



Food habit and food preparation among the Hill Kharia of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha: An anthropological study

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Abstract

India is a land of numerous culture and people. Anthropologically, Odisha is one of the most fascinating states in India. There are as many as 62 different tribal communities and 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) inhabiting the state. They have a very interesting history of origin, custom and social practices. The Hill Kharia is one of such group (PVTGs) located mainly in Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Sundergarh, Keonjhar and Dhenkanal district of Odisha (India). However, the Majority of its population is limited to Similipal National Park and other hilly and forest region of Mayurbhanj district. They are semi-nomadic and fully depend upon the forest for their livelihood. The present study was planned with the objective to access the food Habit and food preparation of the Hill Kharias and evaluation of some of the custom and traditional food processes adopted by them. Eighteen villages were randomly selected from eight Gram Panchayat of two Development block of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha (India). Food habit and food preparation are greatly influenced by the beliefs, traditions, customs and taboos of the Hill Kharia Society. All the respondents were non-vegetarian. Due to the lower economic condition, they cannot afford the foods like cow milk. In addition to the above, for this study data collected regarding other important foods during the various physiological conditions such as Pregnancy, Lactation, and Illness. While consumption of Alcohol plays a very important role in every occasion. Similipal Biosphere is a rich habitat of natural foods, which promote food security, nutrition, and health of the native people.

Keywords: hill Kharia, food habit, food belief, Mayurbhanj, alcohol, tobacco, smoking

Introduction

Tribals living in remote areas have a better health status and more balanced food than those living in less remote areas (Chaudhuri, 1986) ^[1]. Again, some diseases may be more common in some areas but they remain controlled because of certain food habits. The food habit is based on local availability of vegetables, which has been generated through tradition. Thus, food is one of the most vital necessities of life from prenatal stage to extreme old age. It is prerequisite for nutrition, which nourishes the body and it is the main source for the subsistence of the human body. Food is anything eaten or drunk, which yields heat and energy for building up of new tissues as well as for regulation of the metabolic process. The chief function of the food is to supply materials to meet the physiological needs and serves social and psychological functions of the body (Shukla and Rastogi, 2008) ^[16]. Food habit of a community is influenced largely by climate of the region, cultural practices, and prevailing beliefs and superstitions. Local available for certain food items has a direct bearing on food consumed. Socioeconomic variations determine the quantity and quality of food consumed. Food habit is an essential aspect of man's basic needs and extremely vital, that what one eats should be nutritious and wholesome for his health during once entire life. Culture is the pervasive foundation that underlies all food choice (Sengupta, 1980) ^[15]. The dietary pattern of the tribes of India under various agro-climatic conditions in different isolated regions may vary widely. Belief, customs and traditions influence the general

patterns to influence the general pattern of living in any community. The cultural pattern of each community determines the nature and extent of food behaviour found in the area (Randall and Sanjur, 1981) ^[11].

The knowledge of availability of food resources used by man has enabled him to survive in unpleasant climate. Tribals are living as part of nature and exploit nature to meet their food demands. Some of their foods are uncommon to us. Some of their foods may be nutritionally rich and selectively used for bringing nutritionally superior variety through generic manipulation. Therefore, nutrient evaluation, of the local foods and traditional food processes adopted by the tribal, provide an important tool for assessing actual nutrient contribution from their diets (Rajyalakshmi, 1999) ^[10].

The present study was carried out in the two development blocks of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, namely Bijatala and Jashipur where the Hill Kharia population is concentrated. The Hill Kharia is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The tribe has been subdivided into three major sections based on their geographical location, group identity, and relative level of socio-economic development, such as, a) Pahari Kharia or Hill Kharia, b) Dheliki Kharia, and c) Dudh Kharia. While the *Delkhi* and *Dudh* sections represent a relatively advanced culture with their settled agricultural economic and occupational diversification. However, the Hill Kharia or Pahari Kharias live in a primitive condition, pursuing a forest-based subsistence economic and more or less a semi-nomadic lifestyle.

The Hill Kharias are largely concentrated in and around the Similipal Biosphere and in other few Hills and forest regions of Mayurbhanj District, Odisha. Generally, their settlements are situated at the foothills but neither at the top nor on the slope. They are the pre-agricultural and pre-literate community. Forest-based subsistence activities like food gathering and collection of minor forest produce have become the mainstay of their economy. Due to deforestation and Forest Right Act, hunting of wild animal is not so common in their area. The major objectives of the present study were to know the food habit and food preparation of the Hill Kharias and to evaluate some of the customs and traditional food processes adopted by them. The present research work was carried out in 18 Hill Kharia villages of both Bijatala and Jashipur Block of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. Observation and personal interview have taken to fulfil the purpose of this study.

