



Study on the Rich Tapestry of Jharkhand's Tribal Cuisine: Cultural Significance and Traditional Practices

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Abstract

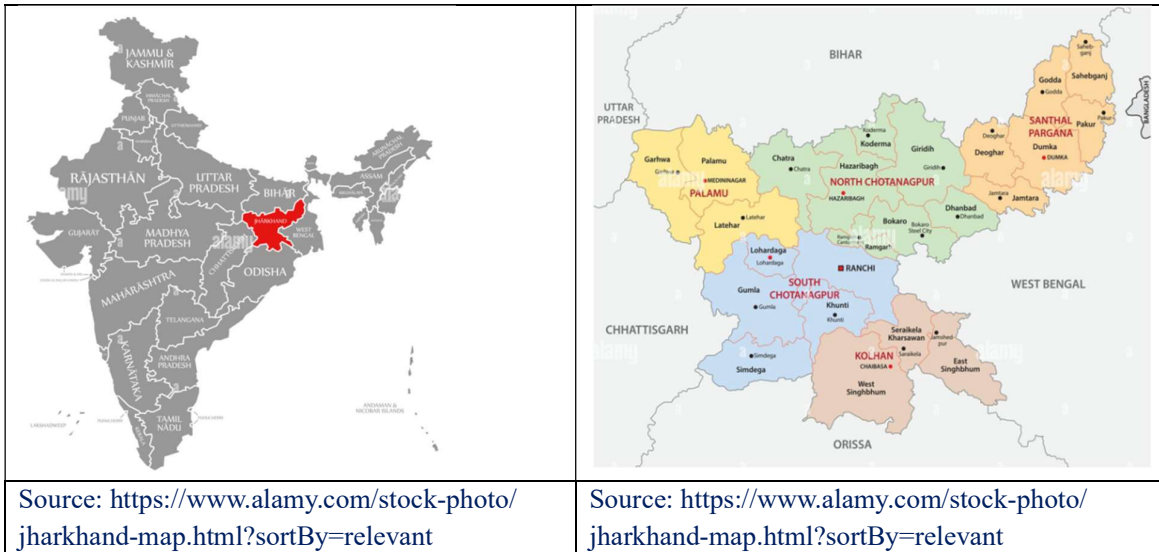
This study delves into the rich and diverse tapestry of Jharkhand's tribal cuisine, exploring its cultural significance and traditional practices. Jharkhand, known as "the land of forests," boasts a unique culinary heritage shaped by its various tribal communities. The cuisine, predominantly comprising rice, dal, and vegetables, is prepared with minimal oil and spices, highlighting natural flavors. Intriguing dishes like red rice, Arhar Dal, Munga Saag, and exotic items like red ant chutney and bamboo shoot pickle reflect the tribes' deep connection with nature. The study also touches upon the traditional practices in art, music, dance, and festivals that enrich this culture. The consumption of local alcoholic beverages like Handia and Mahua Daru during festivals, and the use of sustainable materials in serving and cooking, further illustrate the tribes' sustainable and intimate relationship with their environment.

Keywords: Jharkhand Tribal Cuisine, Cultural Significance, Traditional Practices, Sustainable Cooking, Tribal Communities, Natural Ingredients, Indigenous Dishes, Art and Music Heritage, Festivals and Rituals.

Introduction

"The land of forest" is the name of the state of Jharkhand, which was founded on November 15, 2000 in the southeast area of India. Jharkhand is located in the eastern part of the country. It was once a part of the state of Bihar that was located in the south. Other states that share a border with this state include Bihar, which is located to the north, Uttar Pradesh, which is located to the northwest, Chhattisgarh, which is located to the west, Odisha, which is located to the south, and West Bengal, which is located to the east. The overall area of the region is 79,714 square kilometres, which is equivalent to 30,778 square miles. This particular state is the fourteenth most populous in terms of population, with a total of fourteen million individuals calling it home. Within the boundaries of this state, Hindi is acknowledged as the official language. Dumka is the sub capital, while Ranchi is the capital of the area. Both cities are located in the same region. One

of the elements that contributes to the state's notoriety is the presence of holy places, hills, and waterfalls. In the state, Baidyanath Dham, Parasnath, and Rajrappa are considered to be three of the most significant centres of religious significance.



