

**Inequalities in Basic Amenities: A Case Study of Soliga Tribes in Bargur Hills of Erode District in Tamilnadu**

**Sumathi, S. N**

Research Scholar, ICSSR FELLOW, Department of Geography, Presidency College (A),  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

**Abstract**

Basic amenities and infrastructures are essential for quality of life. Clean drinking water, sanitation, good network of roads, housing, health care centers, toilet facilities are some of the important basic amenities. The 2011 census showed that of India's 79 million urban households 18.6% were without a toilet, while for the 168 million rural households it was 69.3%. In Scheduled Tribes especially *Soligas* community in Bargur hills of Erode District in Tamil Nadu belong to the weaker sections of society have been found to be the most deprived, neglected and excluded from the basic infrastructure and amenities. Soligas are nature bounded hilly tribes living in the Eastern Ghats regions of Erode District. They are basically honey collectors and mainly depend on forest minor products for their basic survival. Bargur hills consist of 33 villages surrounded by Reserve Forest. Out of these villages, Thamarakarai, Solaganai, Onthanai are some of the hamlets mainly dominated by Soliga community. By using simple random sampling method the data was collected from the Thamarakarai village. People in this village are facing many problems, due to inadequate road facilities, drinking water, sanitation, health care etc. Even though houses and toilet facilities were built under Government schemes, Soliga people still practicing open defecation practice, due to inadequate water facilities and traditional cultural practices. Bathing and washing clothes are done in the local pond and streams of Bargur hills. The findings of this article call for immediate action towards providing adequate basic amenities in the villages of Bargur hills. Basic amenities and infrastructure improves the Socio-economic status of the Soliga people.

**Keywords:** Amenities, Soliga, Neglected, Open defecation practice, Socio-economic

**1. Introduction**

“Development of the tribals should be according to the lines of their own thinking”

Jawaharlal Nehru

Basic amenities and infrastructures are essential for quality of life. “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services” Article 25(1) of the Universal declaration of Human Rights 1948. Article 21 of the Indian constitution reads as “No person shall be deprived of his life (or) personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law”. Clean, adequate water for drinking and other domestic household usage, proper sanitation facilities, Toilets, bathrooms, houses, electricity and good network of roads are very essential for the development of particular regions. These are the fundamental amenities and infrastructures for the social wellbeing and to improve the standard of life.

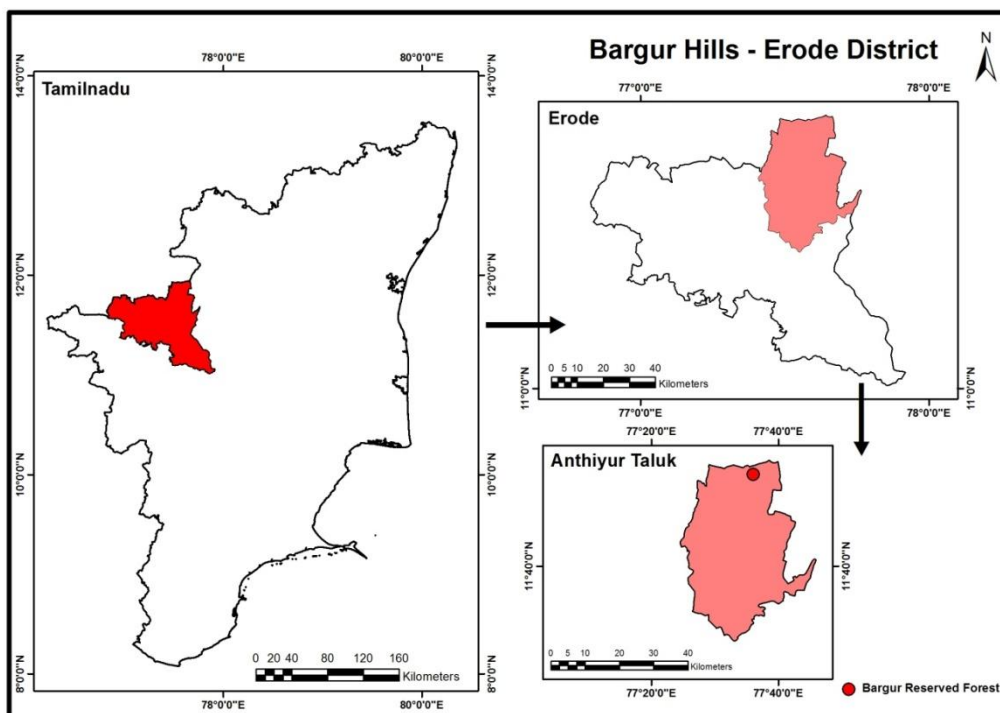
According to 2011 census report, about 168 million rural households (69.3%) and 79 million urban households (18.6%) were without Toilet facilities respectively. Scheduled Tribes (ST) “A Tribe is a group a distinct people, dependent on their land and not integrated into the national society”. Scheduled tribe Population constitutes 8.6% of the total population in India. (Census 2011). While in Tamil Nadu, 36 Listed Tribes are found and they comprise 1.1% of the total population of Tamil Nadu. Soliga, Malayali and Lingayat communities are residing in the Bargur hills. Bargur hills consist of 33 tribal Hamlets, surrounded by reserve forest of Eastern Ghats. Tamarakarai, solaganai, Onthanai are some of the hamlets mainly dominated by Soliga community. Soligas in the Tamarakarai hamlet do not have proper water facilities

