

THE SEQUENTIAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NAMASUDRA IN WEST BENGAL: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Present paper attempts to look into the study of the sequential educational development of Namasudra in West Bengal: problem and prospect. The study is based on the primary data but some books, journals, research articles, research reports have been taken as a source of secondary data. Basic information or data for this study has been collected by interviews using standard questionnaires and active participation in the year 2021. The analysis reveals that the Namasudra community is more progress in higher education than other scheduled caste groups in West Bengal. The result shows that how these Namasudra people struggle to uplift themselves from various barriers.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste, Namasudra, Literacy rate, Barriers, Development.

Introduction

The Namasudra are the second largest populated sub-caste among the Scheduled caste community in West Bengal. Originally Namasudra community lived in the eastern part of the undivided Bengal. But after Independence (1947) Bengal has divided into two parts East Pakistan, now it is Bangladesh and West Bengal. Most of the Namasudras were became a part of Bangladesh. Many of them have migrated from Bangladesh by force or wish. Now they scatter mostly in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Andaman-Nicobar Island, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh in India. The Namasudras live in a strong position among the scheduled caste population in West Bengal and are very much fond of education compare to the other group of Scheduled Caste in West Bengal.

Review of Related Literature

Review of literature and pre-assessment of any study plays a vital role because it provides not only data or information and sub-topic for the present research but also smooth management procedure of social science research. It is a well-known fact that every social problem has a relation with country, time and situation and from this point of view, previous studies are not only significant but essential too.

A study of the status of educational development of the Namasudras in West Bengal problems and prospects conducted by **Biswas K. A (2017)**, objectives of this study were to analyse problems of the development of Namasudra concerning demographic, settlement reason, linguistic communication and the problems of the Namasudra about professional barriers and social barriers. The major findings of the study were literacy rates from 1961 to 2001. Most of the Namasudra people were faced the problem of geographical location, habitation problem and linguistic problems. Professionally many of the Namasudra people are farmers, boatmen and labour. And also the attitude toward education of Namasudra students, parents and community members in West Bengal was found in this study.

Biswas A. K (2016) conducted a study on Bengal unsung Namasudra movement. The main objective of the study is to find out various social and educational movements by the Namasudra community leaders in undivided Bengal. During the British period in India Namasudras were segregated by getting educational, political and social rights. They could not even have the right to get a government job and admission in any Hindu upper cast dominated school. As the result, Namasudras were decided to protest against their tormentors in the year 1883. This strike continued for four to five months. This is the first strike officially recognized and recorded in India. The scandals pledged to bring about social progress and development through energetic educational endeavours.

Roy. A (2018), in his article 'Present Educational Scenario of the Namasudra Community in Barkha and Gerul Village of Dakshin Dinajpur District, West Bengal, India: A Critical Synthesis; highlighted the literacy rate of two villages and their comparison. He also gave much emphasis on the causes of educational backwardness and problems regard to the education of the Namasudra people.

Biswas N. B (2004), in his work entitled 'Emergence of Namasudra as a Sub-caste: an Ethnological view' had highlighted an ethnological view of a sub scheduled caste, unification and progress for socio-economic and political recognition. He also gave much emphasised the settlement and educational problems of Namasudra and how they are exploited by the so-called upper caste group.

Bandyopadhyay S. & Choudhury B.R. A (2014), in their study ‘The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition’ had highlighted the social and educational movement of the Namasudra people. They also emphasised how Namasudra people were bounded to migrate from Bangladesh to West Bengal, India after partition and After migration how they scatter all over India and how their leader lead them for survival had also highlighted.

Objectives

Objectives of this study are given as below:

1. To study the progressive status of settlement- causes of the Namasudra Community.
2. To examine the developmental status of the Namasudra Community about demographic causes.
3. To study the problems of development related to Language, Education, Professional and Social Barriers of the Namasudra community.

Methodology

Documentary survey and field survey (where highly Namasudra population are located) have been followed for the data collection. In the documentary survey, some books, journals/, Ph.D theses, research reports, etc. have been followed and the in-field survey interview technique has been followed by using standardised questionnaires.

Analysis and Interpretations of the study

Literacy percentage of Namasudra people from 1971-2011 census of West Bengal have been given in the following table:

Table no. 1: Scheduled Caste and Namasudra community decadal literacy rate in West Bengal

Sl no	West Bengal	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	Scheduled Caste	13.58%	17.80%	24.42%	42.21%	59.0%	69.40%
2	Namasudra	21.03%	26.86%	35.87%	56.18%	71.93%	79.5%

In the Scheduled Caste of West Bengal, many sub-castes have been found. At present fifty-nine different sub-castes are exist. Most of the sub-castes are still lag incomplete access to education. But few sub-castes have been successfully developed in education. Namasudras are one of the sub-caste who is more developed in education better than other groups of sub-castes among the scheduled caste in West Bengal. In 2011 census 69.40 percent of Scheduled Castes are literate, where Namasudra is 79.50 percent literate. Around 10% more literate Namasudras are living in West Bengal than other groups of SCs literacy. Chronologically different years of literacy rate of SCs were 13.58% in 1961, 17.80% in 1971, 24.42% in 1981, 42.21% in 1991, 59% in 2001 and 69.4% in 2011. On the other hand the literacy rate of Namasudra community was 21.03% in 1961, 26.86% in 1971, 35.87% in 1981, 56.18% in 1991, 71.93% in 2001 and 79.5% in 2011 census. From the above table, it is also seen that the literacy growth rate of Namasudra is higher than all Scheduled Castes in every census report of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. The development of Namasudra people in the field of education in West Bengal express that they are much more aware of their rights, duties toward their society, region, state and nation as well.

