

Himachal Pradesh's culinary folklore: an intangible heritage of food, culture, and identity

Simranjeet Kaur & Anil Kishore Sinha

ABSTRACT

The food consumption pattern of human species is dynamic influenced by the complex socio-cultural and environmental processes. Rough and harsh geographical conditions act as boon or bane to different ethnic communities. The inhabitants have created different pattern of consumption for their survival based upon these conditions. The process of finding different foodstuff in surroundings is still arduous task for different groups. The emergence of these groups to society has led to the formation of different believes, taboos, practices and customs. With passage of time, these believes and taboos took the formation of tales and legends which is a part of folklore. Thus, folklore is a rich reservoir of myths, ballads, legends, tales, riddles, proverbs, proverbial sayings and folksongs that gives deep insight into knowledge of food preparation and consumption of primitive man. The present study emphasis on the exploration of oral literature of primitive folks associated with knowledge of food in the state of Himachal Pradesh. It gives deep insight into culture of natives by delineating systematic description of information about seasons, festivals and other important event of life i.e. birth, marriage and death. The information is stored in form of verses which take different forms and reflects culinary depository of natives. This depository helps to understand how cultural practices, myths, legends, believes and norms provide social structure and cohesion in a society. Thus, the current study explores the words of wisdom related to food intertwined in the verses delineated by hill people. The words of wisdom acts as intangible form of culture that has survived through different ages by the process of acculturation and diffusion and formed the rich heritage of society.

Keywords: *Folklore, Folk-literature, Folksongs, Ballads, Folk-drama, Folk-art, Food.*

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Introduction

The emergence of food in history is dated back to an era when hunters and gatherers started collecting food by hunting, gathering and foraging of wild resources. The time period later came when the discovery of fire changed the history of food consumption from raw to cook. In the later stages of evolution, cultivation of crops along with the domestication of livestock took place. The rough and harsh conditions had led to preservation and conservation of edible wild resources. With the rise of society and culture, the food and food ways as a part of it had also emerged (Mukhopadhyay, 2011). The complex structure of society has given rise to distinctive dietary patterns of production and consumption based upon the availability of resources in environment. The knowledge linked to consumption get entrapped in the words of natives which further took form of verses, myths and legends with passage of time.

Every society has its own culture related taboos, practices, patterns of consuming food. Food is also classified as 'edible' or 'inedible' based upon socio-cultural classifications, availability (market and ecological), nutritional or medical properties and consequences of consuming it (Gautam, 2021). The 'edible' food describes the cultural pattern in which a particular cuisine is prepared, consumed and preserved under different conditions by a specific group. The 'inedible' food itself describes the hidden background of prohibition and restrictions on intake of particular item based upon the beliefs, customs and taboos of particular group (Freeman, 2006).

In ancient times, lack of resources to transmit information into written form had led to loss of major amount of knowledge which makes the origin of various food items in a particular culture difficult to trace. Every ingredient which is used to make a particular dish has its own body of cultural knowledge which is preserved in different forms of oral and written literature. This oral and written literature consists of traditional creations of primitive or civilised people. The abundance of knowledge of ancient people is entrapped in the verses of folklore. The term folklore was first used among Europeans in 19th century and they refer it as the oral traditions of peasants. The folklore is basically the songs, myths, legends, tales, ballads, proverbs, proverbial sayings and riddles of natives influenced by the local tradition, culture, ritualistic ceremonies, witchcrafts, beliefs, customs and superstitions. It is rich reservoir which gives deep insights into cognitive ability and behaviour pattern of primitive man; and its traditional usage of knowledge and wisdom in different social conditions (Kongas, 1963). The basic

objectives of studying folklore are identification and interpretation of an item through subjective and empirical speculation to study the transmitted folk knowledge from one generation to another by process of enculturation (Dundes, 1965). Anthropologists, folklorists, sociologists and many other scholars scrutinize different aspects of this literature to study the holistic panorama of culture (Mukhopadhyay, 2011). The approach to examine the different aspects of folk literature by folklorists and other social scientists is different as anthropologists prioritize study on holistic bases on the other hand folklorists' emphasis on contextual holism (Ghosh & Mullick, 2020). The sociologists also examine to understand how verses influence social cohesion within community and how it upholds the social control and structure of society. Thus, Folk-literature helps to study the collective responses of a primitive group and community in different circumstances. It also helps them for comparative analysis of the functional, cultural and structural aspects of society. It describes the psychology and intelligence of traditional societies to store the information by formulating words into phrases. There are various hidden treasure of knowledge related to food in different parts of nation but in the land of deities (Himachal Pradesh), the knowledge related to seasons, festivals and mythologies etc. is explored.

