

The Role of Communication Strategy In Tribal Development Research: The Case of Malayali Tribal Community In Tamil Nadu, South India¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines communication strategy as an important research technique that can create awareness among the people in participatory development research. This study is an outcome of my internship, which was undertaken at nine different Malayali tribal settlements of Tamil Nadu, South India. To achieve this, applied anthropology adopts the locally found plays, games, songs, videos, and street plays as effective communication tools to identify the problems faced by the people. As such, I call these “communication tools”, communication strategies that are able to create awareness among the Malayali tribes to communicate their livelihood problems with water, sanitation and education. The major objective of this study was to identify their problems and communicate them to the Malayali tribal people through the awareness campaign. The campaign task was accomplished with the collaboration of other research assistants and development workers, who had already been assigned to work in these settlements. This study also attempts to better understand their problems and methods of solving them by participatory research methods. The mode of campaigning was performed through different activities such as street plays, songs, Compact Disc (CD) show, rally, and children games. Nevertheless, such “communication strategy” demonstrated community problems effectively.

KEYWORDS:

anthropology, tribal community, participatory research, communication strategy and development

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1. INTRODUCTION

After my arrival at Padaiveedu², I met the tribal development officer who works at the Srinivasan Service Trust (SST)³ and his research assistants to discuss our internship plan. Then, I had to make arrangements for the research; however, I was very careful with each and every preparation as it was my first ethnographic research in Tamil Nadu. The following day, in the morning, I left from the SST office by tractor. Though I thought it was a strange experience, it was also a joyful one. Prior to this, on a previous trip, I travelled by tractor for a short distance in Sri Lanka in 1994; but this short distance was part of a three day journey from Jaffna to Colombo during the Civil War period; that was the only mode of transportation for the public during that time⁴. While travelling by tractor through Padaiveedu village I could see mountains, paddy fields, non-tribal community life, village schools, village temples, and peasant life of Tamil Nadu. At one point, the tractor had to stop because there was no road after that point, so we had to walk through the forest areas to reach the Malayali tribal⁵ community. The settlements were surrounded by the forest areas where I felt a different experience of “being” in these natural surroundings; because it was very calm quiet, and unlike Chennai city, I heard only the sounds of trees, river, and birds; it was a nice image of the settlements.

I would like to share an observation here before going to the details of this paper. While walking towards the Malayali tribal settlements at Irulumparai, I noticed the tribal people were actively involved in construction of a road between their settlements (the tribal settlement is located in the hilly region namely Kanamalai⁶) and the rest of the community (mainstream society/ Padaiveedu town). It was an amazing

²Padaiveedu is a village panchayat located in the Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil-Nadu state, India.

³Srinivasan Service Trust (SST) is a social body of Sudaram –Clayton Limited and T.V.Sundaram (TVS) Motor Company.

⁴During the war time, I also had to choose this mode of transportation to go to Colombo from Jaffna to attend my sister’s wedding; it was my first time experience of travelling by a tractor, which we had after crossing the Jaffna Lagoon (Kilali Sea), and also it was a horrible and fearful journey because people had to travel at night while hearing shelling and gun firing.

⁵One of the schedule tribes in Tamil Nadu

⁶Kanamalai is one of the Malayali tribal settlement at Tamil Nadu in South India

experience to see people's active participation in the road construction work rather than expecting aid from other donor agencies to construct a road. So far, the road construction had not been completed, and there was still a long way to go. I had a conversation with people to know how they have been involved in this work. They had been motivated by the development officer, which means that people had already started to think of their problems and seek for solutions within their capacity.

During my conversations, they shared their experiences and hardships about day-to-day lives and livelihood. While we were on the path, I noticed there was a woman passing us and she was carrying a bunch of firewood of an unusual size that I had never seen before - because the bark was too long - but she was walking faster than us. In this Malayali community, they often do not interact with the mainstream society and non-tribal members in the exchange of goods and services. I found two main reasons: one is their "tribal identity", which isolates them from outsiders in terms of cultural differences, and the second is the lack of transportation that limits their day-to-day participation in the mainstream society. As a result, I found that people have 'livelihood crises' and 'vulnerability' due to the lack of basic infrastructure facilities. However, they face difficulties in many ways; for instance, people faced a hardship when taking a pregnant woman to the hospital during the emergency time when home delivery practice fails. Further, it is aggravated due to delay of reaching hospital without a proper road facility and their unhygienic practices related to home delivery.

In addition, children had to walk for a long distance to go to school every day, and the other members of the community had to do the same. Interestingly, half of the work of the road has been completed successfully which I observed when I was in the field. The SST has started to build a school in this area (which is located in hilly region) with the support of People's Participation (PP) The SST has also established a small shop in Padaiveedu town for marketing their forest products and some of the members (particularly adults) of this tribal community have joined as workers, learners and trainees in the SST.

