

An Overview of Traditional Harvesting of Honey in Hyderabad – Karnataka Region, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India

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ABSTRACT: The indigenous harvesting of honey from various species of honeybees involves a symbiotic relationship between the community and nature, showcasing a sustainable approach to honey collection the diverse species of honeybees in the region and the traditional knowledge passed down through generations is significance and unique harvesting method. The Lambani, Soliga, Jenu Kuruba and Hakki Pikki are among the tribes that traditionally engage in honey harvesting practices. Local communities often practice traditional methods, such as beekeeping in log hives or tree cavities The main honeybee species involved include *Apis cerana*, *Apis dorsata*, and *Apis florea*. The Munda community, often referred to as the "Mondal" community, is one of the Adivasi (indigenous) groups in the state of West Bengal, India. Traditional storage involves containers made of locally available materials, such as clay pots or wooden boxes, designed to preserve the natural qualities of the honey. Modern beekeepers in the region often use food-grade plastic or glass jars for honey storage.

Keywords: Honey, Traditional method, Harvesting, Tribe, Storage.

INTRODUCTION

The indigenous harvesting of honey from various species of honeybees in the Hyderabad Karnataka region reflects a rich tradition deeply rooted in the local culture and environment. This practice involves a symbiotic relationship between the community and nature, showcasing a sustainable approach to honey collection. Understanding the diverse species of honeybees in the region and the traditional knowledge passed down through generations (Raut *et al.*, 2012) is crucial in appreciating the significance of this unique harvesting method. This introduction sets the stage for exploring the intricacies of indigenous honey harvesting practices in the specific context of the Hyderabad Karnataka region. Apiculture (Latin *apis* = bee) is the study and practice of beekeeping. It is a forest and agro based industry, which is beyond the ordinary realms of industry, in the sense that the humans derive benefits from interaction between two living things like plants and bees without affecting adversel both. Plants, including many crops, prosper and the bees flourish sheltered by humans, giving honey and different other products like bees wax, propolis and royal jelly are major by products of beekeeping (Rahman and Deka 2008).

Kalaburagi, formerly known as Gulbarga, is one of the prominent districts in the Hyderabad Karnataka region of Karnataka, India. The region is known for its diverse agricultural activities, and honey harvesting is indeed a significant part of this. Local communities, including various tribes and indigenous groups in Kalaburagi,

engage in traditional honey harvesting methods. The diverse flora in the region contributes to the unique flavours and qualities of the honey produced. Beekeepers often use traditional techniques such as log hives, tree cavities, and manual extraction methods. The sustainable harvesting of honey in Kalaburagi is not only a source of livelihood for many but also plays a role in preserving traditional knowledge and promoting environmental conservation. The honey produced in this region may vary in taste and composition due to the rich floral biodiversity of the area.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Gulbarga, also and officially known as Kalaburagi, is a city in the Indian state of Karnataka. It is the administrative headquarters of Gulbarga district and is the largest city in the Hyderabad-Karnataka (officially known as Kalyana-Karnataka) region of North Karnataka. Gulbarga is 623 km north of the state capital city of Bangalore and 220 km from Hyderabad. Previously it was part of Hyderabad State and incorporated into a newly formed Mysore State (now known as Karnataka) through the States Reorganisation Act in 1956. Gulbarga city is governed by Municipal Corporation and is in Gulbarga Urban Region. It is called one of the Sufi cities having famous religious places, like Khwaja Banda Nawaz Dargah, Sharana Basaveshwara Temple, Ladle Mashak and Buddha Vihar. It also has a fort built during Bahmani rule. The entire district is on the Deccan Plateau, and the elevation ranges from 300 to 750 m above MSL. Two main rivers, the Krishna and Bhima, flow through the

district. The predominant soil type is black soil. The district has many tanks, which irrigate the land along with the river. The Upper Krishna Project is a major irrigation venture in the district of Jowar. The main crops are groundnuts, rice, and pulses. Gulbarga is the largest producer of toor dal, or pigeon peas, in Karnataka. Gulbarga is an industrially backward district but is showing signs of growth in the cement, textile, leather and chemical industries. The geographical area of the city is 64 square kilometers. The climate of the district is generally dry, with temperatures ranging from 8 °C to 45 °C and an annual rainfall of about 750 mm. The year in Gulbarga is divided into three main seasons. The summer lasts from late February to mid-June. It is followed by the southwest monsoon, which lasts from late June to late September. This is then followed by dry winter weather until mid-January.

In the Hyderabad Karnataka region, honey harvesting involves a blend of traditional and modern beekeeping methods. Local beekeepers typically use techniques like log hives, tree cavities, or traditional boxes to house colonies of honeybees. The main honeybee species involved include *Apis cerana*, *Apis dorsata*, and *Apis florea*. In the Hyderabad Karnataka region, traditional methods of honey harvesting involve practices that have been passed down through generations. Some common traditional methods include:

- 1. Log Hives and Tree Cavities:** Local beekeepers often use natural log hives or tree cavities as bee colonies. Honeybees establish their nests in these hollow spaces, and harvesting is done by carefully opening these natural hives.
- 2. Smoke Techniques:** Beekeepers may use smoke to calm the bees before harvesting honey. The smoke disrupts the communication among bees and helps minimize aggression during the extraction process.
- 3. Handcrafted Beehives:** Traditional beehives made from locally available materials like bamboo or straw are used. These hives may have specific designs that suit the preferences of the local beekeepers and the behavior of the honeybee species in the region.
- 4. Manual Extraction:** Honeycombs are manually extracted from the hives, and honey is separated from the wax. This process requires skill and knowledge to avoid harming the bees or damaging the comb.
- 5. Natural Comb Retention:** In some traditional methods, beekeepers may leave a portion of the honeycomb in the hive for the bees to reuse, promoting colony health and sustainability.



