



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Social Science

INSPIRING JOURNEY OF NARIKURAVAR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CHENNAI

KEY WORDS: Narikuravar, Entrepreneurs, Kuruvikarar, Gypsy, Narikuravar Women Entrepreneur, Women Entrepreneur.

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ABSTRACT

Narikuravar people are traditionally itinerant people, whose native belong to the main occupation of hunting animals and also they were considered as one of the "BANDIT" Communities in South India. The tribe has a rich cultural heritage and distinct lifestyle. The Narikuravar tribe, also known as the "Gypsy" or "Narikuravan" or "Kuruvikarar" community, is an indigenous group in India that traditionally follows a nomadic lifestyle. Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs has more responsibilities, which resist their self-development. Even though they have abilities and skills in Entrepreneurial activities, they lack in upgrading their skills with technological enhancement. The study has been undertaken among Women in the Narikuravar community in Chennai. This article explores the inspiring journey of Narikuravar tribal entrepreneurs in Chennai, their entrepreneurial ventures and the significance of their contributions.

INTRODUCTION:

The Word "Narikuravar" is composed of two meaningful words- Nari means "Jackal" and Kurava means "People". So they are also called as Jackal People. The lifestyle of the Narikuravar tribe is predominantly based on their traditional nomadic way of life, although some members have transitioned to settled living in recent times. The Narikuravar tribe traditionally relied on a combination of occupations and skills to sustain their livelihood. Here are some of the main sources of livelihood for the Narikuravar:

TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS:

The Narikuravar tribe engaged in various traditional occupations, including:

Animal Husbandry: They had expertise in rearing and trading livestock, such as goats, sheep, and horses. The animals provided them with milk, meat, and wool, which they could consume or sell.

Handicrafts: The Narikuravar were skilled in crafts such as jewellery making, basket weaving, pottery, palm leaf crafts, and woodwork. These crafts were often traded or sold for income.

Fortune-Telling: Many Narikuravar community members practiced fortune-telling, palmistry, and other divination methods. They provided their services to others and earned a livelihood from it.

RECENT OCCUPATIONS

In recent times, the Narikuravar tribal community in Tamil Nadu has witnessed changes in their occupations due to factors like urbanization, government policies, and evolving socio-economic conditions. While some members still engage in traditional occupations, others have adopted alternative livelihoods to adapt to the changing circumstances. Here are some recent occupations observed among the Narikuravar community in Tamil Nadu:

Street Vending: Many Narikuravar individuals have taken up street vending as a means of livelihood in urban areas. They sell a variety of goods such as clothes, accessories, household items, and handicrafts. Street vending allows them to interact with the local population and earn income.

Casual Labor: Some Narikuravar community members work as casual laborers in construction sites, factories, and other industries. They take up manual labor jobs, including loading and unloading goods, construction work, and other similar tasks.

Agriculture And Farming: In certain cases, the Narikuravar

have transitioned to settled living in rural areas and have started engaging in agricultural activities. They cultivate small plots of land, grow crops, and rear livestock for their sustenance and income.

Service Industry: With the growth of the service industry in urban areas, some Narikuravar individuals have found employment in sectors like hospitality, restaurants, and domestic work. They work as cooks, housekeepers, security guards, and in other service-oriented roles.

Art And Crafts: Despite the changes, some Narikuravar individuals continue to practice their traditional arts and crafts. They create and sell handicrafts, such as baskets, mats, pottery, and palm leaf crafts, to sustain their livelihoods.

It's important to note that these occupations can vary among different individuals and communities within the Narikuravar tribe in Tamil Nadu. The transition from traditional occupations to alternative livelihoods is influenced by various factors, including location, education, skills, and available opportunities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To Know the entrepreneurial journey of narikuravar women entrepreneurs in Chennai.
2. To Identify Constraints and Opportunities of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs in Chennai.

Review Of Literature:

1. Ms. Pooja Meena, Dr. Sachin Gupta, Dr. Sonal Pathak (2020)- "Opportunities in Tribal Entrepreneurship & MSMEs". This paper highlighted the status of MSMEs and Entrepreneurship in tribal areas and the growth of small and micro Business in the Country. This paper finds that factors influencing the performance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Tribal Areas of India. This paper discuss that lack of knowledge, lack of technology, cut throat competition and lack of knowledge on Government policies are the problems faced by MSMEs and Entrepreneurs.

