

Role of Culture in the Promotion of Millets

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ABSTRACT

Food often has a strong cultural religious or even political meaning attached in it. Culture is a concept, which is having close relationship with the society. Culture is a rich source to carry message and import information very comfortably on the human psychology. Historically culture always had a rich association with food but in the past years in India rice and wheat having major growth than millets. In India even today, millet festivals are celebrated in India . In the tribal areas of Vishakhapatnam people celebrate Mandukiya festival , where recipes made with Ragi (Finger Millet) In many places in northern Andhra Pradesh, after the celebration of Deepawali in the evening , It is mandatory to eat Ragi pancake before entering home. On the occasion of Nagula Chavithi ,the traditional recipes made from Ragi. In Madhya Pradesh Ragi is mixed with turmeric and applied on the bride and groom during their wedding ceremonies. All these examples shows how culture's having deep connectivity with millets . Culture is a strong medium to educate people about the benefits of millets and motivate them to adopt in their meal. The wonderful thing about culture is that ,it helps our brain stimulate and remember information better. The goal of this paper is to investigate the effect of culture on human psychology and how much effective to spread the message about the awareness towards millets.

Keywords:- Culture, Millet, Society, Food , Festivals

Food and culture are closely related as food can reflect the history, geography, and customs of culture. The types of food people eat are influenced by their cultural backgrounds and traditions. Different cultures have their own unique cuisines, cooking methods, and ingredients. Food is also an important part of many cultural celebrations and rituals, and can play a significant role in social interactions and building community. The way people eat, such as the use of chopsticks in Chinese culture or the use of hands in Indian culture, also reflects cultural customs and etiquette. Food can also be a representation of a culture's identity and it can be used as a form of communication to express culture's values and beliefs.

Millets are traditionally consumed in many cultures in different parts of the world. They are highly nutritious valued for their health benefits. Millets are immensely associated with the cultural heritage, believes, rituals, festivals, folklores, etc. Millets are believed as the earliest crop to be domesticated. Archeo-botanical evidence proves that millets cultivation has been started 8000 years ago in China. India, China, and Africa are the centre of origin for most of the millets. Millets were cultivated in an area of 47.34 m ha in 1966-67. But the area has been shrunken in recent years due to various reasons such as introduction of commercial crops, plantation crops in hilly regions, increased irrigation projects, change in lifestyle and taste of growing population, etc. Though millets cultivation and consumption are influenced by many factors, it is unable to replace from people's life due to their cultural significance and health benefits.

Millets played a significant role not only as a staple food but also with cultural significance such as festivals, rituals, folklore stories, etc. These cultural heritage of millets are found in various literatures of India and other countries.

Millets are used in the religious ceremonies and rituals of many culture. Pertaining to India, millets are mentioned in Vedas and the great epics. They also been mentioned in the literature of different Indian languages. Even today, millets are also used in traditional medicine in some cultures.

Millets in Vedas and the great epics

During the Vedic age, grasses (which are later domesticated as millets) were used in various sacraments. Proso millet is mentioned as Anu in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. Italian millet(Priyangu) is offered to deity Rudra to obtain prosperity of cattle. Balbaja (finger millet) is used for fuel, making baskets and other gifts products (Rig Veda). Syamaka (barnyard millet) grains are offered to Soma and other deities (Atharv Veda). Yajurveda mentions the consumption pattern of priyangava (foxtail millet), aanaya (barnyard millet) and shyaamaka (black finger millet).

Enlightenment of earthen lamps andpreparation of millet sweets to celebrate the return of Rama to Ayodhya has been witnessed in the Treta Yuga. Sage Kanva poured the auspicious foxtail millet at the time of bidding farewell to

Sakuntala in Dushyanta court which was mentioned in the Abhigyan Sakuntalam of Mahakavi Kalidas.