The holy land of the gods and goddesses that is often known as *Devbhoomi* is situated on the north-western lap of the Himalayas extends over an area of nearly 56,000 sq. kms and at the altitude from 4500 to 8000 meters above the sea. The land of Himachal Pradesh has abundant and diverse raw materials present based upon the geography and climatic conditions of an area which acts as ingredients of different foodstuffs (Thakur, 2006). The unique and distinctive nature of these raw materials acts as indicator of particular region for example *Himachali kala Zeera* (2018-2019) and *Himachali Chulli Oil* (2018-2019) are marked as geographical indicators of state (Hindustan Times, 2019). The preparation, formation and consumption of cuisines are distinctive in different region which leads to different dietary patterns and food habits. The consumption pattern of different food items reflects the responses of groups towards their environment for survival. Thus, food does not only provide nutrition to an individual but also reflects the cultural, social and economic importance of group of individuals (Tamang, 2016).

The different communities of Himachal have wide range of preferences and styles of consuming food. Wheat, rice and maize are considered as staple food of state but are used in different manner for consumption

(Thakur et al., 2020; Ahuja et al., 2019). The traditional feast which is often prepared at different ceremonies and occasions to provide plethora of taste is locally termed as *dham*. It is a combination of delicious delicacies made up of various types of dairy products and lentils. It was initially offered to gods and goddesses in temples and served as *Prasad* at different auspicious occasions but later became part of *Himachali* diet due to its distinct flavour and balanced nature. (Savitri & Bhalla, 2007; Tanwar et al., 2018).

Besides *dham*, there are various ethnic food and beverages which are prepared through traditional and modern methods that are categorized on basis of type of ingredients used to make the dish for example-ethnic food made from pulses, cereals, buttermilk, green vegetables, fruits and tubers etc. (Sharma & Singh, 2012). Fermented food and beverages have a special place in traditional food of the state. *Chilra, Bhatore, Dosha, Siddu, Seera, Pinni/Bagpinni, Manna, Marchu* etc. are few unique fermented food of the state. *Chhang, Lugri, Daru, Angoori, Behmi, Sura* etc. are few popular fermented beverages which are served at different regions (Thakur et al., 2004).

The traditional food which has high nutritional value is nowadays commercialized with the changing socio-economic needs of people but their authenticity remains the same. The rich and diverse culture is reflected through colourful attires, fairs and festivals, marriages and religious ceremonies of land. On each auspicious ceremony or occasion, food plays a supreme role to celebrate the blessings of deities on people of state. Thus, current study tries to bestow light upon the proverbs used to describe the consumption of food with changing seasons and festivals. It also includes proverbs that are used to describe the state of people of hills especially women because they play major role in culinary art. There are proverbs used to describe the fate of women along with her position in family. It also includes proverbial sayings related to change in status of women in family when child is born. The folksong and folktale are also included to describe the relationship between mother and her children. The girl child is given special importance as mother-daughter shares a special bond. When daughter grow old and the time of her marriage come then a folksong describes the scenario of her marriage. After marriage, the change in position from daughter to daughter-in-law is also described along with the position of son-in-law in a family. The importance of food in the description of folk-art, folk-tale and folk-dance is also delineated to describe the superstitions, beliefs and myths related to the society. Before exploring the folksongs, proverbs or folk-tales etc.

the current studies start from mythologies in the form of ballads as two of the oldest and greatest epics had laid the foundation of Indian culture. In state of Himachal, these two epics have its own cultural and religious importance. One epic is the Ramayana and other one is the Mahabharata; two greatest Hindu mythologies that have shed light on lives of folks and without which one cannot initiate exploring the treasure of information.

Enriched mythologies in form of ballads

People of land of hills have its own way of describing legends in form of emphasized narratives which are sung on special occasions or festivals. These narratives are known as ballads which delineate the events in form of story by having rhythmic affluence and poetic element in it. There is an episode of *Sita-haran* in the Ramayana that is also narrated in form of ballad by different communities of state. During the exile period of Lakshmana, Rama and Sita in the forest, inauspicious event took place in which Sita was lured by the beauty of a golden deer that was passing through the area where they were residing. Sita persuaded Rama to catch the golden deer but he did not want her to leave alone. He gave a bowl of milk, a green leaf of *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) tree and a lamp of *ghee* (clarified butter) to Lakshmana (his brother) to presume the situation of his life in danger. He gave the instructions that white colour of milk will change to red, the lamp will extinguish and the leaf will dry if something bad happened to him. According to this ballad, Rama has used the requisite edibles of nature to symbolise the essence of danger. The comparison of danger reflects quick wittedness of ancient people of using available resources in every situation (Thakur, 2006).

In another ballad of the Mahabharata which is locally named as *Pandavayan* in Himachal, a new episode has been introduced about the dispute between two sisters- Kunti (the elder) and Nandi (the younger) sisters of Narayana fought over the *sag* leaves of green vegetables grown in the shwari (small field) near their house. Bhima (second son of Kunti) infuriated by this matter and went to Duryodhana (eldest of the Kauravas) to solve the quarrel over a dice- game. The whole episode took the form of one of greatest epic which started from fight to Great War. In the another ballad sung in district of Kangra, Kunti showed grievance of not having the meat of birds from the past twelve years and asked her sons to bring it from higher hills. As four of her sons were engaged in individual tasks during their exile, only Arjuna (third son) agreed to fulfil the task of hunting the birds. Before leaving the place, his mother Kunti warned him to not go towards the fourth direction as

illusive stream of *Jauli* flowed there. While roaming around and searching for the birds Arjuna lost his track. Despite the warning he went towards the fourth direction and engaged himself in danger. He was later found by his brother Bhima (second son) in the form of skeleton. Bhima took him in front of his mother where he gained his consciousness. The two episodes in form of ballads sung in different part of state show the eagerness of desired food item and its repercussion (Thakur, 2006).