Tribals in Jharkhand

The state of Jharkhand in India is home to a total of 32 different racial and ethnic groups known as the Jharkhand tribes. An Indian anthropologist by the name of Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi was the first person to classify the tribes of Jharkhand according to the cultural differences that existed among them. As a result, his classification was as follows:

- “Hunter - Gatherer type - Birhor, Korwa, Hill Kharia
- Shifting Agriculture - Sauria Paharia
- Simple Artisans - Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, Chik Baraik
- Settled Agriculturists - Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumij, etc.”

As per the census completed in 2001, the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand is estimated to be 7,087,068 individuals. This represents a percentage of 26.3% of the total population of the state, which is 26,945,829 people. Due to the fact that 91.7 percent of Scheduled Tribes reside in villages, the majority of them find themselves in rural areas. According to the distribution of STs throughout districts, Gumla has the highest percentage of STs, which is 68.4 percent for the district. STs make up more than half of the population in the districts of Lohardaga and Paschimi-Singhbhum, whilst tribals make up between 41.8 and 44.6 percent of the population in the districts of Ranchi and Pakaur. First place goes to Chatra (0.9 percent) (0.9 percent), followed by Kodarma (0.8 percent), which has the lowest percentage of STs after that. It is 3.8% Jharkhand is home to a total of 32 cultural communities.

History

The territory that is now the Indian state of Jharkhand has been inhabited by humans since prehistoric times. Chalcolithic era copper artefacts have been unearthed. The Iron Age began in

this region about the middle of the second millennium BCE. Literary accounts indicate that Jharkhand existed as a separate geographical, political, and cultural entity prior to the Magadha Empire. After the Maurya Empire took over the area, the Mughal rulers Jahangir and Aurangzeb took it over in the 17th century.

- a. **Prehistoric Era:** Microliths and stone tools dating back to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been unearthed in the Chota Nagpur plateau area. The Hazaribagh area is home to several prehistoric cave paintings from the Meso-Chalcolithic era (9,000–5,000 BC). Near Barkagaon, around 25 kilometres from Hazaribagh, in PunkriBarwadih, you may find a cluster of megaliths with an established age of more than 3000 BCE.
- b. **Early Modern Period:** The area around Chota Nagpur is called Jharkhand (Jangal Pradesh) in Akbarnama. Known as khukhra during the Mughal era, Jharkhand was renowned for its diamonds. The Nagvanshi kings of Chota Nagpur ruled autonomously from the time of Akbar's reign till the city fell under the Mughal suzerainty. The Chota Nagpur dynasty was headed by Nagvanshi Raja Durjan Sal when Jahangir's reign began. Ibrahim Khan attacked Kokhra under Jahangir's command. An further rationale for the invasion was also present. The diamonds discovered in the Sankh River's bed were acquired in this manner.
- c. **British Raj:** Queen Victoria was elevated to the position of empress of India in 1876, after the transfer of control of the British East India Company to the crown during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Birsa Munda (born November 15, 1875) led a revolt against the British Raj from 1895 to 1900. Along with the satyagraha and civil disobedience movements of Mahatma Gandhi, the Tana Bhagat resistance movement began in 1914 and attracted over 26,000 aadivasis.
- d. **Post-Independence:** Following India's independence in 1947, the heads of state in every single state made the decision to submit to India's authority. With the formation of Jharkhand on November 15, 2000, India gained its 28th state and 18th district.

