

Status of Educational Development of the Namasudras in West Bengal: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: In this article the researcher wants to focus on the educational development of the Namasudras in West Bengal along with their problems and prospects. The Namasudras occupy a stronger position among the scheduled caste population in West Bengal. However, this article shows how these Namasudra people struggled to uplift themselves from various barriers. On the basis of the collected data the analysis is done in this article regarding various objectives mentioned.

Keywords: Namasudras, barriers, Scheduled Caste, literacy rate.

Introduction: The Namasudras are very strong scheduled caste group in West Bengal. They stood second position in the scheduled caste population of West Bengal; they share 17.40% to the total scheduled caste of the state according to the census 2001 of West Bengal. Namasudras are the indigenous group of the state. As the Namasudras in West Bengal are very strong among the scheduled caste of the state, so they are very sound in education in comparison to the other group of scheduled caste in the state.

Objectives of the Study: The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- (1) To analyze the problems of the development of the Namasudras with regard to demographic reason.
- (2) To study the developmental status of the Namasudras with regard to settlement-reason.
- (3) To study the problems of the Namasudras with regard to linguistic communication.
- (4) To study the problems of the Namasudras with regard to professional barriers.
- (5) To study the problems of development of Namasudras with respect to social barriers.

Methodology of the Study:

The data has been collected through documentary survey and field survey (where the Namasudra population is highly located).

Analysis and Interpretation:

In the following table literacy percentages of Namasudra people are shown from 1961-2001 census of West Bengal.

Table No.1: Literacy of the Namasudras and the Scheduled Caste people in various years of West Bengal :

SI No.	West Bengal	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
1.	SC	13.58%	17.80%	24.42%	42.21%	59.04%
2.	Namasudra	21.03%	26.86%	35.87%	56.18%	71.93%

The Namasudra people in West Bengal are to some extent developed in the field of education in comparison to the other community group among scheduled caste of the state. Their present literacy rate of Scheduled Caste is 71.93%, according to the census 2001. In the census 1961 of West Bengal their literacy rate was 21.03%, 26.86% in 1971, 35.87% in 1981, 56.18% in 1991 and 71.93% in 2001. The present literacy rate of the group is higher than the state level scheduled castes literacy rate. It is also revealed from the table above that the literacy rate of the Namasudra people is higher than the all census report in West Bengal, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001. This progress in the field of education reveals that the Namasudra people in West Bengal are very conscious about their rights, duties and responsibilities towards their life, society and to the country as well.

It is also revealed from the above table no 1 that in each census the literacy rate of scheduled caste remains below than that of the Namasudras in the state. According to the census-1961 the literacy rate of SCs was 13.58%, whereas Namasudra people literacy rate was 21.03%. Again in 1971 the SCs literacy rate was 17.80% and Namasudra people literacy was 26.86%. In 1981 the participation of SCs in education was 24.42% and Namasudra people literacy was 35.87%. In this year the different literacy rate was observed 11.45, but in 1991 this difference increased up to 13.97. In this year literacy among all scheduled caste was found 42.21%, but Namasudra literacy was observed 56.18%. It reveals that growth rate of Namasudras in education is better than all scheduled caste literacy growth. Finally, in 2001 census of the state Namasudra literacy is recorded maximum of 71.93% and all scheduled caste literacy rate is observed 59.04%. So, it is found from the above table that trend of development of Namasudras in education is very good in the state.

