



Traditional Sheep and Goat Farming Folkways and Mores in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Folkways and mores play a major role in traditional sheep and goat farming. Hence, an attempt was made to document the prevailing folkways and mores in traditional dairy farming in the areas where sheep and goat population is high. Tirunelveli, Namakkal, Vellore and Thiruppur districts were selected for the study based on the highest livestock population. A total number of 12 folkways and mores related to sheep and goat farming were documented. A sample of 240 farmers was interviewed through structured interview schedule to document the folkways and mores. Some of the identified folkways and mores include sheep and goats were given as gift in marriages of tribal communities, stroking dry red chillies, hair and salt on the fire after taking them over the sheep, Tying a talisman (*taweez*) around the neck of sheep to protect it from Jaundice and other diseases.

Key Words: folkways, mores, gift, sheep and goat, *Taweez*, diseases

INTRODUCTION

Development of particular pattern of life is mostly obtained by customs, rituals, arts, ceremonial functions, folkways, traditions etc. Although folkways and mores seem to be similar, they differ a lot. Folkways are mildly enforced social expectations, while mores are strictly held beliefs about behaviours. Mores dictate right and wrong, while folkways distinguish between proper and rude behaviour. Folkways differ from mores. While both fall under the umbrella of social norms, violations of mores are met with severe punishments from society. The reactions to violation of social norms, including folkways and mores, are called sanctions (Chitambar, 1973). There are few studies that document the folkways among rural people (Esnard, 2009). But with regard to animal management there were negligible amount of studies with regard to folkways and mores. Some of the animal owners have very little access to modern veterinary facilities due to remote location

of their migratory routes and solely depend on their traditional knowledge to treat their diseased animals (Meena *et al*, 2020). Sheep farmers rely upon self treatment and traditional healers and rarely avail veterinarians' services (Devaki *et al*, 2021). Apart from the ethno veterinary practices, some of the small ruminant owners practice folkways and mores with regard to sheep and goat farming. Under these circumstances, it was purposed to document the traditional Sheep and Goat Farming Folkways and Mores found among the sheep and goat farmers regarding the rearing of animals as part of the ethnography on livestock farming in Tamil Nadu, India.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Tamil Nadu consists of seven agro-climatic zones viz., Cauvery Delta, North-Eastern, North Western, Southern, Western, High rainfall, High altitude (or) Hilly zone. Of these seven agro-climatic zones, top four zones namely North Western Zone, Western

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Zone, Southern Zone, North-Eastern Zone were selected based on the highest livestock population. From each selected zone, a district with highest livestock population based on 19th Livestock census of department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary services, Tamilnadu was selected for the study.

The selected districts were Tirunelveli, Namakkal, Vellore and Thiruppur. Villages were selected based on the lottery method of random sampling. From each block, two villages were selected and thus a total of 16 villages were selected from eight blocks. For the analysis, the primary data were used. A sample of 240 farmers was selected. Primary data were personally collected from the respondents through structured interview schedule. The interview schedule was based on open form questions. The folkways and mores related to animal husbandry were documented and ranked according to their frequency. The data were collected in the farmer's fields, home or in community centers. Simple averages, classification, tabulation and ranking were used for the analysis of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was evident that the majority (50.0%) of the respondents culled the sheep that gave birth to twins from the flock. Sheep and goat waste were collected regularly and used as manure for the agricultural field. Goat was sacrificed during the festival time in villages. Special prayers/mantras were done in temple to protect the sheep and goat from disease attack in near future. In many villages, during the festival to the village deity, water was poured over a sheep's back, and it is accepted as a good sign if it shivered. When the people were economical, they keep on pouring water till it did shiver, to avoid the expense of providing a second victim for sacrifice. People were more scrupulous, if it did not shiver, it was taken as a sign that the goddess would not accept it, and it was taken away.

The goats were decorated with garland, *kumkum* and sandal and worshipped by all the villagers before

sacrificing. During goat sacrifice, if the head was put before the shrine and water poured over, it was said that the sacrifice is accepted only if the mouth of the cut head opened on watering over it. This is in accordance with the findings of Govindarajan (2015). The respondents of the study area practiced the tradition of gifting goats during marriages for the bride. Similarly, camel is generally given as dowry by *Raikas* during marriage of their daughter (Tripathi and Rajput, 2006). Devaki *et al* (2017) observed similar gifting of cow to the bride during her marriage.

The sheep and goat waste (dung and urine) is commonly used as organic manure. This has been a common agricultural practice for many years. Similar traditional practice was documented by Manivannan *et al* (2014). Putting dry red chillies, hair and salt on the fire after taking them over the sheep flock to protect them against evil attack was practiced by the respondents of the study area.

Tying a talisman (*taweez*) around the neck of sheep to protect it from Jaundice and other diseases was also practiced by the traditional farmers of the study area. Similar result was documented by Hiran and Kumar (1980) that farmers believe that by tying *dora* (magical thread) around the neck, animals can overcome for many diseases. The goat owners won't sell the goats that gave birth to 2-3 young ones as these were considered as a potential bread winner for his family. A goat which has climbed on to the roof is treated in like manner, dragged round the house, or slaughtered.

CONCLUSION

The sheep and goat farming were a traditional occupation among the rural societies of India. The rural farmers relationship with sheep and goat is more cultural as well as economical. Traditionally, they cull the sheep that gave birth to twins (50%), which is a myth. The one of the reasons for twinning in sheep is due to the presence of Fec B gene (Kumar *et al*, 2006). As this belief seemed to act as a barrier and hinder the economic growth of society, there is

Table 1. Distribution of respondents on traditional sheep/goat farming folklores/mores n=240

Sr. No.	Traditional sheep/goat farming folkways and mores	Frequency	Percentage
1	Culling of twin birth sheep from the flock.	120	50.00
2	Sheep and goat wastes (dung) were used as organic manure for agriculture.	88	36.67
3	Before sacrifice, water was sprinkled on the animal and if it shivered, it was considered as a good omen.	81	33.75
4	Goat sacrificed during festival time in village's <i>mantras</i> / prayers done in temple to protect the sheep and goat from disease attack.	77	32.08
5	In festival to village deity, water is poured over sheep's back and it was accepted as a good sign if it shivers.	75	31.25
6	Goats were decorated well and worshipped before sacrifice to God.	68	28.33
7	In goat sacrifice, if the head is put before the shrine and water poured over, it is said that the sacrifice is accepted only if the mouth of the cut head opened on watering over it.	67	27.92
8	Goats given as a gift during marriages in certain communities.	58	24.17
9	Putting dry red chillies, hair and salt on the fire after taking them over the sheep.	39	16.25
10	Tying a talisman (<i>taweez</i>) around the neck of sheep to protect it from Jaundice and other diseases	38	15.83
11	Usually the goats giving birth to 2-3 young ones are not sold by the owners to others.	32	13.33
12	A goat which has climbed on to the roof is treated in like manner, dragged round the house, or slaughtered.	30	12.50

a need to bring about behavioural changes among the sheep farmers through arranging training camps, proper extension services and proper educational programmes will help them to overcome this myth and also benefit them economically, culturally and socially.

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