

Inequality of Higher Education on Narikoravar Community in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu: Social Exclusion Perspective

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Abstract: *Indian society is characterized by a high degree of structural inequality based upon the organization of people into caste and ethnic groups. The caste system is highly exclusionary in nature: exclusion is integral to the system and thus, a consequence of its basic features. Social exclusion between caste groups is ensured through the practices of endogamy and social separation. Indian democracy was essentially an upper caste democracy. Though the SC/STs were given reservation in the electoral, educational and employment spheres, they were relegated to the margins. SC/ST reservation was seen as a mechanism to overcome untouchability and tribalism. It did not address the caste system and it was not linked to the modern notion of social justice. Protected by the constitution, these minorities are still suffering discriminations and stay excluded of the dominant Hindu society. Educational performances of Tamil Nadu are often better than those of other states. Since 2010, in order to implement the Indian legislation (free and compulsory school education for all children aged 6 to 14 years), Tamil government builds educative structures that are still lacking in the country villages. It also pledged to improve the quality of all levels of education. Despite such resolutions and reforms, challenges remain current: a lack of teachers training, gender disparities in professional teams, high dropout students from pre-school. Poverty is widespread, the illiteracy rate is high and most families live in government housing built during the 1970s. overcrowding is a problem in the community as there is not enough housing for everyone and families of 8 to 12 people often share these decrepit two-room houses, sleeping on the floor or outside under a mosquito net. One key hindrance to community development is social exclusion. Although the traditional Hindu caste system was outlawed in India, the Narikoravar still experience discrimination from others, often more powerful groups, who reflect, reinforce and enforce social attitudes and values which have continued to exist in spite of legislative changes. The Narikoravar education and welfare society, or news, is tackling social exclusion by inspiring tribes people to challenge the status-quo, raise their aspirations and access services which will improve the welfare of the community, by targeting health and education. (Gabriele Alex, 2009)*

Keywords: Inequality, Higher Education, Social Exclusion, Disparities, Narikoravar and Untouchability

1. Introduction

The Narikoravar are thought to have migrated around 400 years ago from northern India to the south; their language (*Vagriboli*) indicates a Gujarati origin. Until a few decades ago, they were vagrant; groups of a few families would wander on more or less fixed routes, living through hunting, fortune telling, and selling medicines or other items. After independence, they were given small plots and houses in newly constructed settlements called colonies due to the revision of Indian settlement policies. Today, there are around 900 so called Narikoravar colonies in Tamil Nadu, ranging from 20 to 400 houses in size. The Narikoravar are organized into a clan system, with two principal clans between which women are exchanged. These two clans are the *gajarato* and *mevado*, the latter being characterized by the sacrifice of goats and the former by the sacrifice of buffaloes. Each family possesses a goddess in the form of a little silver statue, to whom sacrifices are to be made regularly. Whereas Tamil people locate themselves socially and spiritually with reference to their *ur*, the 'earth' or 'soil' they come from the Narikoravar stress no such connection. Instead, they acquire identity and structure relationships between individuals and groups through their position within the kinship and clan system. Internally, Narikoravar society is divided into a number of hierarchically ordered matrilineal exogamous clans, which stand in a fixed relation-

ship to each other and are unevenly distributed over Tamil Nadu. Inter-colony relations are chiefly established through long standing perpetuated marriage relations, supplemented by political and economic activity. Geographical proximity, on the other hand, does not necessarily lead to such cooperation or intermarriage.

Narikoravar are often depicted as sexually active and also promiscuous, which partly has to do with their use of 'obscene' words, when they mock their counterparts, but also with the different way Narikoravar men and women interact with each other. In fact, sexuality is very much monitored and controlled by the community and by the goddesses, and especially pre- and extra-marital sexual relations (by men and women), is seen to result in diseases and misfortunes. In times of illness and distress Narikoravar use the public health institutions as well as their own available medicines or those of the neighboring communities. Many health problems, especially those related to reproduction, are however explained in reference to the breaching of rules.¹

The Narikoravar community is known as the gypsies of Tamil Nadu. Nomadic in nature, the community's temporary settlements are found all over Tamil Nadu. However, settlements are concentrated in the northern and central districts of Tamil Nadu. Living as hunters and gatherers, the

