

## Present Situation of Irular - A Primitive Tribe

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**Abstract:** This paper assesses two things. Firstly, it studies the social factor of Irular. Secondly it analyses those employment avenue. For this study selected two blacks from Cheyyar taulk, Thiruvannamalai district. These blacks such as Anakkavor and Vembakkam are south and north direction respectively to Cheyyar town. This town exists more distant to district head quarter. A sample of 50 members selected from each block. The paper presents structure of Irular. The finding shows that positive relation between social factor and employment.

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### I. Introduction

Social factor is a basic identity of how much powerful an individual is in a society. In numerous places social factor is carefully connected with ethics, use of richness and an upright measure. All civilizations have established a collective stratification inside their inhabitants were personages are credited a firm with their social grading. The social factor of tribes in India has changed a lot from the past times. In ancient times, Tribes were treated almost equal to the other communities. But, in the medieval times things weren't in favor of the Tribes. So the other communities were in buildup dominating the Tribes. In India Tribal has started playing important roles in different sectors like politics, hospitals, education, business, etc. During British rule in India, many European Scholars came down to India to study about the tribal people and their problems faced by them. The Europeans felt that Tribes were ill-treated in the society. Even today in some places like slums, villages, tribal areas the Tribes are not treated as like other communities.

#### Irula Tribe – A brief outlook

Irulas are one among the six primitive tribal groups in Tamil Nadu. The Irula inhabit the northern districts of Tamil Nadu, a state in southeastern India. In Cheyyar region, Irulas are well spread in north sites to every village. The name Irulas are derived from the tamil word "Irul" meaning dark which refers to their skin nature. The name Irula means "people of darkness." This could refer to their dark-colored skin or to the fact that all important events traditionally took place in the darkness of night. Irular they also call themselves Erlar or Poosari, while their neighbours refer to them as Eralollu, Irulas, Shikari and Pujari.

#### Language

The Irula speak the Irula language as a mother tongue. A member of the Dravidian family, it is most closely related to Tamil, Yerukala, Sholaga and other Tamil languages. The Tamil script is used.

#### Goals of the Study

1. To study the socio- demographic details of Irula Tribe
2. To find the various employment avenues.
3. To assess the various factors that is responsible for the development of Irulas and to facilitate new strategies for their empowerment.

### II. Research Methodology

The study based on Primary data of selected 100 sample respondents from two black of Anakavor and Vembakkam. For this study selected blacks from Cheyyar taulk, Thiruvannamalai district. These blacks such as Anakkavor and Vembakkam are south and north direction respectively to Cheyyar town. This town exists more distant to district head quarter. The study has tried to label only the social factor and employment of the Irula community.

#### Demography and Social factor of selected Irulas Tribes

**Table: 1 Demography and Social factor of selected Irulas Tribes**

Sl. No.	Social factors	Respondents	
1.	Sex Ratio	Male	44
		Female	56
2.	Family size	1-3 persons	24
		4-6 persons	60

		7 & above	16
3.	Family Type	Nuclear	84
		Joint	16
4.	Education	Illiteracy	60
		Primary	32
		Middle	08
5.	Religion	Hindu	98
		Christian	02
		Muslim	00
6.	Language	Tamil	82
		Irula with Tamil	18
7.	Marriage system	Traditional	61
		Modified	49
8.	Festivals	Traditional	15
		like Hindus	85
9.	Medicine	Self	62
		Hospital	38

Source: Primary Sample Survey

Living in huts, they used to hunt and procure forest resources. Subsequently they began to live in huts made of bamboo and slowly learnt the art of cultivation. Due to scarcity of bamboos, they began to build huts with soil and stones. Natives made inroads to their settlements. Earlier rice was consumed only during festivals. Now due to the lack of cultivation, rice has become their attach food. Beef is not consumed by Irular.

### Employment avenues

**Table: 2 Various Employment avenues of Irulas Tribe**

Sl. No	Employment path	Respondents
1.	Rat and Snake Catch	15
2.	Rabbit and Squirrel Hunt	13
3.	Fishing	04
4.	Cattle farm & procure forest resources	20
5.	Birds farm	09
6.	Wood Cutter and Wood Seller	15
7.	Agricultural Wager	06
8.	Bonded Labour in Farm House	03
9.	Medicine Collector and Seller	05
10.	MGNREGS	10

Source: Primary Sample Survey

Cattle-breeding is main source of income. Wild resources like honey, firewood and the like are also collected. The main occupation of the Irulas has been snake and rat catching. They also work as labourers (coolies) in the fields of the landlords during the sowing and harvesting seasons. Fishing is also a minor occupation. The original occupation of these people was rat and snake catching. Since the abolishing of snake catching by the Indian Government, the community had to abandon their migratory lifestyle and make their living among the suspicious mainstream society. The community has settled down in the outer edge of various villages, trying to make their living in as daily laborer in the fields, bonded labour in rice mills. Since, they do not have education and relevant livelihood skills.

### Food

#### Vegetarian

They eat rice, ragi and all kinds of pulses. Groundnut and Palm oil are the cooking medium.

Ragi, mustard, grains and pulses are the main food item.

#### Non-Vegetarian

Animal protein of Rat, Cat, Squirrel, Birds, and meats of chicken, goat, pig and fish are favorites. They cook once a day for supper is the non-vegetarian of Irulas Tribes.

#### Changing Food Habit

Stating that the free supply of rice through the public distribution system is one of the major causes for the change in the food habits of the tribal communities, this has limited their food to low quality rice.

### Health and Medical

- They are collected plant medicine for simple health problems.
- Tribes utilized nearest Government Hospital.
- Bathing habit is worst among them.
- Tobacco has increased health problems.

