

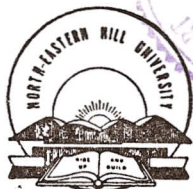
**FOOD, CULTURE AND SOCIETY AMONG THE PEOPLE OF
TANGSAS OF CHANGLANG DISTRICT
OF
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

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INTRODUCTION

Food is a very convenient and exciting entry point to understand the culture of a people. It is one of the basic needs of human beings. Unlike other needs, food need is recurrent. The need for it is several times in a day. It is the source of energy and absolutely essential for the continuation of life. Food consumption of the people is dependent on what is available and what the people themselves can produce. For example, people in arctic region cannot but be meat eaters, whereas, in tropical areas the diet of the people can be highly diversified.

Food is intricately connected with the culture of the people whether they are advanced or less advanced or members of the post-industrial society. Although food meets the common need for all the people, food habit are infinitely complex being derived from man's earliest experiences and being influenced by his family as well as by the social, economic, geographic and religious environment. It must be remembered that the same food may have quite different meaning to different groups of people. For example, beef is a taboo for the Hindu, whereas for the Muslim, beef is an important item of food. Food not only satisfies hunger but also regulates in maintaining social relations. It also carries with it various kinds of

meaning. People may refuse food even during acute hunger, if there are religious or cultural taboos over the food given to them. Food habit is certainly a cultural dependent component which also expresses symbolically. For example, when a new kind of food is introduced, the normal practice is to transform that food in such a manner that it would look and taste familiar to that group of people. Again for some, meal is not considered to be a meal unless specific items of food are there. For example, for the Assamese a meal without rice will not be considered a meal, irrespective of whatever has been served in the meal. A group of people may take an item of food from other people but the way it is processed, cooked, flavoured and mixed with other food items may change the items they had borrowed. For it is only the human beings who consume food by processing it. And the processing is culturally conditioned. Cultural conditioning is a concept that needs to be answered over and over again in order to understand its mechanism and the principles on which it functions.

and There are rules as to how the meal should be served and the persons who are to serve it are also defined. These rules have encoded messages about the various aspects of the society like hierarchy, exclusion boundary maintenance and social events. Food intake is a compulsive thing and it has to come in some order. It not only satisfies hunger and

Objective: Food regulates the material aspects but it is also important enough in maintaining social relations. By offering food, people express their social ties with one another. Among most of the societies friendly relations are established by offering food to individual or family.

Thus food acquires various functions and roles. It helps identification of the groups. It allows a glimpse into the structure of the society. It is one of those links which might have led to the development of culture right from the earliest of time. Throughout the world, there has been large scale migrations in history for new pasture for the people, as a result of which, people have borrowed cultural practices adding further complexities to their behaviour as well as concepts. All this includes food. Even today, some of the most interesting and complex aspects of human life are the food habits.

a) It allows to understand the different aspects of social and cultural life.

b) A detailed cultural description of food habits and rituals connected with food would enable one to raise certain questions like the message conveyed symbolically and significance of the message.

Objective of the Study

In the present study, the researcher is basically concerned with the cultural dimension of food specially the ritual food among the people of Changlang district and the role it plays in their society. Our quest has been to find out how food is handled around the Changlang household and the process that makes food culturally meaningful and acceptable to them.

For the purpose of this study, our question will be under the following broad categories :

- a) Food relating to family.
- b) Food relating to meet reciprocal obligations.
- c) Food relating to life cycle ritual and other special occasions.
- d) Food relating to culture¹ belief, attitude, preference and restrictions.
- e) Food procurement.

The study deals with the following two broad points:

- a) Daily food and b) Ritual and festive food cycle.

a) Daily Food

i) Types of Food Taken Daily

Since household is the unit of our observation, an attempt has been made to cover different types of households to get a representative picture. Under this, we propose to

discuss the frequency of meals in a day and whether such a frequency is same to every member of a household. How food is served and peculiarities in mode of eating or drinking.

ii) Cooking Method and Technique

The cooking method and technique used for processing and cooking food and also the members of the family involved in doing these, will be studied in detail.

iii) Cooking Implements and Utensils

Cooking of each recipe requires specific implements and utensils. These will be studied and attempts will be made to find out whether the same are fashioned by the people or brought from outside.

iv) Receipe

Recipe is a very important aspect of culinary process. Recipe is not just the items, which of course, are important, but the order and proportion in which they are mixed to produce culturally acceptable final product, called food. Attempt will be made to study the recipe of each item prepared and eaten.

v) Cooking Crew

Cooking is one of the central household chores. Who generally cooks the food? If there is any division of labour and whether there are any taboos imposed or to who can be member of the cooking crew. These aspects will be studied in detail.

vi) Food Serving

Under food serving, we propose to discuss if there is any special way of serving or distributing pattern, who is served food first and if there is a particular place to serve food.

vii) Food Consumption

Each society has its own pattern of food consumption. Attempt will be made to find out as to what is the pattern of food consumption among the people of Changlang district, how the food is consumed, what is consumed first and last, the combination of the courses of meals.

viii) Rank Order of the Food

Attempt will be made to find out if there is any rank order of their food. Whether there is any food which is served first and which food is served last. If there is any restriction on the particular place where the food is cooked and how they maintain cleanliness.

b) Ritual and Festive Food

There are many socio-religious occasions where food has its special importance, under these following aspects will be taken into account.

i) Types of Food Taken and their Recipe

Attempt will be made to find out what types of food are taken on different festivals and ceremonies and whether there are any special food associated with each. Further, attempt will be made to study whether any special article of food is prescribed, restricted or prohibited by custom and whether taboos and restrictions apply to individuals either permanently or in crisis such as pregnancy, death ritual, etc.

ii) Cooking Method and Utensils

We propose to discuss what cooking method and utensils are used for ceremonial foods.

iii) Involvement of People and Hierarchy Projected

Rituals usually mark a change whether it is of seasons, work or social relations. For example, there may be a ritual to mark the beginning of a rainy season. It may indicate a new cycle of agriculture activities and responsibilities. Similarly, rituals observed on the occasion of marriage, indicates a new set of relationship, somebody has become a wife, somebody has become mother-in-law and so on. All these indicate new set of rights and obligations, as a result of which, some people get precedence over others. Attempt will be made to study how all this is indicated through food.

