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Traditional Method of Rice-Beer Preparation by Tripuri Tribe at Tripura, India

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Abstract

Tripura, the second-smallest state in India's northeast, is characterized by hills and uplands, with only 19.8% plains across its 10,491 square km area. The diverse tribal population includes nineteen ethnic groups, each with distinct languages and cultural traditions. Despite the rich cultural diversity, there is a lack of documentation on rice beer preparation by the Tripuri tribes. This paper aims to fill that gap by identifying traditional ingredients and methods for rice beer preparation. The study selected respondents from six districts in Tripura, focusing on areas with a significant Tripuri tribal population. A random survey involved informal interactions to ensure understanding of the local language. The methodology employed direct observation to document the traditional preparation methods, exploring the socioeconomic values and traditions associated with rice beer. The main objectives of the study are to identify traditional ingredients and methods used by the Tripuri tribe in rice beer preparation. The results reveal two primary methods: chuwan preparation and rice-beer preparation. The paper contributes valuable insights into the cultural practices of the Tripuri tribes, shedding light on their traditional knowledge of fermented alcoholic beverages, particularly rice beer. The implementation of food science interventions, such as optimizing preparation methods, improving hygiene standards, and enhancing packaging, holds the potential to create a profitable local business in this sector and attract consumers from across the country.

Keywords: Rice Beer, Food habit, Beer Preparation, Ethnic delicacies, Tripura

Introduction:

Tripura, one of the smallest states in India, ranks as the second-smallest in the northeast, following Sikkim, with a total area of 10,491 square km. Only 19.8% of the total area comprises plains, as the landscape is predominantly characterized by hill ranges and undulating uplands (Bhatacharya, 1992). The tribal population in Tripura consists of nineteen different ethnic groups, each with its unique language or dialect and cultural traditions, including tribes such as Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Chakmas, Halam, Mog, Kuki, Garo, Lusha, Ucha, Munda, Orang, Santal, Khasia, Bhils, Chaimals, Bhutia, and Lepcha.

Since ancient times, fermented alcoholic beverages have been closely associated with the existence and culture of ethnic groups globally. Tripura's rich tribal population, reflected in its ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, enhances the elegance and grandeur of the state's stunning terrain. Despite periodic examinations and reports on alcohol consumption in various states of

Northeast India, documentation of rice beer preparation by the Tripuri tribes of Tripura has not been shared. This paper attempts to document the preparation of rice beer by the Tripuri tribes.

Objective:

The main objectives of the study are enlisted below:
(1) To identify the traditional ingredient used for preparation of rice beer by Tripuri tribe at Tripura.
(2) To identify the traditional method of rice beer preparation by them.

Methodology:

The respondents were selected from the different districts of Tripura. Six districts were selected out of a total of eight districts of Tripura. The area of the respondents was selected keeping the view of majority population of Tripuri tribes. Further, a random survey was conducted initially with informal interactions with the respondents to ensure their local language. Further, the direct observation method was used to make documentation of the items. Thus, the study explored the socioeconomic values and traditions associated with these products to give a clear idea of prepration of rice beer.

Result and Discussion:

The main way traditional way of rice-beer preparation generally performed by the Tripuri tribe can further be divided into following type:

(a) Method of preparation of chuwan.
(b) Method of preparation of rice-beer.

Method of preparation of chuwan:

Chuwan is the catalyst or yeast used in the brewing of Chuwak or Langi, a well-known herbal rice beer from Tripura. The following Table: 1 show lists the specific plant components needed to make chuwan.

Table:-1 Different herbal used as ingredients for Chuwan making process

SI.NO	Name of the species	**Requirement per kg of dry rice**
1	Chuwan bwrwi bulai/ leaf	10 leafs
2	Chuwan chula bulai/ leaf	10 leafs
3	Chendrema leaf/ bulai	6 leafs
4	Amone leaf/ bulai	7 leafs
5	Thaipung (Jackfruit) leaf/ bulai	5 leafs
6	Bor leaf/ bulai	3 leafs
7	Moso komon/ kwthwi (red chili)	35 grams
8	Haching/ Ginger	10 grams
9	Rechum/ Garlic	30 grams

Chuwan bwrwi leaf, Chuwan chula leaf , Chendrema bulai, Jackfruit leaf, red chili and Amone leaf, Bor bulai, Haching, Ginger, Garlic natural forests resources are used for making “Chuwan”.

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I) Chuwan bwrwi bulai (Figure-1) II) Chuwan chwla bulai (Figure-2)

III) Thaipung (Jackfruit) leaf (Figure-3) iv) Bor bulai (Figure-4)

For 4 to 6 hours, uncooked raw rice is steeped in water. In the meantime, plant components like leaves, barks, roots, etc. are cleaned, dried, and diced finely. It is proportionately added to the amount of rice used, although the ratio is not rigid and can vary from one processor to another depending on their expertise and regional preferences. The extra water is drained from the soaking rice.The soaked rice is then put in a grinder and started to be ground. All of the chopped plant and herbal elements are then added, and the ground rice is then further processed and mixed. The cakes are next flattened to a thickness of 1 cm by rolling out and gently pressing between palms balls of around 100 grammes (dry weight). Frequently, a few 200-gram cakes that have been flattened are rolled out into long, oval forms.These are referred to as Chuwan chwla, or masculine Chuwan.

Figure- 5 Chuwan

Method of preparation of rice-beer:

After preparation of Chuwan, the rice is spread out on a mat to chill for 1/2 hours. After cooling, 50gm of cold cooked rice is added to 1 kg of cold cooked rice along with the required quantity of beginning culture (cake- chuwan beleb). The concoction is put in a container called a "batikasla," covered with banana leaves to prevent too many vapours from escaping, covered with an old clean cloth or rug, and left for three days. Water is added and stored for 3 days, then kept again for 2 days. Un-distilled rice beer is made from the water that is removed and then drank. For making distilled rice beer, the combination is heated and the vapour is collected in a separate container (batibakhrak) put on top of the container. The vapour from the batibakhrak is then allowed to pass through a bamboo pipe (batisabasa) into a different container filled with cold water (patini).

Figure-6 Langi (Chowak Bwtwk)

Figure-7 Collection of vapour as rice beer

For long-term preservation, starting culture cakes were created and allowed to sun dry. The "chuwan beleb" starter culture cakes are prepared to be combined with the boiling rice. The several customary procedures for rice bee distilling. The final clear distillate (rice beer) is called “chuwak”.

Conclusion:

The study demonstrates the high nutritional value and variety in quality of the rice beer made in Tripura. The tribes of Tripura also often drink rice beer as a main beverage. Therefore, rice beer is a promising beverage that may provide consumers with health benefits due to its nutritional and therapeutic properties. A reorientation with scientific input is absolutely necessary for better results toward manufacturing and lengthening shield life because rice beer is created in domestic settings where the manufacturing units are conventionally designed without in-depth scientific and quality standard. A possible approach to the starting culture's potential as a commercial beverage may be further characterisation of the microbial consortia present in it.Tripura's rich and diverse traditional culture brewing has a significant opportunity to improve its alcoholic beverages through scientific validation and advancement of the procedure and the final product.

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