Through my research efforts and living experience with the Malayali tribal community, I gathered valuable data to show the relevance of Communication Strategy (CS) in community development (CD) research or tribal development research (Mefalopulos & Kamlongera, 2004; Bialystok, 1982) For the last two decades, tribal development and other CD researchers have believed that People Participation (PP) is an important strategy for CD programmes. CS is an effective research tool in creating awareness among the people and becomes essential for PP as well and for research findings to be more relevant to people's needs (Chowdhury, 1989). Its principles are based on the active involvement of people who are likely to be benefited or affected by research outcomes⁷.

The participatory development research experiences, were conducted with the nine inhabitants of ST (Schedule Tribe⁸) community: namely the Malayali community. The people have problems in the fields of education, water and sanitation. This internship was conducted to understand the problems in water, health and sanitation and education. This study greatly demonstrates that communication strategy is one of the most important research techniques in order to create awareness among the tribal people in participatory development research. The campaign was done in collaboration with the education team and water, health and sanitation teams. The people were encouraged to give suggestions to help solve these problems.

2. DATA, MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used ethnographic research methods (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) through residential field work, when I conducted this study among the Malayali people. This study utilizes primary data which was collected during my internship programme. In addition, it also substantially deals with relevant secondary data, which are qualitative and quantitative. Mostly, I have used qualitative research methods

⁷ See Nair and white (1996), p. 167.

⁸ST denotes schedule tribe which is one of the communities of Indian society. Indian society divided into three communities- caste, outcaste (Dalit) and indigenous (Adivasi). The third community includes many more or less homogeneous indigenous communities, which are not obligated to the Indian caste system yet are marginalized by caste communities. These have been grouped under the term "Adivasis," and they are Also referred to as tribal or Schedule Tribes (ST). India has the largest concentration of such indigenous and tribal people. See also Clarke (2005).

such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and key-informant interviews (Lavenda & Schultz, 2008; Bernard, 2006; Ferraro, 2001; LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Emerson et al., 1995). According to the Baseline survey report (University of Madras 2004), the major problems identified were associated with education, water and sanitation (Sabapathi Ponvaithyanathan, personal communication).

Before going into the field, these problems were discussed with development officers and research assistants who had already worked in these settlements. Prior to the field work, I had to spend three days creating a fieldwork plan with other colleagues, field experts, development officers, and key-informants to discuss the settlements and populations. This was meant to prepare the schedules and checklist for the whole internship program. Further, 'communication strategy' has acted as an effective research technique in communicating problem easily, and it played a major role in gathering people for participation. For this, a group of researchers were included into a team called communication team, which used a campaign to create awareness among the people to express their basic problems. The mode of campaigning was through:

- Street plays based on women's empowerment and importance of education.
- Songs based on education, unity and women empowerment.
- CD shows based on childcare and childbirth.
- Rally for enrolment of children.
- Issuing pamphlets for cholera.
- Games conducted for children like Origami, counting with beads and story reading.

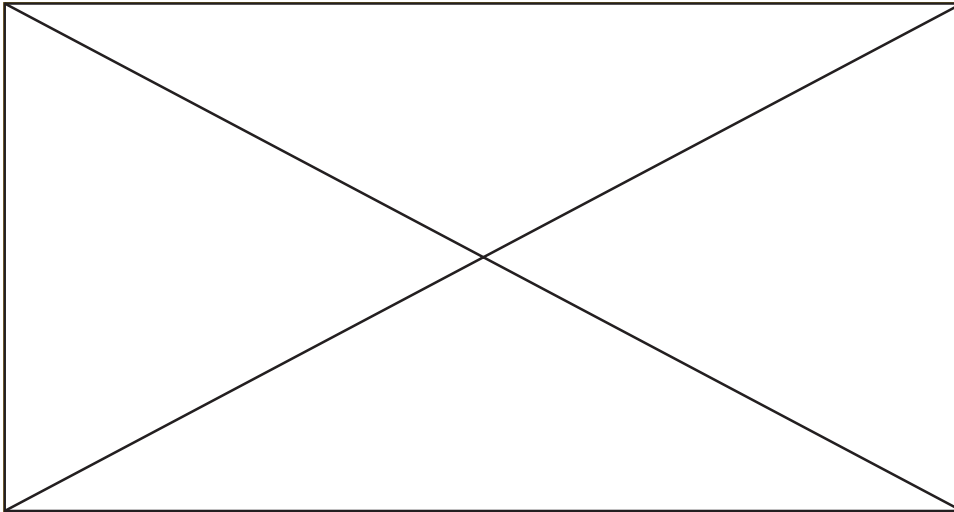
2.1 *Locale of the study and household composition*

