

Conservation now assured for Thurpu cattle of Amrabad

Author - Swathi Vadlamudi, Published on - 21.2.2020



Poda Thurpu cattle breed is a short and hardy animal, with brown markings, found only in four mandals of the reserve.

It is among 13 indigenous cattle breeds newly recognised by NBAGR

Recent recognition of 'Poda Thurpu' cattle as indigenous breed by the ICAR's National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) has its origins in the hunch felt by an activist working in Telangana villages.

The gut feeling of Sabyasachi Das from Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) was shored to its reality through serious efforts by the Telangana State Biodiversity Board. The short and hardy animal typical with brown markings, found only in four mandals in Amrabad Tiger Reserve of Nagarkurnool district, is now one among the 13 indigenous cattle breeds newly recognised by NBAGR.

Also recognised is 'Vanaraja', a chicken breed developed by ICAR's Directorate of Poultry Research.

"We were working with farming community in Doulatabad, Pargi and Bomraspet mandals of the then Rangareddy district, when we first noticed the bullocks. They preferred by the farmers as draught animals for their long endurance in both in black and wet soils," recalled Mr. Das.

However, he could not find any trace of cows from the same breed. Further enquiries revealed that the farmers had not reared, but only purchased the bulls from Amrabad region where they were endemic.

"The animals are reared in hundreds by the Lambada, Golla and ST communities of Amrabad, Achampet, Lingala and Padra mandals. They are not stall-fed, and owe their strong hooves to grazing in forests and hillocks. Traditionally, the male cattle members are sold off before they mature," Mr. Das said.

The nomenclature of 'Poda Thurpu' too has a history. The cattle is known as 'Thurpu Bull' where it was used for farming, indicating its origin on the Eastern side, and as 'Poda Cattle' in Amrabad owing to its body markings. After observing that the cattle survived on less fodder and water, Mr.Das has brought it to the notice of the Telangana State Biodiversity Board (TSBB).

Aided by WASSAN and another local NGO, Conservation of Nature through Rural Awakening (CONARE), TSBB launched the process for registration in February 2016. Physical characteristics of the cattle such as height, colour, hump, horn size and others were recorded with much effort. Other details, including traditional knowledge about the breed, were obtained from the local tribes, which were conserving the cattle for the past 400 years.

"It became difficult for them to protect the breed due to aggressive artificial insemination programmes by the Animal Husbandry department," informed Shilpi Sharma, a scientist from the Board who had worked for the registration.

Requests were made by TSBB to the Animal Husbandry department for halting the programme in 20 villages of the district, home to more than 15,000 animals. Proposals for registration were submitted through the State government about three years ago. Approval came in January last week, and process for registration is on, which will result in conservation of animal through NBAGR's gene repository.

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