Rituals followed in different festivals related to agriculture and animal husbandry by Haveri district farmers in Karnataka

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Abstract

Folklore forms one of the important ways of expressing traditional knowledge. It is one of the important components of a nation’s cultural heritage. The term folklore was first coined in 1846 by William Thoms, who had used the term in his letter to ‘The Athenaeum’ to replace the terms ‘popular antiquities’ and ‘popular literature.’ [Valsala G Kutty]. This letter was written by Thom to emphasize on the importance of collecting the information pertaining to rituals, songs, legends and other oral traditions of England which were facing a certain death. In this study, we have recorded and documented the important Rituals followed in different festivals related to agriculture and animal husbandry.

Keywords: Traditional knowledge, rituals, festivals, folklore practices

Introduction

Traditionally, knowledge was transferred from one generation to the other through activities like seeing, hearing and doing. The traditional knowledge is interwoven in myths, proverbs and ancient saying and gets passed on to subsequent generations through oral means. The development of this knowledge base has taken shape outside the formal education system. [Mehta et al., 2010] [4] This knowledge is also expressed in the form of stories, folklore, legends, rituals, songs, arts and even laws. [Anil kumar 2010] In his publication in 2003, Rajagopalan CR explains ITK as ‘the accumulated information, visions and philosophy of life acquired by local people in each place and country observing the practical effect of everything when they lived in tune with nature’. [Rajagopalan, 2003] It is a system developed without direct inputs from the modern, formal, scientific establishments [Chambers et al., 1989; Gilbert et al., 1980; Adedipe, 1984][2].

Folklore forms one of the important ways of expressing traditional knowledge. It is one of the important components of a nation’s cultural heritage. The term folklore was first coined in 1846 by William Thoms, who had used the term in his letter to ‘The Athenaeum’ to replace the terms ‘popular antiquities’ and ‘popular literature.’ [Valsala G Kutty]. This letter was written by Thom to emphasize on the importance of collecting the information pertaining to rituals, songs, legends and other oral traditions of England which were facing a certain death. [Rajagopalan, 2003] Manners, customs, observations, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. were included by Thoms under the term folklore. This pioneering work done by Thoms successfully awakened the interest of several scholars who worked on this aspect of the society during the second half of 19th century. [Valsala G Kutty]. Folklore is a creation of people who share a common identity like geographical location, culture, language, livelihood, and lifestyle. Based on the essential attributes.

Methodology

Locale of the study

The study was conducted to analyze the folk practices followed in agriculture at Haveri district of Karnataka State, India. Haveri district is located at the center of the state of Karnataka. The district is well known for agriculture. The major crops of the region include Maize, pulses, cereals, rice and Horticulture crops.

Research design

‘Ex-post facto design’ was employed in the present study as the event has already occurred and
design was considered appropriate. Discussions were initiated with the farmers regarding several agricultural practices. In this study, we focused on rituals followed related to agriculture and animal husbandry. All, 122 farmers were involved in this study. All the information that was collected from the farmers during the course of data collection was noted down immediately. This information was later discussed and analyzed.

**Sampling technique**

The sampling technique of the farmers chosen to participate in this study was mainly based on random selection. Through this technique, every participant of the study was chosen randomly and the choice was based entirely on chance. The participants of this study were recruited through snowball sampling because the potential participants were few. This technique is a non-probability sampling technique, where the future participants are recruited by the existing participants among their acquaintances.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the respondents across different taluks of Haveri district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Name of Taluka</th>
<th>No of Farmers</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bydagi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hanagal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Haveri</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hirekerur</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ranebennur</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Savanur</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shiggaon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Result and Discussion**

**Agricultural rituals**

Several agricultural rituals are being followed by these farmers. Many of the activities have been discussed in the earlier sections under each of the sub-heading mentioned. Some of these rituals are described in brief in this section.

Farmers initiate their activities pertaining to agriculture according to the auspicious time given in Panchang. They refer to Panchang for several factors related to agriculture. Land preparation is very critical and important part for all crops cultivation, since time immemorial the folklore practice of magi-ulime (deep ploughing) started during the festival of Ugadi as per Hindu calendar is being practiced even today in the area. As a belief, farmers initiate the land preparation by performing land pooja ceremony on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi.

