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ABSTRACT

**DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVENTIST RADIO PROGRAM
FOR FARMERS IN TAMIL NADU**

by

Thambiraj Mantharasalam Subbiah

Adviser: Nancy Vyhmeister

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVENTIST RADIO PROGRAM
FOR FARMERS IN TAMIL NADU

Name of researcher: Thambiraj M. Subbiah

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Date completed: September 2000

Problem

Tamil Nadu is one of the states of India located in the southern part. The people who live in the state are called Tamils. Agriculture is the main occupation of this state. About 70 percent of the total population of the state are farmers. Hinduism is the main core of their religion. Hinduism taught them various beliefs, such as salvation by work and transmigration of the soul. At the same time, the farmers are caught up with various traditional beliefs which are very much influenced by their agricultural activities. Many gods need to be worshiped for their various needs. They do not have a personal god. They believe in the incarnation of gods. Among them Jesus is considered as one of the

incarnations of their gods.

The Adventist message has not completely penetrated into the farming community because of various setbacks. There is a great need for an appropriate evangelistic approach to reach the farmers in Tamil Nadu.

Method

This project approaches development of Adventist radio programming for the farmers in Tamil Nadu from a contextual perspective. For an effective strategy, this project was approached from two main aspects, such as a background study and development and implementation of the strategy. The background study was done to understand the target audience based on their culture, farm activities, and religious practices of the Tamil farmers. In order to achieve this, various Tamil literature and related sources are also examined.

The second aspect deals with the strategy development of an Adventist radio programming for this selected audience. This aspect includes certain key concepts of the radio broadcasts. It also suggests an implementation process and a systematic follow-up for the expected results.

Results

This mission strategy will provide an effective evangelistic approach to the Adventist World Radio in taking the gospel message to every home and heart of the rural community in Tamil Nadu. The main aim of this project is soul-winning for the Lord.

Conclusions

This radio broadcast strategy will be a more effective approach for the twenty-first century than any other evangelistic approaches in Tamil Nadu, because it is a contextualized model which meets the Hindu farmers at their physical and spiritual needs.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVENTIST RADIO PROGRAM
FOR FARMERS IN TAMIL NADU

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Thambiraj Mantharasalam Subbiah

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

God announces, through the symbol of angels flying in the heavens, His last warning message as follows:

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Rev 14:6, 7)

This anticipation gives a sense of responsibility and constitutes a call for urgency. It is evident that when God speaks through His prophets and gives them a message of warning it makes sense that our actions ought to be guided accordingly. This is a judgment hour message. It is the concern of the Lord that every person on this earth must be saved. This threefold last warning, designed for the people living in the time of the end, is especially addressed to unbelievers.

In these last days of earth's history, the Lord continues to open new avenues to reach the people. Ellen G. White says that "Jesus went about the cities and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom. . . . Just such a work as this is to be done in our cities and villages in the highways and hedges, the gospel of the third angel's message is to

be carried to all classes.”¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tamil Nadu is eager to preach the everlasting gospel to the farming community in Tamil Nadu which constitutes the major portion of the total population. In 1995 the population of Tamil Nadu was 59, 812,000.² The total population of the farming community is about 70 percent of the state, that is 41,868,400.³

Tamil Nadu is overwhelmingly rural. Agriculture is the main occupation. The great tradition of Dravidian culture is found in its villages. Sadhu Chellappa reports: “The Dravidians are the first settlers in the northern part of India and it is believed that they might have followed the pagan worships of Babylon and Greece while trading. The Tamil literatures written before the Christian era do not mention anything about god or religion. Even the Sanskrit scriptures written 1500 B.C. do not reveal anything about gods or goddesses. The early Tamils learned all kinds of rituals and sacrificial systems from the Babylonians and Greeks.”⁴

Hinduism holds sway and considerable influence over the social life and agricultural activities of the rural people. Religion is an integral part of the life of farmers in Tamil Nadu. Hinduism with all its paraphernalia of rituals, sacrificial systems, and

¹Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 46, 47.

²*Let My People Go*, vol. 12 (Chennai: India Missions Association, 1997), 10.

³A. S. Jeevarathinam, Director of State Rural Development, Chennai, interview by the author, August 4, 2000.

⁴Sadhu Chellappa, *Is Christianity a Necessity?* (Chennai: Sadhu Chellappa Press, 1998), 22, 24.

festivities maintains the solidarity of the villages. The state is still a stronghold of temples, witchcraft, and superstition.

It is traditionally believed that the gospel message came to India in the first century A.D. through Thomas, the disciple of Jesus. Since then, God has used many ways to reach the Tamil farmers. Various evangelistic approaches have been used thus far. For the past hundred years the Adventist message has been preached. According to the mission leaders in Tamil Nadu, the present number of Adventist members is 41,000.¹ The total number of mission-employed gospel workers in Tamil Nadu is 192.² A concern of the church is how to evangelize the entire rural communities in Tamil Nadu. It is impossible for the church in its present condition to fulfill the great commission of the Lord rapidly in Tamil Nadu. A new strategy is needed.

As Harold Metcalf points out, the flying angels of Revelation represent “modern inventions like radio, television, and airplanes which have given wings to the proclamation of the gospel.”³ Ellen White states, “The end is near, and for this reason we are to make of every entrusted ability and every agency that shall offer help to the work.”⁴ The church needs to develop mass media evangelism which can reach the farmers in

¹Pastor Simon Singaravelu, President, North Tamil Conference, and Jayaseelan, Treasurer, South Tamil Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, interview by the author, Madurai, August 30, 2000.

²Ibid.

³Harold E. Metcalf, The Great Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation: A Commentary (Atlanta, Georgia: William Collins Sons, 1975), 129.

⁴Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9 (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:440.

Tamil Nadu.

Purpose

This project sought to develop a Christian radio program as a way of communicating the gospel message to the farmers of Tamil Nadu. To do so required first a study of the culture and the lifestyle of the farmers in the state of Tamil Nadu, then to study their basic beliefs and ritual practices. With this information in mind, a mission strategy to reach them with the Adventist message was developed.

Justification

Developing a Christian radio program for the farmers in Tamil Nadu can be justified since the Christian radio broadcasts in Tamil Nadu have thus far not produced any radio program specifically designed for this large group.

The majority of the population in Tamil Nadu belong to the farming community and most of them are illiterate. Intellectual radio programs are not relevant to them.

The farmers in Tamil Nadu are heavily influenced by folk Hindu mythology. Religious practices are dominant in every aspect of their life. To them god is seen in every object and they are not able to see a personal god who is all sufficient to them.

Most of the farmers in Tamil Nadu can afford a radio on their limited budget, providing them easy access to information and entertainment. The radio is their best companion which offers close intimacy. Farmers are aware of the changes which are taking place in the agricultural circles and social life. So, in order to equip themselves, they listen to radio programs, seeking information which will help them attain a better life.

In this situation a Christian radio program can be of great help.

Cross-cultural evangelism presents many difficulties to gospel workers in India. A radio ministry program which is widely listened to should open ways and means to reach people with the eternal gospel.

The information gathered in this study suggests ways and means by which Christian broadcasters can develop other gospel-oriented programs for farmers. This research enhances the present and future scope of Adventist World Radio's ministry in India. Finally, this is a pilot program to my fellow program producers in other languages.

Limitations

The mission strategy developed in this project is designed to reach the farmers in Tamil Nadu. As a result, the model has certain limitations in its applicability to other groups, such as those with other occupations and farmers living in other states.

This project is designed for the Adventist Radio ministry in Tamil Nadu. Others cannot adopt this model without making some modifications.

Overview

Several concerns, pre-suppositions, and ideas were in my mind as I planned this project and I would like to explain them briefly one by one. This project is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction of the study stating the purpose and exploring the reasons why this study has been undertaken. Chapter 2 describes real-life situations of this rural community. Chapter 3 explains various Hindu religious beliefs and traditional practices of the farmers in Tamil Nadu. Chapter 4 reports a few evangelistic approaches

which are being attempted with a specific strategy. The first four chapters lay a basis to develop a program to be broadcasted by the Adventist World Radio, Guam, that is described in chapter 5. Chapter 6 has the summary and the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

FARMERS IN TAMIL NADU

A strategy for taking the gospel to a people group requires knowing that people. To be able to reach the farmers of Tamil Nadu, they must be studied. This chapter describes the land where they live, their socioeconomic status, and their farming practices.

The Land and Its People

Tamil Nadu is one of the states of India located in the southeastern part of the country. The people who live in the state are called Tamils. This section describes the land and the people who live there.

The Land

Important to the description of Tamil Nadu are its location, climate, and rivers.

Location

The western part of Tamil Nadu is covered by the Malabar mountain region and the eastern is marked by the Bay of Bengal. The land for agricultural usage is located in the central and eastern parts of the state, the Cauvery Delta.¹ This is a fertile plain because of the rivers that flow from the north and from the western part of the mountain

¹Encyclopedia Britannica (1994), s.v. "Tamil Nadu."

region.

Climate

The climate is tropical. In summer the temperature occasionally exceeds 109 degrees Fahrenheit. In winter, it seldom falls below 64 degrees Fahrenheit. The northwest monsoon season is from July through October. The average rainfall is between 25 and 75 inches each year.¹

Rivers

The important rivers are the Cauvery, Ponnaiyar, Palar, and Thamiraparani. They flow six months in a year and are dry the other six months. The rivers are considered as goddesses because of their life-giving waters.

The People

Tamil Nadu is the traditional home of the Tamils. While it is one of the most urbanized states of India, it is still a rural land. Agriculture is the main occupation of this state.

Origin

The people of Tamil Nadu are the descendants of the Dravidians who lived in the northern parts of India. T. R. Sessa Iyengar says that the Dravidians lived in India long

¹Ibid.

before the arrival of the Aryans.¹ It is believed that they were driven to the southern part of India² by the invasion of Aryans around 1500 B.C. Some of the archeological findings of Harappa and Mohanjodaro confirm this.³ Tamils have a rich cultural and historical background in the Indus valley civilization. The native language is Tamil, which means “sweet.” Tamil people are proud of their language and culture.

Number

The total population of Tamil Nadu, according to the 1991 census, was 55,638,318.⁴ Of these 74 percent are farmers living in more than “64,000 nucleated villages.”⁵ In 1995 the population was 59,812,000, with 70 percent of them considered farmers.

A majority of the population lives in the villages. A. M. Shah says, “Traditional India was village India.”⁶

Local Government

These villages are governed by village councils called Panchayat raj. The village

¹T. R. Sessa Iyengar, Dravidian India: The History of Tamils in India (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), 35.

²Troy O. Organ, Hinduism (New York: Barron’s Educational Services, 1974), 40-43.

³Iyengar, 42-43.

⁴Ibid., 58-59.

⁵N. G. Mukerjee, Handbook of Indian Agriculture (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1990), 28.

⁶A. M. Shah, The Household Dimension of the Family in India (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), 149.

councils are established for local self-government and rural development. Normally five elderly, well-reputed, and respectable persons are its members. "These persons are selected among local landlords, teachers, priests. These five are representing their god Parameshwar."¹ Group decisions are dominant in village life. The community's activities are determined by the village council.

Caste

The word "caste" first appeared as a term "casta" by which the Portuguese travelers of the 15th century referred to the divisions of Indian society.² The Tamil population is divided into castes and subcastes. This division occurred when the Aryans invaded Indian soil and divided the population into four distinct groups, with a view to appointing different types of duties to each, meeting the needs of society. Channa points out that "each caste is identified with a particular occupation, which it must carry on for the benefit of the others."³ Das notes that "this was done on the basis of the division of labour."⁴

At the beginning there were no social differences between them. As time rolled on, social barriers started appearing by stages and the distinctions of high and low occupations

¹Ram Das, Socio-Economic Transformation of Millions through Rural Development (Meerut: Twenty-First Century Publishers, 1986), 9.

²Dharam Vir Singh, Hinduism: An Introduction (Jaipur: Travel Wheel, 1991), 109.

³International Encyclopaedia of Anthropology (New Delhi: Cosmos Publications, 1998), 12:270.

⁴Das, 5.

began to appear.¹ Discrimination also entered into their religious practices. Kenneth

Dollarhide comments:

Hinduism has traditionally claimed that all men are born unequal. The injustices of the inequalities of caste and circumstance represent the hidden justice of karma; they must be accepted, transcended, but not changed. Each person's value and rights depend upon the rank and circumstances into which he has been born, and he has been born with precisely those rights and values as reward or punishment for his own actions in past lives.²

Vishal Mangalwadi makes a point that

the caste system has been the means of keeping them disunited, enslaved, oppressed and poor and has prevented them from achieving political power and social change.³

The majority of the farmers belong to a middle caste such as Kshatriyas, Goundas, and Vaishyas. They possess most of the agricultural lands. Sudhras are the laborers, who own a very small portion of farm lands.

The Farmers

The farmers in Tamil Nadu are peculiar in their way of life and farm activities. Their way of life and their farming are described.

Their Way of Life

Farmers live a simple life. Lands are their precious possession. They live very

¹Gilbert Slater, The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture (Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1982), 140.

²Kenneth Dollarhide, ed., The Religious World: Communities of Faith, 2^d ed. (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988), 99, 100.

³Roger E. Hedlund, Evangelization and Church Growth: Issues from the Asian Context (Madras: C.G.R.C. McGavran Institute, 1992), 133.

close to nature. Village life is still quite slow and easy, in spite of the many activities in the rural sectors. Compared to urban life, village life is free from much tension and stress. The farmer's way of life includes his family life, education, health, diet, clothing, economy, and entertainment.

Family

In Tamil Nadu the family is fundamental to village society. Family life in Tamil Nadu varies from family to family, according to economic conditions, caste, and religion. However, some characteristics are common.

There are two main patterns found in the family: the single family and the joint family. The "elementary family"¹ or single family consists of husband, wife, and children. In the rural area such families are seldom found. The second type is called "joint family or extended family."² This means that when the children in the elementary family establish their own families, they continue to live with their parents, along with their wives and children. In some families three or four generations live together.

The senior member of the family, the Kartha, may be a grandfather or any eldest person in the family.³ B. V. Subbamma states that the senior person takes care of the family members."⁴

¹Shah, 107.

²Ibid.

³Das, 8.

⁴B. V. Subbamma, Christ Confronts India (Madras: Diocesan Press, 1973), 4.

The joint family is a good system because it ensures social security to all the members of the family. In case of the death of male family members, the widows and their children are properly looked after and educated, if the family finances permit. Losses in business can be shared and supported. The helpless widows and their children are saved from destitution.

