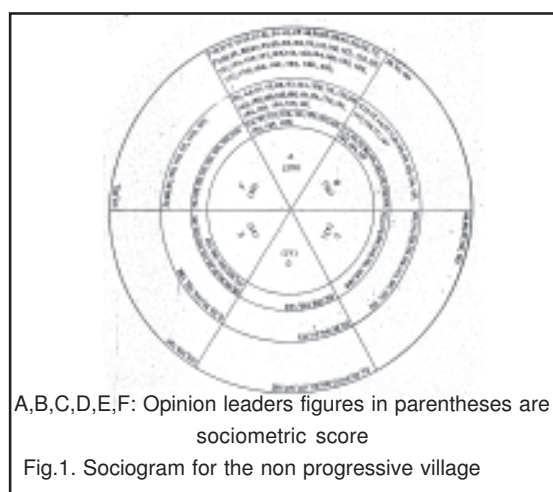


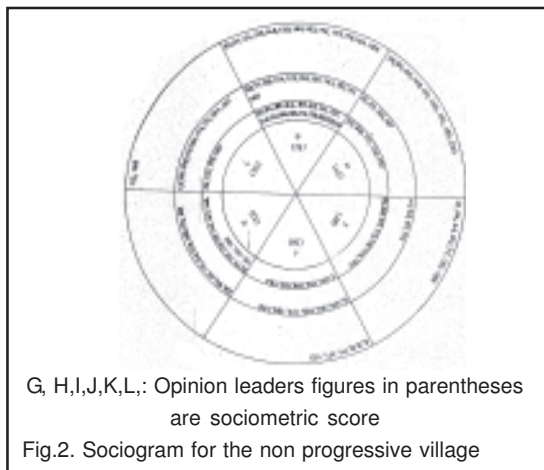
A Study On Identification of Farm Opinion Leaders in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh*

Transferring the relevant technologies is the main job of extension personnel. But due to less number of extension personnel, the farm opinion leaders have to play a vital role in dissemination of agricultural information among their followers and other farmers and in a way, are responsible for bringing desirable changes in the community for its overall development. In this context, a need was felt to identify the opinion leaders at the village level. Keeping in view the above aspects, the present study was conducted to identify the opinion leaders as perceived by followers and to study the personnel, socio economic and psychological characteristics of opinion leaders. The present study was conducted in purposively selected Bapatla mandal of Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, during 1998-99. Out of 20 villages in Bapatla mandal, two villages namely Murukondapadu and Bhartipudi were selected based on the parameters of progressiveness and the villages were termed as progressive and non progressive villages, respectively. In the present study, socio metric method was followed in order to identify the opinion leaders. Two hundred farmers were selected randomly as the respondents for the socio metric analysis from the two villages. Then the respondents were interviewed with the help of a questionnaire to identify the farm opinion leaders. The socio metric question designed was whom do you approach in your village for agricultural information?: Name three persons in the order of preference. The information, thus collected was used to construct the socio metric matrix for each village. The socio metric score was obtained by quantifying the obtained choices by giving a weighted score of 3,2 and 1 for the first, second and third choices 5% individual in each village were then arranged in the descending order based their score value. It was decided to select all those farmers who obtained an arbitrary total socio metric score of thirty or above as farm opinion leaders. Accordingly, 6 from each village who obtained the sociometric score of

thirty or above were selected and designated as "farm opinion leader". Then they were interviewed with the help of another interview schedule to study their personal, socio economic and psychological characteristics. The data collected was analyzed, using only simple statistical tools, percentage and frequency. Sociogram for non progressive village (Fig. 1) showed the opinion leaders and their respective socio metric scores as well as the number of respondents who participated in sociometry and identified six leaders according to preference. The sociogram reveals that the "sociometric scores" obtained by these 6 opinion leaders happened to be : 318, 54, 42, 41, 35, and 30, respectively. That gave an indication about the wide difference between two extremes: the highest and the lowest obtained scores being 318 and 30. On the other hand "sociogram" meant for progressive village (Fig. 2) revealed that the "socio metric scores" obtained by the 60 opinion leaders as selected by them (the followers) happened to be : 79,40,39,38,33 and 30 by these 6 leaders, respectively. Sociogram for non progressive village (fig 1) revealed that the opinion leader 'A' was clearly marked by disproportionately greater socio metric score (318) than the other five opinion leaders (B,C, D,E,F) in this village. In the case of



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progressive village, it was found through the "sociogram" that the opinion leader 'G' was having a sociometric score of 79 followed by other leaders H, I, J, K, L (Fig 2). The above findings are in conformity with the findings of Van den Ban (1961) and Bhaskaran (1976). The plausible reasons for this attribute might be that opinion leadership has to be regarded as matter of degree rather than a dichotomy of leaders and followers. Again, it may be noted that the exact degree of concentration of opinion leadership depends partly on the socio metric choices allowed as well as upon the concerned social system's norms. There are certainly variations in the concentration of opinion leadership from one social system to another, just as the concentration of wealth varies for community too community. In the non progressive village, the opinion leader 'A' got the highest sociometric score of 318 as compared to other opinion leaders. The difference between the socio metric score of 'A' and others is too much in this village. Lack of interaction with others, lack of awareness, poor socio economic background,

having faith in only one man's words, etc. might have contributed towards this wide margin of difference, in terms of "sociometric score" in the non progressive village, most of the respondents were unanimous of the opinion that leader 'A' is the knowledgeable person in the village. In the non progressive village, 50 per cent each of opinion leaders had middle and high school levels of education. In the progressive village, majority of the opinion lead (83.33%) were educated up to high school. Majority of the opinion leaders (83.33%) in non progressive village 50% each of opinion leader belonged to medium and high categories to village and cent per cent in the progressive village had high level of participation in formal organizations. All the opinion leaders in non progressive village had medium level of mass media participation. In progressive village, majority (83.33%) had high level of innovative proneness and in the progressive village, all opinion leaders had high level of innovative proneness. In non progressive economic motivation. Majority of the opinion leaders in non progressive village (83.33%) had medium level of risk preference and in the progressive village, cent per cent had high risk preference. The differences in opinion leaders' characteristics, the socio economic background of leaders and their village atmosphere also contributed for these differences. It may be concluded from the study that developing countries like ours, where literacy is low and other mass media are less developed, farm opinion leaders assume much more crucial role in transfer of technologies for the development of rural community. The results of the study might help the extension personnel in future to locate right persons as opinion leaders and to design a suitable extension strategy for proper use of opinion leaders for effective transfer of technology.

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