

## EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT-A CASE STUDY OF MALDA DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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### Abstract

Several Castes in Hindu society have been described as engaged in unclean occupations, social bondage, who since time immemorial has been experiencing restricted socio-economic, educational and cultural status. Various names have been used to refer to these sections. The names that one comes across for these people are 'Untouchable', 'Chandala', 'Avarna', 'Harijan', 'Depressed class', 'Scheduled castes' and 'Dalits'. Among these Scheduled Caste population constitutes about one-sixth of the total population of Malda district with a lot of spatio-temporal variations ranging from negligible (2.68% of Kaliachak – I) to as high as 49.87% of the total population of Bamangola block of the district. Prior to independence and even later, they had been the poorest of the poor, socially and economically backward caste of the district. In spite of many socio-economic securities provided to them in the constitution and by the Government, they are still comparatively less educated, backward and in the dilemma of privilege and exploitation.

**Keywords:** *Scheduled Caste, Financial Assistant, Scholarship, Hostel, Caste Certificate*

### Study area:

Maldah district of West Bengal lies between 24°40'2" North to 25°32'08" North latitude and 87°45'50" East to 88°28'10" East longitude. Bihar and Jharkhand lie in the West and Bangladesh in the East of Malda district. The Ganga River flows in the South and separates the district from South Bengal while Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal lie in the North of Malda district. The district has an area of 3733 sq.km the total population of the district is 3290468 as per census 2001. The district has population density of 881 persons /sq.km. There are 554165 Scheduled Castes population which is 16.84% of total population of the district.

### Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are-

To describe the various schemes of Government for educational development of SC people

To highlight the different purposes of schemes of SC people,

To find out the number of beneficiaries under different schemes

### Data Source:

The study is based on secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from various Government sources, Census of India; District Statistical Hand book, Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Malda and Government of West Bengal, Backward Classes Welfare Department.

### Empowerment of Scheduled Castes:

"The mid-1980s saw the term 'empowerment' becoming popular and widely used in the field of development. In grass root programs and policy debates alike, empowerment has virtually replaced terms as welfare, upliftment, community participation, and poverty alleviation to describe the goal of development and intervention. Empowerment has become the key solution to many social, economic, political, educational and environmental problems" (Naidu, 2004).

According to Webster's Dictionary, Empowerment means the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given. Through the process of empowerment an individual or a group moves from a condition of relative powerless to relative power.

### PRE-MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP:-

Pre-matric scholarship was started in 1977-78. The main objective of the scheme was to provide financial assistance for children of those engaged in the so called unclean occupations, viz. scavenging, tanning, flaying and sweeping.

Central assistance was provided to the state government on 50:50 basis over and above the committed liability. There were certain inherent defects in the scheme and hence the response of the state government was unsatisfactory. The scheme has been modified with effect from 1st november, 1991, and now it covers day scholars from classes (I) to (X) with graded scholarships i.e.

For class I-V Rs 25 per month

For class VI-VIII Rs 40 per month

For class IX-X Rs 50 per month

The modified scheme covers hostellers from classes III to X. For the students of classes III to VIII, the scholarship was Rs200 per month and for the students of classes IX to X was Rs250 per month. The program has been modified with effect from 1994 and there was no restriction on the number of children of parents up to

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class VIII, and any number of children of couple can get the scholarship. But if the third or subsequent child is born after 1st April 1993, only two Children of the family will be granted scholarship. Similarly, only two children in a family studying in class IX and X will be eligible for the scholarship.

The different facilities under pre-matric scholarship for the scheduled castes students are represented in the table below-

Table-1  
EXPENDITURE AND BENEFICIARIES ON EDUCATIONAL SCHEME  
FOR SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS IN MALDA DIATRRICT  
2007-2010  
(PRE-MATRIC SCHOLAR SHIP)

YEAR	PURPOSE	AMOUNT (Rs.)	BOYS`	GIRLS`	TOTAL
2007-`08	BOOK GRANT	1,17,98,560.00	43755	18750	62505
	HOSTEL CHARGE	24,49,800.00	230	209	439
	MAINTANANCE CHARGE	21,09,120.00	2417	1977	4394
2008-`09	BOOK GRANT	1,00,98,825.00	31282	20853	52135
	HOSTEL CHARGE	23,31,000.00	201	257	458
	MAINTANANCE CHARGE	21,60,000.00	2510	1990	4500
2009-`10	BOOK GRANT	1,64,00,560.00	40770	27181	67951
	HOSTEL CHARGE	23,61,000.00	264	216	480
	MAINTANANCE CHARGE	21,57,600.00	3250	1245	4495

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Malda District-2010.

