

Area - 1

Community



Our Community

OBJECTIVES

1. To help learners analyse their community
2. To familiarise learners with the general situation of marine fishing communities in Tamil Nadu

Start, the discussion by asking

What are the main activities we

Encourage participants to give answers regarding all activities.
economic, social and cultural



Economic activities: Earning money through fishing, marketing fish, spending on nets and boats

Social activities : setting up families, bringing forth and rearing children, teaching and helping the young learn about life and occupation -- especially helping them know their responsibilities towards family members and towards others in the community

Cultural activities : Celebrating festivals, organizing dramas, dance shows and music programmes, organizing sports activities.

Through our occupation - fishing - We help ourselves in earning a living and we help others outside our community get a part of their food. We produce food in the form of fish, not just for ourselves but for the people in general.

Through our social and cultural activities we preserve our tradition and organize our lives in such a way that we live in harmony with others in the family and community. Fishing is an age-old occupation. We have a life-style of our own, evolved over generations.

Lead the discussion further by asking them

Identify some characteristics of ours that we are proud of.

The response may be

Characteristics that we should be proud of

- our hard and strenuous work;
- **our adventurous spirit in going out** into the vast sea;
- our concern for the lives of all fishermen at sea;
- **our solidarity in group living;**
- our sharing tendencies;
- our ability to raise common funds for maintaining temples and celebrating festivals, abiding by the rules and regulations of the panchayat, etc.

7

Is there any characteristic that we are not proud of?

Let the learners give answers voluntarily. They should not be pushed.

Some of the answers **maybe**:

Characteristics that we are not proud of

- our habit of drinking and beating up our wives and children, starving our children
- our marriage customs, especially dowry, which makes marriages difficult for the girls.

Lead the discussion further with the following questions

What do we feel about our own strengths and weaknesses ?

What is the extent of our responsibilities for our strengths and weaknesses ?

What should we do to overcome our weaknesses ?

How far is it possible for us to do so ?

We have our strengths, which are assets in building up our community. We may or may not be totally responsible for our own weaknesses. For example, there could be reasons, which are **beyond us, for** our alcoholism. And we may only be partly responsible. **To the extent** we are, we should be able to do **something** our weaknesses, by **thinking** and working together.



Who Are We ?

OBJECTIVE

To help learners understand their own ideas **of progress in life** through a historical overview of their community

Use the following questions to start discussion on the changes in the villages where the learners live.

What is the present condition of our village compared to the time when we were young ?

Have any of you **spoken to your parents, grand-parents** about their younger days as compared to the present ? What do they think about it ?

If the answers are general, such as good, bad, etc., try to raise the following specific questions

Was more food, of good quality and in sufficient **quantity, available in the past than now ?**

How healthy were the people then ?

Were people more healthy then than now ?

Was the available clothing adequate then ? And now ?

What was the condition of housing then ? And now ?

Did they have occupational problems ? How does the **present compare with the past ?**

What were the possessions of people which were valued and preserved in earlier days and what are the possessions valued by us today ? Is there a difference ?

What were their attitudes towards helping others (relatives, friends, and others who needed help) in the community and what are our attitudes today ?



These questions may elicit varied answers. Some may feel that their forefathers lived a better life than is available today, while the others may feel that their lives are better than those of their forefathers. Whatever the views, the learners could be asked to specify reasons for their views. It is possible that some learners will opt for an older lifestyle in which peace and harmony prevailed because of traditional trade practices which did not give any importance to competition.

The entire catch was shared by all the villagers as though the whole village were one single family. Those who feel that life is better today than it was in the past may do so because of the scientific progress made in contemporary times and the availability of a multitude of gadgets and machines like transistor radios, bicycles and electricity.

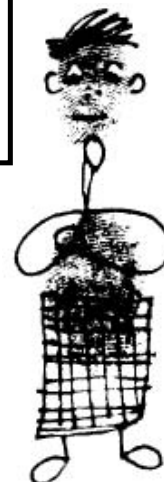
The discussion could be led further by asking

What are the essential things in life ?

