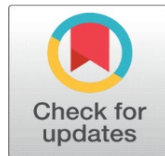


FOOD HABITS OF VARIOUS TRIBES LIVING IN KUMAON

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ABSTRACT

The population of Kumaon includes many tribes like Shoka, Raji, Tharu and Boksa. Bhotiya people, who have similarity with Tibetans, are residents of Pithoragarh, Uttarkashi and Chamoli districts. Tolchha, Marchha and Shoka or Rawat are their three sub-castes. Boksa are residents of Bhabar region of Garhwal and Nainital districts. They consider themselves to be the descendants of Jagdev Singh, a descendant of King Bhoj, who settled here a thousand years ago. Tharu live in the Terai region in Nainital district and consider themselves to be the descendants of the soldiers of Chittor.

Keywords: Tolchha, Marchha, Shoka, Terai Region, Johar Valley, Kumaiya

1. INTRODUCTION

Bhotiya is an ancient tribal community. In ancient times, this tribe used to earn their livelihood by trading with Tibet. At present, there is no trade with Tibet, but they have started earning their livelihood by animal husbandry and government jobs. Education has been well spread among them, which gave birth to modernity and progressive ideology among them. Bhotiya is the only tribe among all the tribes of Uttarakhand that has made the most progress. Their high presence in government services and administration is proof of this. Their customs and rituals were different from Hindu ones. But now many Hindu customs have been adopted by them. Despite this, they have maintained their materialism. The tribes are not considered equal to Shudras, nor are they treated with untouchability, yet the upper castes do not consider it appropriate to have marital relations with them.

But in Kumaon, the Bhotiya tribe has been divided into two parts, one is the Shoka of Johar valley and the other is the Shoka of Darma, Vyas and Chaudas valley. Both belong to the Bhotiya tribe but their culture is slightly different from each other. The culture and food habits of the Shokas of Johar valley are completely similar to that of Kumaonis, whereas the culture of the Shokas of Darma, Vyas and Chaudas valley has the form of Nepal and Tibet.

Now if we talk about the food habits of the people of Johar valley, then their food habits seem to be quite similar to the Kumaoni food habits. For example-many types of pickles, arji, kukala, jya, bhumal, raubaul, thatani etc.

Raji :-

From the very beginning, the Raji community resided in the local dense forests. Therefore, this tribe used to consume only the things provided by nature. Initially, the people of this tribe did not establish relations with anyone except the people of their own community or you can say that they did not even face other people. It was said about the Raji tribe that they used to be invisible traders. These people cross the forests in the darkness of the night and come down to a village. The entire village is asleep. These strangers keep their own wooden utensils made by their own hands in the courtyard outside the doors of two-four houses and quietly return on the same path, to that dense forest. In the morning the village wakes up. The doors open. The house owner with a surprised smile picks up these utensils and places them inside the house in the 'tan'. After Raji's meal before going to sleep these villagers fill the utensils with wheat, mandua or koni and again keep them on the platforms at the places of the previous night and sleep. The strangers again leave the forests without any feet. They pour the grain from the utensils in their clothes and keep the empty utensils as they are and go on their way. The Kumaiya (resident of Kumaon) of the village wake up the next morning and pick up the empty utensils to keep milk and ghee for their use. The business is completed, they get the grain and they get the utensils.

Apart from these, they used to earn their livelihood by collecting food and hunting. Dr. Prayag Joshi, while giving information about the food habits of Raji community in his book 'Vanraniyon Ki Khoj Mein' writes that- The main part of the food of Rajijans is Gethi, Tarud, Tiguna and Thakila etc. Apart from this, Lenguda (fern), Kuthudka, root of forest cucumber, Guruvansha, Salmishri, Musli, forest onion and medicines like Salampanja are their pure wild vegetables (shaag). Neekanthi which is called Ratapatia in Kumauni language, they consider it a very tasty thing. Similarly, the fruits and fruits of Apamarg Kachnar (Quairal), Shakuna and Chiura have great importance in the world of Rajijans. They eat the root, stem, leaf, flower and fruit of Panchak.