The table -1 represents facilities like book grant, hostel charge and maintenance charge for the scheduled castes students of pre-matric standard in different years.

#### **BOOK GRANTS:**

The Scheme, Book Grant, is introduced to provide text books for the scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes students. In Malda district, in 2009-2010, an amount of Rs, 1, 64, 00,560 was released to benefit 67,957 scheduled castes students including 40,770 boys and 27,181 girls. In 2008-2009, the amount was Rs 1, 00, 98,825 and 31,282 boys and 20,853 girls were benefited. In 2007-2008, an amount of Rs, 1, 17, 98,560 was released for book grant to benefit 43,755 and 18,750 boys and girls respectively.

#### **Provide Hostel Charges for Scheduled Castes students:**

One of the important schemes to spread education among SCs. students is Hostel Charge paid by the Government. In the Third Five Year Plan period, to provide accommodation to girls studying away from their home, the scheme was started 50% of cost of hostels built is borne by central and 50% by State Government. Like girls' hostels, scheme for boys' hostels for SC/ST was also taken up in 1989-90. During 2007-08, a sum of Rs. 24.49 Lakh was released for hostel charge for 439 (230 boys and 209 girls) SC students. The amount was 23.31 lakh for 458 SC students in 2008-09. In 2009-2010, the amount of hostel charge was 23.61lakh to provide 480 SCs. Students (264 boys and 216 girls).

#### **Maintanance Charge for S.C. students of Maldah District:**

Table-1 represents that in 2009-10, the maintenance charge for the SCs students of the district was Rs 21.57 lakh for 4495 students (3250 boys and 1245 girls).The amount was Rs21.09 lakh for 2417 boys and 1977 girls and Rs 21.60 lakh for 2510boys and 1990 girls in 2007-08 and 2008-09 respectively.

**POST-METRIC SCHOLARSHIPS:**

Post-Matric scholarship was launched in 1994-95. The scholarships are granted to students who are children of industrial workers having an income up to Rs. 60, 095 per annum. <sup>(4)</sup>

Under the post-matric scholarships sum of Rs114.15 cores was sanctioned as central assistance in 2000-01. The rates of scholarship and stipend were revised from time to time. In Malda district a sum of Rs.1.44 cores was sanctioned in 2007-08 for 4597 boys and 2179 girls belongs to scheduled Castes. In 2009-10 Rs 2.38 cores is released as post-matric scholarship for 11,419 S.C. students including 7527 boys and 3892 girls.

Table-2  
EXPENDITURE AND BENEFICIARIES ON EDUCATIONAL SCHEME  
POST-MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP  
FOR SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS IN MALDA DISTRICT  
2007-2010

YEAR	AMOUNT (Rs.)	BOYS`	GIRLS`	TOTAL
2007-'08	1,44,96,470	4597	2179	6776
2008-'09	2,83,98,115	9509	4802	14311
2009-'10	2,38,48,805.00	7527	3892	11419

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Maldah District-2010.

There is scope of considerable expansion of this scheme. Ample funds are available with the Ministry of welfare but are not being utilized for want of complete proposals from the state government in time. It is learnt that few states Governments like West Bengal did not complete proposals during 1992-1993. So the state Government should be aware of this fact.

**Ashram Hostels for SC students in Malda District:**

There are 5 Ashram Hostels in Malda District, 3 located in Gazole block and one each in Bamangola and Harischandrapur-1 blocks, the detail of which is shown below-

Table-3  
LIST OF ASHRAM HOSTELS FOR SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS, 2010

Sl.No.	Name of the School	Block	No. of Hostellers
1	Tiyakati High School	Gazole	20
2	Jagdala High School	Bamangola	20
3	Raniganj K.C. High School	Gazole	20
4	Chandrabati Saha Vidyapith	Gazole	20
5	Pipla High School	Harischandrapur-I	20

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Maldah District-2010.

**Objectives of Ashram Hostels:**

These five Ashram hostels are established to provide the following facilities-

- 1) Free meal for SC students
- 2) Provide Kerosene, soap, oil, hurricane etc.
- 3) Supply of garments,
- 4) Provide money for games, sports and bedding and
- 5) Medical facilities for SC students.

Rate for the above mentioned facilities for SC/ST students in the West Bengal in 2009-10 is shown in the table 4.

