

Rice and Peasant of South Asia:

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Rice as staple

Rice is the most significant staple food as more than half of world's population, three billion Asian live on it. Rice is the most significant staple food in Asia, especially in monsoon region. In South Asia about 85 percent of people eat rice. In many countries they eat rice thrice or twice a daily. A meal of south Asia is nothing without rice. Asian as well as south Asian can cook the staple in so many different and exotic ways that are served in different feast and festivals and in other occasions. There are about 500 different menus that represent different ways of cooking rice into various dishes. Rice can also produce as wine, liqueur and beer. Main mail consists in Philippine, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Cambodia, China, Korea rice and fish .Similarly Nepal, India, and Bangladesh and Sri-lanka food consists of Rice pulses and vegetable. The people of Asia discovered rice as their dependable staple food nicely before the dawn of modern civilization. There is no doubt that rice is most deeply treasure of Asia. It is the central of Asian way of life, its culture tradition and norms.

As this region is circumscribed by Monsoon system, South and South-East Asia has been the original home for rice, ecologically, too. In their quest to solve hunger and food as the oldest of problems of human society, the earliest settlers in these regions find out and developed rice as their livelihood source. No wonder, the religious texts in Nepal spreading to remote past well over 10,000 B C adorned rice in high esteem. Actually Rice is life, culture and dignity in Asia. . The peasants Of Asia strongly voice their right to have a better life, to preserve their cultures, and protect their dignity by defending their traditions of rice acculturations .Rice is most popular social symbol in Asian society as the peoples' life style calendar is shaped out in terms of this activity, their movement from highland to plains and reverse back, their feasts and festivities, the rich rituals covering pre-natal to post-mortem services, etc. Even women peasants have their own female traditions to protect sustainable rice farming cultures deep-rooted in their far off rural communities for centuries. Rice has been their staple food for centuries, so it is a political issue. More than two-third of labour force is engaged in agriculture and rice is

the main crop occupying more than 90% of serial farming. Rice cropping is the main source of livelihood in Asia even today. Obviously,

Rice As the culture- Culture is also determined by the production system and the level of the development of technology, knowledge and skill in production. And so far as these elements must exist in time, culture is the product of history. Therefore most of Asian use rice not only in birth to death step but also after the death .For example in Nepal when human comes in the earth he is worship by rice, in sixth day known as *Chaity*, it need rice to christen his name auspicious manner. On eleventh day, he is presented before sun in which both paddy and rice needed. On six month, rice is served for the 1st time during a ceremony called *Passni*. Similarly, *Bratamonda*, *Bibaha*, *Janmdin* , *Puja*, *Dasain*, *Tihar*, *Sradha* and *Chita*(funeral pyre) rice is mandatory. When a human dies in Hindu culture the surviving son has to take only rice up to 13 days, other dishes are not allowed to him at that time. Similarly, rice ball called *Pinda* is served along Vedic *Sutras* in memoriam of ancestors on their particular day of demise calculated in lunar system. A Nepali has two meals a day and he/she is called to have rice (*Bhat Khand Aau*) trough the recipes may be other than rice. In hills, it is a matter of social prestige, even to-day, to afford, two rice meals every day.

Land, Rice and Nepal

Rice is cultivated in Nepal across all ecological regions Terai, the southern belt of Nepali plain is the granary of rice fields. In hilly regions rice is cultivated from the low river bed to 3000 meter high terraced hills. Similarly in high mountain regions rice is cultivated along the deep river valley and developed high land variety of rice to cultivate in mountain environment reaching nearly 4000 meters. Nepal has been recognised as the land of largest variety of rice in total there are more than 2000 varieties of rice genre in small Himalayan country. Rice covers 2541729 ha. Out of 3091000 ha. Of farm land. Peasant has developed their own experience of rice cultivation for centuries to produce, protect and improve new varieties adoptable to different ecological settings. There are rice varieties which mature to harvesting crop within a short span of two and half months to long span of nine months togther.

The comparative status of crop calendar farming puts rice as the main harvest which supports all other farming activities. The land measurement system of Nepal traditionally depended on the expected productivity of rice weather it be rice field or not. The quality of farmland is classified according to the rice production capacity of the soil even though

the farm may not be suitable for rice farming. In short, rice and rice fields are the ultimate base and source of socio-political super structures of national life. Good monsoon means good harvest of rice which means augmented growth rate of Nepal even at present day. Therefore, rice is not only a crop but foundation of national life enjoying both politico-civil concerns and socio-economic-cultural aspects of this nation.

