

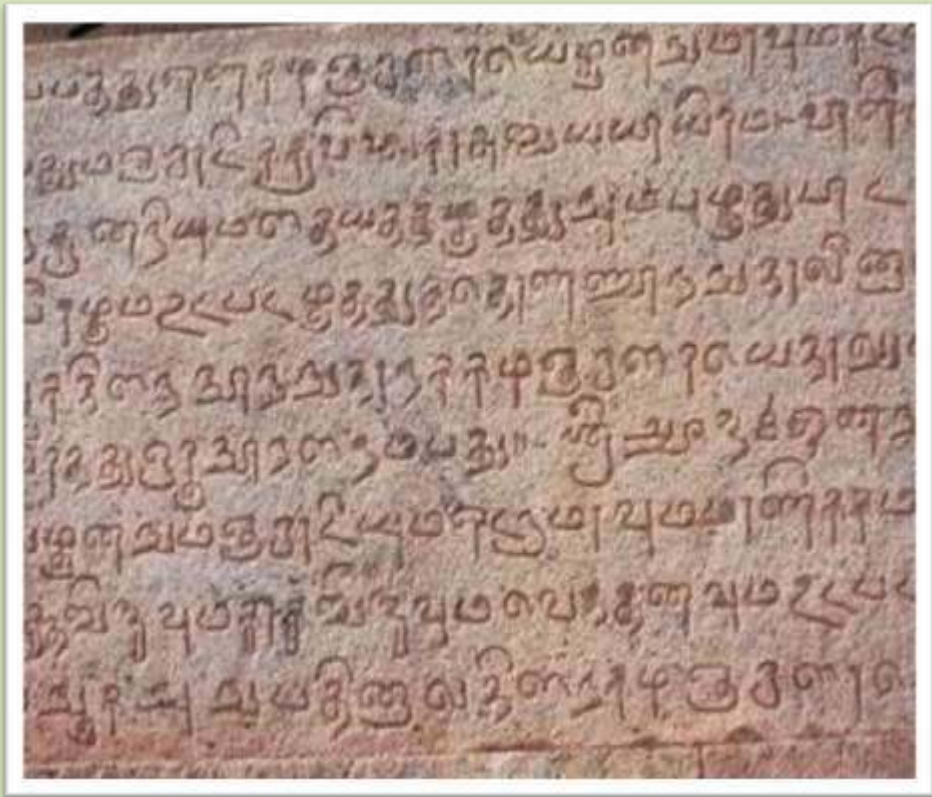
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INTONATION AS A SYSTEM TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS AND ATTITUDES IN SPEECH

G. Ravisankar

Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

The term language is restricted to refer to a vocal system of human communication. Crystal (1971: 239) says that “language is the most frequently used and most highly developed form of human communication we possess.” He further clarifies (*ibid.*) that, “an act of communication is basically the transmission of information of some kind, a message from source to receiver.” Gimson (1962: 3) also views that, “a language is a system of conventional signals used for communication by a whole community.” So language can be characterized as a system of human vocal noises used as a conventional signals by a community for purposes of communication. The patterns of communicational convention cover a linguistic system, a system of significant sound units (phonemes), the inflexion and the arrangement of words (*ibid.*: 4). But not all the sounds produced by the human vocal system are linguistic in nature.

Since language is purely a human act, this system carries person’s emotions and attitudes also. Hence Sapir (1921: 8) regards language as, “purely a human and non-instinctive method of communication, ideas, emotions as desired by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.”

There exists a medium enabling a language to its communicative functions. Abercrombie (1967: 3) calls this medium as ‘aural’ medium. This medium is created by the movement of lips, tongue, larynx and lungs. All these collectively constitute the vocal apparatus, the function of which results in the speech sounds. These speech sounds are arranged in such a way that they form patterns in time. These patterns are relevant for linguistic communication. They function as sequence of sounds in a language. These sound sequences are realized as sentences or utterances. So language is nothing but a system of structures built by the sequence of human vocal sound patterns used for linguistic communication.

Speech sounds are constituted by segmental and non-segmental features. The segmental sounds, with different qualities, are produced by the

vocal apparatus by various articulatory postures at oral, pharyngeal and laryngeal cavities. The extra ordinary activity of the articulators in the above cavities with respect to the articulatory postures, produces the quantitative variations over the already produced qualitatively different segmental sounds (Ravisankar, 1980: 3). The quantitative characteristics of the segmental sounds are known as non -segmental features.

Segmental sounds of a language are broadly classified as vowels and consonants. They are basic to the formation of sound sequence structures. The conventional combinations of these sounds give meaningful words and sentences. The meaning they give are based on their lexical and grammatical relations to the sound sequences.

Non-segmental features prevail over the segmental sounds. They are essential to a language to make the communication complete, fulfilling the various aspects of human activity by intoning emotions, attitudes and personal traits. Even a few lexical and grammatical differences are also made explicit by these features. They establish an indirect link with the words and stretch of utterances to convey not only the semantic variations of lexical items, but also the intended and implied meanings of the utterances. So the non-segmental features along with segmental sounds make the language a humane activity, a social act.

There are two aspects of the non-segmental features which are called as ‘paralinguistic and prosodic features.’ Crystal (1969: 12) says that, “the phrase ‘prosodic and paralinguistic features’ is really a comprehensive label functionally as well as phonetically by definition, referring to all non-segmental vocal effects which have a conventional and systemic role...” These non-segmental vocal effects cause variations along the parameters of:

- ❖ pitch (the number of vibrations of the vocal cords per second or the number of repetitions of the complex wave per second),
- ❖ loudness (the intensity of force of the air-flow causing the production of a sound or a sequence of sounds),
- ❖ duration (the time taken for the production of a sound sequence),
- ❖ silence (the time-lag or the imposed intervals in a sound sequence).

Though the prosodic and paralinguistic features differ from each other in many respects, it is very difficult to make a sharp distinction between them. Paralinguistic features are the vocal effects which mainly express the idiosyncratic features like the speaker’s personal moods and traits. Crystal (1969: 6) says that, “other vocal effects, similar in their relation to the segmental side of language and in their semantic role, but distinct in their

physiological articulatory basic and distribution...are paralinguistic features.” They too have some degree of pitch, loudness, duration and even silence. But, these features are phonetically less discrete and discontinuous in the connected speech than the prosodic features.

Prosodic features are also the results of vocal effects which cause variations along the parameters of pitch, loudness, duration and silence in connected speech. Crystal (1969: 5) says that. “prosodic features are set of mutually defining phonological features which have an essentially variable relationship to those features (phonemes, lexical meaning) which have direct and identifying relationship to such words.” He (ibid.: 140) groups prosodic features into systems on the basis of shared dominant phonetic parameters, each system covering a particular kind of variability that can be discussed independently of variations taking place elsewhere. The systems distinguished are: tone(pitch), pitch-range, tempo, loudness, rhythmicality and pause.

Ravisankar (1980: 2) defines prosodic features as the musical characteristics of speech and they are rhythmical by recurring in equal intervals of time. Unlike the paralinguistic features, these features are present at all times in all persons’ speech in some degree or other. They are integrated with the linguistic aspects to express the emotion/attitude of the speaker.

The prosodic features form prosodic patterns in time dimensions. The prosodic patterns establish a direct link with the segmental sound sequences and add different senses to the basic meaning of the sound sequences (word or sentence) constituted by segmental units (phonemes) by their distinctive behaviours. These sense variations may be related to semantic and grammatical variations of lexical items; emotional and attitudinal feelings of the speaker and emphatic and contrastive functions of the meanings. These extraordinary senses are the results of the overlaid supra segmental features of the segmental units which otherwise will only give the lexical meanings.

The system of segmental sounds and non-segmental features together play a significant role in making the communication strong and effective in a language. Mostly, the lexical and grammatical meanings are expressed by the structural patterns of the segmental sound sequences, the connotative aspects of the same as implied by the speaker are carried by the prosodic features.

The prosodic system is organized on some primary parameters which are the psychological attributes of sound, viz., pitch, loudness, duration and silence with rhythmicality (the isochronous recurrence of syllables), tempo (the speed of the utterance) and pitch range (the width of the pitch-glide). These parameters in various fixed combinations are used to express different marked meanings of the sentences.

A stretch of utterance is formed by the sound sequence structures referred to as utterances. Each such utterance is overlaid with an intonation unit which is formed by the co-ordinate function of different prosodic features referred to above. Among these parameters of intonation pitch is the most significant one which because of its musical quality, is highly sensitive to human ear. It makes tremendous effect as a perceptual factor. The fluctuations of pitch while contributing a smoothening effect to the utterance cause linguistically significant sound components. This musical effect, considered to be pleasing to the ear, is termed as ‘speech melody’ (Abercrombie, 1967: 104). Abercrombie (ibid.) says, “When this speech melody is part of the structure of words (syllables) it is called as ‘tone’ and ‘intonation’ when it is part of the structure of sentence.”

Abercrombie (ibid.) defines intonation as “the speech melody brought out by the pitch fluctuation” and proceeds to say. “pitch fluctuation in its linguistic function may conveniently be called as speech melody.” Bolinger (1972: 3) puts at length that “all languages, including tone languages, use the fundamental for mood and punctuating effects over longer stretch of speech. These are called as – intonation’ speech melody as distinct from the tones of non-tonal languages.” He further says (ibid.) “in every non-total language the pitches of utterances tend to be frozen into formalized patterns or intonations. These patterns constitute phrase melodies which are characteristics of the particular language and which differ from language to language.” Chang (1972: 401) simply defines intonation as “the sentence melody superimposed on the sentence as a whole.” He (ibid.) agrees with Abercrombie in the contention that “intonation is the fluctuation of the voice pitch as applied to the whole sentence.” Denes *et al.* 1962: 2) give a different view describing it as “...a linguistic form in which information about the speaker’s emotional attitude towards his subject matter (agreement, doubt, questioning) is encoded..”

Intonation can be defined on the whole as the pitch patterns formed on the sequence of speech sounds where the pitch patterns are characterized by different parameters from the prosodic system, viz., pitch, loudness, duration, silence etc.

The intonational meanings are explicit in nature. That is, when an intonation pattern is superimposed on the basic pitch sequence (in its colourless form) a more explicit, implied meaning is got. In other words, a change in the pitch pattern adds an extra information to the basic meaning of that utterance, contributing to the total shades of meaning of it. Thus, keeping the meaning unaffected, the emotion/attitude and any intended meaning, the speaker chooses to convey, are made explicit by intonation. Consider the following examples.”*

* The examples provided in this article are from Tamil language

1. //avan// 'he' (declarative - unmarked)
- 1a. //avan?// 'he?' (interrogative - intonation type - unmarked)
- 1b. //avan//'he?!' (interrogative - intonation type - surprise)

The word *avan* when normally said gives a declarative meaning 'he' (1) without any added implication. The same word if given a **rise-fall** intonation will change into a question form meaning, 'is that he?' (1a.) In the same way, it can be said along with questioning, expressing the exclamatory mood or astonishment of the speaker. Here, it gives the sense, 'is that *he* who did it?' (1b).

The questioning and exclamation are the added meaning to the basic meaning *avan*. The basic meaning, however, is retained. The different pitch sequences probably imply the characteristic relation of the speaker to the environment concerned. The superimposed meanings, i.e., the extra information are carried by the extrinsic pitch patterns.

Intonation pattern is the only device to discriminate utterances having same structure but with different implied meanings (cf. Crystal, 1975: 29). For example, a slow rising pitch may be a declaration or a question. The degree or the level of the rising of the pitch helps to discriminate the meaning of utterances which are structurally similar. The following illustration may be considered.

2. //na:n vi:ttukku po:kanum...// 'I have to go home'
(declarative- hesitation)

This sentence has the pitch pattern '**gradual rise - gradual fall - gradual slow rise**'. The meaning conveyed by this sentence is that the speaker intends to go home, but could not do so due to some reason.

Intonation has often been used to express affective meaning. It serves as a device to convey different types of emotion/attitude, the speaker likes to convey. For example, a **low fall** type intonation will indicate the emotion 'pity' whereas the **high fall** will indicate the emotion 'happiness'. Likewise, a **rising** type intonation will express the 'questioning attitude', i.e., an enquiry of the speaker. Similarly, **rise-fall** will express 'insult', to the hearer. So it can be said that intonation carries the subjective feelings of the speaker in any speech act. The emotion/attitude signalling function of intonation is an integral part in any language function.

Intonation is the cover term which refers to the organized prosodic system of the said features. It means that intonation is not a single system of contours, levels etc., but is a complex of features from different prosodic systems like pitch, loudness, tempo etc. The system of intonation is not

restricted to pitch and pitch movement, but can be farced to the factors other than pitch which are responsible for semantic effect (cf. K.L.Pike, 1945: 25). Crystal (1969) explains that “intonation has a very clear centre of pitch contrast and periphery of reinforcing contrast of a different order”. Here the usage periphery indicates the significance of prosodic features other than pitch. Patterns of intonation are invariably complicated because of the minor variations they show yet, they can be limited to specific number on the basis of the semantic contrasts expounded by them. This leads to the understanding that intonation is a “system of systems” and it functions itself as an institution with a set of well defined, structured departments.

From an application perspective it would be appropriate to look at intonation patterns formed on two structures, one formed by the pitch factor i.e., pitch level and pitch movement and the other formed by pitch-range, loudness, tempo. Duration, as supra segmental feature, co-exists with these two levels of structures. In an utterance, pitch movement and pitch levels form a pitch pattern which exists in time domain, and the combined function of pitch range, loudness, and tempo forms specific rhythm (rhythmicality) which also exists in time domain. A pitch pattern combines with a rhythmic structure, forming a rhythmic-melodic structure which is super imposed on a stretch of sound sequence to form a meaningful utterance.

I have proposed in this article that the features that form the rhythmic structure have the cue to emotional/attitudinal expressions of utterances and even accented sentences. In a normal utterance, with a specific pitch pattern, these features behave in a ‘normal’ manner. In other words, the acoustic value of each of them is kept optimal and hence we get normal/colourless utterance. On the contrary any significant variations in the acoustic values of each of these feature, will result into expressing specific emotion/attitude, depending on which feature gets altered and to what extent. This aspect, may be illustrated with the help of the following table.

A declarative sentence has been taken in its colourless nature i.e., the basic structure carrying a basic meaning. Following it, different emotions and attitudes have been intoned into it. It can be observed each kind of the declarative shows the acoustic values for pitch range, loudness and tempo and these values vary according to the nature of the sentence, i.e. colourless and emotion/attitude intoned. Thus we get a specific rhythmic pattern which is imposed on a pitch pattern formed by pitch movement and pitch level of the concerned sentence. The table showing the acoustic values of a particular declarative sentence is self explanatory.

