



“CUISINE AND CULTURE: A HISTORY OF FOOD AND PEOPLE OF WESTERN ODISHA”

Sasmita Rani Shasini*

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Suchismita Naik†

Assistant Professor, Ph.D Research Scholar
Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India

Abstract

Among different elements of culture, food is one, which contribution to shape and define the culture is very big. The anthropological study of food reveals diversifying influence of food on culture and through it, on society. With differing culture, food practices and habits also differ, so much so that that different religion gives differing importance to different foods. By studying the food habits of these religions, we can see the reflection of cultural symbolism of food on it. Not only religion but the diversity of cuisines can also be seen in the caste system that follows the same notion. Focusing our study on the Western Odisha region of Odisha, India, we can observe this phenomenon with our eye. This region comes under the plateau region, hence filled with forest and hill tracts. The majority of people of this region are tribals. Due to co-habitation of tribals and others in this region, great cultural diversity is seen. These cultural diversities are reflected on its food practices. This region is unique for the unique agricultural related festivals. In these festivals food plays a major role. The people of this region eat wide-varieties of food and drinks. The major food ingredients are specifically the wide varieties of fruits, vegetables, other edible forest products and animal meat found in this region. Even the food etiquettes followed by the people of this region are different from others. Forest products, such as leaves are majorly use during festivities as platters. The objective of this study is to study the unique cuisine of this region to study the uniqueness of their culture from other region

* Corresponding Author

Sasmita Rani Shasini, Assistant Professor, School of History, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India, PIN-768004

Email Id- sasmitahcu@gmail.com

† Suchismita Naik, Ph.D. Research Scholar, School of History, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India, PIN-768004

Email Id- suchismitanaik24@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Odisha is located in the eastern coast of India, between 17° 49' N to 22° 34' N latitudes and 81° 27' E and 87° 29' E longitudes.¹ Odisha constitutes of 4.74% of the total geographical area of India. The Bay of Bengal to the east, Bengal and Jharkhand to the northeast, Madhya Pradesh to the west, and Andhra Pradesh to the south serve as its boundaries. Odisha's current geographical structure was created in the recent past when the Odisha state took its final shape on India's map, on January 1, 1949, after the fusion of Mayurbhanj Princely State with it.² At present, the total geographical area of Odisha state is 1,55,707 sq. km. it is divided into 30 districts. Out of the entire state, the ten districts that make up the western part of Odisha—Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Bargarh, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Boudh and Athmallik sub-division of Angul district —have developed a distinctive identity of their own due to their unique social and cultural customs as compared to other regions.³

The undivided four districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi, Sambalpur, and Sundargarh were all parts of Dakshina Kosala along with Bilaspur and Raipur, which was a significant jana-pada in north India in pre-Mauryan Period.⁴ Its origins may be traced back to the Mahabharat and the Buddhist era.⁵ The boundaries of Dakshina Kosala varied in different period of times as historical royal families were ruling over it in different periods. Those dynasties were the Nalas, the Sarbapuriyas, the Panduvansis or Somavamsis, the Teluguchodas, the Kalachuris, the Gangas, the Chauhans, the Bhanjas, the Nagas, the Paramara and the Kadambas, etc.⁶ The Afghans ruled Odisha from 1568 till they lost Odisha to the hands of Mughals in 1592.⁷ Odisha was under the Muslim rule till 1751.⁸ As the Mughal government in India declined, the Bengali Nizams increased their grip over Odisha. The Marathas eventually succeeded in establishing their dominance over Odisha from 1751 to 1803, much to the dismay of the people of Odisha.⁹ The British usurped Odisha from the Marathas in 1803 ushered a new era in the state's history.¹⁰ From the times of Somavamsis, Dakshina Kosala was consolidated with Kalinga, so it stayed under till the colonial period Odisha. During the colonial period, the undivided Sambalpur district was separated from Odisha and was brought under the jurisdiction of Central Province.¹¹ On 1st April 1936 Odisha was granted the status of a separate state with 6 districts, namely; Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Koraput and Sambalpur.¹² After independence 24 princely state integrated with Odisha in 1949 and modern-day Odisha came into existence.¹³

Western Odisha is dominated by various tribes, such as; Khond, Kharia, Kisan, Munda, Soura, Santal, Oran, Kolha, Binjhal, Kuda, etc. These tribes have their distinct rituals, beliefs, customs, philosophies, social organization, dance, music & song, attire, jewellery, festivals, food and drink, languages, heritage, and so on. The presence of a number of cults and faiths in one place have culturally impacted Western Odisha.