Further attempt will be made to find out :

iv) who are the people involved in processing, cooking and serving of ritual food.

v) what are the dominant symbols in the sphere of food.

vi) how food travels from one set of people to the other and how their mutual rights and obligations are expressed through food.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A quick glance on a food related subject like this, would indicate that there are substantial writings on food, their nutritional value and on its cultural dimensions in various societies.

Diet of the people largely depends on the ecology of the people, the local condition of soil and climate, the density of population, extent of urban contacts, local religious customs and tradition, relating to fast, feasts and taboos. Their diet is limited to certain extent by the environment in which they live. The Eskimos of the Arctic live almost exclusively upon meat and fish in contrast to many Mexican Indian people, whose diet is based on cereals and vegetables. Fish is used as a food by many American Indian tribes while Navajas of New Mexico and Arizona consider it unfit for human consumption (Beals and Hoijer 1953, 1971).

Though the people of Islands of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, India, do not produce any food, their staple diet is rice, and is consumed throughout the year. The indigenous population of this island are Muslims. Beef and mutton are taken during occasions like marriage, Ramjan, Milad Nobi, etc. Occasionally, they take drumstick, fruits and leaves, papaya, bread, fruits, etc. There are special

preparation during festival and ceremonial occasions. Mutton curry, *biryani* and *cheroni* are served on all special occasion like marriage religious ceremonies like *Moulaid-id* and *barjad*, plain rice mixed with ghee, beef, sweets are served during religious functions as well as during marriages. Obviously, the food habit of the people in the Lakshadweep Island suggest that they have adopted food of the people of the neighbouring mainland and they have also been influenced in their choice of food by what is produced in this the island (Das 1982). We would like to examine if the food habits of the *Tangsas* have been influenced by any other major community living near their land.

/// Onges of Andaman and Nicobar have three or four meals a day. Pork and fish are reported to be taken with all the meals in combination with roots, tubers and honey depending on the availability (Swaminathan et al 1971).

The staple food of the Garos is rice. They also eat millet and maize. Tapioca is another main article of food of the Garos. In the times of scarcity, they take jungle yams and roots found abundantly in the forest. They eat almost any kind of animal food - goats, pigs, fowls, cows and they also eat non-poisonous snakes and lizards. Dry fish is one of the most favourite food items for the Garos. Their *jhum* fields and the forest provide them with vegetables and roots. Bamboo-shoots are eaten as vegetables. Generally,

they are great consumers of chillies which they grow in abundance. The country liquor plays an important role in the life and culture of the Garos. It is prepared from rice, millet, maize, etc. (Sangma 1979).

Food The food of the Khasis ordinarily consists of boiled rice, *kikpy* (cakes) and tuberous roots which are eaten raw. They are fond of all kinds of meat especially pork and beef. The Khasis, except some of the Christians, do not use milk, butter or ghee as articles of food. Their staple food are rice and dried fish. They also eat field rats and one kind of monkey called *U Shrieh*. Although the Khasis are such varied feeders, there are some classes amongst them which are prohibited from eating certain articles. The Khasis in general drink considerable quantities of liquor. Rice beer is a necessary item for practically all the Khasis and on religious ceremonies of importance the custom for the officiating priest is to pour out liquor to the gods on the occasion (Gurdon 1976).

Food The Gadulia Lohar are one of the major nomadic communities of northern India. The principal item of food of the Gadulia Lohar is bread. Breads are made out of the flour of wheat or wheat mixed with millet. Bread prepared out of wheat flour is considered to be a superior food item. Breads are taken with curry made of pulses, vegetables or mutton or simply with salt and ground red or green

chillies. Cereals are used for other preparations. Pulse curry is often replaced or supplemented by some preparation of vegetables. The choice of the vegetables largely depends upon their availability. The Gadulia Lohar are generally fond of non-vegetarian food and alcoholic drinks. Some of them, however, have given up the consumption of non-vegetarian food and liquor under the influence of religious preachers and in an attempt to raise their status in the eyes of their own, as well as other castes (Misra 1986).

// Rice is indeed the cultural super food of the people of Bangladesh. It is the dominant staple and the main source of calories. Production and consumption of rice occupies a major part of the agricultural domestic work time, and the question 'have you had dinner' is expressed in Bengali as 'have you eaten rice'. Present day food groupings in Bangladesh are often said to consist of 'rice plus trimmings' which are curries of fish, meat, vegetable, fruit and sturdy roots (Nutritional Survey 1977;). Many Bangladeshis regard rice and dal (*dalbhat*) as basic foods and rice has an aura such that rice with potato (as filler) is still considered to be "rice" (Lindenbom 1986).

The most important item of food is bread which is central to the Sardinian economy. For centuries, peasant man devoted much effort to growing, shifting and baking it. These were three or four principal every day types of food

in their diet and item of special, symbolic and pictorial ones for holidays and rituals. As the Sardinian staple food, bread is symbolic of life. Canbasu reports the peasant proverb "chick hat pine indonu" bread in home (Pinna 197 :86). Minimal well being, has been expressed in the words "at least we have bread" (*Pane nemi bin amus*) and poverty as "they do not even have bread" (*mon b'ama mane pane*) (Wilson 1984).

The above brief review indicates that there is a vast variety in consumption of food. It is the rice which is the dominant item of food in Bangladesh, it is bread prepared in different ways in northern India . The Khasis and the Garos appear to be quite versatile when it comes to eating food from animal source.

Each region has its own method of blending flavour. Technology is one of the factors which influence food in many ways. Any technological change, howsoever beneficial will not be easily accepted unless it is culturally reinterpreted and transformed.

The Bemba tribe of Africa, have a number of different ways of cooking relishes. The kitchen equipment of the native women only permits her to boil or stew, and the different dishes used as relish, which she distinguishes with separate names usually have the same composition but one stewed for a shorter or longer time, with addition of

more or less water. Ukuipika the word for "stew" is in fact the general term used for cooking. The art of good cooking among the Bemba is to have sufficient groundnut sauce to add to other relishes to make palatable. To make the sauce, the nuts are pounded into shreds in a mortar and these shreds constantly taken out in the hand and squeezed into a small bowl of water so that the white oil from the butts makes a milky fluid. The residue is then returned to the mortar and pounded again until the last drop of oil is extracted and thickish cream results. The sauce is then ready for use. It is poured on to any cooked relish, and the whole stewed up again for a short time with the addition of salt.

