

# A musical connection!

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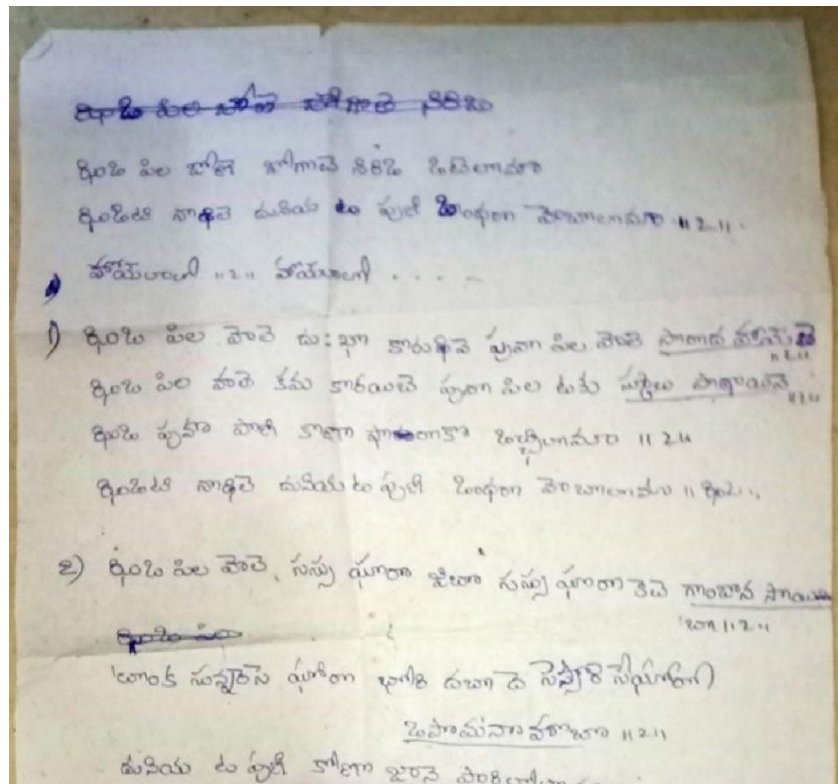
The story of this song filled with corrections and cross-outs is from 2002.

As a newcomer to the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project (APRPRP), the first thing we as community coordinators needed to do was to identify the poor. Since the project was aimed for poor people, we had also been given training in participatory identification of poor (PIP) process which facilitates the poor to become partners through participatory methods and enables them to identify the poor and the poorest of the poor in their villages.

The main task you need to do in this process is to bring as many people as possible in a village together at one place. This community mobilization wasn't an easy thing to do.

We had to meet the village elders and Panchayat members and tell them the date, time and place where we were planning to mobilize

the people and ask them for their support. In addition to that, as we had no other work till we mobilized them and did PIP, we used to go around the village and tell everyone we met about the meeting. Usually, we used to start this work after the whole village had finished dinner and was getting ready to sleep. Because that time was the only convenient time for most of them. However much we tell them all day, it was natural for people who are tired from working all day long to dislike coming to such meetings at that time. During such situations, the most useful tool for us was song. As our project had recognized the importance of songs in community mobilization, they provided all of us with a multi-purpose device that included a tape recorder,



radio, and emergency light. We used to do this PIP process as a group. It was not something that can be done single-handedly.

Every team had a member or two who sang really well. With the support of Panchayat members, we used to arrange for a mic set. At the appointed time of the meeting, when we used to start singing songs, one by one the whole village used to come. If somebody with a voice like mine were to sing a song, there was great chance that people would run away instead of coming to the meeting, so we also used to take audio cassettes with us. Even after forming Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their village federations, we used to start SHGs' meetings with a prayer songs like "జీవితాన వెలుగుందని నమ్మకాన్ని పెంచుదాం. స్వర్గమన్నదెక్కడున్న నేల పైకి దించుదాం" (Let us increase our belief that there is light in life. Let us bring heaven down within our reach). To encourage women join the groups and to make them save at least RS 30 per month, we used to sing a song that was easily understandable by them and was fun and attractive as well — "రోజుకొక్క రూపాయి దాచుకోమంటేనూ దాచను పొమ్మంది మా వదిన, భలే డాబుసరిగుంటాది మా వదిన" (When I said save a rupee per day, my sister-in-law get lost. Oh! She is very pompous, my sister-in-law). Whether it was a meeting, a training, or anything, songs had a major role to play in them. Those songs used to make us forget our tiredness of working till midnight and gave us some excitement.

The text in the photo I attached along with this post is illegible, right? It is an Odiya song. I had written in one of my earlier posts that I had gone to Srikakulam for a 15-day induction programme after joining the project. The villages that I had stayed at that time were all Odisha bordering villages. Most of the people there speak Odiya. The schools also taught in Odiya medium.

Grace, the community coordinator, held a village organization meeting at night in a village I went to. To me that fieldwork, that area, those people were all completely new. I was new to the women there. We were all feeling shy and didn't speak to each other. Observing our situation, Grace called one of the women and asked her to sing a song. This was the song that was sung by that woman in Odiya. I noticed some of the women wiping their eyes with a sigh while she was singing and asked them what was the meaning of the song. She stated that the song was also in Telugu and began singing a few lines— "ఆడపిల్లంటేనే లోకాన అలుసై పోయినమ్మా..అడోళ్ళు లేకుంటే లోకమేడుందని అడుగమ్మా" (Women are belittled by the world, but ask them where would the world have been if not for women). As we were all women, we all began to connect to the song. Everyone had tears in their eyes. I liked that song a lot, so I asked them to sing it again so that I could write it down. Those who knew the song sang it and stop after each line so that I could copy it down in Telugu. Those who could read corrected me when I wrote something wrong (this is the reason for so many cross-outs and strikethroughs :))

Some others also explain to me the meaning of the words in Telugu. All the people hadn't spoken till then became friends all thanks to a song.

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