



UNDERGROUND FOODS CONSUMED BY THE TIPRASA

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Abstract:

Tripura is one of the smallest states in the North-eastern region of India. The land is covered with mountains, hills, and valleys. The first settlers were the Kokborok speaking people. Scholars say that Kokborok is a Sino-Tibetan language that originated from the Dimasa language. It has been mentioned in Rajmala that after a long period of peaceful relationship with Kachari Dimasa, the then King came to Tripura and widened his kingdom here. Tripura shares its borders on three sides with Bangladesh, Assam and Mizoram in the east. If we look at the history of this country, we can say that Jhum cultivation has been part of Tiprasa culture. People those days survived on Jhum cultivation. Some of the crops grown in the Jhum fields were sweet potatoes, bamboo shoot, turmeric, ginger, wild potatoes, tapioca (Tha), mushrooms etc.

Keywords:- Sino-Tibetan, Jhum, Rajmala, Tiprasa, Tapioca.

Introduction:

Tripura or Twipra was ruled by the kings since ancient times. It's reference has been found in Rajmala. Twipra, Tipra or Tripura was formed even before Mahabharata. References are there in Rajmala that the king of Tipra or Twipra kingdom went and fought in the war of Mahabharat. It is also been mentioned that Bhaqadatta, the king of Bodo or Boro community also fought in the war and was killed there. It is also said that after the return of the Twipra king, King Trilochon was invited to Judhisthir's feast as one of his quests. The name of the Tipra kingdom then was Kirat Desh during the reign of King Kirat and his descendants. This is the land of King Kirat. Nothing about the kings of that time was written down or preserved. Writing about the kings began in the 15th century when the Rajmala book was written.

Literature Review:

There are no particular books yet that has been written on underground foods consumed by the Tiprasas or Borok people. Kokborok writers have written plenty of good books. However, no one as such has written on this topic. Although, there are references of few underground food items found in old stories told by our grandparents and in our traditional folk songs. Cultivation of turmeric, ginger and tapioca have been mentioned there but not about all underground foods consumed by the Tiprasas or Borok people. All the described underground food items or root vegetables have been consumed by the indigenous people since old days.

Underground foods consumed by the Tiprasas :-

MUYA HAKWTWI: When we talk about underground foods, the first thing that comes to mind is Muya hakwtwi. These grow in the month of Boisakh when the first rain kisses the earth and are ready to consume by the month of Bador-Asin. Muya hakwtwi is the newest baby bamboo shoot that grows during that season and is almost sweet in taste and very delicious.

MUIKHUMUK HAPOLOK: Muikhumuk hapolok is one of the most loved food item of the indigenous people in Tripura. There is no one that has never had this kind of mushroom. It tastes better than any other food items that we consume. It is found mostly when the new rain falls on the earth. It grows on hapolok which is why it is also named as Muikhumu hapolok.

THA BOLONG: Tha bolong is found in deep and large forests. As it is found in forests which in Kokborok is Bolong, that is why it was named tha bolong by our ancestors. In the month of Kartik-Agun, these wild tapiocas ripen and are tastes good during this time. That season is when the forest leaves fall and people do not do that much of Jhum during that and so people would look out for tha bolong in the forest.

THAKUNG: There is no difference between Thakung and Tha bolong. Thakung does not has much fibre in it and is vwhite in colour but it is said to quite delicious.

THA GONGA: Tha qonga is slightly different from other kinds of tapiocas. It has more fibre and is slimier than other kinds of tapiocas. It is also known as Gongiya in some areas.

MUIKHUMUK ATHUKIRI: Another favourite food item of the Tiprasas found underground is Muikhumuk Athukiri. These are tiny mushrooms that looks like small stars. It is white in colour. It does not grow in deep forests but instead it grows in the grass.

THA NARU: There is a story about Tha naru that our grandparents often used to share. It is said that the best time to harvest Tha naru is early morning or evening and not in the afternoon. Elders joke that it goes for breast feeding its children during the afternoon.

BATIMA: Another popular food among the indigenous tribe of Tripura which is found underground is batima. It would not be fair to name all of the things that we eat but not talk about batima. It is one of the those foods which has to be prepared properly prepare and or it may be allergic to the one who consumes it. It takes a long time the longer it takes, the better its tastes.

THABORCHUK (Tapioca): Among the many foods in the country, thaborchuk is one of the most popular children's foods. However, this is the most common thing. Many people live near the house. Over time, the location of the wedding ceremony has changed and now most of the wedding ceremony is held near the wedding ceremony.

Tha KHAMPWLAI: In the past, tapiocas (tha) were used to be buried or grown. Tha khampwlai is one kind of tapioca. These do look like stools (khampwlai in Kokborok language) and they were named after it as Tha khampwlai. Its shape and outer appearance is similar to a wooden stool.

SWEET POTATOES: Sweet potatoes are very well known to Tiprasa households. These were used as treats for children to be able to handle them or make the stop crying or throwing tantrums. Earlier, there were no baby foods available. Therefore, sweet potatoes were loved by children because it is sweet in taste, which is why sweet potatoes in Kokborok language are called thaktwi (tha (tapioca/potato) +kwtwi (sweet) taktwi). Apart from sweet potatoes, tapiocas and tha thengwi are also boiled and consumed. There are also many different kinds of edible things found inside the ground. Our ancestors have consumed these things and bred or multiplied into further generations. Some other edible things found underground and were consumed by the indigenous people in those days and are still consumed are qinger, tha rondok, tha borok, thadul, tha mwkang, hapek, tha rabon, tha muphrai, tha maitwk, tha badiya, taro bulb etc.

RAW TURMERIC (Swtwi Kwthang) : Tiprasas always have been growing and using raw turmeric in their every day cooking. Turmeric are believed to be good for the body. Raw turmeric are also essential item used while performing rituals to worship the deities.

THA BATIYA :- It is one kind of Tapioca (Tha) found under the ground. It is similar to taro bulb.

Conclusion:

The people of Tripura or the Tiprasas had to be more familiar with the local produce that grew around and be able to make good use of them in those days. That is how Tiprasas started consuming things were found around such as bamboo shoots and under the soil such as sweet potatoes, tapioca etc. These food habits were passed from generation to generation and it became part of the culture. The local produce turned into local dishes and it became our cultural cuisine. Our cuisines also are part of our culture and heritage, which is why it should be carried on and preserved generation to generations.



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