At one time the joint family was considered to be the source of strength in the village. But modernization has affected the joint family system in Tamil Nadu. The younger generation prefers to live as single families. Selvaraj comments: "It is an accepted fact that with advancement in the civilization, people prefer to live in nuclear families for the sake of closer contacts, better harmony and for better satisfaction of their emotional needs."¹ Such an attitude creates the opinion that the joint family system is no longer suitable for this age.

Education

In the rural areas of Tamil Nadu, there are only primary schools, up to fifth standard. Most of the primary schools have a maximum of three or four teachers. The teachers, popularly known as gurus, are well respected by the community members. Traditionally they were regarded as the representatives of the god of wisdom.² The

¹G. Selvaraj, "Effectiveness of Video Teaching on Farmers' Affective Cognitive and Psychomotor Behavior: Type of Family" (Ph.D. dissertation, Agriculture University, Coimbatore, 1995), 72.

²Das, 11.

literacy rate in the villages is less than 45 percent.¹ The reason for this is that girls and weaker children do not achieve a higher level of education. The villagers think that primary education is good enough for rural survival. In addition, their poverty keeps parents from sending their children to school. Immediately after completing primary education, or when they fail in school, children are absorbed into agricultural activities or cottage industries.

Health

Illness in rural areas often occurs because people lack knowledge of health education. In addition, health care often depends on the financial situation of the family. In this connection, N. D. Kamble states that the "attitude of the people towards life, health, and treatment varies according to their religious faith and their social status."² The higher the caste, the better the standard of living and, consequently, health.

The water situation affects health. When floods occur, people in the village are subject to many water-born diseases. Lack of water for bathing makes people vulnerable to skin problems. Ram Das reports,

Every village has water reservoirs or ponds for drinking water for the cattle and buffaloes. This water usually gets heavily polluted as buffaloes wallow in it. Yet here the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and utensils, and take water for drinking. They do not realize that they are using unsanitary water. Provision for safe drinking water was not made for the residents of the villages.³

¹Encyclopedia Britannica (1994), s.v. "Tamil Nadu."

²*Ibid.*, 103.

³Das, 3, 4.

Another disadvantage is the lack of a proper drainage system to dispose of surplus water. Stagnated water becomes the breeding place for mosquitoes which spread disease.

These farmers still prefer the traditional methods of curing diseases and preserving health and life. Mani reports that the farmers believe that diseases like chicken pox and mumps are the expression of their god's anger.¹ In order to be cured, they seek the advice of the local priest, who counsels religious ceremonies to make them well.

Diet

Most of the farmers are vegetarians. Their diet consists mainly of grains, legumes, greens, and vegetables. Milk products such as ghee and curds are used daily.

Economically well-off families consume rice because it is a symbol of social status. Poor families consume other cereals and rice. Most of the farm people drink tea or coffee when they get up and eat a very light breakfast at about 9:00 a.m., a heavy meal at 2:00 p.m., and a light supper at about 8:00 p.m.

Clothing

The farming community dresses in simple cotton garments. The men wear the dhotie, a three-to-four-meter white cotton cloth wrapped around the waist almost touching the ground. The women wear colored cotton sarees, normally made of five to eight meters of cloth. There are variations in its length, texture, quality, and color, according to economic status. Men wear a turban made of a cotton cloth about 1.5 meters long.

¹Mani, farmer, Tiruchirapalli, interview by the author, May 15, 2000.

Economy

The economy of a farmer depends upon the harvest. This, of course, depends on the size of the farm, the kind of the soil, the quality of the seed, and the availability of irrigation. V. P. Mallikeswaran notes that “two acres of dry land produce as much as one acre of irrigated land.”¹ Therefore the annual income differs. Chitra Lega says that

an average annual income of a marginal farmer who holds unirrigated land of 2.5 acres or less is Rs.10,000 or less. The marginal farmer who has the same amount of irrigated land will profit up to Rs.50,000. The landlords will earn more than 50,000 annually.²

Entertainment

The community entertainment is based on local talents, on cultural and religious ceremonies, and on sports events during village festivals. Professional dramatic and cultural groups are invited to entertain the villages with folk songs, folk art, folklore, drama, and musical programs during the festivals. The bhajan is the most enjoyable musical program in the rural community. In bhajan music, acting and folk songs are combined.

Apart from these items there are wrestling bouts and religious festivals. Marriages take on a special significance.

There are community centers in almost every village. There people gather in the

¹V. P. Mallikeswaran, ed., Annual Statistical Abstract of Tamil Nadu for 92-93 (Madras: Commissioner of Statistics, 1993), 141.

²Chitra Lega, Program Executive, All India Radio, Cimbatores, interview by the author, July 28, 2000.

evening to discuss various subjects, from national politics to family politics to matters related to agriculture. Spiritual discourses are arranged during festival seasons. Religious leaders deliver a course of lectures from Tamil literature, such as Thirukural,¹ Silappadigaram,² and Kamba Ramayanam.³

Villages today have installed community radio and television sets at the community centers. The mass media have become a necessity to them. Some are interested in religious programs while others listen to secular programs.

Their Farms

Agriculture is the main occupation for about three-quarters of the rural population in Tamil Nadu.⁴ It is a way of life rather than a commercial venture. Irrigation systems in Tamil Nadu are skillfully done. In the early days farmers waited for rain. But now, according to A. S. Jeevarathinam,

the government helps the farmers get water throughout the year for irrigation, by various means: large dams, reservoirs, tube wells, and ordinary wells. Even then the agriculture in Tamil Nadu is dependent for water on the rainfall of the three months of

¹Thiruvalluvar, Thirukural 3d ed. (Madras: The Little Flower Company, 1955). Thirukural means "Sacred Couplets." Written by Thirukural, it is divided into 113 chapters, each containing ten stanzas. It deals with various moral themes like love, happiness, duty, honesty, and worship.

²K. M. Munish and P. P. Diwakar, eds., Indian Inheritance (New Delhi: Bhavan's Book University, 1951), 1:119.

³Kambar, ed., Kambaramayanam (Madras: V.M. Kopalakrishnamachariar Company, 1963). Kamba Ramayanam was written by a Hindu priest called Kamban. It is a contextualized version of the Ramayana. It describes the life and reign of Rama the great king and incarnate god, who ruled India during the vedic age of India.

⁴A. S. Jeevarathinam, Village Administration in Tamil Nadu (Chennai: Department of Rural Development, 1999), 67.

monsoon. If the monsoons fail, farmers fail in their efforts.¹

The total estimated area of food crop production in Tamil Nadu is 2,665,224 hectares. The estimated area of non-food crops (cash crops like cotton) is 719,494 hectares.²

Kinds of Farmers

Not all the farmers have the same situation. The size of their land, their cultivating capacity, and economic status vary. Rita Khanna classifies them into four categories:

1. Small farmers: Cultivators with land holdings of five acres or less
2. Marginal Farmers: Persons with an unirrigated land, holding of 2.5 acres or less
3. Landlords: Persons holdings more than 20 acres
4. Agricultural Laborers: Persons without any land, who help in agricultural activities.³

Crops and Crop Management

Farmers are quite successful throughout the year because they are skillful in their crop management. Some of the crop management patterns are discussed below.

¹Ibid., 68.

²Selvaraj, 73, 195.

³Rita Khanna, Agricultural Mechanisation and Social Change in India (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1983), 47.

Seasonal activities

Seasonal activities may be divided into three broad categories: summer, monsoon, and winter seasons. During summer (March to May) the land is prepared and kept ready for the monsoon and the selection of the seeds is done. The rainy season goes from June to August. Sowing the seeds starts; weeding and fertilizing are also done. Farmers invest everything in the land and wait for the harvest. In winter (January and February) much attention is paid to harvesting.

Mixed farming¹

The practice of mixed farming, sowing cereals and legumes together, has been traditionally followed in Tamil Nadu. Mixed farming provides multiple benefits to farmers.

Crop rotation system

George J. Farrar states that “one cannot grow the same crop on the same piece of land year after year without suffering a decline in yield.”² Therefore, one must rotate crops and work out the best system of rotation for a particular farm which will produce a rich harvest. Johnson also reports that “a farmer must know about the soil and moisture requirements of various crops. He cannot grow the same crop on the same piece of the land year after year without suffering a decline in yield.”³

¹Das, 11.

²George J. Farrar, Retired Joint Director of Agriculture, Vellore, interview by the author, August 2, 2000.

³D. Johnson, Area Manager, T. Stanes and Company, Farm Pesticides Production, interview by the author, Madras, October 14, 1998.

Therefore a farmer must have sufficient knowledge about his own soil. He must be careful in the selection of seed to be planted. Some varieties will do well on his farm, others will not.

Farming Improvements

For a rich harvest a farmer must have some knowledge about the tools and implements used for cultivation. A skillful farmer must know how to manage his bullocks to get the best possible results. According to Johnson, “the farmer must know about plant and animal diseases and available pesticides to protect from them.”¹

He must also have some knowledge about machines used on the farm. It is helpful to know about maintenance and repair of their machines.

It is urgent for the farmer in Tamil Nadu to keep up the speed of modernization in order to improve his farm production. Gilbert Etienne says that “agriculture and its techniques are on the threshold of a new phase of change,”² and A. B. Hirmani responds y saying that the “rural mass is receptive of new ideas and values related to agriculture.”³

Thus far, the social aspects of rural life have been seen to influence the farmers. Hinduism is a powerful driving force in every phase of agricultural activities. The following chapter explains the beliefs and rituals which have a part in influencing a farmer.

¹Ibid.

²Gilbert Etienne, Rural Development in Asia: Meetings with Peasants (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1985), 78.

³A. B. Hirmani, Social Change in Rural India (New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1977), 155.

CHAPTER 3

RELIGION OF THE FARMERS IN TAMIL NADU

Farmers in Tamil Nadu are, in general, quite religious. They practice Hinduism very rigorously. Although they may not be able to give a reason for their faith, they are ardent devotees of a particular deity of their ancestral clan, which has been traditionally handed over through the generations. Their religious thought and practice may be divided into Hinduism in general and local belief and practices.

Hinduism

Hinduism defies a concrete definition; as such, it is a very broad-based religion. It does not boast of consistency, as it accommodates any sort of practice. While its deep theology creates curiosity among the elite, from the farmers it extracts deep-seated devotion of blind belief and practice. Edison Samraj comments: “Hinduism is a complex system of beliefs forged into a path of accommodation; it is an ocean of beliefs that are now coherent, now complementary, and now contradictory.”¹

Hindu theology has taken different meaning from time to time, and from society to society; however, its basic attitudes, which have influenced the farmers in Tamil Nadu, have remained the same.

¹Edison Samraj, “Understanding Hinduism,” Dialogue 10 (1998): 32.

Basic Beliefs of Hinduism

Unity of All Religions

One of the basic beliefs is the unity of all religions. Otto Waack says that “for a Hindu, whether one worships Shiva, Krishna, or Christ, makes no difference. It is the same God with different names.”¹

The Identity of Human Self

Another underlying belief of Hinduism is the identity of the human self (atman) with the highest divine self. Swami Nirvedananda states that “our soul is essentially one with god.”² This allows for the human self to become totally absorbed into the divine self. When the human self or soul, which exists independently even after death, is not totally absorbed into the divine self, it enters into another body, according to the deeds of its previous life.³ This is transmigration of the soul.

Four Ages of the World

According to Hindu belief, the time element of the world is divided into four ages or yugas: satya, treta, drapara and kali-yuga.⁴ These four yugas repeat themselves in a cyclical fashion. The farmers believe that they are in the kali yuga. Dharam Vir Singh,

¹Otto Waack, Church and Mission in India (New Delhi: The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1997), 78.

²Nirvedananda, Hinduism at a Glance (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1993), 42.

³C. S. Prabhupada, BhagavadGita, abridged ed. (Bombay: Bhativedanta Book Trust, 1972), 31. This edition of the BhagavadGita (B.G.) does not contain chapters and verses. In some places C. Swami Prabhupada appears to interpret.

⁴Ibid.

along with many others, believes that kali-yuga is the end of the present age, and that at the close of this age, the god Vishnu will appear and reestablish his righteous kingdom.¹

God Is in Everything: Pantheism

The farmers of Tamil Nadu are pantheists. P. T. K. Nair points out that rural folk worship everything that they use, because for them all existing things are endowed with indwelling souls.² These souls are regarded as persons having their own will.³

The Concept of Salvation

Hindu farmers in Tamil Nadu have some knowledge of salvation as taught in their scriptures. They understand salvation to be final liberation from this life and its sufferings, i.e., the attainment of moksha. There is a cycle of 840,000 births and deaths, through which a soul must migrate before it attains final liberation.⁴

Hindus naturally crave moksha. They believe that a soul is held prisoner under a cycle of karma-samsara. Moksha is the highest goal of their life; it will free them from the cycle of sin, death, grief, hunger, and old age. Therefore they seek such liberation through actions. They think that any individual who observes specific duties which are prescribed in the vedas will go a step higher in life stage by stage until he reaches the final point

¹D. V. Singh, 55.

²P. T. K. Nair, The Sociology of Indian Rural Society (Bombay: Sheth Publishers, 1987), 162.

³Ibid.

⁴E. Ahmad-Shah, Theology, Christian and Hindu (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1971), 155.

called liberation (salvation).¹ In the BhagavadGita, Lord Govinda teaches to Arjuna the devotee that “farming, cow protection, and business are the qualities of work. If any performs these duties faithfully, he can become perfect, that is considered to be worshiped Lord Govinda. Such person can attain salvation by the grace of Lord Govinda.”²

The farmers have been taught yet another means to attain liberation: bhakti. This is the attitude of love and devotion from a devotee toward his Ishta-daiva (favorite god). Nirvedananda notes that “bhakti is love to God, and by utilizing this one can reach the goal of life that is liberation.”³ Bhakti is expressed by certain devotional activities such as singing devotional songs, dancing, and offering gifts to the god.⁴ The great masses of India are fascinated by the bhakti concept of worship and the farmers of Tamil Nadu are also attracted to it.

Gods and Goddesses

Hindus believe that just as there are males and females among human beings, there are males and females among the gods. These deities are put in three categories: family deities, personal deities, and deities worshiped in general by all. Every individual or family has a favorite deity. P. R. Solomon states that in some villages each caste may have its own deity and a temple where other castes are not permitted to enter. Most of these gods

¹T. M. P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism (Bombay: Chetana, 1971), 85.

²Prabhupada, 264.

³Nirvedananda, 88.

⁴P. R. Solomon, “Ashram: A Contextualized Model for Discipling the Hindus of Tamil Nadu” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1993), 181.

are dead ancestors.¹ The deities are worshiped to obtain rain, good harvest, health, healing, release from devil possession, progeny, prosperity, or protection.