Acoustic Data

Sl. No	Sentence type	Nature of sentence	Pitch range (in Hz)	Loudness (in dB)	Tempo (in ms)	Rhythm pattern
1.	Declarative	Colourless	20	66	12.7	Pr ₂ L ₂ T ₂
2.		Happiness	40	66	11.2	Pr ₃ L ₂ T ₂
3.		Surprise	40	57	10.5	Pr ₃ L ₂ T ₃
4.		Anger	15	71	11.0	Pr ₃ L ₂ T ₃
5.		Pity	10	48	12.0	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₃
6.		Sorrow	15	48	12.	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₂
7.		Disgust	10	51	9.5	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₃
8.		Fear	10	51	9.7	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₃
9.		Hesitation	12.5	43	15.2	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₁
10.		Request	10	42	11.0	Pr ₁ L ₁ T ₂
11.		Sarcasm	10	60	18.0	Pr ₁ L ₂ T ₁

Parameters

Pitch range

Narrow	< 20 Hz	Pr ₁
Normal	20 - 30 Hz	Pr ₂
Wide	> 20 Hz	Pr ₃

Loudness

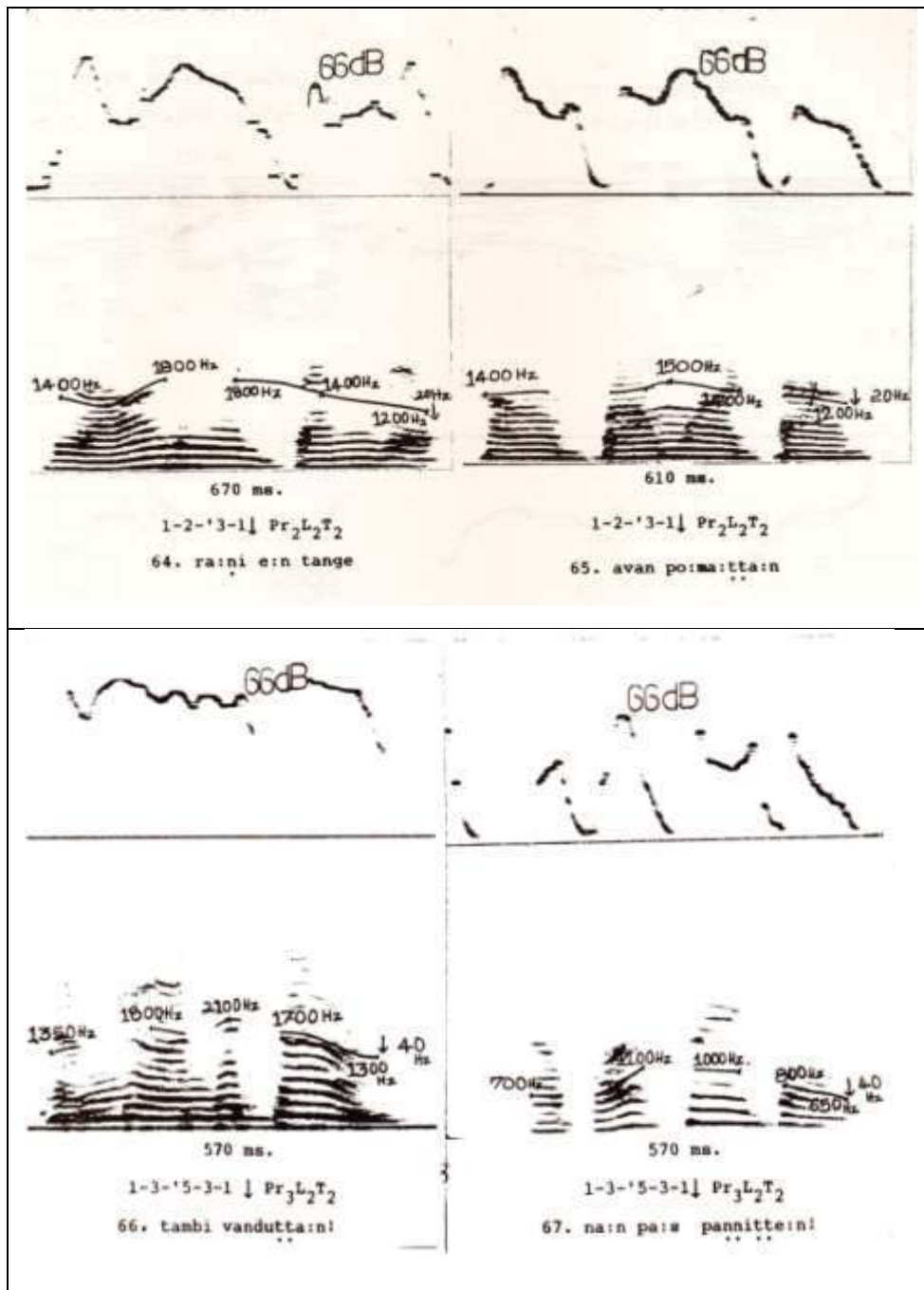
Soft	< 55dB	L ₁
Normal	55 - 80 dB	L ₂
Loud	> 80 dB	L ₃

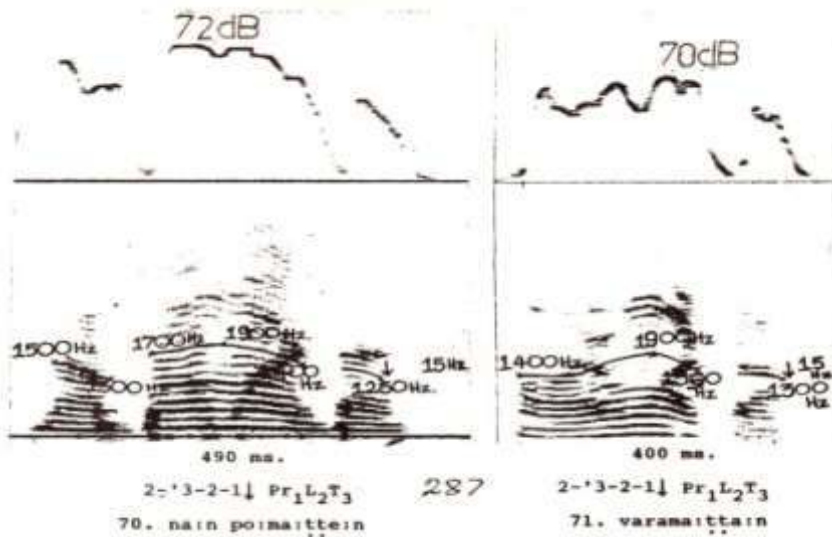
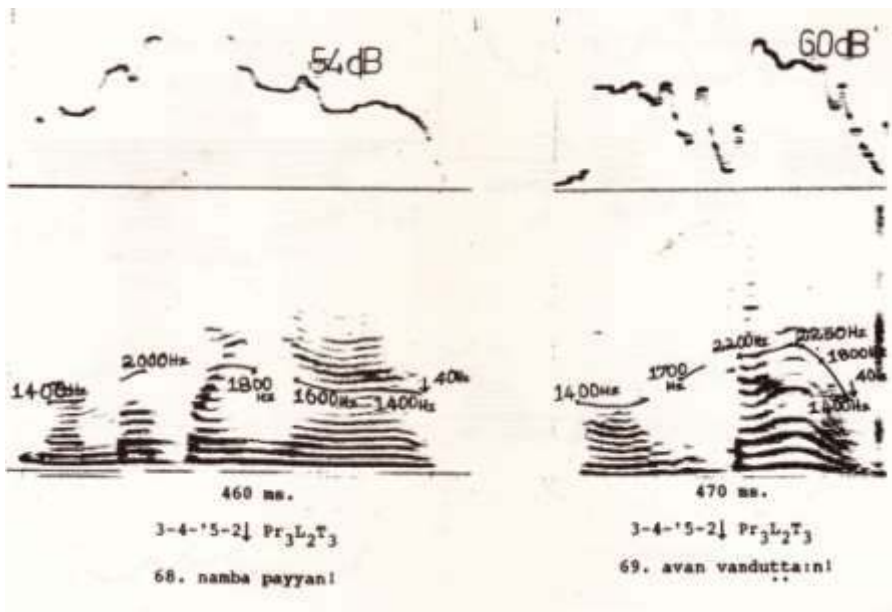
Tempo

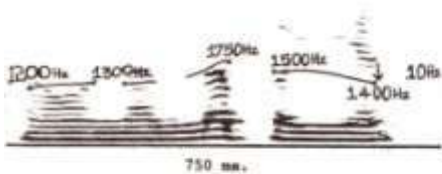
Slow	>13.0 ms	T ₁
Normal	11.0 - 13.0 ms	T ₂
Fast	< 11.0	T ₃

The introduction to intonation given in a simple but concrete manner above is expected to be understood by the speech scientists/technologists. The sound understanding of intonation organization in a language will help formulate the ways and means of inputting intonational cues for speech synthesis and subsequently speech recognition. The validity and effectiveness of the proposition given in this article need to be discussed by the technologists involved in the discipline concerned.

A few spectrograms have been given below. All the given spectrograms are after Ravisankar, 1994.







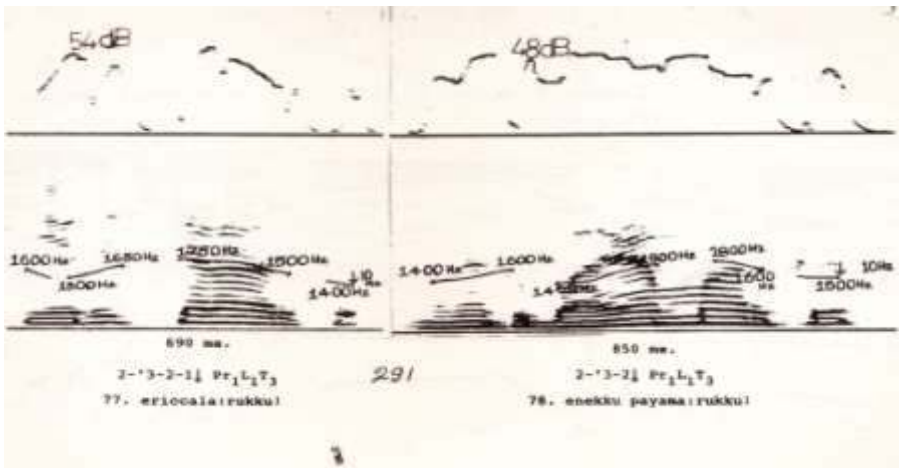
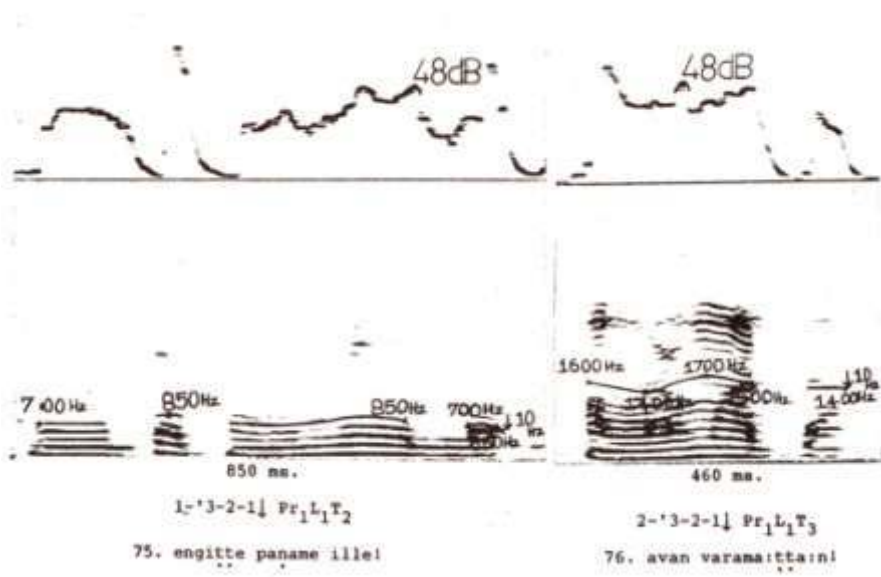
750 ms.
1-2-'2-1| Pr₁L₁T₂
72. avan nalla payyan



690 ms.
1-2-'2-1| Pr₁L₁T₂
73. tambu kaṣṭapaṭṭraṇi



1170 ms.
1-'3-2-1| Pr₁L₁T₂
74. onne paṅke kaṣṭama:rukku!



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TAMIL FOOD CULTURE: SOME CONCEPTUAL PARADIGMS

S. Bhakthavatsala Bharathi

Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

Many scholars have focussed intensive inquiries on the food culture of various cultures for a long time. Of course wide range of studies are available in the English arena, but there is a dearth of studies on Tamil food culture. Comprehensive multidisciplinary studies on Tamil food system are lamentably rare. This paper attempts to focus the following paradigms related to Tamil food culture.

1. Archaic paradigm
2. Humoral paradigm
3. Cultural paradigm
4. Social paradigm
5. Changing paradigm

Food cannot be strictly defined as a mere bio-chemical process; it also has a deep-rooted cultural paradigm, which has been evolved and continued as an identity for each culture. As such that, food or eating is not a biological act; it is essentially a social act, since mankind is a social animal. Hence, social facts, social acts and social dimensions are over-arched on the very basic element of food (Harris & Ross, 1989). In this way, the Tamil food system has its own concepts, norms, values, laws, regulations and continued history which determine its basic paradigms.

Archaic Paradigms

As Tamil society has a long and continued cultural history, its conceptual paradigms are expressed in all its stages: tribal system, peasant system and in the urban system. Moreover, there is a continuum among these three stages in terms of tribe-folk continuum folk-urban continuum tribe-folk-urban continuum. Since Tamil culture has diversified its evolution from the substratum of hydraulic civilization and its lifestyle is majoritively characterized in villages, the village civilization of Tamil society needs a careful intervention while studying its archaic paradigms.

Cross-culturally speaking Tamil food culture is one among the age-old systems which replicates some archaic features of elementary forms that mankind has evolved in his cultural evolution. ‘Altruism’, ‘reciprocity’ and ‘redistribution’ are some of the primordial forms that can be gleaned in the everyday life of the Tamil society even today.

Altruism is one of the archaic features that evolved in the Tamil cultural evolution. It is extending very freely the food resources to benefit others. It is done without any reciprocity. It can be seen among hunter-gatherers, sharing their game animals with others that help in managing food-crisis in day-to-day life. In subsistence economy hunting forms an important animal protein that helps hunters to secure food resources from their immediate environment. Further, hunters or members of one band spare their territory to forage by other bands. Such altruistic features also have strengthened the optimal foraging ability among early human societies (Coleman 2011; Brittin 2011). In Tamil culture offering of *ammaan cooru* (food from mother’s family) during the death ritual is again a classic example that such archaic traits still continue its presence in village communities even today. However, cultural semantics of such altruistic features have diversified over its period of social/cultural history (cf. Bhakthavatsala Bharathi, 2011: 13-33).

Altruism is an exemplary phenomenon that makes mankind a social being with egalitarian nature. *Annadaanam* (gifting of food to others) of different nature is a true and complete example for altruism. Tamil culture has evolved this *annadaanam* long ago in different forms starting from Manimekalai (a Buddhist Tamil literature belonging to the 3-6 century CE) period. *Undi koduppoor uyir koduppoor* (one who gifts food to others are life givers) is a renowned conceptual paradigm during Manimekalai period. This has been practised as an integral part of Tamil culture throughout its history from Manimekalai period to till date. The Tamilnadu Chief Minister, J. Jayalalithaa’s present day *annadaanam* scheme in almost all major temples in Tamilnadu is a programme of altruistic nature that replicates what Manimekalai and Vallalar have done at two different points of time. Reciprocal altruism has also been evolved in Tamil social evolution. Gratitude leads to reciprocity. People benefited through altruism always looking for occasions to reciprocate what they have received earlier.

The mutual exchange of food items is being the hallmark in Tamil culture. On many occasions there is a direct exchange of food items. It is largely based on transactions among kin, kith and neighbours. Among village communities in Tamilnadu the *generalized reciprocity* is a common phenomenon. Food items and cooked foods are simply given away to others with no direct form of repayment. However, in common parlance, it is

expected that others will be equally generous. In some cases *balanced reciprocity* is experienced, wherein expectation of immediate return is anticipated. When surplus food is available no immediate return is expected. We have numerous evidences from ancient, medieval and *bhakthi* literatures in Tamil for this.

In Tamil food culture one could notice a strong phenomenon of reciprocity. From Sangam literature we have numerous references. The Tamils have developed reciprocal exchanges not only in subsistence economy of *Kurinji* (hilly tract), *Mullai* (forest tract), *Neithal* (coastal belt) *thinai*s, but also in the highly developed *Marutham* (delta region) *thinai*. Reciprocity is a stable strategy for food management among Tamils.

In Tamil food culture one could trace both direct reciprocity and indirect reciprocity. From ancient times the Tamil people have developed immediate use-value of the tools, clothing and food items. The itinerant nomadic artists and panegyric bards have received clothes, ornaments and other goods as *paricil* (gifts) from territorial chiefs and villagers for their artistic services and praise songs. Many nomadic communities till date subsist on this reciprocal foundation.

In the cultural milieu of Tamil villages food is the strong symbol of reciprocity. Frequent exchange of food items reinforces the individual's willingness to continue recognising reciprocal obligations. Even in Tamil urban culture valued food items are exchanged among the neighbourhood. During the occasions of Deepavali, Rama Navami, Gogulastami, birthday occasions, etc., people reinforce their strong neighbourhood through reciprocal exchanges of food items. Children are socialized and groomed in such a way that mutual support is encouraged in all possible ways in Tamil society. In almost all peasant villages in Tamilnadu the benefits of cooperation are immediate, that are very effectively expressed in terms of food reciprocity.