What do we consider progress in life ?

What should our goal in life be ?

The answers could be anything and would reveal what these people consider as progress in life. Some may think cooperative living is important some that having stainless steel vessels is important. The issue could be left for them to reflect upon. There is no need to come to any conclusion.



People In Our Lives

OBJECTIVE

To help learners critically analyse relations with people who are closely associated with fisherfolk and to understand the meaning of those relationships in terms of the development of the village community

Start the session by passing around drawings of various men and women, figures depicting fisherfolk's family, and the people they deal with.

The animator then starts the story by saying "This is Sushila. She is 40 years old and is a fish vendor. Now, who else is there in her family?' Continue asking until you have a picture on the board showing the whole family. Continue the discussion by asking about the important people the family members deal with.

If it is a centre for women, the animator should start with the picture of a woman, and in a centre for men with the picture of a man.

Example of how the story might run;



Sushila is a 40-year-old fish vendor. Her 50-year-old husband, Raman, works in Bala-krishna's boat as one of 5 fishermen. Raman has 5 children: Anbu 11 years, Karuna 8 years, Satyan 5 years, Ammu 3 years and Dilip 10 months. And Sushila is two months pregnant.



The people who play an important role in their lives are



Shanmugam and Latha : Raman's parents, who own the house that the family lives in. Shanmugam was a fisherman himself and he helps Raman repair nets while Latha takes care of the children, the house, and the cooking sometimes, when Sushila is out selling fish.



Balakrishna : Boat owner with whom Raman has been working for a long time. He gives loans to Raman when he needs them. Raman is grateful to him for this, even though he thinks that by working on other boats he may earn more. But Balakrishna always helps out with loans.

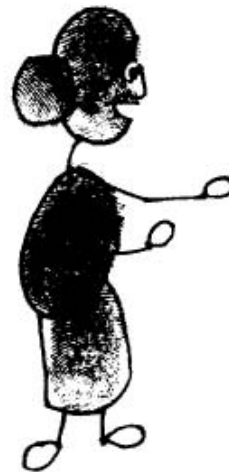


Abdul : Fish merchant. He is another person Raman borrows money from and this compels him to sell his share of fish to Abdul at the price Abdul quotes.



Sundaram : The auction man, who has been doing this trade for many years, gives quite a lot of money to the village fund. He also takes a bit too much fish from each basket.

Ramani : Wholesale fish processor in the village. Ramani is the wife of a well-to-do boatowner. Whenever there is a big landing from her husband's boat or other boats, she buys their cheap fish, dries them around her house and stores them. She then sells them to vendors like Sushila when they do not have fresh fish to sell. They buy dry fish from Ramani or 9 other well-to-do women who also wholesale dry fish. Ramani often lets Sushila take the fish first and pay her at the end of the day/trip when the fish has been sold.



Pranila : Sushila's fish vendor friend. Pranila also lives in the same village. She is younger than Shushila and has only two children, Her husband is also a coolie and works on Balakrishna's boat. Pranila has always been a good friend and gives moral support to Sushila when Sushila feels low and depressed with the family situation. Pranila, however poor she may be, lets Sushila borrow a few rupees when she does not have enough food to cook.



Manickam ; Chit man Manickam visits the village roughly every week to collect from women in the village who have taken utensils from him. He carries a big load of all kinds of kitchen utensils which look good and tempting and which he sells on instalments. Sushila and Raman bought an aluminium cooking pot from him two months ago and have still not finished paying for it. The pot is much more expensive than what can be bought at the market, but since they do not have enough money to buy utensils outright, they buy it from him. He is useful to them this way.



Kadiresan : Quack doctor. Everyone in the family and almost the whole village, goes to Kadiresan when they fall sick. Besides being a doctor, he is respected by all as he is very kind and does not ask much money when he treats the sick.



