

A STUDY ON MOBILITY BEHAVIOUR OF TRIBAL LIVESTOCK OWNERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN ATTAPPADI TRIBAL BELT[#]

Nisha A.^{1*} and Vimal Rajkumar N.²

¹VIT School of Agricultural Innovations and Advanced Learning (VAIAL)
Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore – 632014,

²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Veterinary & Animal Husbandry Extension Education,
Madras Veterinary College, TANUVAS, Chennai – 600 007

*Corresponding author: nishaaravaind25@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The current study was conducted purposively in Attappadi block of Palakkad district in Kerala as this is one among the large tribal settlements of Kerala with considerable livestock population. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The sample comprised of 120 tribal livestock farmers as respondents (n=120) who were selected with the aid of key informants. The respondents belonged to three different tribal communities viz., Irulas (92.5%), Mudugas (5.83%) and Kurumbas (1.67%). The data showed that more than half of the tribal farmers (64.17%) were females whereas 35.83 per cent were males. The mobility behaviour of tribal livestock farmers revealed that major determining factor for the migratory behaviour of farmers was due to lack of employment opportunities in the area, whereas necessary veterinary services were available in the area.

Key words: Attappadi tribal belt, Livestock owners, Mobility behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In Kerala, there are 36 tribal communities with a total population of 4,84,839 (Population census, 2011). One among the large and diverse tribal concentrated districts of Kerala, Palakkad has 10.1 per cent of the total tribal population of the state. Attappadi is the largest tribal settlement area of Palakkad district with three tribes viz., Irulas (84 per cent), Mudugas (10 per cent) and Kurumbas (six per cent) who are traditionally engaged in agricultural activities. Livestock keeping is the major occupational source for livelihood, and an essential part of the cultural heritage of the tribes of Attappadi. In recognition of its importance and potential, livestock development was viewed as a key strategy for overall development of the tribal economy (Mazumder *et al.*, 2014). In line to this, Yadav *et al.*, (2014) opined that the expanding demand for animal food products generated significant opportunities for the poor to escape poverty through diversifying and intensifying livestock production. Livestock keeping generates a continuous

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stream of income and employment, making it an inevitable component of tribal development. The increasing contribution of livestock is very well recognized, whenever crop farming faced challenges. Thus, livestock farming acts as the catalyst that transforms subsistence farming into income generating enterprises, allowing poor households to join the market economy. In Indian scenario, a large proportion of the tribes depend on agriculture, livestock and forest for their survival. In these days, more and more tribal individuals are deserting animal husbandry, owing to many hurdles including location specific and species-specific constraints in livestock management practices which could be studied with their mobility behaviour (Panda *et al.*, 2017). Considering the above facts, the present study was undertaken with the objective of studying the gender participation of livestock farmers in livestock activities and the mobility behaviour of farmers with respect to different activities.

The present study was conducted purposively in Attappadi block of Palakkad district in Kerala. Attappadi block comprised of three panchayats, Agali, Pudur and Sholayoor. A total of 40 tribal livestock farmers from each of the three panchayats, thus a total of 120 tribal livestock farmers were selected randomly as respondents for the study with the help of key informants.

A descriptive research design was employed. Personal interviews by pretested interview schedule and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach was used to serve the purpose of data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

i. Gender participation in livestock activities

The study indicated that more than one-half of the tribal livestock farmers (64.17 %) were female whereas 35.83 per cent were males which might be due to the division of labour among tribal people, where men usually go outside the home/village for earning/work, whereas women looks after livestock farming activities. Women dominated men in the decision-making process of some of the dairy production activities *viz.*, retention and utilization of milk, sale of milk, care of pregnant animals, calves and concentrate feed preparation. The men in the village were not ready to engage themselves in livestock activities due to the poor returns from livestock.

ii. Mobility behaviour of tribal livestock owners.