Local Religiosity

Religion is an integral part of rural life. The nature of worship, sacrificial rites, rituals, and the various ceremonies of rural religion are good indicators of rural life. This section describes some of the popular gods worshiped in the villages, and other objects which are considered to be worshipful.

Popular Gods

Among all the deities that Tamil farmers worship, six are noteworthy: Murugan, Vinayagan, Venkateshwaran, Amman, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. They are worshipped in different places under different names. For example, Murugan, the main deity at Palani, has other names such as Vadivelan, Velmurugan, Palaniyandavan, Kandan, and Kumaran.

Murugan

Murugan means “divine beauty.”² The farming community has a fascination for Murugan, as he is considered to be the god of fertility, and they depend on land and cattle for their livelihood. Not only is he the fertility god, but also the warrior god, who has the ability to protect people and cattle. He is said to protect humanity from evil and various

¹Ibid., 112.

²Kathir Mahadevan, Cultural Heritage of the Ancient Tamils (Madurai: Lakshmi Publications, 1981), 152, 153.

disasters. As a warrior, he has become known as the custodian of the Tamil culture.¹ Tamil mythologies personify Murugan as a child, warrior, householder, teacher, and ascetic on six hill temples that once marked the boundaries of Tamil Nadu.² Palani Hills, where there is a large temple constructed for Murugan, is a pilgrimage center. His devotees visit this center once in a year. His pictures are found in almost every farmer's house and he is worshiped as an ishta daivan (favorite god).

Vinayagan

Vinayagan is worshiped as Ganesha, personified as an elephant-head god. He has four to ten arms, his belly appears like a pot, and he rides on a rat. In his hands he holds a rope, an axe, a goad, and a dish of sweet balls.³ It is said that with the axe Ganesha cuts off the attachment to worldly desires of his devotees and with the rope pulls them nearer to the truth. His images are found practically in every household and also on the outskirts of villages, as he is regarded as the guardian deity. His trunk is meant to remove the obstacles of his devotees. His vehicle, the rat, can creep through small holes to remove any obstacles to progress in religious life.⁴ He, too, is worshiped for protection and for the prosperity of the land.

¹K. K. Murthy, The Temples of Tamil Nadu (Tirupathi: Message Publications, 1991), 91.

²J. P. Waghorne and N. Cutler, eds., Gods of Flesh and Gods of Stone (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Publications, 1985), 113.

³D. V. Singh, 63.

⁴Ibid.

Venkateswaran

Lord Venkateswaran is worshiped at Tirupati. Farmers believe that if he is worshiped, their agriculture will prosper. He is the richest god of South India because devotees worship him with many kinds of offerings such as ornaments, money, and grain in large quantities.

Amman

Amman is considered to be the mother of Murugan. The farmers in Tamil Nadu believe that she has all the powers of this universe. For this reason she is called Parasakti (Great Power).¹ Animal sacrifices are offered to this god to ask her to bring rain to prepare the fields for the crops.

Lakshmi

Lakshmi is worshiped as goddess of wealth and good fortune. She is associated with beauty and it is generally believed that she was born from a furrow. This shows her link with agriculture and indicates that the fertility of the land is a blessing from her.²

Saraswati

Saraswati is the goddess of learning and knowledge. “She seems to have been associated with the creative properties that water has for seeds and vegetation.”³ Being

¹B. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 311.

²D. V. Singh, 79.

³Ibid., 85.

the goddess of learning, she is worshiped when a child is sent to school. This practice is followed particularly in the villages.

The Worship of Animals

The worship of animals becomes more comprehensible when one considers the foundation on which Hinduism is based. In the eyes of a Hindu, anything that can be useful seems worthy of worship. This feeling is much stronger in regard to anything that can harm him.¹ Some of the farmers in Tamil Nadu regard animals such as the monkey, the bull, and snakes as sacred.

Monkey

Hanuman, the money god, is the god of money and a popular deity worshiped especially in Indian villages. He is an important character in the Ramayana which depicts him as the epitome of devoted service and loyalty to god Rama. Every Rama temple has an idol of Hanuman as a minor deity and a faithful servant. "His worship is believed to destroy all evils."² The devotees daily bring offerings of boiled rice and fruits.

Bull

The bull is the favorite deity of the Sivaites or followers of Shiva, the god of destruction. Another name for this bull is Nandi. It is the vehicle of Shiva and is placed at the entrance of Shiva temples in a sitting or standing posture. Bulls are commonly used in

¹J. A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 637.

²D. V. Singh, 69.

agricultural work in India. They are considered collaborators of farmers, the source of material wealth. "Bulls are a great help to them so they reckon them among the most sacred objects of their religion."¹ The well-being of a farmer depends upon the strength of his bulls: the more they are used for cultivation, the better harvest can be expected. Thus bulls occupy an important role in the agriculture purposes and in religious thinking.

Snakes

Snake worship is common among almost all Hindus. Snakes are an object of worship because of the natural human fear of them. Snakes are found mostly in the agricultural lands where the farmers are laboring. Snake worshipers search for the holes where they are likely to be found; when they find one, they visit it from time to time offering milk, bananas, eggs, and other such food. If a snake happens to get into a house, instead of killing it, the whole family will feed it sumptuously and offer sacrifices to it. Snakes are treated as guests and are not to be killed.²

Worship of Inanimate Objects

For a Hindu, everything in the universe is sacred and an object of worship. He believes that there is a divinity in all the objects. Four important ones are stone, water, fire, and tulasi.

¹Dubois, 638.

²Ibid., 642, 643.

Stone

J. Abbot states that to a Hindu, a stone possesses life and a soul.¹ Ritually purified stones are believed to be the power of the sun-god and are placed in cattle sheds to keep away the spirits that reduce the milk yield of the cattle. Farmers bury them in their farms, gardens, and houses to protect against evil.

A small stone called a salagrama is identified with the deity. People feel that the god's living presence is experienced in the form of that stone. These stones are found in the Gundak river in Nepal. They are usually black, either round or oval. Their very presence assures happiness.² The water used to wash the salagrama is considered to be sacred. It is believed that forgiveness of sins may be obtained by simply touching that water. Anyone who keeps this stone will be blessed with perpetual wealth. The salagrama also ensures that at death a person will at once enter into the happiness of heaven.³

Water

Water is considered by Hindus as a power-transporting agent.⁴ Tirth is water which has been poured over a shrine in the temple, considered as sacred. When it is poured upon devotees, they will experience divine power.

Water for irrigation is essential. It is the source of life to a farmer and crops.

¹J. Abbot, Indian Ritual and Belief: The Keys of Power (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1984), 168.

²D. V. Singh, 134, 135.

³Dubois, 649.

⁴Ibid., 240.

Therefore, a Hindu farmer worships river, sea, well, and ponds as his god on earth.

Fire

Most of the Hindu rituals are performed with the sacrificial fire called hom. Holi and Divali are the fire festivals celebrated to mark victory over evil spirits. Rural Hindus believe that “fire is associated with fertility. To the presence therein of fire is due the fertility of trees.”¹ Therefore for a good harvest, fire rituals are performed on the eve of sowing.

Lamps are regarded as sacred. While lighting the lamps in the evening, the members of the household worship the light. There is a waving of sacred lamps during rituals to dispel the evil spirit.

Tulasi

Tulasi (ocymum sanctum) is a plant found in sandy and uncultivated places. It resembles the basil that grows in Europe. It is sufficient to look at this sacred plant to be forgiven of one’s sins. By touching it a person is purified from all defilement; if one performs the namaskara (Homage) to it, any illness is sure to be cured. Salvation is assured to anyone who waters and cares for this plant every day.²

Ancestral Worship

Hindus believe that death is not an end in itself but a transmigration of the soul

¹Ibid., 174.

²Ibid., 650.

(Atman) from one birth to another. Most Hindus believe that after a person passes through a transitional experience, he or she becomes a supernatural person with certain powers.¹ Therefore, dead ancestors are considered to be gods and goddesses and are worshiped in shrines, temples, and under the trees, by offering animal sacrifices.

The personality of the soul is indestructible and in its existence continues. The departed souls may be absent for a short time only, and may return again.² The essential point is that they continue to exist and relate to those who are still alive. People worship their ancestors because they believe that the blessing of good health is possible through their ancestors.

Folk Beliefs

Shanmuga Sundaram divides folk beliefs into the two following categories: (1) rational beliefs that can be explained by cause and effect--relationship through evidences; (2) superstition that cannot be explained by cause and effect--relationship without evidence.³

Many of these traditional beliefs are associated with agricultural activities. They are rarely described in scholarly literature.

Farmers in the southern part of Tamil Nadu believe that if a snail climbs certain

¹Henry H. Presler, Primitive Religions in India (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1971), 35.

²Ibid., 36.

³Shanmuga Sundaram, Nattupura Iyal [Folklore](Chidambaram: Manivasagar Padipagan, 1982), 78.

trees, there will be no rain.¹ “To get rain, we have to throw cow dung on each other.”

The cow is considered holy. Throwing cow dung represents taking holy bath which pleases the Lord Govinda.² As a result he sends rain because he is the supreme personality of the godhead.³

Certain days are said to be auspicious for rich crops. People from the western part of Tamil Nadu believe that Tuesdays and Thursdays are the best days for agricultural operations.⁴ The Irulas community of Tamil Nadu believe that from sowing to harvest all operations are controlled by the power of god and of the priest.⁵

To get a good crop, one must worship Lord Ganapathi before ploughing the field. Ganapathi is thought to remove obstacles in people's daily life and guard human beings.

If a prostitute transplants the seedlings, the crop will not come up well. If a male with good character transplants the seedlings, a good crop will be ensured.⁶

The Kanikara tribes of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts of South Tamil Nadu believe that the sowing ceremony must be conducted by the priests after selecting the land for sowing. The priest distributes seeds to the farmers and the seeds are counted. If the

¹Lakshman Chettiar, Folklore of Tamil Nadu (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1973), 23.

²Sakthivel, Tamil Nattu Pazankudi Makkal Vazhvum Varalarum [Life and History of Tamil Nadu Tribes] (Chidambaram: Manivasagar Nodagam, 1980), 194.

³Prabhupada, 264.

⁴Sakthivel, 16.

⁵Sencho, Vananthara Pookkal [Flowers of the Forest] (Madras: New Century Book House, 1979), 16-23.

⁶Abbot, 359.

number of seeds is even, the farmers sow that land.

If a farmer gets a low yield from his crop, it is attributed to his sin. Should that happen, he must call the priest and be cleaned from all his defilements. Thus the yield of the land will increase.¹

Farmers in Tamil Nadu are much influenced by traditional folk beliefs. While modern science encourages them to adopt the latest farming techniques, the farmers still depend upon their traditional beliefs.

Worship Rituals

All Hindus participate in the rituals regardless of their philosophic orientation. Although Hinduism observes numerous religious rituals, only the major rituals of worship, festivals, and pilgrimages are discussed.

Rituals

Hindu rituals are meant to purify the body, mind, and a person's surroundings. The Hindu rituals are of two kinds: Vedic and Agamic.² The Vedic rituals are sacrifices to the gods and goddesses. The Agamic rituals are mainly connected with the worship of idols, details about installation of idols, and the modes of worship.

The prominent gods of Hindu farmers are worshiped as images or pictures in homes or temples. In addition, the heroes killed in wars are remembered by placing their

¹Iruthiyanath, Kongul Malai Vasikal [Kongu Hill Tribes] (Madras: Tamil Selvi Nelayam, 1979), 100-103.

²T. M. P. Mahadevan, 40.

spears and shields in front of the temples and animal sacrifices are offered as an act of worship.

On most occasions the priest performs the puja rituals. He brings the offerings and places them before the idol. He guides the order of puja and waits for the dharson (auspicious sight)¹ of the deity that takes place at the time of Arathi (“a form of worship in which a tray of lighted oil lamps is waved in a circular pattern before an image or symbol”).² At the end of the puja the priest brings out the burning light, burnt ashes, and holy water. The devotee sips the holy water and sprinkles it over his head and may even take it home for those who could not attend the ritual worship.

Most of the farmers perform these rituals to attain benefits. They look for better harvests in the field, the monsoon at the right time, and health and harmony in the family. They believe that the rituals not only purify their defiled condition, but also improve their spiritual growth.

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimage has always been an essential part of Hinduism. A pilgrimage provides an opportunity for people to get away from their life routine and engage in a spiritual journey to places where they can feel the presence of god. Their spiritual thirst is thus satisfied and their religious spirit is renewed. Fred Clothey says: “The experience of

¹D. J. Fleming, The Hindu Religious Tradition (Encino, CA: Dickinson Publishing Company, 1971), 111.

²D. V. Singh, 190.

pilgrimage reflects a fundamental human need for self-affirmation and recreation.”¹

Pilgrimage centers are considered sacred.

Farmers in Tamil Nadu pay visits to pilgrimage centers annually, “for the completion of vows, for the appeasing of the deity in times of misfortunes, to gain property and good fortune, and as simple acts of devotion to the Lord.”² Usually, people walk to the holy places as part of their vow; a few will roll on the path to the pilgrimage center. Many devotees use modern transportation.

Tamil Nadu has several pilgrimage centers: Palani, Kanjeevaram, Sidambaram, Madurai, and Tanjore. Certain rivers in Tamil Nadu also are considered sacred: Cauvery, Vaigai, Palar, and Thamiraparani. Farmers are fully dependent upon these rivers for irrigation and household activities. Therefore, the rivers are personified as goddesses and given religious importance.³

Festivals

A festival is an expression of success and happy memories of the past. It is an affirmation of joy and freedom and of all the values that the community holds dear. Festivals form an integral and important part of the life and culture of the people. During festivals the religious life of the community is revitalized, and faith in gods and the

¹Fred W. Clothey, Rhythm and Intent (Madras: Blackie and Sons Publishers, 1983), 92.

²Kenneth W. Morgan, ed., Religion of the Hindus (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1953), 188, 189.

³Ellis O. Shaw, Rural Hinduism: Some Observations and Experiences (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1986), 41.

important religious truths are reaffirmed.¹ Therefore, the celebration of the festival becomes an integral part of the life of a farmer. The important festivals celebrated in Tamil Nadu are Diwali and Pongal.

Diwali

Diwali is the festival of lamps (during October and November). During the festival, lamps are lit all over the house in the belief that wealth will not enter a house if it is dark. During this festival “the goddess of wealth, Dhanalaxmi, is worshipped.”² Gold, silver, money, and valuable ornaments are the objects of worship which represent the goddess of wealth. This festival also “symbolizes the victory of truth over falsehood, good over evil, and light over darkness.”³ As the new year arrives there is renewed hope to face the challenges of the future.

