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A Study on the Educational Status of Scheduled Caste People in Udalguri District with Special Reference to Rowta Development Block

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Abstract

Education is considered as the most powerful instrument of social change and development. It is only through education that people can bring desirable changes and development by developing their social and economic conditions. But in a caste ridden and hierarchical society like India access to educational opportunities is unequal and unjust. Though, Scheduled caste group is the part and parcel of the mainstream of the total population of Assam. It has been found that scheduled caste groups are regarded as depressed and exploited class people in Assam who find social, economic and political exploitation since time immemorial. Education is the most crucial tool of empowering marginalized people to lift themselves from the existing levels of poverty and socio-economic backwardness. Various government policies focusing on the upliftment of these marginalized communities and efforts being made are to improve their socio-economic and political condition. But the conditions of the majority of the scheduled caste people have by and large remained the same. And in Udalguri district also their education and socio-economic status of SC population is not satisfactory. So there is need a systematic study on exploration of education of scheduled caste population. In this regard, a systematic study is conducted of schedule caste population under Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District. In this study the researcher followed the descriptive research with survey method. All the SC people inhabited villages under Rowta Development Block constituted the target population. Simple random sampling was followed for the study. An attempt has been made in this paper to highlight educational status of SC people and causes of their backwardness in educational development and achievements.

Keywords: *Socio-economic status, Scheduled Caste, achievements, exploration, education etc.*

1. Introduction: Education is considered as the most powerful instrument of social change and development and means of reducing inequality in the society. It helps the individual to raise its social status in various ways .It acts as a catalyst in improvement in many other aspects of life. The role of education as an investment in human resources has been increasingly recognized in all countries. But in a caste ridden and hierarchical society like India's access to educational opportunities is unequal and unjust. However, after the

independence the 'Directives principles of state policy' enables the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class of citizens. Articles 15(4), 29, 30, 45-46 and 350-A are the relevant provisions in the constitution pertaining to educational development of the people. Education has a special significance particularly for the weaker sections of the society. Since independence, the Government is making serious efforts to promote literacy among the SCs by providing free education, awarding scholarships, reservation of seats and granting loans. In spite of all these privileges, their literacy has not improved satisfactorily. They have to go a long way to come up in the field of educational development¹.

The Scheduled Caste throughout the country occupies the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy. The Scheduled Castes include several Castes in the Hindu Society. As per Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes order act 1976. Assam has sixteen castes categorized as Scheduled castes. Initially they were known as depressed class of the society. But according to the constitutional provision, from the year 1950, sixteen castes have been known as Scheduled Castes in Assam. They are Bansphor, Bhuinmali or Mali, Brittal-Bania, Dhubi, Dugala, Hira, Jhalo-Malo, Jalkeot, Kaibarta, Lalbegi, Mahara, Mehtar or Bhangi, Muchi, Namasudra, Patris and Sutradhar. Lack of education and its facilities is also one of the socio-economic cause of the backward communities specially Scheduled Caste people.

Though the literacy rate among the scheduled castes has increased 10.27 in 1961 to 66.10% in 2011 in national level but some scheduled caste communities still continue to remain educationally backward and there are some who do not have any single literate person in their fold. The rate of literacy does not necessarily indicate the level of educational attainment in modern times. Increase in enrolment and decrease in dropout are also two important indicators for measuring the educational development.

After formation of Udalguri District the government of India as well as Assam has taken a number of steps to strengthen the educational base of SC people in Udalguri District. But still in Udalguri district education and socio-economic status of SC population is not satisfactory. So there is need a systematic study on exploration of education of scheduled caste population. In this regard, a systematic study is conducted of schedule caste population under Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District. So this study will help us to know the educational status of SC people in the studied area. And it has the great significance in the modern age of education.

2. Objectives:

The study was designed with the following objectives:

- To study the educational status of the SC people under Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District.
- To study the causes of educational backwardness of SC people in the studied area.

3. Methodology: For the present study the researcher has used descriptive research and survey method and data has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. For the primary sources of data a survey has been conducted in the five villages under the Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District. Were selected randomly as sample. Head of the households, head of the village, head of the educational institutions of the particular area and the scheduled caste students were selected as respondents .Interview is used as a tool for the present study. On the other hand, the secondary data and information have been collected from different statistical records of the Government of Assam, various local bodies, different books and journals, published Research papers and articles, etc.

4. Findings of the Study: The Udalguri district is a newly constructed district of BTAD and it is situated easternmost corner of the region .The total geographical area of the district is 1673.94 square km. However in Udalguri District where people of different community are living since long back and their educational and socio-economic status is not satisfactory particularly SC people. The study found that the SC people in this district are still backward in educational development and achievements. The socio-economic and socio-familial factors, inadequate government funds and incentives, lack of proper planning and proper implementation of government policies and schemes are acting as the major barriers of SC education in this area. The total SC population in Udalguri district is 37,844(2011 census) and among them 22,840 is literate and 15,004 is illiterate. And in my studied area total SC population is 1,592 and among them 854 literate (2011census).In the studied area mainly concentrated SC groups are Jhalo-malo, Harijan, Namasudra, sutradhar and Baniya. There have a number of Elementary Schools, 4 numbers of high and higher secondary schools, private and venture schools and one junior college .But the enrolment of SC students is not satisfactory. The demographic profile of the studied area is shown below:

Table-1: The demographic profile of villages under Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District:

Name of the villages	Area of villages in hectors	Community	Total House holds	Total popula tion	Male	Female	Population (0-6)
Balisiha Habi	124.76	Jhalo-malo/Bania	35	270	141	129	23
Tarabari	216.76	Muchi	29	175	98	77	19
Barjhar	338.95	Namasudra	21	140	72	68	18
Dhansirikhuti	225.84	Baniya/sutra dhar	15	75	45	30	11

Source: Field study

To study the educational status of SC people we should know about their educational level and attainment. So in my field study I have collected some data from the studied area. These are shown below:

Table-2: Educational level of the SC people of the four villages under Rowta Development Block of Udalguri District.

