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A Study on Socioeconomic Status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Malda District of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Scheduled groups are one of the poorest sections of society in India (UNO, India). A significant share of Malda's population is scheduled population (28.81 %) who have lower socio-economic condition. The Malda district is selected as study area. The study is based on both secondary and primary source of data. The UNDP dimension index is prepared to get spatial pattern of socio-economic status of SCs and STs. An 'in-depth interview is conducted to know the causative factors for their backwardness in the district. The study reveals that only 20 percent and 6 percent of SC and ST households had pucca house compared to 23 percent overall population. For the overall population, 36 percent of houses have drinking water sources on the premises, but SCs and STs just 31 percent and 22 percent, respectively. The 62 percent of people are literate, compared to 61 percent and 47 percent for SCs and STs. There are 4 percent of households who earn more than 10,000 rupees a month, compared to 3.52 percent and 2.32 percent for SCs and STs.

The socioeconomic status of SCs is reported low in Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II while for STs it is low in Habibpur, Old Malda, Gazole, Bamangola, Harishchandrapur-II, and Manikchak. The culture of despair, lack of rights awareness, and liquor consumption despite financial instability contribute to their backwardness. Poverty, social segregation, isolation, landlessness, lower income, lower job position, inefficiency in housing scheme implementation contribute to scheduled groups backwardness and deprivation in the district. Residential schools in SC/ST-dominated areas are essential for education. Increased scholarships, instruction in mother tongue and realistic curriculum can boost tribal student enrollment. The dropout rates must be reduced by addressing poverty and child marriage. Keeping MGNREGS transparent will ensure wage payments on time. Scheduled groups can also benefit from vocational training centers, women's self-help organizations for vermicomposting.

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INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 16.9 percent and 8.6 percent of India's population respectively (Census of India, 2011). They are one of the most disadvantaged social groups in terms of living conditions in India (UNO, India). They are backward in almost all spheres of life such as education, occupation, income, health and nutrition caused by centuries of caste-based discrimination and social isolation. The persistence of the caste system since ages in India acts as a catalyst for inequality.

The 'Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (GMPI), 2021' notes that five out of six people living in India are from disadvantaged tribes and castes where 33.30 percent SCs, 50.6 percent STs and 27.20 percent OBCs are poor. In a nutshell, every second person belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and every third person belonging to the Scheduled Castes remains poor. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes whose share is 25 percent of India's population, contribute about 50 percent to India's total poverty

(Times of India, 12 April 2011). These social groups continue to be characterized as one of the poorest and most subordinate in Indian society, according to any indicator of human development (Thorat, 2009). Such deprivation is rooted in the historical processes of social exclusion, economic deprivation and caste-based discrimination. The unequal engagement of labour impacted by the caste system brings economic discrimination which impedes the overall development of all sections of society (Thorat, 2007). The performance in 'public enterprises' is linked with the caste system.

The population of scheduled groups living in fifteen blocks of Malda district as per Census of India, 2011 is 20.94 and 7.87 percent of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. There are 56 and 35 reported Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the district (District Human Development Report, Mada, 2007). The present study investigates spatial dimension of socio-economic condition of SCs and STs in the district and causative factors concerned for their backwardness.

Literature Review

Several studies have been undertaken in the world and in India by different scholars on various aspects of socio-economic condition including housing, basic amenities, education, income, occupation, deprivation, reservation of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of which a brief review has been presented below.

Bhowmick (1985) has investigated the distribution of tribal population in W.B, the migration and their changing economy in the region. It is found that the concentration of tribal population is reported high in south west and *tarai* region. The weaker tribal groups are pushed to unhealthy regions due to conflict. They retain their distinctive culture and tradition that enriches the diversity of Indian society. Most of tribals in W.B practice agriculture (share croppers), rearing of goats, day labor, work in road construction and in other forest based works. Despite a number of plans, programs, schemes to develop STs are implemented but their development is still far away from desired level.

Javalekar (2004) in "Tribal Situation in India" finds that each and every tribal group practices their own culture and customs which are different from mainstream society. Whether they should bring in mainstream or not is a burning debate. If they are brought to mainstream society and special care is not taken, they may face identity crisis. It may happen as we do not treat them as equal as a person of main stream.

Sarkar et al. (2006) depict deprivation level of scheduled tribes in India comparing with whole population. The development level (HDI) of overall population is higher than STs. In Human Poverty Index the Scheduled Tribes scores high in W.B. They have finally concluded that the self-Governing ST states (Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland) are comparatively better performer in their socio-economic particularly in health conditions than the all India STs. Among these states, the state of Nagaland and Mizoram are in superior level to all India ST level.

Mohanta (2014) has reviewed a book entitled "Social Life of Scheduled Castes at Labpur". This book is an outcome of a project initiated by 'the Anthropological Survey of India', 1999. The two multi-ethnic villages of West Bengal namely Mastani and Nautara are selected as study area. In these two villages, Scheduled castes live along with General and Scheduled tribe population. The changing picture of Scheduled Castes (Bagdi, Bauri, Bayen, Sunri) between two villages caused by endogenous and exogenous factors are compared in the study. The presence of caste hierarchy and social distance in these villages noticed. Furthermore, mainly, the educational status, economic activities and the mechanism of social control were focused in the study.

Chatterjee (2014) has observed that despite the provisions made for the upliftment of Scheduled Tribes in India, the socio-economic status of them is comparatively lower. The tribal women are more hard worker than men who contribute more in their family income. The income generating sources are limited. As they are poor, they need more helping hands for earnings. Consequently, they prefer less to send their children in schools. The low level of education leads them to low level of awareness in basic health conditions. The condition of tribal women in education, employment and health is lower than tribal men and even lower than the women belonging to general population.

Singh (2014) studied socio-economic status of Scheduled Caste people in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. It's hard to them to provide good education to their children. Though most of them is based on agriculture but output from agriculture is not good. Majority of respondents stayed in sami kucha house. There is the availability of electricity, water connection and latrine facility among most of the respondent's households. The MGNREGA was the only rural employment programme in the village MGNREGA. Most of people have less awareness

about the Govt. schemes and programme for the education development.

Pal et al. (2015) have discussed about the socio-economic conditions of tribes (Santhal, Sabar, Oraon and Toto) in Purulia and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal. The source of income among Santhals and Toto tribes is from agriculture while the Oraon tribe earns money from services in tea gardens. The percentage of labourers is highest among Sabar tribe (87 %) followed by Oraons, Santhals and Totos. The illiteracy rate is also higher among Sabars (70 %), followed by Totos, Oraons and Santhals. It is concluded that the socio-economic condition of Sabar tribe is very low. The socio-economic condition of Santhal and Oraon tribes is comparatively better than Toto and Sabar tribes.