There are 32 scheduled tribes in the Indian state of Jharkhand, collectively known as the Tribes of Jharkhand. Among the 182 scheduled tribes, the Banjara, Bhatudi, Chik Baraik, and Mahli were identified as semi-Hindu aboriginals, while the Kora were classified as proletarian Hindus. With the addition of four more in the annexure, the number was increased from 18 to 26 in the 1931 census, which included the aforementioned four semi-Hindu aboriginals and Kora, a proletarian Hindu. Birajia, Godait, Karmali, and Paharia were on the list, but Kisan wasn't. Baga, Bedia, and Lohra were re-enumerated in the 1941 census with Kisan added in the annexure, bringing the total to 30, a figure that remained unchanged until June 2003. The annexure was amended on 8 June 2003 to include the Kanwar and Kol tribes, bringing the total number of Schedule Tribes to 32.



Source: <https://www.jharkhand.gov.in/home/AboutTribals>

Art and Work

Art and labour in Jharkhand are deeply intertwined, reflecting the cultural legacy and way of life of the tribal inhabitants there. The ancient art form of Paitkar painting is a prime illustration of this link. Jharkhandi tribal people use payatkar painting as a means of self-expression and narrative. It is a one-of-a-kind art style that uses paper or fabric to create scroll paintings. The history, customs, and folklore of the tribe may be preserved and passed on via these drawings. The paintings of Paitkar are not only beautiful to look at, but they also contain deep stories. PaitkarChitrakars are the artists who paint in the Paitkar style; they have been instrumental in keeping their communities' traditions alive.



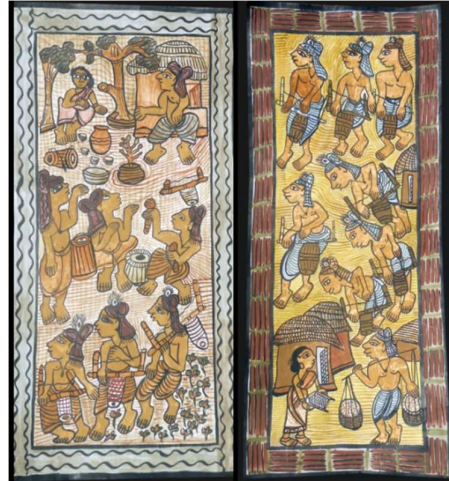
Source: <https://rooftopapp.com/exploring-the-cultural-art-forms-of-jharkhand/>

The art of Paitkar painting is a means of self-expression and narrative painting. As they went door-to-door, singers would give an audiovisual performance accompanied by these traditional scroll drawings. This kind of painting was first practiced by the artists of the Amadubi hamlet in the Dhalbhumgarh district of Jharkhand.

In West Bengal, Goddess Manasa is widely venerated. People in Bengal began to practise rituals honouring Goddess Manasa as a result of its proximity to Jharkhand. Many dangerous snakes, including the venomous cobra, krait, and russell viper, call the Indian state of Jharkhand home. These coexist alongside a plethora of harmless snakes that call the area home. The people believe that Manasa, goddess of snakes, would both bring wealth and protect them from snake bites. As a

result, the Bengali deity found her way into Jharkhandi art. She appears regularly in Paitkar's paintings.

Jharkhand is known for its Paitkar paintings, which are scroll paintings. These art styles are reminiscent to West Bengal's Patashilpa and Orissa's Pattachitra paintings. Paitkar painting, like other Jharkhandi art forms, declined due to a lack of sponsorship.



Source: <https://rooftopapp.com/exploring-the-cultural-art-forms-of-jharkhand/>

Typically, painters practicing Paitkar use water-based, natural pigments on either cloth or paper. The first works of this art style used a muted colour scheme of olive green, deep brown, and black. Jharkhandi art later included red, yellow ochre, white, and indigo as painters improved their access to natural colours. Natural fundamental colours are gathered by the painters and blended to create new hues. These days, most artists who work in this style avoid using synthetic hues.