In the above table no.1, it is mentioned that in West Bengal Namasudras remain higher than all Scheduled Castes in perspective of literacy percentage. It is also seen in the year 1961 census all scheduled caste literacy rate was 13.58% and in the same year, 21.03% of Namasudra literacy rate was found. In the next census in 1971, there was recorded as 17.80% of scheduled caste literacy and 26.86% of Namasudra literacy, 24.42% and 35.87% of scheduled caste and Namasudra literacy rate was recorded in 1981 census, difference literacy rate between SCs and Namasudras was 11.05%. SCs literacy was 42.21% but Namasudras literacy was 56.18%, this difference increased up to 13.97% in the 1991 census. In the 2001 census report, SCs were 59.00% and Namasudras were 71.93% literate. The literacy increase difference in this year was 12.93%. Last, in the 2011 census, SCs 69.40% and Namasudras 79.50% maximum literacy rate was recorded. Above all the information of literacy growth rate of Scheduled Caste and Namasudra people shows that the educational progress of the Namasudra community is better than Scheduled Caste in West Bengal.

Namasudra people are not only very good in education but also they are very sound in economic and political field rather than the other scheduled caste in West Bengal. Dr R. C. Majumder expressed in his book ‘History of Bengal’ (1988), that during the dynasty of king Gopal Pal and other kings of his dynasty were economically, culturally sound in Bengal. They belonged to the Aristocratic community in dignity and the magnitude of their livelihood was high. After that king, Ballal Sen was started ruling over the people of Bengal. He came from south India and he was a strong supporter of Brahmins and caste distinction forced the Namasudras to accept the inhuman rules. But the Namasudras were opposed to accepting these rules. Ballal with all powers implemented his force against them and urged them away from their ancestral land tortured mercilessly and declared all over his state that Namasudras are ‘Chandal’, ‘Charal’ and untouchables. Thus they are bound to become the lowest class of the Hindu religion. Though Namasudras were considered as the lower caste of the Hindu society and they began to scatter to a different part of India to survive. But they maintained their lifestyle and it is separated them from the sub- caste of the scheduled caste.

Table No. 2: Decadal educational Growth of Scheduled Caste and Namasudra community**in West Bengal**

Sl No.	West Bengal	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001	2001-11
1	Scheduled Caste	4.22%	6.62%	17.79%	16.79%	10.0%
2	Namasudra	5.83%	9.01%	20.31%	15.75%	7.57%

The above table no.2 reveals the decadal progress of education of Scheduled Caste and Namasudra in various census in West Bengal. It is also indicated that Namasudra literacy growth was very fast of the previous census but after that, it came low down. Namasudra educational growth rate was 5.83% in 1961-1971 in the above table mentioned, where the educational growth rate of Scheduled Caste was 4.22%. In the same way 6.62% among all Scheduled Caste and 9.01% among Namasudra people in 1971-1981. In the year 1981-1991 among Namasudra the literacy growth rate was 20.31% and among all Scheduled Caste was 17.79%, it is also mentioned that the literacy growth rate of Namasudras is higher than all other Scheduled Castes, but it came down in the decade 1991-2001, it was 15.75% of Namasudra and 16.79% of all Scheduled Caste. Finally, in the year 2001 to 2011 literacy growth rate of SC in education came down to 10%, on the other hand, Namasudra literacy growth rate in education came down to 7.57%.

Literacy rate of Scheduled Caste in different Districts of 2011 census are Bardhaman- 62.74%, Birbhum- 59.42%, Bankura – 54.03%, Purba Medinipur – 82.18%, Pachim Medinipure – 69.14%, Howrah – 71.30%, Hooghly – 68.36%, North 24 Parganas – 79.70, South 24 Parganas -76.31%, Kolkata – 79.31%, Nadia – 73.34%, Murshidabad – 62.23%, Uttar Dinajpur – 62.41%, Dakshin Dinajpur – 66.26%, Malda – 61.04%, Jalpaiguri 73.04%, Darjeeling – 72.94%, Cooch Behar – 73.57%, Purulia-56.04%. The total literacy rate of Scheduled Caste people is recorded maximum of 69.40% where the literacy rate of Namasudra people is 79.50% in 2011 census. The literacy growth of Namasudra people is 10.10% more than all Scheduled Caste people.