Pongal

Pongal is the harvest festival celebrated in January. Its “basic principle is giving thanks to god for the rich harvest.”⁴ The Pongal celebration lasts for four days. The first day is designated to worship the sun god who has richly blessed the rice harvest. The second-day celebration is dedicated to the fruits of fertility. The third day of the Pongal is dedicated to the cattle and all the farming tools. The fourth day is the day of celebration

¹A. P. Nirmal, “Celebration of Indian Festivals,” in Primal World Views (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1976), 79.

²Joy Thomas, Religion as Communication (Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 1985), 126.

³Ibid.

⁴Nirmal, 81.

for visiting friends and relatives. “The Pongal festival gives farmers an opportunity to rejoice over nature’s gifts and celebrate their intimacy and oneness with nature, for particularly in a farming community, closeness to nature is deeply felt and realized.”¹

Thus, the Pongal festival invites the realization of the holistic communion of man, nature, and god.

Agricultural Rituals

Farmers in Tamil Nadu believe that they are at the mercy of the gods. Therefore, at the beginning of every farm activity, some form of ritual will be performed to invoke the blessing of the gods in all their efforts.

Ploughing

When a Farmer in Tamil Nadu ploughs, he makes sure that evil spirits disturb neither the bullocks nor the laborers. To that end, he obtains a charmed thread from a priest and ties it to the plough. The priest who has been invited will sprinkle a charmed red powder on the ground and cover it with rice, then light a fire, in which he throws ghee. Before that a coconut will be broken. The foreheads of the bullocks are then anointed with turmeric and a red thread is tied to the right hand of the ploughman, the right horns of the bullocks, and to the end of the plough.

Ploughing is often begun before sunrise so that no one will talk to the ploughman as he initiates this important work. It is believed that the ploughing must begin in a certain direction and on specific days. J. Abbot comments,

¹M. Arunachalam, Festivals of Tamil Nadu (Tanjavur: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1980), 339.

Some farmers believe that on the first day of ploughing, one can never plough facing south. In the northwest part of Tamil Nadu, farmers prefer to plough in a northern direction. In some parts, specific days are assigned to plough in a certain direction. Farmers of the northern part of Tamil Nadu believe that to plough in an easterly direction on Monday or Thursday, towards the west on Sundays or Fridays, towards the north on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and on Thursday or on the first day of ploughing, towards the south. Thursdays, Fridays, Mondays are considered auspicious days.¹

Sowing

The man who sows the seeds must be ritually clean. Kannan says that “the sowing is done at first in the early morning facing the rising sun in order that the seed may thrive as the rays of the sun give increased light.”² It is believed that the sower must be free from all defects; if not, some kind of defects will be reproduced in the crops.

The ritual for sowing is performed reverently. Abbot describes the sowing ceremony performed at the field as follows:

Early in the morning a scarecrow is buried in a prepared place. It is worshiped with sandal-paste, flowers, coconuts, and plantains, an arti (burning lamp) is waved round it. This rite is performed to scare away the evil spirits. Then the sower scatters seed towards the rising sun.³

All the objects used for sowing--seeds, the plough, oxen, and the seed basket--are worshiped. Such practices differ from place to place in Tamil Nadu.

Harvesting

The farmers believe that the reaping should be done on particular days. Tuesdays

¹Abbot, 355.

²Kannan, farmer, interview by the author, Coimbatore, March 6, 2000.

³Abbot, 361.

and Wednesdays are inauspicious days for reaping. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays are prosperous days. Abbot says that “the farmers believe that reaping is an act of destruction [and] should not be done on a day sacred to the village deity, and if reaping is done on a full-moon day, a new moon day, at an eclipse, it is believed that the grain will be consumed by fire.”¹ All agricultural operations have to be done on the sacred days to the village god.

The information about the religious practices of the farmers of Tamil Nadu provides part of the background for the development of an outreach strategy. Chapter 4 presents yet another aspect: the relationship of the farmers to Christianity.

¹Ibid., 366.

CHAPTER 4

CHRISTIANITY AND THE TAMIL NADU FARMERS

Indian Christians generally accept that their faith came to Tamil Nadu through the Apostle Thomas during first century A.D. Since then the farming community in the state has been greatly influenced by the Christian presence and witness. The various Christian missions play—collectively and individually—a major role in all aspects of social welfare and rural development. Their contributions to nation building have been highly regarded and have opened ways to reach the remote rural people in Tamil Nadu with the gospel.

There are 12,617¹ clusters of five villages, administered as a Panchayats,² in Tamil Nadu. Many Protestant Christian missions have been evangelizing these villages since the eighteenth century,³ but they have not been able to make a great impact upon this rural mass. These people groups still hold firmly to superstition, witchcraft, animism, and

¹Citizens' Charter: Rural Development Department (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2000), 3.

²Panchayat is a name given to village administration. There are five villages under its jurisdiction. This village administration is primarily responsible for the provision and maintenance of basic amenities such as drinking water, street lights, sanitation, streets and roads, and drainage.

³K. Rajendran, Which Way Forward Indian Missions? (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 1998), 15.

Hindu mythologies.

A few missions have had remarkable success in reaching these village people with the gospel. This chapter discusses some of the evangelistic approaches which these missions used. The second part of this chapter identifies some of the contact points between Adventism and the thinking of the Tamil Nadu farmers. These will serve as bridges to evangelism.

Evangelistic Approaches to Tamil Nadu Farmers

Although many Christian fellowships are working with the Tamil Nadu farming community, only a few are reviewed here. These are the ones that have prepared specific mission strategies which are workable and yield positive results.

Farming and Industry Broadcast Program

The Farming and Industry broadcast is a secular program on agricultural issues, prepared for the farmers in Tamil Nadu.¹ At present it is produced by George J. Farrar, retired Joint Director of Agriculture and a dedicated lay person. The Christian Far East Broadcasting Associates of India, located in Bangalore, South India, broadcasts this program for 15 minutes, once a week, every Saturday between 6:45 and 7:00 p.m. The programs deal with agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, farm machinery, home science, horticulture, and floriculture. Gospel messages are also included.

George J. Farrar explains that “the focal point of this broadcast is to capture the

¹The Farming and Industry broadcast was inaugurated by Dr. Raja Gopalan, the Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, March 1988.

attention of the farmers and establish a relationship with them.”¹ Basically, the broadcast is religious but it is felt that an agriculture-related program is suitable to reach the farmers.

All these subjects are broadcast in traditional local program formats, such as dramas, dialogues, interviews, and talk shows. At the close of every program, there is a related biblical concept for listeners to get a taste of the gospel. For example, when a talk on animal husbandry is presented, the Bible text “a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast” (Prov 12:10) may be read. There will be a description of a righteous man. As a result of this, the producers receive letters appreciating the Farming and Industry broadcasts.

Some broadcasts may carry a discussion between farmers and scientists on issues related to subjects appropriate to the season. Resource people come from various departments of the Agricultural University and the Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. Such programs have a great impact on the farming community.

Farrar states that a survey conducted shows that 80 percent of the listeners tune into the spiritual broadcasts also. They express their desire to have a Bible, to know more about God, to understand future events, and to learn health care. Many ask for prayers. Farmers eagerly wait for the Farming and Industry broadcast every Saturday.

Systematic follow-up work is carried out by the FEBA Radio. Radio Farm Schools are popular with the listeners. Those who do not get detailed information on a certain topic through the broadcast will attend a program arranged by FEBA. Experts from various agricultural institutions are invited there to interact with the farmers and give

¹Farrar, interview, August 1, 2000.

them a practical training. Such meetings create a point of contact between farmers and ministers of the gospel.

Tamil Villages Gospel Mission

The Tamil Villages Gospel Mission was founded by P. T. Christopher, an independent gospel minister. The head office is in Tiruchirappali, in Tamil Nadu. Christopher has about thirty-five assistants. This mission work is operated by freewill offerings received from believers in Tamil Nadu.

The aim of this mission is adopted from the Gospel of Matthew: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14). The goal is to reach the more than 12,617 Panchayats in Tamil Nadu.

The strategy of this mission is to place the map of Tamil Nadu and prayerfully select a Panchayat Union which contains more than a hundred villages. All the workers who are associated with this mission are then sent to various villages in that block. The evangelistic approach is to meet every family in the village, particularly the farmers, and pray with them. Prayer is offered wherever and whenever they are called. Some farmers invite the Christian workers in the morning to their agricultural land to offer a prayer before they start sowing the seed or before harvesting. When anyone is sick, prayer is requested by the farming community, because they are basically religious.

In the evening hours films on the life of Jesus Christ are screened. These serve as entertainment for the farmers and an opportunity for contact. At these times, mission

workers distribute gospel literature with attractive and colorful pictures.

This group also conducts adult literacy classes. They help those who cannot read or write to write letters. They establish credibility with farmers as friends who are concerned for their welfare.

According to Mohan,¹ the prayer approach is their primary effort. Other than that, they distribute Bible verse calendars and song cassettes, screen the Jesus film, and carry out welfare ministry. They make it a point to meet the farmers on special village occasions, to bless them and to pray for them. Such activities impress the farmers and create interest among the rural community to listen to the gospel.

The efforts of the Villages Gospel Mission have brought results. Ruth, a village lady and wife of a Hindu husband, wrote a letter on February 6, 2000, to this mission office, requesting the pastor to pray for the rain to stop so that the planting of the small crops could be done. Her prayer request was answered. That event strengthened the faith of other farmers. Prayer is a powerful evangelistic approach in the rural areas.

Kalai Kaviri Arts and Communication Center

The Kalai Kaviri Arts and Communication Center is located at Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu. This missionary institution is operated by the Roman Catholic Church. It offers courses on traditional dance (Bharatha Natiyam), Indian music, and audio and video production. It produces a number of audio and video cassettes on biblical themes and social issues.

¹Mohan, assistant for the Tamil Villages Gospel Mission, interview by the author, Tiruchirapalli, August 1, 2000.

Drama groups address social and family-related problems through dramatic presentations. They tackle sensitive issues, such as caste discrimination, dowry, sex, and alcohol. Since drama is a powerful form of communication, teaching takes place along with entertainment, which exhibits the various issues of daily life.

During the festival season, villagers look forward to many entertainment activities by the traditional village entertainers and religious groups. Kalai Kaviri has a team of artists with an outreach strategy. They visit various parts of Tamil Nadu, particularly during festival seasons such as Pongal (harvest festival), Karthigai Dheebam (festival of light), and perform dramas on the themes of those festivals with a biblical message, which draws people towards gospel truth.¹ While the drama entertains the rural mass, at the same time it creates an awareness of social issues and establishes a point of contact for future mission approaches.

Navajeevan Seva Mandal

Navajeevan Seva Mandal means New Life Service Center. It is a Christian organization dedicated to social welfare projects in the rural areas. It is located at Ranipet, in the northern part of Tamil Nadu. It operates various community-based development projects in the areas of healthcare, social welfare, agriculture, and education. According to the 1999 report of activities, Navajeevan runs a Children's Home, Navajeevan Seva Mandal. Through their child care projects, many rural children are brought up in a good

¹X. Philomin Raj, Kaviri Muthukkal [Pearls of Kaviri]: Dramas (Tiruchirapalli: Kalai Calvaria Publications, 1999), 3.

Christian atmosphere. They leave the compound with missionary zeal.¹ This service center is supported by donations received by the volunteers.

Farms India

Farms India is an agricultural training center located in Madras. It is operated by Dr. M. J. John, a devoted independent gospel worker. Many short-term courses are offered here: organic farming, goat raising, milk processing, dairy, mushroom culture, and fisheries. The nature of the training is residential. Scholarships are provided for those who attend.

John says that the evangelistic approach of this center is through residential fellowship and training sessions. The lifestyle of the instructors who participate in the sessions influences the trainees to learn the saving message of the Lord.² The interested ones are contacted later on by the organizers.

Wonder World Mission

Wonder World Mission is not a separate Christian organization but a kind of Bible study method adopted by S. Chandran, an evangelist employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Velautham Palayam, Tamil Nadu. In this village, caste and religious discrimination are strong. So far, many missionaries have approached the high caste Hindu farmers with the gospel but have failed. Chandran reports that this village is like a gold-

¹K. Chandrasekhar, Fourteenth Annual Report of Navjeevan Seva Mandal for the Year 1998-99 (Ranipet: Navjeevan Seva Mandal, 1999), 6, 10, 18.

²M. J. John, Executive Director of Farms India, interview by the author, Madras, February 17, 1998.

mine for a servant of the Lord.¹

He meets the farmers while in their fields and converses with them regarding various subjects related to their interest. For example, while a farmer is watering, Chandran opens the topic on the usefulness and value of water. In the course of his conversation he leads the farmer to a question about the origin of the water. He opens his Bible and turns to the book of Acts, where it says: “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). He leaves the farmer with a prayer for God to bless all the farming-related activities of that person.

Chandran prayerfully convinces the farmer that there is a God in heaven who causes the prosperity of the land. As a result of his Bible study, he reports that a few families have been baptized into the church.

While many missionaries have negative reports about this Hindu farming community, a few Christian organizations have success stories to share. These Christian organizations and individuals have adopted an evangelistic approach that is appealing to the farming community; however, they are not left without challenges or barriers to face.

Bridges to Understanding

Mission must move forward crossing over all difficulties and barriers. This section considers some of the “bridges” which can connect the Adventist message with the thinking of farmers in Tamil Nadu. A “bridge” is a connecting agent such as a bridge

¹S. Chandran, evangelist, interview by the author, Velautham Palayam, Tamil Nadu, August 1, 2000.

connects the two sides of a river. Anderson points out that “the believers of God function like small bridges which can direct men and women to Christ.”¹ In this paper, “bridges” are ideas found in the thinking of Tamil farmers as well as in the Adventist message. Among these are aspects of the doctrine of God, the doctrine of human beings, and the doctrine of last things. Finally, a holistic health message can serve as a bridge.

Doctrine of God

Farmers are religious. Even though they do not have theological knowledge they have a simple faith in God and practice whatever they learned from their ancestors.

Some of their beliefs correspond approximately to fundamentals of the Adventist message. Among these are God as Creator, God as sustainer and provider, God as gracious, and the human incarnation of God.

God as Creator

The Hindu farmers believe that “the Lord Vishnu created this material world for the conditioned souls to learn how to perform sacrifices for the satisfaction of Vishnu.”² It is recorded in the laws of Manu that he (Lord Vishnu), desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first with a thought created the waters, and placed his seed in them.”³

The Bible says that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen

¹J. Kenneth Anderson, Go Be a Bridge (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1991), ii.