Food habit of the Hill Kharia is very much enriched with the forest products, which they have collected from the jungle. Their food habit varies from season to season. Throughout the year, they depend on the forest. The various roots and tubers available in the forest and or small animals they hunt, supplied a balanced nutrition to them (Chaudhuri, 2012) [2]. They consume all types of green leafy vegetables leafy vegetables, roots, fruits, flesh and fishes. Whatever, they get in the forest they eat. Due to the poor financial condition, throughout the year they struggle for two full meals in a day. Rice is the Staple food of the Hill Kharia. Every day they prefer to eat two to three times in a day, but there is no hard and first rule for the children. They can eat when they feel hungry. Both water rice and rice they like most to eat, which is taken with salt, boil potatoes, green leafy vegetables chilli and edible green leafy vegetables collected from the forest. Villagers were saying that they visit jungle regularly for the collection of some minor forest produces like honey, seeds, resin, lack, tubers, arrowroot, firewood, fruits, sal and *tendu* leaves, and raw materials for making broomstick etc. There is no doubt that any disturbance in the ecosystem i.e. deforestation is likely to affect the balance and adversely affect the concerned population.

Food Intake and Diet-Related Practices by the Hill Kharias

Amongst the fruits, only seasonal fruits such as; *aam* (mango), *panas* (jackfruits), *jam kuli* (blackberry), *saiteema* (guava), *char*, *kendu* (*tendu*), *kusum* (*tol*), *mandaar* (custard apple), *joda* (papaya) etc. are consumed by them. In their courtyard, they build kitchen garden where they grow vegetables such as pumpkins, chillies, *kundree*, gourd, bitter guards, different types of green leafy vegetables (*Saag*) like; *khosola saag*, *leutia saag*, *sunsunia saag*, *sojona saag*, *poi saag* etc. for their own consumption. The Hill Kharias consume a variety of tubers, roots and nuts collected from the forest. They consumed directly by cooking the sweet varieties of tubers, whereas, for bitter types, they process it before cooking. The bitter type tubers called as *Pitaalu*. It is very bitter in raw condition. To remove its bitterness they just washed repeatedly, boiled, and eat by adding salt. However, in the case of arrowroot (*palua*), it is to be pounded to get the paste,

which is washed without boiling. It should be keeping in mind that the water is to change from time to time for complete the activities. Arrowroots (*Palua*) are the major food, collected from the forest. After all processed finished, *palua* is ready to eat. When the Hill Kharias, returned home from the forest and hill, they drink the water mixed Arrowroot. It helps to keep their stomach cool in every day. Vegetables like *baitalu*, *simb*, *laau*, tomatoes, *kundrus*, *korelas*, *janhi*, are chilli, etc are cultivated by them in their kitchen garden for their own consumption.

Food Production (Paddy Cultivation)

As like others, tribal and non-tribal people, the Hill Kharia also follow the crop pattern and technology of cultivation (Dash, 1999) [4]. Paddy is their main crop. However, the majority of them grow a few varieties of vegetables in the kitchen garden either surroundings the house site or adjacent to it. They follow the same procedure while operating the agricultural activities in the fields like the neighbouring tribes Santal, Kolha, Bathudi, and Bhuiyan. During these activities, they used various terminology regarding the agricultural activities in various stages like; *muthi deba*, *hol koriba*, *kodhana*, *duhuda*, *ugalo*, *samalo*, *dhan buna*, *mahi dia*, *rua*, *bihida*, *chhidana*, *dhan bachhha*, *balunga kata*, *dhan kata*, *bida bandha*, *potuli*, *dhan mada* etc. After the successful operation of the above-said stages, the paddy plants are press (*dhaan janka*) by down by the help of long bamboo rod and then reaping by sickle (*daa*). The paddy stalks are tied into bundles (*dhan bida*), which are carried house or to the threshing floor (*khola*) either on the head (by females) or by the help of carrying pole (*bahinga*) by males. On the threshing floor, they either beaten or trodden over by the cattle to separate the paddy from the straw. Whereas the paddy is taken the house, the straws are kept roof as well as for the utilization of cattle feed. All these above activities can only be possible through groups of people work together with sex-based labour division. Besides the cultivation of paddy, other activities usually do not require large numbers of man-power.