Fig. 1. Showing the hive of *Apis florea*.

Local community: The indigenous harvesting of honey in the Hyderabad Karnataka region involves various species of honeybees, including *Apis cerana*, *Apis dorsata*, and *Apis florea*. Local communities often practice traditional methods, such as beekeeping in log hives or tree cavities. Different bee species contribute to the diverse flavors and qualities of the honey produced in this region. The harvesting techniques vary, with some communities relying on smoke to calm bees before extraction. Sustainability and conservation efforts play a crucial role in maintaining these practices and protecting the local biodiversity. In the Hyderabad Karnataka region, various tribes and indigenous communities are involved in the harvesting of honey. The Lambani, Soliga, Jenu Kuraba and Hakki Pikki are among the tribes that traditionally engage in honey harvesting practices (Zvelebil, 1979; Demps *et al.*, 2012; Sohela, 2013; Singh, 2014). These communities often have unique knowledge and skills passed down through generations, contributing to the sustainable harvesting of honey from different bee species.

Nomadic community: The Munda community, often referred to as the "Mondal" community, is one of the Adivasi (indigenous) groups in the state of West Bengal, India (Upadhaya *et al.*, 2016). Within the Munda community, there are individuals known as honey hunters who engage in traditional honey harvesting practices. These honey hunters are skilled in climbing trees to access wild beehives, and they use traditional methods to collect honey and beeswax. Climbing tall trees without modern equipment, these individuals exhibit remarkable agility and bravery in their pursuit of honey. The honey harvesting practices of the Munda community are not only a means of livelihood but also an integral part of their cultural heritage. The methods they employ are often passed down through generations, contributing to the sustainability of both their traditional way of life and the ecosystems they interact with.



Fig. 2. Showing the hive of *Apis dorsata*.

Harvesting: Harvesting is often done with care to ensure the preservation of bee colonies. Smoke may be used to calm the bees before extracting honeycombs. Some beekeepers adopt modern beehive designs for easier management and increased honey production. The honey harvested from this region exhibits diverse flavors and qualities due to the varied floral sources. Sustainability practices are essential to protect local biodiversity and maintain the delicate balance between

honey production and environmental conservation (Anonymous, 2011).



Fig. 3. Showing the harvesting by Mondal community.

Storage: In the Karnataka region, honey is typically stored using traditional and modern methods. Traditional storage involves containers made of locally available materials, such as clay pots or wooden boxes, designed to preserve the natural qualities of the honey. These containers may help maintain the temperature and humidity levels, preventing crystallization and preserving the flavour. Modern beekeepers in the region often use food-grade plastic or glass jars for honey storage. These containers are airtight and provide protection against external contaminants. Proper labelling indicating the honey's source, date of harvest, and other relevant details is also common practice.



Fig. 4. Showing the storage after harvesting by the locals.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the traditional harvesting of honey in the Hyderabad Karnataka region represents a time-honoured practice deeply rooted in the cultural and ecological fabric of the area. This age-old method of honey extraction not only sustains local livelihoods but also contributes to the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable beekeeping practices. The process of traditional honey harvesting involves a meticulous and symbiotic relationship between the beekeepers and the natural environment. Local beekeepers, often following practices passed down through generations demonstrate a profound understanding of the intricate dynamics within their ecosystems. This knowledge is crucial in ensuring a delicate balance between human activities and the preservation of the native flora and fauna. One of the key aspects of traditional honey harvesting in the Hyderabad Karnataka region is the use of indigenous bee species, such as the rock bee (*Apis dorsata*). These species have adapted to the local climate and vegetation, playing a vital role in pollination and

maintaining the ecological equilibrium. By relying on native bees, traditional beekeepers contribute to the preservation of these essential pollinators, fostering a sustainable coexistence between humans and the environment.

Moreover, the traditional method emphasizes the use of natural and organic practices. Beekeepers in the region avoid the use of synthetic chemicals and pesticides, prioritizing the health of both the bees and the consumers. This approach aligns with the growing global awareness of the importance of sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices, positioning traditional honey harvesting as a model for responsible beekeeping. The traditional honey harvesting process is not just a means of economic sustenance but also a cultural heritage that fosters a sense of community and identity. The knowledge and skills associated with traditional beekeeping are often passed down through generations, creating a sense of continuity and interconnectedness with the land (Basavarajappa *et al.*, 2011). This cultural aspect adds a unique dimension to the practice, making it more than just an economic activity—it is a way of life deeply intertwined with the region's history and identity. While the traditional method of honey harvesting in Hyderabad Karnataka has numerous merits, it faces challenges in the modern era. Rapid urbanization, changing land use patterns, and the encroachment of monoculture agriculture pose threats to the natural habitats of indigenous bee species. Additionally, there is a need to strike a balance between traditional practices and modern beekeeping technologies to enhance productivity while maintaining the integrity of the ecosystems.

In conclusion, the traditional harvesting of honey in the Hyderabad Karnataka region stands as a beacon of sustainable and culturally rich beekeeping practices. It showcases the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and embracing ecologically sound approaches. As the region navigates the challenges of the contemporary world, there is an opportunity to integrate the wisdom of traditional beekeeping with modern innovations, ensuring the continued success and relevance of this age-old practice.

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