From the ancient period, Namasudras were a very strong community in respect of social, cultural, profession or any other sectors. They are comparatively stronger than other scheduled castes groups in education in West Bengal and also keep their developmental trend in the social system presently. In West Bengal, though Namasudras is recognised as a backward class group in every perspective they stay and keep themselves more advance and upgrade than other scheduled caste groups in West Bengal. Due to low socio-economic conditions and religious prejudice or an illogical social system this community still living in the lowest stage of society. So-called upper caste people are responsible for the lowest condition of the Namasudra community because upper caste people are always bound to impose all the prejudice and unscientific or illogical law over Namasudra and scheduled caste groups. At present Namasudras are fighting to get minimum facilities to uplift themselves and requirements are very less.

The majority of Namasudras depends on cultivation, labour, fishery and daily wages. They live in rural and sub-urban in West Bengal. The researcher has found during field visits that many families of few districts in West Bengal regularly think about their food. Though state and central government have implemented many schemes to uplift them into the mainstream of society still they are fighting for survival. Some of the districts Namasudras and other scheduled caste groups are still lag, but some districts of the state i.e. North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Purba Medinipur etc. Namasudras and scheduled caste people progress in many aspects like education, habitation, culture, social status and profession. Some people of Namasudra presently doing the highest profession of the state but it is not enough to develop all the people of Namasudra. If some group of people reach in high position does not indicate that development of the state, when all the people will progress then the state shall be developed in every aspect. To examine the cause of unequal development a study has been taken up with the following parametrs.

Settlement Reason

Most of the refugee families who crossed the Bangladesh border were lived in the camps settled by the Government. The conditions of these camps were very poor and it was not suitable for living. In such a place the people had to face an unhygienic. Sanitary and drinking water facility was suitable for the people. Hardly educational institutions were located near the refugee camps.

Table No. 3; Problem of Settlement

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	62% (75)	20% (25)	16% (20)

From the above table it is clear that in West Bengal majority of the Namasudra community are facing problems of residence. 62 percent of Namasudra people face the problem of residence, 20 percent face it sometimes and 16 percent never face the problem of settlement.

Demographic reason:

The uprooted Namasudras had to face many troublesome situations when they migrated from East Bengal to West Bengal. They had to face various types of demographic and geographic environments, and they took much time to adjust and accommodate in the new place.

Table No. 4: Problem of Demographic Location

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	23.1% (28)	50% (60)	26.9% (32)

From above it reveals that in west Bengal majority of the Namasudras are facing problems of demographical location. 23.1 percent of Namasudra people always face the problem of geographical location, 50 percent face it sometimes and 26.9 percent never face the problem.

Social barriers

In earlier, the Namasudras had strong social bonding. But when they migrated to West Bengal their bonding was broken. Once Namasudra people were socially far away from scientific awareness, they became the victims of prejudice very soon. They also lived in a different cultural atmosphere and lost most of their cultural atmosphere. So that they are staying far away from the light of the progress.

Table No. 5: Problem-related to social status

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	11.1% (13)	33.3% (40)	55.6% (67)

From above table it is clear that in west Bengal majority of the Namasudras are facing problems of social status. 11.1 percent of Namasudra people always face the problem of social status, 33.3 percent face it sometimes and 55.6 percent never face the problem.

Linguistic problem

Language plays a vital role in the extent of education. Namasudra people faced the problem of getting an education because of their regional language. It became an obstacle to extent education among them.

Table No. 6: Problem-related to linguistic communication

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	7.7% (9)	19.2% (23)	73.1% (88)

Above table reflects that in west Bengal, Namasudras are facing problems with language. 7.7 percent of Namasudra people face the problem of linguistic always, 19.2 percent face it sometimes and 73 percent never face the problem.

Professional barriers

Most of the Namasudra people of East Bengal were professionally farmers, boatmen, daily labour etc. They have to earn for their survival on such professional only. But they could not attach such a profession in the beginning when they came to West Bengal. Presently they involve many professions like agriculture, daily labour, secondary and tertiary sectors to keep up with time.

Table No. 7: Problem-related to Profession

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	37% (44)	37.1% (45)	25.9% (31)

Above table reveals that in west Bengal majority of the Namasudras are facing problems of getting a job or employment. 37 percent of Namasudra people face the problem of profession always, 37.1 percent face it sometimes and 25.9 percent never face the problem.

It is seen from the above analysis that the major problem of the scheduled caste for their progress is less number of educational institutions in their area, language barrier and lack of teachers from their community at the primary level. It is alienated them from the learning environment.

Conclusion

From this study, it is revealed that the Namasudra people are to some extent progress in education, and literacy is higher than other scheduled caste in the state of West Bengal. Though they are facing problems of settlement, social status, economic, language, profession etc. but the Namasudra community is continuously progressing. As financial, settlement, professional, social status are the main factor for pursuing education by the Namasudra therefore it is necessary to improve their economic condition and other necessities for active participation in the field of education. By getting these opportunities Namasudra Communities will be more developed in the field of education. The government and political leaders must ensure that all the government programmes and benefits must reach to the Namasudra and other backward Communities for their progress in all the sectors like education, economic and professional growth. Essential data of this article has been collected through various means and sources to complete the objectives fixed for the study.

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