Food Process

Food processing practices, in general, seem to differ depending on various factors like tradition, culture and individual preferences. After the paddy, grains are separated from the straws, dust particles and others straws parts are removed with the help of winnowing fans (*Kula*). The paddy if threshed immediately after the harvest it requires to be dried under the sun. To getting rice from paddy, soaked in water for a few hour and half-boiled in big iron *Kadhai*, *dikchi*, or earthen pot *maati handi*. In per-boiled condition, they removed from the hearth and dried under the sun for one or two days continuously. They dried these paddies on village concrete road. Before drying the paddy, women first clean the place with cow dung and leave some hour for drying the place. After drying the place, she put a mat, which made of the plastic cemented bag or date leaves (*Chotaai/ Patia*). After drying, the paddy is husked mainly by the women. For this husking activities, the women normally using the mortar and pestle (*Dhaan Kutni/ Hemdosta*) or go to the rice mill (locally called as *Holaar*). Few of them prefer to husk the paddy by

Dhinki. Only one person is required when husking the paddy in mortar and pestle whenever, in the case of *dhinki*, it is very difficult to manage for a single person. Therefore, there is more than one person especially women required. In this, two types husking activities, Winnowing (*Kula*) can help to separate the dust particles and husk from the rice.

Cooking

Cooking practices of the Hill Kharias are said to be unique. Among the Hill Kharia, the cooking is mainly performed by boiling and roasting. Few women husked the rice, which contains much of its brown coating and is never washed before it is cooked and gruel is never thrown away after it is boiled. Rice is boiled. From child to old everyone likes to drinks this gruel after every meal. An ordinary meal consists of cooked rice and boiled potatoes, green leafy vegetables chilli and green leafy vegetables, added salt for giving extra tasty. Watered rice is very much preferable than the plain rice. Occasionally, they cook *dal*. The Hill Kharia with boil potatoes added salt, and green leafy vegetables chilly for extra flavour consumes both plain and watered rice (*Pokhala*). The green leafy vegetables and chilli are collected by the women from the forest and boiled the green leafy vegetables with a little turmeric and mustard to serve as curry. Vegetables are cooked by using mustard oil, spices (if available) added salt and chilly. Generally, during the festive time, all types of spices are used for prepare special dishes. Besides, these whenever, they get fish and meat; oil and spices are used for cooking. During the joyful event, they prepare special food, like boiled and baked rice cake (*Monda, Arisha, Kaakra, Chokuli/ Biripitha*). Along with these items, they also prepare *Mahul Pitha, Mansa Khechidi, Baitalu Pitha, Chakuli Pitha, Pitalu Kinda Sijha, Karadi Bhaja, Tal Pitha and Kolei Lotha* and many more.

Edible Oil Consumed for Cooking

The Hill Kharia generally used Mustard Oil for cooking purpose. During any occasion, they prefer to refine oil or *Dalda Ghee* for preparing the delicious cake. If they face any constraint to use Mustard oil then they cook without put oil.

Types of Fuel used

The main source of energy for cooking are wood, leaves, Kerosene, and electricity etc. the smoke emitted from these fuel poses serious health hazards for inhabitants. Few of them use gas and electric heater for cooking purpose.

Attitudes and Beliefs about food

Norms of Eating Habits

In India, the habit of washing hand before and after meals is common among the different communities including tribal and non-tribal people. Most of the people in every community washed their hand simply with water. However, in tribal areas, this practice is not so common. The woman normally cooks food. The other family members do not assist the woman. The woman who cooks the food she only serves to the family members. As like Hindus, in Hill Kharia the married women usually takes her meals in the same utensil in which her husband has just taken his meals, without washing the utensils. Mostly, all the members of the family including children eat together near *chulhi*. The habit of eating from the common utensils is unhygienic as this may transfer infection from a sick to a healthy individual.

Table 1: Serving of Food among the Family Members by the Respondents (N=300)

Norms of serving food	No.	%
They do not serve the same food to all members of the family	119	39.67
They serve the similar food to all the members of the family	181	60.33
Total	300	100

Norms of eating food and practices of drinking water are followed by the practice of serving the food among member in the family is another norm, which is important in understanding the health of the individual. The above table proves that of the 60.33% people state that they serve the similar food to all the members of the family. There is no difference is to the distribution of food items between male and female. In the overall sample, 39.67% % respondents, who do not serve the same food to all family members in the family, gave the reasons for the same in the multiple forms. The most important reason for this kind of behaviour is that the males need more energy as compared to females because they work hard (36.13%), and they are the chief earners in the family (29.41%). Another 7.56% of respondents responses that more food to males is that males will continue to stay at home thereby they will support the parents in old age. The common belief is that the girls are discriminated against getting food. It is also to be noted that about 22.69% of the respondents does not discriminate between male and female in serving the same food.