²A. Prabhupada, 48.

³Laws of Manu, ed. G. Buhler (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1990), 1:8.

1:1). The Psalmist wrote: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). Heb 1:2 tells us that God “made the universe” through His Son, Jesus Christ.

God as Sustainer and Provider

The Hindu farmers look at god as the source of blessings¹ and the protector of all living things.² The farmers believe that “agriculture is dependent on the mercy of god.”³ As it is recorded in Bhagavad Gita, the Lord Vishnu speaks to Arjuna, “I am the Creator and Supporter of all things and I am the Father of the universe, the Mother, the Sustainer.”⁴

The Bible speaks of a God who is the source of all blessings. Deut 28:1-12 lists the different aspects of these blessings: children, crops, livestock, food, and rain. God promised: I will open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal 3:10). David gratefully acknowledges all the blessings of the Lord in his life (Ps 103).

God as Gracious

A Hindu believes that “surrendering to God enables one to receive grace of god

¹Ibid., 264.

²Ibid., 48.

³Nair, 158.

⁴Srimad Bhagavad Gita, trans. Paramanada (Madras: Sri Rama Krishna Math, 1982), 9:5,

for his liberation and final union in Him.”¹ The Bhagavad Gita says that when a person worships the Lord Krishna, by the grace of the Lord he becomes perfect and fully aware of everything.²

The manner of the Lord appeared to Moses is recorded as, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exod 34:6).

Apostle Paul mentions that we are saved by His grace alone, not because of our good works (Rom 11:6). Many of the stories that Jesus told illustrate God’s grace. For example, the forgiven great debtor.

Human Incarnation of God

The term avatara is used in Hindu scriptures to signify the human incarnation of god. Avatara comes from ava, meaning “below,”³ and the Sanskrit root tri meaning “to cross.” In Hindu thinking, the god crosses his divine border and manifests himself on this physical world. Swami Nirvedananda affirms that this kind of incarnation has happened and will happen repeatedly throughout the future. Therefore, “it is not unlikely for the Hindus to regard Buddha and even Christ and Muhammed as Avataras.”⁴

The Bhagavad Gita says,

¹Ahmad-Shah, 111.

²Prabhupada, 264.

³Nirvedananda, 133.

⁴Ibid., 134, 135.

assigned by the God alone.”¹ Prabhupada affirms that people are assigned by birth to their work.² According to A. M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, farmers in Tamil Nadu believe that their profession was already assigned to them by god at their birth.³ Gandhi regarded work as divine law.⁴ If a man wants to live, he must work. Those who eat without work are thieves.⁵

Agricultural pursuits are mentioned in the opening pages of the Scriptures. Work was part of God’s plan when man was created. God ordained him for agriculture. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Gen 2:15). God wants man to work (till his land) and earn his bread (see Prov 12:11). Paul went so far as to say that those who do not work should not eat (2 Thess 3:10). Work without selfishness or greed develops the physical and mental abilities of human beings. Agriculture helps people learn to appreciate the wonderful creation of the Lord.

Worship Is Expected of Human Beings

The farmers believe that they ought to worship god to receive blessings. Abbot says that all the agricultural activities in India commence with rituals to invoke the

¹Bhagavad Gita, trans., Chidbhananda (Tirupparaiturai: Sri Rama Krishna Tapovam, n.d.), 17:25.

²Prabhupada, 264.

³A. M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, The Sacred in Popular Hinduism (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1983), 127.

⁴T. K. N. Unnithan, Gandhi and Social Change (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, n.d.), 55.

⁵D. G. Tendulkar, Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Bombay: Vithalbhai & Tendulkar Publications, n.d.), 2:85.

presence of gods for protection, guidance, and property.¹ This is because Tamil farmers believe that “from sowing to harvest all agricultural operations are controlled by god’s power and priest’s power.”² S. V. Subramanian writes: “To get a good crop, worship Lord Ganapathi before ploughing the field.”³ Blessings have been promised to those who worship the Lord Krishna. The Bhagavad Gita says: “To those who worship Me alone, thinking of no one else and who are constantly and firmly united, I supply what they do not already possess and preserve what they already possess.”⁴

God expects His worshipers to be holy in order to worship the Lord who is holy. Worship has been considered as “an activity not only of the spirit, but also of the mind.”⁵ The Bible says, “Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Ps 95:6). We are called to worship because of the fact that He is our Creator and we are His creatures. The first angel of Rev 14 announces: “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7).

Prayer

The farmers of Tamil Nadu understand prayer as an appeal to receive god’s favor.

¹Abbot, 354.

²Sencho, 16.

³S. V. Subramanian, Tamil Nattuppura Iyal Ayvu [Research on Tamil Folklore] (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1979), 37.

⁴B. G. 9:22.

⁵D. Fleming, 100.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches them that “the man offers an oblation to the Lord and appeals to him for a favor or mercy or a miraculous cure of a disease.”¹ They offer prayers because they realize that god is the source of all blessings, the controller of all events, and the possessor of supreme power. They are asked to pray every morning and evening in the form of rites. The Bhagavad Gita mentions that “He who offers Agnihotra [the daily morning and evening oblations in the sacred fire] constantly . . . attains the highest state.”² The Laws of Manu also asks them to offer prayer daily: “let him mutter [prayer] untired, daily offer oblations in the fire.”³ The farmers are required to pray daily for various reasons.

The farmers in Tamil Nadu pray for rain. Aruchsamy says that when there is a delay of rain or no rainfall, they perform a special rite to invoke the god of rain.⁴ George J. Farrar mentions that these farmers celebrate another festival in the month of August to express their gratitude for good rain and commence the sowing activity.⁵

The biblical understanding of prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. It is a divine communication between the creature and the Creator. Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16). “The believers pray because they know that God is the source of all events and source of all good, the controller of all

¹B.G. 17:12.

²B.G. 4:10, 14.

³Laws of Manu, 4:145.

⁴Aruchsamy, a marginal farmer, interview by the author, Coimbatore, 26 February, 2000.

⁵Farrar, interview, 2000.

events and the possessor of supreme power and prayer is inviting God to work His solution to the matter concerning which they are praying.”¹

The prayers can be offered anywhere and at any time. Some believers prayed at noon (Acts 10:9). The Scriptures mention that Jesus spent nights praying to God (Luke 6:12).

People engage in prayer for various reasons. Daniel offered prayer for thanking Him for what He had done to the children of Israel (Dan 6:1). Believers prayed for various physical needs such as protection, healing, forgiveness (Neh 4:8-9; Matt 6:11; 1 Sam 12:23). The farmers in Tamil Nadu, the farmers in Palestine, and the Advent believers pray for various reasons. Particularly, they all pray when monsoon delays or fails. They believe that God is the giver of rain (Deut 11:14).

Elijah offered prayer for the rain. The Lord answered him by sending rain on the land of Samaria while the king Ahab was on his throne (1 Kgs 18). It was a common practice among the farmers in the ancient and contemporary Bible lands. The prayer aspect plays an important role in the lives of the believers.

Offerings

The concept of offering is not strange to the farmers of Tamil Nadu. Abbot says that when they measure the grain they have harvested, they set aside the grain that is measured first for the priest as an offering.² A. P. Nirmal describes the celebration of their

¹D. Fleming, 348.

²Abbot, 384.

harvest festival with offerings such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana, along with flowers and coconuts to express gratefulness to the god for a rich harvest.¹ Animal sacrifices are not permitted as offering. The Laws of Manu says: “He who maintains himself by picking up grains and ears of corn, must be always intent on the agnihotra (morning and evening worship), and constantly offer those Ishtis (desire of the heart) only.”²

Since God is the ultimate owner of all things (Ps 24:1), His people should acknowledge that by giving a portion back to Him. Giving offerings to the Lord is an act of worship from us with cheerfulness.

When Paul was writing his second letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned that the churches in Macedonia gave offerings as much as they were able, and even went beyond their ability (2 Cor 8:2, 3). Paul again said that those who give offering must give with a cheerful heart (2 Cor 9:7). The Lord instructed the children of Israel:

No one appear before me empty-handed. Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field. Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign Lord. Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast. The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning. Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. (Exod 23:15-19)

The Bible says that “each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you” (Deut 16:17). “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The Bible teaches that the believers ought to worship the Lord with offerings.

¹Nirmal, 81.

²Laws of Manu, 4:10.

Ellen White says of the Israelites that “in complying with God’s requirements, they were to manifest in offerings their appreciation of His mercies and blessings to them.”¹

Nature of Human Beings

Sinful

From the early Vedic period, Hindu teachers have affirmed that people are born sinful. Sadhu Chellappa notes that the Pratasnana Mantra is chanted both by saints and common people: “Papokam, papa kanmokam, papatma (I am born in sin, doer of sin, a sinful self). This is the cry of a man for god’s help.”²

The farmers in Tamil Nadu have some awareness of sin, because they were taught from the Bhagavad Gita that “a man who does not follow this prescribed Vedic system of sacrifice certainly leads a life of sin.”³ Lust has been recognized as sin.⁴ According to Swami Nirvedanadan, Hindus consider sin a state of ignorance in the lower self. Sinners therefore, are not to be condemned. They should be treated with sympathy and helped out of ignorance.⁵

The Bible says that “the transgression of the law is sin (1 John 3:4). Anyone who violates the revealed will of God sins against Him (Rom 1:18-22). Christ states, “He who

¹E. G. White, Counsels on Stewardship (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), 69.

²Chellappa, 36.

³Prabhupada, 51.

⁴Ibid., 60.

⁵Nirvedananda, 223.

is not with Me is against Me” (Matt 12:30).

Subject to Consequences of Sin

The Hindu farmers believe that a sinful life brings sufferings.¹ Sin causes people to drag on in a material existence.² They also believe that if a farmer gets a low yield from his crop, it is because he is sinful.³

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:13), that human beings are guilty before God (Rom 6:23). When man committed sin, the earth too was cursed; thorns and thistles came from the land (Gen 3:18).

Health

Importance of Health

Roads in the villages are generally filled with mud or dust; whoever walks on them will be infected with impure air and dust. So, the farmers need to wash themselves with clean water. S. A. Danga says that “the defilements of any nature--physical or spiritual--always needed some kind of purification.”⁴ Radha Krishna⁵ points out from the Rig Veda that maintaining physical health is important because the body is an instrument for the practice of religion. The village farmers are aware of the need for healthful living, though

¹Ibid., 226.

²Prabhupada, 82.

³Iruthiyanath, 103.

⁴S. A. Dange, Sexual Symbolism from Vedic Ritual (New Delhi: PL Printers, 1979), 200.

⁵Principal Upanishads, ed., Radhakrishnan, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 186.

they may not practice it.

The apostle John wrote: “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 2). God wants us live a healthy life. For this He gave us the laws of health through His prophets. To lead such a life, we are asked to follow the health principles which the Lord Himself prescribed for us. “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, . . . I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you” (Exod15:26).

The Adventist health message has been supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. She counsels about the preparation of a people for the Lord’s second coming before which a great work is to be accomplished through the promulgation of health principles.¹ Also she adds that the health message “is clearly part of God’s program of fitting us into heaven.”²

According to the biblical concept, the human body, by creation and redemption belongs to God. He commands that we treat the body as His temple. Paul writes to Corinthian Church: “If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (1 Cor 3:17).

¹Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1940), 206.

²Ellen G. White, Medical Ministry (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1963), 2.

Vegetarianism

The Tamil farmers are generally vegetarian, in part, because these foods are easily available in the farm. Beyond that, the Bhagavad Gita recommends that “all living bodies should subsist on food grains.”¹ According to Kenneth Morgan, Hindu farmers believe that eating flesh foods is eating their brothers and sisters.² This happens for two reasons: domestic animals are treated as family members, and they believe in cyclical births and rebirths.

When God created man, He gave him the plant food but not the flesh food. God said: “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for good” (Gen 1:29). Flesh foods were not permitted until after the flood (Gen 9:3-4).

Temperance

A proper Hindu farmer abstains from drinking and smoking. The Laws of Manu enjoin abstinence from “meat, perfumes, garlands,” and prohibit liquor and any substance which gives intoxicating effects.³ The farmers are physically strong because of their simple eating and drinking habits.

Temperance according to biblical understanding is “habitual moderation and

¹Prabhupada, 50.

²Morgan, 165.

³Laws of Manu, 4:207.

control in the indulgence of the appetites and passions; in other words, self-control.”¹ The Adventist message recommends abstinence from all harmful substances and temperate use of what is good.” According to the biblical account, “the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you” (Lev 10:8-10). The wise man counsels: “Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov 20:1).

The apostle Paul counseled the Corinthian church: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor 6:19, 20).

Doctrine of Last Things

The Hindu farmers believe that this earth is heading towards an end. According to Dharam Vir Singh, “Kalki, the future and the last incarnation of Vishnu, will appear at the end of the present age (Kali-Yuga), when moral excellence would no longer exist, the role of law would disappear and all would be darkness.”²

M. G. Matthew also notes:

At the end period of Kali Yuga (this is the age), all people will become atheists. Bribery will be rampant. There will be a mixing of castes. People will turn thieves and immoral. They will put up appearances of piety but will be evil minded. People will even begin to eat others. In these times, Vishnu will take as Kalki. He will kill all the evil people. The people will be resettled under the four-fold caste system and in the

¹Bible Readings for the Home (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951), 658.

²D. V. Singh, 55.

way of righteousness and thereafter, he will return to Vaikunda.¹

A biblical understanding of the end-times is recorded in 2 Tim 2:1-5:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Christ Himself said concerning His second coming: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Angels proclaimed immediately after Jesus' ascension: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10, 11).

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica concerning Christ's second coming, "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (1 Thess 4:16-18).

When these things occur, Christ's second advent will take place. The Lord will

¹M. G. Matthew, Geeta Simplified with Expositions from Bible (Kerala: Perumbavoor, 1993), 124.

come to save the faithful ones and destroy all whose names are not found in the book of life (Rev 22:19).

In this chapter various evangelistic approaches have been considered and different points of contact between the religious thinking of the Tamil Nadu farmers and the Adventist teaching have been established. On the basis of this information, as well as that presented in the previous chapters, the mission strategy as described in chapter 5 was designed.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ADVENTIST RADIO PROGRAM

This chapter describes the development and implementation of Seventh-day Adventist radio broadcasts to reach the farmers of Tamil Nadu. Two broad sections deal with the various aspects involved in the program production. The first part deals with the basis for the development of an Adventist Christian radio program and the second explains in detail the implementation process.

Development of an Adventist Radio Program

The development of Adventist radio programming is inevitable in the twenty-first century. Such programs must have a clear basis.