Mobility behaviour of the respondents of three panchayats with respect to distance, places, frequency and purposes of visit were drawn with the help of key informants and respondents (Fig. 1, 2, 3). The destination places ranged at a distance 900 m–70 km. It could be noted that the main push factor for the farmers to go

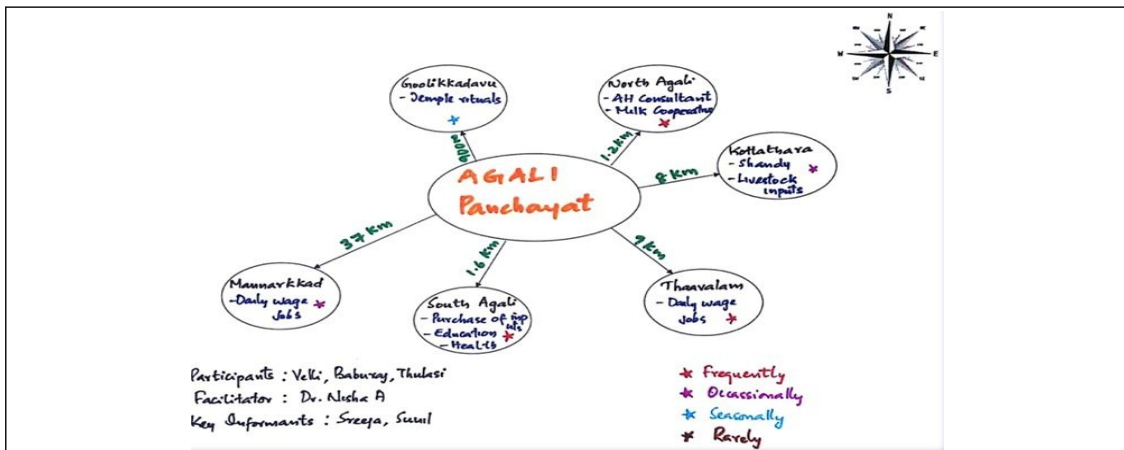


Fig. 1 Mobility map of Agali Panchayat



Fig. 2 Mobility map of Sholayoor Panchayat

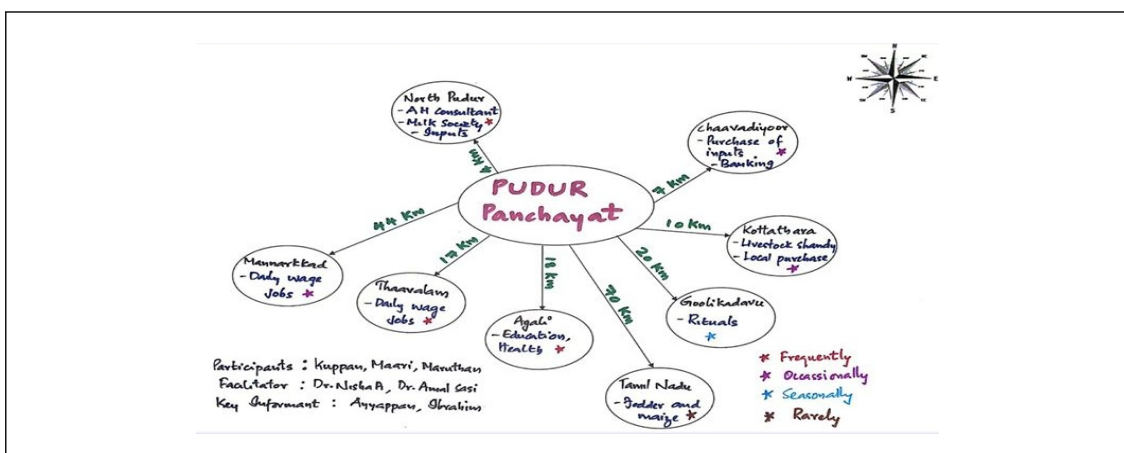


Fig. 3 Mobility map of Pudur Panchayat

for distant areas was lack of employment opportunities in the locality. Similar findings were reported by Kulkarni *et al.*, (2010). Many animal husbandry services were available in the panchayats in a considerable distance.

SUMMARY

Farmer's training and awareness programmes on scientific livestock farming should be initiated to prevent the migratory movement of livestock owners in search of jobs. The farmers need to be given hands on training programmes on scientific animal husbandry practices to improve production. The entrepreneurial programmes with better returns can utilize efficient man power which will improve the livelihood of farmers through increased returns. Commodity Interest Groups of tribal farmers could be created with the expertise of veterinarian and proper marketing channels can be initiated. Promote micro-finance and credit availability to the tribal farmers to attract farmers towards livestock rearing.

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