Mandal et al. (2016) have made a study on tribal population of Alipurduar district where the literacy rate of tribals is reported low due to high drop-out rates. The factors like that of household work pressure, unable to bear educational cost and lack of interest are concerned with drop outs. The finding shows that only 4 per cent people have *Pucca* Housing. It is shown that about 62 per cent households are under 'below poverty line'. It is found that about 32 per cent households have no toilet.

Baskey (2016) has conducted a study to know the socio-economic status of the tribal people and to compare it in the district. The finding shows that the Sheduled Tribes living in Burdwan Sadar (South) sub-division have higher socio-economic condition whereas Katwa sub-division shows lowest. It is expressed that only in two sub-divisions namely Burdwan Sadar (South) and Kalna, the tribal's socio-economic status is higher than average. Remaining four studied sub-divisions namely Burdwan Sadar (North), Katwa, Durgapur, Asansol have lower socio-economic status than average.

Daripa (2018) has conducted a study on the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes of Purulia District, West Bengal and associated problems faced by them to sustain their livelihood. The Scheduled Tribes of the district are socio-culturally and economically backward considered as poorest of the poor. In the present situation, the lower class of STs is exploited by non-tribal and even by upper ST class. It is expressed that their economic condition may be improved with improving education as they less prefer for education due to poverty.

Mosse (2018) has explained that life opportunity is determined by caste identity. Caste system gives birth of unequal subjective well-being among people. It is opined that "caste effects are not locational; they travel from the village to the city and into virtually all markets." Unlike gender, religion, race, caste has not got significant place "in global development policy debates." It is answered that why caste based discrimination and inequality does not get place in "Sustainable Development Goals." The caste system in India is the result of historical disadvantage which is compensated with affirmative action. The questionnaire is prepared to investigate caste system and its changes with time. The economic and political forces have gradually weakened caste system in India. The policy innovation may reduce such inequality placing caste in the global development policy debate.

Rao (2019) has explored socio-economic status of dalit women in Andhra Pradesh. It is seen that dalits have lower land holdings even after land reform succeeded in India. The land reform benefit did not reached to untouchable castes. Therefore dalits did not get benefits of the green revolution. Despite universalization of education, there is no equal access to education across social groups. Furthermore, the economic condition is an outcome of the type of occupation. Most of the dalits and dalit women practice agriculture for livelihood which is most vulnerable occupation. The level of living of dalits and dalit women could have improved policies and special programmes are implemented in favour of these communities.

Coffey et al. (2019) revealed that the differential socio-economic status leads to children's height gap between STs and higher castes. But among SCs and OBCs, the socio-economic status does not fully explain children's height gaps. It is because the presence of discrimination is concerned with children's height outcome. The result shows that SC and OBC children who are surrounded by other lower caste households are no shorter than higher caste children of the same socio-economic status.

Bhoi (2022) investigates educational attainment of Scheduled Castes caused by economic growth. The study finds that the Scheduled Castes faces discrimination in higher education. The low income occupation and poverty of parents of SC students discourages them for higher education in private institutions. The neoliberal policy has created problem for the SCs' retention in higher education by limiting their involvement and performance in academic, cultural, political, and leadership activities.

Objectives

1. To study spatial pattern of socio-economic status of SCs and STs in Malda District.
2. To investigate causative factors for backwardness of scheduled groups.

3. To suggest remedial measures for emancipation of backwardness.

Study Area

The district of Malda has been selected as study area as it is one of the most deprived district in W.B where about 29 percent SC and ST population live (Malda District Human Development Report 2012, Census of India 2011). The Malda district is located between 24^0 40' 20" and 25^0 32' 08" north latitudes and between of 87^0 45' 50" and 88^0 28' 10" east longitudes. The district is surrounded by district Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur in the North and Murshidabad in the south. The western part of the district is bordered by Santhal Pargana district of Jharkhand and the Purnea district of Bihar. The Malda district shares International border with Bangladesh (165.5 km) in the east.

Based on the nature of topography and soil, the Malda district is divided into three broad sub-regions which namely Tal, Diara and Barind. The main rivers of the district are the Ganga, Kalindri, Mahananda, Fulahar, Bhagirathi, Punarbhaba, Pagla and Tangoan. The climate of Malda district is characterized by hot and sultry summers and plentiful rains. As per the Census of India, 2011, the total population in Malda is 39, 88,845 which is 4.38 percent of the state's (W.B.) total population. Out of the fifteen blocks in the district, the population of scheduled groups is reported high in the blocks of Habibpur (79 %) followed by Bamangola (70 %), Gazole (57 %), Old Malda (47 %) and Manikchak (43 %). The decadal population growth in 2011 was 21 percent which was lower than 2001 i.e 25 percent. The literacy rate of the district is 62 percent which is lower than national average. The population density of the district is 1069 while the sex ratio is 944.

Database and Methodology

The study is primarily based on secondary source of data. Though, the primary data sources are also used to know causative factors. The secondary data have been obtained from the Census of India and Socio-economic Caste Census. The fifteen indicators have been taken into consideration for the study. A qualitative method of 'in-depth interview' has been conducted to know the causative factors of the backwardness and deprivation of scheduled groups in the district of Malda. To get clear picture of socio-economic status, the UNDP Dimension Index is constructed as follows.

Standardisation Technique (positive indicator)= $\frac{(\text{Actual Value} - \text{Minimum Value})}{(\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value})}$

Table 1: List of Indicators.

Indicators	Description of Indicators
X1	Percentage of Households with Pucca House
X2	Percentage of Households having Dwelling rooms of more than one
X3	Percentage of households having source of drinking water within premises
X4	Percentage of households having tap water accessibility from treated sources
X5	Percentage of households having toilet facility within premises
X6	Percentage of households having kitchen facility
X7	Percentage of households using LPG as fuel for cooking.
X8	Percentage of households using electricity as main source of lighting
X9	Literacy rate
X10	Work Participation Rate
X11	Percentage of Main Workers (w.r.t) Total Population
X12	Percentage of Other Workers (w.r.t) Total Workers
X13	Percentage of Households Monthly Income with more than Rs. 10 Thousands
X14	Percentage of Households with Govt. Job
X15	Percentage of Households with Above Poverty Line (APL)

Housing

Adequate housing is essential for human survival. The housing condition reveals economic prosperity of a society that's why the study of housing and its condition is important. On the other hand, directly and indirectly housing influences many other aspects of human life like social well-being and quality of life. Pal et al. (2015) in their study have rightly mentioned that adequate housing condition is an essential determinant influencing health status. Lawrence (2004) found a relationship between housing and health condition. Malpractice in identifying BPL households, improper beneficiary distribution of housing, lack of awareness and people's poverty lead to deprivation in equal access to housing in India (Pal et. al., 2015).