Basis for Mission Strategy

The basis for developing a new evangelistic approach can be found in two sources. One is God's plan for evangelism. The other one is the need of the Tamil Nadu farmers.

God's Plan

God wants the gospel preached to the entire earth, because this world is at the end of history. Therefore the Lord commissioned His followers to "go and make disciples of

all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19, 20). Jesus also noted: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14). This commission from the Lord gives a sense of responsibility and constitutes a call for urgency. The church is at the very center of God’s purpose to communicate the gospel to the world. The church was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.¹

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt 9:35-38). There is a great need in Tamil Nadu for the gospel message. Therefore it is a challenge for the church to hear God’s voice and respond in obedience to His command.

As the end approaches, we should hasten the fulfilling of the church’s mission by using radio more and more. Ellen G White counsels the church: “The end is near, and for this reason we are to make the most of every entrusted ability and every agency that shall offer help to the work.”² Harold E. Metcalf comments that God uses the modern inventions such as radio, television, and airplanes for the rapid proclamation of the gospel.³

The top priority of the church at this hour is to recognize the gospel commission

¹Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 9.

²White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:440.

³Metcalf, 129.

(Matt 28:18-20) as the church's mandate to reach the massive unreached population of Tamil Nadu.

Need for a New Approach

About 70 percent of the total population in Tamil Nadu live in the rural areas.¹ There are over sixteen of the largest caste groups that have resisted the gospel.² More than fifteen tribal groups in Tamil Nadu have never heard the saving message of the Lord.³ Rural dwellers live in darkness and die without hope. Agriculture is their main occupation. There are more than 232 mission agencies working in Tamil Nadu,⁴ but no specific evangelistic approach has been taken by any of these agencies except the few which are listed in chapter 4.

Several factors demand a new approach. Among the most significant are transition in the community, superstition, resistance to the gospel, and the sheer size of the population.

Transition in the village community

The farming community in Tamil Nadu no longer lives a slow, simple lifestyle, with community integrity and tolerance towards other religions or cultures.

Valson Thambu reports that religions have "allowed themselves to be infected with

¹Mallikeswaran, 38.

²Patrick Johnstone, Operation World (Carlisle, UK: OM Publishing, 1993), 289.

³Ibid.

⁴Newton Isaac, Go into All Tamil Nadu (Madras: India Missions Association, 1996), 15.

the virus of violence.”¹ Social harmony is no longer found in rural communities. Muthu Pandi says that caste discrimination has created many ill feelings and hatred between various caste groups.”² Changes are taking place in certain fundamental beliefs of the Tamil farmers. They used to believe that salvation depended mainly on man’s own efforts, but now they have started to believe that salvation is God’s gift. Salvation or liberation can be received by surrendering to the God of love as proposed in the bhakti movement.³

Transitions are taking place towards modern society based on science and technology.⁴ Farmers want to improve their productivity and their well-being. A. S. Jeevarathinam reports that developmental projects, such as the building of dams and canals for irrigation, construction of market facilities, and public buildings such as dispensaries, schools, and government offices, are contributing to change in the rural areas.⁵ P. K. Nair points out that “the traditional is giving way to the modern.” Youngsters in the rural no longer prefer to live under the joint family system, because everyone in the household has his or her likes and dislikes, habits, tastes, and idiosyncracies. As a result there is an increase in misunderstanding and bitter feelings

¹Valson Thampu, “Spiritual Foundation for Peace,” Christian Mind Series, 5(October, 1999): 10.

²Muthu Pandi, senior citizen, interview by the author, Tiruchirapalli, May 18, 2000.

³S. J. Hans Staffner, Dialogue-Stimulating Contacts with Hindus (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993), 3.

⁴Indu Mathur, Change in Agrarian Society (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1997), 1.

⁵Jeevarathinam, interview, 2000.

between family members.¹ The modern generation prefers to live as single families² with more privacy and individuality. The industrial-urban influence, and the impact of education and mass media are the primary contributors to this socio-cultural transition.³

Social life, once heavily influenced by Hinduism, is changing as social changes in the village community sweep away the basic beliefs and practices.⁴ Villagers who are affected by these social transitions become vulnerable to new ways and means of life.

Indu Mathur states that a great awareness is taking place, primarily of social, political, health, and economic concerns. Good health is becoming more valued than work, social responsibility, or wealth. Thus the farmers are now more open to seeking medical aid in sickness.⁵

Superstition

Desai reports that the rural people are superstitious. For example, the villager often believes that sickness and family problems are caused by a god who is angry with them.⁶ S. M. Channa notes that people believe that the demon is a cruel personage, who wants to inflict people with troubles including sterility, illness, and material difficulties.

Therefore, the villagers first contact the astrologers to get well. The astrologer provides

¹A. M. Shah, 107.

²Mathur, 55.

³Nair, 81, 82.

⁴Ibid., 171.

⁵Mathur, 100, 101.

⁶Das, 76.

an explanation to the problem by reading the natal horoscope, and rituals are performed under his direction.¹

Hindu resistance

The attitude of the Hindus in rural areas toward Christianity is generally neutral, but varies according to caste and profession. The high castes of the rural community are not favorable to Christian evangelistic work. "To them a Christian is synonymous with an untouchable, an outcast."²

In the recent past the number of attacks on Christians, churches, and missionaries have increased in Tamil Nadu. Some of "the Hindu Militant Movements such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashriya Swayam SevaSangh, Jan Sangh, Arya Samaj, and Bajrang Dal have become a powerful political force, and provoking violence against Christian workers and congregations."³ The ministers of the gospel who are in the forefront of evangelistic activities are threatened by the militants, says Mohan.⁴

Massive population

The population of Tamil Nadu was 59,812,000 in 1995. Of these, 70 percent

¹International Encyclopedia of Anthropology (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1998), "Rural Health."

²Khuswant Singh, India: An Introduction (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1992), 72.

³Johnstone, 275.

⁴Mohan, gospel minister, 100 Village Mission, interview by the author, Tiruchirapalli, August 1, 2000.

were farmers (41,868,400).¹

The report of the executive secretaries of the Tamil Adventist conferences shows 192 pastors in 2000. These 192 pastors are responsible for evangelizing the 41,868,400 farmers in the villages of Tamil Nadu. Though they may baptize twenty persons a quarter, it will take a long time to reach every farmer in Tamil Nadu.

Radio as an Appropriate Medium

Radio is an appropriate electronic medium for the farmers in Tamil Nadu. Radio can reach a large area instantly, is accessible, affordable, and convenient to carry and operate. The Tamil farmers do not have any knowledge about the technicality of electronic mass media, but operating a radio does not require any technical knowledge.

When Anand Gopalan was interviewed about the accessibility of a radio, he said that the annual income of a marginal farmer who holds two to three hectares is Rs.15,000. The cost of a radio is about Rs.700.² The cost of a television set is Rs.8,000. Therefore, a radio is quite affordable. Farmers are interested in listening to the news. The All India Radio operated by the government is the only national radio that broadcasts special programs relevant to the farmers in Tamil Nadu. George J. Farrar reports:

The All India Radio farm broadcast lasts for about three hours daily in different time segments. In that broadcast the current issues related to the latest research findings on agriculture, such as modern rice cultivation technology, modern livestock management techniques, modern dry farming technology, modern oil seed cultivation technology, and modern pulse production technology are broadcast. In addition, various

¹Farrar, interview.

²Anand Gopalan, marginal farmer, interview by the author, Chengalpattu, February 19, 2000.

government benefit schemes are announced from time to time. The farmers residing in the farm sides are also to be benefited by these farm radio broadcasts.¹

Chitra Lega affirms that the radio is the only appropriate medium which produces a variety of farm-related programs for the farmers in Tamil Nadu. She adds that, whenever any natural calamities occur, only the radio can be operated on batteries in the rural areas. Therefore, a radio broadcast serves the farmers in Tamil Nadu better than any mass media.²

Desmond A. D'Abreo states,

The radio has a special and distinctive power. Today, television has assumed the role of general entertainer in most industrialized nations of the world. But the radio is still a very important medium of information for many people, especially in the Third World. Certainly it is the fastest. Hours before news can reach the streets in newspapers, even before the television cameras can film events for presenting on television newscasts, the radio has been describing the latest news events over the airwaves.³

Rekha Bhagat reports,

In the year 1992, there was a radio audience survey conducted in Tamil Nadu by the All India Radio which reported, that 64 percent of the rural women were aware of the rural women's program, 70 percent listen to film music, and 15.3 percent listen to other programs. Radio broadcast listening resulting in gaining knowledge was reported for 37.5 percent rural women. In the case of men the percentage could be more than these.⁴

¹Farrar, Producer, interview, 2000.

²Chitra Lega, interview, 2000.

³Desmond A. D'Abreo, The Mass Media and You (Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, 1997), 41.

⁴Rekha Bhagat, "Modernising Farm Women through Mass Media," Communicator 10 (July 1995): 17.

Functions of Christian Radio Broadcasting

A Christian radio broadcast plays an important role in changing society and the lifestyle of an individual. Its most important function, however, is to bring people to Christ. Viggo Soggard affirms this:

One of the primary functions of the Christian radio broadcast is to carry the great commission of the Lord which is recorded in the Matthew 24:19, 20. Go and preach the gospel. It must be done on the basis of a clear understanding and dedication to the commission given by Christ to make disciples of all nations.¹

A Christian radio broadcast functions like a minister with a person-centered approach.² This broadcast gives a personal touch to the audience; though many listen to the program, yet every one must feel that it is for him or her.

A Christian radio broadcast reflects the ministry of Lord Jesus. Jesus focused His ministry on the needs of the audience.

A radio broadcast has been described as a watch dog. Ranagasamy Parthasarathy describes radio broadcasts as gate keepers,³ because it creates an awareness about foreign ideas, beliefs, values, and, in particular, it can be a spokesperson for the end-time prophecies recorded in Matt 24.⁴ It can describe the fulfilment of Bible prophecy as it comes to pass in the history of this world.

¹Viggo Sogaard, Media in Church and Mission (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1993), 137.

²Ibid., 138.

³Rangaswami Parthasarathy, Here Is the News (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1994), 145.

⁴Donald K. Smith, Creating Understanding: A Handbook for Christian Communication (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 191.

Objectives of Christian Radio Broadcasting

The objective of Christian radio broadcasting is to preach the gospel message to all nations as prescribed by the Lord Himself in Matt 24:14. The overall strategy in radio ministry is to move people from the level of potential listeners to disciples.

Adventist World Radio takes up the challenge to preach the three angels' message to the farmers in Tamil Nadu through this special strategy and prepare them for Christ's Advent.

A holistic health approach will provide for the total well-being of the targeted audience, as a cooperative agent of the government in the health and rural developmental promotional activities.

Development of the Radio Program

Current Adventist Programs

The Adventist World Radio on the island of Guam broadcasts programs in seven Indian languages: Hindi, Kannada, Punjabi, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu. All language programs are recorded at the Adventist Media Center, Pune, and broadcast from the Guam station on shortwave frequency. This frequency is disturbed in certain seasons of the year. Therefore, farmers are not able to receive the program signal clearly during that particular season.

At present radio programs are prepared on health, the gospel message, nature, and listeners' mail response. These topics are presented using the following program formats: Bible study, music and songs, stories, interviews, drama, and talks. There is a great

response to music, health, and stories.

The average feedback is forty to fifty letters a month. On this basis it is calculated that about 12 percent of the population of Tamil Nadu listen to AWR. Since the programs are not prepared for a specific audience, the Media Center in Pune receives feedback from all types of people. No special program has been prepared for farmers in Tamil Nadu.

Survey of the Target Audience

To understand the people target audience, a field survey was organized by the researcher with the assistance of pastors from four Adventist churches in four different localities, four village-level development officers, and the director of the North Tamil Conference Communication Department. This team was organized in 1998. The researcher was the coordinator. The team members were from the local areas. The researcher made several trips to meet the audience personally and collect first-hand information.

To obtain detailed information, a survey was prepared. It appears in the appendix 1 of this paper. Most of the questions had to do with their radio listening habits.

At the beginning of this process, one village in each of four districts of Tamil Nadu was selected. In each village, twenty households were selected, making a total of eighty homes consisting of 400 persons. There were 125 adult men, 110 women, and 165 children below age 12.

The survey completed in March 2000 provided the following information. Of the 80 families, 66 (82.5 percent) owned a radio; 330 (82.5 percent) of the 400 persons said

they listened to the radio. Of the 125 (93.6 percent) adult men, 117 reported listening to the radio; 89 (80.0 percent) of the 110 women were listeners; just over 75 percent of the children under 12 said they listened to the radio.

When asked what programs they listened to, the preferences of males and females differed on most topics. Far more men (93.1 percent) than women (38.2 percent) listened to the news. More women (90 percent) than men (60.6 percent) listened to music and film songs. Market updates were of interest to 65 percent of the men, but only to 26 percent of the women. Agricultural information was interesting to 74.4 percent of the males and to 42.7 of the females. Only 29 percent of the men reported listening to religious programs, while 72 percent of women said they did. Finally, 88 percent of the men and nearly 90 percent of the women said they listened to drama. Evidently the most important programs for men are the news, agricultural information, and drama. For the women, the most interesting programs are music, drama, and religious programs.

When asked about the AWR programs they listened to, 6 percent of the listeners expressed appreciation of the health-related program, 5 percent said they liked the music, about 4 percent said they listened to the children's stories and nature talks, and only 2 percent admitted listening to the gospel messages.

Selection of Broadcast Topics

Selection of the broadcast topics should meet the needs of the target audience.

Edward A. Brawley says that "the effective use of the mass media depends on the quality

of the information which provides a support for a person who is in need.”¹ Both the content and the style of presentation should be relevant to the social patterns of the local audience. Content and presentation should be understandable and acceptable to the local audience.² Viggo Sogaard warns that “if we do not know our audience and the needs of our audience, we really have no right to be on the air.”³

Jesus carefully started with the needs and context of His audience. When He met Nicodemus at night (John 3:1-15) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-25), Jesus dealt with their problems and their concerns. The incarnated God served humanity in a strategic way. Ellen White wrote, “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence.”⁴

The challenge to a radio broadcaster is to get to know the needs of his audience. Such broadcasts will produce the expected results. Another aim, while selecting the topics, is to lead the radio audience to the valley of decision and eventually lead them to become disciples of the Lord.⁵

In the process of topic selection, special village events, festivals, and seasonal

¹Edward A. Brawley, Mass Media and Human Services (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 1983), 12.

²Smith, 191.

³Sogaard, 139.

⁴Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1942), 143.