The area chosen for the internship was Javadhu hills. These nine habitations are a part of Kanamalai panchayat in Javadu hills in the Polur Taluk⁹ Thiruvanamalai District. The Javadhu hills are near Padaiveedu in the Thiruvanamalai District. Padaiveedu is 46km away from Vellore District. Padaiveedu

⁹A Taluk is an administrative division of some countries of South Asia. As an entity of local government, it exercises certain fiscal and administrative power over the villages and municipalities within its jurisdiction.

commercial area acted as our base and is where the SST is located. The total number of households in the nine habitations are as follows:

The nine habitations in Kanamalaipanchayat in Javadu hills in PolurTaluk in Thiruvanamail District.



2.2 The purpose of selection of the area and duration

The purpose of selection of these habitations for this study is that these people face severe livelihood crises such as transportation (road), water health services, sanitation, and education. Also, these habitations have been largely isolated from the socio, economic, political and cultural spheres of mainstream society since they are part of a tribal community. Nevertheless, this does not mean neglecting their valuable indigenous knowledge of their socio, economic, political and cultural world, but they are in vulnerable position in coping with their own mechanism in order to obtain basic needs and complete in this modern society. The duration of this internship was forty five days during the months of May-June 2004 (05.05.2004-20.06.2004)

2.3 Who are the Malayali? Where do they live? What do they do?

First of all, readers may think that Malayali denotes the people of Kerala; of course, people of Kerala are also known as

Malayali, but this paper specifically discusses the Malayali tribes, who are classified as a scheduled tribe and has the largest tribal population among the thirty six scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu. Malayali means inhabitants of hills. According to the 2011 census report, the total population of Tamil Nadu is 72138958. Of this population, 794,697 are members of Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Census Report of Tamil Nadu 2011). A January 2015 update shows that the number of tribal members has grown to 8.63 lakhs. The thirty six (36) STs have been notified in Tamil Nadu by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act.1976. Of the STs, six have been notified with area restriction. The six are: Malayali, Kurumbas, Kanikaran, Kammara, Kota and Toda. Malayali are notified in Dharmapuri, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Pudukkottai, Salem, Namakkal, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli, Karur and Perambalur districts (<http://censusindia.gov.in>)

According to the census report (2011), the Malayali community population is 3.97lakhs. Their residential areas as follows, Jawadhu hills, Kalrayan hills, Kolli hills, Searvarayan hills, Pachamalai, Sitheri hills and few plain areas of northern districts in Tamil Nadu. The SST team has been working only in the Jawadhu hills and Sitheri hills only. The service area total population of Malayali community is 97438 (Interview 2015). Among these sites, most of my visits were at different Malayali settlements in Javadhu Hills.

The Malayalis basically depend on agricultural activities for their survival and forest activities, which includes hunting and gathering. When the Tamil Nadu Forest Department declared a strict rule on hunting and using a gun for hunting, it now happens on a small scale. According to the household survey (Department of Anthropology, 2004) of Malayali in the Javadhu hills, it is seen that more than 80% of Malayali depend on agriculture. It is also seen that most of the (40.6%) households have an operational land holding of 1-3 acres. About 10% of households are landless (Sudarsen and Sumathi, 2003, p. 3-4). Both patterns of cultivation and cropping vary between hill ranges to other. This study found two types of lands: dry land (Mettunilam) and the wetland (Kazhaninilam), which they hold for agriculture. Kambu, Kevuru, Thina, varagu and Samaiare cultivated in dry land

and I enjoyed the diet prepared from these grains. At the same time, I saw small scale paddy cultivation in the wetlands.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In general, communication strategy is designed for development programmes and will efficiently support development practitioners to implement development programs. In this, communication is used as a tool to develop a manual for development programmes. This tool becomes a strategy, which supports development programmes to achieve their goals (UNICEF, 2008). Indeed, communication strategy is quite an effective research tool to identify and enable societal issues and help people to understand their livelihood problems and lead them to seek solution within their capacity. According to the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), “formal definition of strategy as a logical approach derived from a deep understanding of local culture and conditions” (PATH, 2009, p.3). Hence, development of a strategy should consult with local culture and conditions; otherwise it would be a ‘top-down’ approach in development programs. By modifying this, this study concentrated on the local culture, local issues, and conditions in developing communication strategy. Therefore, this paper attempts to use ‘bottom up approach’ in participatory development research.

