

Traditional Foods of Assam and its Commercialization

Pallabika Sarmah, Samutjal Saikia, Ashim Saikia

Abstract: All the people round the Globe have their local traditional food. The taste of the local traditional food differs according to one's social and cultural structure. The source of ingredients of every local traditional food is the nature and they prepare them according to their tradition and custom. The North-East of India, Assam, is full of variety of castes and creeds. And every caste has their own traditional food and a special traditional way of preparation. But, the local people of Assam use only certain specific ingredients to prepare their traditional dishes, of which 'Pork', Pastes prepared from mustard-oil seeds, pickles prepared from various fruits are the main or can be taken into accounts. These traditional foods of Dibrugarh District are also sent for marketing. Study on the use, preparation and popularization of such traditional food is observed in five different villages and sub-urban areas of Dibrugarh District. The fact and data on preparation and conservation of the local traditional foods have been collected through conversation with the needs of the families, shop-keepers, and other such people related with the process. The financial aspect covered provides financial support; scientific process of preparation of the traditional food is also included in this course of study

Keywords: Traditional foods, Commercialization, Dibrugarh, Assam.

I. INTRODUCTION

Assam and the people of Assam are rich in traditional food. The variety in traditional food among the locals exists since old days. These traditional foods are collected, prepared and preserved in different scientific ways. The tasty traditional foods usually are collected from nature and they come under both the category of vegetarian and non-vegetarian. People collect these resources from nature, naturally or through systematic cultivation or through farming of cattle's or through fisheries. People prepare the traditional food both for personal and commercial purposes. The commercial aspect of the traditional food fetch them money for their livelihood. This becomes a major source of income mainly for the economically backward people. Market or marketing system existed in Assam since ages, where variety of material was also marketed along with varied food stuff. And these marketing, at last now have developed and these the shape of fall phased market. The world today has turned

Revised Version Manuscript Received on 16 September, 2019.

Dr. Pallabika Sarmah, Resource Person, & Part Time Faculty, Department of Assamese, Cotton University, Assam, India

Samutjal Saikia Research Scholar, Department of Assamese, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India

Ashim Saikia Assamese Subject Teacher, Swadhyay Academy Senior Secondary School, Dibrugarh, Assam, India

into a global village. Improvement of transportation system, popularization of internet service, has much contribution to the world Globalization. This improvement has facilitated the traders to trade round the Globe, and the people all around also have got introduced to the different culture and traditions and their typical traditional food. People have started to adopt various scientific process in preparing various traditional foods like various cakes from rice powder, local dry fishes, pickle of various seasonal fruits, bamboo shoot Pickle, Pickles prepared from pork and duck meat, various dishes prepared from mustard-oil seeds and many such more. How these local traditional foods have been marketed is the study matter of this research (paper). Preparation, Presentation and commercialization in the subject-matter of this study with reference to social aspects.

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically prepared on analytical method based on primary sources and secondary sources of data such as books, journals, magazine, newspaper and internet. The following tools and methods are used for the purpose of the study and data collection: Unstructured Interview, Personal Interview, Group Interview, Observations method, Conversation, discussion.

III. PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

The period study constituted from October 2017 to December 2018 covering 25 families from the five villages and in 20 commercial outlets. The study data's are purely based on the basis of verbal communication. The study is based on the source and naming of the local food products, its uses and food value, sale of such local production-preservation-packing system, evaluation of costing, popularizations of such local products. The data's and information's are formally noted for followed research work. Local beliefs on such products and its impact on sale and profit made out of it are also is an area of this study.

IV. AREA OF THE STUDY

Dibrugarh is one of the major and important District of North-East, India. The District is 27° 5'38'' to North, 27° 42'30'' to the Northern part, 94° 33'46'' to East to 95° 29'8'' is expanded. Dibrugarh has it area of 1,305.3 sq. Km with a population of 13,26,335 according to 2011 (year) census. Dibrugarh has it Geographical structure with Dhemaji Dist. To its North, Charaidew District and Arunachal Pradesh to its

South. Tinsukia to its East and Sibsagar District To its West. Naharkatia is of Dibrugarh Dist. There exists seven Legislative Assembly Constituencies in the District. Ahoms, Chutias, Sonowals Kacharis, Morans, Motoks are the main inhabitants, - both as Hindus or Muslims.

Five significant villages have been chosen in particular for this Methodological study.- Dighala Gaon, Kumarani Gaon, Patra Gaon, Changmai Gaon and Natun Gaon are covered as place of this study.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULT

The villagers mainly have two resources of collecting the local traditional foods- one; they produce these through home-cultivation of from nature itself. Now-a-days, the raw fact is collected in modern ways, fishes etc. from various water bodies and wild and naturally grown various vegetables, etc. from freely grown greeneries.

