

## Traditional Knowledge and Ethnicity

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We usually perceive that knowledge is predominantly possessed by the society which is more focused and under limelight of urban-civilized. But, that is probably a wrong dimension of framing idea about knowledge. Simple ideas to nurture the life in a more simple and natural way is perhaps the best knowledge for livelihood. For urban civilized this is a process of acquiring through interface with several societal facets and through systematic education. But does it contribute immensely for the life process? What may be the uniqueness in dwelling life with more peace and simplicity?

Communities which physiographical isolated from the mainstream World have their own World within. Generations are imbibing and transferring their own way and art of living for many decades without being evanesced. Knowledge of these traditional ethnic groups in any part of Globe is to be well appreciated as it is sustaining their livelihood in a very simpler way even when the rest of the Globe is tormented with harsh consequences out of technological development. We usually got historical records for big civilization and hardly have come across the history of any ethnic community as it is sparsely documented or remained confined among them. Food, clothes, habitat, health management, music; every inches and domain of life has untold stories, unique and full of vivacity.

Importance of probiotics in food has got importance through scientific intervention and people are now knowingly adapting it into their diet. It amazed to think about several fermented food which is quite common in ethnic communities of South East Asia in particular to North East India, Myanmar, China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; like fermented vegetables, soybean, pearl millet, bamboo etc. Ethnic community of high altitude places like Tibet, Nepal and Sikkim use to prepare holy fermented drink from Rhododendron to

manage altitude sickness. They have their traditional way of preserving yak meat. To maintain blood pressure salt is used for preparing tea. Several local wines (like using fermented millet and sugar cane juice) prepared traditionally are rich tradition here. In South Vietnam, people living in Makong Delta or people of Southern Bangladesh have their best way of fish preservation. Abundant types of pickles (using vegetables like chilli, squash, bamboo, ginger, jackfruit, mango and meats like pork, beef, fish) are available here. Several meat products and corn products are prepared as traditional food by the Swazi or adjoining South African ethnic people.

Silk dyed with organic colour, painting made with herbal colour and metal ores, different stitching works, handicrafts made from bamboo, coconut, cane, metal wires, brass, iron cast, stones etc. is vividly available in different ethnic community throughout the World. Weaving for preparing colourful garments made from cotton or silk is an integral part of ethnic communities of South East Asia.

Constructing huts with loose packed heavy stones at earthquake prone high altitude areas, rain water harvesting type roofing in high rainfall areas having no perennial water source, thatched house for arid regions can be considered as best examples of eco-friendly construction engineering practiced by different ethnic communities.

In agriculture, after long use of chemical fertilizer, we understood and now propagating idea for organic farming. However, cultivating crops with organic inputs in participatory approach is well established in any ethnic group may be because of the unavailability of the inorganics, but should be recognized as the most prominent organic growers of the Globe. We are now more fascinated to use herbal medicines

for health care and herbal cosmetics as beauty products. Any traditional ethnic groups are having strong knowledge and understanding of the plants surrounding them. They were beyond the reach of modern health care system and thus generations after generations practicing herbal medicine for their health management. Traditional use of Picrorhiza, Artemisia, Eryngium, Eupatorium, Himalayan Stinging Nettle etc. were well understood and later scientifically validated and came into practice for ayurvedic drug development.

Have you experienced African drummers? Yak dance of

Nepal? Bhawaia of Bangladesh? Chuigushou from China? Sufi Songs of Pakistan? Baul Songs of India? Hornbill Festival or Mizo Bamboo Dance? Mainstream music has immense debt to these traditional tunes and forms. These are near to earth, soothing, natural music has direct input or influence of the nature surrounding and thus having mystery rhythm of peace.

The knowledge which developed and sustained these ethnic people is beyond our complete understanding however should have the most respect as that yield a healthy natural life which we all look for.

