

A Report on
Participatory Rural Appraisal

Conducted on
14 and 15, November 2010

Perumselvavilai,
Melasankarankuli Panchayat,
Kanyakumari District

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Participatory Rural Appraisal - A Report

Village: Perumselvavilai, Melasankarankuli Panchayat, Kanyakumari District

About the village

Perumselvavilai, a hamlet in Melasankarankuli Panchayat, is a small village in Kanyakumari District. The village has about 1300 population living in about 250 families. The village is well connected by road with Nagercoil which is about 4 kms from the village. The village is predominantly agriculture village with more than 70 per cent of the families engaging themselves in agriculture and allied activities. The village has about 60 families of potters and thus pottery has become the second major occupation of the village. With this background, this participatory exercise is conducted to assess the possibilities of taking-up different development activities for initiating measures to bring integrated rural development.

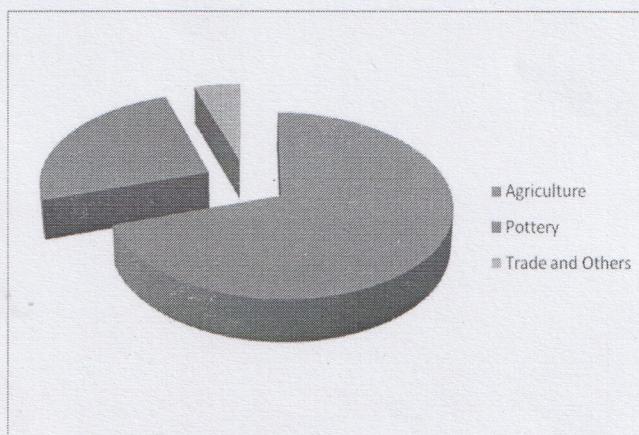
Methodology

For the purpose of this assessment, Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology is adopted. Experts trained in PRA from Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram, Dindigul District and Rural Development Centre of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari served as resource persons in conducting people consultation exercises. As part of this exercise, Village

Transect, Field Transect, Linkages, Occupation Assessment, and Focussed Group Interview were held with people. The team had spent two days and conducted three rounds of Focussed Group Discussion.

- As stated earlier, the village is predominantly agriculture village with 70 per cent of the families engaging in agriculture and allied activities. Of the remaining, majority are potters. Pottery is considered as the second most livelihood avenue for about one fourth of the total population living in 60 families and among them 20 families are involved actively in pottery.

Occupational composition of the village people



- When it comes to agriculture, next to paddy, people cultivated coconut groves. The entire village is surrounded by coconut groves. It is estimated that the area under coconut trees is more than double the extent of land under paddy cultivation. The

village has a big tank with an area extending to more than 50 acres of land and has an area of 450 acres under cultivation of paddy. The other crops raised include banana, green gram and black gram. Though the village has the potentials to grow mango, pomegranate, gooseberry, drumstick and other fruit bearing trees (these trees are found in backyard of almost all households), people have not taken up the cultivation of these horticulture crops in large scale. Similarly, using of lands under coconut trees, for inter-cropping is not prevalent. The village has a very active farmers' club and farmer members in commodity clubs formed by NGOs and Government departments. About 30 per cent of the farming families, in addition to farming, engage in allied activities such as milch animal rearing. The focused group discussion brought forth the fact that the farmers are still practicing the traditional farming practices including application of inorganic and chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Rarely believed in 100 per cent organic farming. They also out-rightly rejected the idea of taking up any other agro processing and agro based activities in their village for enhancing their income.

- scope for further probe among farmers being less.

- The village has social infrastructure facilities such as anganvadi, library and reading rooms, a primary cooperative bank, milk producers society, veterinary hospital, SHG building, community halls, sanitary complexes etc.
- The village has frequent bus services to Nagarcoil and nearby villages.
- The village is better off in terms of housing condition. Almost all houses are concrete houses or pucca houses. Rarely we could see huts. More than 95 per cent of the houses having electricity connection. About 50 per cent of the households have modern kitchen electrical and electronic articles.
- Drinking water supply is regular and people have potable water without any scarcity throughout the year.
- The village has 12 SHGs, of them 6 groups are formed among the potters (4 women groups and 2 men groups).
- Pottery is a traditional occupation. About 60 families of potters live in this village. Among these 60 families, 17 families are actively engaged in production of different varieties of pots, pans, lamps, and country chullahs. The industriousness of these 17 families is evident from the fact that the streets and roads are filled with sand, alluvial soil and pots, almost all members of these families engaging