The farmers use indigenous methods of germination tests in order to determine the germination potentiality or viability of the seeds. One of the methods most commonly adopted by the farmers here is to associate the germination of seeds as a part of an important celebration. One of the most important and prevalent practices during this festival is to sow pulses, cereals and other seeds on the first day in a pot which is watered for nine days. This pot is worshipped throughout the nine days. These pots are considered as a symbol of prosperity and growth. The seeds sprout during the course of the festivities. Towards the end of the 9 day celebrations, the seeds develop into seedlings, big enough to give the farmers a fair idea about the vigor of the seeds that they would use for the subsequent cropping season. During Vijayadashami celebrations, the leaves of Banni tree are distributed among one another. This is as a symbol of sharing mutual love and respect to each other and to forget the bitter past. The flowers, bark and pod of this tree have medicinal properties and are extensively used in ayurveda and in traditional medical practices.

During the festival of Deepavali, which falls in the month of November, animal branding and bull race are organized across the villages. Devara hori (oora basava) or Devara Kona (oora kona) were symbolic of god basavanna (mahadeva) and goddess durgamma (shakti devate) respectively during the celebrations of oora habba or jaatra’s. These animals were believed to be representation of God and they were given unrestricted access to food. This traditional method mimicked the modern method of artificial insemination. These animals were scarified during oora habba to prevent inbreeding and bring in new animal to promote genetic diversity. Heat branding of animals is scientifically proven to prevent skin infections, boost cell mediated immunity to fight against multiple viral, bacterial and parasitic disease in animals. This practice is followed during Deepavali. Through traditional practices, the farmers also ensured pollination by lighting Jyoti (oil lamp) in front of house and temples for almost week to attract beneficial insects towards village from farm land. The farmers here practiced frog marriage, donkey marriage etc. in order to please rain God. They believe, such practices would bring in plenty of rain.

**List of major festivals celebrated in Haveri district**

Several festivals are celebrated in this district throughout the year. Many of these festivals have an association with some agricultural practices which may be related to cropping or animal husbandry.

Sankranti is celebrated in the month of January. This festival is a harvest festival and is associated with branding on animals. During this festival, people decorate their animals, especially the cattle and organize animal fairs in the villages. The festival of colors Holi, falls in the month of March. During this festival, people make merry by splashing colors all over the body. The festival of Ugadi, which typically falls in the month of April, is associated with agricultural practices like deep ploughing of land. On this day, people take bath in hot water to which leaves of neem tree are added. This water is supposed to be having medicinal values and protect people from various diseases.
Table 2: Some of the major festivals celebrated and the practices associated with it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Calendar month</th>
<th>Practices or beliefs in vogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sankranti</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Branding on animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Animal decoration or fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ugadi</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Deep ploughing of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking bath with Neem leaves in hot water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Holi</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Colours splash on the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Naga Panchami</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Raw milk and ghee offered to snake god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shige-Hunnime</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Spreading charaga, puffed rice around crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vijayadashami</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Distribution of Banni leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Deepavali</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Animal branding, Bull race</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Livestock management

Traditional ways of animal branding using hot iron rod is common folklore practice even today in the region during auspicious Deepawali festival. Devara hori (Oora basava) or Devara Kona (Oora kona) were symbolic of god basavanna (Mahadeva) and goddess durgamma (Shakti devate) respectively during the celebrations of oora habba or jaatra’s. These animals had unrestricted access to feed/grass and were healthy, people believed in this animal represents god. This folklore practice helped to maintain a breeding animal in each village/region. Now days, commonly practiced artificial insemination was mimicked by this method. And traditionally these animals were scarified during oora habba to prevent inbreeding and bring in new animal to promote genetic diversity.

Likewise traditional ways of animal branding using hot iron rod is common folklore practice even today in the region during auspicious Deepawali festival (Balipaddya). People believe this practice of branding and application of mixture of turmeric powder, ghee and cow urine on the area helped to prevent flies attracted towards wound. This heat branding method is scientifically proven to prevent skin infections, boost cell mediated immunity to fight against multiple viral, bacterial and parasitic disease in animals.