Present the story with the aid of flannelgraph pictures and allow the learners to add more characters who may play an important role in their lives. Once they complete this work, a discussion could be conducted with the following questions

Who are the different types of people with whom we come in contact in our day-to-day life ?

How do we relate to each of them ? Is it in an over-friendly, friendly, matter-of-fact, or unfriendly way ?

Can we improve our relationships with those with whom we come into contact ?

How can we improve our relationships with others ?

- (a) Do we know **their abilities** and **feelings** ?
- (b) Can we mutually help each other ? To **what extent** ?
- (c) Do we differ from each other ? To **what extent** ?
- (d) Can we **accept their abilities** and **feelings** ? Appreciate our mutual, agree-merits and differences ?
- Ce) How much **efforts** do we make in terms of a, b, c, d ?



The answers could bring out the following

- **the quality of relationships** determines the **quality of a**
- **one's relationships with others** can be improved through one's own efforts;
- efforts should be in terms of understanding what others have to offer, appreciating similarities and differences in views and attitudes, and acceptance of those as reality and identifying the extent of mutual help possible.

NOTE TO ANIMATORS

To make your aids help discuss this lesson and other lessons, please refer to the annexure at the end of this book 'Guide to make your own sketches'.

Our Dependency

OBJECTIVE

To help learners be critically aware of the situation in which they live, one of dependency on people in privileged positions

Present the following incomplete story (or any similar true story) in a way that touches the learners and ask them to complete the story

STORY



Kandan is a fisherman. Valli is his wife. They have four children. Kamala (8), Vimala (6), Anna (4) and Sivaji (2). Kandan knows nothing but fishing as it has been family's traditional occupation. He has only one old net, which he has repaired in several places. He does not own a kattumaram/boat. He works for Krishnan, an owner of five boats and a dozen good nets. Krishnan hires Kandan to fish for him. Krishnan pays wages according to the quantity of fish Kandan brings in from the sea. When the catch is brought to the shore, it is Krishnan who assesses the quantity and fixes the wages to be given. It is never more than Rs 5 per day. If Kandan is unfortunate enough not to catch good quantity of fish one day, he goes home without any wages, but occasionally with some money given as loan by Krishnan for which he will have to work the next day or in coming days. With his meagre income, Kandan is not able to feed, clothe and educate his children. His health is also not good. Valli does some coolie work, carrying headloads of fish for some auctioneers. The eldest girl helps the mother. The other children are too young to do anything. In this condition, Kandan has to attend a close relative's marriage, for which he needs money to buy a gift. From whom can he get the required money and under what conditions?

The story may be completed in a variety of ways.
Examples

Kandan could go to Krishnan and get indebted **further. The money will be given at of interest specified by Krishnan. If** Kandan does not repay in time, the further action to be taken would be decided by Krishnan. He could make Kandan a **bonded** labourer, which might worsen the quality of life of the family.

Kandan can get some money from his friends.

Kandan can get some money from community funds (if available).

Once the story is completed, lead the group to discuss the situation in their village community with the questions that follow:

How many families are there in our village like that of Kandan's ? (What proportion of families ?)

How many families are there in our village like that of Krishnan's ? (What proportion of families ?)

Who are the people (types of families) who are dependent and on whom (which types of families) are they dependent ?

Can the condition be changed ?

What are some of the measures that we could take ?