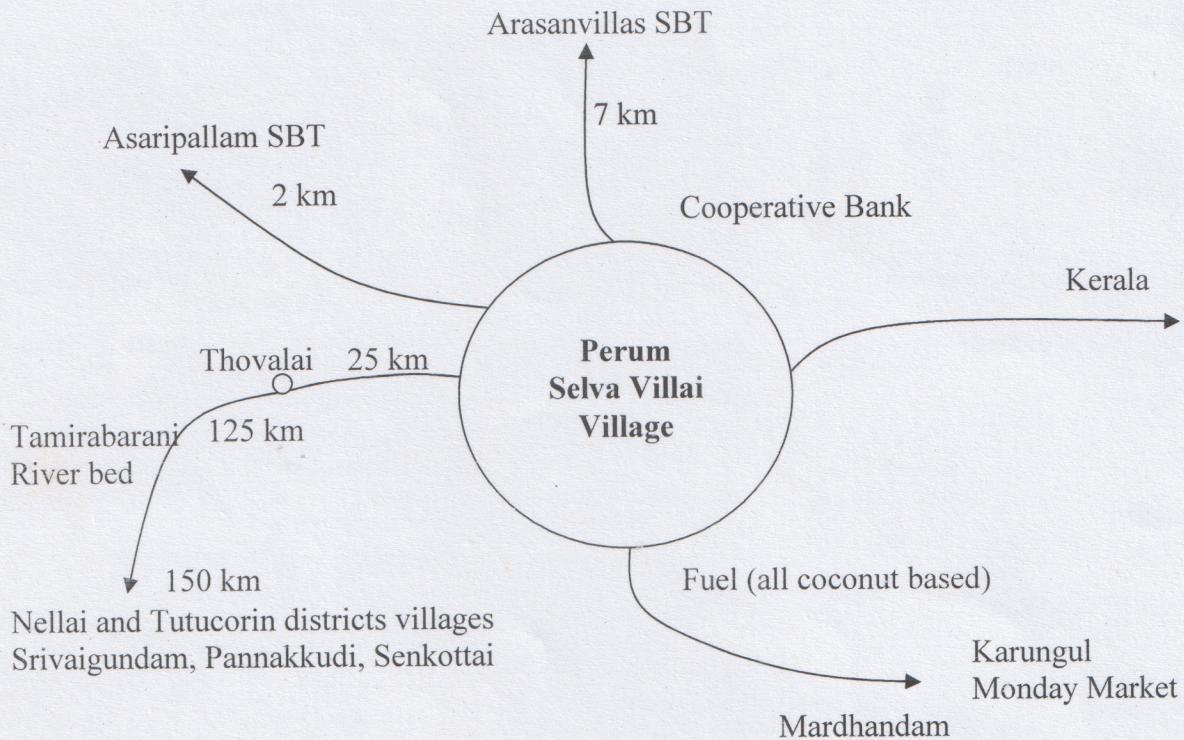
all the time in some work connected with pottery. This traditional occupation provides employment to a sizable number of people engaged in this activity. But they reported that whether they like it or not, they have to engage themselves in this trade as they do not know any other livelihood avenue.

- The team after having understood, decided to probe further about pottery to explore the possibilities of rejuvenating this traditional occupation. A village transect is made by the team specially to observe the process of pot making and to collect the facts on pottery and the problems of potters. The team come to understand the following from the transect walk.
- There are three furnace facilities created by the Government under the panchayat scheme and the MP funds and two potters have their own arrangement for furnace. The furnaces are sufficient as only about 20 per cent of the potters are involved actively in production. The furnaces particularly those built under government schemes need improvement and periodical maintenance. The immediate requirement is that these furnaces need side interlocking walls and repair of the burner.