Pucca House

Our country's houses are categorized into four types- kutcha house, pucca house, semi-kutcha house, and semi-pucca house (SECC, 2011). In order to determine such house types, the SECC, 2011 has considered types of materials for constructing walls and roofs. The wall and roofs of pucca houses are made of permanent or pucca materials like stone, brick, cement, and concrete. Keeping in mind many benefits of adequate housing, it's important to investigate housing condition among different social groups of Malda district.

Approximately, only 48 percent of households in India have pucca housing, which comes further down for West Bengal with 33 percent. Only 23 percent of households have pucca housing in Malda district. It has been reported lower for SCs and STs with about 20 and 6 percent respectively (SECC, 2011). The spatial distribution of pucca housing is shown in Table 2. The percentage of households with pucca housing of SCs is observed high in the blocks of English Bazar, Chanchal-I, Ratua-I, Old Malda and Bamangola. Contrary to that, the percentage of pucca housing is reported low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Habibpur and Kaliachak-II. The pucca housing among SCs is observed highest in the Chanchal-I block with 31.14 percent as the district's subdivision is located in the block which monitors all housing schemes regularly. The lowest share of pucca housing is found in Harishchandrapur-II with 7.90 percent due to its poverty level which is highest in the district. Among STs, the pucca housing is recorded high in the blocks of English Bazar, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Chanchal-I and Kaliachak-I. In contrast, the percentage of pucca housing is observed to be low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda and Habibpur which is accounted for their marginal location.

Table 2: Pucca Housing in Malda District, 2011

Blocks	Percentage of Households with Pucca House		Dwelling Rooms of more than one	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	18.19	8.05	32.60	38.40
Harischandrapur-II	7.90	8.09	32.20	44.60
Chanchal-I	31.14	18.93	44.70	45.80
Chanchal-II	14.84	10.00	38.10	48.80
Ratua-I	22.50	17.62	41.80	41.90
Ratua-II	22.12	18.16	39.80	42.00
Gazole	18.83	2.42	49.80	43.20
Bamangola	22.75	2.22	45.00	36.80
Habibpur	15.52	0.81	36.90	33.20
Old Maldah	24.30	2.64	49.90	40.20
EnglishBazar	24.76	15.95	43.00	37.60
Manikchak	19.86	14.17	37.60	30.00
Kaliachak-I	20.78	22.86	46.40	35.80
Kaliachak-II	17.62	8.39	41.00	41.70
Kaliachak-III	19.72	13.40	44.30	38.00
Malda	19.59	6.00	43.50	38.80

Source: Socio-economic Caste Census, 2011

Dwelling Rooms of more than one

The living space of household members depends on the number of dwelling rooms available in the house. Besides there is an utmost significance of having adequate space for living in house. Foye (2017) has observed the relationship between the size of living space and subjective well-being. The World Health Organization (2018) has argued that household crowding adversely impacts physical and mental health. In addition, the availability of dwelling rooms reflects the economic prosperity of a household or a society.

The spatial distribution of 'dwelling rooms with more than one' is shown in Table 2. The percentage of households with dwelling rooms of more than one among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda and Kaliachak-I. On the other hand, it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Manikchak and Habibpur. The remaining blocks fall under the medium category. However, for STs, the percentage of households having dwelling rooms of more than one is observed in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Gazole and Ratua-II. At the same time, it is found low in the blocks of Manikchak, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I, Bamangola and Habibpur. The share of dwelling rooms of more than one among SCs is found lowest in the Harishchandrapur-II block

owing to its poverty level, highest in the district. Among STs, dwelling rooms of more than one are recorded lowest in the Manikchak block due to out-migration, poverty, and submergence of agricultural land under the Ganga river.

Basic Amenities

Like the importance and need of adequate housing in human life, there is a need of basic amenities for living. It is essential for a decent and desired level of living which enhances economic growth and quality of life. Basic amenities include safe drinking water, tap water accessibility, sanitation, all-weather roads, electrification, fuel, connectivity and sanitation and drainage facility which are crucial for both rural and urban areas (Kumar and Prabhuswami, 2014).

Basic amenities are linked to a high quality and developed way of life, and the government must ensure such amenities through specific institutional arrangement. If these fundamental challenges faced by the poor and marginalized are not resolved, inclusive growth is impossible to achieve. The social life and living conditions in rural areas are linked to availability of basic amenities. Despite designated programs and budgetary allocations, the rural poor and underprivileged sections of society are denied in access to basic amenities which needs to investigate.

Source of Drinking Wate within Premises

There are two types of sources of drinking water categorized by the Census of India. These are 'within premises' and 'outside premises'. The source of drinking water within the premise is essential to investigate because it assures a continued water supply and fulfills any household's immediate needs. The percentage of households having drinking water sources within premises of Malda district is 36.44 percent. It is only 30.70 percent among SCs and 21.70 percent among STs (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of source of drinking water within premises is shown in Table 3. The percentage of households among SCs having drinking water sources within premises is reported high in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Manikchak, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-III. On the other hand, it is reported low in the blocks of Chanchal-II, Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda and Habibpur. The remaining six blocks fall under the medium category. However, the share among STs in drinking water sources within premises is reported high in Ratua-I, Manikchak, Kaliachak-II, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-III. The drinking water source within premises among STs is reported low in the blocks of Chanchal-II, Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda and Habibpur. The share of households with drinking water sources within premises among both SCs and STs, is found low in the blocks of Gazole, Bamangola, Habibpur and Old Malda, which is accounted by lower groundwater table and consequently, the establishment of tap water and submersible pump along roads and streets by the government. The drinking water sources within premises among SCs and STs are highest in the blocks of Kaliachak-III and Ratua-I . Because these blocks are part of the tal and diara physiographic region, the water table is high enough for the households to install tube wells easily.