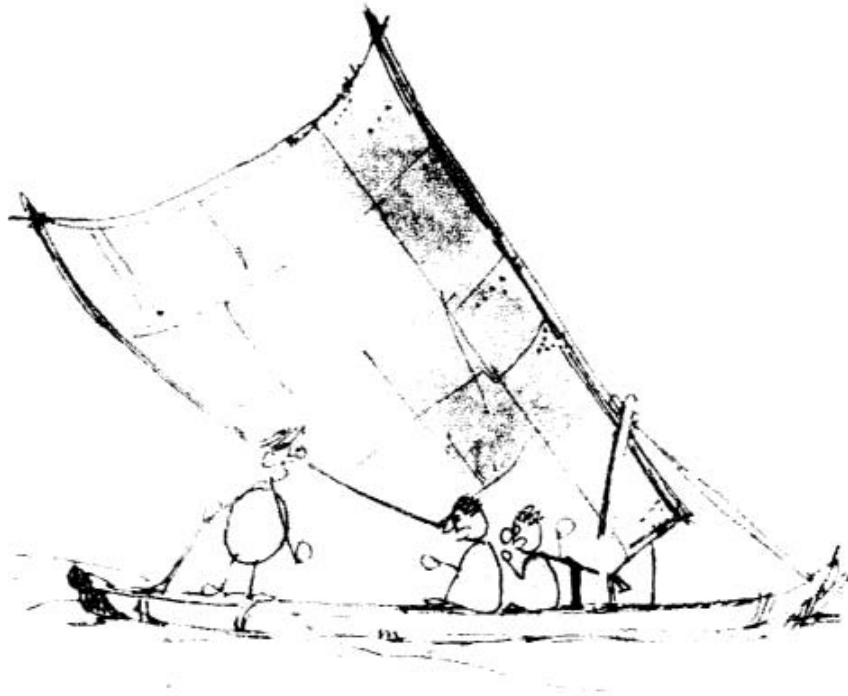
What are some of the measures that should be taken by government or any other agency ?

There could be a large number of families like that of Kandan's, and a small number of families like that of Krishnan's.

Usually Kandan-like families are always dependent

The condition is difficult to change.

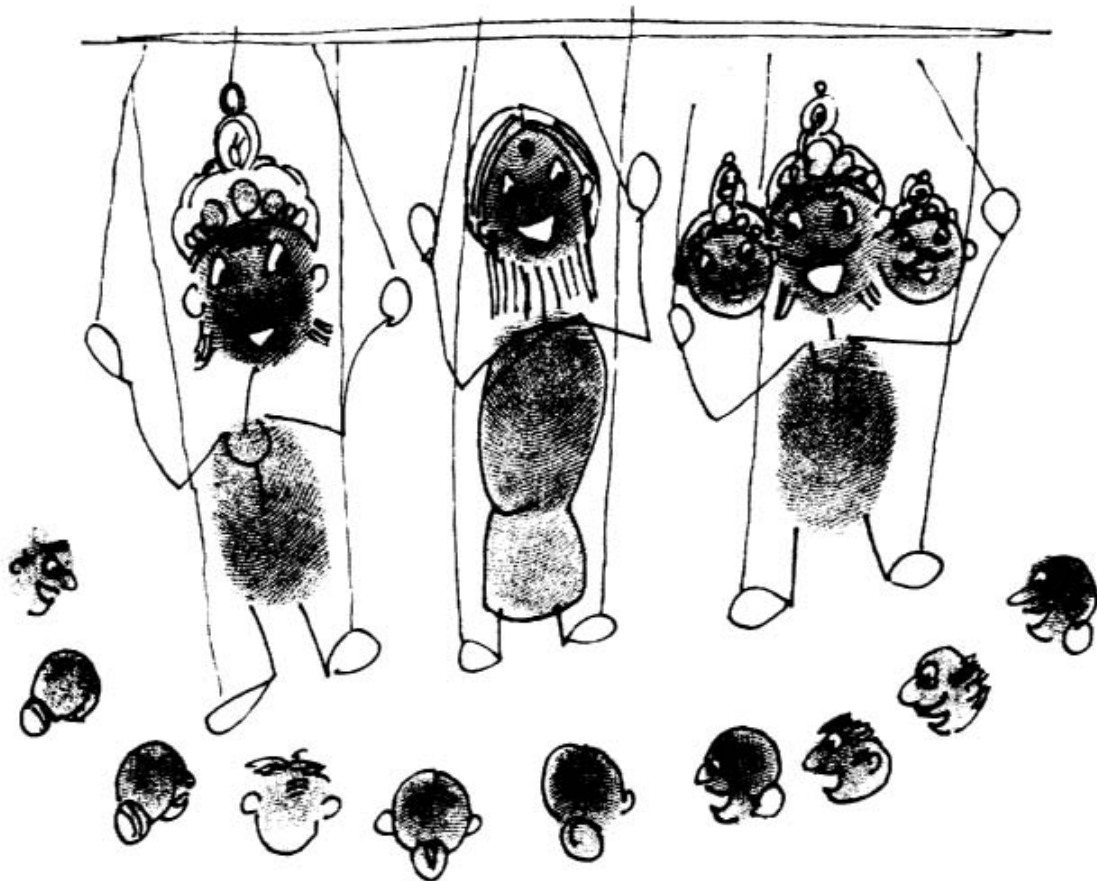
Probably, the idea that one individual cannot do anything about the situation, but together they could make some efforts by the creation of community funds through small savings, may emerge. Similarly, contacting government and other agencies to get the benefits of schemes which will improve their occupational status and thus their economic conditions may also be identified as possible actions to come out of their state of dependence on other, more advantaged, groups.