The word ‘strategy’ is distinct from the word ‘plan’. Further, the PATH report (2009) demonstrates that many people might define strategy by the word ‘plan’, but it is completely different in its logical application. In this, a plan would explain ‘what’ and ‘how’ to do it, but a strategy would say ‘why’. Hence, a strategy contains logical analysis and understanding of a program, so the development of a communication strategy requires consolidated findings and the social, political, economic, cultural, and moral background of the community, rationale and objectives.

Even though there are many elements to this list, there are essentially only two items: “consolidated findings” and “social background of the community, rationale, and objectives.” Consequently, there needs to be a connection between “consolidated findings” and “social, political, economic, cultural, and moral background of the community, rationale, and objectives.

Therefore, drafting and designing a communication strategy is a very challenging task due to different cultural and social settings. Communication specialists are recommended to assist in this process by accumulating knowledge of the community and research data. Indeed, I am not a communication specialist, but I have consulted with a communication specialist, and I could accomplish this work with that support. I could also gather research data from previous studies and research experiences from the people who were working in these settlements. However, this study was not to implement a development program/development plan, but it was to convey community problems by using communication skills and applied anthropological knowledge.

In addition, this article concentrates on the approaches of Community Development (CD), participatory approach (PA), and people participation (PP) (Nair & White, 1994). This study does not focus just on a development implementation, but also identifies livelihood crises and aims to create awareness among the people. By these approaches of CD, PA, and PP, these approaches were generally egalitarian and nostalgic for the virtues of rural communities, assuming that such communities were socially harmonious. The programmes using the label “community development” were quite diverse but had in common two incongruous sets of values and expectations.

In this conceptual framework, further, this study examines the Malayali community problems and development issues by using the concepts of community development, people participation, and participatory approach. Further, this study purposefully emphasises people participation, because people have to identify their problems and learn how to solve them with the help of development organizations. In this, development officials will have to consult with anthropologists and communication specialists to design a development plan.

Today, engaged anthropology and public anthropology especially concentrates on community issues (Fassin, 2013; Low & Merry, 2010; Hale, 2006). It means paying attention to professional responsibility, codes of ethics, and ethical obligations in anthropology, which are very relevant to academic contribution to the community development (Low

& Merry, 2010) Further, this study intends to indicate how much anthropological knowledge is engaged in the day-to-day life of human society, and it is not just research findings, and may be useful for societal benefits or social wellbeing. In this, I would like to explore the real engagement between society and anthropological knowledge (Osterweil, 2013).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. My journey to Padaiveedu

I started my journey from Chennai and went towards Padaiveedu; first I reached Vellore town, then I travelled through Arani-Santhavasal and finally reached Padaiveedu. I was intrigued to know about Padaiveedu because it urged me to connect with Arupadaiveedu (the six abodes of Murukan¹⁰), where, according to Thirumurugatrupadai¹¹, the lord Murukan performed a number of miracles at six different locations in Tamil Nadu. In order to clarify, I had a conversation with the natives of Padaiveedu; there was a village town where I found a tea shop and met people to learn the history of the name of this village. They explained that during the small Tamil kingdom period, one of the Kings built a military camp. Since that day onwards, this place was named as Padaiveedu: etymologically padaimeans troops and veedumeans house. This place is historically and religiously famous for Renugambal (mother goddess) temple¹².

However, I will have to describe the background of the Padaiveedu village before continuing on to detail my findings and discussion, because there is a connection between

¹⁰The six abodes of Murukan temples located in Tamil Nadu of South India.

¹¹ A Tamil poetic work was written by Nakkirar during the Sangam period.

¹²One day, one informant showed that "this is "KamandalaNadhi" while walking through the forest area. Then, I recollected my memory of Jamathakini saint that this Kamandala River formed from this saint's Kamandalam (water jug) and he was the husband of Renuga. The Renuga is the one who became a mother goddess and famous among the many devotees of Tamil Nadu and she is the mother of Parasuramar (one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu), which I learned this mythical story when I was a teen boy. Later, I got to know that Padaiveedu Ammon temple also has another name is Renegambal temple. I am glad to visit this temple, because I never thought that I would visit this temple and Kamandala River when I read about this myth.

Padaiveedu and my field site. Renugambal temple is the entrance of the Padaiveedu village, where SST office is located. SST offers development related services to the Padaiveedu community as well as the tribal community, particularly to Malayali tribal community. Padaiveedu is located at the base of the Javadhu Hill. The Malayali community also has close interaction with Padaiveedu where they may come together for their grocery needs and other commercial activities. In order to identify their problems and create awareness, we need to apply a strategy. We found communication would be the best technique to use in this regard. SST provided accommodation for me and other research assistants during our stay at Padaiveedu, which helped me to interact with SST workers to learn about the Malayali community, and also gave me a good opportunity to observe the non-tribal community. However, I had to report about my work every ten days, so I had to come down from the Malayali settlements to Padaiveedu. As I stated earlier, I had to cover nine settlements for this research, so I had to divide them into three sections to carry out the work. The tractor would not go up to the settlements, so we had to walk the rest of the way on foot. But, we sometimes walked without the tractor when it failed to pick us up.

