

# Towards Conserving The Tribal Cuisine



**Aruna Tirkey**  
Social Entrepreneur & Founder - Director,  
**Ajam Emba Private Limited**

Aruna Tirkey's venture *Ajam Emba* which means 'great taste' in her native language, directly benefits more than 100 tribal women today. Her main objective through this food venture is to ensure the revival of the age-old tribal cuisine and strengthen the culture and identity of her community.

"We run a one of its kind tribal cuisine restaurant and training centre at Ranchi, Jharkhand. We are working directly with around 5000 farmers and forest produce collectors and have so far introduced local food of Jharkhand to around 35000 people at local, national and international



level," She says.

Ms. Tirkey belongs to the *Oraon* Tribe of Jharkhand and started her journey in the tribal super foods around 6 years ago. "There were lots of challenges when I started off the journey. Firstly it was a new concept. Secondly, sourcing all the forest produce was a big challenge. Then we did not have the

trained people to get the cuisine in place,” She explains.

She also founded the Jharkhand Slow Food community as a part of International Slow Food Association for education and awareness building on importance of tribal food systems as healthy alternative for the society and in achieving climate-friendly development through promotion of sustainable food systems.

On the professional side, she has more than 15 years of experience on working in development sector on issues related to community health, women empowerment, natural resource management, livelihood development and forest rights.

She has extensive experience in working with non- profit organizations, government agencies, bilateral projects and international organizations. Few key professional engagements include Swa-Shakti Project, Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) under National Rural Livelihood Mission and research on forest based



livelihood, tribal food nutrition values and integration of local foods in *Anganwadi* systems through developing recipes using local products and cooking techniques.