⁵Julian Sundersingh, Christian Communication through Radio (Bangalore: A FEBA-India Publication, 1999), 7.

activities should be taken into consideration. If the broadcasts are related to a particular event, they will create a greater impact upon the audience. Radio programs can be prepared on the following topics.

Agriculture

Sri Pal says, “The agriculture-related research findings will create an interest among farmers to tune in to the radio program”¹ because these topics are of primary concern. A farm radio should be a guide and counselor to the farmers. The latest and the most beneficial information should be selected. The latest research findings which ensure the maximum yields and high economic gains will create an interest among the farmers to tune to the radio broadcasts. Jesus’ parables related to agricultural topics. Topics such as the sower (Matt 13: 3-9), the tares (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43), the seed growing untended (Mark 4:26-29), the grain of mustard seed (13:31, 32), the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), the barren fig tree (Luke 13: 6-9), and the laborer in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) will attract the farmers to listen. Agricultural topics and the Bible can easily be combined. Ellen White says that the presentation on the benefits of working in the farm can create a love towards nature, health, and God.²

Health

The Adventist World Radio aims at presenting a holistic view of health from the

¹Sri Pal, professor, Department of Rural Communication, Agriculture University, Coimbatore, interview by the author, July 28, 2000.

²Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 220.

Bible perspective to the farmers in Tamil Nadu. Physical, mental, and spiritual well-being are the basic dimensions designed for the individual by the God of heaven. He is the source of life and health (John 14:6). The Bible says that the healing of the whole human race is essential to God's plan for the restoration of human beings (Gal 2:19, 20). This aspect of healing was manifested in the ministry of Jesus Christ, as he went about healing the sick, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel (Matt 4:23). Christ applied to Himself the prophecy of Isaiah:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:16, 18, 19)

Christ's ministry of healing must be made available to the farming community. There is a great need for such health education in the rural of Tamil Nadu. Rural health problems are described in chapter 2. Farmers need health orientation and education concerning basic health problems and their prevention, balanced diet and proper nutrition, safe water and basic sanitation, maternal and child health care, family planning, immunization, first aid, and mental health.

Jacob Chandy reports that "the development of a healthy community depends on the community's ability to recognize its health needs and also on its preparedness to meet those needs."¹ Health topics can be used to draw attention to health principles taught in the Bible.

¹Jacob Chandy, The Healing Ministry of the Indian Church (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970), 29.

Nature

The farmers are always exposed to nature; they have ample opportunity to learn lessons from nature. David wrote that in nature God's glory is displayed (Ps 19:1-4). Paul adds that through nature God's invisible qualities, eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen (Rom 1:20). Ellen White says that "the character and power of God are revealed by the works of His hands."¹ This subject matter aims to educate the farmers to learn to appreciate the beauty of the nature and the power of its Creator. Ellen White adds that "the God of nature . . . can use the works of His hands to serve His own purpose."² The focal point of this broadcast should be to lead the farmers to the school of nature to learn about the wonderful Creator.

Religion

The farmers have a little knowledge about their religion, Hinduism. They acquired their simple beliefs through religious discourses in the villages during festival seasons and the All India Radio broadcast. They are concerned with attaining liberation from the cycle of births and deaths and the remission of sins, which they consider as washing away the defilements of the body and mind. Their belief is that they have to earn their salvation by good works. Their religion talks about the end of this age, called kali yoga, but there is no hope offered to them.

¹White, Medical Ministry, 103.

²Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 103.

The gospel message on the radio program aims at presenting the Savior of the world Jesus Christ, whom they consider as one of the avatars. P. R. Solomon says that “Christ is viewed as the fulfillment of Hindu aspirations, not as the founder of a new religion over and against other religions of the world. Therefore, Christ can be communicated not as the destroyer of Hinduism but as the crown of Hinduism.”¹ The Bible offers hope for the future through Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Selection of Program Formats

The selection of the appropriate formats will determine the result of the program. Viggo Sogaard says, “The best message demands the best programs.”² To decide on the type of the formats, one must keep in mind several factors. First of all, it is important to note the type of people one wants to reach, such as children, youth, women, or adult farmers. Then one must focus on the purpose of the program: Is it chiefly for public relations or is it to bring people to Christ? Is it for passing on information or educational purposes? One should choose the format that can present the gospel message in the best manner possible. Following are several program formats that can be used for this radio program.

Dramatized Bible stories plus Bible message

The advantages of presenting a message through radio drama are manifold. Julian Sundersingh says, “Drama attracts a greater audience than any other radio format. This is

¹Solomon, 11.

²Sogaard, 136.

revealed by several audience surveys conducted in India, because the drama format provides entertainment and the drama capitalizes on this and conveys the message in a very attractive way.”¹

Radio drama is the prime example of creative listening. No other type of program catches the attention of the audience as it does. The aim of dramatic writing is for the original ideas to be re-created in the listener’s mind, creating mental images in response to the information given.

One can draw some biblical principles from the Bible characters and dramatize according to the need of the listener. For example, one could use true-life incidents in the Bible, such as the sight restored to two blind men (Matt 9:27-31) or Jesus’ parable on the sower of the seed and the four types of the ground (Matt 13:3-9). While preparing this, the producer must decide on suitable speech, music, and sound effects. In a good radio play there is gripping dialogue with continuous action leading to a climax.²

Dramatized real-life situation with Bible message

Vivek Habbal says, “Since drama represents the real-life setting and the respondents could feel their personal attachment with the dramatic characters, they might receive solutions to their problem or be educated by this dramatized real-life situation.”³

Farmers have various life problems related to farm, family, and society.

¹Sundersingh, 18.

²Ibid.

³Vivek Habbal, Assistant Director, Education for Media Research Centre, Pune University, interview by the author, Pune, May 14, 2000.

Dramatized real-life situations will link them to their situation and provide a solution for their problem while the character in the drama teaches the Bible message.

Chitra Lega says that “the drama program has its validity for educative purpose.”¹ The village community needs to be educated on various aspects of life such as health, agriculture, first-aid, pesticides, weather, family life, and economy.

Interviews

The interview is one of the most valuable kinds of radio program. “The interviewer becomes the representative of the listeners, asking the questions which his audience would want to ask if they had the chance.”² Robert McLeish explains: “For someone about to be interviewed it is essential to recognize what an interview is and what opportunities it presents, and what is not. For example it is not a confrontation, which it is the interviewer’s object to win.”³ Dittu Abraham affirms that the interview broadcast must be informative, believable, enthusiastic; he advises, “Get your object in before the end of the interview session.”⁴ One could invite a missionary, or any Christian personality, a doctor or agriculture scientist. They will be able to give information the farmers need.

¹Lega, interview, 2000.

²Michael Harrison, A Radio Production Guide (London: Association of Adventist Broadcasters, 1991), 43.

³Robert McLeish, The Technique of Radio Production (London: Focal Press, 1988), 42.

⁴Dittu Abraham, Adventist News Network, interview by the author, Hosur, February 10, 1998.

Prophecy in the news

Farmers are curious about their future. “The prophecy in the news broadcast is likely to hold the interest of non-religious persons and the farmers from other faiths because it foretells the future.”¹ In a fifteen-minute program, give two or three news items and show how Bible prophecy is being fulfilled in the history of this earth. Two voices work well, one to read the news item, the other to comment on it.

Sabbath School of the air

The voices and the words of children on the radio program have a captivating effect. The farmers and their children can learn many lessons in a simple way. Jesus had a special concern for children and warned against ignoring or despising them. He pointed to their simple dependency on others as an illustration of the attitude that people must have if they are to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 18:1-4). The apostle John refers to new believers with childlike faith (1 John 2:12-13). The Bible speaks of believers as the children of God (John 1:12-13). It tells us that He adopted us into His family and gave us the status of mature adult sons (Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:5-7). The Sabbath School broadcast reveals the importance of child growth in a society. If the children are brought up with a good Christian atmosphere and if their talents are identified, they will be a great support to the community.

¹Ten Tips on Taking to the Air (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Radio-TV Department, 1961), 9.

Music

Music is a gift from God; with all other talents it should be used in soul-winning activities. Ellen White says, “Your voice, your influence, your time--all these are gifts from God and are to be used in winning souls to Christ.”¹ She also writes: “Song is one of the most effective means of impressing spiritual truth upon the heart. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ’s representatives . . . prepare people for the church above.”² Music should be an important part of the radio program.

The traditional way of communicating religious stories uses villupattu and bhajan. This style combines speaking and singing. At special events like village festivals, a village poet chooses a theme related to the occasion, such as the harvest festival, and composes songs and dialogues to communicate his thoughts, accompanied by a singing group and local musical instruments. This music is usually performed in an open space where the village audience sits and watches.³ This is usually presented in the evening but may go on until the early hours of the morning. Hans Staffner says that the average Indian divine worship is not so much a duty prescribed by law, but something spontaneous. “The village audience are just carried away by the fervor of their devotion as they listen to such a program.”⁴ Most religious discourses are presented in Tamil Nadu in this traditional

¹White, Testimonies, 5:493.

²Ibid., 5:491.

³Staffner, 162.

⁴Ibid.

style. Bible readings and the stories in the Bible can be presented in this same manner, with great impact upon the farming community.

Singh points out that “music can help set a mood, create an atmosphere, lift an item, and finally, it can get people in the way of your purpose.”¹

Tamil music and songs can be prepared in the traditional village style. Singh says, “If a man listens to music in his own language, he feels mentally and spiritually happy.”² While writing the lyrics of the song, combine farm activities with the gospel message. If describing the joyful season of the good harvest, at the same time express the joy of a farmer, with gratitude and thanksgiving for the Lord who blessed him.

Writing for Radio

Radio writing demands a high degree of skill. There is no room for anything but essential facts. Sometimes the listener may hear the message only once, therefore, the radio script should be written in such a way that the person gets the message at first hearing.

Script writer

A good radio producer goes to the recording studio well prepared and carrying a good written manuscript to follow. Singh comments that good writers have an interest in people. They know the target audience personally. As a result, they can communicate

¹Christopher Singh, “Music in Programs,” AWR Producers Seminar, Pune, July, 1994.

²T. C. N. Singh, “Music,” Kissan World 29 (April 1998): 7, 8.

well. They have an enquiring mind and know the problems of the audience.¹ Therefore they are able to address them well. Like good sales people, good writers have the ability to express themselves well in appropriate words.

Characteristics of a good script

A program cannot be successful unless the script writing gets a good finishing. According to Julian Sundersingh, “a well-written radio script avoids undue anxiety at the time of recording. It also helps others to follow the producer’s thinking and to recollect the presentation without much struggle.”² The focus must be clear, so that the farmer can get the message easily. The writer must use short sentences with simple words. Goldman points out: “To communicate the concepts of our field of human relations requires a simple and direct language.” He adds: “We need to be confident enough in our expertise to express our opinion clearly and vigorously to the public.”³ According to Rangaswami, a good script “should be compact, using short sentences with every word selected and placed for maximum effect.”⁴

Singh points out some of the good qualities of a radio script. They are as follows: “It avoids confrontation, respect of others, finds common ground, written in common language, indigenous, gives profitable information, avoids to be too authoritative, finally

¹Christopher Singh, radio correspondent, World Wide Radio, London, interview by the author, Pune, June 4, 1997.

²Sundersingh, 22.

³M. W. Goldman, “Radio: A Medium for the Presentation of Social Work,” Social Work 5(May 1990): 89.

⁴Parthasarathy, 177.

tries to be short.”¹

Need oriented. A good script visualizes the needs of the listeners. For example, to the woman at the well drawing water, Jesus spoke of living waters which one might drink and not thirst again (John 4:1-26). He knew her need and supplied it. Viggo Sogaard affirms that “if we do not know our audience and the needs of our audience, we really have no right to be on the air.”² Whitehouse says “that we need to focus on the issues of importance for the person at his/her position of spiritual understanding.”³ The effects of a program depend upon the content in relation to the needs of the audience. A Christian broadcaster leads a person to the greatest friend in the world: Jesus Christ.

Interesting. Robert McLeish says that “the radio is an immensely switch-offable medium.”⁴ If the program is not interesting to the farmers, they may switch off the radio. He also advises: “Don’t spend a long time getting into the subject, start with an idea that is intriguing, relevant, or at least unusual.”⁵ “Use illustrations and stories”⁶ from the farm and make provision for many characters and different voices to participate. That will make the script interesting. Vivek says, “Start with a pretty, crisp, attention catcher. Use

¹C. Singh, “Music in Programs.”

²Sogaard, 139.

³Jerald Whitehouse, “Contextualization as a Part of the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” Class lecture, Missions to Islam, Pune, 1998.

⁴McLeish, 52.

⁵Ibid., 53.

⁶Ten Tips on Taking to the Air, 21.

interesting comparison.”¹

Conversational. Writing an article involves certain types of sentences; so does writing a radio script for farmers. Sentences should be short, like people talk.

Conversational writing makes the program more personal. Vivek says “the radio script should be in the common people language.”² The writer can create emotional feelings, especially if the script is written in the local village spoken style.

Contextual. Jerald Whitehouse points out, “Seventh-day Adventist contextualization aims to communicate biblical truth in a culturally-relevant way that is both faithful to the scripture and meaningful to the new host culture, remembering that all cultures are judged and/or affirmed by the gospel.”³

Donald K. Smith points out,

The use of media should take into account not only differences within major cultural blocks, but also less obvious differences within major groups of people. A single message prepared for the several groups different groups will not be equally effective in all groups. Therefore the writing for radio demands a cultural appropriateness.⁴

Jon Dybdahl affirms: “The church has a vital challenge to communicate God’s salvation in the context of the world’ many religions and cultures. People can respond to a message that they clearly hear in their own context.”⁵ The farmers in Tamil Nadu cannot

¹Habbal, interview.

²Ibid.

³Whitehouse, Class lecture.

⁴Smith, 207.

⁵Jon Dybdahl, “Cross-Cultural Adaptation,” Ministry, November 1992, 14.

be won unless the gospel comes to them in their own context. Smith points out that “the messenger of the gospel must become part of the community, instead of taking the role of an outsider telling others what they need or what they should know.”¹ The radio script must fit the context of the village.

Persuasive. Persuading means trying to get the people in their own way. Vivek explains that “persuading others to accept their point of view, making happen what seems best to them.”² There should be a concern to change the target audience’s lives to the truth that we have discovered. Whitehouse says that “persuasion should be done on the ground of love relation but not on argument.”³

The listening audience is made up of people of many faiths or no faith at all. When a farmer listens to the Christian program, he wants to hear something convincing. The speaker must cultivate earnestness and positiveness in addressing the people. Jesus set us an example in communicating His message. He spoke the language of the people and drew His illustration from the affairs of everyday life. Unless we bring the audience to the valley of decision, all our efforts will be in vain.