FOOS AS CULTURE

People can be distinguished based on their culture, which reveals us who they are and where they come from.¹⁴ Belief, art, morals, law, tradition, knowledge, capacities and habits which are acquired by man as a member of society are all elements of a culture.¹⁵ It encompasses every aspect of human existence, including how people communicate and connect with one another and is re-created again and again throughout our lives as we experience new things, situations, people and generations.¹⁶ Anthropology, as a discipline, defines culture by unifying these different themes of culture into a single body of information.¹⁷ The *Anthropology of food* teaches us culture through food, where food serves as an approachable dimension through which understanding of culture is made easier as anthropologists struggle to identify a culture.¹⁸ In return, the anthropological study of food makes us understand food and cuisine in more holistic way.

By studying food and cuisine, we also deal diverge range of subject matters, such as- environmental studies, sociology, politics, economics, anthropology, philosophy, religion, biology and nutrition, social organization and kinship.^{19,20} The traditional cuisine of an area is often influenced by the local environment, consequently, food practices give us knowledge about local food production and commercial exchanges.²¹ The methods of preparation and preservation of food inform us about the cultural transmission of ideas and information. A simple thing, such as consumption techniques and patterns further give us more information about the given culture. A kitchen, where food is prepared and the dining area where the food is served acts as a place of social interaction, where people share their ideas on philosophy, religion, politics, economic.²² These are the places for the transmission of culture. Traditionally in most of the cultures, female members of the house are in charge of the food preparations.²³ This tells us about gender roles in a domestic setting. Food-related etiquettes also play vital role in differentiating one culture from another.²⁴ Different cultures have differing table manners while eating, which are regarded as polite and some behaviours, which are considered as impolite and rather rude.

From the pre-historic times, as per the dietary need, men have learnt to manipulate nature. The pre-historic men tried to satisfy his tastebuds by discovering various hunting tools to hunt more animals and using fire to make the food taste.²⁵ To this day, people always try to enrich the taste of the food they eat by discovering new techniques, by experimenting with their food.²⁶ This contributes to cultural development. Thus, the anthropological relevance of food is significantly broad, because due to our foodways²⁷, our environment is being exploited and transformed according to our need hence influencing our culture. Culture acts as a bridge between food and society. Food give way to collective identity formation.²⁸ Foodways tells us about the social class and lifestyle of the consumers, about gender roles, family, social groups and ethnicity.²⁹ Thus, even little changes in dietary habits are indications of societal change.

It is believed that traditional foods are a crucial component of a given culture. Traditional food practices may help people connect with their cultural or ethnic group.³⁰ Traditional cuisine is the emblem of culture, which is preserved carefully by retaining the traditional methods of preparation and preservation and

passes down from generation to generation.³¹ At the same time it symbolizes the ever-changing nature of culture as even the traditional food cannot remain unchanged with changing time and place. Factors, such as globalization has brought many cross-cultural changes to the local cuisines. Indigenous food practices are not always immune to change and necessarily acts of cultural preservation, rather they also reflect cultural adaptability and fluidity.³²

Cuisines bridges the past with present challenges and potential futures.³³ In the study of history, scholars generally use dietary practices of a past culture to analyse and interpret it more accurately. Food plays a very complex role in a society, such that it enables the historian to unearth social relationships and arrive at fresh perspectives.³⁴ By studying a specific kind of food, we can construct the past environment, as even alteration in weather, such as floods, hurricane, and tsunamis for a small period of time can affect the foodways.³⁵ Food gives us accurate information about exchange of information among two civilizations or cultures. The diffusion of dietary related information among cultures are all result of sharing of culture, technology and politics.³⁶

Food and Religion

Food is one of the ways of expression of religious culture. Food possesses ritualistic significance, thereby many religions follow religious precepts, hence food is cooked differently in different religion.³⁷ Foodways has a strong symbolic expression which represents bonds between individuals, communities and ethnic groups.³⁸ What we eat can convey many things, such as our family background, caste, class, religion, ethnicity, etc.³⁹ People and groups interact with each other through two different kind of oral activity, they are; speaking and eating.⁴⁰ Eating with someone or exchanging food with someone is more intimate way of oral interaction than verbal communication.⁴¹ Refusing someone's food signifies drawing boundaries between one's own culture and someone else's.⁴² It is a way of keeping one's community apart from others. Thus; what we eat, who we eat with, how we procure it, who cooks it, and who eats first are all forms of interactions with a deep cultural symbolism.⁴³ According to some perspective, religion is a system of teachings which are expressed through rituals and daily routine. Cuisine being an object of prime importance in our daily life plays very crucial part in shaping this system of religious teachings.⁴⁴

Food is typically conceived as in Abrahamic traditions, the result of a human partnership with God, the "product" of a relationship made possible by kindness of God and efforts of human.⁴⁵ William Robertson Smith in 1880s argued that food sharing ritual gave birth to the idea of community and this notion gradually sanctified religion.⁴⁶ Every religion has some traditions, such as rites, ceremonies, and daily activities that incorporate food, eating, and drinking.⁴⁷ Religious food regulations put limitations on sort of food we eat in relation to people, time and place. Religions sets ethical and moral norms on foodways with reference to absolute good or evil based on some philosophy. These religion sanctified food practices believed to obtain moral and spiritual certainty.⁴⁸ These food restrictions serve to construct and maintain boundaries between social groups and strengthen religious identities.⁴⁹