Apart from this, the Rajis like the "Gaba" of Haate (Shamele) very much. Just remembering it makes the mouth water. In present times, apart from these wild tubers, fruits, flowers and relatives, the Rajis now commonly consume dal-rice, roti-vegetables etc. among the people of civilized society. The habitat of the Vanarauts is the Himalayan region. In this Himalayan region, the land of most of their villages is uneven and rocky. Due to which the production of crops is low here. Due to low productivity of crops, the problem of food insecurity always remains in the Raji community. At present, whatever income the people of the Raji tribe get from hard work, they spend the entire part of that income in the evening on their food items. Their food habits are based on "Search daily, eat daily". Rajijan is a vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian tribe. These people like to eat the meat of wild animals like Kakar, Chhud, Porcupine, Chicken and Partridge etc. whereas among the wild animals, they like the meat of Shahi (Shaula) the most. These people hunt wild animals by making "Jibla". Apart from Rajis, the custom of catching live animals by making Jibla is also seen among the people of their neighboring Hindu community. Whereas these people hunt porcupine with the help of Kunya and Bansula. Initially, Rajijan used wooden utensils for cooking food. For example, they used to use bamboo sticks for cooking rice. These people used to fill rice in thick bone pitchkaris for cooking. In this way, they used to prepare many pitchkaris of bamboo and after putting three parts of rice and one part of water in them, they used to dig (bury) them vertically in the mud and the rice used to get cooked by getting heated by the heat of bamboo.

The Raji tribe eats meat and Puri on the occasion of festivals. Initially, they were completely dependent on tubers and fruits, but due to modernity, these people now buy goods from the market and eat them. Alcohol consumption is also prevalent in the Raji tribe, among them men start consuming alcohol from a very young age. This alcohol is given by the Bhotiya tribe, which is also known as Kachi Sharab. Due to excessive consumption, the age of men of the Raji tribe does not exceed 50 years. In the Raji tribe, both men and women earn their living by selling wild fruits, flowers and wood, since their economic condition is not good, they still use stoves made of stones."

Tharu tribe:-

Tharu tribe, whose main occupation is agriculture, resides in many districts of many states of India, such as Bengal, Bihar, Assam, apart from Nainital district of Uttarakhand. Its population is 5.3 lakhs in the whole of India. Tharu is the tribe with the highest population and territorial expansion in Uttarakhand, which is divided into many castes and sub-castes. Tharu connects itself with the ancient tribe Kirat and creates its own separate culture and connects itself with agriculture and animal husbandry. Due to the physical characteristics of Tharu tribe being similar to Mongolian (yellow complexion, short height, flat nose, broad face), many scholars consider it to be of Mongol race. Tharus also associate themselves with Rana Pratap. To escape the fear of Muslim invaders, many Rajput women hid in the Himalayan forests with the help of their followers and later established marital relations with their followers, which led to the birth of Tharu children. This is confirmed by the high status of women in Tharu society.

Tharu society is primarily based on agriculture, but due to living near forests, they also hunt wild animals. Despite the land being fertile, they also face food problem due to low agricultural production, due to which they collectively do fishing and hunting, in which both men and women are involved.

Tharus drink a lot of alcohol when they get food. Every person smokes tobacco. They make it at home. They love chicken, eggs, alcohol, meat, fish. Earlier they used to rear chicken in large numbers, but now this practice has reduced. They are very fond of pork. They consume less curd and milk. They even feed curd to their little girls instead of milk. Who will drink milk, they consume buffalo's milk too. They consume less ghee too. They use a lot of oil, chilli, garlic, and onion.

Bhadiya is the main drink of Tharus. They prepare it themselves from rice. It is called Jad. It is prepared and consumed on special occasions. Generally Tharus and Das are considered synonymous with each other, but Manbhaktas do not consume alcohol.

Buksa tribe:-

The primitive tribal group Buksa lives in Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Kumaon Commissionerate of Uttarakhand. For centuries, these people have been living in this Terai region of the Himalayas in extremely harsh climatic conditions." The Terai region of Kumaon is situated in a 20 km long and 50 km long strip towards the south of the Bhabhar region. It is located at an altitude of about 1000 feet above sea level. Khatima, Sitarganj, Rudrapur, Bajpur, Gadarpur, Kashipur and some parts of the development blocks of Ramnagar and Haldwani, Nainital district are included in this strip of Terai. This part of the Terai of Kumaon has been the abode of the primitive tribe Buksa for centuries. Before independence, this area was full of swampy and dense forests. Wild animals like python, snake, scorpion, lion, elephant, leopard, Nilgai, deer, elk etc. were found here. The Buksa people had been living here for centuries in harmony with these wild animals and the forest.

This area, which was covered with dense forests in the past, was almost neglected till 1948 due to adverse climate. Due to marshy land, severe heat, months of rain, sanctuary for wild animals, outbreak of diseases and lack of means of transportation, human settlements were almost non-existent here. In ancient times, the Buksa tribal group made this unproductive, forested, marshy part of the Terai their home and with their hard work, they populated this area and made it fertile and productive.

