



“The Main Reasons Behind The Backwardness Of Scheduled Castes Population In West Bengal”

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ABSTRACT

An important part of the population of India is Scheduled Castes. West Bengal is the western part of the ancient Bangadesh. Present day West Bengal and today's Bangladesh were known as Bangadesh until Lord Curzon's infamous partition of Bengal in 1905. A large number of Scheduled Caste people from East-Pakistan and later independent Bangladesh migrated to West Bengal for political reasons. West Bengal is the important state of East India. About a quarter of the total population of the state is Scheduled Caste people. According to the 2011 Census of India, total Scheduled Castes population in West Bengal is 21.4 million (23.51 %). There are 60 Sub- Caste categories among Scheduled Castes in West Bengal. Bordering areas of South Bengal such as North 24 Parganas, Nadia, and South 24 Parganas districts are inhabited by the Namasudra community of Scheduled Castes. On the other hand, people of the Rajbanshi community living in the districts like Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri in North Bengal. There are several Scheduled Castes communities like Bagdi, Bauri, Chamar, Dhoba, Dom, Jhalomalo, Kaora, Kotal, Musahar, Sarki, Sunri, Hrishi etc in West Bengal.

Scheduled Caste people of this state are very backward from other general class people in economic, social and cultural fields. Even after 75th years of independence, they are forced to choose the lower professions of the society as a means of livelihood. They are still neglected by the upper caste people of the society. Due to lack of education they are forced to live in lower socio-economic status. The main livelihood of the class of people of West Bengal are- agricultural, agricultural labourers, hawkers, construction workers, small business, work in Mills, scavenging etc.

Lack of education is the main reason behind the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes people from other general classes in terms of socio-economic status in this state. Due to lack of education, they are denied the right to take up the higher profession of the society as a means of livelihood. Various superstitions and bad practice are prevalent among the Scheduled Castes in our state. Due to lack of economic development, they are backward in education, health, housing and food. Another major reason behind the under development of these people in the state use of false certificates. Many of the general classes are depriving the real Scheduled Castes people of their rights by using false caste credentials for the sake of Political power. Due to lack of awareness in the fields of education, economy and politics, the Scheduled Castes people of West Bengal are not able to develop as expected in the socio-economic fields.

INTRODUCTION

According to the division of labour in the Vedic period, four classes of people were created in the society. The four classes were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishayyas, and Shudras. Aryans entered India around 1500 B.C. For many centuries thereafter, the Aryans fought against the ancient inhabitants of India. Aryans skilled in material arts defeated them very easily. They fled elsewhere and started living in the jungle. From 600 years before the birth of Christ to 200 AD, the concept of untouchability was developed in the ancient society. Chandals and other untouchables are identified from various Vedic texts like Taittiriya Brahman, Brihadaranakeya Upanishad and Chandiyoga Upanishad. According to B.R. Ambedkar, the main reason behind the development of the concept of untouchability in the society at that time was the dependence of one class of people on another in terms of cultural and finance. Varnasrama system is responsible for the development of class-divided society in ancient India. According to Vedic literature, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishayyas were the fair classes, and Shudras and Dasas were the unfair classes.

In a hymn called "Purushsutra" of the tenth mandala of "Rigveda", it is said that Brahmins originated from Brahma's mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishayyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet. Those who worshiped God, performed pilgrimage, studied and taught, they known as Brahmins in the society of that time. And those who were skilled in the state administration and warfare were known as Kshatriyas. All those people who used to earn their living by farming and trading started to be known as Vaishayyas in the society. On the other side, those non-Aryans who lived their lives by serving the upper three castes of the society, came to be known as Shudras. At that time the caste system was not hereditary. Caste was based on occupation. There was social contact among the people of the upper three castes. But later, this caste distinction gradually became hereditary. This is how the caste system arose in the ancient Indian society. The divisions in the society were gradually becoming permanent and strong.

About a quarter of (23.51%) the population of West Bengal are Scheduled Caste people. The Scheduled Caste of West Bengal has a total of sixty Sub-Caste. These are -

Table-01,
List of West Bengal's
Scheduled Castes (Sub-Castes).