2. Dr. Suryakumar, C. Ramesh (2018)- "Problems and Prospects of Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Salem Districts of Tamil Nadu". This paper discussed about various opportunities and schemes of Women Entrepreneurs in Salem Tribal Regions. Lack of information and experience, poor transportation, problem of liquidity and finance, shyness etc. are the problems faced by Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Salem.

3. Subham Chandra Nandi, Khama Sharma (2018)- "Women Entrepreneurship as a tool of empowerment- A study of Tribal Villages of Bankura". This Study examined the impact of

Entrepreneurship among tribal women through SHGs. This paper concluded that there is a positive impact of entrepreneurial activities among Tribal Women. It is noticed that Women Entrepreneurship development is higher in SHGs members than Non-SHG members and highlighted that lack of awareness on entrepreneurial activities is the significant problem faced by Tribal Women.

4. A.Amalorpava Mary and Dr. A.Anand Jerald Sebastine (2017)- " A Study on Profiles of Gypsy's Women in Thanjavur and Trichy District". This study aimed to discuss about the profile of gypsy women, marketing facilities available to their products, basic amenities and their employment status. In this article, result were found that 100% of people said that there is no place for marketing and minimum vehicle are used for selling their products. The Researcher identified that there is a significant association between the type of family and getting economic support from the SHG.

5. Bhagabata Behra (2017)- "Women Entrepreneurship in Tribal Areas in Odisha: An Effective means of Women Empowerment". This paper discussed about the influential factors of Women Entrepreneurs in Mayur Bhanj district and identified that tribal entrepreneurship has significant bearing in the part of alleviation. This paper concluded that tribal entrepreneurs belong to low innovativeness, low farm decision making ability, medium level of knowledge, medium risk taking ability, medium level of self-confidence, medium level of management orientation, high leadership ability and medium achievement motivation category.

6. Dr.J.Jay Chitra (2016)- "Life Style and Major Issues Pertaining to the Narikuravar (Nomad) Community in Tamil Nadu". This paper discussed about the status of Narikuravars in Tamil Nadu. Researcher identified the major issues confronting Narikuravar Community as discrimination, illiteracy, high crime rate and employment, low Human Development Index and High Deprivation Index, Child marriage and lack of empowerment.

7. Mary Angeline Santhosam.E, Umesh Samuel Sebaseelan (2014)- " Adjustment Problems of Irular Tribal Women in Kancheepuram District, Chennai, India". This study identified the adjustment problems of Irular Women in the areas of health, emotion, self, home and social dimension.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Convenience research methodology is used to collect data from the respondent. Altogether thirty respondents are chosen for this study from Chennai city. The research was carried out in December 2023. A Structured interview method is used for primary data collection. Secondary data involves some published research papers, journals and books related to this study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic Factors Of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs

AGE	Respondents belongs to the age category between 18 years – 35 Years. Some were uncertain about their age as well as their children age due to absence of birth certificate.
EDUCATION	Out of thirty Interviewed Women, twenty Women were Illiterate. They did not go to the school. Only four were studied up to 5 th grade and six were got educated up to 8 th Grade. The number of Women in this community were significantly low.
OCCUPATION	Making and selling Beaded ornaments, selling retail products, flower decorations, etc.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN	Tamil and Varibooli.
INCOME	Their monthly income is less than Rs.10,000. They are hardly facing many difficulties and are living in below poverty line. Main source of income is from selling beads ornaments, flower decorations, puzzle games etc
PLACE OF BIRTH	Participants belong to Chennai district. Majority of their birth place is Ayanavaram Government hospital and Padi Government hospital.
MIGRATION DETAILS	They were living in Chennai for about two generations. It is found out that their grandparents were migrated from North India.
INHABITANT	Living in the road side of Ambattur Industrial Estate and Under the bypass fly over bridge.

Journey Of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs In Chennai

The journey of women Narikuravar entrepreneurs is marked by determination, resilience, and the pursuit of socio-economic empowerment. While facing social discrimination and marginalization, these women strive to overcome challenges and create a better future for themselves and their communities. Here's an overview of their journey:

Breaking Gender Stereotypes:

Women Narikuravar entrepreneurs challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes within their community. They defy societal expectations that limit women's roles to household chores and caregiving. By venturing into entrepreneurship, they inspire other women and challenge the notion that women are solely responsible for domestic responsibilities.

Identification Of Business Opportunities:

Narikuravar women identify various business opportunities based on their skills, resources, and the needs of their communities. They explore diverse sectors such as handicrafts, handloom weaving, agriculture, animal husbandry, and small-scale enterprises. By leveraging their traditional knowledge and skills, they add value to their products and services.

