

The Sweet Success of a Honey Entrepreneur

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Shri Veeresh Dharwad often reflects on a simple yet meaningful question: "Honey bees don't measure man-days or calculate benefit-cost ratios; they collect honey solely for their hive's needs. So, how can I consider profit from practicing apiary?" For Veeresh, who engages in beekeeping out of pure passion, the line between occupation and interest is clear. Though basically a mechanical engineer, his true calling lies with honey bees and their propagation.

Hailing from Dharwad district, Veeresh completed a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Despite his career in engineering, his passion for honey bees never wavered. He began exploring beekeeping during his leisure time, with a growing interest that soon became a full-time pursuit. In 2018, he visited ICAR-KVK in Dharwad and met with plant protection scientists who provided information on apiculture, domestic honey bee species, and the best conditions for beekeeping. During a six-day training program on scientific beekeeping, sponsored by the National Bee Board, New Delhi, Veeresh learned about the life cycle of bees, necessary materials for beekeeping, and pest management practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a pivotal moment for Veeresh. Recognizing the stability of the food industry, he left his job and transitioned fully into beekeeping. He also took the opportunity to improve his mango orchard and began placing bee boxes in the fields. Under a subsidy scheme called "Private Apiary"

from the Horticulture Department of Dharwad, he purchased honey bee boxes and started his beekeeping journey with 25 boxes. He convinced local farmers of the benefits of beekeeping, showing how bee colonies significantly increase pollination and crop yields. His success inspired more than 40 farmers to take up beekeeping with his guidance and technical support.

Veeresh's first breakthrough came when he caught a natural hive of Indian honey bee species (*Apis cerana indica*) in a tamarind tree trunk at Yettinagudda village. This species, smaller than rock bees but larger than little bees, can produce nearly 5 kg of honey per hive. *Apis cerana indica* is particularly suitable for honey production, with honey collection season running from September to May. With a steady supply of flowers required for honey production, Veeresh emphasized the importance of growing flowering crops year-round.



His passion for agriculture started early in life, although he admits he doesn't remember exactly when it began. What he does know is that he has always loved nature. His fascination with apiculture grew as he gained experience. Initially, Veeresh and his friends scouted for natural colonies in termite mounds, trees,



and soil cracks. The process, however, was not without its challenges – natural hives are sensitive to disturbance, often resulting in bee stings. Using his engineering background, Veeresh invented a honey bee vacuum machine that safely sucks angry bees through a pipe into a container. This innovation made it easier to transfer bees into hives, and the machine can be operated by a single person. For this achievement, KVK Dharwad recognized him as an innovative farmer during the 2019 Krishi Mela.

Honnapur village, where Veeresh now manages over 50 bee boxes, provides an ideal

environment for beekeeping, with its rich ecosystem of flowering plants, forest trees, coconut trees, and mango orchards. Freshly collected honey contains about 18% moisture and must be processed immediately to prevent fermentation and maintain quality. Veeresh encourages young people to take up beekeeping, not only as a hobby or source of self-employment but also to contribute to biodiversity protection.

Beekeeping offers many lessons, according to Veeresh. Beyond its economic benefits, bees teach us about discipline, sincerity in work, and care for the community. As human beings, he believes we should adopt and practice these values. He also assists in safely removing rock bee colonies, relocating them to forests to help protect biodiversity.

Today, Veeresh not only supplies honey but also honey bee hives and apiary units to farmers, earning more than a lakh per annum from his beekeeping ventures. Through his work, he continues to inspire others to explore the world of bees and find meaningful connections between nature, livelihood, and passion.