By looking at foodways of different religions closely, by observing their meals, fasting and feasting as well as abstinence, they define religions and differentiate between them.⁵⁰] Muslims are allowed to eat only *halal*⁵¹ foods. Foods which are listed as *haram*⁵² in Quran are prohibited. They only eat meat of animals who have been slaughtered by invoking the name of Allah.⁵³ When Muslims fast during Ramadan, they avoid eating or drinking anything in daylight hours.⁵⁴ Conservative Jews observe dietary regulations, commonly known as a *kosher diet*⁵⁵, that are part of their Jewish Torah.⁵⁶ They are allowed to eat animals with cloven hooves and chew their cud, sea creatures which have scales and fins and in addition, they cannot eat dairy products and meat together.⁵⁷ Many Hindus, Buddhists and Jainas are vegetarians. They avoid eating meat to refrain themselves from harming other creatures. This is due to the fact that they follow the policy of non-violence.⁵⁸ These regulations are there to be followed for spiritual wellbeing.⁵⁹ In Hinduism, cattle meat is strongly forbidden as cow is considered as a sacred animal. Nevertheless, Christianity does not put any regulations on food or drink.⁶⁰ However, there also may be variations in food habits inside one religious group due to religious sectarianism and present of sub-groups inside one religious' groups.

Food and Caste

According to Vedic tradition, food is regarded as cosmic and spiritual, and sacred. Being equated with Brahman, it is worshipped by people believing in Vedic rituals as *Anna*^{61, 62} The notion of what food one can eat and whose food we are allowed to eat signifies social identities and boundaries.⁶³ In Hindu belief system, food is classified into *sattvic*⁶⁴, *rajasic*⁶⁵ and *tamasic*^{66, 67} *Tamasic* foods are usually viewed as polluted and people show disgust reaction towards such foods, which are otherwise a potential food item, due to impurity. The caste groups who eat such food are placed outside the Vedic Hindu Brahminic caste structure. They are the marginalized groups, and the platters of marginalized is regarded as distasteful because of the dominant cultural codes of vegetarianism among the higher caste groups. This classification of food has brought about the psychology of purity and pollution.⁶⁸

At some point in history, some hereditary occupation became polluting according to Vedic notion of purity and pollution and this social attitude erected the ideas of taboos and acceptance. Hence, the food specifically cooked and eaten by this category of people was viewed as loathsome. Thus, the belief of purity and pollution also entered into the dimension of food. For high caste Hindus, it is forbidden to receive food from lower caste people, because they are viewed as contaminated. However, a high caste Brahmin can receive uncooked food, such as fruits, vegetables and grains.⁶⁹ Further, food is divided into *kaccha* food that is inferior as it is cooked using water and *pakka* food that is cooked in ghee or clarified butter.⁷⁰ The *pakka* food is perceived as pure and can be received from caste of lower strata by a higher caste person, but *kaccha* food cannot.⁷¹ Even among the lower caste groups, they may refuse to eat food of each other's due to notion of ranking among them also, enforcing such taboos with more ferocity.⁷² The dietary, occupation and ritualistic practices often cited by anthropologists as predictors of caste hierarchies often coincides with hierarchies of food transfer.⁷³ These practices of exchange of food reinforces caste hierarchies.

The tribals, who are placed outside the caste system. They do not follow the Vedic Brahmanical order, so are the marginalized section of society. They do not follow the food regulation otherwise appropriated on Hindus as per Brahmanical code. They eat all kinds of meat, animal products, fish and all kinds of plant products, vegetables, herbs, etc. otherwise prohibited eating according to the said code. Such tribal communities make decision on what is and is not edible in their surroundings. Generally, the more primitive a tribe, the larger the variety of foods eaten by them. Tribal peoples' traditional meals are quite basic, and they are utilized in religious festivals and rituals.⁷⁴ These foods have high nutritional values and the ingredients are generally found in their natural habitat. They used their extensive traditional knowledge to prepare traditional foods, boiled foods, fermented foods, and beverages from indigenous agricultural plants, forest products, and meat from wild and domestic animals.⁷⁵

DISTINCTIVE WESTERN ODISHAN MEAL: ENRICHING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY

In most cultures, food plays very crucial part. Good food is intimately related to mental and spiritual fulfilment and enrich the culture. Cooking and eating habits are central to many family activities and traditions. The degree of importance, however, differs from culture to culture. Eating behaviours differ even among persons with same cultural origins and some of the same dietary habits. Men and women both eat differently, even people of various ages eat in different ways. Food, on the other hand, is connected with hospitality and expressions of goodwill in most regions of the world.⁷⁶ As a result, understanding dietary norms and practices is critical for cultural dissemination.⁷⁷ Cuisines are shaped by natural environment, which decides the availability of raw materials used to cook food and trade and commerce through which cross-cultural interaction happened.⁷⁸

