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The Roles of institutional frameworks in enforcing food Safety in Karbi society: A study on Karbi Anglong District

Ms. Sangita Das

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Eastern Karbi Anglong College, Karbi Anglong, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

Food is considered one of the basic elements for survival. Karbi tribe can be considered one of the major tribe of North East India, and in some extent, they are found in other parts of India also. The Migration history of the Karbis revealed the fact that, since the primitive time, the Karbis are very conscious about their food habits and in the very beginning of their society; they developed the concept of food consumption in various way in their society. All the core institutions of the Karbis such as culture and tradition, economy, religion, marriage, family, kinship are focus primarily on food habits. The framework of all the institution shows that the Karbis are scientifically consumes all the food items according to the season, and health. The present study basically deals with the institutional framework in enforcing food safety in Karbi society. The present study also deals with the governmental and village elders' role in bringing awareness among the youths in terms of food habits.

Novelty: It is hoped that this study will help the governmental and non- governmental organizations to expend policies to upward the food safety in Karbi Anglong District. The study tried to dig out the psycho-motor qualities and advancement and provides a general contribution of social institution of the Karbis in consuming foods.

Type of the paper: Empirical.

Keywords: Community, Consumptions, Enforcement, Food Safety, Institutional.

INTRODUCTION

The Karbis can be considered as one of the primitive tribe of Assam as well as North-East India. Presently, they are found everywhere in India and other countries also. In primitive time, there were no written language existing in Karbi literature but they used to transmit their culture, folk songs, folk tales, narratives, historical incidents and socialize their societal members through oral tradition. Since the time immemorial, the Karbis have been showing their efficiency in all spheres such as dance, drama, hunting, war, ritual performance and especially in preparing foods. The knowledge on indigenous foods (including both raw and cooked) is a outstanding feature of the Karbis. Their oral tradition disclosed the fact that in the primitive time, they used to take raw or boiled food instead of overcooked spicy food. According to the oral history, the Karbis did not use much spices and oil in their cooking but they used to apply certain natural ingredients in their cooking to make them delicious and healthy. After searched out their food history, it has come to know that, their food habit was purely based on scientific procedure and they included maximum natural ingredients in their food habit, which enabled them to get all required vitamins and minerals, energy and boost the resistance power to fight with diseases and sickness. The Karbis are very well equipped in medicinal uses of natural resources. They have been having a great knowledge about the herbs and their uses for different diseases.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative research. There are 400 sample households has been taken for data collection. The data and information has been collected through interview through structured questionnaires. For theoretical analysis, secondary data has been referred. To make review of literature, different books, journals, articles were followed. An intensive field work has been carried out during the year 2018-2019 with the cooperation of

village headman and other responsible members of their society. Historical facts related with the present study were collected from village elders (including both male and female). Verbal Interaction has also done with the young generation to understand their knowledge about their food habits and their interest towards enforcing food safety in their society. Initially, working out in field has been far away from easy and smooth. The factors that proved to be a major barrier in this process were illiteracy and isolation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existing literatures relevant with this issue are discussed about different types of societies and these literatures are irrespective in nature. Bhattacharjee in his major work "Sociology of the Karbis" discussed multidimensional aspects of the Karbi society in sociological view point. In this book author discussed the role of family and society in maintenance the traditional food culture by transmitting the knowledge of traditional food habits to the young generations. He further discussed the social structure of the Karbi society and their functions of social institutions in sustain their traditional food habits.[1] Bermouna, Soumaya in her published thesis "An Insight into the Regulatory Framework on Food Safety Management" (2015) provides an insight into the regulatory framework of food safety management of some world's largest economies such as European Union, United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Author also focused on discrepancies in the legal system deals with food safety incidents.[2]

Kar, A & Borthakur,S.K in their article "Wild Vegetables of Karbi-Anglong district, Assam" (2008) discussed the scientific name of the vegetables, plants and herbs, uses, medicinal values, market price and shelf-life of the vegetables after harvesting.[3] Xaxa, Virginius in his book "The Status of Tribal Children in India: A historical perspective" (2011) highlighted on the profile of tribal situation in general and tribal children in particular. This was done by discussing their status in relation to their economic well being, education, health and food. Author further discussed the disorder in food habits of the tribes which enforced them towards unhealthy health condition.[4] Phangcho, P.C in his book "The Karbis of North East India" (2003) discussed the functions of different institutions and measured their influence on the culture and tradition, which include dress, food, ornaments, rituals, rites etc.[5] Bey, M.S in his book "The Socio-Economic Life of the Karbis at a Glance" (2004) highlighted the mythology lies behind the origin of food items in Karbi society and the role of social institution in regulating the food habit of the members of their society.[6] Sharma, A in her article "Role of Traditional Institution in Governance-Experience from Karbi Anglong, Assam" (2011) focused on the role of traditional institution in strengthen the functions of society and enable them to preserve their culture and custom as it was in earlier.[7] Saikia,P & Gogoi,P in their article "A Sociological Study of the Karbi Tribe in Karbi Anglong District of Assam" (2016) discussed the rile of social institution and their structural functional approach in studying the social affairs of Karbi society. The authors have made a sociological explanation in discuss the cultural aspects such as food, dress, songs, folk tales, folk narratives etc.[8]