(both drinking water and other domestic usages) and almost all these people here accustomed to open defecation. This may be due to the lack of toilet storage fits and toilet storage fits provided in their houses built by the state government. Soligas basically honey collectors, mainly depend on forest minor products for their basic livelihood and their standard of living is also poor due to prevalence of unemployment, illiteracy and poor income.

## **2. Study Area**

Bargur hills is the part of the Eastern Ghats range in the Anthiyur Taluk of Erode District. The altitude of the Bargur hills is about 850 to 1000 m mean sea level. A Bargur hill has a cluster of 33 hamlets in a total area of 5000 hectare. This hill area was mainly concentrated by the Malayali, Soliga Tribes and Lingayats people.

Figure 1: **Study Area Bargur Hills**



## **3. Objectives**

1. To observe the Soliga Tribes in Tamarai karai hamlet of Bargur hills.
2. To examine the Basic amenities inequalities among the Soliga Tribes.
3. To identify the basic amenities and infrastructural facilities like drinking water, sanitation, health care etc.

## **4. Methodology**

Personal interview method, observation and Schedule method were used to collect primary data in the Bargur hills due to more illiterate population. Different questions like age, gender, family size, income, education, employment, sanitation, drinking water facilities and open defecation level was included. Systematic random sampling method was used to select samples based on a system of intervals in a numbered population. It ensures that all outcomes are given equal chance of getting selected in the total sample.

## **5. Sample Size**

The total sample consists of 160 respondents from Thamarai karai hamlet of Bargur hills region.

## 6. Statement of the Problem

Socioeconomic problems of the Soligas need special attention. Soligas has distinctive health. They lack basic amenities like Toilet facilities, drinking water, drainage and employment. Climate change and its impact on Bargur hills were observed. Still most of the deliveries happen in the home without any doctor's assistance and medical facilities. Due to less per capita income and inadequate work in the Bargur area, increased the migration rate in the soliga community.

## 7. Results and Discussion

**Table 7.1 Gender wise classification**

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Male	81	51
Female	79	49
Total	160	100

**Figure 7.1 Gender wise Classification**

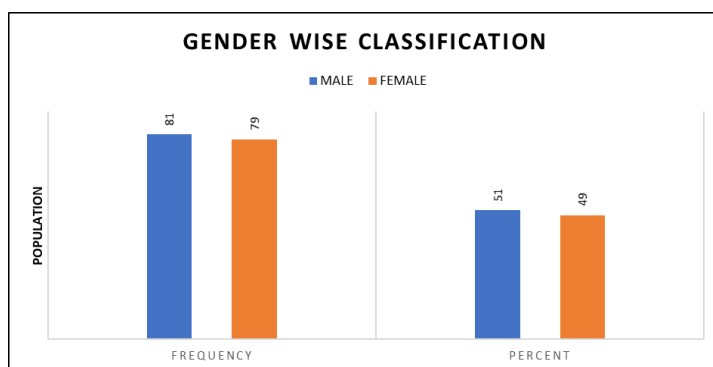


Figure 7.1 shows the gender of the respondents, 51 % of the respondents are Male and 49% of the respondents are Females in the Tamaraikarai village. Female population distribution was also good.

**Table 7.2 Educational qualification**

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Uneducated	106	66
Primary	16	10
Middle	30	19
SSLC	2	1.25
Higher Secondary	4	2.5
Degree	2	1.25
Total	160	100

Figure 7.2 Educational Qualification

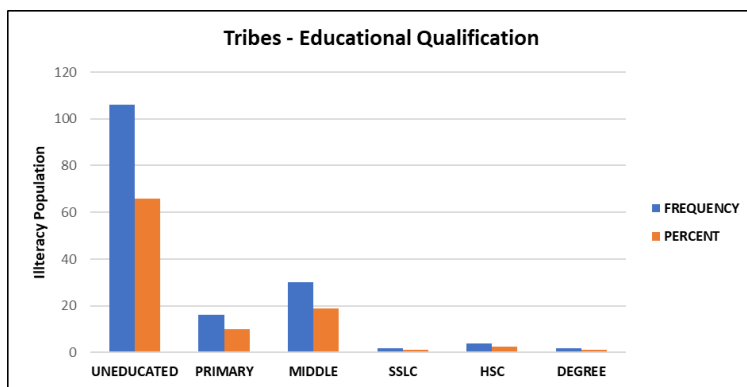


Figure 7.2 gives the information about the educational levels in Bargur district. The respondents are classified into six categories according to the qualification as Degree, SSLC, HSC, Middle, primary and Uneducated. Table 7.2 portrays 66% of the respondents are illiterate, 10% of the respondents had completed their Primary school level, 19% of the respondents had completed their Middle, 1.25% of the respondents have completed their SSLC Level, only 2.5% of the respondent had completed HSC and only 1.25% respondents had completed Degree.