When it comes to cuisine, Odisha has supremacy over delightful delicacies. Odisha has long been recognized in India for its unique cuisine. There is an old saying that Odia people have "Nau Tiana, Chah bhaja," which translates to "nine types of curries and six types of stir-fry dishes." This idiom shows a wide range of foods is exclusively seen in Odisha. In Western Orissa, Sambalpur's festivities are one-of-a-kind and agriculture related because most of the people of Western Odisha depend upon agriculture for their living. The major festivals of Western Orissa culture include *Nuakhai*, *Pushpuni*, *Makar Sankranti*, *Bhai-juntia*, and *Po-juntia*, etc. The state also features festival-specific foods, for e.g.; on the day of *Rath yatra*⁷⁹ people like eating Khechedi, *poda pitha*⁸⁰ and *Dalma*⁸¹.⁸² Sweet meals produced for special occasions include *Rasbora*,⁸³ *Sarsatia*,⁸⁴ and *Tikhri*⁸⁵. The tribal people of Western Odisha celebrate indigenous festivals such as *Puspuni*, which is celebrated in Pausha⁸⁶ Purnima in western Odisha, to celebrate harvesting of peddy. *Nuakhai* festival includes worshiping of the new harvest of crops and celebrated it with eating together. *Po juinta* celebrates mother's love for her child, *Bhai Jiunta* celebrates love between siblings. In *Sitalshasthi* people celebrates the coming of monsoon by marrying Shiva and Parvati; *Karamsani*, is the worship of forest God and *Muitchhian* is praying to the soil for good harvest.

Western Odia meals frequently feature a major carbohydrate rich food such as rice and dry roasted or fried vegetable or meat curries. Rice is a mainstay in Odisha, and vegetables like as potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkin, brinjal, drumstick, and banana blossom and stem may be found in a variety of recipes. Pakhala or fermented rice is the most satisfying meal for everyone in the state. The seasonal products available to the people of Western Odisha, such as- mangoes and local greens during the summer, Pumpkin during the rainy monsoon months and root vegetables during the winter months makes Sambalpuri cuisine testier. The focus is based on the assumption that in-season meals are more powerful, tastier, and have more nutritional content, despite the fact that year-round availability of many crops thanks to technology is now there.⁸⁷ Festivals also follow these seasonal culinary cycles as that are generally accompanied with specific offerings to the gods and feasting on certain foods.

Food etiquette of western Odisha

In addition to food choices, culture also is shaped by food-related etiquettes. Table manners, a phrase that may be used to refer to food-related etiquette in Western nations, depicts the cultural expectation of eating food or meals at a table. While in Odisha, individuals typically prefer to sit on the ground while eating. For eating purpose, East Asians use chopsticks whereas Westerns use forks and spoons. However, people in Western Odisha prefer to eat with their fingers. According to food etiquettes of this region eating with one's left hand is considered impolite. The science behind eating food using fingers is, when we eat with our hands, we ingest the microbial flora and enzymes on our fingertips. It is good for your digestive health and aids in the digestion of food.

In western Odisha, several different styles of platters are utilized during eating. For instance, a multi-course meal is presented on a huge platter. The utensils usually made up of bronze, steel, or silver is used, which is considered pure. Despite these, leaves from various trees are used as the main platter in festivities and on a daily basis. Leaves utilized for serving food in regional festivals have religious connotations. The use of platters at festivals such as *Nuakhai* is determined by the people's caste. *Kure leaf*,⁸⁸ *Mahul Patar*,⁸⁹ *Sargi Patar*,⁹⁰ are all utilized in Nuakhai. Banana leaf is also utilized in various religious ceremonies.

FOODS OF WESTERN ODISHA

Kardi



All over the world, bamboo shoot is a traditional delicacy and is consumed in many forms, such as; as dried, shredded, boiled, stir fried, pickled and fermented, etc.⁹¹⁹² It is basically a grass, which is rich in nutrient with low fat content and rich in carbohydrate, fibre, vitamins, potassium, etc.⁹³ These are consumed in traditional and non-standardised way in most of the places. During rainy season, young bamboo shoots are harvested and cut into thin shreds. These shreds are dipped in water to ferment it and wash off the bitterness to make *Kardi*.⁹⁴ Some like to stir fry freshly sliced *Kardi* and some like to add it to a traditional dish called *amil*, a sour vegetable soup, to enrich its taste.⁹⁵⁹⁶ Pancakes is also be made from Kardi using rice-flour as binder.⁹⁷ Also, a green leafy dish called *kardisaaga* is also made cooking Kardi with finely chopped tender pumpkin leaves.⁹⁸ Some like to dry Kardi in sun for days and pickle it to savour it for months.