Problems and Needs of the Potters

Raw material collection	Permit pass limited to 25 nos. Difficulties in obtaining licence
Mixing of clay	Machines are available They need financial assistance, space, etc.
Potters wheel	Gear wheels are required This again needs – capital investment (about Rs.20,000)
Finishing work (moulding)	Women are involved
Furnace	There are 3 furnaces established under financial support from MP/MLA funds. But they need maintenance work; construction of side walls
Marketing	No problem at all

Linkages



- There is a high level of demand for the pots and country chullahs produced here in villages and cities in Kerala. Mostly the potters sell their products locally to the traders who again are from the same community who is willing to pay the potters in advance and at time instruct the potters what kind of improvements to be made in the pots and other products. Though the potters are either directly or indirectly under the clutches of these well off potters cum traders, they never accept this fact and they say that one cannot involve in all activities as efficient as in any one of these activities.
- The potters reported that they have several problems in their occupation. Since adequate sand and mud are not available locally, they need to travel long distances and by the way they need to spend more time and money. Sand quarrying needs licence, obtaining which is again the major problem they face. (See Problems and Needs and Linkages diagram)
- KVIB, the spokes person of the cottage and village industries, has not shown required interest in the promotion of the pottery nor the villagers approached the KVIB with requests for assistance.
- The probe brought forth the fact that a local NGO which is working with the objective of promoting village industries

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particularly pottery related activities could not convince the people in the introduction of modern methods and techniques in the production of pots and other items.

Possible project intervention areas identified

Agricultural related projects

- Promotion of organic farming – training and demonstration on
 1. Cultivation of azolla
 2. Vermi compost
 3. Decomposing pits
- Establishment of community vermin composting units of 2 MT/month capacity – jointly owned by Farers Club and SHG with Farmers clubs providing the land and SHG with contribute towards labour
- Promotion of agri clinic for taking up soil testing, interpretation of soil test reports for application of fertilizers, issuance of soil health cards, and application of fertilisers based on leaf colour charts – in intensively paddy cultivated areas
- Demo plots in small of size 200 to 500 cents – latest varieties of paddy and banana (about nine varieties of banana are planted)

- Demo plots on green gram cultivation – mono crop as well as inter crop in coconut groves
- Capacity building training and exposure trips to farmers on
 1. mushroom cultivation,
 2. organic farming,
 3. use of micro nutrients,
 4. promotion of coconut based value addition projects,
 5. horticulture promotion, etc.
- Inter-crop and intensive cultivation practices
 1. awareness,
 2. demonstration plants, and
 3. exposure trips,
- Micro nutrient management practices in coconut groves
 1. Application of micro nutrient
 2. Planting of N_2 tree crops / grasses (fodder) as bunds for nitrogen source eg. Acacia Grass CO4
- Training and capacity building in NFS activities
- Micro enterprises development programme for artisan groups, matured SHGs, and women and progressive farmers
- Coconut Farmers Club may be formed. The club may be equipped with ICT.

- Farmers club and commodity clubs may be further strengthened.
- Strengthening of Village Development councils – social engineering
- Capacity building to VDC to take up developmental works exit policy is put in place at the beginning of the programme
- Creation of JLGs and issue of Kisan Credit Cards
- Collective procurement of fertilizers, and pesticides
- Collective marketing for coconuts
- Integrated Farm Development – Demo with assistance from a suitable agency

Pottery related

- A scientific study may be carried out to understand different aspects of pottery and for suggesting appropriate technology
- Exposure trips may be arranged to the potters on the modern techniques of pottery
- At the household level, place is insufficient. Therefore, common shed may also be created to work in the village.
- With proper training, they can be motivated to take-up pottery in large scale
- The future generation will not take-up the occupation unless otherwise facilities are created to enable the potters to produce in a continuous manner

- People are also urging that this occupation has export possibilities
- Clay, sand (vandal) not available. Permanent pass not issued for taking clay and sand (only 10 passes were issued). It was not sufficient. Therefore the departments concerned should take necessary steps to enable the potters to get required raw material for their occupation.
- Modern (mixing) clay puck mills may be supplied
- Modern wheels (17 numbers) with brick facility
- The potters need financial assistance for the following purposes – puck-mill for grinding and mixing the clay and mud (sand), gear wheels, furnaces, drying yard, etc.
- Pottery – training, financial assistance for developing artistry in pottery for export promotion