- Alcoholic addiction is major health killer.
- Infant mortality and maternal mortality rate are also higher among them.

### **Birth ceremonies**

There are many Irular customs and observances involved from the birth to death of a person. When pregnancy approaches a tent is erected near the woman's house. Elderly women who are well versed in magic are to attend the pregnant woman. When the child is born, the child's aunt takes a glass of water and sprinkles it on the child. For seven days nobody will go out of the tent and none will be allowed to enter the tent. Food will be sent to occupants in the tent. On the seventh day child will be named and it is a big ceremony. The name will be the name of grandfather or grandmother. Rangan, Nanjan, Marutan, Kalimuthu, Kalithamma, Vaduki, Muruki are some common names. For three months relatives other than the immediate parents, should not touch the child. Those three months are taboo or termed as unholy. Those days the mother should eat and take rest without doing any work while the father will attend to all work.

### **Marriage ceremonies**

Marriage is fixed for girls within the age limit of 12 -18 whereas boy's age is from 14-24. People from the same clan within the Irular tribe do not intermarry. Marriages are fixed within the family by the parents. Bride prize has to be given to girl's house in the form of cash or cattle. Marriage is arranged in the presence of tribal chief. The marriage ceremony takes place in the ancestral home where the village god is installed. An elder called Guruvan presides over this. Marriages that do not have the acknowledgement of a local panchayat are considered invalid.

### **Death ceremonies**

One's death will be proclaimed to everyone. The village elder will walk with a stick stretched forward. This communicates the death. The body will be kept in a typical tent on a bamboo platform, in a posture where both the legs had to be drawn backwards and tied. The closest relatives bring water from the river. Water is drawn after uttering the name of the dead person three times without looking left or right. Ground saffron or turmeric liquid mixture is sprinkled over the body. Visitors spread white dhoti (cloth) over the body if the dead is male and colour cloth in case of female and others who gather will settle civil as well financial disputes. If the dead is a married woman, seven persons from seven clean remove the thali (marital necklace). Later they rejoice and dance giving thanks to the god for preserving them till then. This rejoicing is known as Shapparayattam. Grief and weeping is not done in the house. Body will be buried after 3 days. Till then the Shapparayattam continues. Body that is wrapped in linen is buried in the pit dug, where there will be a furrow to place the head. This is to avoid the falling of mud on the head! After the burial it is customary that food is served on the banks of the brook.

Irular who comes back after the burial, warms his feet by setting a fire grass (straw), which is pulled out from the roof. A full pot of water is kept at the entrance of the house. Caster or jingly oil is dropped into this water with a thin stick. First drop is dripped by invoking the name of the dead person and the second drop by uttering the name of the father. When the two drops joined, the head of the family touches it and applies it on his forehead. Before entering the house, occupants need to bathe. This ceremony is referred to as Nizhalkoothu.

In appearance, the widow or the widower has to live as they saw each other at last before one's death. This is observed so as to recognize each other after the other too died. This demonstrates that the Irular believe in life after death.

## **III. Findings**

- ✓ Average Family size of Irulas is 4-6 persons.
- ✓ They do not follow any family planning. They have been minimum 3-4 children.
- ✓ Irulas living in nuclear type.
- ✓ Irulas studied was up to middle standard remaining 60% are Illiteracy.
- ✓ In Irulas, Hindu are 98% and 2% are Christian religion.
- ✓ Language of Irulas mostly speak Tamil remaining 18% are Irula with Tamil.
- ✓ Marriage system of them is 61 % are traditional and simple in home.
- ✓ This people are highly celebrated Hindus festivals.
- ✓ Firstly, in employment 20% of tribes are cattle farming in those areas.
- ✓ Secondly 32% of tribes are hunting various animals for food and trade.
- ✓ Wood cutter and seller are 15% and MGNREGS worker are 10% to total respondents.
- ✓ Bonded labour and wager in agriculture are 9%.
- ✓ There is no proper road and water pond to them.
- ✓ All people are drunken mood in every evening, it affect those health.

- ✓ In most of Irulas tribes, Illiteracy and low rate of livelihood stage are causes for hunter, wood cutter, Bonded labour and Fishing etc.

#### **IV. Conclusions / Suggestions**

- i. It is the inaccessibility of the area that accounts for the backwardness of the tribal especially the primitive groups. Due to this reason development services do not really reach the remote packets. It is therefore suggested that contraction of roads and communication system in remote tribal areas must receive priority. Easy and effective communication will certainly pave the way for their progress and accelerate their contacts with outside world.
- ii. Appointment of technical assistant was observed that the man power for technical assistance to project officer is minimal. Tribal beneficiaries find it difficult to secure guidance from the project officer's office. Hence the project officer is required to be manned with technical staff that can extend guidance & help the tribal as & when required.
- iii. Need for technical training for self employment & skill development to Industrial development in tribal areas invoke demand for more technicians such as filters, electricians, welders, carpenters, motor mechanics etc. it is, therefore, proposed to set up training schools which can impart the above skills to tribal. This will help to curb down the tendency of migration, especially of the Irulas.
- iv. Poultry farming was observed that this sector showed considerable promise as a means of providing gainful employment in the rural areas. There is a great demand for eggs and table birds. The tribal should be given adequate training to manage poultry farms and should be helped in developing market links.
- v. Cultivation of medicinal plants is necessary to promote and propagate the cultivation of medicinal herbs in tribal areas with the help of tribal. These medicinal herbs could be marketed to pharmaceutical industries.
- vi. Healthcare services did not reach the primitive tribal as Irulas effectively. The project officers must make efforts to monitor these services for tribal women, children, men and old folks besides health services.

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