Hendua



After making Kardi from the smooth part of the bamboo shoots, the part which have turned a bit fibrous are sliced into small pieces, fermented and dried to store and use for years, is called *Hendua*.⁹⁹ Bamboo shoot has a significant quantity of carbohydrates and dietary fibres.¹⁰⁰ By cooking the polysaccharides in bamboo shoots are hydrolysed into simple sugars, giving it a sweet flavour.¹⁰¹ Due to low moisture content *Hendua* can be directly added to various dishes, giving it a tangy taste.¹⁰² This is also an ingredient for patalghanta chatani (tomato chutney) and *Ambil*. It is mostly used for flavour enhancement of basic foods. When mashed with roasted tomatoes or tiny fish called as *jhuri*, it transforms the poor man's diet to a delicacy. The taste of bamboo shoot is an acquired taste and not everyone can eat this for its strong odour and tangy taste.

Pakhal Bhat



In eastern part of India, specifically in Odisha, where Pakhala is the main staple food, it is eaten with much enthusiasm. It is a traditional dish made by adding water to cooked rice.¹⁰³ It is eaten in many ways- fresh, fermented for a day, mixed with curd, with lime or by *tempering*¹⁰⁴ with mustard oil, curry leaves and ginger.¹⁰⁵

It is usually served with dry roasted vegetables like potato, brinjal, *saaga*¹⁰⁶, *badi*¹⁰⁷ and fish fry.¹⁰⁸ It is a very nutritious dish, usually eaten during summer to provide relief from the hot climate condition during Odisha summer. It is the most celebrated dish of this region.

That's why 20th March of every year is celebrated as Pakhala Divas by Odias^{109, 110}. The word Pakhala comes from Pali word '*Pakhaliba*' and Sanskrit word '*Prakshalana*', both of which refers to 'to wash'.¹¹¹ It is also served to the deities as offerings in the famous Jagannath Temple at Puri.¹¹²

Studies have shown that this dish have therapeutic effect on our stomach. It relieves our stomach off digestive issues.¹¹³ It is a natural coolant also treat dehydration due to loss of water during summer.¹¹⁴ It is rich in calories, minerals and vitamins. The Basi Pakhala/fermented water rice contain some bacteria which potentially anti-nutritional factors present in rice.¹¹⁵ Besides all these fermented Pakhala has a wide range of other health benefits, such as; it provides better sleep, healthy skin and hair, reduces cholesterol, promotes healthy bacteria and antioxidants, reduce toxins, etc.¹¹⁶

Jhuri-Purga

Odisha being a costal state, the craze of eating fish in here is very much the same as other coastal states of India. Jhuri Purga is a small fish curry and a delicacy in Western Odisha. Jarda is a type of tiny fish that is utilized to bring out the exquisite flavour of Jhuri Purga, because not all fishes are suitable for this meal. This fish is tossed in mustard sauce to offer the soft and tangy texture with



the sourness of lemon or pickle added to it. These small fishes are also marinated in spices and then wrapped in Saal leaves to be cooked directly on wooden fire, so it is also called as patra-puda-jhuri. It is served as a side dish with rice. Small fish is high in omega-3 fatty acids, which are very important fats for our body, protein, iron and vitamins like D and B2 and also a great source of a large range of minerals.¹¹⁷

Patalghanta Chatni



accessible throughout the state.

Patalaghanta chatani, which seems like one of the truest kinds of intricacy in Odia cuisine, is one of the simplest dishes of cuisine of western Odisha. The major component of the meal is patalaghanta, a regional term for tomato invented in Odisha. Ripe tomatoes are sautéed and mashed with mustard oil, grated onions, garlic cloves, and chilies, and served somewhat warm beside the famed Pakhala/water rice. Patalaghanta chutney is simple to produce and widely

Letha

Letha is a classic western Odisha dish notable for its sour flavor and soupy texture. It's a soupy meal with various veggies such as lady finger, pumpkin, tamarind, brinjal, carrot, radish, and tomato and has a distinct spicy-sour flavor. The vegetable soup is mixed with the drained water used to boil rice to give it thickness and its specific taste. A specific kind of pickle named *ambula* is added to it to give it a tangy, acidic