Source: <https://rooftopapp.com/exploring-the-cultural-art-forms-of-jharkhand/>

To make their natural paintings, the PaitkarChitrakars combine colours found in nature with resin from babool trees or gum extracted from the Bel fruit. They grind stones and dirt into pigments, which they then use to make paint in colours like yellow and red. To make black paint, the painters burn rice or lampblack; to make white paint, they utilise lime powder. Their blue paint is made from indigo, while their green paint is made by crushing broad bean leaves. The painters would fashion their own paintbrushes by affixing a bamboo stick with hair from a goat or squirrel.

Music and Dance

The burdens of daily living are swept away by music. This is also true of the tribal music of the state of Jharkhand. Jharkhandi music and dance are characterised by frequent group performances, which is its most distinctive feature. There is a distinct look to the conventional musical instruments. This is also true for the beautiful dance moves that have their roots in ancient tribal cultures.



Source: <https://www.jharkhandonline.in/about/profile/culture/dance>

Music: There are many different types of music that are popular in this state. Some of them include Domkach, Janani, Jhumar, Jhumta, Mardana, Daidhara, Pahil sanjha, Adhratiya, and Vinsaria. Festivals, puja, and social events would not be complete without music, which acts as an integral part of the proceedings.



Source: <https://www.jharkhandonline.in/about/profile/culture/dance>

Musical Instruments: Among the musical instruments played in this state are the kadri, gupijantra, sarangi, tutila, vyang, anandlahri, and bansuri. There are a number of traditional musical instruments played in Jharkhand, including the Domkach, Dohari, Daidhara, Mardana Jhumar, Janani Jhumar, Pahilsangha, Udasi, Vinsaria, Pawa, Adhratiya, Jhumta, Pratkali, and AkhariyaDomkach. There are three primary chords on the Jharkhand sarangi, and they are heavier than the other chords. The instrument has a curved shape. the captivating nature is achieved with the accompaniment of singa, bansuri, and arbansi. Music from the Shahnai, Bheir, Narsingha, and the Dhak and Nagara drums accompany the Paika dance (the "Paikas" were regular troops). Chhaw makes use of a variety of instruments, including the Nagara, Jhanj, Turi, Dhol, Dhumsa, Bheri, Bansuri, and conch shells. Folk music with instruments such the jhumki, thhumki, chalka, and payri accompanies Karma.



Source: <https://www.jharkhandonline.in/about/profile/culture/dance>

Dance Forms: In addition to being entertaining forms of art, Jharkhandi dances reflect the state's rich history, customs, and folklore. The "Kunjbans" from Jharkhand have brought their traditional music to audiences in Europe, the United States, Asia, and India. Natua, Agni, Nachni, Ghatwari, Jamda, Karma, Jadur, and Paika are some of the most well-known dance styles. Traditional musical instruments, such as tribal drums (sometimes called "medals" or "singas"), accompany the folk dance known as jhumar. Love and passion are at the heart of Jhumar. Additional dance styles include Santhal, Jamda, Matha, Sohrai, Lurisayr, Janani Jhumar, Mardana Jhumar, Bheja, Choukara, Damkach, Phagua, Sarhul, Santhal, and Jamda. The dancers in Chhaw dance use masks to conceal their faces. Therefore, the focus should be on the body motions rather than the face expressions and head and neck movements seen in other classical dances. As a symbol of good fortune and wealth, Karma trees are planted at the Karma festival. Next, they form a circle and dance as a unit, moving branches of the tree from one person to another as a symbol of their joy. In the Indian state of Jharkhand, Lahsua and Khare are the two main types of karma. Baigas and Gonds engage in this kind of dancing.

Fairs and Festivals

Sarhul



Source: <https://currentaffairs.adda247.com/sarhul-festival-2022-celebrated-in-jharkhand/>

In the spring, when the Shaal trees sprout fresh leaves, the festival of Sarhul is observed. During the Sarhul festival, devotees honour the local god revered as a guardian of the indigenous people. Shaal flowers are used as an offering to the gods. The shaal flowers stand for the camaraderie and

solidarity felt by the locals. Every hamlet receives a bouquet of shaal flowers from the priest, who goes by the name Pahan. The locals are then given the Prasad.