4.2. Rapport building and setting the programmes

For this task, first of all, we had to build a good rapport with young people from the Malayali community (who work at SST already), so we explained the purpose of our visit as well as our plan in this community. Generally, we found some of the serious issues in the community from the early ethnographic literature and planned some of the key techniques. In order to complete the tasks of street plays, cholera campaign, CD (Card Disk)-shows, weight assessment in women and children, signing of names, story reading and rally, we had to identify appropriate methods to apply and study the issues. The following sections will discuss the application of these techniques and feedback experiences.

Initially, my colleague suggested some of these methods to apply since he had used them on a previous project. I too agreed to use them, and gradually, I could see the effectiveness

and benefits of these methods. For this, I had to hire some of the research assistants who were already in different research projects of SST. Having long conversation with people in the evening was easy and helpful, and it was also easy to build the rapport with community. During the day time, they all were busy with their work and not in a position to talk. For them, new people are “strangers”, which is why they did not allow us to enter their houses. So, we had to stay and sleep outside of the house throughout our research work.

The communication strategy has played a major role in the whole assessment of this work. Thus, the communication strategy proposes the following activities in this study: street plays, cholera campaign, adolescent personal hygiene, Card Disk shows, weight assessment in women and children, origami, story reading, signing of names, rally and low cost experiments. These campaigns and the resulting feedback are discussed in this section. As a team, I had to work with people, who really knew how to conduct these programs in tribal communities. First, we explained the purpose of my visit to the area and I met the president of the settlement and expressed my plan of having some programs and he was happy to have them. Before having these plays and programs, we usually visited the president to go around the settlement that really helped us to become familiar and build a good rapport with the community.

4.3 Street plays

Street plays based on women empowerment and importance of education were the main code of the campaign. The plays, which were put up, were Vallienvazhkhru (women empowerment) and Kaditham(letter) and Pillaikalengai (where are the children) which represented the importance of education (Pathmanesan, 2008, Pathmanesan et al., 2004). I collected scripts, songs, and story from my colleague, who used them for previous community development programs. The plays were staged up in the Irulamparai, Naduvuur, Thanjamparai, Melshenbagathoppu, Kanamalai and Arasanoor Malayali settlements

- *Vallienvazhkhru*: This play was based on the problems faced by girls at home and in society. It also

says how she overcomes challenges and that women should fight for their rights. The problems like eve teasing and importance of education of a girl child. This story is a typical rural story, in this, Valli is a young girl, and one day she went to fetch water closer to her house, where her cousin came and involved in eve teasing. Continually, he insisted that she marry him, but she refused and wished to continue her education. She brought the eve teasing incident to Panchayat (local government system) one day. She argued for her right and refused to marry him. She insisted the Panchayat punish him for the incident. Therefore, this story addresses the women's right and empowerment in a society.

- Kaditham: This play was based on the importance of education. An old man who has not studied, gets a letter which has the message of his son's death suffers for 3 days to get the message. One girl reads the letter and tells him. He screamed and realized the importance of education. After that, he could not read the letter as he did not know how to read and write.
- *Pillaikalengai*: This play was based on the importance of education. A teacher goes and calls the children to the school, but the children are impoverished and must go to work instead of school. The play conveys the responsibility of the teacher.

Having these street plays at these settlements was very thought-provoking and interesting experience to learn how to build rapport with the community easily. While we were in the community, first we had a meeting with people at night and discussed their general issues connected to their day-to-day life. Then, we announced that we are going to stage several street plays there. Actually, we were the actors, who played the street plays and usually I gathered the people by singing a song. For this, I sang a very famous Sri Lankan Tamil folk song "chinachina vanndikatti...." (This song about a farmer, who rides a bull cart with a heavy load of his harvest and other stuff towards his home, and it, is during a summer time, so he was so tired and struggled to ride it due to sandy road). Apart from meaning of the song, the song was had a rhythmic and folk music base, which attracted people. For this, we used very simple dress costumes to distinguish the

different actors. Prior to the street play, we announced it during the day time and informed small children to convey the message to their family members. They were very enthusiastic to see and hear. We selected a common place; mostly it was one of the house's courtyards, because it was able to accommodate many people there. People were seated in a circle keeping the center space for the performers and it was like an open theater. They were happy to attend the event and it was very crowded. They prepared meals for us and served them after the play.