The Bemba have normal method of baking or roasting, but they occasionally cook foods in the ashes of open fires, and prepare sweet potatoes, maize cobs, or meat skewed on stick in this way when on a journey (Richard 1939). Abors of NEFA, do not wash cereal/milletts before cooking, nor drain the water after cooking (Rao 1971).

On the Onge of Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a peculiar way of cooking pork. It is wrapped between leaves and then boiled or roasted on red hot stones placed in a hole. The hole then is made airtight by mud plastering and opened after 3 or 4 hours. The pork thus cooked is consumed without seasoning by salt or spices, pig fat is reported to be extracted by prolonged cooking of pork which is used as

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subsiidiary dish by the Onges (Swaminathan et al., 1971). Cooking of rice in butter milk instead of water is reported to be practised by Toda herdsmen where milk supply is abundant (Raj and Rao 1962; Rao 1971).

Among the Garos, method of preparing rice, millet is by boiling with water in earthen or alluminium pots (Sangma 1979).

Thus it is seen that each region have their own ways of cooking and blending to produce culturally acceptable food. To produce culturally acceptable food, people have devised various kinds of techniques, tools and utensils. Even a group like the Onge which is pre-agricultural group has an elaborate way of cooking pork. Seasoning play no part in their cooking but it is important for many groups.

Serving and eating play an important role in Kanya Kubja Brahman of North India. The eating starts in the serving areas, especially when there were several members supposed to eat in one sitting. The ritual ranks of the servers and eaters in the serving area have to be appropriate. The first food plate is served to the family deity. A few morsals of food are dropped in the fire of the hearth (as a sacred daily sacrifices) a piece of bread is set apart for the cow and an offering is made to the hearth that the cook manages. However, before starting to eat, several old members of the household also offer food to the



personal deities. The orthodox eaters wear only hand-washed clothes after bathing, wash hands and feet before entering serving area, sprinkle water where they are going to sit, and carry their drinking water with them (Khare 1976).

~~The~~ For the people of Island of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, India, food is prepared and served by female members. But generally food is first taken by the children, next by the adult male members and lastly by the female members (Das 1982).

~~eat~~ In Gadulia Lohar's family, food is first served to men and children of the household, and then the women consume the remaining food. Generally, people squat near the hearth to consume food but food can be taken anywhere near the household bullock cart. The utensils in which the food has been cooked and the plats in which the food has been eaten are cleaned with the ashes from the hearth and washed with water. The same process is repeated again for the meals in the evening. The Gadulia Lohar make very clear distinction between hearth and forge. No cooking of any sort is done on the forge in the same way as no blacksmith work is attempted on the hearth (Misra 1986).

~~be~~ The cooking area for a Hindu should be free from any contamination. In North Indian Brahmin kitchen, two types of meals are produced namely - *kachha* and *pakka*. *Kachha* literally means unripe, uncooked but in their parlance, it

means food boiled with water, which is the daily food. it is highly vulnerable to pollution and, therefore, there are strict codes of cooking, serving and eating it. It cannot be taken out of the kitchen. It is consumed there only. The *pakka* food is fried food. It is not so vulnerable. it can travel across different ranks (Khare 1976).

In all societies serving and eating play an important role. Serving involves the sequence of whom to serve first, what to serve and when to serve. Similarly in eating, there are certain spaces which are strictly demarcated for eating purposes. The same may be the case with Tangsas.

The Hindu food like any other has rank order. The highest ranking food is the purest. The concept of "purity" and pollution in the Hindu society is central and permeates not only the food area but also interpersonal and intercaste relationship. Purity is highly vulnerable. It can be distributed by physical contact, a mere sight or thought.

In Assamese community, the manner in which cooking makes food permeable to impurity varies according to the method by which it is prepared and these prepared food can be divided into three classes.

Boiled rice (*bhat*) and the dishes eaten with boiled rice. The person who cooks food according to the existing custom should be of equal or higher status and should also

maintain ritual purity. For this purpose, while cooking food, the cooks generally wear a particular coloured dress (red cloth) and the dress is kept separately to maintain its purity. All other food except *prasad* categorized as *jalpan*, can be cooked by any other member of the family and there is no ritual purity or any other formalities. *Prasad*, the food offered to God are sweetmeat and various kinds of fruits, occasionally, the rice cooked in milk, is also offered to God. Strict ritual purity is maintained with due care to cleanliness in preparing *prasad*.

and Assamese community, the purity of food is also effected by sexual maturity. A boy upto the age of ten or twelve, and a girl before her first menstruation are not open to contagion and can participate in kitchen activities. For instance if a woman is preparing breakfast in the fire room in the morning and if she wants something from the kitchen (the place where main meal is cooked), she cannot herself enter into the kitchen if she had not taken bath. Her body is *bahi* (stale). But she may ask a young child to take off his clothes and fetch what she wants. It shows that the place where food is cooked is considered pure and its purity can be defiled if proper rules are not followed. It also shows that the body of a young person is not *bahi* (stale) but his clothes could be. If that be the case, he

takes off the clothes and can enter into the kitchen without defiling it (Cantile 1984).

the In the Kanya Kubja Brahmin of North India, food area is always located in an interior part of the house. It is accorded a definite priority in the planning of the domestic spaces and its place and orientation is guided by certain cultural rules (Khare 1976).

off The above studies show that serving of food, the place where the food can be served, the person who can serve food and who cannot are important considerations. Hierarchy and exclusiveness are important aspect in caste society. This is very clearly reflected in giving rank order not only to food, but the place where the food is cooked and also who cooks the food. In Assamese society if a lady has not taken bath, her ritual rank order is low and she is not entitled to enter the kitchen. That is the food reaffirms the basic principles on which the society is organised. On the basis of this it may be hypothesized that the societies which lack the principle of social stratification would also not have the concept of ritual purity or impurity of food, the place where the food is cooked and the person who cooks the food. This aspect will be examined among Tangsa.