Threatened Rice Heritage

The traditional rice farming and culture has seriously threatened since the introduction of developmentalism in late 60s' under so-called Green Revolution. The invention of HYVs and chemical fertilizers drove away the traditional varieties of rice acculturations. Poor farmers had no alternative but to accept so called improved varieties that replaced the eco-friendly age - old rice varieties causing a great loss to rice heritage. Besides, the unwarranted rampant use of pesticides and herbicides damage the natural habitat of traditional rice wealth. In pursuit of production maximization, farmers were forced to propagate alien varieties rather than own culturally fit ones. The Agri- TNCs promoted mono-culture to serve their profit mongering. In such imitation- led situation, rice and Rice culture naturally fell back.

Liberalization commercialization further augmented this process. Small farmers were marginalized as big landed gentry buy out the tillers. In the name of globalization and neo-liberalization and implementation of WTO's agreement on Agriculture control over rice production and agriculture in general has moved more and more from farming communities and peasants to agro-chemical transnational corporations and developed imperialist countries. Land for rice has been converted into industrial use urbanization and other types of farming. Rice as farmers' heritage has greatly been threatened. Therefore, resistance to this down grade trend on rice and rice culture has been felt urgent. At this moment WORA has come with new promise.

WORA - Resistance Programme

Week of rice action (WORA) is an international campaign to protect, conserve and preserve rice in Asia. Since rice is important - political, social, cultural and economic - to Asians a common strategy is preferred and WORA has been the most viable platform towards this end. The main objectives of the campaign are to fight corporate agricultural system which calls for the massive use of agro-chemicals and increasingly, GE seeds, to counter the threats of WTO and the agreement on Agriculture to Asian peasants' as well

as to promote and ensure more support to small - scale, ecological cultivation systems and related wisdom of Asian Peasants'

The core elements of rich heritage of rice are enshrined in the five pillars of rice wisdom this are-Rice wisdom, Rice culture, Community wisdom; Biodiversity based ecological Agriculture, Safe food and Food sovereignty.

In the last five decade our rice heritage has been severely eroded and under grave danger of being lost completely.

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Through the intellectual property rights regime enforced by TRIPs and bilateral trade agreements, rice seed varieties are moving from the hand s of farmers, particularly women, Dalit and Indigenous communities to those of seed companies and private agencies.

In 2004 Asian Farmer Lunched Peoples Caravan in 13 countries for the issue of Food Sovereignty. Its culmination programme was held in Katmandu, the capital of Nepal.

Again Asian farmers are lunching Week of Rice Action (WORA) programme. It has been very much a welcome message for genuine agrarian reforms, preserve and protects the lands and food Sovereignty, Adopt the policy of No Patents on life, ensure the safety of rice and rice ecosystems.

The lunching programme would be held in Bangladesh in the last week of March 2007 and culmination programme would be done in Manila in 4 April 2007.

In Nepal All Nepal Peasants Association collaborating with other like minded organization would organized different types of programmes like Save Rice Rally, Signature collections ,Seed exhibition, cultural programmes, ,collection of name of food recipe made of rice verity in different communities,

Different types of programmes would be organized by KRKP, Indonesia, No GMO Campaign, Japan, Vikal Pani Srilanka UBING Bangladesh, SRED India, PEAC china, Lok Sangh, Pakistan, RRFA Thailand CEDAC Cambodia

This campaign would affirm that rice culture, community wisdom Biodiversity based ecological Agriculture, Safe food and Food sovereignty. Should be based rice cultivation

consumptions and trade globally. Farmers' knowledge traditional rice culture and rice cultivation practices should be conserved, preserved and protected. Landlessness should be addressed by y genuine agrarian reform led by genuine peasant's movement in Asia local and traditional rice varieties would be conserved, preserved and protected. The on going movement is in Progress .Many countries in SAARC along with other Asia -Pacific countries are heading forward with their own programmes . Following is the WORA programme . Of Nepal

S n	Activities	Duration	date	Location	Participation
1	Three ecological workshop on rice	1 days	Dec 26 Jan 13 Mar. 25	Rupandei Lalitpur Dolakha	60 75 40
2	Women Peasants' gathering	2 days	Dec. 7-8,2006	Kathmandu	80
3	Signature collection	2 days	March 23- 24,2007	Kathmandu	50000
4	Save rice Rally		28 march	Kathmandu	500
5	CD making				
6	Rice seed collection				
7	Seed exbision		30 march		
8	Cultural night regarding the rice		2 April		
9	Collection of Name of Food recipe made of rice verity in different communities				
					total