Karam



Source: <https://www.tourmyindia.com/states/odisha/karama-festival.html>

It is at this festival that the God of Power, Youth, and Vitality, Karam Devta, is honoured. The Bhadra month's eleventh day of the moon's phases is when the celebration takes place. To prepare for Puja, the younger members of the community embark on forays into the forest in search of the necessary materials, including wood, fruits, and flowers. People gather in groups to sing and dance throughout the duration of this time. The sound of the drums fills the valley, as if it were a dance. There aren't many youth festivals in the tribal region of Jharkhand that are as active and exciting as this one. Simultaneously, the Jawa holiday is celebrated by the young tribal females who are not yet married. The major reasons for holding this are the hopes of improved home conditions and fecundity. A tiny basket is adorned with growing seeds by the unmarried females. People think that if they pray for the grains to germinate well, it would make them more fertile. The females present the Karam god with green melons, a sign of "son," which represents the most basic human desire: for food and offspring. All of Jharkhand's tribal communities become a little tipsy around this time.

Tusu Parab or Makar



Source: <https://www.hellotravel.com/events/tusu-parab-or-makar>

The areas of Bundu, Tamar, and Raidih in the state of Jharkhand are the most often visited places for this specific festivity. TUSU is the name of a harvest feast that takes place on the day that marks the winter solstice, which is the last day of the Poush month. Women who are not married are also invited to attend. The girls decorate a bamboo or wood frame with coloured paper, which they then release into the hilly river that is located in the surrounding area.

Bhagta Parab



Source: https://hi.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B9%E0%A4%BE_%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%AC

This celebration occurs in the transitional season between spring and summer. For the indigenous Jharkhandis, this celebration is all about paying homage to Budha Baba. Daytime fasting is observed and the priest, Pahan, is brought to the tribal mandir, Sarana Mandir, to bathe. When Pahan, also known as Laya, emerges from the pond, the worshippers form a chain by interlocking their thighs and then step forward to expose their chests to Laya. Devotees participate in the spirited Chhau dance, which features a plethora of acrobatic manoeuvres and masks, after the evening devotion. A plethora of rudimentary courage sports await the next day. A long horizontal rod, suspended from the top of a vertical Shal wood pole, is used to bind the devotees while they pierce their flesh with hooks. There is a maximum height of forty feet. One end of the pole is linked to a rope, which the people pull around the pole, while the tethered devotees do a breathtaking dance in the sky. In Jharkhand's Tamar area, this celebration is more well-attended.

Bandna



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandna>

In the dark moon month of Kartik (Kartik Aamavashya), one of the most well-known celebrations is celebrated with the bandana. Animals play a key role in this celebration. Animals

and pets have a special place in tribal cultures. Cows and bulls are showered with attention during this celebration, as they are painted, fed properly, and ornamented. Ohira, the festival's official song, is an ode to the animals that help humans with mundane tasks. Animals, according to the festival's adherents, are not only necessary to existence but also possess souls, much like humans. For bandana week, the last day is the most anticipated. The buffalo and closed bulls are hit with a dry animal hyde while they are tied to a sturdy pole. Infuriated beasts lash out at parched flesh with their sharp horns while onlookers roar in delight. As is typical of folk art, the hues chosen to decorate animals are those found in nature.

Culture

Fewer people are aware of the many gems located in the Chotanagpur plateau in the recently formed state of Jharkhand. Folk and tribal dances from all around the state move to the beat of their own personal journeys. The scenic beauty of Jharkhand is enhanced by the gentle flow of several rivers, including as the Damodar, Brahmi, Karkhi, and Subarnrekha. After the indigenous peoples abandoned their nomadic ways of life, they cleared land for settlement. Famous for its unique arts, customs, and festivals, the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand is situated in the heart of the nation.