Sharing of meal is found in all societies, but it acquires a special significance in the societies where an explicit institution of power is non existent.

well ✓ In Assamese community food can be exchanged between equals, and it can also be given to lower and received from the higher. For the food flows between individual and groups indicates contribution of happy and appropriate relations. Its stoppage indicates some kind of pollution or strained relations (Cantile 1984).

In most societies first crops are obtained and are offered to deities. This is because the sacrifice acknowledge the overlordship of the Gods, and it bargains protection of future harvest for the honour paid.

✓ In Bisa districts of Africa, a special rite of thanksgiving as distinct from the Ukuposela is performed in August to September or after the main millet harvest has been reaped. This is known as 'Ukupela bwalua Kulimfumu', to give the (dead) Chiefs, beer, special fire stands (Onafwasa) had been built in the open near village spirit shrines especially for the heating of water for this beer. The villagers gathered round the shrines, men on one side and women on the other, and the headman began to call on the chiefs of the land : "Ya sa matipa, Sir Maluma Lubande you, the owner of the chief of the Bisa, you know your compassion all the other chiefs call them that they come to drink our beer" (Richard 1939).

During the feasts, the Garos eat and drink to excess. The preparation and arrangement having been made

well in advance, the guests are made to sit in rows. Before taking their food they first offer some grain of rice and pour out some of the liquor as a libation to God. The country liquor plays an important role in the life and culture of the Garos. It is prepared from rice, millet, maize, etc. (Sangma 1979).

~~restrict~~ Rice beer is a necessary item for practically all the Khasis and on religious ceremonies of importance the customs for the officiating priest is to pour out liquor to the Gods on the occasion (Gurdon 1976).

~~articles~~ In most of the societies the first grain from their agricultural field, or the first morsel or a few drops of drinks are offered to the deity or dead ancestors. Giving food/drink first to deity/dead appears to be a matter of showing respect/honour to them. But the caste Hindus have a principle of "jutha" (left over) which is a ritually impure and therefore inferior food and cannot be offered to equal or higher ranking people least of all to deities or dead ancestors. Thus in any case, it appears that the principle that offering of food/drink first is an acknowledgement of priority is a wide spread phenomenon. How does it work among the Tangsa? This is an important question because the Tangsa though is non-stratified society observes a number of rituals.

All societies discussed above show some restrictions about food. These restrictions are used as identity makers and may also be useful in restricting competition for the same kind of food within a region. Such restrictions, thus are valuable not only in maintaining harmonious relationship, but also ecological balance, wherever such restrictions have broken down ecological disaster is a possible outcome.

The tribal population of Arunachal Pradesh have not been studied from their perspective. There are some story articles about their food and drinks but no full length studies on their food habits has been attempted.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Observation Our study was based on the preliminary investigation that were conducted in the month of November and December, 1989. The second phase of data collection was started in May 1990 and ended in August 1990. Again for the final revision of the data, we went to Changlang in the month of May 1994 and also visited Changlang whenever required. Before embarking on the mission, mixed feelings of apprehension and fear regarding the people, their cooperation and attitude towards the researcher was experienced. But, the one consolation was the familiarity with the places, as the researcher's father had served in Arunachal Pradesh for a number of years. So their manners and customs were not totally unknown to the her. Even then, she as an alien among them, very often they would eye her suspiciously, whispering among themselves and so on. After the initial awkwardness, the researcher felt quite at home. The researcher had spent a considerable time amongst them conducting a door to door survey and in some special cases, a single person had to be pursued in order to get a complete understanding.

For the study, the researcher had selected two villages from Changlang district. They are Changlang village inhabited by the Lungchang section of Tangsas and Thomlom village inhabited by the Moklom section of Tangsa.

Observation

Inter- Observation is probably the oldest method used by the anthropologist which suggests observation of the respondent in a given situation. The advantage of this method is that data can be collected to some extent without disturbing the person.

dis- Observation in this context is not only limited to the visual aspects of the situation but also involves a full range of sensual experience including smelling and tasting wherever appropriate. Besides, the researcher has also participated in most of the harvesting festivals which are considered central in the festival calendar.

Interview

Fac- As the term implies, interview is an interactional process. It provides a mutual view of each other. By interviewing people, one can get the information, as desired to the extent it is required. Interview data may include information of what the informant knows, believes, expects, feels and wants to know in course of the proceedings. Interview method is complementary to observation. Interview can also give additional information on the related matters, which may allow to see the inter-relationship between the various aspects of life.

started To substantiate the material recorded through observation, the researcher used two basic types of interview techniques namely, structured and unstructured. In the structured format, the researcher had prepared a list of questions which served as a questionnaire and a schedule depending on the literary status of the informants. In the unstructured technique, it was mainly free flowing discussion.

lodging, etc.

Case Study

Change: Apart from these, the researcher used case study technique too for detailed probing of some selected cases. She also tried to supplement her data through secondary sources as far as possible.

Kebang

Field Experience

vi On November 24, 1989, the researcher started the preliminary studies on the "Food Culture and Society Among the people of Tangsas of Changlang District". For that purpose, the researcher had been to Changlang district with her father. Since Arunachal is a restricted area, an inner line pass from the liaison officer (Arunachal Pradesh) had to be obtained at Guwahati. The journey started on the 22nd evening by bus, reached Dibrugarh the next morning at about 5 a.m. and halted there for the day and the next morning

started for the destination with a lot of hope and expectations. They reached there at about 12 noon. Thereafter, they met the Deputy Commissioner. It was a coincidence that Shri N.S. Myan, A.D.C., Changlang, who happened to pass by the corridor, saw the researcher's father whom he knew well. The purpose of their visit was explained and he promptly arranged for some officers to help the researcher for the work and also arranged for their lodging at the circuit house. The researcher was introduced to Mr. Kengsang Kenglang, Socio Cultural Organizer of Changlang district who belonged to the Lungchang tribe of Changlang village, Mr. W. Rekhung, Language Officer, belonging to the Moklom tribe of Changlang district and Mr. Metcha, Circle Officer belonging to the Moklom tribe of Kehmiyang village. The researcher had initial discussion with Mr. Kengsang Kenglang regarding the interest of visiting the tribes. Mr. Kenglang suggested the name of some villages and sub-tribes for the study. From the Deputy Commissioner's office, which is located at a certain height, Mr. Kenglang pointed out the New Changlang Village nestling below, which is adjacent to the circuit house.

