CHAPTER - III

RESEARCH SETTING
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This study is aimed at finding out the interaction between mass communication and socio-economic development of the rural people of Kerala. Kerala's rural setting was chosen for this study due to certain reasons. It was revealed that no serious study was undertaken so far on this topic in this state though it's socio-economic and cultural climate offer a unique opportunity for tapping the potential of mass media for development.

Kerala is a geographically compact state stretching out between 8°-10° and 12°-16° North latitude and 74°-52' and 77°-22' East longitude. It is blessed with natural resources and good climate. Generally, natural calamities like cyclones, draught and flood do not disturb this state. The 530 km of sea coast of the state gives it an equable and salubrious climate.
The soil is fertile and suitable for crops which are having high demand both in domestic and world markets. The average annual rainfall is 3000 mm. Rubber, tea, coffee, pepper etc., are the main crops of the high lands and paddy and coconut those of low lands. The much wanted spices of Kerala are cultivated in the hilly high lands.

Kerala has one major and several minor sea ports. The backwaters provide excellent and cheap water transport facilities. Other modes of transport are also fairly good. A fully fledged communication network also serves the state.

The state produces plenty of hydro-electric power which has offered abundant scope for industrial development. The potential for generating further power is also high since many of the rivers are dropping their altitude suddenly.

Educational advancement, which is the propellant of development is keeping high momentum in Kerala. The literacy rate according to the 1981 statistics is 69.17% and this is 8.75% higher than that of the 1971 census figure and the highest in India.

There is a felt need for judicious utilisation of land since the population pressure on land is very high.
The population density is 654 persons/km² (1981 census). So in the case of farming, water management and soil conservation most modern practices have to be adopted.

Being a highly educated society, Kerala offers abundant opportunities for the mass media to be utilised for development. Hence a study of this phenomenon will be highly rewarding.

On a careful scrutiny of the features of different rural areas with the help of officials from the Panchayat Development and Agriculture Departments, it was found that the two areas, namely Kalthakkad and Brahmapuram of Ernakulam District would satisfy the criteria, given under chapter II, for selection of the locale for the study. Of the two, Kalthakkad was found to have more social overheads than Brahmapuram. A detailed description of the two areas is given in the ensuing paragraphs.

**Area - I : Kalthakkad**

Kalthakkad is the 8th ward of the Kunnathunad Panchayat of Ernakulam District. It comprises of an area of 2.61 km².
Population

The population of the area is 2418. Of these 1217 are above 18 years and they have voting right in the Panchayat Election. Among the voters 599 (49.22%) are women. The strength of Scheduled Caste voters comes to 184 (15.12%).

The population density is 926 persons/km². The birth rate and death rate of the area are calculated as 10 and 4 persons per thousand people respectively.

There are 639 occupied households in this area.

The population strength of the three religious groups is almost equal. Certain parts of the area are dominated by certain religious groups. However, the social relationship between the different religious groups is highly cordial.

The Economy

The economy of the area is predominantly agrarian. The isolated farmsteads and homestead farming which are specialities of Kerala rural setting are seen here.

Area Under Cultivation and Return from It

The total cultivating area is calculated as 480.80 acres and the wet-dry break-up is 136.80 acres and
344 acres respectively. The average holding has an area of 0.75 acres. The average area occupied by a household under wet and dry cultivations are 0.21 and 0.54 acres respectively.

The Christians and Hindus hold land above the average holding and they are at a greater pace on the path of development. As is the case everywhere, the Scheduled Caste Population are the poorest section. Most of them are agricultural labourers.

The main crops are paddy, coconut, arecanut, tapioca, banana, yam, ginger, pepper, betel leaf, rubber, cocoa and lemon grass.

Three-crops pattern is the usual practice in paddy cultivation here. The average annual return from one acre of paddy cultivation is estimated as Rs. 1389/-.