In Tamil culture both cooperation and reciprocity are vibrantly practised. In cooperation both parties benefit immediately. In reciprocity the giver can expect the return at a later time. Though it is a delayed return it helps him at the time of distress or need. Food items figure prominently both in cooperation (*uthavi*) and reciprocity (*kondū-koduthal*). In ancient days scarcity and starvation were effectively negotiated through these modes of obligatory activities.

In Tamil culture there exists yet another kind of distribution of food items, which may be called as redistribution. It is a kind of distribution that is potentially non-exploitative in nature. Gift giving is a form of redistribution that also serves as a means of redistributing wealth. In temple and communal festivals persons having surplus food items (raw items) throw away in front of

the temples, where people requiring such resources take them for their own consumption. *Masaana kollai* (a festival of Angalaparameswari) is one such festival in Tamilnadu where large items of food materials are thrown away in front of the temple and people who are requiring them take away for their consumption. Such kind of gift giving is a kind of redistribution of surpluses which enhances the status of the donors and balances between surplus and scarcity.

Humoral Paradigms

Whatever may be the conceptual elements operate in the system of food in the cultures around the world, the Tamils, surely, have developed humoral concepts in their food system. Though there is a saying in Tamil that *unave marundhu, marunthe unavu* (food is the medicine and medicine is the food), there are some more concepts that are attested in terms of humoral transactions.

The Tamil conception about food not only advocates on the line of bio-medical approaches, but it also defines on the approaches of humoral transactions. The religious conceptions regarding God and food are note-worthy in the Tamil cultural milieu. The worship of Lord Murugan at Palani hills and other temples explicates the humoral paradigm of the Tamils. There are two important festival cycles celebrated each year in Palani. One is *thai puusam*, celebrated in the month of January-February; the other one is *panguni uthiram*, celebrated in the month of April-May. The former festival falls in winter and the later in summer. A close cultural inquiry into these festivals explicates more meaningful paradigms on the cognitive pattern of the Tamils and their humoral conceptions (Moreno & Marriott, 1990).

The *thai puosam* is largely worshiped by the Naattukkottai Chettiyar or Nagarathar (merchants) community from Karaikudi and adjoining regions of the southern Tamilnadu. The other festival, *panguni uthiram*, is celebrated by the *anju caathi* (five castes) of the *Kongu* region (Western Tamilnadu), where Kongu Vellalars (dominant caste of Kongu region) celebrate with deep veneration. These two contrasting aspects are functioning on basis of multiple binary oppositions that are deeply rooted in the humoral transactions with bio-medical and cultural paradigms.

During *thai puusam* dominant merchant communities of southern Tamilnadu bring jaggery as their votive offering to Lord Murugan. During *panguni uthiram* the dominant peasant community of western Tamilnadu bring *Kaveri thirtham* (holy water from the river Kaveri) as their votive offering and pour it on Murugan. The bio-chemical conception is that jaggery generates heat in the body of Murugan that helps the Lord to protect from the cold winter prevailed in the month of *thai*. The holy water taken from the river Kavery is carried to Palani hill that brings down the heat of the Murugan's body during

the month of *panguni*. The holistic perspective that operates behind the two major festivals of Murugan is directly related to humoral basis of divine body. Thus, the following binary oppositions are mediated in the whole system of celebrations.

Sl. No.	Binary Categories	
1.	Panguni uthiram	Thai puusam
2.	Devotees are Kongu castes	Devotees are Nagarathaar castes
3.	Summer period	Winter period
4.	Holy water is poured on Murugan (hotness is balanced)	Jaggary is the votive offering (cold is balanced)

Though religion is a separate domain in the Tamil cultural milieu, the holistic view of food paradigm is cutting across various domains and replicates its conceptions in a deep rooted manner. The functional interrelatedness within the whole is characterized by some dominant paradigms that operate within the Tamil cultural system. The humoral paradigm of Tamils forms one such dominant theme.

Cultural Paradigms

Food is always culturalized. It is very interesting to note that how Tamils connect food to rituals, symbols, and belief systems. Food is essentially used to link with religious, social, political and economic ends that are being reenacted always.

Eating in ritual contexts reaffirms or transforms relationship in the social domains (Goody 1982). In the Tamil domain, too, the phenomenon is highly predominant. Rituals and beliefs surrounding food powerfully reinforce caste and ethnic boundaries in Tamil villages. The annual festivals of the goddess Mariamman (goddess of small-pox) reinforce the solidarity of village community. The Mariamman festival falls in the peak summer, which is the period of encountering small-pox, draught, starvation, looking for rain, etc. The village community is experiencing a loosely-knit relationship prior to the Mariamman festival, come together in a tightly-knit community in order to collect money and celebrate the said festival for the well-being of the village. A village feast is arranged in terms of *kuuzh* (porridge) which also reinforces the organic solidarity of the village.

For animals, eating food is just a bio-chemical process, but among humankind it is more than those encompassing social and cultural values. That is why anthropologists very often define goods in terms of “goods are not only for using, but also for thinking”. The cognitive pattern and thinking process of the Tamils are embedded in their food culture. Every culture has decreed what

is food and what is not food and what kind of food should be taken and on what occasions. The preference, prohibition, avoidance and taboo values make each culture a unique one.

The Tamil cuisine and food system are highly categorised and conceptualised on various themes like hot-cold, non-toxic-toxic, ritual-non-ritual, sacred-profane, raw-cooked, hot-sweet, rich-ordinary, and the like. The Tamil concept of good meal is a holistic meal. There are sub-categories emphasizing a few more binary categories that implicate both nutritious and cultural semantics of a good meal. For example, a rich Tamil meal always contains *vadai* (boiled cake) and *paayaasam* (semi-liquid sweet). Semantically speaking *vadai* is a solid food and a hot one; while *paayaasam* is a liquid and sweet one. The former is prepared by using oil, while the later is prepared by using sugar. Oil and sugar are very precious and costly ingredients in Tamil cuisine. *Varuval* (fried item) and *poriyal* (boiled vegetables) is yet another binary category in the Tamil meal. Such binary conceptions could further be traced from the holistic meal.

Social Paradigms

The Tamils use the act of fasting and sacred eating as a vehicle for ritual activities. Fasting is invoked to support their sacred journey. During this process many rituals and beliefs surrounding each sacred journey (including pilgrimage, sacred journey for fulfilling vows, etc.) are characteristically associated with sacred food items. During this time many profane items become taboo. An elaborate practice is followed on each and every ritual observance. On every occasion invocation of deeply held values and beliefs through ritual foods are experienced, both at individual level and at group/communal level, based on the occasions. Iyyappan pilgrimage, *Arupadai viidu* pilgrimage, Lord Venkateswara pilgrimage are some of the classic examples in the Tamil region, where people observe an elaborate belief system relating to food and eating. The conspicuous consumption of ritual food has always been important as an indicator of ritual status.

Belief system on food and eating among the Tamils prominently makes its cultural identity. Tamil society is essentially a caste based society, though transformation is experienced in the post-independent period. Right now we have 209 endogamous Tamil castes in the Tamil region. Each endogamous caste is entitled for keeping its sub-culture in the totality of Tamil culture. Food and eating are unique in each sub-culture. Like all culturally defined material substances adopted in the making and maintenance of social hierarchy and social relationships, food serves both to solidify caste membership and to set castes/sub-castes apart. The 209 sub-cultures of the Tamils in one way or other have some unique traits in their food culture.

Changing Paradigms

The aspects of societal changes on eating patterns, and vice versa are of growing interest to ethnographers. Ethnographic literature on Tamil dietary patterns in a changing world is very much limited. In-depth food ethnographies informing the fast changing economic and globalization circulation-cum-diaspora process is also understudied. In this changing context, food is going global now. However, cultural globalization was initiated among the Tamils well before the Sangam period (the Tamil classical literature dating from 3rd century BCE). During the colonial period many number of plants, grains, vegetables, tea, coffee, etc., were brought into India including the Tamil region.

In Tamil context, a great deal of assimilation happened when the new food items entered into this region. Tamil people, now, move across the globe, so also do foods. The role of current globalization in dietary change of Tamils has already made a great deal of impact. Tamil people travelling to foreign countries make rapid changes in food fashions. The white-collar travelers accustomed to 'foreign foods' fascinate themselves after returning to the Tamil region. The privileged rich propagate the food fashion and gradually advocate it and percolate down to middle class, that resulted the introduction of many foreign food items among the common Tamil people.

The western coffee (Nestle) is being assimilated as a famous "Kumbakonam Degree Coffee," which is a classic example for the 'innovation sent' and 'innovation received' process. In the same way many English vegetables, ingredients, plants, animals, cooking methods, or some other culinary borrowing have been gradually detached from its origin nation and reintegrated into the Tamil culinary system. We have many examples for this phenomenon. Cultural borrowings normally never stand in true form anywhere in the world (Tannahill 1988; Coleman 2011). Domestication of foreign goods were well assimilated into the Tamil system of food culture. *Carrot alwaa*, *beetroot pachadi*, *beans poriyal*, *pototo chips*, *tomato chatni*, and the like are a few examples for the aforesaid facts.

McDonald seems to be the same everywhere but it assimilated or reinvented the menu or taste of the nation where it started operating. Similarly drinks, burger, pizza like food items are modified to the tastes of the local consumers. Western fast food is tailored to local tastes. Food entered into the Tamil country have been changed and domesticated according to the Tamil culture.

Whatever may be the levels of westernization and globalization processes transforming the Tamil food culture, the Tamil ethnic identity is secured and retained with regional identities, like Chettinad cuisine, Kongu cuisine, Nellai cuisine (Tirunelveli alwaa), etc. These regional brands find good market in the

hotel industry as well. These regional brands of cuisine facilitate Tamil intimacy and warmth among their culture bearers. Though western food is slowly becoming an integral part of the urban elites, there is a clear demarcation that these are all becoming active agents in global process. How does the globalization of food and cuisine influence the Tamil food culture remains understudied. Future focus on this will tell us the changing paradigms.

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TAMIL SYSTEM OF EPISTEMOLOGY AND FOLKLORISTICS

S. Pilavendran

Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

I

Sangam Corpus and Folkloristics: An Epistemological Continuum

We have to differentiate among the interpretative definitions of the terms ‘Tamil Epistemological Tradition’ from Folkloristics, when we start to investigate the historical dialectics between them. If not, there may arise the possibility of considering both the terms having common connotations between them. Human society has been living in a concrete locus standi of space and time. The society, formed out of living, in a space and time, gathers various existential and experiential modicums from that space and time which may be passed on as its knowledge system or thought system. Further, in due course of time after traversing many thousands of generations this conglomeration of knowledge system or thought system gets itself established as epistemology of that society. In other words, this epistemology may be acclaimed as that society’s cultural tradition or the Folklore. Hence, folklore may be taken as the epitome of that society’s thought system moulded into and formulated as the concept of its culture in toto. Those concepts, when they had been handed down through many centuries of generation, keep on imbibing still more experiential epistemes and eventually becoming incomprehensible symbols by being crystallised as a collective body of folklore. Only here comes the play of folkloristic hermeneutics by deconstructing the accrued epistemes and logically deciphering the embedded contents of them. In that way alone Folkloristics has evolved as a separate discipline in the academia. Therefore, as an academic discipline, the discipline of folklore has propounded many techniques and methodologies as theories in order to study globally on the people’s culture related thought systems. Furthermore, the discipline of Folkloristics has ventured to take advantage of other disciplines of social sciences to investigate its concerned subject matter: Sociology, Archaeology, Linguistics, Semiotics, Psychology and so on.

In an expanded sense, the technical phraseology, ‘Tamil System of Epistemology’ signifies here, only the Tamil society’s traditional and cultural system of epistemology. So far, the system of epistemology has been overlooked by scholars, without giving keen and due attention due to them. In one plane, the scholastic tradition of Tamil thought has treated folklore/folk culture as mere oral traditions, customary lore, material culture, art forms and ritual performances alone. Meanwhile, all the life experiences, the concepts of thinking and the histories of Tamil society have been handed down to us in written form. Whereas, in Tamil academic circles, those literatures have been treated simply perfunctorily, only dissecting the outer crust of those so called undeciphered treasures of the system of Tamil epistemology. Therefore, I have been constrained to delve into the unearthed treasures of the system of Tamil epistemology so far left undeciphered.

As the Tamil academicians have not ventured to apply the methodology of utilising the tradition of *Orality* which might have evinced the implied senses embedded in the layers of the so called Oral Traditions. Nevertheless, by applying the methodology of utilizing the multidisciplinary tools, I have attempted to delve out the implications of hermeneutics embedded in the Tradition of Scripts.

In the same way, I have simply taken advantage of applying the theories of Oral Tradition for elucidating the implied meanings of Folklore. However, it seems that the methodologies of both could be feasibly applied to investigate them. I think, if we could come to understand the importance of applying the above said methodology of folkloristics, for delving deeper into the abyss of the Tradition of Scripts as well as into the darker depths of the Oral Tradition, we can have a rich harvest of knowledge from both the treasure troves.

We can specifically propound here three important conceptualizations put forth by the Tamil Tradition of Scripts as follows:

1. The core, rudimental essence of the cosmos is the ‘Primary’ i.e. *mutal poruḷ* which constitutes *space* and *time*;
2. The life of the human society in the cosmos have been the temporal historic [timescape] evolution of the human societies living in it have been categorically serialized as ‘surreptitious wooing’ and ‘virtuous domicility’ i.e., *kalavu* and *karpū*;
3. The original source of the social as well as the individual human beings’ existential functioning is *defined* as the paradigm of ‘interiority’ and ‘exteriority’ [*inscape*, *exscape* - John Hopkins] i.e., *akam* and *puram*.

These three conceptualizations may seem to be simple at the level of superficial perusal. But, if one gets into the deeper side of those, one can easily find out the total collection of the Tamil society's epistemological wealth. In the same way, if anyone makes a sharp and keen exploration into the elements of Folk Culture, one can come across the plane of dynamism or the pivotal point of dynamism would be no other thing except these three namely, 1. *mutal*, 2. *kaḷavu* and *karpu*, and 3. *akam* and *puram*.

II

Time, Space and Folk Culture

We could come across the specific features of landscape classified under five categories such as *kurinji*, *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytal* and *paalai* while reading the literary corpus of Sangam era. However, we could also come to understand about the same type of classified categories when we try to comprehend culture based functioning of tradition in a subtle way expressed through the same. That type of subtle differences embedded in the Tamil literary corpus of the Sangam era become manifested when we keenly observe the societal functioning system of everyday life. Our so called family system and our interpersonal interactions are being institutionalised system of family and which is described and defined as domestic 'Home'. Whereas the daily needs for sustenance and livelihood are carried out in the outer space of the so called 'Home'. The sphere of the space wherein the human beings are leading their lives collectively as well as inter-relatedly as society has been called '*na:tu*' i.e., the sphere of domesticity. Whereas, the sphere of space wherein the functional activities of economy and warfare is allocated as *ka:tu* i.e., the sphere of non-domesticity. Only this type of leading of mundane life is said to be the cultural life, which has been artificially formed and being put into practice by the human society. The sphere of the space of non-domesticity i.e. *ka:tu* is not only meant for food hunting, but also, for the activities of observing and intermingling with the biodiversity, overwhelming with the flora and fauna being encircled with rivers, rivulets, streams, ponds and lakes, hillocks, hills, mountains, forests, thickets and etc. Thus *na:tu* signifies the sphere of domesticity and whereas *ka:tu* signifies the sphere of non-domesticity. Moreover, the human society always interplays and intermingles with both those spheres. In the mean time, as there are diametrically opposite hermeneutics, we can find the same diametrically opposite semantical exegetics formulating them as a symbol. However there is a separating flimsy scape dividing them into two bipolar fields. Normally it is termed as the field of boundary which is called *ellai*. Only in this way alone we have been constrained to construe the significances of the prevailing boundary stones as well as the boundary shrines as symbols of the boundary space. In the same way

we can come across in the rural localities strewn here and there spherically shaped and boulder-like heavy stones (*ilavattak kal*) meant for measuring the stalwartness of the youth. When the artificial field of *na:tu* - scape has been symbolised for the existential space meant for the human society, the natural *ka:tu* - scape has been symbolised as a space of existence for the natural sources and forces. Formerly, love has been considered as a natural instinct as well as a spontaneous impulse which goads the people to have physical union; and, that has been called as *kalavu olukkam* i.e., hidden courtship. Those affaire d'amour frolicking have been registered in the Sangam Corpus. The forest sites of mountain cliffs, waterfalls, running streams and bushy thickets where tigers, elephants, wild dogs are found rampant and cultivable hillside crop fields (*tinaippunam*) along with dormitories for young chaps (*a:yam*) are chosen to be suitable spots for the hero and heroine to have their wooing games. The affaire d'amour frolickings i.e., the games of *kalavu* have been tamed into and institutionalised as the system of family (*karpu olukkam*) and transposed in the sphere of artificially made *na:tu*. This type of transposition, too, has been registered in Sangam Corpus.