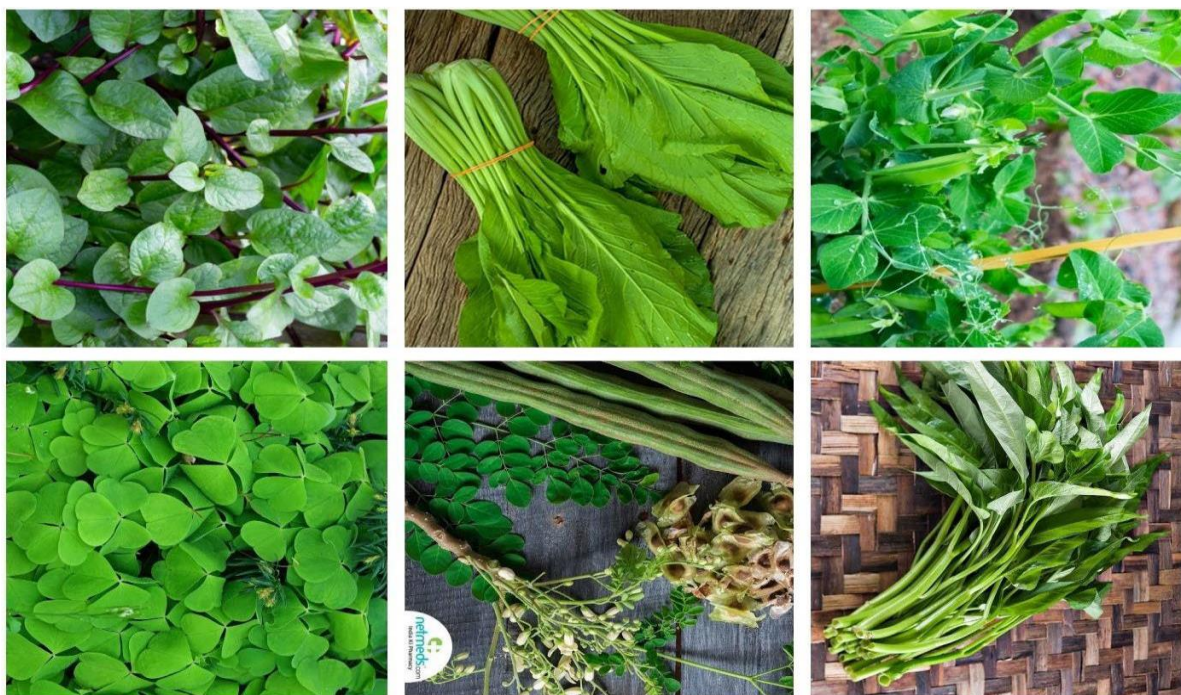
taste. At last it is tempered with mustard, jeera and other spices, curry leaves, Kardi and dried chili. Because it is one of the most Western Odia cuisines, it is best served with steamed rice, which brings out the tastes of the vegetables immersed in the soup. Letha, which is essentially a vegetable-based soup, is a fantastic nutritional alternative since it is the combination of high nutrient density with low-calorie density. We obtain a lot of important nutrients, including vitamins and minerals from Letha.

Tol Bhaja

The fruit of the Mahua tree is called as Tol. The blossoms of this tree are known as Mahul flowers, and they are a key element in the production of local whiskey. Also, Tol seed is a vital oil producer, which yield oil almost 35% to 47%.¹¹⁸ For making Tol bhaja the Tol fruit is deseeded and the flesh is chopped into little pieces. After that, it is combined with other vegetables or *saaga*. It is stir-fried in mustard oil, which imparts an incredible taste and fills the room with aroma. Tol Bhaja is ready to serve on the plates after adding salt to taste. It tastes best when served hot.



Saaga-Different Types of Leaves



Saaga is the most important dish in our Western Odisha cuisine. In all 10 districts of Western Odisha, large varieties of plants are used as *saaga*. It shows that dependency of people of Western Odisha upon forest products and plants. The saagas eaten by people of this area are- Kalamo saaga or water spinach, Khada saaga prepared from amaranth leaves, Bajji saga prepared from *Amaranthus dubius* leaves, Leutia saga prepared from *Amaranthus viridis* leaves and tender stems, Palanga saga or spinach and Poi saga prepared from *Basella* leaves and tender stems is so nutritious. Munga saaga prepared from *Moringa oleifera* or drumstick leaves cooked with lentils or alone with fried onions which is beneficial to human body. *Sunusunia* saga or *Marsilea Polycarp* leaves, Kakharu saga or pumpkin leaves, Sorisa saga or Mustard greens, Methi saga prepared from methi or Fenugreek leaves are stirred fried to make tasty side dishes. Also, saaga such as Bahal saaga and Kuler saaga are famous.

Iron, vitamins C and E, potassium, and magnesium, fibres and phytonutrients are all abundant in these leafy vegetables.¹¹⁹ It can assist to improve immunological function, aid the digestive system, and may even have anticancer qualities when consumed as part of a balanced diet. However, people may need to consume this vegetable in moderation. Bloating may be caused by consuming too much saaga. It can cause intestinal issues. As a result, it is said not to consume at night rather consumed earlier in the day so that our bodies have time to digest them before you go to bed.

Rugda Chaati



Ruguda Chhati is an Odia cuisine's forgotten delicacy prepared from a specific type of fungus, Ruguda. Rugda mushroom is found in deep, dark woodlands. Tribal women handpick them and enjoy their earthy flavor. It is prepared with veggies and spices and has a wonderful scent. Ruguda chhati vividly displayed indigenous wisdom of ethnic tribes for usage of such wild mushroom as food. It is found mainly in the forest of Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Bargarh.