Besides the ballads of greatest epics sing at different part of state, there are many ballads of different forms that glorify gods and goddesses especially on religious occasions. The verses of these mysterious ballads reflect the heroic tales, cults of local deities and their customs related to it. The legend of Baidra of Nadaun of Hamirpur district is one of these ballads that describe the journey of becoming a *deota* (local deity) after scattering the seeds on the dry place that turned into forest. According to legend, he did not get anything to eat for himself but had grown full forest for others. People worship him as a *deota* because he had sown the seeds of peace and prosperity by destroying cruelty inhabited in nearby place. The nurturing nature of hill people is reflected through this ballad as hill people are always ready to help others. The people of state take pleasure in singing the verses of ballads with relish depending upon the situations and occasions. These occasions are periodic like seasons which come with plethora of pleasure (Thakur, 2006).

Proverbs used during the changing season

The alluring mountains of Himachal are covered with white sheet of snow in winters whereas rays of sun radiate the hills in summers. The changing cold and hot weather effects the lives of hill people as agriculture and horticulture are main source of income of these people. Hill people are mostly agriculturalists so the knowledge about farming, harvesting and seasons is required. Weather plays a major role in predicting the kind of work to be done in a particular season. People of hills have distinctive food habits which change from season to season based upon the resources. Mostly, hill life is simple and away from the impact of western culture. The food habits of these people are authentic and traditional. At the *Nuhari* (morning), *Dhupahari* (noon) and at the *Sanhiyalu* (evening), there is a pattern of consuming three main meals which include mostly boiled rice, *roti* (unleavened bread) along with curried dal (Indian Lentil Curry), vegetables and buttermilk (Vyathit, 1984). Knowledge related to these meals in different seasons is stored in short and concise form of proverbs. These short and concise forms are thoughts of people written in wittiest manner which reflects the

philosophy of hill people through fixed and convincing way in different situations. Proverbs and proverbial sayings are usually the concise description used in various situations for example:

Chaitra ri chaitryali, sat kalari sat biyali (Thakur, 2006).

It is believed that in older days, an old lady usually took seven breakfasts and seven dinners in a single day in month of Chaitra. It is cloudiest month in later half of March and first half of April. It has mostly thicker and darker rainy days due to abnormal and sudden change in weather. It is advised that an individual can take more food as body's capacity of consuming food increases in this weather. In another proverbial saying,

Barse Magsir, Khae khand khir, Barse kati, agla sangh na pichhla sathi

(If there is rain in the month of Magsir, it is suggested to eat sweet pudding made up of sugar and rice whereas if there is rain in month of Kartik, it is believed that awful weather will usually destroy the standing crops of maize and rice) (Thakur, 2006).

The verses describe the changing dietary pattern according to the change in weather. The rain that occurred in month of *Magsar* (it starts from middle of November to middle of December) is often celebrated by consuming sweet rice pudding whereas rain in month of *Kartik* (it starts from the middle of October to middle of November) is deleterious for crop production. It reflects the awareness of hill people about climatic changes and how it changes the consumption from one month to another based upon the environment.

There are two proverbial sayings related to eating *satu* (flour of fried roasted chickpeas or barley mixed with water and salt) in month of *Ashadha* and *Jeth*. In month of *Ashadha*, eat four cakes of *satu* and work for the whole day long (*Au mahina Shar, char mathingla satu re mar, kom kamona dhar*), where as in month of *Jeth* it is advised to eat cake of *satu* and leave the work for rest (*Au mahina Jeth, satu re kha mathingla kom pitla let*) (Thakur, 2006). *Asadha* corresponds to fourth month in Hindu Calendar that starts from middle of June and ends at middle of July. It is considered as cherished period for spiritual growth and it fosters positive energy and devotion whereas *Jeth* (also known as *Jyeshtha*) is considered as hot and humid month that starts from middle of May to middle of June. The hot and humid conditions are unfavourable for a person to work so it is advised to take rest and eat less

whereas *Asadha* bestows more energy so an individual can consume more food and work according to surroundings.

The above-mentioned verses describe the significance of food with the changing season as the same piece of foodstuff has different effect on body depending upon the season. It is the rule of nature of bestowing fruits to her children on its time. Every grain has its own season of germination and consumption but hill people always discover different occasion for savouring every mouthful. These occasions are observed in form of festivals to celebrate.

