational companies are very easily accessible and the result behind it, we are now in the condition to fail to spot **Thandai**, **Aam panna**, **Pallar**, **Sharbat** etc. Rarely people will found the pakories are made by flowers of **Sahjan phalli** and **Kachnaar**.

These traditional foods have relevance with the seasons and they play a major role for protecting the ill effects of seasonal changes.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to understand the evaporating essence of traditional touch in our daily meal. Indigenous crops and products are not only cheap sources in our environment and easily available; the biological systems of our body are moreover based on their uses as the food. They seem to be best produced grains in our land. Somewhere, we feel a need them in our daily diet. In the era of vast competitions, our traditional recipes must be protected with the efforts of entrepreneurs, supported by policies of State Govt. Universities and institutes can play their major parts by organizing the food festivals. The research and development in traditional recipes is required to represent the harmonization of food with the diverse seasonal fluctuations in this hill state along with the applications of their therapeutic use. The attentions towards retaining tradition foods will not only help to preserve the soul of rituals in Uttarakhand, but it will also provide a backbone for continuation through the present generation to next generations.

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