Place Of Procuring Raw Materials:

Participants said "Broadway and T-Nagar" is the place, where they buy their raw materials at cheaper price. Broadway is the place has more number of population, so that women can sell their products easily. This place is composed of many different language speaking people like Tamil, Hindi, Marati, Telugu etc.

Marketing Place:

Women Narikuravars sell the products at the road margin, traffic signals, main roads, public places and public transports like train. With the hope of finding new customers and markets, they often move from place to place.

Skills And Strategies:

Interviewed Women Narikuravar said that they have used Personal Selling as their Marketing Strategy. Personal Selling plays a significant role in developing customer buying behaviour compared to selling products to the retail stores. Direct selling to the customer, makes more profits to Narikuravar Women than the indirect selling. Women Narikuravar said that they usually explain about their product like product description, benefits of product, uses of the product, price negotiation and personal connect with customer. And the best skill used by them is Communication skill. They speak in Tamil and Vaaribooli language. Their communication skills has the ability to influence their

customer and has the ability of persuading customer to buy their products.

Uniqueness Of Product:

Their uniqueness of their product is “Handmade”. They have made the ornaments by using glasses and mirrors. Traditional method of doing ornaments with beads and wires makes the products looks good and shiny. They said their products never gets faded, it has long durability, it is available at cheaper rate and more young age females are mostly gets attracted. Now their method of making ornaments has been changed according to modern style. They are modifying their products as long chain, bracelets, earrings, bangles and anklets using stones, shells, pearls and sands.

Constraints And Opportunities Of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneur

Constraints Of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneur

Narikuravar women entrepreneurs face several constraints that hinder their entrepreneurial journey and economic empowerment. These constraints arise from various social, economic, and cultural factors. Understanding and addressing these constraints is crucial for creating an enabling environment for Narikuravar women entrepreneurs. Here are some key constraints they face:

Social Discrimination

Earlier Narikuravar Community people are considered “Untouchables” and they are excluded from the streets inhabited by other peoples due to consumption of animals and places where they settled. As they don't have permanent place for living, their children are unable to go to schools which is the major aspect of discrimination in today's modern scenario. They are also no allowed in public places like temples, malls, theatres etc. This discrimination manifests in various forms, including restricted access to resources, exclusion from social and cultural events, and limited opportunities for socio-economic development.

Limited Financial Resources

Women Narikuravar has no initial source of finance in starting the business. They mainly depend on their labourer skills. Access to financial resources is a significant challenge for Narikuravar women entrepreneurs. Many lack collateral or formal financial documentation, making it difficult to secure loans from traditional financial institutions. Limited access to credit hampers their ability to invest in their businesses, purchase necessary equipment, expand operations, and explore new markets. Ensuring adequate and accessible financial services tailored to the needs of Narikuravar women entrepreneurs is vital.

Limited Knowledge On Financial Resources

Most of the Narikuravar Women are lack in obtaining finance from various Non- Government Organisations. This is mainly due to lack of education and awareness towards various financial schemes. Due to this, they have no or less knowledge in procedures for obtaining finance, schemes existing, etc.

Lack Of Market Linkage

Narikuravar women entrepreneurs often face difficulties in accessing markets and establishing market linkages for their products and services. Limited knowledge and skills in marketing, branding, and product promotion can pose challenges in reaching wider consumer bases. Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs are good at producing their products but they are lack in concept of marketing. They usually sell their products in neighbour market and with in their domestic area.

Opportunities Of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneur

Tribal Narikuravar entrepreneurs have various opportunities that can contribute to their economic empowerment and community development. These opportunities arise from

their unique cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and the growing demand for sustainable and indigenous products. Here are some key opportunities for Narikuravar entrepreneurs:

Family Business

Narikuravar Women select their business according to their caste system, religious and hereditary adoption which affect their individual creativity, idea implementation and their capabilities. Women with their own innovative ideas are affected by belief of following their insisters and carry out their business with small groups to lead their day-to-day life. There are more opportunities available to Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs designed by Government and Non-Government Organizations to uplift their status.

Agriculture And Herbal Production

In order to encourage “Agri- Entrepreneurship” our Government has given opportunities for Narikuravar communities to involve in agricultural activities. There are many opportunities available to Narikuravar to establish herbal manufacturing units. This manufacturing involves production of ayurvedic products like oils, drinks, creams etc.