Namasudras in West Bengal are not only sound in education, but they are also very sound in their economics and political fields. In this regard it may be mentioned that Das. B (1986) expressed that in Bengal during the period of King Gopal and other Kings of his dynasty and Raja Sitaram they were economically sound. They belonged to the Aristocratic community in culture and dignity and magnitude of their livelihood was high. But afterward due to political changes and violence of untouchability which incited during the reign of Raja Ballov Sen, who was a strong supporter of Brahmins and caste distinction, forced the Namasudras to accept the inhuman rules. But the Namasudras opposed to accept the inhuman rules. The King with all powers operated his force against them and drove them away from their ancestral land tortured mercilessly and announced all over his state that Namasudras are 'Chandals', 'Charal' and untouchables. Thus they were placed in the lowest class of the Hindu society. So, from that time onward though they were considered lower caste of the society and migrated to different places of India, but they could maintain their life style above than any other sub-caste of scheduled caste group. Consequently, they are able to progress in every sphere of their life.

Table No. 2 Decadal wise growth of Namasudra and Scheduled caste people in education in West Bengal :

SI No.	West Bengal	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
1.	SC	4.21%	6.62%	17.79%	16.83%
2.	Namasudra	5.83%	9.01%	20.31%	15.75%

The above mentioned table no 2 reveals the decadal growth of education among Namasudra and scheduled caste in West Bengal in various censuses of the West Bengal, It is seen from the table that growth rate of Namasudra literacy in West Bengal in the early censuses was very fast, but later on it came down. It is found from the table that decadal variation of growth rate among Namasudra people in the state was 5.83% in 1961-1971, whereas all scheduled caste rate was only 4.22% in the same year. In the same way 9.01% among Namasudra and 6.62% among all scheduled caste is found in the year 1971-1981, 20.31% among Namasudra and 17.79% among scheduled caste in 1981-1991. It also reveals that growth rate of Namasudra people in education always remain above than the state level scheduled caste literacy growth so far the above table is concerned. But suddenly in the decade 1991-2001 growth rate of Namasudra all scheduled caste people in education was came down. It is seen from the above table that in this decade Namasudra people's growth rate came down into 15.75% and all scheduled caste people's growth rate came down into 16.83%.

The above table expresses that the district-wise participation of Namasudra people as well as scheduled castes people in education in the census 2001. In the table highest literacy i.e. above 70% among the Namasudra people found in the districts are Puruliya 85.40% whereas scheduled caste literacy percentage of the district is only

45.15%, than 73.19% among Namasudra in Kolkata and 70.54% among scheduled caste. The districts having more than 60.00% literacy of Namasudra people are North 24 Paragana 69.35%, Midnapur 67.27%, Birbhum 66.54%, Howrah 67.10% and Hooghly 68.08%, Darjeeling 61.34%, Nadia 61.81%, Burdwan 64.19%, Bankura, 62.44% and Murshidabad 61.16%. Again the districts having below 60.00% are Uttar Dinajpur 54.62%, Jalpaiguri, 57.01%, Coochbihar 53.19%, DakshinDinajpur 53.09% and Maldah 55.87%. The above table also reveals that almost all the districts having higher literacy of Namasudra in education in comparison to the state level scheduled caste literacy percentage. But it is only four districts of the state having higher literacy among scheduled caste in comparison to the Namasudra people. The districts are North 24 Paraganas 70.79% of scheduled caste, w/hereasNamasudra people's literacy is 69.35%, than Koochbihar 66.30% among scheduled caste and 53.19% among Namasudras, Jalpaiguri 61.87%, and 57.01% and in Darjiling 62.43% among scheduled caste and 61.34% among Namasudras.

The table above again explains that Namasudras in West Bengal are comparatively stronger in the field of education in comparison to the few scheduled caste group as well as all scheduled caste people. As it is found from the history that Namasudra in Bengal were very strong group, so they could keep their developmental trend in the present time social system also. Actually, though they have been recognized as the scheduled caste or lower group people in the society, but they keep themselves above in every aspects than the scheduled caste in the West Bengal society. But in some cases, still they are living at the lowest level social structure due to their low socio economic condition and due to the social system imposed over them by the so called higher caste people in the society. The people of this group living under that sector still are able to get even minimum facilities required by them.