4.4 Feedback

The people understood the street plays and the message reached them quickly. In some occasions, the local people (from non-tribal communities) were also encouraged to participate in plays. In all the areas after watching Vallienvazhkhu, women were found to be in more number, they said that the girls should be sent to School and give them equal rights. If men act with them in a wrong manner they should be punished, so they will not repeat it again.

In some places, there was argument between the people themselves. They were aware of the importance of education; they told that the children should go at least until middle school and not only Tamil should be taught, but also English. After watching the plays some children forced their parents to allow them join in the school. When we were in the field we heard that the children in Irulamparaireenacted one play after we left, which means they were impressed. The plays helped us to build a good rapport with the people, as in some places they were not prepared to talk with us but after the play they came forward to tell us their problems. The women mainly supported the street plays. Songs were sung in between the plays, which emphasized education, unity and women empowerment. The people were relaxed after the play and at the same time received the message.

4.5 Cholera campaign

During my field work, I felt the importance of cholera awareness and the need for an immediate temporary solution,

which people can adopt to prevent dehydration. As settlements are closer to each other and the people live in small huts, which allow diseases to spread quickly. For this, a cholera campaign was conducted in which the people were told the mode of infection and treatment. They were told to hydrate since lots of water is lost due to dehydration. They were also taught the method. The ORS powder is the best treatment for dehydration. The powder is made with a hand full of sugar and a pinch of salt is to be added in a glass of water and to be given to the patient. The people said that they will follow this method and tell this to the others. I had to spend time conveying it to people while they working, cooking, and relaxing. Otherwise, it was very difficult to get them for the conversation. Having conversations with them was very useful to understand their life. During my field work, I felt like a member of the community, because I spent my time having conversations about not only their issues, but also their belief systems, religious beliefs, customs, and taboos of the community.

4.6 Adolescent personal hygiene

For this, I had the help of some of the female research assistant and gave them careful instructions. With regard to girls' menstruation and their practice, it was very important to pay attention because of the unhygienic practices that are commonly used. The adolescent girls were told the importance of personal hygiene as they use cloth which they wash and keep it on the roof of the hut and use it the next month. They were told to keep the cloth in a plastic cover as poisonous insects may hide in it and bite when the cloth is used. Our research assistants were instructed to inspect the roofs of the houses and look for those clothes.

4.7 CD (Card Disk)-shows

A CD about childcare and childbirth was shown to the women. The CD is about child birth and growth until the age of four. It covers the changes which take place in the child, types of food to be given at the various stages, the importance of breast feeding, how the growth of teeth occurs, at what stage children starts to walk and crawl and the different types of crawls the

baby prefers. The CD duration is about forty-five minutes. I was surprised to see televisions and CD players were at some of the houses in the hilly regions, because I was thinking that it was very difficult to walk, let alone carry a heavy load to these settlements, so how people managed to take all these stuffs from outside is surprising.

4.8 Feedback

In general, women said that it was very useful to them and they were able to get more information about childcare and childbirth, which they were not aware at childbirth. They said they have a traditional practice of feeding mother's milk only after three days and they give oil and sugar water for three days. They say milk comes in only after they take a bath. They were told that milk comes in soon after birth. The first milk is important as it gives immunity to the child against diseases. They use a knife which is used for household purposes to cut the umbilical cord. They were told to use a new blade as the knife may contain rust, which can cause infection to both the mother and child. They feed the child breast milk till the age of three but give solid food only after one year. The women were asked to start giving food from six months, as the baby needs energy for the growth of the body and brain. When the women asked what type of food can be giving to a child, we told them they could give boiled and smashed vegetable, dal, rice, egg, potato, ragi, greens and fruits.

4.9 Weight of children and women

The weights of children and women were taken and it was found that they were very weak. This may be because the women get married at a very early age and the time gaps between the children are found to be less. They do not take nutritious food according to the amount of work they do. Therefore, development official instructed them to consume a lot of vegetables and asked them to start a kitchen garden. We told them that wastewater can be used to grow plants. These instructions were important because I observed that they eat one or two vegetable only, and many times, I had food at their places and had one vegetable curry and rice.

4.10 Children's activity

Some activities were done for the children like origami, counting with beads and story reading. These were done to attract the children to school and get them interested in studying. Adults and senior students were trained by all these three activities to continue this programme in future.

4.11 Origami

Origami is art of making objects in paper, it is basically to teach the geometric shapes are created while folding the paper to make the object. This was also taught to the development workers as they can continue teaching the children in the coming days. The children were very much impressed and made the object taught to them which made them happy. They were happy after they made the object.

