

## Traditional wisdom on livestock selection and management in folk proverbs of Orissa

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Oriya folk songs and folk proverbs relating to livestock characters, selection criteria and their management procedures are highlighted. The scientific basis of this traditional wisdom and its present relevance are analysed.

**Keywords:** Folk proverbs, Traditional wisdom, Livestock management, Orissa.

Domestication of animal is an ancient practice of man, which he undertook much before he settled in riverbanks and started organised agriculture. Due to this long association and utility of livestock like cow, bullock, buffalo, horse, sheep and goats, etc. there exists a rich heritage of character study, selection methods and management of these quadruped animals in different parts of the world. This wisdom is transferred orally from generation to generation in the form of popular folk songs or proverbs, which exists till date. In India, the existence and utility of this traditional knowledge in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh is studied recently<sup>1</sup>. Orissa also has a rich tradition of such folklores<sup>2-4</sup>. The present work is a part of the collection and study of such proverbs<sup>5</sup> enumerating the characters, selection procedures and management of livestock in rural coastal Orissa along with the analysis of their present relevance.

### Materials and Methods

Folklores and folk proverbs concerning cattle and other livestock relating to their characters and selection procedures were collected by discussion with the rural farmers and Yadav community of six coastal districts following the standard prescribed procedure as explained earlier<sup>6-9</sup>. Literature regarding the folklores of this region<sup>2-4</sup> already collected and compiled was consulted and scrutinised to avoid misinterpretation or error due to difference in spoken language.

### Enumeration

Ten folk proverbs relating to livestock are presented in spoken Oriya language with their transliteration followed by word meaning and explanation.

1.

Gāī kiniba duhim  
Balada kiniba mohim  
Āmba kiniba khāī

(Gāī – cow, kiniba – purchase, duhim – milking, Balada – bullock, mohim – feeding, Āmba – mango, khāī – testing)

A cow can be purchased after milking, a bullock after observing his feeding habit and mango after tasting it's sweetness.

2.

Baladara dānta  
Gāīra anta

(Baladara – Bullock's, danta – teeth, Gāīra – Cow's, anta – stomach or feeding capacity)

Feeding habit of bullock as well as cow is to be closely observed before selecting them to purchase. Because with good feeding habit, a bullock becomes capable of hard work and a cow becomes high yielding.

3.

Ghodāku cihniba niśbasu  
hīrāku cihniha uśbāsu  
guniku cihniba māne  
rajāku cihniba dāne

(Ghodāku – to a horse, cihniba – identify, niśbasu – breathing, hīrāku – to a diamond, uśbāsu – from light weight, guniku – to a knowledgeable person, māne – pride, rajāku – to a king, dāne – charity)

A good quality horse can be known from its breathing, a diamond from its weight, a knowledgeable person from his pride and a good king from his charity.

4.

Pandāku kiniba kharāre bohi  
balada kiniba yocina mai  
mācha kiniba gāīsi dekhi  
Gāī kiniba singa parakhi

Ghodā kiniba bālire kasi  
Paribā kiniba pindāre basi  
Sunā kiniba nimāre podi  
Bāchurī kinba yodiki yodi

(Pandāku – a male buffalo, kiniba – purchase, kharāre – in Sunlight, bohi – engaging, balada – bullock, yocina – engage, mai – harrow, mācha – fish, gāīsi – gills, dekhi – observing, gāī – cow, singa – horn, parakhi – observing, Ghodā – horse, bālire – sand, kasi – testing, Paribā – vegetables, pindāre – doorstep, basi – sitting, Sunā – gold, nimāre – fire, podi – burning, Bāchurī – calf, yodi – pair)

Select and purchase He-buffalo after observing its performance in scorching heat; bullock by engaging in harrowing; fish by observing the gills; cow from its polished and small horn; horse by engaging in sandy bed; vegetables at door step; purity of gold by burning in fire and male calf in pair.

5.

