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Food habits and nutrition among Santals: A case study in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha

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Abstract

Sustainable development is a concurrent theme not only economics but also in other social science literatures. Sustainable development is about our home planet and its fabric of life. It's about the people and how we interact with each other. And, it's about our aspiration for prosperity and posterity. As per the UN resolution 2015, the goal of sustainable development focus clearly on alleviation of poverty, hunger and good health and wellbeing besides other issues. Hence, the alleviations of poverty and hunger needs sustained efforts for uninterrupted economic growth through increase in productivity and income mostly in the developing countries of the world. But there is more to develop than just economic growth unless the transformation of the society and the management of the environment are addressed integrally with economic growth, any attempt towards sustainable development will be jeopardized over the long run. Many economic, environmental and social processes knowledge, conflict, nutrition, disease, migration, pollution, finance have outcomes which have bearing on human wellbeing both directly and indirectly through their effect on growth. When social and environmental issues are neglected for a long period, the economic growth is affected and may have irreversible consequences. There is urgent need to focus not only in economic policy making but also identify many social issues and provide institutions along with commitment and changing attitude to address them early before problems become crises. More than three quarter of the world's population out of estimated six billions, live in developing countries of the world and nearly one million of them live in abject poverty. These people are deprived of minimum necessities of life and are undernourished and underweight. In spite of long continued efforts poverty through declining, still remains a challenge in many parts of India particularly in case of the tribal and other deprived classes. To provide the productive work and better quality of life to these people still remains a challenge and the challenge is daunting in deed. Unless these people are provided with balanced diet, safe drinking water, better education, and health facilities, the objective of sustainable development cannot be fulfilled in its proper prospective. A study was undertaken in the Morada block of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha with 150 respondents. The paper examine the consumption pattern of food on different occasion, food consumed in different stages of life and food consumed during illness along with the socio- economic status of Santal tribes. Their poor economic background as well as the low literacy particularly among women have been responsible for a food consumption pattern. Their food is rich in carbohydrate with low quantity proteins, vitamins and minerals. The poor diet is responsible for the nutritional deficiency diseases in tribal population, most particularly among the women and children. In spite of lots of steps by government and non-government agencies in improving child nutrition and healthcare, the problems still persist and need to be addressed through proper education and improvement in economy of Santals.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Santal, Diet, Nutrition

1. Introduction

Mayurbhanj – a district in northern Odisha historically famous as the "land of maharajas" is also known for its dominant tribal population, vibrant culture and the famous Similipal forest. Mayurbhanj is a border district with a total geographical area of 10,418 sq.kms and is situated on the northern boundary of the state with its district headquarters at Baripada. The district lies between 21° and 22° north latitude and 85° and 87° east longitude. Mayurbhanj district experiences a tropical climate with dense moist tropical forest. The soil of the district may be broadly classified into red soil and laterite soil. The district has nine major perennial rivers namely; Budhabalanga, Deo, Sunei, Gangahar, Jambhira, Kharjhai, Khairibhadan, Bankabal, Katara and their tributaries which originated mainly from Similipal hills. Forest area of 4392 sq.kms provided a vital strength to the district to attain sustainable development. Mayurbhanj

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is one of the tribal dominated district of Odisha, which has been declared as the fully scheduled district of the state. Demographic features of communities of Mayurbhanj the scheduled tribes constitutes 22.21% of total population in Odisha. The tribes of the state are divided into 62 subgroups of which 18 live in Mayurbhanj district. Of the total population in the district tribal constitutes 67.87% in 1991 which came down to 56.59% in 2001 and rose to 58.72% in 2011. The major tribes in the district are Santals. The Santals one of the populous tribal communities of Odisha and are mainly found in the district of Mayurbhanj. The word Santals is derived from two words Santa meaning calm and peaceful and Ala meaning man.

Food refers to anything which nourishes the body. It would obviously include solids, semisolids and liquids which can be consumed to sustain the body and keeps it healthy. Food in any society is basically an indispensable means of survival and it is integral parts of our social existence and serves an important function in our daily life (Mark 2007). Food habit of community are influenced by geographical as well as social surroundings (Dhar 2010). Food habits of tribal in different region are quite different from the other parts of the country as food habits of many tribal groups are mostly monotonous and local based (Varadharajan, 2010). The dietary habit is in relation to their socio-economic condition (Subarnalata Sahoo and Basumati Panda, 2005). Food habits and practice among the Santals are fully dependent on their availability in their surroundings (Biswajit Parida and Ratnawali, 2016). In the simpler communities like tribes their consumption pattern is related to their cultural context. It includes regular food, seasonal food, health foods and food offered to Deities. Occasion related to life cycle like birth, marriage, death etc. Ecological degradation and influence of other communities resulted in a lot of changes in food pattern of Santal people.

2. Objective of The Study

- a. To study the socio-economic status.
- b. To analyze the food consumption pattern.
- c. To know the food consumed in different stages of life and during illness.