4.12 Story reading

The children were made to read stories to assess their reading capacity. Some children were able to read while most of them were unable to read the stories. The children have less reading capacity, so they need more practice in reading.

4.13 Signing of names

In addition, we organized a signing campaign to learn how to write their names. The women were taught to sign their names in Tamil. For this event, a lot of ladies came forward to sign their names. The women themselves came and asked us to teach them to sign their names. They were very interested and learned in a short period. They were asked to continue practicing until they are confident enough to write it without any help. Particularly the communication team in particular took this responsibility with a research assistant (one of the members of the communication team) an initiation to teach them to sign their names. It is actually good sign in people participation for community development and it is good achievement for people.

4.14 Rally

A rally was organized in Irulamparai and Melshenbagathoppu for the enrollment of children and dropout students. In Irulamparai, the rally was started from the school and led to Naduvur and Thanjamparai. The school children and the teacher were also made to take part in the rally. Slogans were told and banners were made by the communication team to hold children. The slogans were told, insisting the parents to send their children to school. The children were enrolled as the rally was going on. The rally was organized in the same way in Melshenbagathoppu also. The local people were also made to take part in the rally and at the end some games were organized. There were ten enrolments done in both the places together. The parents came forward to enroll their children in school and promised to retain them.

5. PROBLEMS

Communication strategy has been playing a significant role in identifying the problems with great support of the research assistants from SST. The problems were identified and some suggestions were provided.

5.1. Problems

The study picked some stories to stage as a street play and some interesting activities to encourage them to engage with our research to identify their problems. That is why I would like to say that the study applied those common social issues in Tamil Nadu society to advise people to create awareness about their issues and try to solve them within their capacity to some extent. Though the study picked a few activities or plays to accomplish the target, the study could meet a number of issues, which people face in their settlements.

Regarding the problems, they are varied from settlement to settlement; some are common to all and some are different. In this section, I combine the settlements together to discuss the problems, which share the same problems. First, it discusses the three settlements of Irulamparai, Naduvur and Muthandikudisai where people expressed that a common issue is proper transport facilities, which they require for their

day-to-day activities. They have a road which connects to the mainstream society, but they need public bus transportation service. Another common issue was found that people need deeds (locally known as patta for their lands) and they have not had them for a long time. With regard to education, I observed that school has not functioned regularly and even we stayed in their school for ten days.

According to my observation and conversation, the school is not a big building and does not have many classrooms. It is just a small hall and all age groups are taught together. The school did not have many teachers and a teacher had to spend time with each group of students as they were different age groups. Each group indicates different grade. We used the school as our stay place, but most of the time, the school was not functioning and we mostly used that place during the night time for writing the field notes and discussion with other colleague. Then, on the following day, we had to get up early and make the place as school. The school did not have any separation within the hall. I heard from the Irulamparai inhabitants that teacher was irregular in coming to school and due to this, more students were dropouts, therefore, I decided to have a rally promoting the education and importance of school.

Accidentally, we met the school teacher when he came to open the school one day. I asked him about the dropout issue, but I received a different opinion from him: that students regularly attend the school, therefore, he decided to make it three or four days per week. Here, the issue was the teacher took a decision himself without consultation with the community or community leader. The teacher also did not take sincere care to encourage the children to attend the school. Scarcity of water was also one of the main problems because one group was not allowed to take water from the bore of Irulamparai settlement due to internal conflict. There is no common well, and they had to walk a long distance to take water from river. Additionally, there was no hospital nearby the community. Though they had managed to solve some of the immediate problems using indigenous medicine, they had very serious problems dealing with pregnancies.

Thanjamparai settlements also addressed the same issues like road facilities, drinking water, and need of deeds for their land. In Neerthumbai, the study identified same issues discussed above, but particularly they emphasized the need of a local school as their children had to walk to go to school, which is located in the mainstream society. Children could not do their homework at home, because they returned back home in the very late evening every day and they were very tired due to long distance travel. In addition, they did not have electricity in those settlements of Neerthumbai, and health and sanitation were poor. They had to cross the river during the rainy period even in emergencies this was the only mode of transportation to reach the mainstream society.

Moving to Melshenbagathoppu, there was an issue of illicit liquor that they produced them. Some of the same issues with roads, health and sanitation were brought up for the concern. Remarkably, there was a dam construction which would affect the Keezhshenbagathoppu settlements that they will have to move the dam: I think it will be a serious issue for these settlements due to this new development project.