Exports Of Handicrafts Products

The Government of India has setup Export Promotion Council for Handicraft, controlled by Ministry of Textiles Government of India. Handicraft sector plays a vital role in employment generation and economic uplift of our Nation. Narikuravar Women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities like selling arts, jewellery, decorative paintings, fabric furnitures, metal crafts, paper crafts etc.

Digital Market Space

Digital India concept paves a way for the growth of tribal business, by providing them more opportunities to present themselves digitally. The use of E-Commerce and E-Market platforms by Narikuravar community has proven to be a Boon. The abuse in physical market space by Narikuravar women are resolved by creating and selling their products in online portals.

Government Initiatives And Schemes

National Scheduled Tribe Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) is an apex organization under the Ministry of tribal affairs launched in 2001. The objective of this organization is to develop economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes by providing financial assistances to target groups under various schemes. Schemes are Term loans, Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana, Adivasi Shiksha Rinn Yojana, Tribal Forest Dwellers Empowerment Scheme and Teak Groweres Scheme.

Suggestions:

In recent years, several Narikuravar women have broken through the barriers and embraced entrepreneurship as a means to uplift their lives and preserve their cultural heritage. Through their sheer determination and resilience, these women have created successful enterprises, becoming beacons of hope and inspiring future generations. Based on the findings the following suggestions are made to improve the narikuravar women entrepreneurship for their better livelihood.

Empowerment And Education: Access to education and empowerment initiatives can significantly impact Narikuravar women's entrepreneurial aspirations. Education equips them with knowledge, skills, and confidence to start and manage businesses effectively.

Skill Development: Providing skill development programs and vocational training tailored to their needs can enhance the entrepreneurial capabilities of Narikuravar women. Acquiring specific skills related to crafts, business

management, financial literacy, and marketing can empower them to establish and run successful ventures.

Financial Inclusion:

Access to financial resources, including microfinance options and government schemes, can enable Narikuravar women to overcome the initial capital constraints in starting their businesses. Accessible and affordable credit facilities can support their entrepreneurial endeavours and create economic opportunities.

Supportive Social Networks:

Building strong networks and support systems within the Narikuravar community and beyond can be influential. Peer support, mentorship, and networking opportunities provide guidance, motivation, and valuable connections for Narikuravar women entrepreneurs.

Market Linkages And Infrastructure:

Facilitating access to markets, creating marketing platforms, and improving infrastructure can enhance the visibility and reach of Narikuravar women's entrepreneurial ventures. This can include initiatives to connect them with potential customers, retailers, and distributors.

Policy And Legal Support:

Enabling policies, legal protections, and affirmative action can promote entrepreneurship among Narikuravar women. Ensuring equal rights, addressing social barriers, and offering supportive regulatory frameworks can create an enabling environment for them to thrive as entrepreneurs.

It's important to recognize that these factors should be implemented through culturally sensitive approaches, considering the specific needs and aspirations of Narikuravar women, and involving them in decision-making processes.

Appendix



Picture 1: Interviewing Mrs. Simran (left) and Mrs. Priya (right), Women Narikuravar



Picture 2: Discussion about uniqueness and marketing techniques of their products



Picture 3: Discussion with Women Narikuravar



Picture 4: Finished Products and Marketing place of Narikuravar Community

CONCLUSION:

The rise of Narikuravar tribal women entrepreneurs in India is a testament to the transformative power of entrepreneurship. These women have defied societal constraints and harnessed their skills, knowledge, and cultural heritage to create successful enterprises. Their endeavors not only generate economic prosperity but also preserve their cultural identity and challenge stereotypes. By empowering themselves and their communities, Narikuravar tribal entrepreneurs have paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable society. It is essential to recognize, support, and amplify their voices to ensure their continued success and the preservation of their rich cultural heritage. The present study on Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs has brought out their unique way of living style. Majority of this people has no or low level of education. This is because of lack of settlement at permanent place, lack of educational institutions, early marriage and lack of awareness about various Government schemes. The Average monthly income of this Narikuravar Women is less than Rs. 10,000, which states their pitiful life condition. This

research paper highlighted the entrepreneurial journey of traditional handmade ornaments. This paper tries to bring light to the latent talents of Narikuravar Women Entrepreneurs in selling their products.

These Women are facing various discrimination, as a result they are still living in poverty. With the recent amendment of our Government, Narikuravar community entered into "ST" category. The journey of women Narikuravar Entrepreneurs is an inspiring example of how women can overcome social barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for themselves and their communities. Their entrepreneurship not only contributes to their individual growth but also promotes gender equality, empowerment, and socio-economic development within the Narikuravar community.

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