Tap Water Accessibility

Potable water plays a crucial role in human survival. In this regard, its quality matters for human health, as about 1.5 million infants and about 1.2 million children die every year suffering by diarrhea (Esrey et al., 1991). Keeping in mind the importance of the availability of safe drinking water, the International Union for Conservation of Nature has expressed water as a human right for "drinking, bathing, cleaning, cooking and sanitation" (Scanlon et al., 2004). According to the Census of India, the primary drinking water sources are tap water from treated and untreated sources, hand pumps, wells, tube well, rivers, springs and others. Potable water must be safe for health reasons, as unclean drinking water carries several diseases. Tap water from treated sources is considered safe among drinking water sources.

The share of households that get tap water from treated sources in Malda district is 11.25 percent where about 11 percent of SC households and 6.5 percent of ST households get their tap water from treated sources (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of tap water accessibility from treated sources is shown in Table 3. The percentage of households among SCs accessing tap water from treated sources is high in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Ratua-I, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I and Habibpur while it is reported low in the blocks of Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda, Ratua-II and Manikchak. Among STs, the share in tap water accessibility from treated sources is observed high in Chanchal-II, Ratua-I, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-III. Contrary to that, it is found low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Manikchak, Gazole and Old Malda. The tap water accessibility among SCs is observed highest (23.50 percent) in Ratua-I block due to its arsenic problems. Likewise, due to the same reason (arsenic problems), the tap water accessibility is found highest in the block of Kaliachak-III with 14.20 percent where the Ganga river flows through this block.

Table 3 : Source of Drinking Water within Premises and Tap Water Accessibility from Treated Sources in Malda District, 2011

Blocks	Percentage of Households having source of Drinking Water within premises		Percentage of Households accessing Tap Water from Treated Sources	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	43.3	36	18	9.3
Harischandrapur-II	31.5	36.3	7.2	1
Chanchal-I	29.4	23.8	7.8	1.8
Chanchal-II	11.7	13.6	12.7	9.9
Ratua-I	40.9	54.9	23.5	12.8
Ratua-II	40.9	26.7	2.8	9.2
Gazole	14.8	3.9	2.5	2.2
Bamangola	18.2	3.3	7.1	5.9
Habibpur	7.9	3.8	14	3.8
Old Maldah	18.1	3.5	2.4	1.3
EnglishBazar	37.7	30	18.8	12
Manikchak	46.3	42.9	5.4	2.5
Kaliachak-I	51.1	50.4	18.9	14
Kaliachak-II	38.5	38.3	9.5	4.5
Kaliachak-III	48.3	51.3	9.8	14.2
Malda	30.7	21.7	11.1	6.5

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Table 4: Households by Bathroom Facility and Toilet Facility within premises in Malda District, 2011

Blocks	Percentage of Households having Toilet Facility within the premises		Percentage of Households having Kitchen Facility	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	21	15	56.7	35.6
Harischandrapur-II	15.7	13	41.4	40.7
Chanchal-I	26.2	23.8	60.9	64.4
Chanchal-II	13	10.3	37.7	21.2
Ratua-I	26.2	15.4	61.3	68.6
Ratua-II	30.3	24.2	35.1	39.6
Gazole	27.2	7.7	50.4	25.9
Bamangola	44.9	14.4	63.1	37.3
Habibpur	25.3	5.3	55.8	32.5
Old Maldah	32.7	4.9	51.3	21.7
EnglishBazar	35.4	21.9	34.1	28.1
Manikchak	19.4	8.8	60.7	66.8
Kaliachak-I	39	30.6	51.4	37.1
Kaliachak-II	18.1	22.2	51.3	39.6
Kaliachak-III	19.5	22.6	52.5	34
Malda	29.1	12.8	53.4	39.2

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Toilet Facility within Premises

A nation's social and economic development will come to a standstill if its citizens could not access proper toilet facilities. Poor sanitation, according to research by the World Bank, was responsible for economic losses equal to 6.4 percent of India's GDP in 2006. The impact of being able to use the toilet is manifold. According to an article published in 2016 by the Times of India, over 400 children die every day due to diarrhoea in India, which is linked to improper sanitation, hygiene, and open defecation. According to a number of studies, defecating in public is associated with child stunting, which is characterized by a reduction in both the children's physical and cognitive development. The toilet facility and its use is vital for the safety and dignity of women and adolescent girls. The Swachh Bharat Mission, which the government of India initiated in 2014, was an excellent step toward eliminating open defecation across the country. According to the NSO data, although 71.3 percent of rural households have

access to a toilet, 3.5 percent of those households never utilize this facility (BBC, 2019). This indicates that we still have a long way to go in this endeavour (BBC, 2019). According to a study published by the Times of India in 2020, nearly ten crore household toilets have been built since the beginning of the Swachh Bharat initiative in 2014. However, behavioural change remains the fundamental challenge.

According to the Census of India, 2011, the percentage of households having toilet facilities among SCs and STs is about 29 percent and 13 percent respectively whereas for overall population it is 32 percent (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of toilet facility within premises is shown in Table 4. The share of households having toilet facilities among SCs is reported high in the blocks of English Bazar, Old Malda, Kaliachak-I, Ratua-II and Bamangola. On the other hand, it is found low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Manikchak, Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III. For STs, the percentage of households having toilet facility is observed high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Ratua-II, Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III, while it is noticed low in the blocks of Chanchal-II, Manikchak, Gazole, Old Malda and Habibpur. The toilet facility among SCs is reported highest in Bamangola block due to its high literacy rate and lowest in Chanchal-II due to the low literacy rate accounted among the blocks of the district. Among STs, the share of households having toilet facilities is observed highest in Kaliachak-I due to diversified livelihood opportunities, business-centric economies, and households' urban nature.

Kitchen Facility

A number of studies emphasize the importance of a separate kitchen facility for cooking as without a separate kitchen room, a number of health problems may occur. As most Indian households use unclean fuel for cooking, the smoke released from the kitchen affects women, particularly pregnant women. Islam et al. (2021) have revealed in their study that indoor air pollution caused by using unclean fuel for cooking and cooking without separate kitchens results in low childbirth weight. In this regard, it is necessary to understand about the kitchen facilities of SCs and STs in Malda district.

The percentage of households having kitchen facilities among SCs and STs of Malda district is approximately 53 percent and 39 percent respectively (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of kitchen facility is shown in Table 4. The percentage of households having separate kitchen facilities among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Chanchal-I, Ratua-I, Manikchak and Bamangola, while it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Ratua-II, Gazole and English Bazar. For STs, the share of households having separate kitchen rooms is observed high in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Ratua-I and Manikchak. On the other hand, it is found low in the blocks of Chanchal-II, Gazole, Old Malda, English Bazar and Habibpur. The share of separate kitchen facilities among SCs is reported highest in Bamangola block, which is owes to its literacy rate which is highest in the district.