**Remarks:** Uneducated people dominate in the Thamarai karai village due to lack of school infrastructure and poverty.

### 7.3 Drinking Water Access & Sanitation

Table 7.3 Accession to Drinking water and sanitation facilities

Population	Sanitation	Drinking water access
MALE-81	0	0
FEMALE-79	0	0
TOTAL-160	0	0

Table 7.3 reveals that out of 160 people no one has the access of individual drinking water Taps and sanitation facilities. Water was fetched from far away Ponds and Lakes. No bathing facilities in their houses. Women and young girls taking bath before Sunrise and after Sunset. So Tribal peoples do not have regular bathing habits. Young school going children do not brush their tooth regularly. Lack of health awareness and unavailability of sanitation facilities affects the Soliga people largely.

### 7.4 Open Defecation

Thamarai karai hamlet lacks water facilities, public Toilet system and individual Toilets. Therefore, 100% open defecation was practiced. Lacking these basic amenities hinders the development in the Bargur hills. It also reduces the Enrolment ratio in the schools. Human rights are not fully enjoyed by Soliga people.

### 8. Houses

The houses of the Soliga people are thatched, tiled houses and terraced houses. Majority of the Soliga houses have got electricity facility (Single Bulb System) from Government Electricity Board under free services scheme. Most of the houses of Soliga people were built by the Government under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Scheme. Most of the Soliga tribes are living in huts. The construction materials used for these huts are Mud, Bamboo wood and grasses. Bamboos and other trees are cutted and used locally from the forest. Another feature of these huts is that each house has a small granary, which is miniature hut, constructed in the courtyard. Each hut has a place for storage. Formerly they

were not in tiled or terraced houses. But, of late tiled and terraced houses have come up in some of the 33 village in the Bargur hills.

## **9. Occupation**

Land and Forests are the main natural resources for Soliga people. Soliga's are traditional cultivator and they gather minor forest products and also work as labourers in the forest. Earlier Soliga people practiced Shifting Cultivation, but now it was banned. Government gave 1-2 acre of lands to the Soliga households. Soligas mainly cultivate Ragi (Finger Millet / Eleusine Coracana) in their lands for subsistence. Their main source of income is harvesting and sale of Non-timber Forest Produce like honey, gooseberry, bamboo, paasi (lichen), algae, soap nut and wild root. They also make baskets using Bamboo. At present, many new issues have found in the economic sufferings of Tribal Farmers on the hills due to exploitation of intermediaries, switched over from Ragi to Topioca cultivation in expectations of better returns. Elephants also destroys their agricultural crops by eating and smashing.

## **Conclusion**

Soliga Tribes basically honey collectors, living in the admist of the Bargur hills. Bargur hills has 33 hamlets under Bargur village. Their basic livelihood was severely affected. Basic amenities are denied. Poor roads, lacking of mobile networks, drinking water facilities and sanitations affects the Socio-Economic conditions of Soliga People. More migration to the plain region and losing of their traditional way of life and cultural ethos was witnessed in the Thamarai karai hamlet (Bargur hills). Forest and was the main asset possessed by the tribal people. Literacy level was very low when compared to the total literacy level in Tamil Nadu. Their miseries are compounded by a low level of infrastructural and social services and the existence of a greater inequality among the tribes. Regarding educations, the respondents are aware of their educational status. Though the respondents are illiterates, they want their children to avail the education provided by the government.

## **References**

1. Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, T.N., 1956." An Introduction to Social Anthropology", Asia publishing House, Bombay
2. socio-economic status of scheduled tribes in Kalrayan hills - Prof.AJayakumar,P. Palaniyammal
3. Menon, P.S.K,'Tribal Development Policies, Plans and Programmes', Yojana, April 2002
4. According Report of 'The Study on Tribal Land Alienation,'In the state of Tamil Nadu', The Niligiris, 1998.
5. Socio-Economic conditions of Thalamalai Tribes, Dr. Thangamani Vol.3, No.1, Dec 2014,ISSN: 2319-961X
6. Encyclopedia of SOUTH ASIAN TRIBES – Satinder Kumar
7. Tribal Development and Planning-Devendra Thakur, D.N.Thakur
8. Tribal women -Devendra Thakur.D.N.Thakur
9. Tribal Life and Forests-Devendra Thakur, D.N.Thakur
10. Castes and Tribes of Southern India-Edgar Thurstan