Millets in Tamil literature

Tamil literature Purananuru portrays that peasant obtained kodo millet on loan to remove the poverty of his relatives during Sangam era. The earliest available Tamil literature Tholkappiyam interprets sorghum as the great millet. It also mentions kodo millet, foxtail millet and little millet. Perumpatrupadai mentions about wholesome meal “kali”, a paste like food prepared with finger millet and foxtail millet flours, which was eaten with freshly cooked fish, toddy and dry pieces of meat. It also mentions about the sweet tasting meal made with kodo millet cooked with white lablab beans cultivated in the dry field. In Ainkurunuru the poet Kabilar mentions mountain dweller’s daughter eats tender Italian millet flour. The prayer song offered to Lord Murugan in Tamil starts with the words “Thaenum Thina Maavam” which means “I offer honey with foxtail millet flour”. This shows the values given to millets by our ancestors. The celebrated Tamil poet Avvaiyar gratitude Boothan of Pulvelur village as “Varagu arisi chorum, vazhuthunangai vaatum, moramoravena pulitha morum’ in “Thani padal thirattu” for serving her steamed kodo millet rice, with smoked and mashed brinjal and tangy frothy buttermilk. Regional level rituals and millet festivals in India. Millets have been the traditional cuisine in different parts. Though the millets have been neglected as food for the past half century, they have been preserved by the cultural heritage, rituals and festivals associated with it. Millets are kept in the kalasam of temple towers (gopuram) in Tamil Nadu. These millets act as a source of food during the natural calamities such as drought and flood. Later these seeds are taken for sowing of crops. Koozh, porridge especially made from the finger millet is offered to the lord Mariyamman. This is celebrated as festival in most of the villages in Tamil Nadu to get the health and wealth of livestock. In Odisha, millet ear heads are tied with bamboo strips and stored in mud houses which do not allow the entry of direct sunlight. Metumniu festival is celebrated by the Yimchunger Nagas of Nagaland after the harvest of millet crop in August month. The recipes made with finger millet are offered to bullocks in Mandukiya festival celebrated during June-July in the tribal areas of Vishakhapatnam.

In some parts of northern Andhra Pradesh, it is mandatory to eat finger millet pancake in the evening before entering home after Diwali celebration. Finger millet recipes are made during Nagula Chavithi festival for worshipping the snake god. Finger millet flour is mixed with turmeric and applied for the bride and groom during wedding ceremonies in Madhya Pradesh. Millet stalks are hanged in the courtyards of Pahadi Korwa tribe of Chhattisgarh to ensure good hunting and plentiful harvest. “Kuthiyottam” festival is celebrated in the honor of Lord Vishnu during November-December by offering millets to deities in

Kerala. In Karnataka, Koorge pooja is done for the commencement of millets and redgram sowing, where one woman sows the millet seeds, and two others follow with pigeon pea as intercrop.

In Gujarat on Makar Sankranti, “ghoogri” is made by soaked bajra seeds mixed with jaggery is offered to cattle as a sign of gratitude. Bhakri (roti) and pithal (sabji) are offered to Gajanan maharaj in Maharashtra. Mulaipari is an important ritual in Tamil Nadu. Villages where the women carry pots of sprouted and germinated Navadhanya on their heads. Navadhanya consists of sprouted seeds of nine crops in cereals, millets, and pulses. Soliga tribes in BR hills of Karnataka celebrate the roti festival called rotti habba during the end of winter months. After offering to the gods, they distribute to all the people.

Culture and millets

Folklores have been interlinked to the cultural fabric, narrative, and mythology of the people of many societies. In African communities, millets are trusted to have magical properties and are used in rituals to bring good luck and prosperity. There is a famous African folktale about a farmer who tames the snake who was destroying his millet crop. In the famous collection of fairy tales by Grimm Brothers, the theme “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” features about the porridge. A famous folk song “Bajre Da Sitta” which express gratitude to the harvest and abundance of bajra is often sung during traditional weddings in Punjab. A rain-call song assumes the drought as a thief who has stolen the clouds, rain, and grains of finger millet, bajra, and little millet in Rajasthan. A Himachali song fussed about the difficulties faced during grinding of hard seed coated millets. A farm song “Ngi ia bom te ia u krai” in Meghalaya explains about the smoking of millet sheaves with local wood to enhance the flavour of grain. This is followed by threshing the earhead/panicle with sticks and stamped to separate the seeds. In Tamil Nadu, hundreds of folklore songs are available for the mulaipari festival. Mulaipari song is sung along with kummi and other traditional dances. The rotti habba festival in Soliga tribes of Karnataka is followed by night long dances by the men folk around a bonfire. During this time, the women gather around to watch and choose their partners.

CONCLUSION

Though recent researches indicate that millet consumption has been decreased even in rural areas, millet still exists not only in the rural but also in urban areas due to their cultural significance. In return millets provide a refreshment and encouragement to the farmers by taking part in rituals, Hence, cultural heritage is the major event folklore, festivals, etc. which preserves this past and future crops not only in the present but also for the future generations.

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