SI No	Sub-Castes	SI No	Sub-Castes	SI No	Sub-Caste	SI No	Sub-Caste
1	Bagdi, Duley	16	Doai	31	Kaur	46	Namasudra
2	Bahelia	17	Dom, Dhangad	32	Keot, Keyot	47	Nat
3	Baiti	18	Dosadh, Dhari, Dharbi	33	Khaira	48	Nuniya
4	Bantar	19	Ghasi	34	Khatik	49	Pailya
5	Bauri	20	Gonrhi	35	Koch	50	Pan, Sawasi
6	Beldar	21	Halal-khor	36	Konai	51	Pasi

7	Bhogta	22	Hari, Met hor, Bhangi, Balmiki.	37	Konwar	52	Patni
8	Bhumali	23	Jalia Kaibartta	38	Kotal	53	Pod, Poundra
9	Bhuiya	24	Jhalo Malo	39	Kurariar	54	Rajbans hi
10	Bind	25	Kadar	40	Lalbegi	55	Rajwar
11	Chamar, Charmakar, Mochi, Rabidas, Rishi	26	Kami (Nepali)	41	Lohar	56	Sarki (Nepali)
12	Chaupal	27	Kandra	42	Mahar	57	Suri
13	Dabgar	28	Kanjar	43	Mal	58	Tiyar
14	Damai (Nepali)	29	Kaora	44	Mallah	59	Turi
15	Dhoba, Dhobi	30	Karenga, Koranga	45	Musahar	60	Chain

Source: Census of India

Even after the 75th years of independence, their socio-economic status is still lower than the general class of people in West Bengal. Scheduled Caste people of the state are still lagging far behind in the all areas of education, economy, health and lifestyle etc. Scheduled Caste people are not able to take the opportunity of higher education due to economic conditions. Due to lack of higher education, they are forced to spend their lives in low paid jobs or petty trades in society for years. For lack of proper knowledge, they are being exploited even today by the upper caste people of the society. In the remote village of West Bengal, the caste system, high- low discrimination and attitudes are still very evident. As a result, the people of these Scheduled Castes are not able to take educational opportunities very easily. And due to financial hardship, they are unable to utilise the educational opportunity. As a result, the constitutional privileges available to them have become meaningless. They have been deprived of these benefits for a long time. Among the Scheduled Castes of West Bengal, the number who have benefited financially from the educational opportunities are very few.

In the term of health their condition has not improved as expected. Still they have more faith in ancient medical methods. Due to financial difficulties they are not getting the opportunity to treat themselves in the best medical centres in West Bengal. As a result, most of the Scheduled Castes people are still dying prematurely without being able to enjoy the benefits of good treatment.

The Main Causes of Backwardness of Scheduled Castes population in West Bengal -

LACK OF EDUCATION :

Lack of education is the most important reason behind the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes people of West Bengal. Due to lack of educational awareness, they are unaware of the need of education. As a result, they have been forced to do low level jobs in the society for a long time. Poverty, ignorance,

and lack of suitable jobs are the major reasons behind the backwardness of Scheduled Castes in education in the present day West Bengal. The main livelihood of Scheduled Castes people in this state are farmers, daily wages, hawker works, mill factory workers, small business, agricultural labourers etc. On the other hand, Scheduled Castes women earn their living by working as agricultural labourers, mill factory workers, and as domestic workers. All these jobs are not remunerated enough. As a result the family remains in poverty. The Scheduled Caste parents have to spend most of their time outside the home to earn money. They can't pay attention to their children's education due to lack of awareness and poverty. As a result, their studies are disrupted from childhood.

Table-02

Scheduled Castes Literacy Rate in West Bengal (2011).