LPG Use as Fuel for Cooking

LPG is a clean fuel. Urban areas in India make the most use of it, whereas people living in rural areas make very little use of it. It is possible that poor economic conditions, as well as the availability of crop wastes, cow dung, and firewood, account for the low rate of LPG consumption in rural India. BPL households have begun receiving free LPG connections as part of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, which the Central Government initiated in 2016. However, reports claim that an increase in the price of LPG makes it impossible for them to refill their LPG tanks, which eventually leads to the usage of crop residue for cooking. It is well known that utilizing unclean fuels such as cow dung, agricultural leftovers, or firewood can adversely affect women's health. Within the context of this issue, the consumption of LPG as a cooking fuel is an essential signal to comprehend among SCs and STs.

The share of households using LPG for cooking among SCs and STs of Malda district is about 4 percent and 2 percent respectively (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of LPG use as fuel is shown in Table 5. The percentage of households using LPG for cooking among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Ratua-II, Old Malda, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I. At the same time, it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Manikchak, Kaliachak-II, Kaliachak-III and Habibpur. For STs, the share of households using LPG for cooking is high only in English Bazar and Chanchal-I. Contrary to that, it is reported low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Ratua-I, Manikchak, Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda and Habibpur. The share of households using LPG among both SCs and STs is recorded highest in the English Bazar block due to the presence of municipality, urbanization which leads to economic prosperity caused by opportunities of earning and economic activities.

Electricity Use as Main Source of Lighting

Electricity has been a blessing for humankind as it reduces human effort (Lekshmi S., 2010). Without it, it is almost impossible to run daily life as it has become a part and parcel of modern life. It is used for lighting rooms; the fans and domestic appliances work with the help of electricity; essential items like cloth, paper, and almost all items are produced in a machine that is driven by electricity. Modern means of transport and communication are also using electricity. In a nutshell, almost all sectors of human activity require electricity. Hence, dealing with the share of households with electricity is regarded as an important indicator of economic as well as social development.

The percentage of households using electricity for lighting among SCs and STs of Malda district is about 30 percent and 15 percent respectively which is lower than that of overall population with 35.48 percent (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of 'electricity use as main source of lighting' is shown in Table 5. The share of households using electricity among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Ratua-I, Ratua-II, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-II, while it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Gazole, Manikchak and Habibpur. For STs, the share of households using electricity is found high in the blocks of Ratua-I, Ratua-II, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I. On the other hand, it is low in the blocks of Gazole, Bamangola, Old Malda, Habibpur and Manikchak. The share of households using electricity for lighting among both SCs and STs is found highest in Kaliachak-I block due to its livelihood opportunities, business-centric economies, and urban nature of living.

Table 5: Household by LPG Use and Electricity in Malda District, 2011.

Blocks	Percentage of Households using LPG as Fuel for Cooking		Percentage of Households using Electricity as main source of Lighting	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	2.3	1.9	24.6	11.2
Harischandrapur-II	1	0.4	20.8	19.7
Chanchal-I	4.8	3.5	32.5	25.3
Chanchal-II	1.6	1.1	22.1	18.5
Ratua-I	2	0.6	33.3	33
Ratua-II	3	1.9	37.1	37.6
Gazole	1.9	0.6	21.5	6.8
Bamangola	2.4	0.4	32.3	7.4
Habibpur	1.3	0.2	22.2	3.7
Old Maldah	3	0.6	31.5	7.1
EnglishBazar	5.8	4.6	42.5	34.6
Manikchak	1.1	0.4	22.4	11.2
Kaliachak-I	3.7	1.9	46.4	38.8
Kaliachak-II	1.3	0.8	34	28.7
Kaliachak-III	1.1	0.9	26.7	30.6
Malda	4.2	1.8	29.9	15

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Education

The importance of education in human life is manifold. Education helps to gain knowledge and confidence. Several studies have highlighted the relevance of education in human and economic growth (Seetanah, 2009). Education helps in human development which is positively related to economic, social, political, and cultural development. Cornelissen et al. (2022) studied the multigenerational benefits of expanding primary schools in Vietnam. They found that expanding primary education has boosted future generation's educational attainment, literacy, non-agricultural economic activity, incomes, and intergenerational educational mobility. Education is crucial to a region's development (Venkatraja et al., 2011). They observed a direct relationship between schooling and social development linking educational access to social well-being. According to Spiel et al. (2018), education is a process of learning new things and broadening one's cultural perspectives. Better education leads to better human resource development. In a nutshell, education is one of the most effective ways to improve living conditions.

Literacy

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write fluently in any language by a person of either seven years or more. According to empirical findings, education acts as a prime catalyst for the development of a society. Education is one of the essential factors in determining the development level of a society or a region. Henceforth, considering the importance of education, it has been placed as a fundamental right (right to education). To enrich people educationally, many efforts have been made since independence. Among many effort, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is one of among them and its aim is directed towards the universalisation of elementary education in terms of free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14. Despite such efforts, the literacy rate varies across regions and within a region among different social groups.

The literacy rate of Malda district is approximately 62 percent which is far below than the literacy rate of West Bengal (76.26 percent). The literacy rate of SCs and STs in Malda district is 61 percent and 47 percent respectively which is lower than the literacy rate of the overall population (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of literacy is shown in Table 6. The literacy rate of SCs is recorded high in the blocks of Gazole, Bamangola, Habibpur, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I, while it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II and Ratua-II. For STs, the literacy rate is observed high in the blocks of Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III. Contrary to that, ST's literacy rate is low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Chanchal-I, Gazole, Old Malda, and Habibpur. The highest and lowest literacy rate among SCs is reported in Bamangola (70 percent) and Chanchal-II (46 percent) respectively. The literacy rate among STs is found highest in Ratua-II (66 percent) and lowest in Chanchal-I (34 percent) caused by lack of awareness among tribal people for educational need and perhaps despondency to education.