Narikoravar are also known for skills with basketry, fortune telling and making of bead necklaces. Highly disadvantaged due to the peculiarities of their language, nomadic and abject poverty, the community has suffered continuously from negative representations in the popular media and television. Government efforts to house them permanently in one or two settlements have failed miserably. Missionaries and other charities working with this community have educated a few members. Those that have received collegiate education rarely return to work for the development of the community. Ethnographic studies of this community reveal the immense ecological and medicinal knowledge that the community's elders possess. Community leaders agree that establishing a digital community archive would enhance the community's ability to access its own rich oral traditions and knowledge and help improve its relations with the outside world. These frontier migrants who settled in the Tamil region several centuries ago possess rich "ecological wisdom". As knowledge is the community's stock-in trade, a digital community archive for the Narikoravars would seek to gain a closer approximation of their perception towards empowerment and self-development. Though Narikoravars were essentially hunters and gatherers for the past several decades, now they have taken up different economic options. Though their occupations have diversified, they still exhibit the characteristics of a nomadic way of life. Their primary occupations include hunting and gathering, sale of spurious jackal teeth, hawking varieties of needles and glass beads, advocating and selling herbs and medicines, tattooing and begging. They also do a variety of subsidiary occupations that include selling various types of traps and nets, selling feathers of peacocks and other rare birds, trapping rats in paddy fields on contract, agricultural labour, purchase and sale of fowl and fishing. For the establishment of this archive, Culture, The archive has been set up at the Ashakulam settlement in Villupuram district. Gabriele Alex,

2. Conceptual Framework

As nomadic tribe Narikoravar community shift from place to place in groups, advantages to the occupation. They love to eat non vegetarian food especially birds and animals of the forest. They further earn their livelihood by hawking needles and glass beads. They sell fox horns and teeth known as "Narikombu" and "Naripallu" which would fetch good luck to the buyers. The men go for hunting and with licensed guns. They catch pries and cook being served in a large wooden plate from which all the members of the joint family eat. The dress habits, food habits, way of life of Narikoravar community in Tamil Nadu are different from the main stream communities, distinguishing and even discriminating. An estimated 9000 children from Narikoravar whole community are in situations of either school drop-out or non-schooling. Among them most of the young adults got married at their young ages, and are employed. We recommend an option of availing valuable land wherein Residential School infrastructure could be made available and the portion of land could be used for raising food crops in organic methods. By doing so, the action will also sensitize and cultivate environmental conservation thinking on the children of Narikoravar community. As the Tamil community transforms itself into every aspects of modernity, still the progressive political

parties, those social organizations which are interested in social change/transformation have so far not addressed any of the Narikoravars issues on the social, political front. The irony is that they have not been enrolled in the electoral roll by the State Election Commission or Election Commission of India and even their participation in Enumeration through National Census Population has not been dealt fairly. Moreover, Narikoravar community has been placed in the list of Most Backward Castes by the Government of Tamil Nadu viz.

3. Statement of the Problem

Narikoravar community peoples spacing to the lot of problems in our daily life the discrimination is one of the major issues. As they are well known socially excluded community, because their cultural tradition they are not able to consolidate themselves in the Identity politics to demand their basic rights. The Narikoravar community has been consistently humiliated on the screen and in the social reality. Often they are booked in the theft cases, smuggling and other non-boilable cases by the police. The state Government which is a delivering source of justice, equality and fairness to every individual and community miserably failed to hear their problems. There is no social movement to awake them for getting benefits from the modern social, political and economic institutions. Education is one of the most challenging issues for them that they have no access to the institution which needs a social, economic and geographical/demographical identity or evidence. So, this research is intended to explore the untold social reality through properly structured evidence as materials, and ethnography as one of the approaches and methods to reveal the social condition of the Narikoravar Community. The social exclusion perspective would be the most relevant one to understand the forms of exclusion, discrimination and humiliation done to the Narikoravar in the spheres of Social, political, Educational and Employment. There is no research studies conducted in this perspective. With a view to fulfill the research gap, the researcher would like to conduct a study with the following objectives:

Objectives

- 1) To study understand the Narikoravar community child education
- 2) To find out the problems faced on school specialty in residential area
- 3) To analyses their economic activities of Narikoravar (Gypsy) with indigenous conduct with civil society;

4. Significant of the Study

Narikoravar community is facing lot of problems at their day to day life. The discrimination is one of the major issues. They are well known socially excluded community, because their cultural tradition they are not able to consolidate themselves in the identity politics to demand their basic rights. The Narikoravar community has been consistently humiliated on the screen and in the social reality. Often they are booked in the theft cases, smuggling and other non-bailable cases by the police. The state Government which is a delivering source of justice, equality and fairness to every individual and community miserably failed to hear their

problems. There is no social movement to awake them for getting benefits from the modern social, political and economic institutions. Education is one of the most challenging issues for them that they have no access to the institution which needs a social, economic and geographical/demographical identity or evidence. So, this research is intended to explore the untold social reality through properly structured evidence as materials, and ethnography as one of the approaches and methods to reveal the social condition of the Narikoravar Community. The social exclusion perspective would be the most relevant one to understand the forms of exclusion, discrimination and humiliation done to the Narikoravar in the spheres of Social, political, Educational and Employment life. (Narikoravar granted Scheduled Tribes status, 2013)

Selection of the Study Area

From the 4villages the researcher had chosen Asakulam as sample village to study about the problem of Narikoravar which was more excluded from the civil society and also convenient to the researcher to conduct a research. **In the village there were 300 houses and 425 families** were living. The researched has visited each households were provided relating to the women who got married below the legal age of marriage. Through such pilot study. The researcher could understand that the Narikoravar Community problem based by child education which is one of the tribal communities living in this district in various hill stations.