However, majority of this group of people are living in rural areas of the state and maximum of them are still dependent on agriculture and daily wages. During the field visit of the researcher, it is found in some cases that there are some families in the districts of Nadia and North 24 Paraganas, they are to think regularly about their food; and in that situation their reply was that in such situation they could not think of sending their children to the school, though govt. has introduced free and compulsory education to the all people irrespective of caste, creed, community, sex, race and languages. Because of these mentioned reasons some of the districts of West Bengal still could not show the education level high of the scheduled caste and Namasudras. But there are some districts which are developed in many sides; consequently they could show their education in very high position. But development of a state does not mean to develop one group or few groups in some fields; rather development means progress of all people from all areas. To examine the causes for unequal development a study has been taken up with the following objectives.

Demographic reason: The displaced Namasudras had to face various troublesome situations when they came from East Bengal to West Bengal. They had to face different geographical atmosphere where they took much time to be accustomed to.

Table No.3 : Problem Related to Demographic Location:

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	16(5.34%)	114(38%)	170(56.60%)

Majority of the Namasudra people of West Bengal are undergoing the problems of geographical location. 5.34% people of West Bengal face the problems of geographical location always. 38% people face it sometimes. 56.60% face the problem never.

Settlement-Reason:

The refugee families lived in the camps allotted by the govt. These camps were not suitable for living. Population was much with respect to living places. In such region people have to face unhygienic atmosphere and lack of drinking water and sanitation. Besides, there were no educational institutions.

Table No. 4 : Problem Related to Settlement:

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
WestBengal	114(38.34%)	112(38. %)	74(24.66%)

Majority of the Namasudra people of West Bengal are undergoing the problems of residence 38.34% people of West Bengal face the problems of residence always. 38% people face it sometimes. 24.66 % face the problem never.

Linguistic Communication Problem:

Language played a major role in the spread of education. Their regional language problem became an obstacle in the spread of education among them.

Table No.5: Problem Related to Linguistic Communication:

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	12(4%)	106(35.34%)	182(60.66%)

Majority of the Namasudra people of West Bengal are undergoing the problems of language 4% people of West Bengal face the problems of language always. 35.34 % people face it sometimes. 60.66% face the problem never.

Professional barriers:

The Namasudras of the East Bengal were mainly farmers, boatmen etc. They had to earn their living on such professions. But in West Bengal they could no more attached to such profession in the beginning. Presently they have to be involved in various professions mainly agriculture, daily labour, secondary sector and tertiary sector to keep up with time.

Table No. 6: Problem Related to profession:

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	46(15.34%)	108(36%)	146(48.66%)

Majority of the Namasudra people of West Bengal are undergoing the problems of profession 15.34% people of West Bengal face the problems of professional always. 36 % people face it sometimes. 48.66 % face the problem never.

Social barriers:

The Namasudras previously had a social bonding. But when they came to West Bengal their bonding did not remain intact. As the people were socially far away from scientific consciousness, they easily became the victims of superstitions. They live in a separated cultural ambience so they are staying far away from the light of civilization.

TableNo7 : Problem Related to social status:

State	Always	Sometimes	Never
West Bengal	30(10%)	104(34.66%)	166(55.34%)

Majority of the Namasudra people of West Bengal are undergoing the problems of social status 10% people of West Bengal face the problems of social status always. 34.66% people face it sometimes 55.34. % face the problem never. It appears from the above analysis that the major problems of the Scheduled Caste for their development is their less number of school in their area from times the language barriers and of the teacher from their own community at the primary level alienated them from the learning situation of course slowly those problem residing.

Conclusion:

In the present article, the necessary data gathered through various means and sources have been narrated to fulfill the objectives fixed for the study. Data of the study have been analyzed and interpreted with the help of various Government documents, books, Census report, Guruchand followers, Namasudras people's the attitudes towards education of Namasudra students, parents and community members of West Bengal, the problems faced by the Namasudras in West Bengal and suggestion to the Namasudras students.

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