Work Participation

The work participation rate of Malda district is 38.55. In contrast, the work participation rate of SCs and STs is higher with 42 percent and 46 percent respectively than the work participation rate of the overall population in the district (Census of India, 2011). The scheduled group's high work participation rate and their low income level indicates that they are mostly engaged in low paid works especially in manual casual labouring caused by their low literacy in the district. The spatial distribution of work participation is shown in Table 6. The work participation rate of SCs is reported high in the blocks of Gazole, Old Malda, Habibpur, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-III, while it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Manikchak and English Bazar. For STs, the work participation rate is high in the blocks of Gazole, Bamangola, Habibpur, Kaliachak-II and Kalaichak-III. On the other hand, it is recorded low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Manikchak and English Bazar. Both SCs and STs have lowest work participation rate in Ratua-II block with 35 percent and 33 percent respectively.

Table 6: Literacy and Work Participation in Malda District, 2011.

Blocks	Literacy		Work Participation	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	46.52	37.49	40.05	45.85
Harischandrapur-II	51.50	48.58	38.50	39.01
Chanchal-I	56.59	34.41	41.72	44.07
Chanchal-II	46.02	50.36	40.68	40.47
Ratua-I	59.68	54.17	35.94	39.44
Ratua-II	54.87	65.89	34.94	32.96
Gazole	65.66	45.20	44.40	48.90
Bamangola	70.07	50.24	41.80	49.03
Habibpur	63.77	38.44	44.18	52.45
Old Maldah	60.53	38.20	43.61	46.69
EnglishBazar	63.13	49.55	38.19	36.76
Manikchak	56.75	51.40	38.53	39.25
Kaliachak-I	64.34	56.30	46.13	46.37
Kaliachak-II	60.10	57.83	42.32	47.67
Kaliachak-III	57.14	53.71	44.94	47.14
Malda	61.04	46.86	41.83	46.26

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Main Worker

The Census of India has categorized workers into many types based on parameters like the work period and nature of work. They have been typed as main and marginal workers based on their work periods. The main worker is one who is categorized based on a work period extending up to six months or more in a year while those who work for less than six months are categorized as marginal workers (http://labourbureau.gov.in/WL%202K5-6%20Chap%201.htm). The percentage of main workers in the district is 26.34 percent while among SCs and STs it is 28.03 percent and 27.19 percent respectively (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of main workers is shown in Table 7. The percentage of main workers among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Chanchal-I, Gazole, Old Malda and Kaliachak-I, while it is found low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Manikchak and Habibpur. For STs, the share of main workers is high in the blocks of Cahnchal-I, Gazole, Old Malda, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I. Contrary to that, it is observed low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Ratua-II and Manikchak. Among SCs, the highest share of main workers is found in Gazole (31.80 percent), while the lowest is reported at Manichak block (21 percent). Among STs, the percentage of main workers is recorded as highest in Kaliachak-I with 44 percent and lowest in Manikchak with 19 percent. The Manikchak block where the share of main workers is lowest because the people with lower level of education are engaged in the short term work including migration to Kolkata and other states in search of work for a short term. Besides, this is the block where every year, several square km of agricultural land submerges under the Ganga river due to its sideward erosion.

Sectoral Composition of Workers

Depending upon the nature of work, the workers have been classified into four types-cultivators, agricultural laborers, household industry workers, and other workers (Census of India, 2011). Cultivators are actively engaged in the cultivation of land, while agricultural laborers work on another person's land for wages. The household industry workers are those who run the small cottage industry with the help of household members, where there is no need to register the cottage industry as a registered factory. The last among four categories of workers is engaged in economic activity of tertiary type which includes workers engaged in service sectors like government servants, municipal employees, workers in trade, commerce, business.

Table 7: Main Workers and Other Workers in Malda District, 2011.

Blocks	Main Workers		Other Workers	
	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	29.99	25.08	20.56	21.22
Harischandrapur-II	24.27	24.73	19.34	10.08
Chanchal-I	32.14	29.80	26.93	13.58
Chanchal-II	27.44	22.74	18.34	11.79
Ratua-I	22.13	25.91	33.91	24.08
Ratua-II	22.03	23.59	36.93	24.69
Gazole	31.80	30.66	21.72	7.68
Bamangola	27.38	26.17	17.12	4.64
Habibpur	26.53	27.96	21.33	4.52
Old Maldah	29.98	30.53	35.90	17.24
EnglishBazar	28.61	31.60	59.44	51.07
Manikchak	20.84	19.06	29.28	19.89
Kaliachak-I	30.00	44.36	44.70	36.36
Kaliachak-II	27.16	27.55	33.79	21.86
Kaliachak-III	29.23	28.80	24.89	26.83
Malda	28.03	27.19	29.36	13.46

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Other Worker

All workers who are not cultivators, agricultural laborers, or workers in the household industry are referred to as 'other workers'. The other workers includes all government employees, municipal employees, teachers, factory workers, plantation workers, those engaged in trade, commerce, business, transportation, banking, mining, construction, political or social work, priests, performers, etc.

The share of other workers in Malda district is 35.19 percent while for SCs and STs it is 29.36 percent and 13.46 percent respectively which reflects the lower engagement of SCs and STs in tertiary economic activities in the district (Census of India, 2011). The spatial distribution of other workers is shown in Table 7. The percentage of

other workers among SCs is found high in the blocks of Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Old Malda, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I while it is reported low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Bamangola and Habibpur. For STs, the share of other workers among STs is reported high in the blocks of Ratua-I, Ratua-II, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-III. Contrary to that, it is reported low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Gazole, Bamangola and Habibpur. The share of other workers for both SCs and STs is reported highest in English Bazar due to presence of municipalities, urban nature of economy, location of district headquarter where a significant section of population is engaged in tertiary economic activities.

Level of Income and Job

Income is a vital determinant that has a significant correlation with the well-being of people and the standard of living among people. In this regard, income has been an essential aspect of assessing the living condition of the population as it enables people for purchasing power. Purchasing power is directly linked with the standard of living and well-being of people. In the general design of the United Nations level of living index, income has been part of it, reflecting its significance to assessing income level in assessing any social group's living level. Besides, the nature of occupation in terms of job has a linkage with better income level. In this regard, it's essential to deal with and discuss income and job status to assess the living conditions of SCs and STs in the district of Malda.

Income

In India, approximately 8 percent of households earn more than ten thousand rupees in a month. It comes down for West Bengal, where only 6 percent of households have more than 10 thousand rupees of monthly income. It is reported even further lower for Malda district where only 4 percent of households have an income of 10 thousand rupees monthly. In a nutshell, it is depicted that, compared to India and West Bengal, the income level is reported low in Malda district.

