

Report of wild food workshop conducted in Kudhraiya Centre of the Palni Hills Conservation Council

30-03-2023

The wild foods workshop was essentially planned to ascertain the status of wild food knowledge among the youth and the younger generation. All the participants were women, including young girls and even some children.

Figure 1: Yam and tuber display



The participants were from the Palliyar adivasi group of three main villages/settlements (Kudhraiya Dam, Kathalam Parai, and Pondhu Kuzhi), with varying degrees of access to the forest, which was also a factor in their using/consuming wild foods in their daily life.

After a round of introductions and a general discussion about the impacts of agriculture on forest ecosystems, The focus shifted to enumerating the wild foods gathered from the forest in the surroundings. The elders listed them, the younger people noted them down.



Some of the foods listed were as follows:



Fruits

- kottam palam
- kara palam
- veera palam
- nagara palam
- soora palam
- eeaacham palam
- ottu palam
- siru kela palam
- nava palam
- athi palam
- peiathi palam
- nochi palam

Greens

- millu keerai
- sirukkerai
- valva kerai
- palva keerai

Figure 2: Fishing



It was found that the people here have stopped harvesting and consuming the young leaf buds of certain *Ficus* species; a small discussion about this point followed, in an attempt to re-introduce such knowledge. Apparently, some people also consumed the tender leaves of guava.

An interesting point that came up was that none of these people kept honey that they harvested at home as they liked the taste of raw honey and consumed it quite soon after they procured it.

Figure 2: Fishing



Then the discussion shifted to fish, and there was much enthusiasm. In the main the fish they caught were from the streams and other freshwater bodies around. The fish named were:

- valai
- nandu (crab)
- puliya
- parai
- aara
- paravai
- kal otti
- palu nandu (crab)

Figure 2: Fishing



The most popular method of catching fish employed by the women was by using a sari, wading into the water and cornering the fish. This technique was later demonstrated to us and the younger girls. Other methods included the use of fish poisons, especially the “kare” fruit (*Randia dumetorum*) and the bark of an *Acacia*.

Other points of discussions include the yams (and other tubers) that are available and collected. These include:

- mulluvalli kizhangu
- vethalaivalli kizhangu
- chenai kizhangu
- sepan kizhangu

Some of these yams/tubers were also cultivated near their homes as some participants had taken planting material from the last meeting about a year ago. Usually, the forest department does not restrict the local Adivasi people from entering the forest area for gathering forest produce. (Yams, however, are mainly collected by women). During the discussions, it was apparent that the younger generation knew very little about the identification of yams and greens. This aspect was taught by the elders when we held a demonstration session on digging some of the yams planted during the last season in the Centre. The fish brought back were as follows:

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- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • uluvai | • jalebi |
| • valai | • ottu-jalebi |
| • pallukandai | • iyira |
| • kalotti | |

The fishing expedition was a success, with much joyous shouting when the fish were caught. The fish were brought back to the Centre and were cooked with the yams and greens already collected, and lunch was served.

The post-lunch session was a recap of all the discussions and activities that had happened during the day, with a plan to meet again with more of the youngsters after a few months. The meeting closed after a vote of thanks by a PHCC member.

Fish names from top to bottom

- *left and right (top): iryia and jalebi/ottu jalebi*
- *left and right (middle): kal otti and pallukandai*
- *left and right (bottom): uluvai and valai*