A Brief Description on the Food habits of the Karbis: The innovative ideas of the Karbi women folk and the elderly person of Karbi society enable the food habits to become a delicious one and healthy too. The culture and traditions as one of the basic institution of the Karbis include food as the main part of their enjoyment. Most of their cultural affairs and traditional rites include foods items as food is considered the bearer of Karbi culture and tradition. The *Hor* (rice beer), a very popular beverage of the Karbis is considered an integral part of their culture and tradition. Offering of hor is necessary in most of their religious rituals, marriage rituals, social functions, ceremonies, and birth and death rituals. They have been using hor as a beverage and drink it as the refreshment drink. There are three types of hor are available in Karbi cuisine, namely *horpo, horlong* and *arrak.* The *horpo* and *horlong* are kept in tradition container made from

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[2] Bermouna, Soumaya. (2015) "An Insight into the Regulatory Framework of Food Safety Management: A comparative approach to food safety incident response in EU, US, China", MSc Thesis Law and Governance Department, Wageningen University, Wageningen. Reg no. 911108-059-030
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dried wild gourd, which helps in preserving the *hor* for long time and sustain its taste and spirit. The procedure of making such drink is also scientifically proven that it is not harmful for health, if it consume in a limited amount. Preservative and harmful chemical are not used in preparing certain drink. Pork is another popular food habit of the Karbis, which some time creates health issue. Therefore to tackle such health issues, Karbi people include sore dishes in their food habit such as pork cooked with yam and sour bamboo shoot, pork with yam leaves, pork with black grams etc. Here it is worth mentioning that all the food item of the Karbis is generally naturally available products so that the age old linkage between the Karbis and forest is notable.

Role of social institution in food safety: The fundamental social institutions of the Karbis include the politics, economy, Religion, family, marriage, kinship, education, culture, tradition. These social institution have been regulating the behavior of the Karbis in maintain or sustain social norms, values, tradition and culture. The Karbis considered food as the basic need of the human being and that is why food gets a special place in all functions in Karbi society. In political affairs hor generally offered to the dignitaries and guests as a honor or symbol of respect. Before starting any political meeting, *horlong*[9] should be offered the invites and the ministers of *Lindokpo*[10] and his *Pinpomar*[11] and other functionaries. In this way, till today, offering a bottle of horlong is treated as the matter of honor for the invites and guests. In primitive time the shifting cultivation was the main occupation of the Karbis. People preferred to cultivate crops through slash and burn and remained in one place for 5 to 6 years and then search a new land and shift that place. Hunting and food gathering from the forest was also integral part of the Karbis. During that period, they innovated different types of food items which helped them to get energy and safe them from diseases. Since the primitive time, boiled and burnt food have been getting priority in Karbi society, whereas the application of spices and oil was seem very in their society. The Karbis show their expertise in various types of cultivation such as sesame, pineapple, ginger, king chili, verities of potato, barriers, lentils etc. in primitive time, the Karbis produced only those food item in the field, which could applied in their food habit. Sesame have great role in Karbi cuisine because it works as oil supplement in dishes as well as it improves health conditions also. The Karbis use row turmeric in the dishes which is full of anti bacterial and anti inflammatory properties. The Karbis celebrates different types of rituals which are associated with the cultivation and food items also serves according to the crops cultivated in the agricultural field.

It is worthwhile to mention that the role of family in enforcing food safety is great. In primitive time only family was there which ascertained the regulation for the societal members to enforce safe food products. The procedure of preparing food items and the way of having such food items were purely contemplated by the family members and its pattern was differing from family to family. Presently, the Karbis are following the same traditional pattern of consume food. Family decides which food item should have and which have not. In marriage ceremonies also, Karbis proves that they are great foodie. Traditional food items are still treated as favorite one for all the societal members.

The role of synthetic food in Karbi society: Presently, by the invention of artificial food items, several changes are observed in the perspective of the Karbis towards food culture. Present generation are now preferred to have readymade pocketing foods, which are full of artificial color and preservative. Cultural assimilation also brought food culture of different societies into this society, and it has changed the cooking style and preserving style of the food items. Assimilation of food culture has brought a challenge for tradition food culture in Karbi society. Introducing of artificial foods are also bringing threaten to health of the Karbis. Presently, diabetes, cancer, typhoid, heart diseases, problem of high cholesterol, are increasing in a rapid way whereas in traditional Karbi society, these diseases were also none among them.

Till today, Governmental and non-governmental organization are also silent regarding this issue. In the post independence period, several strategies have been adopting by the governmental and non-governmental agencies to bring awareness among the people regari9ng food safety issue but Karbi Anglong district is still deprived from this type of benefits from the state and central government.. Karbi Anglong Autonomous district council has been taking several initiatives to make food safety in the Karbi society by proving loan to the farmers for cultivation. The farmers are getting subsidy to get instrument for cultivation. Forestry department are also helping in restoring the forest based food items which will enable the people to access the forest based products in all season.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be say that presently, the Karbis are suffering from the artificiality in food items which are creating health issues among them. Those people, who are living in remote hill areas, are still preserving their traditional way of

[9] The meaning of Horlong is rice beer.
[10] Lindokpo means King of the Karbis.
[11] Pinpomar means the minister of the Lindokpo.

food consumption and artificial food items are less harming them. The government and non-government sectors should concentrate in this hill district to access awareness campaigning for the people to make them aware about the harmful effect of the artificial foods. Presently, it has seemed that the Karbi youths are become conscious to revive their food culture and they are trying to present their food culture in front of world. With a little modification, Karbi youths are learning to cook food in a health friendly way. Now a day, social media is playing great role in sharing the traditional foods of the Karbis with people of different society throughout the world. In this way the Karbis are sharing the medicinal value of the vegetables, which are frequently grows in the paddy field of Karbi Anglong district.

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