Most of the people in Assam are dependent on agriculture, including the people of Dibrugarh district. They mainly cultivate rice and one-one cultivation covers the whole years. Along with this many villagers grow various kinds of vegetables for their personal use. Pig, Goat, Duck, Chicken are domesticated for their meat. It can be noted that the people of Assam collect various kinds of raw food materials in different season. Specially the Ahoms, Kacharis, Boros, Missing, Deuris, Chutia, Tiwas and other such tribes of Assam domesticate animals or patronize the animal farming. This is because, they over to the vegetarian food, were habituated to the meat of birds, pig, fish along with various home-made toxicities drinks or beverages.

It is observed from the study that, a large member of traditional food are in the custom among the tribes, - Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian and Drinks can be categorized as the three main stream of the system of food habit among the various tribes living in Assam. Different fishes or dishes prepared from different fishes and various meat stuff as Non-veg, various kinds of vegetables, fruits etc as Veg. And home-made various wines as drinks and beverages can be categorized as drinks. It can also be noted that these local and traditional foods are prepared either through cooking, or baked in natural fire or through boiling. The process of preparation differs depending on taste, Some of these foods are even consumed for its taste and food-value.

Demand for these traditional foods are still seen to exist in societies of town and city dwellers. These traditional foods also have their own medicinal values and provides us the necessities for a sound and healthy life. The inhabitants of Assam also have the knowledge of having a certain kind of traditional food with response to day-hours and night-hours. Various faiths and believes have their link with these traditional foods.

There are many scopes of producing or preparing such traditional foods on commercial levels. Production of such foods can help one to become independent. Some of such traditional food have seen to take its commercial move. Such products, not only can be consumed locally within the state, but can be exported to the neighbouring states, and even to the International Market. Some of such traditional food have been introduced here through this paper.

A. Commercialization of vegetarian foods

The tradition of preparing different traditional food from different vegetables is in existence since long. And we normally use these foods in our every diet. These traditional foods have their significant tastes and we derive the nutrients necessary for our body from such traditional foods, with their specific medicinal values. All the traditional foods although cannot be prepared on commercial basis, but some can be preserved for a considerable longer period of time and can be presented in the market with commercial outlook. Some of such traditional food have already penetrated the commercial market.

B. Some Of Such Traditional Foods Are Been Presented Here As A Subject Of Discussion

“Outenga”– “Outenga” out of many is a common food among the old food diet system.



It is a very useful food item. According to ‘Encyclopaedia of fruits or Nuts’, every 100 gm. Of this vegetable contains 59 kilo- value, out of which 0.8 % is fat content, 2.1-2.5% fibber and 3.53% has the acidic value, 16 gm Calcium, 26 gm Phosphorus, and 04 mg. Ascorbic Acid. Considering the content quality it has a prospect of having commercial value and can be commercialized.



Pickle from this (Outenga) can be prepared in various tasty ways. Some young entrepreneurs and self-help groups are trying to

commercialize this. This pickle prepared from the stuff can be preserved for a long period. There is immense scope to make a project of preparing pickle from this in scientific and commercial way.

It can be mentioned that one from Dhemaji Dist. Kabyashree Borgohain has started such a program as 'Project Outenga' and started a self-service outlet in Gujarat with various palatable Assamese traditional foods prepared from bamboo-shoot, mustard-oil pastes, etc.

"Bhut Jalakia" - (Ghost chilli) "Bhut Jalakia" is another popular food-stuff of Assam. It has its scientific name as-



It is the world's hottest chilli. Along with Assam, this special quality of chilli is also cultivated in the other parts of our country. This special type of chilli (the Bhut Jalakia) has been recognised has the highest hot-chilli in the "Guinness Book of Records" and has established Assam with a high status before the world in the field of organic cultivation. It has a high market value in the International market. And keeping this as a point of



consideration, a wide-range of cultivation of the species will fetch a profitable market.

This species is usually sold in raw in the markets of Assam Pickles, etc. if prepared from it in proper way can be preserved for long. There is also a scope of preparing powder

of the species along with pickles for commercial purpose. These products prepared from the hot chilli are used as cooking ingredients. The cultivation of the species will provide immense scope to one to be self dependent. It has got high demand in the markets of Assam and many has chosen this as a scope of business.

There are number of instances of people considering this as a commodity of business. Dr. Anuj Baruah, a doctorate in petroleum technology, from Guwahati University is a living example who has taken to the cultivation of this hot-chilli (Bhut Jalakia) and is exporting its powder to many countries in abroad.