The Tamil sangam corpus has mentions about the flimsy dividing screen between the space of functioning nature and the space of functioning culture. In the Sangam Corpus the playings of *tho:li* i.e., the female playmate and *ceveli* i.e., the mother surrogate are made to be mediators for transforming the so-called functioning of *kalavu* which has been found instinctively impulsive as well as disproportionately passionate into function of *karpu* as approved by societal culture. Whereas, before the process of sublimating the above said *kalavu* life into the system of family and familial relationship has been esteemed as instinctively, impulsively and disproportionately passionate activities of affaire d'amour. As there are no clearly definitive hints about their social relationships as per the system of *kalavu* life, that leads us to consider those two role players, *tho:li* and *ceveli* as mediators. Only these kinds of pieces of information are giving place for the conceptualizations on the ideas of space in the system of Tamil thought tradition, found here and there in the textual scripts of Sangam Corpus.

The cultural praxis of the spatial paradigm of *na:tu* and *ka:tu* can be found well represented in the folk religious behaviours. Generally speaking, religion is said to be a functioning of interaction between the *Concrete* – human beings and the *Abstract* – the a-natural: almost all the religious traditions are substantiating this. The sphere of *na:tu* i.e., the space of domesticity is taken as the living place of the human society which is a concrete one; whereas the sphere of non-domesticity is meant for the abstract a-natural. Only in that sphere of *ka:tu*, the human society conducts all of its religious worships and

rituals. The human society gets itself its external natures according to the sphere of *ka:tu* for making the rituals in order to realise the abstract a-natural reality.

Further, when we give more heed and attention to understand the extraordinary sanctity conferred upon the so called *ka:tu* based natural settings we could easily be convinced of the establishments of the sacred groves and also why those succincts of the sacred groves are treated as sacred pilgrim centres. The sanctum sanctorum wherein the folk deities are being enshrined, are vehemently symbolising the semiotic character of the *ka:tu* based fields.

In the folk religious culture some abstract realities which have neither divinity nor a-humanness are also identifiable. These are called the liminal spirits (*a:vi, muṇi, pe:y*). As these beings and forces cannot be categorically be classified under either religious terminologies i.e., divine beings or demi-gods, they are treated as liminal spirits. These liminal powers are believed to follow some selective human beings who are particularly in the liminal spaces or sites and they might be frightening them particularly. These selective human persons are those who are supposed to be crossing physiologically from one developmental phase to the other which in terms of Van Gennep is called *transition* and in terms of Turner they are said to be in *between and betwixt* stage. In the tamil cultural customs, girls in puberty, menstruating women, pregnant women, wet mothers, babies, teen agers are believed to be in liminal stage. Hence, the society places these liminal spirits in between and betwixt spheres of *na:tu* and *ka:tu*; which is nowhere but unambiguous, the so called amorphous space of the boundary spaces (in the horizontal axis) and the empyreal space (in the vertical axis).

Only when we come to understand about both the horizontal and the vertical plane of spatiality, and the thinking process prevalent from time immemorial, we can imbibe within us the depth knowledge of the Tamil thought tradition. Even though the *ka:tu* based natural sphere has been made to signify symbolically the original space of existence for the folk deities it has never left out to signify symbolically the vertical space which lies over and above the plane of Earth and also it has used even the empyreal space to symbolically represent the same. The following spots such as the mountain-cliffs, gliding falls, fountain-heads hilltop shrubberies and also the shrub covered fountain-heads have been treated as original abodes for those folk deities. And, this has been culturally inculcated and enshrined within the consciousness of the folk. At the time of celebrating folk religious festivals, the concerned deity which has been stationed in the supposed empyreal abode, being a vertical one, is revoked to descend to the horizontal plane i.e., on the earthly plane of *ka:tu* based field and from there temporarily symbolised, in a pot filled with water which is collected specifically from the spots believed to be the abode of the deity for the said ritual celebrations to be held at the *na:tu*

based field which is meant for social living. Since the folk deity *murukan*, being the well prevalent folk deity of the Tamil (south Indian region too) and attested by the Tamil literary corpus as the deity/god of mountainous tract (*kurinji*), the popular shrines of *murukan* are found to be built on the hill tops. In the same manner we can also come to realise in the ritual possession contexts the liminal powers are seen to be descending on the vertex of the head into the ritual possessed mediums. After the ritually processed performance of divine possession, the very same liminal powers of the folk divinity is depossessed to its original spot of existence i.e. *malai/ka:tu* from the possessed mediums' physical body has been described phenomenally as *malaiye:rrutal* i.e., return to mountain.

In the same way, when the evil spirits are exorcised from the possessed mediums or when the tufts of hair being cut from the possessed mediums are to be nailed to the bark of the trees as a process of sending back the spirits to the mountain. This ritual process is always conducted in the *ka:tu* based spots alone. So, almost all the folk religious ritual performances are being carried out only in a far away space from the human dwelling settlements such as forests, deep wildernesses and mountain tops. This type of demarcating the sense of spatiality would easily and lucidly expound the stream of current prevalent in Tamil thought. However, in the studies made on the folk religion and folk deities, this 'sense of spatiality' has not been given any due importance by the Tamil scholars, according to the Tamil paradigm of conceptualization; but, luckily we can't also come across anything contrary to this basic Tamil epistemic sense of spatiality. There have been many various methods of classifying the folk deities in studying the South Indian folk religion. The earlier studies done by Barthlomeus Ziegenbalg (1860), Henry Whitehead (1921), Theodore Elmore (1915), and the studies by Louis Dumont (1959) and Thulasi Ramasamy (1985) can stand testimony for the above. Masillamani Meyer (2004) as per the above conceptualization of the sense of spatiality, has treated the folk deities under two categories: 1. *ka:tu* deities and 2. *u:r* deities.

The Tamil thought tradition has categorised the *primary essence* as space and time wherein time is conveniently divided into *time auspicious* and *time inauspicious*. All the social and cultural functions like rites and rituals, festivals, worship performances are ascribed to and conducted at the *time inauspicious*.

From folkloristic perspectives we could understand the synthesis made accurate and intensive among the implied bundles of meanings of the sense of spatiality and temporality embedded in the corpuses of beliefs and rituals. Let us take for example, the physiological growth of an individual body from one phasal stage to the next the body is said to traverse the so called developmental

phases of change such as: babyhood, childhood, adolescence, puberty, gestation, motherhood (fatherhood) and death. These are socially recognised and symbolically encultured with specific set of rituals. These transition of the phasal stages of physiological change have been described as *passage* which have liminal characteristics (Gennep, 1969 [1910] and Turner (1967)). Both of them expounded the structural paradigms underlying these ritual performances. However, we must try to find out what could be the psychological impulse that impels to perform the life rituals. So far, after the studies done by Gennep and Turner, none has ventured to delve out the causative impulses hidden under these rituals, still unexplicated. The Tamil thought system defines the very physical entity of the body in two contrastive domains: 1. *body-natural* and 2. *body-cultural*. *Body natural* means the natural body existing without being cultured: and, the body cultural means the one which has been culturally socialised. Whenever the body flowers into a stage of developmental maturity it is supposed by the society as if it were deviated from the domain of culture. This type of deviation is rendered by society as an astounding shock. Therefore, the society deems that body to be oscillating between those two domains for a short span of space and time. Only that short span of existence in those two domains is implicated as liminal stance. The society deems the stance of liminality as something sacred, ambiguous and a mysteriously powered state of being. It is also a state of tumultuousness. Only to appease this turmoil and to redeem the body towards its earlier stance of existence, the rituals are symbolically made. That is why, in all the life cycle rituals, the rituals are performed to redeem those bodies to their earlier stages of existence.

In the same way, the very sense of time and space with their thoughtful objects has been interacting in the corpus of folklore, depicting the system of belief relevant to divination practices. When a movement from one spot of departure to another spot of destination or a moving from one act of functioning to another being is intersected, either by a specific entity or by a specific sound, makes a shuddering shock. This can be taken either as good or ill omen. The society has conceptualised of these having liminal features like sacredness, mysterious power and ambiguous significances as well. This movement or the act of functioning being intersected by specific sound or a particular entity from the sphere of *na:tu* (point of departure) to the sphere of *ka:tu* (point of destination) will be taken as an intersecting activity. The society takes such type of intersection made by those specific entity or sound as having liminal characteristics. This traversing from one point of departure to the point of destination being intersected, has been considered happened symbolically to interpret something special- good or bad. A continuously wholesome movement is being taken as impeded. Hence, some kind of ritual has to be performed to appease this kind of impediment.

The basic units of the primary core of life i.e., place and time have been emphatically registered in the social mind and manifest the social functioning and meanings embedded. Here, we are constrained to raise a question whether all living beings, apart from human beings, have the consciousness of space and time. At times, we could come across some natural evolutionary efflorescences manifested among some kinds of plants, when they are found growing in specifically relevant spheres of space and time; and, which persuades us to deduce that those plants too, have some elements of consciousness about space and time within them. Similarly, we could also infer from that some plants and animals have specific time for reproduction. And, this type of natural selection of spatial and temporal specificities affirms, that they, too, have a subtle sensitive intelligence towards them.

There are close affinities between thematical composition and conventional *tinai* poesis, which comprises the sphere of time and space, are seen in our tradition of poetry. The German scholar Gunther Sontheimer (1993) has expounded that the Tamil *tinai* - based concepts are still prevalent among the pastoral and bucolic communities found in the states of Karnataka and Maharashtra in their basic units of their conventions of religio-literary poeses.

Even in the folk games, we can find there a close affinity with the systems of space and time. Though, there is no restricted regulatory system for playing a particular game in a specifically stipulated periodicity of time. But, there is an interlinking among the specific periodicity, the specific spatial context and the psychological inclinations for the choice of playing of specific folk games. There is always an inevitable correlation between children's games and the spatio-temporal consciousness. Hence, here arises a necessity for formulating this cultural behaviourism as a concept, say for example, '*bio-space and time symbiosis*.'

III

***Kaḷavu* and *Karpu*: The never-ending Continuum of the Tradition of Tamil Epistemology**

From the prehistoric times till this century, the Tamil socio-cultural morale has been marked by *kaḷavu* and *karpu* behavioural patterns. This has been the field of discourse in the Tamil scholastic tradition. Nevertheless, the holistic dimension of the Tamil social and cultural history still demands a holistic study. The clandestine meeting of the lover and the loved in their courtship before marriage is defined as *kaḷavu*; and, this kind of concupiscent meeting has been explained with the cogency of the *tinai* patterns of behaviour. Hence, *kaḷavu* precedes *karpu*. And, that will end up in *karpu*, which plays a major role in the scape of Sangam era by defining the social system of relationships

like the family and other ties of relationships. However, we could rarely find in the Sangam Corpus of scripts enough registries about the *kaḷavu* pattern of behaviours. Here and there, some speculative referents alone are merely scattered about *kaḷavu*. Still we can see only scarce references of *kaḷavu*. Hence, many questions about *kaḷavu* stand to be explored. A specific question may arise to a studious researcher why Kabilar, the Sangam poet, has taught the King Prakathaththan only about the *kaḷavu* pattern of behaviours. Therefore, this speculative enigma needs to be resolved: whether the historic traces about *kaḷavu* pattern of behaviour had been obliterated from the very bundle of memories or rather uprooted from the layers of societal consciousness.

It should be indicated here that there is a registry of a Myth of Deluge and Recreation of the World. Similar to that myth, there has been found registered in the Old Testament i.e. the myth of Noah. In the oral traditions of several societies and scripts of written traditions, we could come across the same genre of myth in vogue; and, they are readily accessible in almost all the worldwide webs. Almost all the eminent Mythologists, Anthropologists, Folklorists and Psychoanalysts have at their store, many explorative studies about the myth.

According to that type of myths, once upon a time, the world was rampant with sins, vices and immoral acts. The human beings and the living beings, too, were encompassed with chaos. A big deluge destroyed all. However, one man and one woman (father and daughter, mother and son or brother and sister) escaped from the deluge by entering into a capsule (a hollow gourd, a ship) or climbing to the hill top. After the ebbing of the deluge, new human beings were procreated by that single pair, left non-extinct.

When the mythemes of those myths of deluge and recreation of the world have been deeply studied and explored by eminent psychologists like Rank, Kluger, Roheim and Dundes, they have interpreted those myths as male created ones. The deluge, the capsule and the escape in the capsule and the hill top are taken as symbols; The deluge has been representing the male's womb envy against the female's power of procreation. As that has been registered so, in the subconscious of the male, it manifests itself through dreams and myths under the disguise of the deluge symbol. In the Tamil folklore studies, Ponnuthai (1998) has given an account of mythological studies done worldwide and she has registered one variant of this type of myth collected from the Tamil region. In the Tamil context, the festive ritual of *teppam* has been interpreted with the voyage of escape from deluge from psychoanalytical perspectives by I. Muthiah (2010). To him, this myth seems to represent in a way the subconscious travel or return to the womb. However, all the scholars who had treated this myth did not take into account of the society before the deluge and the society after the deluge. However, it is highly noteworthy that among all the

variants of the deluge myth various societies found worldwide, the Tamil myth contains a unique symbol representing the system of society having enjoyed promiscuity before the deluge and the system of society after the deluge, ruled by the taboos drawing prescriptive code of behaviours, formatted for kin relationship.

Comprehending the pivotal point of these myths, we could be led only to this centrifugal force of incest. It has been obviously implied in the biblical myth of Noah. However, as per the Tamil myth, the kinship system prevalent before the deluge had been marked as a promiscuous one. And, thenceforth, the post-deluvian recreation of the new world manifests the kinship system, conforming to the socio-cultural code of norms.

Edmund Leach (1986) has stated that, in one way or another, the theme of incest lies hidden in all the myths of Deluge and Recreation of the World and the first human clan has been created by the act of incest alone. Though, we can come across the same theme of incest in almost all the myths of the world, only in the Tamil myth, we can find the discourse of the theme of incest being manifested in a unique way. The reason for destroying the world by deluge seems to be caused by the increase of promiscuously incestuous behaviours and, the recreation of the world, has been caused by the very same incestuous behaviour. Therefore, we have to be a little bit conversant with the evolutionary history of the human society. The process of cultural evolution might have taken a vast span of time to traverse from the promiscuous living to the present non-promiscuous living, creating socio-cultural system of kinship.

In the Tamil literary scape, the sexual behaviours are categorised as the so-called *kaḷavu* and *karpu*. *kaḷavu* life preceded the *karpu* life in the historical evolution of culture. Only in the Sangam literary Corpus some scattered traces of *kaḷavu* are found. *Karpu* life would have taken many centuries to become a socially and culturally accepted pattern of living. But, the historical facts about the promiscuous life pattern of behaviours which might have flourished before *karpu* period of Sangam still remains to be investigated. Hence, we can take this myth as a starting point for unravelling the mystery which lurks behind this paradox. Further, by the very construction of the history of culture, the concepts of *kaḷavu* and *karpu* may be rendering possibilities to define the Tamil myth - making tradition of orality. And also, by these studious investigations we can also step upon the clear vistas of harlotry and its origin along with its incessant prevalence in the domain of Tamil society. By delving deeper into the abysmal chaos created by compartmentalising the human sexual behaviour into *kaḷavu* and *karpu* life patterns, we may come out with a harvest of cultural meanings, remaining obscure so far. We think by

exploring further and further both the written and the oral traditions may be opening the gateway of deciphering the mysteries left behind so far.

