

# Indigenous Traditional Knowledge: Blending Traditional Cuisine and Scientific Knowledge

Sima Kachhot

Department of Food Science and Nutrition, ACN&CS  
Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University, Sardarkrushinagar - 385506, Gujarat

\*Corresponding Author: [kachhotseema001@gmail.com](mailto:kachhotseema001@gmail.com)

India is a land of numerous people and cultures. Many different ethnic groups found here outnumber many countries. It has a rich culinary heritage that has evolved over centuries. Traditional foods give an exquisite vision of India's rich cultural heritage. Each region of India, and the world, is diverse in its food habits. Each region has its own recipes; it cooks with different ingredients and, it eats differently. Traditional food habits across the country are primarily based on a holistic approach to nutrition. However, with rapid urbanization, our eating habits are also rapidly changing, and we run the real danger of losing our rich traditional food knowledge, built with the wisdom of centuries.

Apart from being healthy traditional foods are also very delicious. Their several health benefits include supporting the immune system, circulatory system, brain function and several other metabolic functions in the human body.

Traditional knowledge often forms part of people's cultural and spiritual identity of most local communities. It is a key constituent of a Community's social and physical environment and, as such, its preservation is of paramount importance. The preservation, protection and promotion of the Traditional Knowledge-based innovations and practices of local communities are particularly important for developing countries like India.

## Importance of Traditional Knowledge

- An African proverb says: "**When an old knowledgeable person dies, a whole library dies**" indicating the importance of TK.
- Indian Systems of Medicine (Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani) are part of the official healthcare system in India, and depend on a diversity of biological resources and traditional knowledge.

## Traditional cuisine used during festivals in India

India is known for its rich culture, festivals, rituals, traditions, and religious functions, which

makes it a radiant nation. Almost every religious festival makes an important contribution to diets.

## Ram Navmi

- The ninth day of the month, the bright half of the *Chitra* (March-April) is observed on the birth of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is an important Hindu festival celebrated all over the country by all the sects of the Hindu fold.
- On this day *Panjeeri* is special indigenous foods, prepared on *Ram Navmi*.
- *Panjeeri* is a *prasad* prepared on *Ram Navmi* and offered to God Ram. It is sweet and pungent in taste. It is prepared out of coriander seeds, sugar and dry ginger.
- Coriander seeds is the main ingredient of *Panjeeri*. It has a refrigerant property. Hence, consumption of the *Panjeeri* gives cooling effect to the body.

## Akshaya Trutiya

- *Akshaya Trutiya* is observed on the third day of the bright half of *Vaishakh*. This is also believed to be the first day of *Satyuga*.
- *Pannha* is offered to the forefathers, on the occasion of *Akshaya Trutiya*.
- *Pannha* is a refreshing drink of cooked green mango popularly consumed in, the month of *Vaishakh* in *Vasant* season.
- *Pannha* is recommended to all age groups. *Pannha* is the unique energy imparting and disease preventing drink used in *Vasant* season. According to Deshpande (2001) mango is laxative, diuretic and antiscorbutic, which tones up the inner muscles. Hence, it is used for various gastrointestinal, bilious and blood disorders.

## Pola

- *Pola* is the harvest festival, celebrated by farmers all over Maharashtra. This festival is celebrated

on the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Shravan (July-August). On this day, bullocks, which are an integral part of the agricultural chores and consequently the village economy, are honored.

- *Poi bhaji* is prepared on the festival *Pola*. Mayalu vegetable is easily available in uncultivated land in forest and near the farm. This vegetable is available during the months, of July-August and September only. The botanical name is *Basella rubra* or *Basella alba*.



- *Poi bhaji* can be recommended for people suffering from iron deficiency anaemia, protein calorie malnutrition. *Poi Bhaji* is a rich source of dietary fibre, hence it is recommended during constipation and in febrile disorders. *Poi* leaves are good substitute for spinach when boiled it becomes mucilaginous and their flavour improves. It is a good source of vitamins and minerals. Hence, it can be used to check malnutrition in children, pregnant women, in case of constipation and in urinary disorders (Rajasab and Isaq, 2004). The family members relish this *bhaji* together which not only fulfils the physiological needs but also has socio cultural values.