In the Kannamalai and Arasanoor settlements, there was a serious issue due to illicit liquor that they produce and sell. Due to this, outsiders visit there for liquor and it created many social issues in the community. They also faced same problems in the fields of proper road facilities health, sanitation, and the lack of a schoolteacher. Particularly, as there is no proper road to use in the case of pregnancies and in emergency cases, they had to carry the patients in daily. Many of the cases died on the way, especially in pregnancy cases, both mother and children died.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, communication strategy has played a major role in identifying the day-to-day life of Malayali tribal community, and it also enabled us to create awareness among the people. For me, this study was a good opportunity to learn more applied anthropological knowledge. In addition, it was intended to bridge the gap between communication and anthropology, and succeeded by the application of communication and anthropological knowledge to the field.

Although it was a very short term stay in the field, I have moved in the right direction to achieve the goals of the study. Thus, communication strategy helped to reveal their problems, and the study was able to continue suggestions by using anthropological knowledge. In this, the study drew attention to the fact that people have lack of public interaction and communication with the mainstream society/non-tribal society in exchanging goods and services. It also addressed the 'livelihood crises' and 'vulnerability' among the Malayali community due to the lack of basic infrastructure facilities.

Furthermore, they face difficulties especially in taking pregnant woman to the hospital in emergencies while failing home delivery practice and it becomes worse due to their unhygienic practices. In addition, children have to walk long distances to school every day and people also do the same for day-to-day activities. Further, development in tribal communities needs to be compared with global development as each society is connected with global capitalism. In the present day, the fields of relevance of anthropology and engaging anthropology heavily involve in making decision and providing recommendations, even play a major role in policy making. This kind of treatment is known as public anthropology or engaged anthropology (Obsterweil, 2013). Following these directions, this study intends to provide some suggestions.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions were given for education. These suggestions are common to nine settlements in order to improve their education.

- More interest should be shown to students who are below average.
- Reasons for poor concentration to be identified.
- A support center for these students run by local volunteers
- Teachers should know how to train students on the basis of activity-based program
- Identification & reason for dropout
- Steps taken for enrollment
- These students should join the support center

- The school should be used as a community center
- A teacher should be a counselor of the village
- A parent and teacher association (PTA) should be started in the school. In PTA meeting problems of teachers and students should be solved. Self Help Group (SHG) meetings should be held at school and education topics should be discussed

Regarding the water problem in Irulamparai, a few suggestions were given that:

- The water problem can be solved by making them together and bring unity into them
- During rainy season, chlorine can be added to wells and water tank
- Advise them to boil the water before drinking

The following suggestions were provided for the health..

- A small health center can be opened.
- Lady volunteers should be trained in delivery and first aid.
- Bring the awareness to the issue of water-borne disease.
- Give vaccines to the children.

This section discusses the suggestions for Melshenbagathoppu, Keezhshenbagathoppu, Kannamalai, Arasanoor and Neerthumbai, which are particularly varied in from other areas that what we discussed the above. Therefore, this paper now will discuss about the suggestions were given to the areas, which shared the same issues commonly. The following suggestions were given to the Neerthumbai settlement.

- People can be engaged in building the road
- Children can be advised to go to Ellanthapattu School after construction is over
- Awareness in personal hygiene & sanitation should be brought to people's attention.
- A wooden bridge can be constructed across the river by the people themselves
- Health camps can be organized once every three months

- Women can be taught how to keep the genital area clean

The following suggestions were given to the Melshenbagathoppu and Keezhshenbagathoppu settlements.

- Awareness in personal hygiene and sanitation should be brought
- A wooden bridge should be constructed across the river by the people themselves
- Health camps should be organized once in three months
- People should get awareness and treatment on illicit liquor
- Health volunteers should be trained in each village
- A low cost water filter can be made and people can be trained to use it
- People can be asked to replace leaking taps.
- Lady volunteers should be trained in delivery and first aid
- PTA meeting to be held once in a month
- In PTA meeting problems of teachers and students can be discussed.
- A support center run by local volunteers can be established to help these students.
- Teacher should know how to train students on the basis of activity-based program
- (* In each village there is a cricket team, which can be organized as a youth group and give them responsibility in solving the local problems. They can be invited to local SST meetings to have a good relationship)

The following suggestions were given to the Kannamalai and Arasanoor settlements.

- If a road is installed there should be a lower rate of illicit arrack brewing as there will be easier communication between hills and plains.
- In Ottankollai, a check dam should be built also in Nakkulam to save water.
- Artificial lakes can be made to store rainwater, which can be used for irrigation.

- Health volunteers can be recruited and trained.
- The reason for the absence of the teachers should be identified and an alternative should be given through the government.
- The local persons who are interested in teaching should be appointed and paid by the Panchayat.
- A support center should be started for the children to encourage them to join the school.
- The people should see whether an overhead or small tank should be used.

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