Conclusion

The history of the Tamil society is an incessant continuum. It has traversed through many stages of social, cultural and civilizational periods. The repertoire of the past cultural history of both the traditions of orality and scriptures has been the treasure-trove of the well collected and highly cherished resources of the Tamil folks. The later days' developments in the socio-economic and political systems such as the royal regimes have given more significance to the tradition of scripts than to the orality. This kind of effacing the significant motifs of the trends of the pre-sangam eras' has placed oral tradition to play the second fiddle. However, the oral tradition continued in its own style as an undercurrent in the life styles of the folk. Both the traditions of orality and scriptures have travelled and progressed in the course of time. However, the oral tradition has well penetrated into the mindscapes of the folk and has become ingrained. The tradition of the written script has been sustained in the status of continuously being moulded and standardised by the said systemic institutional organizational temper of Royalty. However, the advent of the religious movements of Buddhism, Jainism, Vedic brahminism, Islam and Christianity has simply played a minor role in moulding the core essence of the folk and their oral traditions. This would be very obvious when we study the haphazardous works of the *siddhar-s* (*siddhar* poems) and the anthology of stray poets' works (*thanippa:tal thiraṭṭu*). Therefore, we must be convinced, that, though there are a few impulsive impacts imprinted on the currents of Tamil tradition of orality made by the above *isms* of the European religions, in no way, they have fully transformed the vital core of its being. So, we could not depend upon the current theories and methodologies of the West, out and out, to evince or to divulge the splendour of the Tamil epistemology embedded in the Tamil orality. However, the applications of those theories of the West on the texts of Tamil orality may bear perhaps only a meagre fruition out of studious interpretation.

Hence, the hermeneutical exegesis of Tamil society's epistemology seems standing to demand a mutual reciprocation of deeply investigating both the domains in order to fill up the gaps of knowledge, occurring within both the domains of Tamil society's epistemology, since they are complementary to each other.

Note: This is the translated version of the earlier Key Note Address delivered in the International Conference on *Study of Folklore: New Perspectives* in the Department of Tamil, Peradeniya University, Peradeniya, Srilanka on 07. 10. 2016. I thank Mr. J. Kuppuraj (Puducherry) for his role in rendering this paper into English from the earlier Tamil version.

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INDIGENOUS HEALTH CARE PRACTICES FOR NEWBORN AMONG RURAL DALITS OF PUDUCHERRY IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

V. Pragati

Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

0. Introduction

The Indian government has come up with schemes such as the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the soon-to-be-launched National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) to address this dreadful situation. Both schemes give high priority to the issue of maternal and newborn health for marginalized communities, and seek to improve the availability of and access to quality health care for those at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. Additionally, government programs such as the Janani Suraksha Yojana incentives delivery in hospitals by encouraging mothers to opt for institutional deliveries.

In spite of several child development programmes, for every seven minutes, a woman in India dies due to pregnancy-related complications. Over a million babies born in the country die within their first month of life. India has the unfortunate distinction of claiming more than a quarter of the total newborn deaths in the world. The majority of these deaths occur in rural areas where poverty and lack of knowledge about proper maternal and child health care are the real cause of these fatalities.

Children are the future of any nation. The neonatal period is the most important part in the life of a newborn for its survival and development. There are various traditional and cultural practices followed which affect the newborn. A family which mirrors values, traditions, customs and beliefs, i.e. culture of a society to which it belongs, plays an important role in physical, psychological, social development and health in children. Although they may vary from culture to culture, pregnancy, birth and child care related beliefs and practices appear in all communities and may play an important role in child health. Cultural and traditional practices, values and beliefs play an important role in the medical attention-seeking behavior of postpartum mothers as well as in newborn babies during the postnatal period. There are various traditional and cultural practices followed which affect the newborn. During the child illness or

general health problems, the first line of treatment is the traditional healers. Only when his/her treatment does not work then approach the private doctors/health services provided. Newborn mortality is one of the world's neglected health areas. As most of births and deaths occur outside any established health care facility, reduction in neonatal mortality may depend significantly on interventions involving promotion or adaptation of traditional care behaviours practiced in the home. Feeding of colostrums, timing of initiation and duration of breastfeeding, umbilical cord care, and measures taken to prevent hypothermia of the newborn are important factors in health and survival during the neonatal period. A family, which mirrors values, traditions, customs and beliefs, i.e. culture of a society to which it belongs, plays an important completely physical, psychological and social development and health in children. Although they may vary from culture to culture, pregnancy, birth and child care related beliefs and practices appear in all communities and may play an important role in child health.

Every society has its own traditional beliefs and practices related to baby care. Beliefs in supernatural power that is holy rituals, salvation offerings and sacrifices are applied at different stages of life from birth to death. There are many such practices, rituals, beliefs and offerings which either protect or harm the health of the baby. The study enabled the researchers to identify the cultural practices and beliefs on newborn care followed by the mothers.

A package of essential newborn care practices exists, which has a proven impact on reducing mortality, and can be implemented in low resource settings. However, childbirth and the neonatal period are culturally important times, during which there is a strong adherence to traditional practices. Successful implementation of the package therefore requires in-depth knowledge of the local context and tailored behavior change communication. Child health studies among rural dalits have been remained largely neglected. Only few studies tried to explain the socio-cultural practices associated to delivery care and utilization of MCH services. Nevertheless, most of these studies were focused either on the delivery care or on the utilization of Government health services pertaining to neglected child care/health.

For useful reviews of the literature on the anthropology of reproduction including studies on the biomedicalization of childbirth, see Mani, 1981; McClain, 1982; Laderman Carol, 1983; Prasad and Kapoor, 1990; Basu and Kshatriya, 1989; Brown and Sergent, 1990; Ginsburg and Rapp, 1991; Devarapalli, 1992; Pandey and Tiwari, 1993; 1995; Van Hollen, 1994; Pandey, 1996; and Davis-Floyd and Sergent, 1999; Pragati, 2012; 2013.

Keeping these points in mind an attempt is made in this paper to bring out the salient features of indigenous health care practices for newborn among rural dalits of Puducherry in anthropological perspective.

Dalit Profile

The dalits are an important and one of the largest sections of groups in India. It is true with Puducherry Union Territory also. They are concentrated in the districts of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam. They are inhabited in almost all communes in Puducherry Union Territory. There are fifteen dalit groups are an important and one of the largest section of groups Puducherry Union Territory. This particular study is focused on four Scheduled Caste communities who would like to call themselves as dalits also i.e., Valluvar, Paraiyar, Thinda vannar and Arundhathiyar. The researcher myself conducted ethnographic studies on each one of these communities in consequent years (1994, 1999).

The fieldwork was conducted from ethnographic perspectives. Primary data is collected through observations, informal interviews, case studies and by administering schedules to the key informants like pregnant women, lactating women, women having one or more children, old women and medicine-women. As this topic is on child health practices among rural dalit child health of Puducherry, which ultimately covers issues on delivery customs, and practices for which the researcher needed a good rapport with young pregnant women, lactating mothers and old women. Therefore, before attempting to obtain data on the specific topic, they were engaged for a long time in enquiring about their welfare and health problems etc.

This particular study is focused on four Scheduled Caste communities. Therefore, Scheduled Castes dominated villages were selected for the study. The fieldwork was conducted in four villages, namely Karikalampakkam, Thalalakuppam, and Abhishegapakkam of Puducherry district and Sornavur in Tamil Nadu. The four villages selected for the study are located within Puducherry at a distance of about 10Kms and 17Kms. Karikalampakkam village is on the main road near to Madagadipet, where as Sornavur village is in interior area of Puducherry and it belongs to Tamil Nadu; Thalalakuppam is on the Puducherry to Cuddalore main road. Abhishegapakkam is in between Thalalakuppam and Karikalampakkam villages. A gravel road connects these villages. In each of these villages, Anganwadi and Primary Health Centre are there.

Place of Delivery and Mode of Delivery

Deliveries in hospital and home are in equal number. Still the women prefer home deliveries and it is attended by Traditional Birth Attendant (*maruttuvacci*). Ram mentioned that the rural Tamilian women are more likely to seek the aid of Traditional Birth Attendant, and have home-births (1994: 23). The women prefer home-birth because they allow emotional support from other women and because hospital staff can be abusive to women especially with regard to childbirth pain (Ibid. 24). When the real labour pains start, the expectant woman (*piracava pen*) is taken to the corner of the main room. In order to elude pollution associated with childbirth, kitchen (*samayal arai*) and *puja* room (*puucal arai*) are avoided for this purpose. If the family has one room, the expectant mother is secluded in a corner of the room and a cloth curtain is put up to separate her from the rest of the house. In the place where the delivery takes place, is spread with a thick layer of sand on the floor. Then the expectant woman lies on a mat spread on the sand. The other married woman of her family and Traditional Birth Attendant assist in massaging her abdomen in order to make the delivery easy. East is considered the direction of life because the sun rises from that direction and is considered as an auspicious direction by the villagers of Puducherry. Therefore, delivery is performed facing towards the eastern direction. When the child is about to be delivered, the expectant woman is seated on the ground and two or three married women support her when she cries of her labour pains and stretches her legs on either side. They hold her in the right position and do not allow her to move, so that the baby may be delivered without any harm.

The postpartum period is recognized as a special time in many societies and is associated with special rituals and customs in many cultures (Manderson, 1981; Lundberg, 2011). People held a common belief that women and infants were vulnerable during the postpartum period (Piperata, 2008: 1094). Pragati also mentioned the various practices carried among rural dalit of Puducherry for cord cutting (2009, 2013: 86). Therefore, before cutting umbilical cord (*toppul koti*) the baby is laid on the floor or on sac or cloth. It is cautioned that only when the baby has recovered her vital breath then the Traditional Birth Attendant leaving a space of eight fingers from the root of the navel, and at that point, the umbilical cord is cut. Because the placenta (*nanji koti*) contains the life as well as power of the newborn and is an essential part of child till he/she transits to extra-uterine life through breathing. For this reason, the placenta is cut after few minutes of baby's birth. Traditional Birth Attendant uses a knife (*katti*) or a sickle (*aruva*) or a blade to cut the umbilical cord. The umbilical cord is cut and tied with a piece of a thread or lamp wick. This string is tied to curtail bleeding from the umbilical cord.

Daily Dressing of the Umbilical Cord

Pragati said that the Traditional Birth Attendant or any old woman does the daily dressing of the umbilical cord during first few days after birth. They used to take a little warm coconut oil in hand and gently press it on the cord close to the umbilicus, which is believed to help in early drying. Materials ranging from harmful (fatal) to harmless are applied by Traditional Birth Attendant for dressing of the cord. This consisted of ashes of tobacco cigar (*curuttu*)/ talcum powder/any medicated powder/ointment and others. Shedding of the umbilical cord is called *toppul koti ularatu* (2012).

Giving Bath to Newborn

On the first day a few hours after the delivery, the newborn is given lukewarm water bath. The rural dalit women of Puducherry believe that warm water induces growth where as cold water may lead to fever (*joram*) or even to death of the infant. Traditional Birth Attendant hold newborn baby's feet, shook and tossed the baby in air, blew in baby's ears and sucked out the contents of his nose and mouth.

Bathing the newborn is considered a specialized skill, and often a Traditional Birth Attendant is summoned. The Traditional Birth Attendant apply warm oil to the baby's body and hair, and then pour small amounts of oil into the baby's ears and sometimes into eyes and nose in order to prevent the body from getting too "dry". The baby would then be vigorously massaged before the oil is rinsed off with hot water. Some of them use soap and some use herbal bath powder to wash the baby. Infant is put in a sleeping position on the thigh; neck is always supported during bath. To wash infant's mouth Traditional Birth Attendant put water in the infant's mouth and sucks it out through her mouth. Finally, the pot containing water, the mother quickly makes three circular movements around the body of the baby before throwing away the water contained in the pot. This practice is believed to cast away the evil eye (*drishti*) and is apparently of magico-religious origin. Water, symbolizing sacred water, is thus requested to keep watch over the child.

Giving Baby Medicine (*pillai maruntu*) to Newborn

The procedure of bathing the baby would not be complete without the child swallowing an herbal mixture, which is believed to protect it from the small ailments common to this age group: chills, cough, worms, dysentery, and stomachache. Numerous decoctions prepared for infants are composed of medicinal plants: malabar nut, *Adhatoda justicia* (*adatodai*), garlic, *Allium sativum* (*vellai pundu*) betel, *Pepper betle*, (*vetrilai*), the fragrant root of the sweet flag, *Acorus calamus*, (*vasambu*), chebulic myrobalan, *Tarminalia Chebula* (*kadukkai*), dried rhizome ginger, *Zingiber officinale* (*suku*), and so on.

The ingredients are chosen for their cooling or stimulating properties. After the bath the Traditional Birth Attendant often would give the baby its first taste of baby medicine, which she had prepared herself and which she would give with each subsequent oil bath. This medicine is given to ensure that the baby would have regular bowel movements for each subsequent oil bath.

After the bath, the baby's scalp and body are dried and perfumed with Indian frank incense (*caampiraani*) smoke. The fire and fumigation had the power to drive away evil spirits such as the various kinds of demons, or even to ward off misfortunes, disease, and the consequence of sin. They would dab black marks made by thick black paste known as *mai* on key points of the baby's body. This is also known as *mai pottu*. The latter is a special mark intended to protect the baby from being afflicted by the evil eye and evil spirits (*peey picaasu*).

When all these procedures are over, the child is dressed and decked with ornaments. They put plastic black bangles to both hands, and evil eye cotton threads (*kanaaru kayiru*), around the left wrist and right leg of the babies. This is put to ward off evil eye. They also put waist thread (*araignaan kayiru*), a black string made of cotton thread tied to the waist. These black ornaments, it is believed protect the child from the evil eye and astrological danger (*dosham*). Since black is considered an unattractive colour, it is believed to repel any hostile glance.

It is also common to hang various trinkets from the cotton string around the baby's waist, including amulet (*taayittu*) to which is attributed a preventive power. A little silver may be filled with a fragment of the umbilical cord is also tied. The latter is another sign of the everlasting, nature of the protective bond uniting mother and child.

Infant Feeding Practices

During the first three days of the newborn's life, whether it is born in the hospital or at home, the pre-lacteal foods such as sugar water or honey are given. The first food is given between 4 and 12 hours after birth. They continue giving sugar water or honey for three days to stop the neonate from crying. The newborn is given only sugar water or honey in order to clear its throat or phlegm and to get rid of the "rubbish" and water in its stomach. By offering the infant its first food of sweetened water, the moral character of giver is impressed for life upon the neonate. The importance of the child's patrilineal relatives is initiated clearly brought out in the ceremony. The child's paternal aunt, the paternal grandmother, or Father's elder Brother's Wife initiates feeding. This is known as sugar water *sevaennai* or *seeni thaneer*. This signifies that the baby's life on earth will be as sweet as the honey it first tastes.

Through this rite, the child may imbibe the behavioral characteristics of the respective person.

Immediately following delivery, many rural dalit women of Puducherry do not put the baby to the breast to drink colostrums (*ciimpaal*). They have the fear that the colostrums cause diarrhoea and nausea for the baby. A few women also said that because the colostrums are thick, it is too hard for the baby to suck and digest. Furthermore, some believed that colostrums derived from menstrual blood which ceases at conception and which has been stagnated during pregnancy. Hence, it is considered as polluting substance.

The infant is a tender shoot; hence, it is nourished by mother's milk (*taaypaal*) and is highly sensitive to fluctuations in the content of the milk. From the third day onwards the child feeds on its mother's milk and continues to do so till the child is one and sometimes until the child is one and half years old and occasionally until they are 2-3 years old; the limiting factor is usually the timing of the next pregnancy.

There are many food taboos after delivery, the newly delivered woman (*pracavam anna pen*) is not supposed to eat rice for three days, pulses for one month, tubers and non-vegetarian diet for two or three months except dry fish and chicken. In order to avoid the mother and infant from the cold, they feed the newly delivered woman on a hot liquid, particularly delivery medicine (*kuliselavu*). Most of these ingredients used in delivery medicine are considered to have the quality of producing heat or warmth in the body. They use lots of garlic, *Allium sativum* (*vellai pundu*), and cumin, *Cuminum cyminum* (*ceergam*) in the sausages preparations to enhance the mother's milk.