The spatial distribution of households with more than 10 thousands monthly income is shown in Table 8. The income level is lower for SCs and STs with 3.52 percent and 2.32 percent, respectively. It means only 3.52 percent of SC households and 2.32 percent of ST households earn an income of more than ten thousand rupees in a month (SECC, 2011). The income level across blocks is not uniform. It is found that such income level among SCs is reported high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Ratua-II, Gazole, Old Malda and English Bazar. In contrast, it is reported low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Habibpur, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-II. For STs, the income level is recorded high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-II, English Bazar and Kaliachak-III. On the other hand, it is found low in the blocks of Bamangola, Old Malda, Habibpur, Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-II. The highest income among SCs and STs is observed in Ratua-II and Chanchal-I, respectively, due to the highest share of government job holders in these blocks.

Table 8: Monthly Income, Govt. Job and APL in Malda District, 2011.

Blocks	Monthly Income		Govt. Job		APL	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
Harischandrapur-I	3.39	2.40	2.28	2.64	12.08	7.09
Harischandrapur-II	2.77	2.51	1.91	2.13	7.87	7.08
Chanchal-I	5.07	11.65	4.21	12.62	14.55	20.87
Chanchal-II	2.34	7.24	2.76	6.38	7.95	11.36
Ratua-I	3.66	3.18	3.40	2.85	13.76	8.61
Ratua-II	6.08	10.44	5.32	11.90	15.10	20.67
Gazole	3.92	2.13	3.40	2.10	14.39	6.78
Bamangola	3.51	1.55	3.30	1.60	16.50	8.08
Habibpur	2.97	1.29	2.49	1.10	18.81	14.05
Old Maldah	4.12	1.41	2.95	1.47	20.23	8.08
EnglishBazar	3.88	6.27	4.30	9.69	19.46	11.11
Manikchak	3.11	1.82	2.45	1.59	14.75	21.81
Kaliachak-I	2.74	1.71	4.29	2.29	23.18	64.00
Kaliachak-II	2.34	1.68	2.44	1.89	8.06	4.82
Kaliachak-III	3.56	3.40	2.66	3.25	16.51	8.71
Malda	3.52	2.32	2.99	2.21	15.31	11.08

Source: *Census of India, 2011.*

Government Job

The share of households with a government job in India is 4.98 percent, while for West Bengal, it is reported 4.33 percent. It is only 2.93 percent in Malda, far lower than the state and country's engagement in the government job. The share of households with government jobs among SCs and STs is 2.99 percent and 2.21 percent respectively in the district (SECC, 2011). The spatial distribution of households with government job is shown in Table 8. The percentage of households with government jobs among SCs is observed high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Ratua-II, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I, while it is found low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II, Manikchak, Kaliachak-II and Habibpur. For STs, the share of households with a government job is reported high in the blocks of Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-II, English Bazar and Kaliachak-III. On the other hand, it is found low in the blocks of Manikchak, Kaliachak-II, Old Malda, Bamangola and Habibpur. The share of households in government jobs among SCs is observed highest in Ratua-II block and lowest in the Harishchandrapur-II block. Henceforth, there has been recorded the highest poverty rate in the Harishchandrapur-II block. Among STs, the percentage of households in a government job is found highest in Chanchal-I due to the presence of the district's sub-division through which deprived sections get an opportunity to engage in group D and group C jobs (Table 8).

Households with Above Poverty Line

The households have been categorized into three categories based on their wealth parameters set by the socio-economic caste census (SECC-2011). Such categories are auto-excluded households, households with deprivation, and auto-included households. The automatic exclusion also termed the 'households with no deprivation' includes 14 parameters covering income, asset ownership, and living standards (SECC, 2011). The public distribution system (PDS) considers auto-excluded households as households above the poverty line (APL) in distributing food grains at affordable prices. In the meantime, the deprivation category includes seven parameters under consideration to tag a household as deprived. There are five parameters (household without shelter, destitute/ living on alms, manual scavengers, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded laborers) to identify a household with auto-inclusion. Any household with the parameters mentioned above categorized as auto-included households, which is eligible for welfare schemes provided by the government (who should get government welfare benefits? Mint, 20 October, 2015, https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/dHVeuUAZmxkDuUJ5A65SJI/Who-should-get-government-welfare-benefits.html, accessed on 27 December, 2022).

The percentage of APL households in India is approximately 96 percent while it is only 51.32 percent in West Bengal. This figure becomes lower for the district of Malda, which is only 35.23 percent. The percentage of APL households among SCs and STs of Malda district is approximately 31 percent and 23 percent respectively (SECC, 2011).

The spatial distribution of APL households is shown in Table 8. The share of APL households among SCs is reported high in the blocks of English Bazar, Kaliachak-I, Old Malda, Habibpur and Chanchal-I. At the same time, it is recorded low in the blocks of Gazole, Harishchandrapur-I, Kaliachak-II, Chanchal-II and Harishchandrapur-II. For STs, the percentage of households with the APL category is observed high in the blocks of Kaliachak-I, Ratua-II, Chanchal-I, Manikchak and Chanchal-II. Contrary to that, it is found low in the blocks of Gazole, Old Malda, Harishchandrapur-I, Harishchandrapur-II and Kaliachak-II. It is observed that the percentage of households with APL category among SCs is found highest in English Bazar and lowest in Harishchandrapur-II. Among STs, the share of households with APL category is reported highest in the Kaliachak-I block and lowest in the Kaliachak-II block, from where people migrate searching for work to other states.

Level of Socioeconomic Development among Scheduled Castes based on UNDP Dimension Index

To get a composite development level, UNDP dimension index is prepared taking into consideration of fifteen indicators. The level of socio-economic status of SCs is reported high in the blocks of Kaliachak-I, English Bazar, Chanchal-I and Old Malda while it is observed low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II and Manikchak. These low performing blocks seeks policy maker's intervention. The level of socio-economic status is recorded medium in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Habibpur, Kaliachak-II, Gazole, Kaliachak-III, Ratua-II, Ratua-I, Bamangola.

Table 9: Level of Socioeconomic Status of Scheduled Castes in Malda District, 2011.

Category	Index Value	No. of Blocks	Name of the Blocks
High	>0.539	4	Kalichak-I, English Bazar, Chanchal-I, Old Malda
Medium	0.340-0.539	8	Harishchandrapur-I, Habibpur, Kaliachak-II, Gazole, Kaliachak-III, Ratua-II, Ratua-I, Bamangola
Low	<0.340	3	Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, Manikchak

Source: *Computed by Researcher*

Level of Socioeconomic Development among Scheduled Tribes based on UNDP Dimension Index:

The development level of STs is reported low in the blocks of Habibpur, Old Malda, Gazole, Bamangola, Harishchandrapur-II, Manikchak. The policy makers need to focus on percolation of different scheme and programme in these blocks. The development level is observed medium in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-I, Chanchal-II, Kaliachak-II. In addition to it, well performing blocks are Kaliachak-I, Ratua-II, Chanchal-I, English Bazar, Ratua-I, Kaliachak-III.