SI No	Name of the Districts	Total	Male	Female
	West Bengal	69.43	77.22	61.23
1	Bankura	54.03	65.74	42.10
2	Bardhaman	62.74	71.50	63.60
3	Birbhum	59.42	67.98	50.42
4	Dakshin Dinajpur	66.26	73.82	58.24
5	Darjeeling	72.94	80.59	65.00
6	Haora	71.33	77.29	65.12
7	Hugli	68.36	76.29	60.12
8	Jalpaiguri	73.04	80.11	60.24
9	Koch Bihar	73.57	80.67	65.54
10	Kolkata	79.31	85.02	66.01
11	Malda	61.04	68.58	72.85
12	Murshidabad	62.23	68.45	52.91
13	Nadia	73.34	79.01	55.68
14	North Parganas 24	79.70	85.37	67.29
15	Medinipur	75.52	83.17	73.69
16	Purulia	56.07	69.82	67.25
17	South Parganas 24	76.31	84.38	67.76
18	Uttar Dinajpur	62.41	70.87	53.31

Source: Census of India, 2011

According to 2011 Census only 69.43 % Scheduled Caste are literate in West Bengal, male and female literacy rate are 77.22% and 61.23% respectively. The highest Scheduled Castes literacy appeared in North 24 Parganas (79.70 %) and the lowest literacy rate appeared in Bankura (54.03 %). The picture of female literacy are very poor in the state. According to the 2011 census data only Medinipur and Malda have above 70% female literacy rate. This picture is really disappointing.

Most of the Scheduled Castes people of West Bengal are belongs to the Namasudra class. People of this sub - caste live in the districts like North 24 Pargana, Nadia and South 24 Pargana. Most of the families are very poor. The women of this families migrated to Kolkata for earning. Male members of this families spend more than half of the day out side the house to earn money for their families. Due to lack of presence of parents, children's education remains deficient. As a result without getting a suitable study environment, they are forced to study up to the secondary or higher secondary and enter the career by working in small business and factories. As a result, their educational career end long before the higher education. Similar situation of people of Rajbanshi class of North Bengal. They are also forced to work in the tea plantation and other factories without being able to progress much in the field of education. The conditions of other sub-castes including Bagdi, Chamar, Dhoba, Dom, Methor, Kotal etc. are same. As a result , they are not able to develop in the field of education.

Lack of government jobs are another major reason behind the educational backwardness of Scheduled Castes population in West Bengal. Almost fourteen lakh students pass secondary and higher secondary examination every year in our state. One third of these are Scheduled Caste students .Very few of them can engage themselves in the government service. As a result, not more than three percent students among the Scheduled Castes cannot join the government jobs. 97% of Scheduled Castes people earn their living outside of government jobs. As a result, reluctance to study can be seen among the students of poor Scheduled Castes due to not getting government jobs after spending a lot of money on education. Although there is 15 percent reservation in government jobs in West Bengal as per the construction, it's not always followed properly. They are farther deprived by showing the lack of proper candidate to take it open to general classes after a few years. In many cases reservation rules are not followed. There are also problems in entering higher educational institutions. This disparity can also be seen in the admissions at the university level. Discrimination can be observed in admission to Master degree and Phd course in various university in West Bengal. Students of Scheduled Castes are not given higher education opportunities despite reservation citing lack of suitable candidates. As a result of this discrimination Scheduled Castes students are deprived of educational opportunities. For this reason, they don't get the opportunities to take the most government jobs.

Another major reason behind the educational backwardness of the Scheduled Castes people of West Bengal is use of false caste credentials among the general class of people. A section among the general classes are depriving the people of the genuine Scheduled Castes of their rights by using false certificates in cooperation or ignorance of the administration. By illegal means, the general peoples are making false caste certificates by using sub- castes like Namasudra, Dhoba, Rishi, Rajbanshi etc. As a result, the Scheduled Castes people are not able to enjoy the benefits that they have reserved for them in terms of education and employment. The result has affected the socio-economic development of this nation. They are not enthusiastic about higher education. Not getting opportunity in government jobs, they have become discouraged to study for government jobs. In West Bengal very few of them have established themselves in the society by getting government jobs and improving their socio-economic status.