Our Potential

OBJECTIVE

To help learners recognise the qualities they have and their potential and to understand the qualities that help in keeping their solidarity and those that divide them



Parur Kuppam village is known for its temple festival in the month of Adi.* Everyone in the village starts preparing for the festival from Vaikasi.* Elumalai, Raman, Krishnan,

* Months in the Tamil year

Adi - July-August
Vaikasi - May-June

Subramani, Jayaraman are all fishermen in the village who possess extraordinary skills in identifying the time to go fishing and get a big catch whenever they go to the sea. Their adventures and catches are the talk of Parur Kuppam and neighbouring villages. Fishermen with lesser skills join them for 2 to 3 months to increase their catch and allocate a substantial portion of the catch for two months towards festival funds. Murugan, Irulappan and his friends, are good at talking to everyone in the village and help in collecting the contributions of the people for the festival.

Sundaram and his troupe, whose 'Theru Koothu' (street drama) is an important item of the festival, start their practice early. Most children and some adults find time to go and watch the rehearsal and start feeling the joy of the festival early. Kanagamma, Matsya Kanthi, Surya, Ramani are busy with Kummi and kolattam (folk dances).

The small vendors who go around the villages during festivals, start coming in to find out the mood of the people for the coming festival and to study their preferences.

The children ask for new clothes or other tidbits for the festival. They also try and collect some coins to spend during the festival.

Thus, one may list endlessly the tasks and people's individual and collective efforts to make the occasion enjoyable.

Present the story and conduct a discussion with the following questions.

- . Does this story depict the situation in our village also ?
- . What are the roles played by everyone or every group in creating an atmosphere for the festival ?
- . When and how do we create an atmosphere for the festival ?
- . What should be our attitudes in the creation of the festive atmosphere ?

Try and bring out here that the festival becomes enjoyable only when the atmosphere is one of

Mutual trust :people trust one another to carry through their own responsibilities

Sharing people in groups and individuals in a mood to help each other to move towards the goal of the festival - 'joy'

Bringing out their talents : each group bringing out their ability to collect funds, organize cultural programmes, plan and utilize the funds for various things that are necessary during the festival, decorating the temple, the home and the village.

Carry on the discussion further with the following questions

- . What are our experiences in making an unhappy situation a happy one ? What are the things that cause unhappiness and what are the things that bring about the change ?

What are our experiences of a happy situation turning into an unhappy one ? What are the things that can cause unhappiness or happiness ?

- . Can we have control over our life situations and make them happy or unhappy by our own efforts ?

Allow free discussion of the questions and help the gathering to see the underlying values of mutual trust, sharing and willing-talents for the good of