On the next day, a round of Changlang town (both new and old Changlang villages) was undertaken and the library was also visited. The researcher stayed there for a couple of days.

of days and returned to Guwahati with a variety of first hand impressions of the land and the people.

regard: What struck the researcher most during the visit was the warmth and hospitality of the people, their simplicity and enthusiasm. The people were spartan in their habits. Their sense of involvement and oneness made the researcher feel at ease and quite comfortable, which gave great boost to the spirit to pursue the work.

action: On May 7, 1990, the researcher started for Changlang to begin the research work and reached there on 8th May, in the evening. After putting up in the circuit house, the researcher met the Additional Deputy Commissioner (A.D.C.) and informed him about the programme. Accordingly, the A.D.C. made some plan to enable a visit to the Changlang village. Co-incidentally on that day, the Minister for Research, Arunachal Pradesh, Shri W. Pongte was on a visit to Changlang which is his constituency. The researcher was introduced to him and he enquired about the mission. He was quite pleased and offered to take the researcher along with his partymen to the villages. The researcher went first to the Changlang village. They were welcomed by the village head along with the villagers. Soon, the headman invited them to his house and the researcher was introduced to him and also with some other villagers. The researcher was standing there amidst strangers in a strange place with

mixed feelings. Soon, they were served with rice beer and fowl meat packed in a leaf. The researcher was in a dilemma regarding the rice beer and was debating whether to have it or not. The reluctance to take came about because she had never taken it before. So she asked for a glass of water. The Minister who was sitting next poured out the water. He then filled the glass with rice beer. He informed her that refusing it would be an insult to their hospitality, and an act of displaying disrespect to them. So for the first time in her life she tasted rice beer, she was so excited that she could not make out the taste. It was neither sweet nor bitter. Soon she noticed something - she saw the minister and the partymen poured down a few drops of rice beer along with other food items on the floor. On enquiring the reason behind this practice, she was told that it had some special significance in that there is a staunch belief that by doing so the spirit of unity remain intact and it was also believed that evil spirits will not harm them.

Meanwhile, the village head with whom the researcher was introduced earlier spoke at length to the villagers about the nature of her work. The researcher then took the opportunity of going round the house. There she met the womenfolk who were busy preparing rice beer for the coming (Moh) festival. She noticed that the Cheng house is a rectangular one. Except for the sitting room the other

portions of the house are divided into a number of small rooms or compartments. Such rooms are partitioned by bamboo mat. Each room has a fire-place.

From the 14th May, the *Moh* festival of the Lungchang tribe of Changlang village started. The researcher was supposed to be accompanied by the Socio Cultural Organiser (S.C.O.), Mr. Kengsang Kenglang to the Changlang village where the festival was held. As he was not there at that time, on the direction of the Additional Deputy Commissioner a girl peon hailing from the village accompanied her. While travelling in the jeep, she learned from her about the Changlang village and its people. Initially, she was talking, but then she requested the researcher not to question her about anything in connection with her work and the festival as she would not be able to give much information. The S.C.O.'s house was then visited but he was not there. Thereafter, she was taken to a well-to-do family, related to the S.C.O. Meanwhile the *Moh* festival was going on in full swing. The people were rejoicing, dancing, singing, drinking, etc. A dancing party went house to house enjoying the rice beer. In the evening, the Deputy Commissioner along with other officers had come to witness the festival. Besides the usual dancing, singing, etc. they were entertained with rice beer. The researcher was also offered rice and pork meat.

visit. The joy of these village people knew no bound during Moh festival. During the days of the festival, they liberate themselves from the humdrum of day to day life and from all worldly tensions. As the village people consume a large quantity of rice beer during festival days they seem to remain intoxicated for most of the time. The researcher was impressed by their simple behaviour since she had been introduced to the village people for her mission; they were quite helpful in her work. The researcher spent a considerable time in the Changlang village studying, observing and interviewing the people. Gradually, her nervousness and apprehension started diminishing and she began to feel at home. On the other hand their response to her was improving day by day. Although it was a bit problematic to find people to answer her questions as they were very busy with their cultivation and other activities. The researcher used to feel bad that she was taking precious time for her interest. While going to meet them, at times she even felt as if was not welcomed by them. At times it seemed as though she was interfering or rather disturbing their normal pattern of life. It could also be felt that on seeing her, they started whispering among themselves. Specially it seemed to her as if the womenfolk were withdrawing away from her. But even then, the researcher had to carry on relentlessly to fulfill the objective of her

visit, oblivious of their feelings and reactions towards her. Realizing this difficulty, the researcher accompanied some of them to their paddy fields. This enabled her to talk to them for a longer time and also observe what they do in their fields. During the course of her work the researcher was informed by the villagers that there was an old man who would be of great help to her in giving information about their customs, legends, etc. The researcher approached him. He agreed to help her provided she was agreeable to give him a bottle of good quality rice beer and packet of biri each day. He had similar deals with other visitors like her who were eager to get information. The researcher readily agreed and she also gave him an Assamese gamosa. He was very pleased and became a willing person to talk to her and communicate whatever he knew about the community. However, he could not explain to her about the Wangjang ritual which is observed individually. This ritual is an expensive one, generally only a few people of the village can afford to observe it. There are several restrictions for observing this ritual. The old man himself knew to recite the hymn of the ritual. He informed her that he could not tell her the hymn as it is. As per his belief, he was afraid to chant the hymns in his own house. So he came to the researcher's camp in the evening to explain in detail the implications of observing the Wangjang ritual.