Māgha maimsi, Bhodiā gāī  
Srābane ghodī gosiām khāī

(Māgha – in lunar month Magha i.e., during Jan.-Feb., maimsi – buffalo, Bhodiā – Lunar month Bhadraba i.e., during Aug.-Sept., gāī – cow, Srābane – in Lunar month Srābane i.e., during July-August, ghodī – mare, gosiām – owner, khāī – kills or harmful).

Buffalo born in *Magha*, cow in *Bhadraba* and mare in *Srabana* are expected to bring ill-luck to the owner.

6.

Khara balada maiki  
Pakhāla bhāta dahiki

Khanda nadiā khaiki  
Kānakoli kantā pahiki

(Khara – Swift or active, balada – bullock, maiki – for harrowing, Pakhāla bhāta – moistened boiled rice, dahiki – to curd, Khanda – piece, nadiā – coconut, khaiki – to parched paddy, Kānakoli kantā – a particular thorny plant, pahiki – to side road or by lane)

An active bullock is suitable for harrowing, moistened boiled rice for curd, pieces of coconut for purchased paddy and kanakoli kanta is suitable to check the use of any side road or a bylane.

7.

Nebu rāti, ānibu rāti  
tebe dekhibu poghara jāti

(Nebu – to take, rāti – from very early morning, ānibu – to bring back, rāti – after evening, tebe – then, dekhibu – can know, podhara – buffalo's, jāti – quality)

By engaging from dawn to dusk, the efficiency of a buffalo can be tested.

8.

Balada parakha bāli  
bandhu parakha dukkha padile  
Saudā parakha kāli

(Balada – bullock, parakha – testing, bāli – sand or sandy bed, bandhu – friend or relation, dukkha – sorrow and suffering, padile – when falls, saudā – grocery, kāli – on credit)

A good bullock can be tested by engaging it in sandy soil, friend or relatives during hard times and a grocer while purchasing on credit.

9.

Gāi kariba kālipunci  
balada kariba dhepā  
Pokharī pākhare bila karithiba  
Cāsa karithiba ekā

(Gāi – cow, kariba – possess, kālipunci – black and short height, balada – bullock, dhepā – tall, Pokharī – pond, pākhare – near to, bila – plot for cultivation, Cāsa karithiba – cultivate, ekā – alone)

One should acquire cow with black colour and short height, tall bullock, cultivate plots near the pond or source of water and farming should be done alone.

10.

Thāpuā balada rakhyāpāe  
thāpuā manisa nāśayāe

(Thāpuā – lazy, balada – bullock, rakhyāpāe – saved, manisa – man, nāśayāe – suffers)

A lazy bullock is saved i.e. due to its laziness not engaged over time. But a idle man usually suffers due to same character.

### Discussion

Folklores are the best means to learn or explain any incidence or event<sup>10</sup>. Thousands of such folklores relating to various aspects of natural, cultural, mythological, traditional and other activities of people prevail in Indian folk life<sup>11</sup>. Similarly the present ones under focus depicting the identification and selection procedures of different livestock are some among the numerous poetic versions of traditional wisdom still alive in rural Orissa.

Ten physical and behavioural characters like the milking quality, food habit, work efficiency, etc. of cow, bullock, buffalo and horse are enumerated through these folklores basing on which a farmer can test and select a livestock befitting his necessity. Moreover, there are some predictions regarding the quality of these quadruped animals basing on the months of their birth, suitable body colour, appropriate height, etc.

Although the ancient people were not aware of the genetic principles responsible for particular characters of living organisms, they were able to test and isolate the suitable ones basing on the physical or external and observable expression of those genes called phenotypes through their long association, experience and keen observation of those animals. Later, these were codified as guidelines in the form of folklores or folk proverbs. Regarding the scientific basis and relevance of traditional wisdom and particularly the farmers' knowledge and practices in cattle rearing was found to be in tune with the parameters of recommended scientific criteria and practices of livestock management. Hence these folk proverbs should be collected on wider scale and preserved for their future utility before they vanish with the rapidly changing society in rural Orissa.

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