Farmers in the area practice lighting Jyoti (oil lamp) in front of house and temples for almost week to attract beneficial insects towards village from farm land. During this season all crops flower and insects are major pollinators in plants, farmers believe the practice of lighting Jyoti during Deepawali helps to attract various species of insects for pollination.

Land preparation

Land preparation is very critical and important part for all crops cultivation, since time immemorial the folklore practice of magi-ulime (Deep ploughing) started during the festival of Ugadi as per Hindu calendar is being practiced even today in the area. As a belief, farmers initiate the land preparation by performing land pooja ceremony on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi. Farmers practice this folklore tradition for preserving soil moisture, manuring of crop residues by termites, improve soil health by preventing water logging and soil erosion during heavy rains in monsoon. Slowly as the time progress and people started modern agriculture practices by utilizing tractors, tillers etc., the folk practice have taken the backseat and being reduced to bare minimum to one or two lane ploughing in recent times. This coupled with extended cultivation seasons to rabi to take more crops per acre of land.

The folklore practice of magi-ulime (Deep ploughing) started during the festival of Ugadi as per Hindu calendar is being practiced even today in the area.

Soil health and Pest management

The festival Nagapanchami celebrated in the month of august has special emphasis to preserve soil health. During nagapanchami raw milk and ghee poured into termites built soil bunds in the name of snake god. This attracts variety of ants to the field and they help to control termites breeding in field during harvesting season. After harvesting the crop, farmers make bunds (Banave) in the field and this is a
proactive measure taken in traditional way to prevent termites breeding.

The festivals of Shige-Hunnime and Vijayadashami, which fall in the months of August and October, respectively, have significances which are associated with agricultural practices. One of the practices associated with Shige-Hunnime is spreading of charaga or puffed rice around the crops to attract birds to feed on insects in the field. During Vijayadashami celebrations, the leaves of Banni tree are distributed among one another. This is as a symbol of sharing mutual love and respect to each other and to forget the bitter past. The flowers, bark and pod of this tree have medicinal properties are extensively used in ayurveda and in traditional medical practices.

During the festival of Deepavali, which falls in the month of November, animal branding and bull race are organized across the villages. Table 02 represents some of the major festivals celebrated and the practices associated with it.

**Jatra and Fairs**

One of the most popular Jatra in this region is the one at Mailara Lingeshwara Temple, which is situated in Rannebennur Taluka of Haveri district. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. This temple is situated on a hill and is known as Devaragudda. Fair or Jatra is organized in this temple. Several rituals are associated with the temple. One of the important rituals associated with this include Karanika Utsava. This Jatre is of great significance to the agricultural community. During this ritual, a Karanika Gorava fasts for 12 days with all religious beliefs. At the end of the 12th day, he climbs a bow which is 12 metre long and utters a prophecy which may be of significance in regional agriculture, animal husbandry and politics.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mylara_Lingeshwara_Temple_at_Mylara]

**Pooja to prosopis cineraria tree**

This is a tree that grows with very low maintenance and is widely found across different villages. The plant has several uses and preparing green leaf manure is one of them and it extracts nitrogen from environment and leave it to soil and it has VAM growth in its roots that will control soil born diseases and this tree will give good shade and air for humans.

**Panchang**

The Panchang or an almanac which gives details of auspicious times based on astrological predictions has been in use among farmers for several thousands of years. The farmers refer to these panchang before initiating several activities related to the agriculture. The Panchang also provides details like rain prediction, the crops that are likely to yield maximum, soil conditions and the drought conditions likely to prevail over a certain year. Many traditional farmers consider this to be the major source of information and rely on it to make decisions on certain critical activities pertaining to agriculture. Besides giving information about the auspicious time to start an activity, It also provides information about inauspicious times. Farmers usually avoid taking up crucial activities during the inauspicious time.
Fig 8: Reading and interpreting Hindu panchang for farm activities planning.

References