The first impression, the researcher had of the old man was that he was a jolly good old fellow. He was of medium height, with a round face, small eyes, and was suffering from goitre. He was wearing a lungi and a shirt and was smoking a biri at his neighbours' place. To the researcher it appeared that the old man was a simple ignorant villager. The villagers then informed the researcher that he had no family and was a solitary man. Being alone, the villagers had a great sympathy for him. Very often he had his meals at his neighbours' place; he occasionally cooked food for himself. Most of the time, he drank rice beer and smoked. This is how he spent his time. His simplicity seems to draw a lot of people to him. Moreover, being a priest he was respected by the people. With the researcher he became friendly very quickly and made her feel at ease. In the course of the researcher's interaction with him, she realized one thing that he was a short-tempered man. Very often when she asked him a question in between he used to get annoyed and sometimes refused to talk. The researcher then would pester and plead with him. He would then slowly resume the conversation. The researcher was able to get a lot of information from the old man. She also visited a number of villages there, namely, Thomlon, Khemiyang, Yanman.

the Mol The first visit was to New Thomlom village. Mr. Rekhung the District Language Officer accompanied her. It is situated 5-6 kms. away from the district headquarters, inhabited by the Moklom subtribe. First, the researcher was taken to a relative of Mr. Rekhung. There she was offered rice-beer and boiled eggs. Later, she was introduced to other villagers too. From the next day onwards, the researcher ventured out alone in the village walking around, taking her own time, interviewing the villagers and so on. She visited nearly all the households. Sometimes she got a very enthusiastic response and sometimes rather cool.

sister While staying at the Changlang circuit house Sri T. Ngenlu, Minister of Arunachal Pradesh called the researcher to meet him, on hearing that she had come to Changlang for research work. He was very pleased and thrilled at the idea that the researcher being a girl and that too all alone had come for research work to Arunachal Pradesh. He gave a lot of encouragement to pursue her work. He then asked Sri Tangha, Assistant Engineer of P.W.D. (of Moklom tribe) to accompany her to Khemiyang village to see their Mol festival. They first visited the house of Mr. Phoshum Khomhun's who was a political leader. The researcher's meeting with him proved to be very fruitful as he helped her a lot. His mother, sister and other family members gave a lot of valuable information. The researcher took part in

the *Mol* festival there. During the course of her visit she stayed at Mr. Phushum Khem^hhum's relative's house. There she also met an old man who intimated her regarding various aspects of their custom. After spending a couple of days, the researcher returned to her headquarters.

Yanman Village

birth On the 27th May, the researcher went to visit Yanman village to see the *Mol* festival. There she visited the village home of the minister Sri T. Ngemu along with some other officers. She stayed there with Mr. P. Khem^hhum's sister and got quite well acquainted with the family.

res During the day, the researcher was taken round the whole village by Mr. Khumhum's sister. Going around with her proved to be very helpful as she acquainted her with the surroundings and the culture. The researcher saw the *Mol* festival which is celebrated during the harvesting period. In the evening gathering took place in the minister's house. The minister was sitting by the fire-place along with all the villagers. They were then offered rice beer. The minister then asked her to question the village elders and also others present there for her research work. Some of the villagers spoke in their dialect and the minister was kind enough to interpret what they said. It was a kind gesture on his part. The whole night ended in eating,

drinking and talking. In the morning, the researcher noticed that a variety of insects had feasted on her, then she realized why the people were constantly in the habit of slapping their body while talking at night.

~~situation~~ Next morning the Researcher took a walk and came across a ruined hut. On enquiring about the hut they told her a peculiar aspect of their life. In their community, birth of twins is considered to be inauspicious. As soon as twins are born they are taken to a jungle and killed. The inmates of the house then desert the house and build a new one for themselves.

~~have~~ After collecting some more information, the researcher returned to Changlang. Thereafter, she again visited the adjacent villages of Changlang and Thomlom to collect more data and become conversant with their different facets of life.

~~some~~ In the course of her visit, the researcher had become acquainted with a particular Longchang family called the Taizus. Within a short time span, the researcher had developed a close relationship with the family to such an extent as to leave a permanent impression on her memory. Some other people with whom the researcher had a close relationship is Mr. Kamtu Mamai (District Statistical Officer) belonging to the Longchang tribe and also with Mr. Rekhung (District Language Officer). As a whole when,

looking back upon her visit, she realize that apart from the above mentioned persons, the researcher had friendly relations with a number of people. Interacting with them, interviewing them and observing them under various situations of day to day life helped the researcher to collect a lot of data. Without her realizing so, she had become an observing participant. The most important thing was that her continued presence - 'a hang on' technique. There were moments when the researcher felt depressed for being let down and ignored. But since she was 'hanging on' she got involved in something else. But all this would not have been possible if people would not have been friendly. Their friendly gesture gave her moral strength to go on and on. Reflecting back on the situation, she cannot deny that she being a female and alone did help her a lot. Though now they are somewhat exposed to the role of data collectors of social events in a limited sense, they do not have any idea as to how to fit females into that role. They were ofcourse rather over protective about her and tried their best to provide what she needed. In this respect the minister, bureaucrats and people were all very helpful. The researcher became a learner, and the people became her enthusiastic teachers. Her initial hesitation and fear turned into a rich experience. Whenever she was bored, the scenic beauty of this area kept her totally absorbed.

two villages. On her recent visit, the researcher was very sad to learn the shocking demise of Mr. Mian, A.D.C., Changlang. It was a personal loss to her as he was the person who was the moving force behind her pursuance. She is very much indebted to him for his help which enabled her to collect data. He guided her through the proper channel and introduced her to a lot of people who were of great help to her. Another shocking news was the death of the old man who can be called a store house of information relating to all the customs, practices and traditions of the Changlang tribe. He had the confidence and appeared to know all cultural practices and tradition of the Changlang tribe. His death too was a great loss as she was looking forward to meet both Mr. Mian and the old man. The purpose of her visit was to make sure that she had not over-looked at any information and to refresh her memory and get hold of any information which may have escaped her attention on previous visits.

Limitation of the Study

For the study, the researcher decided to project the food habits of the Tangsas of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tangsas are comprised of a number of sub-tribes, of which, she has selected the Lungchang and Moklom group of Changlang and Thomlom villages. Her universe is the complete study of

two villages and she also gathered information from two more villages comprising of Lungchang and Moklom subtribe to support her data. In her thesis the local terms that have been used are both from the Lungchang and Moklom dailects.

In the next chapter, introduction to Arunachal Pradesh, Changlang district in particular along with the origin, the social life and cultural life will be discussed.