CAUSES OF ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS :

Education has a close relationship with economic development. Only the educated part of the society can improve themselves economically by doing government jobs or business. But due to low level of education of Scheduled Castes population in West Bengal ,they can't get good jobs or high paying jobs. As a result, for centuries, they run their families by doing menial jobs such as barber work, sweeper work, petty trades, dome work, labour work, agricultural work, van- rickshaw driving etc. Very few of Scheduled Castes or Dalits have managed to associate themselves with higher positions or higher income. The Namasudra and

Rajbanshi of Dalit class are relatively better of than other Dalit classes of people in West Bengal. The economic position of this two Dalit classes in West Bengal are enabling their next generation to establish a progressively better economic life. However, only a small part of them have been able to achieve this economic development. This condition of the rest is not as expected.

Almost one - fourth of the people of West Bengal belongs to the Dalits community. A very small part of it is associate with government work. They are unable to establish themselves in world of higher education for economic development. As a result, they are lagging behind in economic development. Due to proverty, they have to take responsibility for the family after getting primary and secondary education. As a result, they are forced to choose relatively low quantity work. Which is holding them back economically.

Another major reason behind the economic backwardness of the Scheduled Castes of West Bengal is economic deprivation. A class of people in the society are exploiting their ignorance in various ways. This category of people are not aware of their rights. As a result, they cannot understand their economic rights due to ignorance. Due to ignorance, they are hired as agricultural labourers or for other jobs at low wages. They are under paid even after working long hours. Being destitute they are forced to for less.

Poor women of the Scheduled Castes in West Bengal earn their living by helping in the household ,cooking or working as a labourers in the factories in urban areas. They get paid very little in this case. Even if they work for 8 to 10 hours daily, they can't earn more than 10 thousands rupees per month. As a result, proverty remains in their family. This proverty keeps them poor for life. Children of this families can't get good education or higher education due to financial hardship in the family. They are engaged as labourers or in small business, without finishing secondary or higher secondary level of education to solve the financial problems of their family. Lack of government jobs prevent them from pursuing education. Currently, corruption in ededucation and government service are emerging as a major factor.

CAUSES OF POLITICAL BACKWARDNESS :

Political awareness helps the people to gain their rights. The people of various Sub- Castes of the Scheduled Castes of West Bengal are not politically aware. Most of the Dalits don't involve themselves in political activities. Their participation in direct is very little. They are not aware of their political rights. The main reason for their lack of awareness is their backwardness in education. Because in the field of education, the people of the Dalits class of West Bengal are far behind from the general class of people. Most of the Dalits class people are poor. As a result, they spent most of the day to earn their money for their families. After a long day of hard work, it is very difficult to them to engage in direct politics.

In 1992 through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, one - third reservation was introduced for Scheduled Castes in Gram Panchayat and in Municipalities through the 74th Constitutional Amendment in the same year. The 73rd Amendment Act was passed in 1992 and it came into effect on 24th April '1993 and the 74th Amendment Act came into effect on 1st June ' 1993. This two acts provided Constitutional status to rural and urban local bodies. But even this reservation they could not active in politics. 79 seats have been reserved for Scheduled Castes out of 543 seats in Lok Sabha election across India. In West Bengal this number is 08 out of 42 seats. Out of total 294 in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the number of seats reserved for Scheduled Caste is 68. Scheduled Caste candidates are generally not allowed in unreserved constituencies in the state elections. Only reserved constituencies can see this category of people. This is no exception in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections. As a result, the lack of political awareness is seen very naturally among this class of people.

CAUSES OF CULTURAL BACKWARDNESS:

The cultural status of the Dalits in West Bengal is not as expected. The purpose with which the construction makers introduced the reservation system, its benefits have not yet been delivered to all the people of Scheduled Caste of West Bengal. Education brings consciousness and consciousness brings cultural. Due to the backwardness in the field of education, the culture of this class of people could not be raised to a higher level. The literacy rate of this class of people in our state is far behind now. They have yet failed to raise their culture to a higher level for being backward in education. For being backwardness education they are backward in language and health. They are still more interested in taking rural or ancient methods of treatment. The number of people who know English language is very less among them. They still believe in various superstitions in the field of treatment. Due to financial weakness, they are far behind in terms of food, clothing, shelter and sanitation system. Among the Dalits class of people of West Bengal, a small part of the sixty Sub - castes have managed to change their position slightly by taking the opportunity of education and establishing themselves in government jobs and business.