Proverbs used during festivals

Devbhoomi has various auspicious occasions to celebrate the existence of gods and goddesses at holy land. Fairs are often organized to celebrate the eminence of deities. The fairs also reflect the rural life and their related customs. On the other hand, festivals are celebrated to glorify the importance of day on which auspicious events take place. These are also celebrated to honour rich heritage, when seasons are changing and crops are harvested. There are various folklores linked with festivals of deities and changing seasons. Different delicacies are also prepared based upon the occasion and festival, for example Chaitraul (festival of pictures) is celebrated in month of Chaitra in Sirmaur district. A special delicacy (*Poltu*) is cooked on this special occasion. *Sairi* is winter festival celebrated in month of *Ashwin* (usually begins from middle of September to middle of October) when the harvesting of maize crop is done. *Pakodus* (urd dal dumpling) and sweet *bhaturas* are cooked in this festival.

There are different festivals celebrated in different states but Diwali is one of auspicious festival celebrated throughout the country and in Himachal, the significance of festival is more because there are two types of Diwali that are celebrated; one is national Diwali and other is *Budhi* Diwali. *Budhi* Diwali is celebrated after one month of national Diwali on *Margshirsh's Amavasya* and will continue for one week. On this auspicious occasion, an idol of *Bali* prepared with wheat flour is laid on ground and worshipped with dishes of delicious food, roasted grains and walnuts along with lamps burning to its surroundings. For the whole night, people worship this idol of Lord Vishnu and sing songs in his praise. In the morning, it is nailed to the ground by saying:

*Aweli Diyali re Kobai? Khoro muri re lobhe,
Chajari chewri re lobhe. Chajare gabhru re lobhe.*

(When will you come- Diwali along with the walnuts and roasted grains to celebrate with the beautiful women and handsome young men)
(Thakur, 2006).

During the month of Diwali festival, even the poor person tries his best to cook sweet delicacies and all members of family start coming back home to unite even from the distant places to celebrate the festival. The women of hill kept waiting for their husbands to visit the home and eat freshly prepared cuisines. They suppressed their sentiments and start preparing food. These suppressed emotions are reflected through the verses delineated below:

O my woodcutter, you live at distant place,
when will you visit the home?
Have you forgotten the sweets (*Babroos*) of Diwali
and the *Khichadi* prepared during *Lohadi*? (Vyathit, 1984).

The wife of woodcutter is missing her husband during Diwali and want him to come back home to have sweets with other delicacies prepared with love for him. She prepares *Khichadi* on *Lohadi* and *Babroos* on Diwali. Thus, the consumption of certain food items according to occasion is a way of acknowledging the connection and harmony with nature.

Folk-Dance, folk-art and folk-tale of people of state

The people of colourful land form blissful and cheerful moments through celebrating different forms of ceremonies, marriages, fairs and festivals. There is no such event that remains untouched from the embellishment of food items; even the music, dance and art of state include these essentials. In Kinnaur region, the *Kayang Mala* dance is very popular that is performed by forming crisscross pattern of rows of dancers to look like a woven garland. There is a tradition of drinking *Chaang* (a rice brew) while performing to form the lusty beauty of dance (Vyathit, 1984). In *Chamba* region of state, *Til-chauli* dance is very famous that is performed by bridegroom's mother during marriage ceremony. During the performance, a plate of soaked sesame seeds along with rice mixed with jaggery or sugar is placed on the head (Thakur, 2006).

The folk-art of state also depicts the tales and legends in form of pictures and paintings. The pictures of *Hoi* (she-demon) are painted on the walls in many regions of state which includes she-demon and man carrying a packet of food along with his mother. There is a story behind this folk-art

that resulted into the celebration of *Hoi-Ashtami*. According to legend, *Hoi* was a demon living in the forest that tortured people in many ways and devoured them. The villagers begged for the mercy and promised her that they will sacrifice human being each day. After a while, when a young man who was about to get married was send to her. His mother gave him food and sweets to eat during the journey. He saved the food and put it at *Hoi*'s altar to save his life. *Hoi* ate the delicacies and was pleased by his gift. She blessed him and sent him back to get married. From the day onwards, it is celebrated as Hoi-Ashtami that has put an end to human sacrifice. This folktale has taken the form of folk-art which is still portrayed on the walls to delineate the legend (Vyathit, 1984).

Besides the dance, music and art; the hill people have their own beliefs and myths related to their surroundings, certain places, rivers and animals etc. There are some superstitions attached to certain things as if something bad happened in its past then it is prohibited to utters its name. If one hears the name or utters it, one must immediately suck sugar or lump of jaggery to ward off the bad luck. Animals and trees are essential part of hill people as their lives are dependent on it. The superstitions related to these animals reflect their admiration towards nature. All fresh new grains, vegetables and other food articles are offered to the deities before consuming by its owners. It is believed that failure to do so would result either in a lessening of the yield or the death of an animal (Vyathit, 1984).