In the field of dry cultivation, coconut and rubber are the dominant crops. These are more profitable than paddy cultivation. People are attracted by the price rise of rubber latex and the tendency is to convert paddy fields into rubber plantations. The average per acre annual return from dry cultivation of this area comes to Rs. 1713/-.
Fertilizer use

It is estimated that on an average 89.63 kilograms of chemical fertilizers are applied to one acre of paddy cultivation in a season. The annual fertilizer application for dry cultivation is 108.38 kilograms/acre.

Agricultural Implements in Use

In this area 6 tillers, 24 sprayers, 96 pump sets and 11 rubber rollers are in use. No tractor is in use since the holdings are not very large and not amenable to tractor ploughing. Instead, 126 pairs of oxen/buffaloes are being utilized for agricultural operations.

Irrigation

The area is blessed with the main canal of the Periyar Valley Irrigation Project. The canal crosses this place length wise through the middle portion. Nearly 81.91% of the cultivable land have irrigation possibility.

Animal Husbandry

319 households are keeping local breeds of cows and 90 household have high yielding variety stocks. Ordinary variety of poultry is more appreciated by the people.
However there are 3 high yielding variety poultry farm units here.

**Accessibility to Government Agencies for Development**

The area comes under the Vadavacode Development Block and Puthencruze Agricultural Development Office. The two offices are respectively 8 km and 10 km from the study area.

**Educational Institutions**

In this area there are sufficient facilities for school education. There are 1 Lower Primary School, 1 Upper Primary School and 1 High School in the area. 650 boys and 400 girls are studying. There is one first grade Arts and Science College at a distance of 8 km from this place.

**Medical Facilities**

Eventhough there is no Government Dispensary in this locality, the 5 private clinics functioning here are sufficient to cater to the health care needs of the population. There is a Public Health Centre at a distance of 5 km from the area. Moreover, one of the institutions of advanced medical treatment in Kerala, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Medical Mission, is only 8 km away from this place.
Electrification

For reasons already stated, electrical power is available at every corner in this area.

Provisions for Drinking Water

This area is also benefiting from a rural water supply scheme of the government. There are sufficient numbers of public and private wells in this area. This area has never suffered from shortage in drinking water.

Communication and Transport

One Branch Post Office and a Public Call Office are there in the area. But a Telegraph office is lacking. Three community recreation centres and library are situated in this locality.

6 km length of asphalted road and 25 km length of rubble roads and pathways link the people of this locality together. Pattimattom is a junction situated in this ward where tarred roads connecting this area with Kolenchery, Muvattupuzha, Perumbavoor and Alwaye directly cross each other. 15 buses ply through this area connecting it to the above places. Kalthakkad is 20 km away from the National High Way and 25 km from Cochin Corporation where the District Head Quarters is located.
Banking and credit Facilities

There is one co-operative credit society to finance the agricultural credit needs of the population. A branch of the Ernakulam District Co-operative Bank is also situated in this place.

Shops and Market

Pattimattom which is situated in the Kaithakkad ward, is a place from where the people can get all commodities which are available in urban centres. A number of shops which are outlets of necessary and luxury goods have been functioning here. A well developed market is also there in this place where people can sell or exchange their produces.

Mass Media Exposure

One Cinema theatre is functioning in this ward. 156 households are subscribers of Malayalam Dailies. The Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Kerala Kaumudi, Desabhimani and Chandrika are the newspapers available here. 246 households have radio receiving sets.

AREA - II : BRAHMAPURAM

Brahmapuram is ward number 5 of the Vadavucode Puthencruz Panchayat and it is situated South-West of
Kaithakkad. This area spreads out in 3.69 km². The distance between the two study areas is 8 km.

Population

The population of the area is 2365. Of this, 1997 persons have voting right in the Panchayat Election. 48.15% of the voters are women and 19.73% are Scheduled Caste members.

The density of the population of the area is 641 persons/km². The birth and death rates are respectively 6.77 and 2.96 persons per thousand population.

There are 614 occupied households in the area.

The population of the three religious groups in the area is almost equal. By and large, people have secular outlook. The religious groups are clustered in certain areas.

The Economy

Agriculture is a main vacation of the people. Many people also have other occupations.