Table 2: Reasons for not serving similar food among the male and females in the family (Total 119 HH)

Reasons For Not Serving Similar Food	No.	%
Male are given more food, as they are hard worker and need more energy	43	36.13
Males are chief earners in the family	35	29.41
Sons are helpful in old age	09	7.56
If girls are given more healthy food they will grow fast and then early marriage	27	22.69
Not applicable	05	4.20
Total	119	100

After discussing the matter, amount, types and distribution of food, it turns to discuss the influence of evil spirits and bad eye on the food. This is an important belief in the tribal and rural area; therefore, attention should be required.

Effects of Evil Spirits and Bad Eyes on Food:

Superstitions and beliefs invariably influence the attitudes towards foods. Food habit and beliefs differ among the different tribes and even among the communities within the

tribes. Certain foods are prohibited from consumption by all, and in some cases, the food restrictions are determined by age, sex and physiological status and seasonal availability (Onuoha, 1982) [8]. A widely accepted belief connected with health and disease is the effect of the evil eye. Some individuals including certain animals are believed to be in possession of a certain amount of supernatural power. Children are considered to be most susceptible to the effect of evil spirit and a bad eye. However, it is not confined to them. It is believed that when a child is very beautiful and whose sun sign become weak, it is supposed to have a mysterious evil effect on its health. They identify the evil impact when

the child suffers from diarrhoea, dysentery, fever, cries loudly and continuously and becomes weak within a short period. In the village, the common observation was that when the child is under the influence of evil eye, he is not taken to the doctors, because the doctors do not know how to cure such evil spirits. Therefore, they never spend a single minute and move to the shaman or traditional healers, whom in their community called as *raulia/ gunia/ ojha* etc. On the contrary, the physician ridicules the patient and their relatives when they talk about it. They suggest for the therapy of *jhada phoonka* (blowing and whiffing) for such evil spirits.

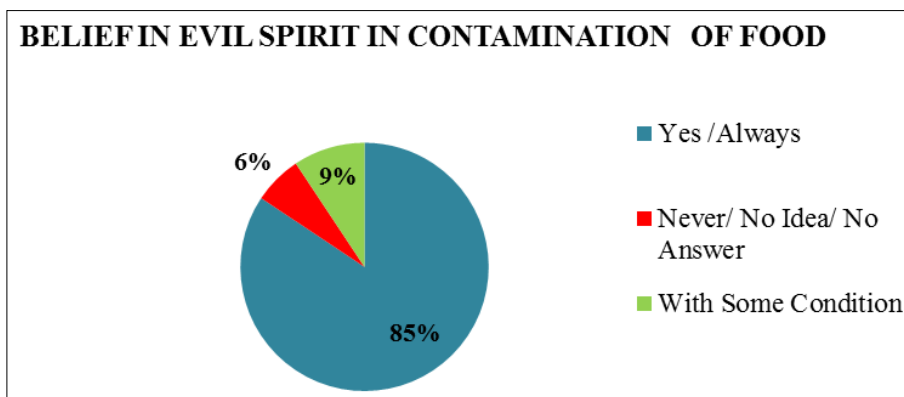


Fig 1: Belief in Evil Spirits in Contamination of Food

After identifying the belief about the evil spirits in the causation of certain ailments, certain practices about the belief in the evil spirits and bad eyes in relation to the food are also observed. These practices are the product of experiences for generations without any changes. It is interesting to note that even among the urban respondent's certain bad eye and evil spirits contaminate the food, which further results in certain types of illness. However, the belief in evil spirits and the bad eye is lower among the non-tribal people as compared to tribal.

Privacy on Food

On further interested, the respondents who had belief in evil spirits and bad eye gave multiple answers for the practices of

servicing the food among their members for avoiding the effect of evil spirits. The most frequent practices observed was to serve the food their members inside the house i.e. 91.67% where nobody from outside could watch them so that bad eye may not contaminate the quality of food. Out of the total household, this belief was confined to the delicious foods are only served inside the house. For example, 12.33% of the total people have such a view. Similar, a tendency 66.33% was found to hide the food prevalent among the Hill Kharia when someone from outsider comes in the house. It was believed that a child during breastfeeding can be contaminated or affect by bad eye. Therefore, the 45% viewed that mother should be feeding their baby inside the home or covered the baby when she does.