Pani-Tenga (a solidified paste prepared from mastered-oil seeds in leman taste) is an old traditional food of Assam. It is in tradition for many centuries, now it is mainly prepared from mustard-oil seeds. The (mustard-oil) seeds are grinded mixed with lemon juice or with one kind of seasonal fruit called 'Thekera' (a kind of acidic fruit), chilli and salt, which, after a number of days, on fermentation gets



converted to a delicious solidified paste called 'Pani-tenga'. It provides enough taste when taken with plain vegetarian foods. It, in present days is prepared in modern and developed ways to meet the commercial need. The stuff is normally kept covered with small pieces of banana leaf, but, it is also seen to be covered with plastic wrapper for commercial use.

'Bamboo Shoot' is another popular traditional food of the state. Its basic source is the bamboo-shoot- the very tender spout of local bamboos.



The bamboo-shoot are properly cleaned and peeled and then thinly sliced or crunched and left deep in clean water for three-four days to become sour or fermentation. The soured shoots gets tasty when cooked with fish and other vegetables. The sour shoots are taken out of water-base and are allowed to dry. This state of the stuff is termed as 'Khorisa' and pickles can also be prepared from this. The bamboo-shoot has its demand in the market. In older days, the bamboo-shoot prepared



'Khorisa' was also used as medicine in the post-pox period suffering. The dried up 'Khorisa' also have old traditional value. This 'Khorisa', as bamboo-pickles, is now commonly available in the market. People have takes this as an income source and are doing in large scale, as a homemade pickle industry and it also bear every scope of conquering Business market even outside the state of Assam.

Assam, being an agriculture based state, rice grows in abundance with variety of brands and quality. The rice-grain derived from the crops are generally crushed and rice-powder is prepared to prepare different kinds of 'Pitha's and 'Ladoo's.



The preparation of 'Pitha' and 'Ladoo' is ancestral, -- going on as a tradition since the days of our fore-fathers. 'Pitha's prepared in variety of shapes, expresses an artistic mind of the ladies of the age.

'Til-Pitha' (prepared from a particular grain named 'Til' covered by rice-powder), 'Tel-Pitha' (paste of rice-powder fried in oil), 'Ghila-Pitha', 'Sutuli-Pitha' (another kind prepared from rice powder), 'Kholo dia Pitha' (one kind of 'Pitha' prepared from rice-powder by baking) are the kinds generally prepared from rice-powder and are still commonly available even today. 'Ladoo's are also prepared differently with variety of ingredients with 'Ladoo's prepared from 'Til' and coconut are common.



These traditional foods, now, are usually available in our present market. They are one-one special item that which takes its importance specially during the seasonal festival of Assam – the 'Bihu'. These traditional foods at present are commercialised and are seen to be in market in plastic packets. Although marketed, this has not reached the height of export to the other parts of our country in commercial level. If this can be made to export in commercial level, there is every scope to hope for a large amount of profit and will earn a substantial commercial market.

C. Commercialization Of Non-Veg Food In Assam

The variety of traditional food in Assam is commercialization of non-veg very much high in figure. Different traditional societies of castes and tribes exists in the North East India including 'Ahom's, Boros, Rabhas, Mishings, Dewris, Konch, Chutias and many more. Leaving besides various kinds of vegetables, different kinds of non-poisonous insects are also covered within their list of food. Presently the tribes of Assam are commercializing their traditional non-veg foods out of which pickles prepared from pork and from duck (meat derived from bird duck). These two non-veg pickles are considered as the point of discussion here – 'Pork' is another food traditionally used in the Assamese society and culture. The tribes known as 'Ahom', 'Missing', 'Dewri', 'Boro', 'Chutia' have been absorbing the pork either baked or boiled or in other traditional ways. Tribals have the custom of keeping pig as domestic animal and have the tradition of offering their meat 'pork' in various different rituals. They also had farming with commercial point of view and that was a profitable business. Even wild pigs were hunted for food. But due to deforestation the wild pigs are losing their numbers.



Pork is gaining its popularity and are found almost in every market and it bears a high market value (even rising up to 250/300 per kilogram by weight). Pickles are also made from pork. The pork is initially boiled and dried in the direct sun light. This helps in preservation and lasts for long. Pickles are mainly prepared from dry pork. The concept of preparing pickles from pork is fresh and the process of preparation is scientific. A few numbers of youth from Jorhat is starting this venture as a business in small scale commercial way with a brand name 'Tholowa Swad' (local taste) and is exporting this make (pickle) to different places of Assam and is earning considerable profit.