There are some other beliefs such as if an animal kicks during milked, then it is said to have caught the evil eye of a *dagi* (even sorcerer). To ward off the evil spirit, red chili is put in the fire, if smell is not released then it is believed that it is sign of *nazar* (the evil eye). Milk is also supposed to catch the evil eye and upset the child, so a burnt cinder is put in the milk to ward that off. Thus, hill people have their own myths related to events and their own ways of preventing it (Vyathit, 1984).

Urbanization and modernization have affected many parts of lives of hill people but most percent of population still practice traditional set of production. Men of state are still involved in agricultural practices and follow conventional way of living. The women of state are very assiduous in performing their duties. They make tireless efforts to take care of their households. Every woman shows honour and reverence for her hearth as it is a place of creating food for their survival. They make different cuisines based upon their preferences, availability and choices. They follow the traditional practices of preparing food based upon believes and knowledge. Besides the art, dances, myths and superstition

of people related to food; women hold the superior position of performing culinary practices in their households. Apart from their strenuous efforts towards life, fate of these women plays a major role in shaping their lives. The hard lives of state women are inscribed in form of verses which are uttered in form of proverbial sayings at different regions as described below.

Women described as symphony of grace and strength in form of proverbs

Women's luck is like potter's pot *Betri ra bhag, Kumhare ri handi*, earthen pots made by potters is used for different purposes, one might be used to store milk, other might be used to store butter and one might be used for nothing. Thus, women's fate is also like an earthen pot which may be blessed or may be destroyed based on the family in which she gets married. Women's destiny is sculpted by her fate and the role she plays. The position in her family describes her role and responsibility. She has to perform every role with perfection especially as a mother as it is believed that her reflection is seen in her children. As a proverbial saying:

Jisha dudh, tishi budh

(As the milk so the intelligence) (Thakur, 2006).

It means the children take after their mother. The first mouthful of child is mother's milk as it gives all the essential nutrients to a child along with her intelligence and qualities.

Child is considered as boon to a mother as it completes her life. The number of children describe her status in family as more number of children born to a woman, more blessed she is. In older days, elder women gave blessings to a newlywed daughter-in-law by saying:

Jeti daru re bij ghane, teti bohti put jane

(May the bride blessed with as many sons as there are seeds in pomegranate) (Thakur, 2006).

According to traditional norms, a childless woman does not acquire respect and any position in society. She is not allowed to be a part of any auspicious function and considered as useless. As a proverbial saying:

Aj niputi, kal niputi, kesar phula sada niputi

(She is useless today, tomorrow and even if the saffron blooms, she is still useless) (Thakur, 2006).

The beginning of life starts when a child enters into this world. This joyful and cheering occasion begins with the first tasting of cereal known as *Annaprashan*. As the child grows and become seven-month-old, the first meal in the form of *kheer* (rice pudding) is given at the ceremony of *Kheerpoo*. A special article (spoon) made up of silver is used to feed *kheer* to child (Vyathit, 1984). A girl is considered as complete woman after she bears a child. According to traditional belief, son take after their father and daughter take after their mother. Daughters are the precious jewels of a family that connects all bonds of a family but the most cherished bond is mother-daughter bond.

Folksong and folk-tale used to describe the relationship of mother and daughter

Most sacred bond of love is mother's love towards her children. A shadow of mother is always seen in daughter. Daughter is a part of mother's heart. Mother gives her everything for sake of her love. Daughters of hill state are often getting married at earlier stage of her life. The time later come when she has to leave her maternal home is heart wrenching. The fondness of mother towards her daughter is expressed through the verses of folk song written in form of conversation between mother and daughter during her departure from home (Pathania, 2022).

*Daughter-Charke da tand maaye charkha ch raheya,
dudh raheya kadhaye mai chaliye jaana*

(The thread remains in the charkha. The milk will remain in vessel but I will leave this house and move to in-laws' house).

*Mother-Ann bi dinghe dhiye, dhan bi dinge,
hor dinge jagiraan, dhiye nahiyon jaane*

(My daughter, I'll give bread (Wheat), I'll give money, I give you even the share in property but please don't leave my daughter).

*Daughter-Ann taa dhan teriyan nuuhan lenne,
putran ne leniyan jagiran, mai chaliyan jaana*

(Wheat bread will be taken by daughter-in-law, property will be taken by your son and I should leave) (Pathania, 2022).

It describes the loving and sorrowful relationship between daughter and her mother during her departure from home. Mother wants to give everything to her daughter as much as possible but do not want to let her go. It is the bitter reality of leaving her natal home after marriage either she wants to leave or not (Pathania, 2022).