The Hindus and Christians are dominant in the economy of the area. They hold land far beyond the average holding. Also, the more fertile land is in the possession of these communities. As in other parts of Kerala, the
Scheduled Caste members are the weakest section and majority of them earn their livelihood through daily wages.

Area Under Cultivation and Return From It

The total land under cultivation comes to 584.6 acres. Of these, 113.90 acres are under wet cultivation and 470 acres are under dry cultivation. The average area available for wet cultivation per household is 0.19 acres and that for dry cultivation is 0.77 acres. The average cultivable land at the disposal of a household (both types) comes to 0.96 acres.

Since the two areas are close to each other, the main crops are the same.

Paddy cultivation is a gambling here due to the presence of salt water and chemical wastes from the neighbouring chemical factory, the F.A.C.T. (Cochin Division). Two crops cultivation is the usual pattern. At certain times only one crop may be possible. The average annual return from an acre of paddy cultivation is Rs. 443.75/-.

Here also the people are more interested in commercial crops such as rubber and coconut. The average per acre annual return from the cash crops is estimated as Rs. 790/-. 
Fertilizer Use

The application of fertilizer is also comparatively low in this area. For paddy 42.63 kg/acre are applied on average in one season. It is slightly higher in the case of dry cultivation. (45.75 kg/acre/annum).

Agricultural Implements in Use

No tractor is in operation in this area. However 3 tillers, 12 sprayers, 30 pumpsets and 4 rubber rollers are in use here. There are 65 pairs of oxen/buffaloes in use for agricultural purposes.

Irrigation

The irrigation facilities are deplorably low. The land is therefore generally dry and not fertile. Only 19.48% of the land is under irrigation. Water and air are polluted here due to the presence of the F.A.C.T. and a Carbon factory in the neighbourhood of the locality.

Animal Husbandry

214 households are keeping local breeds of cows and 34 are keeping high yielding variety stocks. Two units of poultry farms are also there in this locality. Local breeds are being kept in almost all households.
Accessibility to Government Agencies for Development

This area is also within the jurisdiction of the Vadavucode Block and Puthencruze Agricultural Development Office. The former is 20 km away from this place and the latter 10 km.

Educational Institutions

There are 1 lower primary school and 1 upper primary school situated in this locality. For higher education the people have to send their children beyond 20 km.

Medical facilities

Practically there is no medical facility within this area. For getting the service of even a private medical practitioner people have to go to Karimughal which is a place at the periphery of the locality. The nearest Public Health Centre is at a distance of 12 km. Within a radius of 20 km there is no facility for advanced medical treatment.

Electrification

Electricity is available at every place in this area.
Provisions for Drinking Water

The people are benefiting from a rural water supply scheme maintained by the panchayat. Public and private wells are also catering to the drinking water needs of this area. However, during summer seasons shortage in drinking water in certain elevated portions of this locality is a regular feature. The weaker sections suffer more by the water scarcity since they are dwelling in these places.

Communication and Transport

In this area there is a Branch Post Office. There are no Public Call and Telegraph Offices. One community receiving set is located in this area. A library with 500 Malayalam books is also functioning here.

In this area there is 5 km length of tarred road. The length of village roads and pathways comes to 20 km. 3 buses are plying on this 5 km length of tarred road, connecting this area with Ernakulam, the District Head Quarters, 25 km away. The National Highway also is 20 km away from this place.

Banking and Credit facilities

There is no co-operative institution or commercial bank in this place.
Shops and Market

In Brahmapuram there are are only very few shops and they too are functioning in dilapidated buildings or temporary sheds. These shops are mainly meant for the weaker sections as they can satisfy only the bare consumption requirements. The total capital investment of none of these scattered shops will exceed Rs500/-. A market is also lacking in this area.

Mass Media Exposure

No movie house is operating in the area. 150 households are subscribers of Malayalam dailies. The Dailies which are in circulation in Kaithakkad are available here also. 286 families possess radio receiving sets.

This analysis of the social overheads indicates that Kaithakkad is more developed than Brahmapuram.