In all cultural aspects of the life of this class of people, such as education, food, clothing, language etc. the lower position can be observed. Achieving a better quality of life style and culture requires education and money which the Dalits community of Bengal does not have. Livelihood of majority of the people of Dalits society is hereditary occupation, agricultural, small business and labour work. As a result they don't have much money on their hands. Among the Dalits class, the Namasudra and Rajbanshi caste have somewhat satisfactory education rates, and their cultural position is quite advanced. On the other hand, Bauri, Chamar, Rishi, Mochi, Dom, Methor, Kaora, Kotal etc. class of people are underdeveloped due to their cultural position is very backward. Most of the people of Chamar, Mochi, Methor, etc. are still forced to choose the livelihood of their ancestors. In the eyes of the other sections of the society, they are still very low position and untouchable. Even after the 77th years of independence, the cultural conditions of the Dalits society in West Bengal has not improved as expected. From 1947 to the Present time, various governments have taken various measures for their development, but it has not reached to them completely. As a result of not developing their socio-economic status, they are remained culturally backward.

WAY TO SOLVE:

Almost 74 years have passed since the constitution of India came into force on 26th January 1950, but the socio-economic position of the Dalits community in West Bengal is still far behind from the general class of people of our state. Despite various reservation in education and jobs and various schemes of the West Bengal government, the development of the marginal class people of this state is still neglected. In the eyes of the society, they are still untouchable. The general class of the West Bengal still does not look favorably upon them. The general class of the society is not interested in marrying with the Scheduled Castes of the state. They still look down on this class. However, in many ways the situation of Dalits class of West Bengal can be improved or it is possible to bring them back to the main stream of the society.

(1) Lack of education is the root cause of underdevelopment of a nation. Therefore the education of Scheduled Castes population of West Bengal should be improved. Every member should make arrangements to take education compulsory. Higher education opportunities should be increased and it should be ensured that there is no corruption in higher education.

(2) Good job opportunities should be created to remove the economic backwardness. Various job oriented projects and training shall be arranged for Scheduled Castes people for their better job. Currently the reservation policies in the government jobs across the country should be maintained for the real Scheduled Castes people of West Bengal.

(3) All kinds of corruption in government jobs should be stopped. So that the people of genuine Scheduled Castes can get this opportunities.

(4) All people of the society should be represented in the society. They should be made politically aware. This category of people should be made aware of their rights. If they are not politically aware, they will not take able to choose the right candidate in the election.

(5) The government has to stop the use of false certificates of caste and corruption in admission to educational institutions with a strong hands. If not, their rights will be enjoyed by other sections of the society. Which may lead to isolation on indifference to their rights among Dalits. The result of which can be very terrible in West Bengal including present India.

(6) In order to end the backwardness in the cultural field, the sanitation system should be improved for them along with the expansion of education. Observed proper hygiene, good medical facilities, construction of houses, development of roads, proper eating habits should be encouraged.

(7) It's necessary to take immediate administration action in case of any torture against Scheduled Castes population. If the suppressors can be punished quickly, the incidents of injustice against them will be reduced and this class of people will be able to improve their socio-economic status quickly.

(8) In order to increase rate of education, it's necessary to increase hostel facilities, including scholarship to ensure them these facilities are available free or at low cost.

(9) Appropriately qualified Scheduled Castes people need to be nominated for general seats in election, so that they don't feel inferior. This will increase their confidence and potential awareness.

(10) In order to increase economic self-reliance, it is necessary to establish technical schools and education institutions for training in various occupation in Scheduled Castes priority areas.

(11) It is necessary to take proper measures to that modern medical methods can be reached to these Dalits class of people. It must be ensured that they don't die due to lack of modern treatment.

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