The verses of this song reflect the love of mother towards her daughter whereas the verses of another folktale “*Dhaiyan dhiyareyan ra peuka*” reflects the love of daughter towards her mother and natal home. The tale reflects the mental outlook of hill people and their nurturing nature towards each other. Two of them collected piece of bread from the neighbour; one smaller and other the bigger one. Mother always took the smaller share and gave bigger one to her daughter. One day, daughter replaced the smaller piece of her mother to the bigger one because she did not feel good about having biggest share always. After knowing her deed, mother started running towards her daughter with cudgel in her hand asking for her bread (*mera tikar de*). Her daughter hid in forest to protect herself. A king who was passing through jungle found her and married her. This folktale describes the journey of a woman who is born in poor family and later became a queen. It started over the fight to give bigger piece of bread to other person and described the love of mother and daughter towards each other through this tale (Thakur, 2006)

The pleasing and alluring beauty of mountains has mesmerized its people and has sown the seeds of love and fondness in form of folk-songs. The love is present in the atmosphere of hills which has given rise to various love stories. Among various bonds of fondness, some take the form of marriage and some take the form of tales and legends.

Folksongs sung during the ceremony of marriage

According to Titus (1994), marriage is union between male and female having intimate and economic relationship approved by the society. There are different types of marriage take place at different region of state. In most part of state, monogamous marriages are conducted but in some part of state polygamy type of marriage occurs. There are different ceremonies also take place throughout the process of marriage, for example in Gaddis the marriage ceremony take place twice. Firstly, when girl is young, groom's family visit the bride's house and breaks a lump of jaggery on the name of girl and distribute the jaggery to all the passengers coming through their home back announcing the confirmation of *betrothal*. After five to ten years, second part of marriage take place known as *sadnoj* (Vyathit, 1984). The voyage of this loving bond begins when the members of bridegroom's family visit the natal home of bride and ceremony of marriage take place. On the name of lord Rama, members are greeted with ghee, jaggery and rice (*Khao janetiyo ghee, shakkar mande bhatt, ki bolo ram ram*) (Thakur, 2006). The verses of

folksong of marriage also narrate the whole satiric scenario of marriage ceremony.

Mirchan charperiya chaneya di daal karaari-2
(There are a lot of chillies in the chickpea lentils-2)

Larra khai kari hor mangda, botiye karchhi maari
(Bridegroom asks for more after having it, but cook hits him with the serving spoon)

Labada te khoon aa gaya, mukadma ho gaya jaari
(Bridegroom's lips started bleeding and resulted in court case).

Mircha charpariyan chaneya di daal karaari-2
(There are a lot of chillies in the chickpea lentils-2)

Laare da babu khai kari hor mangada, botiye karchhi maari
(Bridegroom's father asks for more lentils but cook hits him with serving spoon)

Mirchan charpariya chaneya di daal karaari-2
(There are a lot of chillies in the chickpea lentils-2)

Larre da jija khai kari hor mangda, botiye botiye
(Bridegroom's brother-in law asks for more lentils but cook hits him with the serving spoon).

Karchhi maaari mirchan charpariya chaneya di daal karaari-2
(There are a lot of chillies in the chickpea lentils-2) (Pathania, 2022).

Through above verses, it is observed that marriage in Himachal is engaging ceremony where all the members of bride's family and groom's family come together to celebrate the union. Due to traditional belief, bridegroom and his family always get more attention during this ceremony. The verses of folksong portray the scenario of marriage where bridegroom and his family are asking for having more of delicacies which include a lot of spices. In some region of state like Chamba, different communities consume food which includes a lot of chillies. Chamba *Chukh* is one of example of Chutney which includes *Chitrali* chillies grown in local valley of Chamba (Raj, 2020). The gluttony of bridegroom is depicted through verses of this song and his relationship with other members of bride's family. It also reflects the status of bridegroom's family in a society where they always demand for more even if they are having substantial amount of goods. It is the classical example of portraying the social image of the real episode of a marriage that describes difference between men and women's position in a society

where men are given more importance in many circumstances as compare to women.

Proverbs used by daughter-in-law

The father of bride tries his best to provide all essential commodities to his daughter and her husband but it is difficult to fulfil all desires. Daughters in their natal home are free from all constrains and enjoy all privileges but when they get married and move to their second abode, all their freedom gets limited. The responsibilities towards the other members of family increases and she has to perform various roles to be an ideal daughter-in-law. The change in position from one family to other makes a lot of changes of her roles and responsibilities. In some cases, she gets the best treatment from her in-laws and in other cases she is ill-treated. When she is treated well then she praises her in-laws by saying:

*Bana phule ban-barah, bage phule kesar,
sas meri parvati, saura mera pamesar*

In the forest, flowers are grown, in the garden, saffron is grown, my mother-in-law is Parvati and my father-in-law is Shiva (Thakur, 2006).

It tries to delineate that a daughter-in-law will bloom like a flower in the loving atmosphere of abode but when she is ill-treated, she complains to her mother about her sufferings. She says:

*Mein ni rehna maye, mein ni rehna,
chhaliyan di roti ni khane jo dende hathi dende fafru da sag*
(Oh my mother, I do not want to live here in my in-law's house, I don't want to live here. They do not give me bread made up of maize's flour to eat. They only give me course bread along with the wild grass's vegetables) (Thakur, 2006).