Breast-feeding is done on demand. Until about seven to eight months, the mother's milk is the only food the child has. At that stage, it may be given an occasional biscuit, or a little bread dipped in milk or more often coffee or tea. When the breast milk is inadequate or completely not available then the provision of substitute milk is presented. Other substitute milk used is cow's milk or goat's milk or milk powder. Fruits, vegetables, and rice are not given to the child until he is a year old or as it is put, 'till he walks'. He cannot digest rice and vegetables and fruit is likely to give him a cold. Fish and meat are also forbidden until the child is nearing two years. The child cannot digest all these foods.

They give rice gruel (*kanji*) as supplementary food. They also use other supplementary foods such as rice with *dhal* or *rasam*, *idly* with milk and biscuits are dipped either in water/milk/tea/coffee and fed to infants. The well-to-do families will give diluted tinned formula foods such as, Glaxco and Amul, Ceralac and Farex, a tinned baby cereal. The general health of the infants showed that they were very weak, thin and fragile.

The supplementary feeding started after one or two years which is quite late. Children are not weaned systematically, but start taking solid food (usually boiled rice) before the age of one. When the mothers find it difficult to wean a child, they resort to various methods such as applying of bitter substances like the paste of margoosa leaves, *Melia azadirachta indica leaves* (*veepa eelaikal*) to the breast and offering of various foods. Properly blossomed jasmine flowers, *Jasminum officinale* (*malligai puukal*) are spread evenly on the breasts of lactating woman and tied tightly with a cloth to stop the free flow of milk and it cures the swelling in the breast region. Van Hollen also mentioned about it, that, the jasmine flowers inhibit the flow of breast milk; hence, women are refrained from adorning their hair with jasmine flowers, *Jasminum officinale* (*malligai puukal*) while breast-feeding (2003: 175). In order to stop the free flow of milk lactating woman tie 30 jasmine flowers on the breast.

Health Problems of Newborn

Most of the rural dalits usually believe that the illness (suffering) is caused on account of the wrath of the Gods or Goddesses, spirit intrusion, sorcery, casting of evil eye or breach of any socio-cultural taboo. A child's risk of dying is highest in the first month of life, where safe childbirth and effective neonatal care are essential. Once children have reached one month of age and until the age of five, the main cause for loss of life are pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and measles. Malnutrition also contributes to more than one third of all child deaths. Other than, these diseases, many of the deaths were thought to be caused by fever, astrological danger (*dosham*), and illness (*ammai noi*) or evil spirits. It is interesting that, except for fever (*joram*), these are just the diseases for which allopathic treatment is least sought. They also suffer with fever, diarrhoea (*beedi*) and respiratory disorders (*muuichi ciiriimai*). The major diseases noticed among children are air borne diseases like whooping cough (*kakauvai*), fever, cold and cough (*cali, irumbal*), etc. These were followed by water born diseases like diarrhoea, jaundice (*manjal kamalai*), cholera (*kaalaraa*), typhoid (*taipaad*) and measles (*tatta ammai*). Malnourished children were more likely to suffer from pneumonia (*nuraiiral veekam*), and whooping cough (*kakauvai*), compared with healthy children.

The most common chicken pox (*cinna ammai*) is not a serious disease. There are several categories of pox illnesses (*amma noikal*). Chicken pox and measles (*tatta ammai*) are common and rather harmless children's diseases. The rural dalit children of Puducherry are mostly infected with diseases such as coriander seeds pox (*kothamali ammai*), mumps (*thonda ammai*), neem flower pox (*veepam puvu ammai*), and measles. Mumps (*thonda ammai*) is an infectious disease caused by a virus. It occurs frequently in an epidemic form in summer, and mostly affects children. Measles is an acute, infectious disease,

which strikes mostly children. These diseases constitute a special category, as all of them are supposed to be caused by the wrath of goddess *Mariyamman*. Generally, to protect the pox illness - house from the pollution *veepa eelaikal* margoosa leaves, *Melia azadirachta indica* are hanged up in the threshold of the house. Therefore, no material medicine is efficacious to check them. Turmeric, curcuma longa (*manjal*) and fresh margoosa leaves are grounded to the paste and applied all over the body of patient for seven days. On seventh day, after applying the paste of margoosa leaves and turmeric, all over the body, cold-water bath is given to the patient. Likewise, three baths are given to the patient, and then the disease will be cured.

Maantam is a local, non-allopathic term that usually refers to a kind of diarrhoea, which is thought to be unique to children from birth until age three. Zygomatic disease in children (*maantam*) means 'indigestion problem in children'. *Maantam* is a type of diarrhoea in babies and small children thought to be due to lactating mother eating certain forbidden foods, which harm the baby through the mother's milk. Children infected with *maantam*, will not have proper digestive capacity of food, bloated body, whitish face, do not drink mother's milk, frequent vomits, do not feel hungry, and diarrhoea with water motion. There are three types of *maantam noi*, such as *maanga maantam*, *muku maantam* and *puvu maantam*.

In the traditional society, weaning is commonly abrupt and unplanned. Often it is brought about by the occurrence of another pregnancy to the mother. In many communities, there are superstitions and beliefs concentrating the effects of another pregnancy on the quality of the breast milk. It is believed that the womb heat from the 'poisons' the milk in the breast. It is also that the baby in the womb is jealous of the older sibling on the breast. It is considered urgency that the child should be taken off from the breast immediately. In the ensuing hurry, there is hardly any time for the gradual introduction of solid to allow the child to get used to them. Instead, the breast is denied to him. This practice of separating the child from the mother is yet another way of effecting abrupt weaning. This abrupt weaning and separation of the child from the mother leads to the illness known as *savallum noojanum/savallai pullai*. This disease in children i.e., *savallai pullai* illness comes closest to term kwashiorkor/marasmus illnesses. *savallai pullai* is a nutritional problem caused by lack of protein. The child's face, hands and feet were swollen (oedema), potbelly and he/she will have great difficulty in breathing. Eventually, the more heat can cause the child to have a fever and diarrhoea.

Excessive crying was traditionally treated by a procedure called '*uram edikaradhu*' relief using the technique of rolling the baby in a long cloth and turning the baby upside down and finally shaking it. *Uram* in Tamil is infantile

sprain; it is a kind of sprain among infants, during that time infant continuously keep crying for long time. Then the infantile sprain is removed by body massage/by rolling in bed sheet or dhotis. The removing of infantile spasm is known as *edikaradhu*. Usually it begins in between third month to first year of the infant life. If it happens to adults, then it is said as sprain (*suluku*).

When the child is affected with astrological dangers then the child will have green stools, then they say it is because of evil touching, saliva touching, body touching, evil air, touching of bird shadow, are the causation for this disease. Usually the child is infected with this disease in between third month to one year. There are eight types of astrological dangers such as *pacchi dosham*, *paravai dosham*, *puvu dosham*, *echil dosham*, *pen dosham*, *aan dosham*, *kanni dosham*, and *mudda dosham*.

Traditional Practices

The types of medical care that they practiced are traditional medicines self-medication, herbal medicines and lastly Allopathic. In addition, parents arranged magic of the witches or sorcerers whenever their infants and children fell ill. The rural dalit women for ordinary health problems, at first they try to treat with home remedies by consulting the Traditional Birth Attendant or any old women in the family or from neighborhoods. Traditional Birth Attendant apart from managing deliveries, they could address diverse health problems of the children. She expertly treats a wide range of pediatric problems pertaining to child's growth, cold, cough, fever, improving digestion etc. They use many locally available herbs for above said health problems of children. Most of Traditional Birth Attendants is storehouse of traditional wisdom. Most of the medicines are accompanied with certain diet restrictions. Their medicine chest comprises of herbs, roots, tubers, barks, leaves, etc. If not cured with the home remedies, then the indigenous medicine man (*maruttuvar*) is consulted for further treatment. Indigenous medicine man is believed and considered to be efficient indigenous medicine man. The rural dalit women said that they consult indigenous medicine man for treatment of certain diseases. It is observed that the numbers of indigenous medicine man are gradually decreasing but people's belief on their traditional ethno medicine is as strong even today as it happened to be in olden days.

For both evil eye and astrological danger, they take infants to Muslim mosque. The Bai is a Muslim priest in the *Darghaal/Maasudi* (Mosque) and he acts as a healer. He recites some incantation (*mantram*) by waving with peacock feathers over the face of the baby and ties a knotted string or talisman (*sivappu mantriicha kayiru* or *maasudi kayiru* or *mudi kayiru*) to the baby's hand.

To ward-off the effects of the evil eye, the rural dalit women of Puducherry district tie an amulet of black (*karuppu*)/red (*sivappu*) threads

(*kayiru*) on the wrist of the child. This is known as *mantriicha kayiru* or *mudi kayiru*. Generally these mystifying power threads are got from the Muslim *Bai* (Muslim Priest). He recites some incantation by waving with peacock feathers over the face of the baby and ties a knotted string amulet to the baby's hand as a preventive measure. The black and red colour is believed to absorb/neutralize/ward off the effect of evil eye. Among the Mavichis a black thread (*mangadhya*) is tied around the neck of the child for such type of health problems of the children. (Tribhuvan and others, 1992). In some cases wearing a talisman is thought to be powerful enough to protect a child.

They also bring enchanted water (*mantriicha thani*) from the *Dargaah/Maasudi* (Mosque). This enchanted water is used to wash the face and is given to drink to the baby. Then they take the sick child to the Hindu Gods/Goddesses temples, worship and do special puja (*puccai*) in the name of sick child.

Some salt and dried chilies are held in one's hand, and then circled 3-3 clock-wise and anti clock-wise times over the effected mother/infant or their food. The encircled items such as salt/red chilies are thrown into fire. The malefic influence will be confirmed when a red chilies or a handful of rock salt thrown in a fire crackles. This ritual action is believed to reduce the evil eye harmful effect on the effected person. The patient usually gets relaxed after ritual. The evil eye is mildly feared and is generally avoided. It is warded off by secluding the parturient mother, the infant and their food from unnecessary exposure to outside people. Therefore, the mother eats her food in privacy, or only in the presence of a few trusted persons. To ward off evil eye a ritualistic gesture is made by the concerned persons.

Mostly magical medicine is effective in the treatment of these diseases. An able Shaman (*mantravaati*) can diagnose the cause of such diseases and ward off the evil spirit from the patient through some magical rites. After warding off ceremony the Shaman will usually give the patient some amulets or talisman to wear on the body. This is a prophylactic measure to prevent attacks that may occur in future. In some others, more complicated rites will be deemed necessary and advice will be sought from a specialist Shaman whose status falls somewhere that of the Shamanism and the temple priest. Naturally, as medical science and hygiene develop the realm of superstition decreases. Nevertheless, in Tamil villages, it is still possible to observe the co-existence of both systems of thought: a child will be vaccinated against disease but at the same time, will also wear a talisman (*taayittu*). Usually they put talisman to the upper arm or on the neck as to preventive and protective

measures from evil eye or sorcery (*ceyvinai*). Some apparently unreasonable customs are still alive today with their magical origins.

During the child illness or general health problems, the first line of treatment is the traditional healers. Only when his/her treatment does not work then approach private doctors/health services provided. Primary Health Centre and Government Hospitals seemed to be alien to rural people in general and in particular to dalit women, as they did not feel at ease. Though the OPD facilities are utilized wherever available, the indoor treatment has not been well accepted.

Anganwadi (a day care centre) also takes care of pregnant women and children by giving them milk, egg, nutritious meals (*cattu unavu*) and dried nutritious flour (*cattu mavu*) etc. They also teach the pregnant women how to take care of their children and how to keep their house and environment in hygienic conditions.

Conclusion

The child health care practices among the rural dalit women of Puducherry district in relation to their ways of life and vice-versa revealed various dimensions of their health and socio-cultural life. Birth of baby is always a happy occasion and both home and medical remedies are used to keep a good health of the mother and the baby. It was revealed that notwithstanding of available medical treatment, they believe on herbal medicines and seek help from indigenous medicine man and medicine woman for easy delivery, illness etc. They visit the Primary Health Centre or health workers when either the cause of the disease is not understood/or there is no relief from their own medical system. Whenever they faced any health problem at first they go to their local man or women such as *vaitiyar*, *maruttuvacci*, and *mantravaati*, who treat them with traditional methods or medicines. Because the medicine man/woman resides somewhere nearby in the same locality, it becomes easier for the villagers to approach them; this saves them of the travel cost. The medicine man/woman prepares a variety of mixtures, oils or ointments out of various forest plants or their roots collected from the neighbouring forest which are used for treatment of pregnant women and other diseases. At the time of child delivery also, the same oil is used for massaging the women. The villagers have more faith in these medical measures than the modern medical care simply because they have been depending upon the local medicine, the man and his traditional system of treatment over the ages.

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UNDERSTANDING ECOLOGY IN TERMS OF COSMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: A SPATIAL STUDY AMIDST THE INDIGENOUS PALIYAR AND IRULAR OF TAMIL NADU

B. Gnana Bharathi
BITS, Pilani University.

Introduction

In regard to the stance, the paper would critically analyse the ecological role of two traditional scheduled tribal communities namely; the Irulas of Nilgiris and the Paliyars of Palani hills in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. By bringing in the various cultural peculiarities of these two ethnic communities, the paper seeks to understand their way of life that has been in regular harmony with that of the cycles of nature and how in the subsequent stages, the right of access to such ecological spaces of these communities have been denied chronologically through diverse dominant power structures at various time intervals. From my personal field experience with these two major tribal communities, I have identified how some of their cultural features or entities have consistently maintained a healthy and a harmonious eco-social relationship with each of its local environment through times.

Brief Ethnographic Account on Irular and Paliyar

Irulas

The Irular, chosen for the study and representation belongs to the district of Nilgiris in Western ghats region of Tamil Nadu. The Irula or the Irulas are found in the southern part of India in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and even in regions of coastal Andhra Pradesh. They are identified throughout in various names or ethnonyms as, Erilagaru, Iraligar, Irulan, Kasaba, Kasava, Kasuba, Ten Vanniya 1997: 104). There exists two Paul Hockings kinds or groups of Irulas inhabiting in these regions namely: the Melenadu-Irular (uplanders) and the – Vettakaadu-Irular (lowlanders). As with that of their linguistic affiliations, the Irulas have been identified as speakers of a distinct Irula language or speakers of a dialect of Tamil. In addition, Malayalam has influenced Irula speech in Kerala and Kannada has influenced the speech of the subgroup of Irula, called Kasaba in Karnataka (ibid.: 104).

Paliyar

The Paliyans or the Paliyar whom again classified as the scheduled tribes living in South India were predominantly identified as hunter-gatherers. The Paliyans largely live on the eastern slopes of Western Ghats. My study is concerned and confined only with the section living in the range of Palani hills. The community who were once chiefly engaged as foragers has now largely been driven by market based economy and work in large sectors of tea, coffee and cardamom estates and contemporarily practise a settled means of cultivation in the hills.

Rudiments of Ecology

No living thing or a group of living things exist in isolation. All organisms both plants and animals need energy and materials from the environment in order to survive and the lives of all kinds of living things or species affect the lives of others. Ecology is basically the study of the relationship between living things (within species and between different species) and their environment. Humans have always studied living things in their natural environment in order to hunt and to gather food, but as a scientific discipline, ecology is relatively new. My field work tries to see what happens to particular species (here in this case, both with the tribals and to with that of their surrounding ecosystem) the relations that operate either directly or indirectly with that of their population numbers, diets, form, size and behaviour. Both paliyar and Irular here are seen as how they maintain a harmonious symbiotic relationship in tune with that of their natural systems through their indigenous world-views.

State's Simplification

The colonial rule in India had certainly marked its stringent departure from the earlier local systems of appropriation and management of natural resources. Hence, with the cases of both the Paliyar and Irular managed natural resources, their land and forest were demarcated and fenced to make room for the state's control, which came in the name of the forest department. This study brings out certain key cultural acts of the communities like- shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering of their MFP (minor forest produce) that were diachronically developed and were time tested local resource systems that were vigorously replaced by centralized administrative rules or regulations that were quite abstract or alien towards their cosmological view of land and to that of their indigenous ecological space(s). Further, as Indra Munshi (2012: 4) cites in one of her work:

The forest has been a major source of food, timber for house construction and agricultural implements, fuel wood, medicines

and for other necessities of everyday life. Leaves, fruits, flowers, roots, tubers from the forest constitute an important supplement to the otherwise meager diet of the adivasis, especially during the lean seasons or periods of drought. Wild fruits, berries and honey are collected by children when they are hungry, fish and other small game animals are a source of protein, bamboo and timber are necessary for making agricultural, hunting and fishing tools and herbs serve not only as potherbs, but, as medicines for several ailments; oil, liquor, soap come from forest. Scholars have suggested that 50 to even 80 percent of the food requirement of the adivasis may be provided by the forest. Sale of non-timber forest products like bamboo, kath, fuelwood, tendu leaves, sal leaves and other variety of nuts are an important source of income. Gods and spirits reside in the forest so do trees and animals which are objects of devotion and it is the ideal gateway space for leisure time activities. In spite of the fact, that, a major disruption in the relationship between the two has been caused by forces unleashed in the last two centuries or so, for a large number of the adivasis, the forest is the leitmotiv of their material and spiritual existence.