Rasa-bara

One traditional dish of Odias, Rasa-bara dish made up off moong dal/green gram. It is one famous sweet dishes of Western Odisha. It is an offering to goddess Lakshmi during every of Margasira month of Odia calendar. Water is flour of green gram to make a tinging dough, then that into small balls deep fried in oil. After it is oil, is dipped into sugar syrup for a few minutes, after which it became ready to eat.



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Sarsatia



This is a sweet and crunchy snack prepared from resin of a specific tree. Resin of Ganjer tree¹²⁰ is extracted and added with rice flour, sugar and water. This smooth batter in poured slowly into hot oil in thin strings and deep fried to prepare vermicelli kind of snacks. It is only prepared in very few places of western Odisha, but people from all over Odisha crave for it.

Kadalifeni

This salty Khaja is a rice powder or flour-based snack. It can also be relished after being dipped in sugar syrup. Because it resembles a banana, it is also known as Kadalifeni. It is made from fluffy dough comprised of rice powder and flour. It is then battered and deep-fried in oil in the shape of a banana till golden brown. When served sweet, it is mixed with sugar syrup; and when served savoury, it is mixed with spices such as cinnamon powder.



Chaulbara



The popular Chaula Bara is made with rice and white gram flour and baking soda, which aids in the fermentation of the rice. It is then cooked in oil with salt to taste and served with chilies and Pudina chutney. Chaulbara was only available only in household kitchens two decades ago. However, the flavor and popularity gained it enormous commercial renown. This delectable dish originated in a little village near Bargarh called Barpali. However, it is currently available in Balangir, Sonepur, Bargarh, Cuttack and Sambalpur region. Now, it can be readily found on every corner of a street in Western Odisha.

Kai Chutney or Red Ant Chutney

'Kai Chutney' or the red ant chutney is in tribal dominated Western Odisha. *Kai* is name of red ant in this region, hence such ants and their eggs are used to create western Odisha. The paste is also a popular Egypt, where it is known as *chaprah*. Kai thought to be an excellent medicine for illness, trouble breathing, cold, weariness, variety of other maladies. Formic acid, which is known to kill germs in the human digestive system, is also found in these ants and their eggs.



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Collecting these ants from local woodlands is a difficult process. Male ants are first removed from around each nest and then the females and eggs are collected. To produce the chutney, the locals smash and dry the ants and eggs before grinding them using a mortar and pestle. Next, they blend it in tomatoes, coriander, garlic, ginger, chili, salt, and sugar to make a smooth, orange paste. The red ants are also enjoyed sautéed with chopped onions.

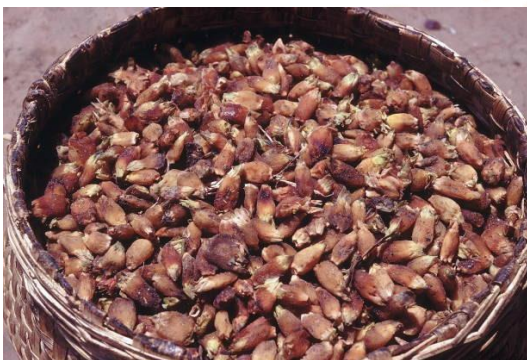
Ghuli or Snail



Eating a snail may seem repulsive to us, but if we can get over our mental barriers, their flavour is quite good and unique. They have a meaty texture but are juicy on the inside and absorb the taste of the sauce in which they are cooked. Snails are an excellent source of iron, calcium, Vitamin A, and a variety of other minerals, in addition to being high in protein and low in fat.¹²¹ Vitamin A in snails strengthens vision, helps strengthen immune system and also promotes the growth of cells in our body.¹²² The iron content in

snails is very high which promotes growth of healthy blood cells and fight anaemia.¹²³ However, Regular eating of snail might result in cardiac issues as a side effect.¹²⁴

Mahul Ras



The butternut tree, Moah tree, or *Madhuca longifolia* are all names for Mahua. It is mostly grown wild and picked for its edible flowers and oilseeds. It is high in phytochemicals.¹²⁵ That is why it has traditionally had a wide variety of medicinal uses. Mahua blossoms are meaty. They are consumed fresh or dry, powdered and mixed with flour, used as a sweetener, or fermented to produce alcohol. In western Odisha, the dried flower is particularly popular. Mahua flowers contain high amount of sugar in it.¹²⁶ As a result, it is used as a sweetening factor in a variety of tribal, local, and traditional foods. In Ayurveda, mahua flower is used as a cooling agent, carminative, galactagogue, and astringent.¹²⁷ It has been linked to improved heart, skin, and eye health. Many ailments are treated using Mahua flowers by tribal people. Mahul ras, which is a alcoholic drink is a healthy drink for tribes around Western Odisha. However, excessive alcohol use is one of major problems among tribals.