Table-4, MAINTAINANCE OF ASHRAM HOSTELS FOR SC & ST STUDENTS  
WEST BENGAL-2009-2010

Sl. No	Item of Expenditure	Rate in Rs.		
		2007-08	2008-09	Rate w.e.f. 01.02.2010
1.	Meal Charge	600/Head/Month	600/Head/Month	750/Head/Month
2.	Other Charges (Purchase of kerosene, soap, oil, hurricane etc.)	300/Head/Year	400/Head/ Year	400/Head/ Year
3.	Garments	80/ Head/ Year	200/Head/ Year	200/Head/ Year
4.	Sports &Games	50/Head/ Year	100/Head/ Year	100/Head/ Year
5.	Bedding	100/Head/ Year	300/Head/ Year	300/Head/ Year
6.	Medical Facilities	50/Head/ Year	100/Head/ Year	100/Head/ Year
7.	Remuneration of Superintendent	1500 /month	1500/month	1500/month
8.	Remuneration of Cook	850/ month	850/ month	850/ month
9.	Remuneration of Helper	600/ month	600/ month	600/ month

Source:-Government of West Bengal, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Writers Building, Kolkata, 2010

Total requirement for the five Ashram Hostels in the Malda district was Rs.40.26 lakh in 2009-10, but sanctioned amount was 38.58 lakh for 400 students including 380 boys and 20 girls. Against the total allotment of 38.58 lakh, the total expenditure was Rs38 lakh 57 thousand 450. So, District welfare office was unable to utilize the total sanctioned amount.

Table-5, EXPENDITURE AND BENEFICIARIES OF ASHRAM HOSTELS  
FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES STUDENTS, 2009-2010

AMOUNT (Rs.)		BENEFICIARIES	
REQUIREMENT	40,26,800	BOYS`	380
ALLOTMENT RECEIVED	38,58,000	GIRLS`	20
EXPENDITURE	38,57,450	TOTAL	400

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Maldah District-2010.

#### Yearly Expenditure of Ashram Hostels in Maldah District:

The yearly expenditure of five Ashram Hostels is given in the table below-

Table-6, YEARLY EXPENDITURE OF ASHRAM HOSTELS  
FOR SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS, 2007-2010

Sl.No.	Name of the School	Block	YEARLY EXPENDITURE(Rs.)		
			2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
1.	Tiyakati High School	Gazole	1,89,000.00	1,89,000.00	2,01,400.00
2.	Jagdala High School	Bamangola	1,89,000.00	1,89,000.00	2,01,400.00
3.	Raniganj K.C. High School	Gazole	1,89,000.00	1,89,000.00	2,01,400.00
4.	Chandrabati Saha Vidyapith	Gazole	1,89,000.00	1,89,000.00	2,01,400.00
5.	Pipla High School	Harischandra Pur-1	1,89,000.00	1,89,000.00	2,01,400.00
T O T A L			9,45,000.00	9,45,000.00	10,07,000.00

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Maldah District-2010.

The table-6 represents that, in 2007-08 and 2008-09 the expenditure of hostels was Rs. 9, 45,000.00. In 2009-10, the expenditure was increased to Rs. 10, 07,000.00. It is also observed that the yearly expenditure of all the Ashram hostels is equal in all the financial years.

#### **Issue of Caste Certificates**

Issue of caste certificates for scheduled Castes is represented in the table -7. In 2008-09, 8811 applications were received and 1546 certificates were issued to the candidates. So, total pending cases were 7365. In 2009-10, 12007 applications were received and 2973 certificates were issued to the candidates. 8683 cases are pending. There are 351 cases with objection. So, it is clear that scheduled castes are becoming more conscious about their facilities for development and hence the number of applicants is increasing.

Table-7  
ISSUE OF CASTE CERTIFICATES TO SCHEDULED CASTES, 2008-2010

YEAR	APPLICATION RECEIVED	CERTIFICATE ISSUED	PENDING CASES	OBJECTION
2008-2009	8811	1546	7365	NIL
2009-2010	12007	2973	8683	351

Source:-Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer, Backward Classes Welfare, Malda.

Education is the chief instrument through which society socializes its members for bringing desirable change. So, special focus has been given in this study on educational status of the people. But there are a lot of variations in the educational status of Scheduled Castes and non-scheduled castes. There are rural-urban variations in the educational level of Scheduled Castes. This is a serious issue which needs to be examined. The paper is reflecting only a miniature of whole fact.

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