Research Design

Since, this research is a pioneerone on social exclusion perspective towards Narikoravar community. The researcher used an explorative research design to explore the exclusion problem of community people education which is going to be studies.

Tools of data collection

After The pretest the well-structured interview schedule was applied to collected primary data from 100 respondents.

Sampling method

The proposed study applied with simple random sampling procedure to collect primary data from the universe in my research study. This type of sampling is also known as probability sampling where each and every item in the population was given equal chances of inclusion in the sample method. These Researcher collected data based on total number of household's i.e.300 and families i.e. 425.

Universe

The universe consists ofboth male and female employed from the selected segments from the Asakulam settlement of villupuram District, Tamil Nadu i.e. 425.

Primary Data

For this research the researcher collected both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected with the help of well-structured interview schedule after the pre-test was over. The tool of data collection was included with the following components of Narikoravar community (gypsy) such as socio-economic background, family composition, livelihood options, health problems faced by women,

knowledge on early marriage and its consequences, traditional practices over the marriage etc.

Secondary Data

The secondary data was collected from various sources such as, journals, newspaper, books, theses, monographic and other non-published research articles. The secondary data were collected mainly through published works form books, journals, newspaper, internet resources etc., The investigator made use of secondary data in order to understand literature review with respect to the topic she had chosen for the research Study. Through this secondary data she conducted study and extract that information from this data which was significant for the research study. From these published works, the researcher was able to theoretically understand the research problem engaged with, and she was able to draw on the concepts which were relevant for his study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was tabulated and statistically analyzed by using SPSS software. Quantitative data was interpreted based on the information collected from the field.

Distribution of the Respondents by their Educational Status

School education is crucial in all global approaches of development and harmony of societies (Buisson, 2009). Education rights and equal access to school structures for all children are in the foreground of priorities of the government of the republic of India. However, disparities between states and union territories stay significant. Despite political efforts, the Universalization of literacy and schooling is hindered by several difficulties, including social and cultural background. Among them, the school integration of children of ethnic and nomadic minorities remains an important problematic. Protected by the constitution, these minorities are still suffering discriminations and stay excluded of the dominant Hindu society. Educational performances of Tamil Nadu are often better than those of other states. Its literacy rate is one of the highest in the country . Since 2010, in order to implement the Indian legislation (free and compulsory school education for all children aged 6 to 14 years), Tamil government builds educative structures that are still lacking in the country villages. It also pledged to improve the quality of all levels of education. Despite such resolutions and reforms, challenges remain current: a lack of teachers training, gender disparities in professional teams, high dropout students from pre-school.

Implementation of different tribal sub plans doesn't solve all the problems of access to the public or private schools for many ethnic, social and cultural minority communities. This is the focus of the research we conducted. Our study is an empirical analysis based on the immersion of a researcher, during three months, within the institution called "apres school". This was founded in 2009 by a French association, with the official support from the Tamil department of education. "Après School" aims at fostering the educational integration of children of the Narikoravar community, a nomadic tribe. It also welcomes children from the neighboring village, who belong to the poorest strata of the population. Participant observation allows us to analyze

administrative, pedagogical and psychosocial functioning of the school, to evaluate its strengths and its weaknesses.

[4] Gabriele Alex, (2009) folk healing and the negotiation of shifting social identities in Tamil Nadu, India, (MMG Working Papers Print) pp.11,12.

Distribution of the Respondents by their Educational Status

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by their Educational Status

Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	79	79.0
Primary Education	10	10.0
Middle School	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table explains that the majority 79% of the respondents did not have any educational qualification, followed by that only 11% and 10% of them attained education up to middle school and primary school level. It is inferred that the majority 79% of the Respondents did not show interest to have at least basic/primary education due to their family settlement and occupation.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Family Members Educational Status

Educational Status	No. of Family Members
Illiterate	195
Primary School	125
Middle School	105
Total	425

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table indicates about the educational status of the family members of the respondents. Out of 425 of the family members, the majority 195 of them were illiterates did not go to school at their life; 125 of them attained education upto primary level and; 105 of the family members from 100 respondents were attained education upto middle school level. The inference drawn from this table is that the majority 195 of the family members of the respondents were illiterates. (Gabriele Alex, 2009)

5. Conclusion

The Narikoravar also pursue a quest for identity, in this case a “tribal” identity, on a different social level in their efforts to gain the recognition of a Scheduled Tribe by the Indian Central government, a recognition which would guarantee them schemes of financial support and many other state distributed benefits. In this quest the historical representations described above are taken up and refined, in order to prove a truly tribal status.

References

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