After independence, the first people to come to settle the Terai were the mountain people, but due to the dangerous wild animals and the huge number of mosquitoes, the mountain people could not settle here easily. After the partition of India and Pakistan, the then Indian government provided land to the refugees to settle in the Terai. Gradually, the forests were cut down by tractors, bulldozers and hard human labour to make cultivable land and towns were settled, through which farming and the means of farming were developed. In the year 1952, a sugar mill was inaugurated by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Bajpur town. Thus, with the strong efforts of the government and the people, the Terai began to be populated. In this era of the 21st century, this region has become economically prosperous, extremely fertile, an advanced agricultural area, an industrially dominated area. Today, the land here has started yielding gold, but despite this economic and industrial revolution, there has been no improvement or change in the living and economic conditions of the primitive tribes. The Buksa tribe residing in 132 villages of Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts are forced to live as poor landless labourers even in the twenty-first century due to bad habits, extravagance, negligence, bad customs and superstitions.

Population:-

At present, about five thousand Buksa families live in Bajpur, Kashipur and Gadarpur blocks. Their population was 5664 in 1881, 6683 in 1931 and 40977 in 1991 respectively. At present the total population of Buksa people living here is approximately 29000.

Geographical location:-

The total Buksa population of Uttarakhand is more than 30 thousand and about 60 percent of the Buksa population lives in Udham Singh Nagar district. In the Terai region, the Buksa tribe lives between 28° 43' to 29° 35' north latitude and 78° 532' to 80° east longitude." The major rivers of the Buksa region are Dabka, Baur, Bhakra, Kosi, Ghugha, Dhela etc. During the rainy season, these rivers flow as rainy rivers carrying moist water. The Terai region mainly experiences summer, monsoon and winter seasons. Summer season is found from mid-March to June. The temperature reaches 40-45 degrees centigrade. The rainy season lasts from the last week of June to mid-October. The entire Terai region becomes completely submerged in water. Almost all the rivers remain in spate.

Meal:-

The Buksa people are both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Apart from normal food, they eat many wild tubers and fruits. Among non-vegetarians, they like to eat goat and chicken. They like fish a lot. Like the Tharus, they also eat a lot of fish and eat fish once a week. Most of the people of the village go to the river banks to hunt fish. In the village also, these people do fish farming collectively, for which they build small ponds. They do not eat non-vegetarian food every day. But they eat it enthusiastically when it is available. They mostly do not like to rear chicken and pig. They like meat and liquor a lot. But some people do not drink alcohol at all.

After saving the food grains as per their requirement, these people sell the remaining grains. With the income obtained from this, they earn their livelihood. These people store the grains in big storehouses. These people also produce mentha. By drying mentha (peppermint), mentha oil is obtained by distillation. Which is used as an infallible pain reliever in various pain relieving medicines. Buksa women also help in economic activities. They do the work of sowing, weeding, harvesting and threshing in agriculture.

Vegetables and fruits:-

In vegetables, gourd, ridge gourd, pumpkin, ladyfinger, spinach, fenugreek, carrot, radish etc. are produced in large quantities. Radish and cauliflower are dried and used to make vegetables. In this region of Terai, fruits like mango, guava, banana, litchi, jamun, bael, custard apple, pomegranate, lemon etc. are produced in large quantities. In the field of agriculture, a tree called poplar is cultivated here. Which is cut after 6-7 years. Its wood is suitable for making matchsticks and plywood. People plant poplar at a certain distance in their fields. And wheat and paddy are also grown in between it. Due to which cultivable land does not go waste and increase the fertility of land. Valuable timber trees like sal, sheesham and teak are found in abundance in the Terai region. The main cash crops of Terai are sugarcane, wheat, peas, mustard, paddy, etc.

Medicinal Plants (Herbs):-

The people of the Buksa tribe have been using herbs since ancient times to cure diseases. Medicinal plants that are very beneficial for medical use are found in abundance in the Terai region. The forests here are full of herbs. Among these, neem, babool, curry leaves, mentha, asparagus, balamkhiira, basil, akarkara, amla are found in abundance in the region. At present, important medicinal plants like asparagus, mentha, amla are also cultivated in abundance. At present, medicinal plants and herbs are being used in abundance by the common people. The entire Himalayan Terai region is full of herbs. Almost every plant here has some or the other medicinal properties. These forest dwellers have been using them for centuries.

Tribes have lived in Uttarakhand since ancient times. Tharu and Boksas live in the Himalayan region of India, the Shoka, Raji and Terai Bhabar regions. The difference in geographical conditions, soil, production can be clearly seen in the food of all these tribes. Earlier, due to lack of facilities, the food of the tribes was different from Kumauni food. For example, due to extreme cold and snowfall for 6 months, the tribes living in the high Himalayan region knew how to preserve meat as well, due to which they could not remain hungry and also lived a nomadic life, but currently, due to facilities, the tribes have also connected with Kumauni cuisine, due to which Kumauni food culture can be seen in their food chain as well.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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