### Diwali

- The word Diwali is the corruption of the sanskrit word Deepavali. Deepa means light and Avali, means a row. It means a row of lights and indeed illumination forms its main attraction. Multi coloured rangoli design, floral decorations and fireworks lend grandeur to this festival which heralds joy, mirth and happiness in the ensuing year. This festival is celebrated on a grand scale in almost all the regions of India.

- *Shankar pale* is a diamond shaped sweet preparation. *Shankar pale* are used as a snack prepared on the festival *Diwali*. It is prepared out of refined flour, sugar and milk.



- According to Charak, in summer one does not need as much fat as in winter. In winter, appetite is better and man can digest a larger quantity of other protein foods, which in summer may lead to gastrointestinal disorder. Carbohydrate needs are also increased in winter due to contact of cold air, digestive fire is confined, hence its vitality is increased and, therefore in winter one can digest much more heavy stuff than in summer (Narsinga Rao *et al.* 1989), hence, Shankarpale eaten in winter are helpful to fulfil requirement of energy. It is recommended to all age group.
- As it is a low fibre high starch recipe, it can be recommended to the people with gastric ulcers and digestive troubles. Chewing of *Shankarpale* stimulates ptyalin in the mouth due to its crispness, hence, aid digestion of starch. It gives soothing effect in peptic ulcer.

### Makar Sankrant

- The festival of *Makar Sankrant* traditionally coincides with the beginning of Sun's northward journey (The Uttarayan) when it enters the sign Makar (Capricorn). It falls on the 14th January every year according to the solar calendar.
- *Til ladu* is a special indigenous food prepared on the occasion of *Makar Sankrant*. It is a sweet confection eaten as a snack in which crunchy



materials like roasted sesame seeds, kneaded with a hot viscous solution of jaggery into balls.



reduce serum cholesterol levels by increasing fecal excretion of total bile acids.

- *Ghee*, in India, has always been regarded as the supreme cooking fat. An Ayurveda terms ghee as a sweet food, it strengthens, aids digestion and tampers the over activity of all three bodily doshas i.e. Vatta, Pitta and Cough. Cardamom act as a carminative, aromatic, stimulant and diuretic (Pruthi, 1998). *Puran poli* has been used as an expression of love, friendship and social acceptance. It is also used as a symbol of happiness on certain occasions in life.

### Conclusion

It can be said that indigenous foods often have some significance. The people will also know the nutritional, therapeutic, medicinal and socio-cultural values of the recipes done on festival days. This may be also helpful to some value in preservation of unique indigenous knowledge which disappear owing to the lack of proper documentation.

### References

- Corolyn. B. D. (2002). Handbook of Nutrition and Food. Florida, CRC Press. pp 368.
- Deshpande, A.P. (2001). Dravyagun Vidhanyan. Pune. Anmol Prakashan. I & II pp 2: 21.
- Narsinga Rao S.S., Y.G. Deosthale and K.C. Pant (1989). Nutritive Value of Indian Foods. Hyderabad, NIN. pp 37 - 48.
- Pruthi, J.S. (1998). Spices and Condiments. India, National Book Trust. pp15 - 245.
- Rajasab, A.H. and Isaq, M. (2004). Documentation of Folk Knowledge of Edible Wild Plants of North Karnataka. *Indian J. of Traditional Knowledge*. 8(4): 421.

### Holi

- *Holi* is the last major festival in the Hindu calendar and falls on the last day of *Phalguna* (February-March) which is the day of the full moon. During this time, the winter crops are ripe for harvesting and the spring starts blooming.
- *Puran poli* is a very prestigious dish in Hindu festivals. It is sweet pancake. In most of the festivals people prepare *Puran poli* as an important recipe, hence, it is also known as *Mahanaivedya*.
- According to Ayurveda, bengal gram is cool, laxative, diuretic and anabolic. Bengal gram consumed over period of several weeks may

\*\*\*\*\*