Table 3: Forms of special practices in serving the food reported by the respondents

Forms of practices related to food (Total- 300 HH)	Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%
Food is served inside the house	275	91.67	25	8.33
If somebody comes in the house from outside, then the food is hidden	199	66.33	101	33.67
Mother should be feeding her baby inside the house or covered the baby at the time breastfeeding	135	45.00	165	55.00
Only Delicious food is served inside the house	37	12.33	263	87.67

All types of green leafy vegetables like *Sujna, Marshi, Kamni, Khosola, Kundali, Pita Geema, Neem, Girli, Poi, Lau, Baitalu* etc. are consumed either boiled with water or fried with oil if available, added some pinch of salt and green leafy vegetables chilly for extra taste. Mushroom-like *paal/ Kuta Chotu, Bali Chotu, Rutka Chotu, Kodhan Chotu, Parav Chatu* etc. are consumed after washed in water. While washing mushroom, they add some turmeric and salt in water for proper clean and

boiled with water or fry with mustard oil. Green leafy vegetables jackfruit also prepared curry and eats. Some tubers may consume either roasted or fried with fire and oil. Yam (*Khambalu*) can be eaten both boiled and fried with oil. They prefer to eat both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. It is the general habit of the Hill Kharia that, they take their meals mostly in twice to thrice time in a day. But, they allow children to eat more times. However, consumption of non-

vegetarian food is largely depending on the availability. Earlier period, they wish to hunt the wild animal but now a day, due to introducing of Forest Right Act hunting and poacher has completely banned in this area. Most of the people in Jashipur and Bijatala who live nearer to river catch fish while they go for a bath in nearby *Bhandan*, *Khairi* or *Bankbal* River are mostly for personal consumption. Whatever they get like; fish, snail (*genda/ samuka/ jhinuk*), *chingudi* (prawn) bring home and cooked and eat on lunchtime. Along with rice, boiled potatoes are preferable by Hill Kharia. Apart from roasted potatoes Brinjal (*baigan*), ladyfinger (*bhendi*), tomatos (*bilati*) are mostly taken. Occasionally, they eat the meat of goat and chicken. The Hill Kharia consumes *Kaai / Kurkuti* (red Ant found in the tree) and *Jhodi poko* (one type of flying Ant found during the rainy day). It has noticed during the group discussion with villagers that whenever they go to the jungle for searching or collection of honey, resin or arrowroot, they often hunt jungle fowl (*Titer*).

Generally, the Hill Kharia have the habit of carrying their food along with them when they go to the forest for the collection of honey, resin, arrowroot and others edible items except for rainy season. However, during the rainy season, they do not prefer to take food in the morning then going to the agricultural field. In the midday, any members of the family, especially the female who cooks food, carry it to the field for the male workers if they working nearest to their home. Sometimes, children also carry food to the field. The workers eat the food under the shade of the tree (*chhaira*) or the *heeda* of the rice field and after a while start working again. They like to eat hot food because it removes their tiredness. Few of them refer to eat at home *mudhi* (puffed rice) and tea. When someone fails in illness, they may either make *ruti* or eat *chudaa* and *mudhi*. With the interaction of the other non-tribal people, they also drink tea, cold drinks. But, not a single household found who consume cow milk. There is no system of eating food with spoons, knives and forks in the villages. Foods are generally eaten with the help of hand. Washing hands is not so common before eating food. But, washing of hands is common after eating the food on a stone or wooden platform placed in front or the corner of the house.

Preservation of Food Items

The habit of storing excess food is more evident in the tribes living in the dense forest where more surpluses can be collected. However, the Hill Kharia does not preserve the items which daily consume. Those have enough grain mostly drying under direct sunlight. When the paddy is to be preserved as seed, it is kept inside a straw made pocket in round shape. This pocket wrapped around completely with a straw made rope. This is the type of unique pocket is locally called as *Pooda*. The Hill Kharia usually kept the rice in bags or earthen pot.