Language: Many indigenous languages are spoken by the people of Jharkhand, even though Hindi is the official language. Sadan speaks khortha, nagpuri, and kudmali, all of which are regional languages of Jharkhand that are part of the Indo-Aryan branch. Mundari spoken by Mundas, Santhali spoken by Santhals, and Ho spoken by Ho are all languages that are under the Austroasiatic branch. Kurukh spoken by the Oraon people, Malto spoken by the Paharias, and other languages that are part of the Dravidian family

House Infrastructure: Because they are at ease inside their tribal community, the Adivasi people of Jharkhand are reclusive. Joint families are the norm for them. The first room is usually the drawing room, which often has a side kitchen with a burner (called a chulha) where they prepare meals using sticks, leaves and wood that they gather.



Source: <https://www.johntyman.com/jharakhand/21.html>

The mattresses that are commonly used in beds are typically made of straw, which has been a traditional material for bedding for centuries. The courtyard, a common feature found in every tribal house, serves a multitude of purposes for the community. It is a vibrant space where the

tribes people gather for various activities such as dancing, singing, and celebrating their rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the courtyard also serves as a practical area for the tribe's day-to-day tasks, including drying lentils and wood for their essential needs. This central hub of the tribal house is not only a physical space but also a symbol of unity and togetherness, where the tribespeople come together to engage in both practical and cultural activities that are integral to their way of life.



Source: <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2201107.pdf>

In many tribal communities, there is a long-standing tradition of domesticating cattle. These tribes have developed unique methods and practices to ensure the successful rearing and management of their livestock. One interesting aspect of their cattle domestication process is the construction of separate rooms specifically designed for the cattle. These specially built rooms serve multiple purposes and are carefully designed to cater to the specific needs of the domesticated cattle. In many cultures around the world, it is quite common for people to keep a variety of domestic animals for various purposes, such as food consumption and farming. Among these animals, we often find the presence of hens, goats, cows, and bulls. These creatures play a significant role in providing us with essential resources like eggs, milk, and meat. Hens, for instance, are primarily known for their ability to lay eggs, which are not only a staple in many households but also serve as a key ingredient in numerous culinary creations.



Source: <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2201107.pdf>

In addition to their other practices, they also have a tradition of collecting and storing dry leaves, twigs, and wood for the specific purposes of burning and cooking. Houses, which serve as essential shelters for individuals and families, are constructed using a combination of various materials. These materials include bricks, straw, and mud, each serving a specific purpose in the overall structure. Bricks, known for their durability and strength, form the foundation and walls of the house, providing stability and protection. Straw, on the other hand, is utilised to insulate the house, ensuring that it remains warm during colder seasons and cool during hotter periods. Mud, a versatile material, is used to bind the bricks and straw together, creating a cohesive structure. In addition to these foundational elements, houses often feature an upper shade, which plays a crucial role in shielding the inhabitants from external elements such as rain,



Source: <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2201107.pdf>

In the traditional villages of various indigenous tribes, a fascinating sight can be found at nearly every tribal house. This captivating sight is none other than a remarkable contraption, meticulously crafted from sturdy wooden materials. This ingenious invention serves a vital purpose in the daily lives of these tribal communities - the crushing of rice grains into a fine, powdery flour. Known by the name "dheki," this remarkable machine embodies the rich cultural heritage and resourcefulness of these tribes, showcasing their deep connection to the land and their ingenious methods of sustenance.



Source: <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2201107.pdf>

Jharkhand's Cuisine

Jharkhand cuisine encompasses the cuisine of Indian state of Jharkhand. Staple food of Jharkhand are rice, dal, vegetable and tubers. Common meals often consists of vegetables that are cooked in various ways, such as curried, fried, roasted, and boiled. Traditional dishes of Jharkhand may not be available at restaurants .However, on a visit to local village, one can get a chance to taste such exotic foods. Some dish preparations may be mild with a low oil and spice content, although pickles and festive dishes may have such characteristics.