She faces discrimination for having inadequate food as compare to other family members. In other proverb, she complains about how her sister-in-laws treated her as she says:

*Drsdani-Jethani kren pidhe patlde, Minju beera manjru da toda,
Drani-jethani khayen shali-jhinjhan minju beera kodre da toda*
(Elder brother's wife and younger brother's wife take fine bed to sleep and do not give even a cot of ropes to sleep. Both take lavish food of rice and do not allow me to have even koda) (Thakur, 2006).

Proverbs used by son-in-law

To reduce the social stigmas related to relations in society, various jokes and anecdotes are represented in proper jest to make the situation humorous. The satiric criticism and emotions which cannot be directly explained through words are often represented through hilarious verses to intensify amusement and laughter. Elements of humour are reflected through folk-proverbs. The dyads are mostly related to son-in-law and in-law's relationship which is of mostly joking and avoidance.

The relation of son-in law with his in-laws has a very uncanny and strange aspect. He always gains the high respect and often offered various delicacies, cuisines and desserts in the form of present but his gluttony never satisfies, for example-in an occasion, mother-in-law has prepared Twenty loaves of bread for five members of family and asked her son-in-law to have some of it but he refuses to eat it by saying "Am I a glutton, who can take all the loaves, just give one loaf to mother-in-law. Rest is sufficient for me to consume". Thus, in literature he is considered as donkey, clown or burden if he is living in father-in-law's place and having all the food that is prepared for five members of family. The greed of son-in-law for food and desire to have more from in-law's house are delineated in form of verses as follows-

Dura ra jawain, jawain braber

(A real son-in-law is one who is living at distant place from his in-law's house)

Nere ra jawain adha

(Son-in- law living at nearby place is equal to half)

Ghar jawain gadhe braber

(Son-in-law living at his wife's maternal house is like a donkey)

Jab marzi tab lada

(When it is necessary, then it is used) (Thakur, 2006).

Food plays significant role in various phases of life. There are various rituals and customs attached to every phase that are deeply embedded in a culture. These food rituals are performed to express gratitude, embody beliefs and strengthen spiritual and physical wellbeing; for instance, birth rituals signify purity and rituals performed at marriage signify unity. Thus, food rituals perform multifaceted role either to celebrate a milestone or to provide comfort in the hardships of life. From birth to death, there are various transitional phases of life but death is considered

as ultimate truth of life. Hill people also perform various rites related to departure from life.

Proverbs used to describe departure from life

Death is inevitable process that leads to ending of life. It is considered as ultimate reality that transform soul from this realm to another i.e. passing of living being from microcosm to macrocosm as described in verses-

Jatasya vai manusyasya dhruvam maranam iti vijaniyat
(Know that for the individual who is born, death is inevitable indeed)
(Chaitanya, 2005).

In Vedic traditions, there are many sacraments performed in form of religious rites to fulfil the final act. According to Hindu mythology, it is believed that the final death occurs on the funeral pyre so cremation is considered as last sacrifice of an individual to god (Perry, 1994). There are different communities residing in the lap of Himachal following different rituals related to funeral and bereavement. The Pangawala people of *Pangi* region of state is such community that follows certain set of rituals till the *kriya* ceremony. It is believed that the person who is dying should lie on the ground while heading his feet towards the south direction as it is associated with death. The other members of family should assemble around the dying person and pour melted *ghee* in his mouth during his last breath. After the death of individual, the corpse is given warm bath and dressed with white shirt pyjama, *pattu*, a pair of socks etc. made up of *Khasaan* white cloth. The other members of village are gathered and starts mourning for the deceased person. The Aryans are also invited to play instruments consists of *ghanta*, *dhole*, *flute*, *nagarah* and *sankh*. The logs of woods are joined to prepare *vimaan* on which the corpse is lied. On four angles of *vimaan*, small lamps made of kneaded wheat flour filled with *ghee* (clarified butter). The male member of family walks three times around the corpse and take the *vimaan* to the cremation ground. After funeral ceremony is over, all villagers head back to homes and members who have joined the ceremony eat one meal a day or three times *sattu* for three days. On the third day, *kriya* ceremony known as *Kathi* occurs in which all villagers are invited. *Chappatis* along with *ghee* is given. For the whole year on the day of death, a feast is organised in which each of nearest relative give some quantity of wheat to household. After one year, *Kathi* is

organised again with special feast containing *cheena* and *manday*. Before feast, *Havana* is conducted by village *pandit* in which relatives are present. When relatives are about to leave, they are provided with *cheena* and *manday* and village *pandit* is given utensils, cloths and other eatables. This is considered as ending of all rituals for death (Thakur & Singh, 2022).

Different regions follow their own rites of mourning for demise. A ritual of *pind dan* is also performed to offer food to the dead ones, with the feeding of balls made of cooked rice, sesame seeds and curds to birds at many parts of state during the lunar month of *Pitra paksha* (fall between mid of September and October). There are many other rituals that are followed for instance, a piece of bread stuffed with dal is thrown on the rooftop for crows in Kinnaur area. According to them, it is believed that food would help them to communicate with the dead ones (Vyathit, 1984).