3. Review of Literature

Review of literature is an essential aspect of research. A number of scholars have made significant contribution towards study of food habits of communities. Mahadevan (1962) [5] reported that the deep rooted ethnic and cultural practice influence the choice of food of rural and urban people as well but economic condition had a significant and contributing factor to determine the choice of food of any community. Yotopoulos (1985) [11] emphasized the concept of grain can be consumed into two forms- first direct grain consumption as rice, roti, bread etc., and second indirect grain consumption as animal products embodying definite quantity of feed-grain (meat, eggs, fish and dairy products). Another component of indirect grain demand is processed food, alcohol and fuel. Marak has emphasized that concept of food consumption is influenced by many factors such as; socio-economic status, culture, religion, education, ignorance, food beliefs and habits. Rajalaxmi (1999) [8] has suggested that food habit is different from people to people, region to region and country to country. Food processing practices, in general seem to differ depending on various factors like tradition, culture and individual preferences. Processing in addition to improving the taste of food products, add variety and diversity in food habits, and also improves the nutrition. She is also

opinioned that understanding the qualitative aspects of tribal food processing could help in proper planning, motivating and evaluation of nutrition education programs intended for the community. Hembrom (1996) [3] the food of Santal is as simple as their life. Unlike the main stream community, they don't include much spices and oil into their diet as they live closer to nature and adoption of food available in their surroundings. Saikia (2013) [9] has examined that food habits of a community and hold the view that it is influenced by geographical as well as social surroundings and its procurement, while preservation are conditioned by the climate, varying seasons, community size, economic condition, infrastructure and technological knowledge. Jama (2002) [4] food consumption pattern can be defined as the recognizable ways of eating foods. Tribal people tend to adhere to their old eating pattern rather than venturing to seek new and more proper eating habits. In order to maintain healthful diets, variety and balance of foods from all food groups and moderate consumption of all food items is very important.

4. Methodology of The Study

Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. The proper methodology is helpful for valid inference. For the present empirical study, various methods are used for a deep understanding of food habits among the Santals.

Selection of the study area

Mayurbhanj district is one of the tribal domain district of Odisha. The present research work was undertaken the Santals of Morada block. This block is about 30 km from the district headquarter of Baripada. Three villages were selected for the study namely; Chilbasa, Chuasole and Bhalukchua of Morada block of Mayurbhanj district.

Research Design

A research design is the arrangement of condition for the collection and analysis of the data. The present study aims to know the food habits of Santal tribes of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. Hence for the purpose of the study a descriptive research design is most suitable and it was followed while carrying out the research.

Sampling Design

The collection of data was done by survey method from the Chilbasa, Chuasole and Bhalukchua village of Morada block. For the collection of data 150 households were selected as sample and random sampling method was adopted. This study was carried out from December 2018 to January 2019. Schedule was prepared for the collection of information on food consumption pattern of the Santal tribe.

Tools and Techniques used

For the collection of data one interview schedule has been prepared which contains various information as family information, socio-economic status, and consumption pattern, food consumed during different stages and during illness. Most of the information were collected by interview method and observation method.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

The quantitative data from the survey were compiled in MS excel and analysis into tabular and graphical form. The statistical method percentage is used.

Major Findings of The Study

Majority of the sample belonged to nuclear family and the family size consisted of 4 to 6 members. The major occupation is casual labor belonged to the income group of 3000 to 5000 Rs. per month. Most of them were belonged to low income group lived in kaccha house. Most of the sample possessed less than one hector of land. Majority of the respondents' education level was up to primary school.

All Santals took both vegetables and non-veg. Most of them took meals three times in a day. Parboiled rice is the staple food and the source is agriculture. All the Santals consumed red gram, only few of them used green gram along with red gram. All the Santals consumed tomato, cabbage, brinjal, cauliflower, ladies finger, pumpkin, bitter gourd, ground gourd, kunduri, papaya subjected to seasonal availability. All the sample consumed mustard leaves, curry leaves, Katha saga. They consumed drumstick leaves more, source was agriculture and forest trees. Santal used mustard oil, only few used refined oil, source is Hata. Santal used cumin and mustard seeds as spices. In fleshy food majority of the respondents consumed occasionally according to the availability. In flesh they took fish, chicken, mutton, beat, pork, crab, deer, jackal meat, dry fish, rabbit, bird, reptile, frog and red ant. Majority consumed black tea. All the Santals consumed Handia. Some of them consumed Dua, Pika and Bidi. Since their purchasing power is low, they could not provide different categories of diet to different age groups. Lack of knowledge about nutrition ensures that different age group are not provided with different diets. During the illness, they consumed food which is available to them. They consumed boiled rice with veg and non-veg curry at the time of fever and cold, they avoid water rice in this period. At the time of Diarrhea and Dysentery they took soft rice and torani. At the time of Measles, Mumps, Chickenpox they consumed boiled rice and boiled veg and avoid non-veg at this time. At the time of body pain, they consume boiled rice, veg or non-veg curry.

5. Conclusion

Food habits among the Santals depend on availability of food in their surroundings. They collect most of the food from the forest and depend on agriculture, kitchen garden. They hunt animals. Rice is the only staple food they consume. Preparation of rice and eating rice is different as compared to other tribes they do not remove the starch from the rice. The consumption of pulses is very small quantity, 2 to 3 times in a week which is not adequate. Vegetable consumption is very limited. According to their family size they were not consuming proper amount. Oil is also limited. They don't consume milk and milk products. Sometimes their meals go without vegetables especially at the time of monsoon. They really suffer a lot. Low economic status influences the food consumption. Their food is only rich in carbohydrates, lack in other nutrients like protein, vitamins, fat and minerals, which affect their health. During the illness period they consume the things available to them. As a result the children as well as the adults suffer from many deficiency diseases. The traditional form of agriculture adopted by the Santals failed to provide them enough food for the entire year. Hence, the government's 1 rupee/kg rice supply scheme has been beneficial for making rice available for home consumption.

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