- a. **Red Rice:** It is not the white polished rice that we are used to seeing but red rice, these have more fibers and contains the best that rice can offer. To be more specific the husk are removed from the rice using the thresher (Dheki) that most houses will have in their backyard. Earthen pots are used to boil the rice and wood fire is used to heat them. Firewood is quite in abundance thus it is the most common source of fuel.
- b. **Arhar Dal /Toor Dal:** With red rice the most staple dish is arhar dal/toor dal (pigeon pea). most of the families does not have the luxury to have another side dish thus rice and daal are the most common food that is consumed .pigeon pea is scientifically known as *Cajanus cajan*.
- c. **Munga Saag:** Chotanagpur region is mostly covered in forest with some patches of cultivating the land. Though vegetables are grown in these cultivating land but the production is usually sold in the wholesale markets. Thus, the local does not usually get to eat what we eat. The best example would be that of munga saag (*Drumstick-Moringa oleifera*), the leaves, flower as well as its fruit is consumed by washing⁴, then smashing & then cooking.
- d. There is also the Koinaar saag (*Phanera variegata*), similarly like drumstick both the leaves and flowers are eaten.
- e. **Sanai Flower:** Sanai flower are also fried and eaten along with rice. These are actually flowers of jute (*Chorchorus*) plant.
- f. **Bamboo Shoot Pickle:** Another interesting side dish is bamboo shoot pickle. It is only a misconception that bamboo is only popular in northeastern part of country but it is also quite famous in Jharkhand. It seems that tribal love the bamboo shoot pickle which has been marinated in various spices and then left in the sun to dry
- g. **Red Ant Chutney:** During the season the locals like a good dollop of this chutney with their rice. It is made by mashing the egg, Larvae & adult of an ant which is very sour in taste.
- h. **Aru:** It is a potato that grows on the tree, locally known as the Aru (*Dioscorea Bulbifera*) is from the yam family and grows in quite an abundance in some regions these are boiled and made a curry and eaten along with rice .
- i. **Marwa:** Marwa which most of us know by the name of Ragi or Finger Millet (*Eleusine Coracana*).these are used in making flat breads as well as used in baking also.
- j. **Dhuska:** Dhuska is most common snack, these are made of wet ground Rice and Chana Daal (chickpea) .the wet mix is then deep fried and eaten along with potato or meat curry .
- k. **Tribal Non-Veg:** Finally coming to the non -veg part, we all know pork is the favorite meat and when cooked with right spices it's amazing. And the other one is puti fish (*Puntius Sophe*) tribal use to catch it directly from river /pond and they sell it fresh in the market.
- l. **Arsa:** Jharkhand is famous for its Arsa, this snack is more prominent in the villages of eastern india, made with rice flour, coconut, fennel seeds, etc. These comes in 2 varieties one made

with white sugar and the other made with jaggery. The mixed concussion is deep fried in oil and served to the guests.

- m. Handia:** Local alcoholic drinks are handia (made of stale rice) and mahua daru (Mahua flower). During their functions or festivals they usually offer dishes on plate made of leaves which is sewed with twigs, which is made of Sal tree (Shorearubusta). Different types of dumplings are also made during their festive season known as pitha generally made of rice flour.”

Conclusion

Jharkhand's tribal cuisine is an intricate blend of flavor, culture, and tradition, offering a window into the lives of the tribal communities. Its simplicity, reliance on natural ingredients, and sustainable practices not only make it unique but also reflect the tribes' profound connection with their environment. While being rooted in tradition, this cuisine has the potential to appeal to a broader audience, seeking authentic and ecological culinary experiences. This study underscores the importance of preserving and promoting Jharkhand's tribal culinary heritage, which is integral to the cultural identity and sustainability of these communities.

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