

Original Research Article

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An Analysis of Traditional Dairy Farming Folkways and Mores of Tamil Nadu State, India

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ABSTRACT

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Folkways and mores play a major role in traditional dairy farming. Hence an attempt was made to document the prevailing folkways and mores in traditional dairy farming in the areas where cattle population is high. Tirunelveli, Namakkal, Vellore and Thiruppur districts were selected for the study based on the highest livestock population. A sample of 240 farmers was interviewed through structured interview schedule to document the folkways and mores. Cow / buffalo meat should not be consumed, Cows and calves were given as gift in marriages of tribal communities, Cow death was a bad sign for the family and to see cow with calf on the way is good for the journey were the top four identified folkways and mores in traditional dairy farming.

Introduction

Folkways are the customs or conventions of daily life. They are a type of social norm and expectations for how we act. In sociology, folkways are generally discussed in contrast to mores because they both are social norms, though they vary in the degree to which they are enforced. Folkways are mildly enforced social expectations, while mores are strictly held beliefs about behaviors. Mores dictate right and wrong, while folkways distinguish between proper and rude behavior. 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.

Materials and Methods

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 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. The blocks were selected based on the suggestions made by the respective district Veterinary Assistant Surgeons. 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 was used. A sample of 240 farmers were selected. Primary data was 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 was usually 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

A critical perusal of the table 1 depicted that a total number of 15 practices were documented under the heading folkways/mores.

The top most ranked mores was cow/buffalo meat should not be consumed (67.92 per cent). As per Hindu mythology, eating bovine meat was severely punishable by the society.

Similar findings were recorded by Singh and Misri (2004). Cows and calves were given as gift in marriages (41.25). The groom would be sent to bridegroom's home with cow and calf. This would bring prosperity to their life (Ouma *et al.*, 2003).

A cow death was considered as a bad sign (40.83 per cent). There was a custom among the tribes of Kolli hills that, if a cow dies with a rope round its neck, or on the spot where it is tethered, the family is under pollution until purification has been effected by means of a pilgrimage, or by bathing in a sacred river. In contrary, cow with calf on the way is good for the journey (36.25 per cent). The journey would be successful. If an animal was sold on a Friday/Wednesday (34.58 per cent) it is bad for the other animals in the manger and therefore cattle owners will not sell animals on Wednesdays.

While selling the cow, the head / nose rope of the cow (34.17 per cent) was retained because farmers attribute sentiment and emotional reasons for this practice. If the seller gives it away, his wealth will decrease. Purchasers therefore bring their own ropes with them. The purchaser would put new head/nose rope for the animal and after that only he would take the animals to his place. Cows are made to enter into a newly built house during house warming ceremony (31.67 per cent) (Figs. 1 and 2) with full respect as first persons because the cows were considered as the Goddess "Lakshmi". More than one-fourth (28.75 per cent) of the respondents tied a black rope with conch (*sangu*) around the neck of cow against the evil attack (Fig. 3). Calving on Sundays by a cow (28.33 per cent) was considered as a bad sign for the family. First milk (colostrum) should be poured into river, temple well or temple pond (27.08 per cent) etc. This would increase the milk yield in their animals. Similar findings were recorded by Mishra *et al.*, (2010).

Table.1 Distribution of respondents on traditional dairy farming folkways/mores
(N = 240)

Sl. No.	Traditional dairy farming folkways/mores	Frequency	Percentage
1	Cow / buffalo meat should not be consumed.	163	67.92
2	Cows and calves are given as gift in marriages of tribal communities	99	41.25
3	Cow death is a bad sign for the family.	98	40.83
4	To see cow with calf on the way is good for the journey.	87	36.25
5	Cows are not sold on Fridays / Wednesday.	83	34.58
6	While selling the cow, the head / nose rope of the cow is retained.	82	34.17
7	Cows are made to enter into a newly built house during house warming ceremony	76	31.67
8	Tying a black rope with conch (<i>sangu</i>) around the neck of cow against the evil attack.	69	28.75
9	Cows should not calve on Sunday.	68	28.33
10	First milk (colostrum) should be poured into river, temple well, temple pond etc.	65	27.08
11	Hanging placenta on tree that has white sap.	45	18.75
12	Palm tree leaf sheath tied across the brisket region just in front of the forelimbs to shed the placenta.	41	17.08
13	Cows are worshipped as God (Considered as “Lakshmi” to their house).	32	13.33
14	To see milk, curd and ghee on the way is good for journey.	27	11.25
15	Bullock with numerous spots over the body was considered very lucky	27	11.25



Fig.1 House warming ceremony

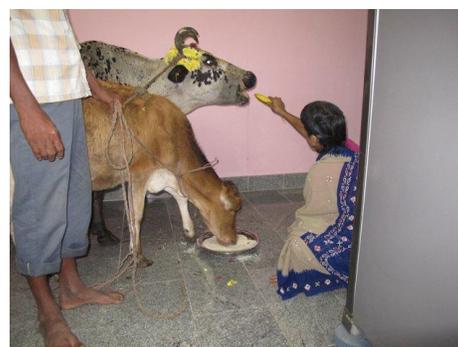


Fig.2 House warming ceremony



Fig.3 Tying a black rope with conch (*sangu*) around the neck of cow



Fig.4 Placental waste tied/hanged on big banyan trees

Gunny bags are commonly seen hanging on banyan trees (18.75 per cent) on the outskirts of villages in Tamil Nadu. The expelled placental waste of newly calved cow/buffalo was put in a gunny bag and tied/hanged on big banyan trees (Fig. 4). Similar findings were recorded by Manivannan *et al.*, (2014). The afterbirths (placenta) of cattle are tied to a tree which yields a milky juice, in the belief that the cow will thereby give a better yield of milk. Palm tree leaf sheath tied across the brisket region (17.08 per cent) just in front of the forelimbs to shed the placenta (Pachaiyappan, 2009). Cows are worshipped as God (considered as “Lakshmi” to their house) (13.33 per cent). To see milk, curd and ghee on the way is good for the journey (11.25 per cent). If a cow at the time of purchase voids urine, it is considered a very good omen, but if she passes dung it is considered bad. The reverse is the case with a bullock. The bullock with numerous spots over the body was considered very lucky (11.25 per cent) to bring prosperous to the owner family. Manivannan (2004) documented similar folkways in his study.

The authors themselves have collected this information during an extensive survey of the study area. A comparison of the data so gathered, with the relevant information obtained from elsewhere shows very interesting results.

In conclusion A total number of 15 folkways and mores related to dairy farming were documented. It includes cow / buffalo meat should not be consumed, Cows and calves are given as gift in marriages of tribal communities, cow death is a bad sign for the family, to see cow with calf on the way is good for the journey, cows are not sold on Fridays / Wednesday, While selling the cow, the head / nose rope of the cow is retained, Cows are made to enter into a newly built house during house warming ceremony, tying a black rope with conch (*sangu*) around the neck of cow against the evil attack, Cows should not calve on Sunday, First milk (colostrum) should be poured into river, temple well, temple ponds etc., hanging placenta on tree that has white sap, palm tree leaf sheath tied across the brisket region just in front of the forelimbs to shed the placenta, Cows were worshipped as God (Considered as “Lakshmi” to their house), to see milk, curd and ghee on the way is good for the journey and bullock with numerous spots over the body was considered very lucky.

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