DISCUSSION

Usage of different types of food in different societies for various social and religious activities is intrinsically embedded in the culture of the people. The usage get reinforced by myths. Exchange of food is a sign of social acceptance and the discontinuation of food exchange is an expression of social disapproval or breaking of ties. Food is the intermediary between the sacred and profane domains too. As in all societies, certain food is considered more sacred. This food emphasizes on social relationship and at the same time it portrays the cultural level of the society.

1) A perusal of the Table A (Chapter III), the prescribed items in daily food cycle indicates that the common items of food in daily cycle are rice, local beer, red tea and some vegetables. Very often the most commonly appeared the food item is *chutney* which is prepared with locally available items, i.e. *Phansi*, *namsing*, *namrop*, *tousing*, *phankhu*, *makat*, etc.

2) The items which sometimes find place in their normal cycles are meat (buffalo, cow, pork, fowl), fish, egg.

3) It appears that for both Lungchang and Moklom the first meal is important. The term for the first meal is

Rongnapdoong/Rongnaptil meaning primary meal. Having a first full meal signifies well being of the person and his family. The day begins with a sense of satisfaction.

4) The table B (Chapter IV) gives details about the prescribed items of foods on festivals. It is noted that rice, local beer, meat and some vegetables are the common items present on festival occasions.

5) The normal cycle of meals, barring the meals taken on festival and ritual occasions, is fairly standard. There are some variations in the contents of the meals owing to change in seasons, but cycle of the meals remain the same.

6) It is noted that some festivals are associated with some special items of food. For example in *Moh* festivals apart from rice, rice powder, local beer, pork and fowl meat, vegetables, various kinds of spices, roasted egg (number of eggs depends upon the number of the agriculture fields one possesses) and raw ginger must be present. The significance of the presence of roasted egg and raw ginger is not clear. But these are the essential items.

7) In *Parong* festival most of the items remain the same as *Moh* festival excepting that there is a conspicuous absence of rice powder, egg and ginger as the items of food. The significant aspect of cooking in *Parong* is that the meat

is cooked in the blood of the animal sacrificed for the purpose.

8) In Hemoiwan Cekholi, the animal sacrificed is the pig but unlike *Parong* festival it is not cooked in the animal blood. In this festival, the preparation out of rice powder is missing.

9) In the Haikulam festival the animals that are sacrificed are pig and fowls. In this festivals too the meat is not cooked in the blood of the sacrificed animal.

10) Mokloms observe three major festivals, namely, *Mol*, *Chamtuk*, *Kungtom*, of which the first two are same as *Moh* and *Parong* festivals as observed by the Lungchang. However, one significant difference in the *Mol* festival observed by Moklom is that there is no significance attached to ginger. Rest of the items and the activities are same in the two festivals. In the *Kungtom* festival observed by the Moklom, the animals sacrificed are the fowls. There are no other special items.

11) The Lungchangs consider odd number as a sign of auspiciousness. During marriage ceremony the gifts offered to the bride side are always in odd numbers. The gifts are fish, raw rice, cooked rice, pig and local beer. In marriage the women come to the boy's side, gifts flow in the opposite direction.

In the life cycle rituals observed by the Lungchangs and the Moklom, the common items are rice, local beer, meat and some vegetables. For the Lungchang raw rice and fish are a must in the celebration of marriage apart from the other common items. Whereas for the Mokloms both these items are not essential. However, for them the priority is given to buffalo meat, but if they cannot afford it then pork is allowed.

12) For the Lungchang and Moklom the food takes a special meaning on specific occasion. For example soon after the birth of a child the mother is offered rice and local beer. This is done to provide some energy to the woman who has undergone a lot of pain during delivery, to enliven her and also to express a sense of joy.

Among the Lungchang they sacrifice a cock if a boy is born and a hen if a girl child is born. The Moklom also observe the same practice.

On the occasion of death, both Lungchangs and Moklom offer fowl and pig as part of the death rituals. The other items of food on this occasion too are the same. However, it is to be noted without any spices and they consume it without any vegetables or meat. But in the case of Moklom they cook normal food. The only visible difference that appears on this occasion is that they eat food by placing the leaf upside down.

14) Just before the delivery the Lungchang offer egg, dog and raw rice in the jungle (ref. Chapter-V) and return home.

15) It is only in the case of pregnancy that there are certain items of food which are prescribed for the carrying women. According to their belief the prescription are to ensure smooth delivery and the health of the coming child.

16) Food plays an important role in maintaining the social relations, in meeting the social obligations and in reciprocation. For instance in Wangjang ritual, local beer is contributed from the married sister, nieces and nephews. In return they are given a portion of the meat of the animal sacrificed for the occasion. Thus it is seen that there is continuous flow of food items to and fro between girl giving side and girl receiving side to keep a balance in the relationship.

In the Wangjang ritual the most essential part is that they put salt in the mouth of the buffalo they are going to sacrifice. This ritual is marked by the sacrifice of the buffalo.

It may be mentioned here that after performing this ritual they do not consume the following items for a month:

1. White gourd
2. Pumpkin
3. Cucumber
4. Any creeper.

In order to resume the consumption of the above items they have to perform a ritual sacrificing a pig (Ref: Chapter-VI).

18) It is seen that the festival and ritual food is marked by some special items. In none of the festival or ritual, sweet dishes or milk and milk product have any value for Lungchang and Moklom. It is not possible at this stage of our enquiry to indicate as to why the rice powder, egg and ginger are prescribed in the *Moh* festival observed by Lungchang and why the food has to be cooked in the blood of the sacrificed animal in the Chamtuk festival observed by Moklom. Similarly why a buffalo has to be sacrificed in the Wangjang ritual. It is also not possible to indicate as to why after the buffalo is sacrificed in the Wangjang ritual, all creepers and creeper vegetables are withdrawn from their daily meal. To restart their consumption a pig is required to be sacrificed. There must be some 'associate' between welfare of the family, offering a buffalo, prescription on creepers and pig sacrificing.