While Maize's (*maka*) are, preserve by hanging them in the kitchen compartment just above the hearth. Due to the contact of smoke and warmth of the hearth (*chulhi*), they remain well preserved. However, they get plenty of mushroom, green leafy vegetables; green leafy vegetables mangoes, tamarind and *mahul* are normally preserved by sun drying. After removed the upper layer (skin) of the green leafy vegetables mangoes, cut and remove its kernel, then washed and added salt then

drying under sunlight for few days. This taste as like the pickle but locally called as *aamsi* or *ambula*. Similarly, in the case of tamarind, after removing the outer cover of it has and removed its seed and keeping for long days by adding salt. The Hill Kharia likes to dry the *Barakoli* in a *dala* (a bamboo made pot) or on the mat on either their roof or floor. After drying, they cooked. They also were making a powder (*kuli gunda*) in mortar and pestle/ *dhinki*.

Mahula/ mahua flower plays an important role in their livelihood. They also preserve this flower after sundrying. And later on, they make liquor and cack (*Mahul Pitha*). The Hill Kharia like to preserve the surplus amount of fish as *Sukhua*. During the rainy or cloudy days, they are dried over the hearth on a *dala* or on a winnowing (*Kula*) as a hanging mode. Due to the warmth of the hearth, the fishes become dry. Honey can be preserved in a glass bottle for a long time. The sal resin, sal seeds, other seeds can also keep in a bag for a long time. The food materials are similarly kept in a bag and hanging on the wall. Some materials are kept in a container in an overhanging rope hanger as known as *seeka*. The *seeka* protect the food items from the contact of rat, ant, dogs, cat and fowl. While making the leaf plates and cup, they are dried completely under the sun. Therefore, it remains for several days without any damaged.

Food Customs

The pattern of Mean during Pleasure events

Food plays a very important role on every occasion. The specific type of meal is prepared on different occasions that too depend upon the customs, food habits, and availability in the particular area. The Hill Kharia who lives from hand to mouth celebrates these occasions rather with austerity. The important festivals are, *Phagu*, *Am Nuakhai*, *Karma Puja*, *Phool Bhangni*, *Chait*, *Makar Sankranti*, *Holi*, *Ram Navami*, *Raja Sankranti*, *Kalipuja*, *Jeth Nuakhaia* and *Durga puja* etc. The Hill Kharias focus their festivals and during the festivals days they must drink and prepare *Handia* and delicious food and cake, eat meat etc. marriage and birth occasions, are celebrated as pleasure events, with special preparations of food.

Patterns of mean during Sad Occasion (death)

When death occurs in Hill Kharia family, that family does not cook food on that day and next day. Neighbours feed the family during these days. They do not take any delicious food until the 10th days. During these days, they consumed only boiled food and added with salt and green leafy vegetables chillies. On the day of the eleventh, they prepared Rice Dal, Meat, Handia and serve the invited guest.

Restriction

Sometimes the Hill Kharia may follow some restriction regarding food intake. This is completely depending on individual and times. Generally, there are some restrictions for children intake to some green leafy vegetables, vegetables, rice, egg, meat etc. Pregnant women have strongly restriction to take *Bhakur* fish. Those Fishes are catching through fishing rod was strictly prohibition for pregnant women. For lactating women *poi saag*, brinjal, *biridali*, *vendi*, are banned. Even before the festival called *phool Bhnagni* (*Phagun Puja*) people

cannot take new leaves, fruits, flowers etc. from the tree. Similarly, until the Nuakhai parav complete, the Hill Kharia people could not eat new rice. If someone dies, until the death ceremony finished, the members of the deceased person should not take non-vegetarian food. Even the purification day, the adult members of the family and those who are present in this ceremony, they cannot take food and water until not completion of worship. Pumpkin (*Baitalu*) and *laau* are not eaten at this time. They have the taboo to take or eat the flesh of monkey.

The belief of hot and cold in food habit

It is stated that the one can stay healthy if she or he maintains the balance between the hot and cold forces. Diseases and illness occur when these opposing phenomena become unbalanced. Certain things such food, liquid or even states of nature are described as inherently hot or cold, depending upon the cultural definitions. Thus, the general rule is that one should balance the intake of hot with something cold and vice versa. It is also kept in mind that to be healthy, one must maintain a proper balance not only between fluids but also maintain them in proper amounts and densities. Thus, if nature of body is cold or in cold season one should avoid food, which increases the coldness in the body, for example, curd, cold drinks, radish, lemon, oranges, guava etc.

Certain foods were considered 'hot' (heat producing), certain 'cold' (foods which had a cooling effect on the body) and certain others natural (which were neither 'cold' nor 'hot'). Consumption of these foods in excess under inappropriate circumstances was believed to result in illness. For example consumption of lime or *palua* juice during cold season caused cold and tamarind caused pains in joints.