Kushna



During the summer, the traditional drink '*Kushna*' or '*Handia*' is in high demand in the tribal parts of Western Odisha. The drink is intoxicating, keeps the stomach cool, and provides a lot of energy. It is created by fermenting rice in a unique way. Some refer to liqueur as "poor man's whisky."¹²⁸ The drink is quite popular among the tribals in the region, and it is frequently served during weddings, birth anniversaries, and celebrations customarily.¹²⁹ It is also regarded as a sacred drink and is presented to deities as well as utilized in ceremonies. The name *Handia* comes from an odia word '*Handi*,' a large clay kettle in which rice is fermented.¹³⁰ The method entails soaking and cooking rice in water. The rice is then combined with a powdered herbal root known locally as *ranu*¹³¹.¹³² The mixture is left alone for two days to ferment with mouth slightly open.¹³³ The liquid is then allowed to run through a bamboo filter before being collected in clay containers.

This drink is quite advantageous for its health benefits. It is mostly a summer drink since cools our stomach while simultaneously bewitching us. It is believed to be curing constipation, liver disorders and urinary infections.¹³⁴ But there is high probability of alcohol addiction among the tribals due to its regular consumption. The tribals have received the knowledge and skill of creating this traditional drink from their predecessors, and the craft is passed down from generation to generation. The drink has also become a source of income for the tribal people.

Taadi or Khajur Ras



Taadi is a traditional alcoholic beverage from Western Odisha that is served as a welcome drink in the mountain villages. The process of extracting stem juice from a Palm tree or Khajuri/Palm tree to make liquor is called as '*Taadi*' in the local language. Mainly tribals of this region harvest Khajuri stem juice and use it to create *Taadi*. First, they choose a palm that is at least 5 years old.¹³⁵ Following palm selection, the stem is tapped at the top of the palm stem, for which *daa*, a sharp iron-made cutting implement, was used to scrape the top phloem

part from which the sap poured out.¹³⁶ Fresh sap is delicious, but when exposed to sunshine, it ferments.¹³⁷ *Taadi* has socio-cultural importance since it is drunk during festivals and functions.¹³⁸ The drink is also presented to the local deities. It also has medicinal properties. Khujuri stem juice, freshly gathered, is used as a refreshing beverage. The Bonai Forest Division's local communities believe it may cure jaundice.

Western Odisha cuisine is flavourful and easy to prepare. The dishes are linked to the soil of this location. Everything smells like the ground. It is a great cuisine to be tried by the foodies and enjoyed the different kind of aroma associated with it.

CONCLUSION

Food and cuisine are a holistic aspect of culture, influencing various subjects such as environmental studies, sociology, politics, economics, philosophy, religion, biology, nutrition, social organization, and kinship. Foodways also reveal social class, lifestyle, gender roles, family, social groups, and ethnicity. Food is a significant expression of religious culture, with ritualistic significance and a strong symbolic representation of cultural bonds and diversity. Traditional food habits of a community or otherwise known as foodways are a crucial component of a given culture, preserving traditional methods and passing down from generation to generation. Foodways reveal social class, lifestyle, gender roles, family, social groups, and ethnicity and set ethical and moral norms, constructing and maintaining boundaries between social groups and strengthening religious identities. These variations in food habits also exist within religious groups, for e.g. in India, caste system has divided Hindus into numbers of caste groups with diversifying foodways. This classification has led to food related taboos and acceptance.

Odisha, known for its unique cuisine, has a wide range of regional dishes. Western Orissa's Sambalpuri cuisine features festival-specific foods and is influenced by seasonal produce. Rice, a mainstay in Odisha, is also significant in rituals. In addition to food practices, Food-related etiquettes also shapes culture. Food etiquettes of Western Odisha is such that, people in here enjoy their food sitting on the ground and using fingers instead of using utensils, such as spoon. Different platter styles are used, including metal utensils; and during festivals and ceremonies leaves from specific trees are used. Kardi, a traditional delicacy in Western Odisha, is rich in nutrients and has a unique taste and Hendua, the fibrous part of it, is used in dishes like patalghanta chatani and Ambil. Patalaghanta chatani is a simple dish with ripe tomatoes, mustard oil, onions, garlic, and chilies is enjoyed with Pakhala, a dish made from rice water. Jhuri Purga, is made from small-fish curry. Letha is a classic dish with a sour flavour and soupy texture. Tol Bhaja and saaga are rich in minerals and fibres. Ruguda Chhati is a delicacy made from Ruguda mushrooms. Rasa-bara, Sarsatia and Kadalifeni are snacks eaten by every Sambalpuri people with greatenthusiasm. Chaula Bara served with chutney is a mouthwatering dish. Dishes like Kai Chutney and fried snails' nutritious food choice of tribals and need to acquired taste for it. Mahua, Kusna and Taadi are alcoholic beverages enjoyed by both male and female members of the tribes of this region.

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DECLARATION

We the undersigned declare that this manuscript is original work of the authors and has not been published before and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

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Primary data is collected from some villagers by personal interviews

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