19) Although rice, local beer and meat are the common items of food in their diet but they are also

considered to be high ranking food. These are the items present in their normal cycle of meals as well as on the festive and ritual occasions. These are the items that are also offered to the spirits. It is one of the ways by which the world of the spirits get connected with the world of living through these items. Further, it is assumed by the people that the spirits too have the same dietary needs as human beings and their preference of food is also same. In this respect, local beer seems to have a very special place in the life of these people. First this is the only liquid item besides water which is an all time meal. Second, no propitiation of spirits can be complete without making any offering of it. Third, it is present on all festive occasions. It is liberally supplied to all the guests when they arrive on festival occasions. Fourth, local beer has an important place in marriage negotiation and marriage celebration.

20) In all festivals, partaking of the meat of the animal sacrificed on the occasion is essential. Meat may vary from festival to festival but the common aspect is the slaughtering of the living animal, offering it to the spirits processed and cooking it for human consumption. The over-riding believe is commonly held that spirits are all powerful and they have to be continuously kept satisfied to ensure the well being of the living. But the interesting

part is how a particular animal is associated with a particular festival. Although we have not dealt with this aspect, it is clear that there is a rank order of the animals. The highest ranking animal is buffalo which is specifically associated with Wangjang ritual. This ritual is observed for the well being of the family. Pig and fowl are the animals of lower rank associated with other festivals. Not only the animal but the various portions of the meat are also ranked. The high ranking portion is given to high ranking kin, specialist or guest according to the occasion.

21) The observance of rituals is accompanied with dancing, singing and beating of drums. For the people, drum is a sacred object. It is through the drum they draw the attention of the supernatural being. Thus the drum too has to be properly fed. They offer rice and local beer to drum too.

22) The Tangsa offer food to the dead daily. They believe that there is a world of dead. There the dead need food like any other living being and they have to be kept satisfied all the time. The food offered to them is same as the food for living in the normal cycle. That is, the food can travel from the world of living to the world of dead (unseen) and help in communicating the concerns, the fears and the prayers of the living to the dead.

23) The tables (A,B,C) (Chapters III, IV and V) indicate that there are some very special items of food which are specifically associated with a special festival or ritual. For example fish is strongly associated with marriage and offering of rice powder with Moh festival. Whatever may be the reason for such association, these special food items mark the occasions.

24) Food offered on various ritual occasions is also associated with the cure of various ailments. According to their belief the ailments are caused because the spirits are not satisfied for one or the other reasons. They have to be appeased by the sacrifice of the appropriate animal, the meat of which is cooked and eaten by the participants.

25) People learn about the food, the norms associated with it, the preferred and prescribed items, their rank order and the coded messages in it, in the process of growing up as a member of the family and larger society. These messages are continuously coded and decoded by the participants and act accordingly. The presence and absence of certain food demarcate one festival and ritual from the other. Whatever be the design at deeper level these demarcations break the monotony of existence, tie the members of a group more cohesively expressing a degree of

"A"
FOOD IN DAILY CYCLE

FOOD GROUP	LUNGCHANG DAILY	MOYLOH DAILY	SOMETIMES	VERY OFTEN	OCCASIONALLY
RICE	+	+	-	-	-
RICE POWDER	-	-	-	-	+
LOCAL BEER	+	+	-	-	-
RED TEA	+	+	-	-	-
MEAT (BUFFALOES)	-	-	-	-	+
MEAT(COW)	-	-	+	-	-
MEAT(PORK)	-	-	+	-	-
MEAT(FOWL)	-	-	+	-	-
FISH	-	-	+	-	-
EGG	-	-	+	-	-
VEGETABLES	+	+	-	-	-
SALT	+	+	-	-	-
OTHER SPICES(LOCAL)	+	+	-	-	-
SWEETS	-	-	-	-	-
MILK & MILK POWDER	-	-	-	-	-
BLOOD OF THE SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL	-	-	-	-	+

Common Food Items : Rice Vegetables , Local Beer And Tea.

"B"
PRESCRIBED ITEMS OF FOOD DURING FESTIVALS.

	LUNGCHANG			MOYLOH			
FOOD STUFF	MOYLOH FESTIVAL	PARONG	HEROTIWAR CEKHOL	HAIRUKAN	MOL	CHANTUK	KUNGTOM
RICE	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
RICE POWDER	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
LOCAL BEER	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
GINGER	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
MEAT (BUFFALOES)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MEAT(COW)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MEAT(PORK)	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
MEAT(FOWL)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
FISH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EGG	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
VEGETABLES	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
SALT	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
OTHER SPICES(LOCAL)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
SWEETS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MILK & MILK POWDER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BLOOD OF THE SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
CHUTNEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

COMMON FOOD ITEMS : RICE, LOCAL BEER, MEAT, VEGETABLES.

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS : EGG, RICE POWDER, GINGER, SALT, BLOOD OF SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL.

"C"
PRESCRIBED ITEMS OF FOOD ON LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

	PREGNANCY	BIRTH	MARRIAGE	DEATH
FOOD GROUP	LUNGCHANG	MOYLOH	LUNGCHANG	MOYLOH
RICE	+	+	+	+
RICE POWDER	-	-	-	-
LOCAL BEER	+	+	+	+
MEAT (BUFFALOES)	-	-	-	-
MEAT(COW)	-	-	-	-
MEAT(PORK)	+	+	+	+
MEAT FOWL	+	+	+	+
FISH	-	-	-	-
RAW EGG	+	-	-	-
VEGETABLES	+	+	+	+
SALT	+	+	+	+
SPICES	+	+	+	+
SWEETS	-	-	-	-
MILK & MILK PRODUCTS	-	-	-	-
RAW RICE	+	+	+	+

COMMON ITEMS : RICE, LOCAL BEER, MEAT, VEGETABLES.

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS : EGG, FISH, RAW RICE, RICE POWDER.

TABLE "A" Shows The Normal Cycle Of Meal.
TABLE "B" Shows The Prescribed Items Of Food During Festivals.
TABLE "C" Shows The Prescribed Items Of Food During Life Cycle Rituals.

- (1) From All The Tables The Common Items Are Rice+Local Beer.
- (2) For Ceremonial Occasions Meat Is A Compulsory Item.
- (3) For Some Rituals, Some Food Items Are Significant, These Are Shown In The Tables. "B" & "C".