It was believed that a person was born with either 'hot' or 'cold' constitution of the body. A person with a 'hot' constitution should not consume 'hot' foods and a person with 'cold' nature of the body should not consume 'cold' foods. The nature of the body was different for different people. In one person's body might be more heat than cold. He should be careful about his diet for even a small quantity of hot foods if not balanced by any other food might create excessive heat in the body. A person, the nature of whose body was cold, would have to be careful in respect of consumption of cold foods. For instance, pumpkins (*Baitalu*) were considered flatulent. In preparation of these vegetables, *methi* seeds were essentials for counteraction. Pulses like *masoor dal*, black gram and vegetables like red pumpkin, and brinjals were regarded as flatulent. Certain foods were considered as neutral i.e. neither 'hot' nor 'cold'. They were *moong dal*, apples, *lau*, *karela*, and *patala*. These foods were also prescribed for many illnesses and during confinement.

Food Combination

People believe in 'hot' and 'cold' types of food and about the significance of association of these foods with the hot and cold constitution of the person have been discussed earlier. Besides these ideas pertaining to hotness or coldness of food, ideas about combinations of foods and drinks pertained to other qualities of foods also. It was believed that combinations of certain foods caused and aggravated certain ailments if not eaten moderately.

Drinking, Chewing and Smoking Habits among the Hill Kharia

The Habit of Alcohol Intake

Tribals generally consume alcoholic beverages. Alcohol plays a significant role in the social and religious life of some tribes of India (Rao, 1971) ^[12]. Cereal and millet-based liquor consumed by the tribals are said to be homebrewed-undistilled liquor. The millets based less alcoholic beverages are said to be nutritious providing protein, minerals and vitamins (Sen Gupta, 1962) ^[14]. Hill Kharias are extremely fond of *Handia*. Consumption of liquor is more or less a part of their food habits and became a part of their culture. Without country liquor locally called as *Handia* (Rice-beer), there is no meaning of celebration of any occasion. They believe *Handia* is God gifted. They do not prepare *handia* regularly rather they bought it from the Kols and Santal tribe. During the joyful event, they prepared *handia* to offer their ancestors and Gods and Goddesses. Men use this drink start from his daily life then gradually move towards the social life, economic life, religious life and his economic life.

In every stage of life, it's role very important. According to Hill Kharia, in day-to-day heavy and restless workload, they feel so tired; therefore, they prefer to take *Handia* and *Mahuli* (country liquor). After having a drink they feel relax and forget all sorrow and pain. Thus, liquor forms an essential component of the ways of life among the Hill Kharia. They prepare alcohol from the wildflower and seeds of *Mahul* (*Mahua*). *Mahul* flowers are said to be the basic ingredient in the preparation of liquors (Roy, 1976) ^[13]. Both *handia* and *Mahuli* have the significant value. Without country liquor, there is no entertainment or none of the ceremonies and festivals are performed. During the ceremony of the childbirth, marriage festivals and death ceremony are celebrated with *handia* and *mahuli*.

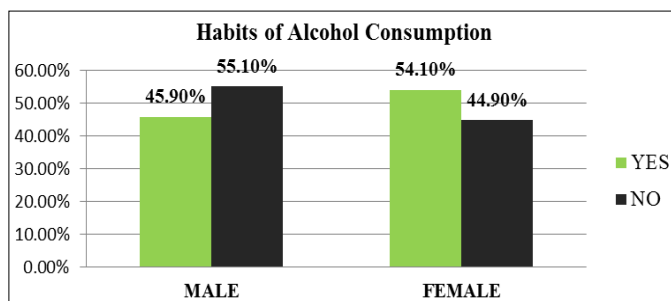


Fig 2: Habit of Alcohol Consumption of the Hill Kharias

The Habit of Tobacco Chewing

Chewing of tobacco is now common to all in all society. The younger generation are addicted to chewing tobacco in present days. The elder person of the Hill Kharia usually chews raw tobacco, whereas, the youth purchase from the local store. The older person crushed the raw tobacco (*Patra Khaini*) on a small flat piece of stone; they rubbed in the palm with lime (*Chuna*) to make a semi powder to chew. Both elder male and female usually brush their teeth by using the *Gudakhu*. Even the youth under the 13 years of age chewing the *Gutkha*, are now available in any store of the locality. All types of *Khiani*, *Pan Masala*, *Supari*, *Pudia*, *Telaul Bhang* are common chewing among the Hill Kharia.