Conclusion

The art of weaving words into phrases of wisdom and forming the oral literature of information is one of admirable qualities of primitive societies. Every society has culinary lore of dietary rules and regulations that provide information linked to food items either fit or unfit for consumption. It also provides the detailed elucidation about the systematic consumption of food items based upon its nutritional value, seasonal availability, environmental conditions and phases of human life cycle. The intake of certain food items is often associated with the beliefs, superstitions, legends and cultural significance of food etc. in a society. These beliefs or superstitions shape the dietary pattern of an individual. The prescription and proscription of food items will allow effective utilization of resources and protection from allergies or diseases. The current study also tries to present a part of this rich reservoir of culinary lore enriched with information of food. It also includes the information about the changing seasons and its impact on natives as they spent most of their lives in lap of nature. The hill people mostly perform traditional food practices associated with changing seasons as it plays crucial role in forming rhythmic bond with nature. The consumption of sweet pudding in month of *Magsir* is such example that gives insight into the intelligence of natives by saying that rain in

this month would be beneficial for them as compare to other month like *Kartik* so they celebrate it through consuming different delicacies. The seasonal changes are not only celebrated with specific food and delicacies but are also marked in the form of special ceremonies and festivals. These ceremonies and festivals are significant events that play crucial role in preserving and transmitting traditional values, for instance Diwali is one of most important festival that act as vibrant expression of cultural heritage and social cohesion. It is considered as 'festival of lights' that symbolises the triumph of good over the evil. It is widely celebrated among different communities throughout the country showing religious and historical significance. In Hindu traditions, it is associated with the victory of Lord *Rama* over the demon king *Ravana* as narrated in one of greatest epic *Ramayana*. *Ramayana* is one of the greatest epics in Indian literature that provides spiritual and philosophical consciousness through its characters for righteous living. Thus hill people also celebrate religious events by performing folk-drama or singing emphasized narratives in form of ballads on special occasions and festivals. The cultural art in form of pictures and dance also play significant role in preserving folk-traditions as presented in pictures of *Hoi* (she-demon) and *Kayang Mala* dance.

The people of state are simple and hardworking individuals who follow conventional way of living and make tireless efforts for their survival. Folklore gives them chance to express their sentiments about their struggle or suffering in form of verses. Folklore is mostly considered as creations of indigenous and rural communities based upon their knowledge and experience towards environment. In culinary dimensions, women and elder members of family act as custodians that pass down the information in form of lullaby, proverbial sayings, stories and songs. According to the conventional image of women, they are mostly bounded to perform their duties within the domestic sphere especially near the hearth. Women are expected to be good at culinary arts to look after the other members of family. They are often considered as central locus from where all web of relations is created. The entangled web of relations and attached high expectations create suppressed sentiments in their hearts which are not able to express to others. So mostly women expressed their suppressed emotions through verses. These verses

include their sentiments about their surroundings in which they are preparing food, doing household chores, taking care of children or elders etc. The present study also tries to highlight the notions and norms attached to different roles of a woman.

In this world, the superior role that a woman can play is by giving birth to a child. She is considered as a creator and a nurturer to a living being. There are various rituals performed to celebrate the beginning of new life on earth and motherhood. The food creates the purest bond between the new born baby and mother as she provides nourishment to the soul. Thus, a mother always offers unconditional love to her children but share special bond with her daughter. She always wanted to give more to her daughter than she can afford as expressed in tale *Dhaiyan dhiyareyan ra peuka*. Daughters have special place in her natal home but they have to move to another house after marriage as part of cultural traditions in a society. The departure from natal home is always sorrowful as expressed in folksong *Charke da tand maaye charkha ch raheya*. After marriage, the role changes from daughter to daughter-in-law so as the responsibilities. Based upon the treatment, she either praises or expresses her sadness through verses. On the other hand, a son-in-law is taking advantage of situations and asks for more goods. He is associated with greed and gluttony as described in folksongs *Mirchan charperiya chaneya di daal karaari* and *Dura ra jawain, jawain braber*. The portrayal of son-in-law as selfish or greedy character in different narratives and folk-songs signify cultural stereotype in a society. The good and bad things always have the ending in life after transforming through different phases. Death is considered as ultimate ending of life and rituals associated with it expresses grief and pay tribute to deceased. Death rituals also show deep meaning in a culture as it provides period of mourning and healing. Thus, current study has tried to describe the attached myths, beliefs, superstitions, rituals and traditions attached to important phases of life i.e. birth, marriage and death in form of folk-songs, proverbs, proverbial sayings or riddles. It also tries to describe how folklore provides the emic perspective of the natives towards their gastronomy. The current study has made efforts to revive the enriched knowledge of ancestors and to explore the different aspects of folk-literature to acknowledge the intelligence of natives. Thus, the study of folklore is important to understand the intangible heritage of culture

enriched with experiences that need to be documented and preserved as it influences the tangible part of culture.

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