Hence, these native and the ecological habitats of these indigenes have a vital role to play in the way of life, thereby, setting a backbone of their very existence as one among the diverse communities that inhabit the planet today.

Traditional Eco-Cosmological Knowledge of Paliyar and the Irular

Very much as a fact, the indigenous local knowledge systems of the tribals are highly relational, reciprocal and ecologically sustainable by nature. The real sustainability of these two scheduled tribal communities lies at the disposal of their surrounding distinctive local bioregional practices. Today, the state's ban on their shifting cultivational practices, hunting and other foraging activities have had adverse effect on their surrounding ecosystems either directly or indirectly at large. The swidden or the Shifting cultivation culture has been an ancient indigenous activity of these two communities for a long period of time. In this process, the forest patches are cleared by burning out the wild shrubs that involved cutting and burning of plants in the forest, in order to create an area called the swidden. These areas once after being cultivated are left over by these communities for almost 5-6 years until they return back to the same place once when the piece of land gets back most of its soil nutrients. During this fallow-period, the land regains its nitrogen content to its top layer and the forest after monsoon showers regains back a fresh tract of trees and

shrubs that again as a cycle become a source of food for wild animals, like elephants, deer and the bison. The process of regeneration of the forest through this process is completely bestowed by these communities in such practice(s). As the famous Indian Ecologist Madhav Gadgil rightly notes in this regard that how “some of the largest natural forest exist in areas inhabited by slash-and-burn cultivators for centuries, while whereas intensive plough-cultivation has destroyed forest wherever it was and is practiced.” (1992: 192).

A ban was imposed by the colonial government due to its abstract understanding of such practices and on such spaces throughout the country. Later, in Tamil Nadu by the erstwhile Madras presidencies forest divisional officer in charge Sir. Hamilton issued a report that completely ruptured that organic bond by all possible means. This could be evidently felt through one of his report that reads:

Throughout the Indian empire large and valuable tracts of forests were exposed to the careless rapacity of the native population and especially unscrupulous contractors and traders who cut and cleared them without reference to its ultimate results and who did so moreover without being in any way under the regulations 5 of the authority (1860: v). (Norstrom, 1860: 29).

Thereby, through such practice and the style of cultivation, either directly or indirectly had paved a way for the regeneration of many new plants, the opportunity to freshly germinate and grow which served to be an organic food for many other species like insects and other big fauna species. This organic method misunderstood by that of the forest department was actually for the Paliyar in their local cosmological term was known to be as the *Varadhi*, meaning ‘house-keeping’, i.e., cosmologically meaning, in which the forest spaces are cleared, kept neat and tidy and restored back once again through this method. Hence, they saw this practice as a forest purifying work, or as a cleansing method regaining from it from its previous dust or befalls. The Irulas called this practice as *Kothu-kaadu*, meaning to; cleave and clear the forest patch.

Chattan of the Paliyar community gave us some brief information about the various advantages involved in such cultivational practices, which goes as follows:

- ❖ Some of their traditional crop varieties like - Ragi, Millets, Horse-Gram, Pepper, Bamboo rice etc., would be cultivated through this method without any chemical pesticides or fertilizers in it. It is purely organic.

- ❖ A minimum of at least 5 out of 10 such crops would ‘certainly’ yield; thereby, making their sustenance guaranteed throughout that year.
- ❖ The *land-raise* (land texture) and the native crop diversity is constantly maintained.
- ❖ These food crops are highly organic and healthy and are cultivated according to the texture and the climate of the local region (land ethical practices are strictly upheld).
- ❖ These crops are cultivated and consumed in tune to the seasonal cycles of the region, thereby, naturally and constantly keeping them in sync with the natural cycle of their surrounding environment.
- ❖ The method also reduces soil erosion to a great extent.

Hence, through the states’ intervention in the form of bans and denial of such practices has of late led to serious damages widely across both the land and economy. Most of their native crop diversities due to the recent alternative means of intensified agriculture that supports only certain variety of crops. Government as the ‘only’ master has always accorded with such ethnic environmental injustices upon these communities without considering their intimate land based culture.

The Notion of Value

The concepts of ‘value’ in such indigenous communities offer certain significant insights of their traditional world views. To the mainstream communities the concept certainly depends more inclined in terms of economic means. Plato, for example, conceived the idea of good, the supreme value, as the direct culmination of the ideal world. For him, values are merely a sort of an extra-mental, eternal realities that are unaffected by human feelings, desires or passions that intuit one’s heart. Kant, too, holds a similar view when he declares autonomy of the Good will and asks to perform duty for duty’s sake. Plato, Kant, Sidgwick and Moore believed in a purely ontological concept of value (Sen. 2003: 115).

Neither Paliyar nor the Irulas hold such a sole ‘economic-view’ towards the idea of value. For these two age old traditional ethnic communities, the idea of value is more of a naturalist image. Their value-consciousness is deeply rooted in their tradition and socio-religious practices. It is moreover, generally held that their local or their indigenous knowledge customs and beliefs came down from their ancestors to whom it was supposed to have been bestowed by the supreme ancestral gods who reside in their world. Hence, the adherences towards their native socio-religious customs are considered to be right while its violation to be wrong. Both Paliyar and Irular’s equality and solidarity co-exist

not only within the community but also with that of their surrounding nature and their native land of which they are certainly an essential part.

Karuppasamy of the Pattiyakaadu village gave us an interesting information on the ritual called the *Kurinji-puu vazhipadu* or as the *Puu-Noombu*. The flower *kurinji* actually carries its botanical name as *Strobilanthes kunthiana* that blossoms in the Shola forests regions of the Western Ghats in south India once in 12 years. The characteristic features of the ritual celebrated by the Paliyar during the time of its blossom go as follows:

- ❖ Celebrated during the month of April, the ritual goes on for almost 8 days. 8 days before that celebration, people of the community fast and abstain themselves from any sexual or alcoholic addictions of any sort.
- ❖ The local name being *Puu-Noombu* (lit: puu means flower in Tamil, while noombu means ritual) is seen to be a welcome party for the grand flower that has arrived after 12 years.
- ❖ Prayers to receive good rains, perennial water supply, sufficient harvest yields, fertility for their land and for the welfare and good will of the community are requested from the special flower through the ritual.
- ❖ Their local shaman named as *Teeraadi* initiates these rituals and is considered to be a man of the highest order possessing purity of thought and action.
- ❖ During the ritual he dances fiercely like an oracle sayer, called as *veriaattam* in Tamil, in which he invites their spirits and goes into a trance and mediates as sacred oracle conduit, conveying the messages of the gods to the community people.
- ❖ Honey bees are invited by the shaman and are believed to drink the honey from the flower's nectar that symbolically represents a good re-instigation of the community towards a fresh start in their upcoming life and in its events.
- ❖ The flower bears a fruit that has a rice sort of seeds inside which is later cooked and shared by the community members during the ritual.

This significant ritual marks the supreme value that Paliyar posses towards their surrounding environment. Through such cultural practices the younger generations naturally learn from their old of how to respect and care for their environment that stands to be their life supporting system. Hence, according to the Paliyar the supreme God has created the world and it is their duty to safeguard it by means of all respects through such rituals. The most cherished wish of these communities lies in maintaining a perfect

harmony (integrated with nature and supernatural powers) without exploiting it for any material gains. Hence, these rituals stand to evidently substantiate to how they consider the elements of their local environment and how culturally important they are towards their community's well-being forever. They respect nature and take back its response in an organic bondage.

Further, Karuppasamy gave us more particulars about the sound eco-centered lifestyle behind their other activities such as hunting and fishing which form an essential part of their life.

- ❖ Before going to hunt, their hunting dogs are smeared on their noses with squeezed juice of various herbal roots with some garlic and pepper. When this is done, the dogs let out their mucus from noses, thereafter the dogs are believed to gain a sharp sense of sniffing power to track the body smell of the targeted prey(s) during the hunt.
- ❖ Before the hunt starts, they offer prayers to lord Velan popularly known as lord Murugan or Subhramanya to safeguard them during the hunting expedition. They strongly believe that the gods and spirits would show mercy on them which automatically constructs humility in them while encountering animals as a prey. The anthropocentric attitude is diluted through such rituals.
- ❖ While catching birds, they use a native sticky gum seed called as the *Ottunni*. They crush the sticky milk got out of it and place it in-between the bamboo shrubs so that when the birds sit on it, their claws get stuck and it becomes easy for them to catch. They regard this to be a harmless way of catching them without inflicting any pain on the species which is the *food-gift* given by their forest spirits.
- ❖ While fishing, they use wild seeds like-*Irاندانكااي* and *Karankaai*, and mix them in the place where the fish come or where the water flow is slow. The fish would faint (fish stupefying) and it becomes an easy catch; but, this poisoning gets cleared then and there so that it does not affect the stream or the brook water in any way. It is a temporary poisoning method.
- ❖ Once the fishes are caught, they are hooked onto a long stick and placed above small creeks and when the crabs come to eat them they quickly catch them too.

By all possible means, the paliyar makes sure that their act of hunting is environmentally genial and never exploits the resources in excess.

According to their cosmology, the Paliyar apart from this, also perform a small ritual named *-Pulikku-vai-Kattutal* (tying the tiger's mouth). Through this ritual, it is believed that when the Paliyar graze their cattle in the wild, no tigers, leopards, Hyena or any other such big cats would attack their cattle. Hence, before they go for grazing their cattle their shaman gives them a sacred ash which is actually the ground mud and mythically marks the grazing-area with fox's tail hung in all the four directions of the marked area. Through such acts, it is believed that wild animals will certainly not enter the arena till they finish grazing. Suddenly, if an animal comes they are shoed away using drum noises and are never killed or harmed at any cost. Hence, through such cosmological practices it becomes evident that how the Paliyars respect the spaces of other animals and all their defensive strategies are never anthropocentric at any cost. Besides, they also maintain certain specialized spaces called the *Kaanal*, which are considered to be deep forest areas where big wild animals and their ancestral spirits reside and hence, in their cosmological lens these spaces are never disturbed even for collecting firewood as they consider such spaces to be the private breeding and feeding space of such animals. These spaces help or aid for process of conservation, as even during any crisis or emergency state, the Paliyar women would never cut young trees for wood or hunt in these region(s), instead they do not mind taking the risk of distant walking to collect only dry woods that would have naturally fallen down on the ground for domestic use. The cultural and environmentally ethical behaviour of these communities here deserves respect. Such limitations and demarcations keep their eco-centric life alive till date.

The Cosmological Hunting Style of the Irulas

Due to the imposition of a ban upon, the adivasi communities inhabiting the Nilgiris in the western part of Tamil Nadu, have very much lost their crucial protein diets. Small game animals were always a vital part of their everyday staple diet and now the ban on hunting has become a huge blow upon these communities, especially on their overall health, making them easily vulnerable to diseases. During my fieldwork, Veerasaamy and Chinnapaiyan of Allimoyar village of Kotagiri taluk gave some significant details regarding their indigenous mode(s) of hunting that are executed without causing any imbalance in their ecosystem. The Irulas are quite well adept at their hunting skills in every aspect. Hence, as mentioned before, some of their native hunting modes include diverse ethical aspects like:

- a. They do not hunt all animals or birds for the sake of meat. They hunt only small sized animals or birds, that too, only if necessary.

- b. They mostly hunt only animals that breed or populate more quickly in numbers.
- c. Animals that are spotted in the verge of giving birth or a young calf would never be touched by their arrows at any cost. Young animals are definitely given more time to live and are certainly not brought down by hunting.
- d. Animals and birds that are in the verge of their extinction or that are quite rare are never hunted down.
- e. If any animal comes to attack them, they slightly hurt them on the lower part of their leg just to escape the situation. They never kill the animal at any cost. Most of the time the animals are scared away by using fire or other forms of heavy hooting or drum sounds.
- f. If any wild animal spotted with its own natural wound, the information about that particular animal would quickly be sent across the village, so that other members of the community become aware of it and do not hunt it down. (Gestures of its typical limping, or the specific area that is affected in its body are used as sign indicators).
- g. Hunting has never been a mere entertaining game, but rather only to cater to their self-sufficient protein dietary requirements when needed.

The Irulas are well aware of the fact, that, they and the animals in the environment are mutually dependant. Their relationships are traditionally disciplined and do not sustain through any external nodal agencies aiding them in maintaining the ecosystem. Hence, the *use-value* of the forest along with all its natural elements (including the presence of wild animals) are cordially maintained without causing any trouble by these indigenous communities. Further, in their point of view, most animals are seen as persons endowed with a soul. The leopard especially for the Irulas, is connoted to be a *Vettaiyan* (an anthropomorphized human hunter). So, whenever they spot a leopard killing and eating its prey they chant mantras thereby requesting it to leave some for them as well, and is believed that it certainly leaves some amount of meat share for these people. In such hunting societies, the collaboration with the game animals are seen highly as giving them the due respect. The hunter must avoid wasting animal lives one must swiftly kill the animal without inflicting unnecessary suffering upon it; further one must treat the dead corpse of the animal with dignity and should not brag about his win over the animal. As a noted anthropologist Phillippe Descola points out, “during the hunting process, what may appear as a treachery is in fact an act of compassion for the game

animals that are moved by the suffering of the starving hunter and willingly offers him their corporeal..." (2013: 29-30). Hence, through such profound interrelatedness the communities maintain a balanced relationship with their environment even during hunting acts. Hunting acts were seen as a sort of social-intercourse with their surrounding environment (inter-specific relationships); as a genuine deal with that of the non-human. The act (art) of the hunting not only supplements their dietary requirements but also indirectly maintains and controls the population of the wild species. When hunting was banned, this became one of the major root causes for the frequent human-animal conflicts in and around their hamlets till recent times. The *community* concept of ecology (i.e., both living and the non-living entities of the ecosystem) was traditionally maintained in an egalitarian way by these people but now due to its snapping off this organic link, the bond is largely broken within their ecological space.

Apart from being precisely ecologically specific, the cosmology of these indigenous communities strikes a highly revered 'non-dualistic approach' towards their environment. Cosmologies of this kind cannot be cited as a direct transposition of particular ecological processes that are evident with their local environment. Rather they provide an adequate base through which ecological processes that are locally distinct could be subjectified and integrated as meaningful components in a web of mutual relationships. In the case of Paliyar, when elephants, if accidentally found stray in their fields or hamlets, they are addressed to as their *thathas* (i.e., as grandfathers or forefathers) and are very gently driven off by seeking their humble permission to let them do their work. The relationship between both the human and the non-human entities are very *relational* and *reciprocal* by nature and no hierarchy or dichotomy is maintained in such relationships. A classic example to understand this phenomena could be seen in the Irula culture in Nilgris, where, when- their crops are ready for harvest, it has been and is still being a tradition of allowing elephants, wild pigs and parrots to eat some before the community takes the rest. The Irulas strongly believe that since whatever comes from the forest space (i.e. the cultivation space and its yield) the wild animals who inhabit the forest place right from the beginning too have an equal share in it. Hence, a generous act of allowing them to eat is still being practised in this community, till date stands out to be a supreme cultural eco-philosophy of this community. Thereby, the act of cultural recognition here becomes highly important towards various decisions made by the state.

Development as a Conflicting Ideology

As in continuity with many other indigenous communities of the world, these two scheduled tribal communities have their identity and culture, rooted

deeply into their land and the environment. Their vast lands are mostly a common property and community life is co-operative and their symbiosis with that of nature and its elements are conceived as the forms sociability. Both Paliyar and Irular consider, land and forest as their mother; and more than the material products provided by them. It has always been a sacred resting place of their ancestors. Today, large scale alienations and displacements caused by powerful voices do not consider such indigenous notions or their cultural affinities towards land. Further, in the name of wildlife protection or conservation, the setting up of numerous reserve areas (national parks) seems to be a tool for exploiting forest wealth in order to meet only to the demands of the mainstream nation-states, expansion schemes. Modern medicines are of late winning over their native medicines by imaginarily representing a speedy recovery, thereby, colonizing both the 'mind and the body' of such communities.