Seasonal. Sri Pal counsels: “Write the script according to the season or special event.”⁴ Farmers celebrate many festivals, as discussed in chapter 3. The festivals are

¹Ibid., 215.

²Vivek Habbal, “Writing for Radio,” Class lecture, Introduction to Radio Journalism, Pune University, May 10, 2000.

³Whitehouse, Class lecture.

⁴Pal, interview, 2000.

important because some farm activities, such as sowing or harvesting, will start immediately after the festivity. Many spiritual lectures and entertainments are arranged during festival seasons. A Christian radio message adapted to the season will have a great impact upon the farming society.

Implementation of the Strategy

The ultimate success of this strategy lies in the implementation. This part of study deals with some aspects of implementation: pilot program, selection of the participants and program contents, rehearsals, publicity, presentation, and finally follow-up.

Pilot Program

The pilot program that the researcher produced with the cooperation of the Tamil Church at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, was broadcast thrice from the Adventist World Radio Station, Guam. They were broadcast on the following dates: March 9, 16, 23, 2000.

The contents of the program were finding God through nature, the biblical understanding of health, and finally, the future crisis of this planet Earth.

The results of my pilot program were many. The listeners' letters for that month increased to 110. Twenty-one of them enrolled in the Health Correspondence Course. More than 90 requested prayer and some sent a free-will offering to our recording center at Pune.

Selection of Participants

The selection of the participants is another important factor for a successful broadcast. The right person should be selected for the appropriate part of the program, such as announcement, talk, dialogue, and different characters in the drama. “Select a person who has a good voice, articulates well, and possesses the talents required.”¹

Program Contents

1. Theme music drawn from a familiar traditional Christian song. This will help the listeners to identify the station.
 2. Opening announcement with a special welcome extended by a professional radio announcer. This announcement also introduces the special features of the day’s program, such as the story hour for children, a news item on agriculture or weather, a drama on family issues, or an interview.
 3. Special songs especially prepared for the farmers. The content of the song must connect to the theme of the rest of the program. The music must create interest in listening to the rest of the program.
 4. Following the introduction of the program, the first segment of the day’s program. A dialogue or a minidrama on a particular subject highlights a special event for the farmers. This segment must be presented in eight to ten minutes.
 5. The station identification and, if there is any, special announcements.
- Immediately after this, another special song with traditional rural music can be played.

¹Ten Tips on Taking to the Air, 50.

The selection of this song must introduce the segment which follows.

6. This part presents spiritual issues a farmer faces. Without condemning anybody's religion, it must introduce the gospel message and highlight the Savior of the world. Many presentations can be made on agriculture and conclude with a simple biblical thought. For example, if the subject is about the prosperity of the land, conclude with the life of Abraham who was blessed by the Lord.

Always conclude this segment with a special prayer for the farmers. While the prayer is being offered, a melodious devotional music can be played softly. That will leave the farmers with a sacred feeling in their heart. If anybody has written to the station with a special request for prayer, mention that and pray. This act of ministry will encourage other farmers to ask for prayers or join with the broadcasters in prayer.

7. The concluding announcement contains expression of thanks to all those who listened to the program and leaves the address to contact the station. An announcement can be made as a reminder of the next week's farm radio program.

8. Conclude the broadcast with the station theme music.

All these programs should be completed within twenty-eight minutes each. The musical segments should not go beyond three to four minutes, and the two important segments must be over in eight to ten minutes each.

There should be a common theme running throughout the program. If the program is interesting and beneficial, the response from the farmers will be sure, as the Spirit of the Lord moves them.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is important in order to keep the program within time limits. Confidence is built through rehearsal. It helps participants know their part and the order of the program. There is a general understanding in the recording studio that all participants should plan at least five minutes of rehearsal for every minute on the air. The rehearsal can be conducted well in advance, even several days ahead, in order to allow time for re-timing and rearranging as may be necessary. Rehearsal should be repeated an hour or so before recording time.

Publicity

Public announcements should be made well in advance regarding this special broadcast by radio and television. Proper publicity is needed regarding day and time. Information will prepare the farming community for this special program.

The advertisement can be made through the following church-related communication agencies: Local Union/Section News magazine, Denominational magazines, Envelopes used by VOP schools/Sections/Union/Division, Display boards at schools/hospitals/important shops or centers, distribution of cards at all levels -- schools/evangelistic meetings, inserting cards in newspapers/magazines sent out from various presses.

Advertisements could be placed in the newspapers at least four times in the month preceding the first broadcast. Much depends on the availability of funds.

Presentation

The recording of this program will be made at the Adventist World Radio Studio at Pune. It will be broadcast from the Adventist World Radio broadcasting station in Guam. The program will be recorded four times a month, but a month before the actual broadcasting time. The series is planned for one full year.

The prearrangements related to this special broadcast have been discussed in detail with the Asia Pacific Regional Director and the local director of AWR, Pune. After the completion of this dissertation, a further decision can be made about broadcasting this special program on a weekly basis for half an hour. The funds will be provided by the regional office and the Asia Pacific Region of AWR.

At the beginning, the program will air once a week, when the farmers are available at home or in the village community hall. A particular day will be chosen, such as government holiday, marketing day, or holy day (Friday, Saturday, Monday). Later on as interest grows, the number of days can be increased.

It will be appropriate to choose a time when the farmers are relaxed after returning from the field or early in the morning while they are in bed and their minds are fresh. If the program impresses them, that thought will continue throughout the day.

Follow-up

It is important to plan a systematic follow-up work for the interest created among the farming community. Some of the ways of organizing the follow-up are described below: through the Health and Bible Correspondence Courses, through personal

visitations and Bible studies, through inviting them to attend the church services and Sabbath School, and finally, through lay participation.

Radio Farm Schools

Radio Farm Schools are arranged to cater to the needs of the farmers. These are arranged for the farmers who did not listen to a program or are not clear about certain issues. It is like a correspondence school in which the local Adventist church takes an active part. The Adventist Media Centre, Pune, sends the lists of listeners' addresses to the concerned SDA church pastors, local conferences, and local unions. With the help of the church members they locate such radio listeners and study with them some of the materials provided to them by the AWR.

Some of the topics related to the farming activities, health, and spiritual issues are included. The lessons are prepared in a common language. The church members meet the farmers and study with them the above mentioned subjects, help them to write the answers, and mail them back to AWR, Pune.

The Adventist radio station should not only be known for its gospel message, but also for other subjects related to the farmers. It should function as the storehouse for spiritual and agricultural information. Lessons are prepared by the AWR producer and fit the professional, spiritual, and physical needs of the farmers. Lessons can be sent by post as per their request. After the completion of lessons, farmers should be invited where there are AWR listeners' clubs. An opportunity will be created there to meet with experts in agriculture. Immediately after the meeting, the local church pastor and the believers

will make personal contact at their respective places.

Listeners' Mail

Correspondence creates an opportunity for the minister of the gospel to communicate the gospel message to the farmers. Later on the local pastor will be introduced for further contacts. Radio clubs and the local church members will assist in corresponding with the illiterate farmers.

Lay Participation

The radio audience is large and spread all over the state. It is impossible for the radio ministers to visit listeners personally. The participation of lay church members can be a great help to meet the needs of the radio listeners. Their participation is required in promotional and correspondence tasks. Lay persons can function as representatives of Adventist World Radio and be a bridge. With the help of these people the listeners can be encouraged to visit a nearby church.

Evaluation

The evaluation process helps the program producers to understand the needs of their audience and modify their future programs. The evaluation process can be classified into three categories. "1. Context evaluation. This is an attempt to find out the background of the targeted audience. 2. Input evaluation. To evaluate the impact of radio program on rural mass. 3. Process evaluation. To understand the effects of the radio

listening.”¹

Some of the ways that need to be used for the evaluation process are:

1. Feedback from the listeners should be followed up through letter or telephone calls. Their needs can be understood by the requests made in their letters.
2. There should be regular correspondence between radio listeners' clubs. They will assist us in surveying the audience and their interests.
3. The listeners' addresses are posted to the local churches. They can venture into the field and help us in evaluating the audience response for us.
4. This evaluation can be done twice in a year just prior to the broadcast schedule changes. These changes take place at the beginning of the summer and at the beginning of autumn.

This chapter discussed various factors to be considered in designing and implementing a radio program for Tamil farmers. It also described the program planned, its implementation, and the follow-up to reach the farmers for Christ.

¹Tony Bates and John Robinson, eds., Evaluating Educational Television and Radio (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1977), 123.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This research project consists of six chapters. There were two basic ideas in developing these chapters. The first is to set a theological and cultural basis for the project and to give information about the Hindu farmers in Tamil Nadu to whom this mission strategy is focused. The second idea is to develop an appropriate media approach to reach this targeted audience.

The farmers in Tamil Nadu comprise 70 percent of the total population of the state. Their agricultural activities are still followed in a traditional manner. They still live in small villages where there is a lack of medical attention and school facilities. Changes are taking place in the village life. People are no longer interested in living in the villages. The extended family unit is breaking down. People are after money. Village solidarity is no longer found. The researcher identifies that there is a need for the rural community in order to meet the challenges of modernization.

The farmers are religious and they are caught up with the Hindu mythology. The influence of the Hindu beliefs has very much penetrated into the agricultural activities. It is noted that most of their folk beliefs and agricultural rituals, which are transmitted from

generation to generation, are irrelevant to the present.

Some of the evangelistic approaches are being carried forward to reach the Hindu farmers with a specific mission strategy, such as Farming and Industry Broadcast Program, Tamil Villages Gospel Mission, Kalai Kaviri Arts and Communication Center, Navjeevan Seva Mandal, Farms India, and finally Wonder World Mission. These missions' approach used various means as bridges to reach the farmers, such as prayer ministry, social services, agricultural information programs, and explaining the wonders of nature. They are successful in reaching the farmers, but they are a very slow process.

Finally, this research paper identifies the need for a special broadcast by the Adventist World Radio. It is justified that this approach can be successful because the radio broadcast carries the gospel messages wherever the pastors cannot go due to the attacks of the Hindu militant groups. The radio carries the gospel message faster than any other communication agencies. The farmers in Tamil Nadu can be reached faster with this special mission strategy through the Adventist World Radio.

Conclusion

This project provides an opportunity for change in the evangelistic approach in rural sectors of Tamil Nadu. Many preachers and evangelists still use the traditional methods of preaching, distributing literature, and Bible study. The Great Commission of Christ our Lord to preach the gospel to all nations can be carried out successfully in rural Tamil Nadu if radio broadcasting of programs especially suited to the farmers is implemented.

Radio broadcasts can be a vehicle to bring the gospel message to the unreached. They are an economical and appropriate way to communicate. Program production and technical operation are feasible. Air time is available.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LISTENERS

1. Do they have the habit of listening to radio programs?
2. Which part of the day they listen to the radio program?
3. The type of program they listen.
4. The reason for the selection of the program.
5. How long are they listening to that particular program?
6. Do they own a radio at home? If not, from where are they listening to the broadcast?
7. What do they benefit from listening to the radio?
8. Do they listen to one particular broadcast or to any other broadcast?
9. Are they aware of Adventist World Radio?
10. Are they listening to the Adventist World Radio regularly or casually?
11. What do they learn from listening to Adventist World Radio?
12. Do they have any talent to contribute to the Adventist World Radio?

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF 12 TOPICS AND FORMATS FOR FARMERS PROGRAM

Agriculture

1. Windbreaks protects crops and soil.

Certain places in Tamil Nadu strong winds blow. These can damage the crops and blow soil off the land, until only sand and stone are left. A barrier of trees and shrubs can help slow the wind speed and protect the fields and crops. The barrier is called a windbreak. Similarly the angels of the Lord will protect you from any harm and danger.

If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge, then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. Ps 91:9-11.

Because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation. Ps 91:14-16.

Format: Discussion between an agricultural scientist and a farmer.

2. Importance of Water.

This program explains the importance of the water for crops, cattle, and human beings. Agricultural activities are dependant upon the monsoon season. The Bible says that God is the one who causes the rain to fall on the ground. “Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:18).

Format: Talk.

3. Seed and seedlings.

Explain the importance of selecting the good seed and good ground for seedlings. Connect this with biblical thought. A man went to sow the seed (Luke 8:5). The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11).

Format: Drama.

4. Pongal, the harvest festival.

Describe the various events which make this festival season such a joyous occasion. The weeds are left in the field to be burned and the grains are taken to the storehouse. "He answered, the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the word, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels" (Matt 13:37-39).

Format: Discussion between two farmers.

Health

5. Poisonous Insecticides.

Insecticides contain chemicals that are very dangerous to the farmer's health. Therefore, give some precautions, such as using gloves to protect the hands, use a handkerchief or mask to cover the mouth. The Lord of the Bible promises: "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit says the Lord Almighty" (Mal 3:11).

Format: Discussion between an Agro Chemist and a farmer.

6. Nutritious snack.

In some villages of Tamil Nadu, people in traditional communities prepare a nutritious snack for children and adults by sprouting grains.

Format: Conversation between two village ladies. They discuss what and how to mix grains for sprouting. They show the benefits received by adding this type of food in their daily meals. The Bible explains about the spiritual bread which will satisfy us eternally. As John quotes:

Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. John 6:32-33, 35-37.

7. Cleanliness.

Roads in the village are dusty. The climate in Tamil Nadu villages is hot. Therefore, taking a bath helps us to maintain good health. The point to be focused is that not only the external body to be cleansed. But the inner soul also needs to be cleansed. That can be possible only through the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb 9:13-14; 10:22).

Format: Conversation between two village travelers.

8. Work as a blessing.

Describe the intention of the Lord for man when He placed him in the garden of Eden. Point out what causes the pain and suffering. The blessings of working can be highlighted.

Format: Real lifestyle drama.

Religion

9. The incarnation of God.

The story of Jesus' birth can be presented in a bhajan format. That is semi-dramatic style, simple songs mixed with traditional music. All religious lectures take place in that manner.

10. Resurrection of a dead man.

Dramatize the story of Lazarus and the way Jesus brought him alive from the grave (Luke 6:19-23).

Teach about life, a gift from the Lord.

Teach about death, causes of death, condition of death.

Present the hope of a resurrection.

11. Honor God and He will honor you.

Explain what it means to honor. Give an example of those who honored God and be blessed like Abraham, Joseph, etc. Quote Prov 3:9, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

Format: Discussion between a priest and a farmer or fellow farmer.

12. Prayer.

Present the importance of prayer. A real-life story can be dramatized on this aspect of prayer. The prayer of Hannah can be dramatized by a village young lady (I Sam

2:1-10).

Format: Drama.

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