Different kinds and varieties of duck are seen to exist and almost all kinds are found in Assam. It is a domestic bird and many keep this bird Duck as a pet. And people of Assam also use its flesh as food. Duck-meat now is gaining its commercial demand and are been farmed for its commercial utilization and benefits. Both 'live' and 'dressed' Duck as a meat are

easily available in the present market. Pickles from Duck-meat are seen to be prepared in the present time for its market demand. Pickle from Duck-meat is prepared using various eatable preservative spices. Duck-meat is boiled or cooked with various spices to prepare pickle. Some enterprising youths of Jorhat District are taking bold steps to prepare pickle from Duck-meat and are exporting of to different districts of the state. People are also accepting the same with great enthusiasm.

D. Profit Of Commercialisation Of Local Traditional Foods

Some of the aspects of profit on commercialisation of local traditional food.

- On commercialisation of the traditional foods, the local market are getting flooded with variety of such foods making the local enterprising youths financially sound.
- Commercialisation is making the world a global village. The traditional foods, for the positive aspect of commercialisation, has reached a wider market beyond its own native place. Else, such traditional foods were within the periphery of the day-to-day lives of Assamese society.
- The traditional foods of Assam has an identity in its taste. Every tribe and its varied sections have their own traditional food with identical tastes. Commercialisation has provided all the scope to have the taste of Assamese traditional food at large.
- The traditional foods are still in the cottage industry scale. Small groups of youth have started commercialisation of such traditional foods in cottage industry scale or someone has started individually. There is enough scope of growing such industry in large scale and there is every chance of having one such in near future.

E. Steps to Be Taken In Modernisation Of Commercial

To implement or to expand the market of the local traditional food products, the commercial system will be needed to be improved or modernised, Proper planning of preparation and marketing will expand the market and provide to the publicity of the product to a large extent.

But we must need to take some step or measures to reach our goal.

- The traditional foods are to be sent to the market in large scale and in scientific way.
- The commercialisation of traditional foods will solve a long awaited problem of preservation of foods as no such units are in existence in Assam. People of Assam will think for such an unit and will plan for it. If such a kind of warehouse can be brought to existence, it will be a long lasting asset for Assam and its people.
- There will arise the scope of training to the enterprising youth by trained trainers in difficult fields, -regarding preparation, pocketing, marketing, etc.

- Using the Internet, Whatsapp, Facebook and such other social medias have made marketing more easy and fast. The global market now is in the click of a fingers-tip. These Assamese traditional foods should be brought under the Coverage of electric social Medias to enhance its business volume.

VI. CONCLUSION

Therefore, It can be Concluded from the study that there is a rising demand for Assamese local traditional foods. People are not only using these foods for personal consumption through preservation, - but also are marketing these traditional food products and making oneself self-independent. Because of various medicinal values, people throughout the state are accepting the traditional foods widely. The tradition and the process of preparing the traditional foods of Assam are reaching almost to every corner of the state. Considering the facts about the quality and tests of the local traditional food a National and an International market can be given to its existence, and this survey will provide a sharp economical rise to the people of Assam and will help to provide a stability to the economical status of the Assamese people.

REFERENCES

1. Das N., *Asamar Janajatiya Lokakhadya : Ek Bislesanatmak Adhyayan*, PhD Thesis, Gauhati University, Gauhati, Assam, 2017.
2. Gogoi MP, Pan-Bhoojan, Students Stores, Guwahati, Assam, 2013
3. Gogoi L., *Asomar Loka-Sanskriti (Vol-II)*, Krantikaal Prakashan, guwahati, 2013
4. Gogoi L., *Asomar Loka-Sanskriti (Vol-III)*, Krantikaal Prakashan, guwahati, 2013
5. Das A., *Asamor Janagustiyo Lokakhadya*, Aankbaank, Guwahati, Assam, 2012
6. Kumari P., *The missing foodways an analytical study on the foods and food related cultural practices of the misings of Assam*, PhD Thesis, Gauhati University, Gauhati, Assam, 2014
7. <http://as.vikashpedia.in/education/>, jul 17, 2019
8. <http://www.xahitya.org/2014/>. ISSN 2321-5097
9. <http://www.newsasn.com/node/2210>, october 05, 2018

AUTHORS PROFILE



Dr. Pallabika Sarmah, Resource Person, & Part Time Faculty, Department of Assamese, Cotton University, Assam, India



Samutjal Saikia Research Scholar, Department of Assamese, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India



Ashim Saikia Assamese Subject Teacher, Swadhyay Academy Senior Secondary School, Dibrugarh, Assam, India