

HONEY PRODUCTION

Bharmour sub division of Chamba district is a typically tribal and backward region under the wet temperate climate. This area was famous for its herbal and medicinal plants and honey derived from their nectar was traditionally used for curing various diseases since time immemorial. The farming system in the area is mainly Hort.-Agri- pastoral system. Apiculture on a commercial basis became economically unviable because of the diverse problems especially of red mite attack on the bee colonies. The honey being produced by the farmers was stored in ordinary tins and sold raw in exchange for ghee or other grocery items. Traditionally the bees used to be reared in indigenous structures which were of fixed type and lot of honey bees used to die during extreme winters also. To overcome the problems being faced by the farmers the KVK scientists conducted a survey of the area to apprise themselves with the problems and make suitable recommendations for revival of the enterprise. The process included suggestions and trainings on Control of pest attack on bee colonies. The honey especially the white honey produced from the flora of *Plectranthus* spp. is in great demand because of its medicinal value which fetches premium price in the market.

The technological intervention of the KVK was in the form of diagnostic visits and trainings to the farmer groups. The KVK was instrumental in popularization of modern wooden bee hives with frames for apiary and creating awareness for value addition through better refinement/packaging of honey to fetch premium prices in the market. The farmers were trained for better packaging and refining of honey and were motivated to adopt it on a large scale as an enterprise with an aim to serve as an additional income-generating activity and provide round the year employment to the rural youth. The farmers were earlier rearing bees of the species *Apis cerana* which were wild and honey yield was comparatively low. The domesticated bees of species *Apis mellifera*, having wider pollinating ranges and is capable of providing more honey, was also promoted through demonstrations and trainings.



Traditional and Modern Methods of Bee keeping in Chamba

The awareness programme was started in the year 1994 while the training part remained a continuous process. The pest problems (red mite) were encountered during 2004 when corrective measures were suggested and also the suggestions

for improved packaging were given to the farmers. The extraction and refining machine under the NAIP project has been installed in the year 2009.

The farmers after getting the required motivation and training, adopted apiculture as an organized enterprise. They were further encouraged by the line departments which facilitated the availability of wooden framed boxes and bee colonies. As an entrepreneur, they were now confident enough to move ahead. Further their awareness about the importance of bees for pollination in apple also promoted the apiculture enterprise. Pollination in most of the temperate fruits, especially in apples, is done by insect, particularly by honeybees. The Horticulture Technological Mission project, too, has done its bit by giving subsidies besides making available bee hives, bee colonies, honey extractors, bee veils and C.F. sheets to needy and unemployed rural youths. The area has recently been provided with honey extractors and refining machine under the NAIP project in a collaborative project of the KVK and CSKHPKV Palampur. The farmers of the area have formed Self Help Groups and are working collectively for the processing and packaging of honey. The improved techniques have helped in reviving the bee keeping activities. The initiative was started by a group of 5 persons and the motivation and trainings regularly has led to a horizontal expansion of the group to about 350 farmers presently.

Apiary do not involve the replacement of any commodity. However the upgradation of bee hives from the traditional stationary hives to the wooden frame hives which can be transported easily does involve some expenditure but in these tribal areas such inputs are provided to the interested farmers at heavily subsidized/ nominal prices. This has led to its widespread acceptance in the locality.

The honey produced by these tribals especially the white honey obtained from flora of *Plectranthus* spp. is bought by the traders right at their doorsteps at premium prices. For honey of other flora during their period of migration they sell

honey to local traders at the place of their temporary settlement. The society formed by the rural youth/ self help groups performs the role in the processing of honey and also in facilitating the sale of surplus honey at higher prices.



A tribal farmer with his Quality Produce