

# A Study on Socio Economic Condition of Narikoravar Community in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract:** *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. For the establishment of this archive, Culture, The archive has been set up at the Ashakulam settlement in Villupuram district. (Suresh Sharma)*

**Keywords:** Narikoravar, Ethnographic, Community Poverty, Gypsies hunting and Traditions Knowledge

## 1. Introduction

In India we have achieved significant progress in the field of Economic condition. In spite of that we have deprived communities like the Narikoravar in Tamil Nadu, who are struggling for their rights to lead a socially enriched life with education, economics and social wellbeing. We should take up the responsibility to uplift them to an empowered status in the society. This article aims to shed light on the life style of the Narikoravar community residing at Asakulam, Villupuram District, and Tamil Nadu.

### 1.1 Population and Place of Living

A considerable Village of 4 Narikoravar community is living in Villupuram district. Aasakulam is named after the former collector of Villupuram District who helped build 300 houses during the year 2016. Asakulam is a non-descript place located 1 km away from the district capital of Villupuram. Interestingly, Asakulam is inhabited exclusively by the Narikoravar community. Currently there are 300 houses and about 425 families living there for about 30 years, out of which 425 family members are children. It is believed that their ancestors migrated to Tamil Nadu from Gujarat and Rajasthan. They are living in very old and almost ruined houses built by the government about 14 years ago. Some of these are in small shanties. Neither the damaged houses nor the shanties save them from the scorching sun or torrential

rains. The pitiable condition is that they are living together with families of their married children in a single roomed house the government has proposed to build new houses for them through the Narikoravar welfare board. Most of them are having ration card and voter ID.

### 1.2 Economic Status

In earlier days, the main source of income for these people was hunting. They lost their livelihood after the Forest Department introduced districts regulations and levied hefty fine for Hunting. Currently the economic status of Narikoravar in Asakulam is such that they cannot satisfy even their basic needs through family occupation of selling beaded ornaments. They purchase the raw materials such as beads from Madurai, prepare ornaments and go to public places like temples, bus stand, festival areas etc. to find a market. Unmindful of their poor economic condition; they spend a lot for rituals and ceremonies. As their earnings cannot fully fill their needs, they are borrowing money from money lenders and repayment becomes a great burden for these people. They remain in persistent debt-bondage for longer period and are unable to pay off their loans for generations. This adversely affects their social, cultural, economic and educational status.

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## 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 fulfil the research gap, the researcher would like to conduct a study with the following objectives:

### Objectives

- 1) To study understand the Narikoravar community Economic perspective.
- 2) To find out the problems faced on beads specialty in residential area
- 3) To analyses their economic activities of Narikoravar (Gypsy) with indigenou conduct with civil society;

### 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-billable 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. (Beteille).

### 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 pioneer one 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 pre-test 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. (Vijayathilakan,J.P)

**Universe**

The universe consists of both 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.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 "après 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 neighbouring 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. (Normal Kumar Bose)

**Distribution of the Respondents by their Economic Status**

**Table 1.1:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Female	54	54.0
Male	46	46.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Computed from primary data*

The table 4.1 reports the distribution of the revels about the gender-wise distribution of the respondents from Narikoravar community out of 100 respondents the majority 54 per cent of them was female and 46 of them were male. During the time of data collection the male members were gone out from their settlement to earn for their family livelihood. The women were not going out without permission of the male yielders of the family. It is inferred that the majority 54 per cent of the respondents were involved in household activities in addition to make beads garlands.

**Table 1.2:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Occupational Status

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hunting	22	22.0
Selling Bells	78	78.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Computed from primary data*

The above the table reveals about the occupation particulars so the responded. Out of 100 responded, the majority 78% of them were involving in selling bells. And making beads garlands the remaining 22%preparing me dowels of them were involving in hunting on from various birds' fat and other organs. The inference drawn from the above table is that majority 78% of them were involving invariably in selling bells and making beads as their primary occupation.

**Table 1.3:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Monthly Income

Monthly Income (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
<5000	47	47.0
5001-7500	42	42.0
7501-10,000	4	4.0
> 10,000	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Computed from primary data*

The above tables explain about the monthly earning of the Narikoravars earn Out of 100 respondents , the nearing majority 47% of the respondents were able to upto Rs.5000 per month through selling of bells and beads making; followed by that 42%,7%and 4% of them able to earn upto Rs.7500, 10,000, above 10,000 respectively.It is inferred that the nearing majority 47% of them were able to earn up toRs.5000 only. With these earnings they meet not family expenses, medical expenses, purchase of raw materials etc.



**Table 1.4:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Type of Business

Type of Business	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Selling Beeds	36	36.0
Hunting	24	24.0
Petty Business	40	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table explains about the type of business which the Narikoravars done. Out of 100 respondents the majority that 40% 36% and 24% of them exposed to involve in petty business, selling beads and hunting, alone.

**Table 1.5:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Income per day

Income per day	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to Rs. 200/-	29	29.0
Up to Rs. 500/-	37	37.0
Above Rs. 500/-	34	34.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

As far as their family income is concerned that they were able to earn Rs. upto Rs.200 (29%) up to Rs. 500 and above Rs.500 (34%) per day. It is inferred that the majority of them were able to earn upto Rs.500 per day. Within this small package of earrings they have to meet on their family expenses, purchased of raw materials, transportation etc, and also they expressed that this business is quite comfortable to them when compare to agricultural activities.

**Table 1.6:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Expectation for Doing Business

Expectation From	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Loan	78	76.0
Government Supported Business	16	18.0
SGH Supported Business	6	3.0
Self dependents		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table reflects the feeling of the respondents Narikoravar community. Out of 100 respondents 78% of them expressed that the government may motivate to develop their business though loan facilities 16% of them expressed that the Normal Kumar Bose SGHs can help the women entrepreneurs and 67% of them did not expect any support from anybodies. It is interred that the majority 78% of them were Expecting government support to start a new business and own traditional business. For their products they fixed the price for their products accordingly the public has to purchase it.

**Table 1.7:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Forms of sale

Forms of sale	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Retail	53	53.0
Direct Marketing	20	20.0
Whole sale marketing	27	27.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

As far as their sale of product is concerned that the majority 53% of them were selling their goods in a retail manner, whole sale marketing (27%) and direct marketing (20%) and in a retail manner (53%). It is inferred that the majority of the respondents inferred that the forms of sale is concerned that it could be whole sale marketing.

**Table 1.8:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Customers

Who are the customers	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Poor and Public	63	63.0
Other caste customers	37	37.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table explains the customers of the Narikoravars for their products of beads, needles, fox products, ayurvedic medicines etc., and Out of 100 respondents 63 per cent of them expressed that the poor public were their customers and by that the remaining 37 per cent of them expressed that the high class/ caste people were their customers. It is inferred that the majority 63 per cent of the respondents expressed that they were depending upon the poor public of the society to sell their products.

### 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.

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