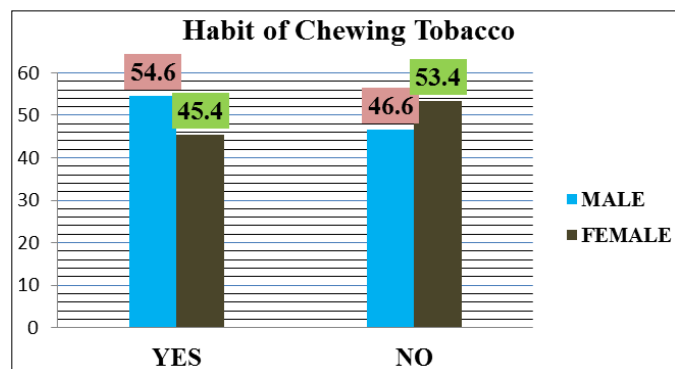


Fig 3: Habit of Chewing Tobacco Among the Hill Kharias

The Smoking Habit

Smoking is also prevalent among the Hill Kharia. For smoking, they seldom purchased *Bidi* from the market. Whenever they visit weekly market, they bought *bidi*. Otherwise, in daily life, they use *tendu/ sal* leaves with small rubbed tobacco and make role to make a *bidi* and light it with a piece of the fire taken from hearth (*chulhi*) and enjoy the smoke. Male members used to do smoke. However, only old women found do smoke. Out of the total studied population 36.2% (197) of the males used to smoking whereas, only a few females 5.4 (old women) found in smoking during field investigating (Showing Figure: 4).

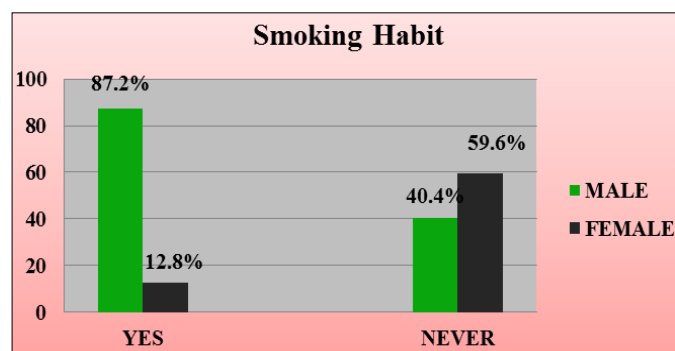


Fig 4: Smoking Habit of the Hill Kharias

Conclusion

With the context of Franz Boas, any activity has its own cultural context, either food, dress pattern, marriage and residence after marriage, family type, relationships, anything and everything. So with this, we can say the food habit and practices what they have is not only to satisfy the biological need of appetite but beyond that to maintain the health and to make the survival possible. Making use of natural resources with the possible ways also be considered as an adaptive mechanism for better survival and well-being. Thus, the food habits and social practices of Hill Kharias help them to lead a life in psychologically and culturally comfortable. However, the biological health depends upon the kind of nourishment the food habits provide. The food habits of Hill Kharias are deeply related to their lifestyle and are influenced by many socio-cultural and economic factors. The major part of their diet consists of fruits and green leafy vegetables, roots, tubers that are boiled and eaten. These provide them more nutrients than rice. Whatever rice a Hill Kharia eats contain more

vitamin than the polished rice consumed by others. They eat both meat and fish. They consume everything cooked, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian and follow two to three times meal pattern in a day. Due to low socio-economic status, the meal pattern may vary. They do not have the practice of consuming raw flesh. They use to cook outside of their houses. Cooking inside of their houses is unusual for them. Firewood are used for cooking and mostly collected from the nearby forest. Rice, alcohol, mutton forms the major part of their ceremonies. Without country liquor locally called as *Handia* (Rice-beer), there is no meaning of celebration of any occasion. Although milk is not tabooed among the Hill Kharias, because of Poverty none of them has taken it. Apart from this, they have some superstitious beliefs regarding food preparation and food serving. Among the Hill Kharia the married women usually takes her meals in the same utensil in which her husband has just taken his meals, without washing the utensils. They believed and practices of serving the food among their members for avoiding the effect of evil spirits. It was believed that a child during breastfeeding can be contaminated or affect by bad eye. Therefore, the mother feed her baby inside the home or covered the baby when she does. The beliefs on "Hot" and "Cold" in food habit and food combination are very important to maintain the balance of the body.

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