Conclusion

Various development plans have always acted purely in a mechanical manner in such spaces and have never considered human or their socio-cultural aspects of those communities. The main engine of modernity is driven through commodity capitalism and to its synonymic culture being consumerism. As Patrick Curry notes;

The inability of capitalism (and orthodox socialism) to recognize real, natural and ultimately non-negotiable limits is what makes it inherently unsustainable, as well as anti-ecological. And the cultural dimension of this process is principally to replace local distinctiveness, variety and qualities with flattened, homogenized and standardized units, tending towards identical and interchangeable quantity (2011: 174).

Traditional ecological knowledge has been acquired over thousands of years through direct contact with their surrounding natural world. Further, in order to validate this as Patrick Curry again points out:

A joint report by the world Wide Fund for Nature and Terralingua cross-mapped the world's eco-regions of the highest biological diversity with the areas of greatest cultural and linguistic diversity. The result- a highly significant coincidence of the two – strongly implies that biodiversity and cultural diversity are interdependent and stand or fall together: where TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) survives and thrives, so does biodiversity and where it suffers or disappears, so do the ecosystems (2011: 175-176).

Through the denial of the right to access towards these indigenous communities by the nation-state's structures, it has always proved to be largely insufficient.

As Madhav Gadgil notes in one of his essays that, “studies show that, in fact, the highest levels of biological diversity are found in areas with some amount or activities of (though not excessive) human intervention. In opening up new niches to be occupied by insects, plants and birds, partially disturbed ecosystems often have a greater diversity than untouched areas...” (ibid.: 1992: 207). This further enables us to understand the various endemic practices practised by these two communities traditionally that has maintained their surrounding ecosystem.

Moreover, in understanding such recent trends in developments, that have largely done diverse environmental injustices towards these communities, the policies proposed by the erstwhile, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru towards adivasi’s development here would be of aid at large. As he rightly accounts that how tribal people should be treated through following means:

1. They should be allowed to develop in the line of their *own genius* and we should avoid forcefully imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture;
2. Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected;
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside the region will, no doubt be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many of them into the tribal territory;
4. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through *their culture* and not in rivalry with their own social and cultural institutions;
5. We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but, by the quality of human character that is evolved (Sen, 2003: 129).

Thereby in addition, some more important points that could be kept in mind while dealing with such native cultures are as follows:

1. The notion of ‘flux’ is important for them. Tribals believe that everything has to undergo a change in order to be dynamic, active and recyclable in nature;
2. ‘Spirits’ are actually the *energy-waves* (cultural), but still, have a close resemblance towards the energy dynamics produced in real time ecology. In ecology the energy is transferred from one organism to another as such here in

their cultures are the spirits that provide them with aid and energy;

3. Tribals mostly think in terms of space, rather than in sense of time. Space acts as the ultimate base and time is architected accordingly from it;
4. *Western sciences* believe that human beings create chaos (anthropocene cultures that cause environmental degradation) over order (nature is considered to be pristine and ordered);
5. *Native sciences* believe that it is the order (i.e. tribal culture) that maintains a standard order the chaos (i.e. nature). Tribals keep or maintain nature in a state of equilibrium through their diverse practices such as: hunting, agricultural and foraging methods etc.;
6. Science is based on random experiments, while the native sciences are based on long term close observation;
7. In reality, in the everyday life, the native people are dealing with that of the nature's flux and thereby maintaining it in a state of equilibrium throughout;
8. Native rituals and other such tribal ceremonies are all about creating new sets of energy and thereby unloading the dreary past;
9. Tribal people today throughout the world are being expelled forcibly out of their forests in the name of conservation. But what we miss to see is that; if the areas chosen for biodiversity conservation had been naturally rich, it automatically follows a logic that the tribal's who had lived there had been keeping its richness safe and sound and that's why the area is chosen for conservation by the global bureaucracy.

Hence, any measures adopted to overcome or handle their spatial-troubles should be 'region-specific' and 'ethnicity-specific' (i.e., culture specific), keeping in mind, their existential peculiarities. A better result would always be the politico-administrative boundaries that follow the already inherent and existing natural ecological space. Instead of ignoring or trying to overrule those economies of sustainability, nature should be encouraged that would culturally correlate and maintain their locale in tune with. The German ecologist Ernst Haeckel described ecology as being "the domestic side of organic life and the knowledge of the sum of the relations of organisms to the surrounding outer world to both its organic and inorganic conditions of existence..." (1992: 2).

Hence, for these two scheduled ancient tribal communities, both land and the surrounding forest space plays a pivotal role in shaping their psyche and personality. Thence, respecting and recognizing such indigenous cultural spaces in terms of their endemic¹ peculiarities are the best options that both the legal and the other concerned administrative institutions could adopt in offering them a deserved justice.

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End Notes:-

1. **Endemic/Endemism:-** something that prevails pertaining only to a specific region (unique flora, fauna, activities etc).

ROLE OF PHONETICS IN LANGUAGE SUSTENANCE

G. Ravisankar

Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

Society is expressed through the people who constitute it and the vernacular used by them. Any vernacular language is an arrangement of different constituent features. These features in a linguistic terminology are called phonological, morphological, syntactical features. These features apart, a language is a genre; it possesses grammar, idioms, repertoire of words, pronunciation, etc. Pronunciation is a practical aspect of a language and a unique feature of it in its spoken form. A language, though can be comprehensively studied with least importance to pronunciation, to understand the speaker of that language, the way it is spoken must be learnt.

Pronunciation demands accuracy as good as science. So it should be taught scientifically which will reveal the exact nature of speech sounds, their distribution, etc. Here comes phonetics. To remain unwary of the niceties of pronunciation would lead to misunderstanding of the subject matter and the speaker (learner) as well. Intonation, an aspect of supra segmental system goes beyond the boundary of pronunciation. It's an extended pronunciation over the words and stretch of utterances. Both pronunciation and intonation if not properly taken care of will put the learner head long.

Phonetics, the science of speech sounds is indispensable for acquiring a new language. In phonetics there are ear training exercises, pronunciation teaching exercises, etc. This discipline resolves the practical phonetic problems. It focuses on helping people to learn and speak languages better, to provide the only sure basis for constituting simple orthographies for the languages hitherto unwritten and for improving orthography of such languages. Pronunciation and spelling are terms related to phonetics. Phonetics has been a foundation for any kind of linguistic analysis. This has been emphasised by Henry Sweet (1877). He says, "The importance of phonetics as the indispensable foundation of all study of languages whether that study be purely theoretical or practical as well is now generally admitted." He also highlighted the absolute necessity of a thorough practical as well as theoretical mastery of phonetics to analyse hitherto unwritten and savage languages.

It must be remembered that it is possible to comprehensively study a language, i.e., the grammar, syntax, idiom and literature, without knowing much about the pronunciation aspect of it. But, as said elsewhere, to understand the speaker of that language, the spoken form must be learnt. It must be understood that languages differ not only in grammar, idiom and vocabulary but certainly also in the production of sounds which make up the respective language. In addition it should also be noted that linking of sounds, to form words and sentences, the distribution of breath force over words and syllables, the manner of voice modulation known as 'intonation' all have to be taught as they do not come naturally.

Another difficulty is teaching pronunciation scientifically to see the exact nature of speech sounds, distribution of sounds, etc. This means the actual use of phonetics. This is essential to know the niceties of good pronunciation only to avoid being misunderstood. This is significant as far as tribal languages are concerned, since a sound in one language varies in its pronunciation in another language. Tribal language studies so far lack accuracy in recognizing sounds. In addition to pronunciation, intonation and tone may complicate the learning of a new language. What is the starting point to thwart these difficulties? The native speaker and the investigator together explaining the phonetics of a language may be the option.

The prime requirement is 'an ear for speech sounds'. The investigator needs musical ear for recognizing tone/intonation variations and to discriminate minor variations of sounds. Next is a 'talent to making the speech sounds'. The peculiar sounds of the language under study must be made out, i.e., the phonetic procedures to identify and transcribe the different sounds of the language under study by making use of a practical alphabet, the arrangement of phonetic symbols based on phonetic cues. Following this is the question, when to use sounds? i.e., the correct distribution of sounds in the sequence of words/phrases/sentences. Here attention is required to use phonetic transcription on the basis of a phonetic orthography. The last thing is 'acquiring fluency' which means saying sentences with sufficient ease and speed.

From the foregoing discussion let us look at the significant role that phonetics can play in protecting tribal languages. It has been attested that most of the tribal languages are under the threat of extinction due to many factors. Several linguistic studies have been carried out at several research institutions in India on tribal languages to find measures to prevent them from endangerment. Phonetic observation and analysis form a small part in it. Beyond a cursory observation, nothing has substantially been carried on further. No consolidated efforts have been noticed from the point where the researches had stopped. The need of the hour is to create a well-founded Phonetic Orthography for the

tribal languages. This can be called 'Practical Orthography of Tribal Languages.' Based on the Practical Orthography of Tribal Languages, a separate phonetic alphabet should be evolved pointing to the pronunciation aptness of the phonemes. The need to evolve such a phonetic alphabet is mandatory as it is being felt that International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is more scientific and detailed and perhaps may fail to show the pronunciation nuances of the concerned tribal language. Consequently to what extent it will be useful for tribal languages is a question mark. So an alternate practical alphabet may be evolved for tribal languages. It may be the one called 'Standard Alphabet' suggested by Richard Lepsius, (cited in Kemp 1981). Richard's Standard Alphabet was considered abstract and general by his contemporary researchers. For the present need, it is suggested that the IPA system together with some scientific notions based on the requirements of tribal languages in general can be thought of. It is the 'Tribal Alphabet' in all practicality. Language learning and teaching notions should be given a place in it, as it would keep the tribal languages out of endangerment. This will also enable the documentation of tribal languages a successful one. Such a kind of phonetic alphabet has been successfully done for African languages and this is called "Practical Orthography of African Languages."

Based on the discussion foregone with regard to writing a Tribal phonetics the following are suggested. Firstly a nodal centre can be established to account the tribal languages in order to carry out linguistic studies of them. This notwithstanding the existence of different tribal study centres functioning at different academic centres. Secondly a standard phonetic alphabet may be evolved which may be called 'Practical Phonetic Alphabet for Tribal Languages' (PPATL). Thirdly Phonetic Orthography and Spelling system for each tribal language, based on PPATL may be evolved and be followed with all orthodoxies. Ultimately, it will lead to forming a "Tribal Alphabet" which will take care of almost all tribal languages. It is also emphasised that the orthography making should have in mind the 'language learning', with the utmost aim of preserving the tribal tongue from endangerment. Even a 'Tribal Phonetic Handbook' can be envisaged. It may be worthy to recall the views of the great phonetician of British origin Professor Daniel Jones who views phonetics as a discipline to resolve the practical phonetic problems. He recognises that the main uses of phonetics are to help people learn languages better and to provide an only sure basis for establishing simple orthographies for the hitherto unwritten languages and also for improving orthographies for languages which are at present defective.

BOOK REVIEW

GD Wanode, Pallav Vishnu, “Sociolinguistics–A Chronological study” (Pp.i-iii+232) Published by SABNAM PUSTAK MAHAL, Badam badi, Cuttack–12, Odisha, India 2013. Price: 250/- \$50

The book, “Sociolinguistics – A Chronological study can largely be seen as an attempt to introduce the subject sociolinguistics (hereafter SL) and the basic concepts related to it. On reading this book one will surely get an overview of the subject SL, since this book discusses in a systematic manner the origin of SL and the developments that followed later on. It is verily clear this book focuses on language variations which can be correlated to variations in the society it belongs to. In a general perspective this book covers both the theoretical as well as the applied aspects of SL.

There are nineteen chapters in this book each deals with different, independent areas in SL. The areas considered are the major domains in SL and these ought to be read and understood by anyone who are interested in SL.

The authors have rightly observed that SL continues to be a field of scholarship where application of research findings are verily feasible. This statement by the authors highlights the significance, the SL continues to hold as an applied linguistics discipline. The authors claim that this book covers the crux areas in SL research.

The first chapter (Pp 11-18) “What is Sociolinguistics?” introduces SL to the readers various theories put forth by J.J. Gumperz and others and all of them have been elaborated here. Especially the relationship between language and society has been treated from the view point of Joshua Fishman and JJ Gumperz. The relevance of data based on different choice of parameters has also been discussed (Pp18-32). The presentation of content fits in a perfect frame in this chapter.

The chapter on, “Sociolinguistic Nuances of Semantic Notions” of a word (Pp 33-36) exposes the social relevance of word, as a word has more than one meaning, according to the contextual usage. The authors have chosen to list the words used for greeting in different languages. There is a comprehensive presentation on ‘code switching’ and ‘code mixing’ with illustrations accompanying it. There is a lengthy discussion on ‘Language and Culture relationship in reference to Whorfian hypothesis’ (Pp 39-51).

The authors have dwelled on “Standardization and Modernization” the topic still vibrant in Sociolinguistics. Many illustrations and references have been drawn in to highlight these two concepts (Pp 52-57). Language planning has been extensively discussed (Pp 58-82). The basic notion of Language

planning is also incorporated. Language development process too has been given a finer treatment in this chapter.

The chapter on “Language Prejudice” (Pp 83-105) clearly brings out the meaning of this term. The authors have rightly observed that language prejudice and language conflicts co-exist in any language. There is a brief section on “Sociolinguistic Methodology”(Pp 106-108). In what perspective this has been written is unclear. No concrete ideas have been discussed on the topic. Sapir Whorf. hypothesis is critically examined in the chapter titled “Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis”. For any beginner it will be an appropriate introduction of the hypothesis (Pp 109-113). There is a general as well as unrelated topic “Language for Wider Communication” (Pp 114-123). The authors have not mentioned any reason for the inclusion of this chapter in this book. Still in the view of the authors this chapter has a special reference as it dwells on Pidgeon – Crcole, which have been discussed at length under the chapter on “Pidgenization and creolization”.

The chapter on ‘Bilingualism’ (Pp 124-138) deals widely on bilingualism and its characteristics. The authors have devoted a chapter on “Diglossia and Language shift” (Pp 179-183). In my opinion these two chapters could have been discussed critically as a single entity which would give a meaningful rendering to the readers on these popular areas in SL.

The chapter on ‘Speech Act Analysis’ discusses speech act with special reference to illocutionary force and its implication (Pp 139-151). By giving different sets of speech act, the authors have justified their contributors. It is a worth reading chapter. “Language Contact Models” (Pp 152-160) is an well written chapter where the discussion is relevant and extensive. The chapter on “Language and Sex” is theoretically and content wise stands strong. This topic has been presented with reasonable data drawn from various sources (Pp 161-178).

The chapter on “Pidginization and Creolization (Pp. 184-192) considers pidgin and creole as special languages and defines them besides explaining pidginization and creolization as linguistic processes. “Language Variation and Change” (Pp 193-212) discusses variations in language and change in relevance to social factors. The views of John Fischer (1958) and also of William Labov (1966) are presented. The authors have taken much care to extensively deal with this topic. There are theoretical background and suitable illustrations systematically presented by them. The following chapter “Concept of Code” (Pp 213-222) dwells on code-switching and code-mixing appropriately and briefly based on the concepts on these topics as prescribed by Basil Bernstein.

The final Chapter is titled “Conclusion” (Pp 223-224). Here the authors again have mentioned that they have taken the crux areas of SL, the areas

mostly found accommodated in the curriculum by various universities. Thus the authors have justified the outcome of this book. They have also hoped that this book will serve the requirements of the students of linguistics especially those who are interested in Sociolinguistic research.

G. Ravisankar
Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Puducherry.

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

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Annamalai, E. 1992. "On the Function of the Reflexive Forms in Tamil". *PILC Journal of Dravidic Studies* 2:2: 139-46.

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Subramoniam, V.I 1973. *Debates on the Grammatical Theories in Dravidian*. Trivandrum: Dravidian Linguistics Association.

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