

Folk Beliefs of Munda Tribe Towards Dairy Farming*

A K Singh¹ and Jitendra Chauhan²

1. Introduction

National commission on Agriculture has rightly observed that dairying as an additional enterprise is an instrument of great significance for improving socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections of rural people including tribals. It is a common knowledge that tribals usually keep varying number of milch animal but milk production, consumption and sale are woefully low because of traditional ways of their thinking and doing. Even though the isolation of tribals from mainstream culture is fast receding as a result of expansion of communication media and increased inter-mingling of tribals with non-tribals, they are still quite rigid towards their belief systems. Loomis and Loomis (1961) defined belief as any proposition which is thought to be true. David (1978) described it as primitive gods, ancestral spirit, magical powers, totemic creatures, wishes, etc. which are found among traditional societies. It has been observed by many scientists that rituals, social attitude and customs of socio-religious way of life required indulgence in non-productive expansiveness.

Every tribal community has its own religious beliefs. They believe in the presence of supernatural powers, ghosts and spirits. Faith in spirits and supernatural powers is the important aspect of tribal religion. The tribals believe that thunder, rains, lightening, flood etc. are produced by supernatural powers. Similarly, they also believe that every object such as forest, river, mountain etc. has got its guiding spirit. The diseases are thought as evil influences of spirit. They believe that suitable rituals help in eradication of diseases. Worship of nature is important aspect of tribal life. Among certain tribals, women are not allowed to touch certain objects. The women are not allowed to do any work relating to dairy products, in some cases, as these products are considered sacred. Srivastava (1982) reported that munda tribals of Bihar worship Sun God and Cattle God to Protect the cattle wealth. Hiranand and Kumar (1980) had reported 44 folk beliefs related to dairy husbandry. Thus, folk beliefs touch socio-economic aspects tribal living and affect use of technologies. Keeping in view the importance of folk belief in tribal's life this paper intended to discuss folk beliefs of munda tribals pertaining to dairy farming.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in the district of Ranchi, Bihar having high concentration of tribal population. 200 tribal dairy farmers were selected from eight villages situated in four different development blocks by using multi-stage random sampling. On the basis of researcher's experience in the study area during pilot study and available literature, a list of 6 statements which expressed folk beliefs of tribal were prepared, and agreement or disagreement of respondents were sought.

3. Results and Discussion

It is revealed from Table 1 that 79.5 per cent of tribal dairy farmers hold the belief regards necessity of bhagates advice to maintain animal health. It was followed by the belief that neglect of religious

-
1. Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Communication, College of Agriculture, Pantnagar – 263145
 2. Reader, Department of Agricultural Extension, R.B.S. College, Bichpuri, Agra

practices make supernatural power angry (78.5%). A large percentage of tribal dairy farmers (69.5%) believed that sacrifice is desired by the deities followed by the belief that on artificial insemination, animal does not get satisfaction (51%). Thirty two percent tribal dairy farmers found holding the belief that sight of specific women spoils the milk yield of animal. Quite a few 128 per cent believed that evil spirits cause death of animal.

Table 1 Folk Beliefs Held by the Tribal Dairy Farmers in Their Rank Order

Sl. No	Folk beliefs	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Neglect of religious practices make supernatural power angry	157	78.50	II
2.	Evil spirit cause death of animals	56	28.00	VI
3.	Sacrifice is desired by the deities	139	69.50	III
4.	In artificial insemination, animal does not get satisfaction	102	51.00	IV
5.	Sight of specific women spoils the milk yield of animal or spoil animal	64	32.00	V
6.	Necessity of bhagat's advice to maintain animal death	159	79.50	I

Mean = 13.41, S.D. = 1.82

It is indeed ironical that nearly 80 per cent respondents believed in Bhagat's advice as important for animal health, which decidedly lowers the value of professional veterinarian's consultations. Fatalistic views about anger of supernatural powers and desirability of sacrifice too is popular amongst large majority. Such attitude would be against application of scientific practices as sure way of improving productivity in case of dairy farming. With advent of high-breeds of cattle, use of modern practices is a must. Artificial insemination also does not find favour with nearly half of the sampled population.

4. Conclusion

Considering the importance of tribals' beliefs in their life, it can be concluded that efforts to improve dairy production must be preceded by suitable extension education programmes to make the tribal leadership convinced about the value and generate consensus among the tribal folks regarding scientific practices of dairy farming.

Thus, it is essential that efforts of dairy development in tribal areas must begin with motivational efforts to spread of science. In fact, it takes time to change attitudes. However, growing effect of uniform areas and increasing demands of milk in cities are good incentives to improved milk yield. It can be achieved by appropriate educational efforts on the part of development works. It is noteworthy to mention that dairy development projects are integral part of tribal development programme.

5. References

- David, P. (1978). For science in the social science. The Macmillan Press Ltd. London.
- Loomis, C.P. and Looms, Z.K. (1961). Modern social theories, Princeton, New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand, Co. Inc.

Srivastava, R.M. (1982). Cattle in culture and economy of tribal Mundas of Bihar. *Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis*, Division of Dairy Extension, N.D.R.I., Karnal.

Hiranand and Kumar (1980). Folk beliefs associated with dairy farming. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*. XVI, (3 & 4) 36-42.

* Initial advice and help in designing the study received from Dr. T.S. Sohal, Former Professor, Dairy Extension, N.D. R.I. Karnal, is duly acknowledged.