Name of the villages	Illiterate		Literate								
	Persons	%	person	%	Below primary level	Primary (I-V)	Middle (VI-VIII)	secondary (IX-X)	HSLC Passed	Higher Secondary passed	Graduate
Balisiha Habi	129	47.8	141	52.22	105	20	18	11	04	03	Nil
Tarabari	83	49.71	90	50.29	50	17	11	09	02	01	Nil
Barjhar	61	43.58	79	56.4	49	13	10	05	02	00	Nil
Dhansiri khuti No.5	25	33.33	50	66.7	26	08	04	05	03	03	01

Source: Field study

It is observed from the table that educational attainment of SC people of these villages is not satisfactory. The educational level shows that the below primary level literates is very high. In the Secondary and higher Secondary level enrolment of SC students is very low. And there is only one graduate in the above four villages. It is observed in the field study that there are large-scale school dropouts during and after the primary stage of education among this section which is primarily due to financial hardships.

In my field study, I have taken some views from the respondents regarding the education of SC people. These are given below.

4.1: Teachers' opinion about the causes of backwardness of education of scheduled caste students,

During my survey, the majority of the teachers have opine that , financial problem, guardian unconsciousness, low attendance of the scheduled caste students ,lack of proper implementation of government policies and illiteracy of parents remain as the major hindrances in backwardness of schedule caste education in this area. They also mentioned that the enrolment of SC students in secondary and higher Secondary level is very low and dropout rate is very high among this section.

4.2 Views of Scheduled caste students on various issues regarding their education: The majority of the SC students opine that they do not get the facilities like scholarships, home tutors, and parental guidance in addition to improper household condition. The views of the SC students clearly reveal that they play a role of earning member of the family in many cases. And the secondary level students also opine that they do not have all the textbooks.

4.3 Views of parents/guardians and head of the villages regarding the causes of educational backwardness: The majority of the parents and head of the villagers opines that their financial problem is the main cause of educational backwardness. Because of weak economic condition they are not able to effort their children for education. And they also mention about the lack of government funds is also the cause of their educational backwardness. They also mentioned that at present guardians are to some extent conscious about their child so some of them send their children to the school and government policy like SSA encourage them for educating their students.

4.4 Major findings of the study: The educational level of SCs is not satisfactory in the studied area..They enjoy a low educational status. The enrolment and retention of SC students goes lower and dropout rate goes higher as the level of classes goes higher. Guardian's unconsciousness, lack of guidance, financial problem remains as major barriers in Scheduled Caste education.

Education has a considerable impact on their economic conditions but due to limited aspirations, job insecurity and poverty the majority of scheduled caste students are not encouraged to opt for secondary or higher education.

A large percentage of Scheduled Caste students are deprived of government funds and incentives. The Government assistance is not availed by the SC people for whom the provisions are made.

They are not aware about their rights and constitutional provisions. Lack of awareness of SC people about educational importance, educational concessions, scholarships, reservation etc. provided for them.

Scheduled caste children because of their socio economic conditions, find it hard to be in schools. They are not benefited by the reservation policy because of lack of education they are not able to take benefits of the policy. They are not able to apply higher education and jobs which are reserved for them.

Lack of progressive outlook and under privileged conditions for centuries fails to motivate them towards receiving education.

4.5: Suggestions: Therefore, to overcome the problem of SC education it may be suggested that the concerned authorities should take appropriate steps to provide proper facilities for effective participation of scheduled caste population education in this district. Adult education should be encouraged to motivate the parents or guardian regarding education. Some sort of counseling guidance should be arranged for the parents to make them aware about the importance of education in their life. The traditional occupation has to be regenerated with modern techniques. In educational institutions vocational courses should be opened in such occupation. The field work and Government survey should be done properly and special arrangements should be made for wide publicity among the SC people about different schemes of development and the ways and means to improve their status by availing themselves of the schemes and participating in such schemes. At last to overcome the problems of SC people accurate information regarding the provision made in the

constitution for the upliftment of the SC people to be given wide publicity through mass media like radio, television, newspapers, bulletins and wall posters. Otherwise SC people will remain same status as the past.

5. Conclusion: Analysis of the results in this study reveals some genuine and significant facts that participation and progress of scheduled caste student's education in study area is below the satisfactory level .As per the first objective of this paper we can state that the educational status of SC people is below the satisfactory level in the studied area. .As per the second objective of this paper the major factors behind the backwardness of these students in this stage remain as guardian unconsciousness, lack of motivation, low attendance of students in schools and above all financial problem and poverty along with inadequate government aids . The enrolment of SC students in higher Secondary and higher education is not satisfactory in the studied area. Although attempt has been made by the state government as well as central government for their better improvement in education but their result is not satisfactory. The Scheduled Caste students do not differ from non-scheduled Caste students in terms of their intelligence,creativity,academic achievements, self-concept and self-aspiration but the enrolment, retention and dropout of Scheduled caste students in schools and colleges are influenced by the availability, effective administration and implementation of the programmes and schemes for the welfare of the Scheduled Caste Provided by the government and this is likely to lead the progress of their education. Therefore it may be concluded that to improve the educational status of SC people there is need to increase their enrolment in higher education and the Government should provide some free cost of books and other learning material up to 10+2 level and encourage them for higher education

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