Table 10: Level of Socioeconomic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Malda District, 2011.

Category	Index Value	No. of Blocks	Name of the Blocks
High	>0.502	6	Kaliachak-I, Ratua-II, Chanchal-I, English Bazar, Ratua-I, Kaliachak-III
Medium	0.328-0502	3	Harishchandrapur-I, Chanchal-II, Kaliachak-II
Low	<0.328	6	Habibpur, Old Malda, Gazole, Bamangola, Harishchandrapur-II, Manikchak

Source: *Computed by Researcher*

Causative Factors of Backwardness of SCs and STs of Malda District

To know the causative factors of backwardness of scheduled groups in Malda district, an in-depth interview is conducted during February, 2021. It is conducted in person to person with the thirty respondents (two from each block) of the district. The purposive sampling is adopted to identify respondents from each block. To draw the most complete picture, an in-depth interview incorporates multiple cohorts. Diverse cohorts are selected for the interview to obtain and cover diverse fields. Malda district is one of the most backward districts in terms of socio-economic conditions in West Bengal as per Human Development Report, Malda, 2006. The scheduled groups are deprived here for a wide range of factors as follows.

Table 11: Purposive Sample Design

Sl. No	Cohorts	Number of Respondents
1	Backward Class Welfare Officials, Malda District	2
2	College lecturers	2
3	School teachers	2
4	Migrant Labour	2
5	Business Man	2
6	Agricultural Laborers	2
7	Parents whose children are going to school	2
8	Retired Person	2
9	Older Person	2
10	College going girl	2
11	Housewife	2
12	Unemployed youth	2
13	Anganwari workers	2
14	ASHA Worker	2
15	Cultivator	2
	Total Cohorts=15	Total Respondents=30

Causative Factors

A culture of despondency to education is observed among some tribal people. Such despondency to education is caused by unemployment. Scheduled groups particularly most of the tribal people consume wine (*Cholai Mod*-a traditional wine made from rice) that sometime leads to loss of property, health issue having potential toxic effects. In addition, gambling also contributes in potential economic instability. As most of the people of scheduled groups are illiterate

leading to lack of awareness about their rights and are deprived from getting benefits of different government schemes.

Educational constraints faced by scheduled groups include poverty, lack of parental literacy, and lack of family support. The Indian government launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program in 2001 to universalize elementary education, reducing dropout rates and improving school enrolment. Despite of it, poor family status often leads sons to earn to support their families which contributes in dropouts (Parent of school going children, 39). In most cases, boys do drop out to provide financial assistance to the family.

The government benefits play a vital role to curb school drop outs. Though the early marriage and household work contributes in girl's dropout. Child marriage is prevalent among scheduled groups due to poverty. It impacts health and overall development. Society prefers daughter's marriage early to escape from economic burden and social responsibility (Business Man, 50).

It is expressed that parents struggle to manage daughters marriage expense and hence consider them as economic burden. Most people from such scheduled groups are engaged in daily wage in the agricultural fields, brick yard and brick factory and even in rag picking in urban centers of the district.

Scheduled groups particularly some Scheduled Castes often face discrimination and sense of impurity from upper castes. Historically, they were excluded from general and Muslim households, only allowed for agricultural activity. However, due to increased education and awareness, these issues have been diminishing. The government reports about forty castes in the district including dom and chamar who experience lower social status (Older Person, 65).

Scheduled groups live in isolation and segregation, with their hamlets often located far from mainstream society. Hence they lack to avail government benefits many times. Landlessness is an acute problem among scheduled groups in the district where Scheduled Tribes contribute more in landlessness than Scheduled Castes. As per Human Development Report of Malda district, 2006, tribals of the district migrated from Jharkhand during 1857 leaving behind immovable properties. They lack agricultural and residential land, leading to settling along roads and streets. Though, the land reform movement, Operation Barga (1978-80) aimed to distribute excess land to share croppers. Though landlessness prevail (Agricultural Labourer, 50).

Landlessness is also linked to moneylending, alcoholism, and gambling. Illiteracy and lack of education lead to agricultural laboring and wage laboring. Daily wage workers earn very less where females earn very less having gender gap in earning. Limited work availability throughout the year leads to migration and bonded laboring.

The 2011 socio-economic caste census revealed that only 3 percent of SC and 2.31 percent of ST households have monthly incomes of more than 10 thousands which is lower than the overall population in the district. Individuals with lower educational attainment often face lower-grade job positions and limited opportunities.

Government and Administration

The scheduled groups in the district face high level of poverty leading to kutcha housing. Sometimes, the government incentives for housing are denied due to biased household selection and local political influences (School Teacher, 41).

There is lack of residential schools in the SC and ST dominated areas. Most of the teachers teaching in these areas are from non-tribal community. Consequently they are less capable to mingle with tribal children. There is a lack of proper infrastructure at some schools in terms of classrooms, hygienic toilet facilities and water facilities. Consequently, the school going girls stop going to school and henceforth the educational deprivation is observed. The students of scheduled groups are the first learners who have limited and sometimes no knowledge about the existing schemes of scholarships. Consequently, they are deprived of issuance of SC and ST certificate and hence from availing scholarship.

Education is crucial for decision-making and behavior modification. Poverty and segregation contribute to lower educational attainment among scheduled groups. The beneficiary record of various employment generating schemes, such as Laghu Vyavsay Yojona for SCs, Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana for STs, Mahila Samridhi Yojona (MSY) for SCs, and Enhancing Employability through skill development, shows lower achievement than the target due to lack of literacy and unawareness.

Scheduled groups perform less in healthcare utilization due to illiteracy, lack of awareness. Children under five are often left behind in immunization and vaccination processes. Community health workers are less willing to visit tribal hamlets. Poor transport routes and communication prevent them from accessing emergency health services. This may contribute to higher mortality rates among tribal people (Retired Person, 70).

Scheduled groups, particularly tribal people suffer from malnutrition and protein and energy deficiency. MGNREGS (2005) aims to improve livelihood security in rural areas by providing hundred days of wage employment. However, late payments, unawareness, illiteracy, and wage theft discourage workers, leading to migration to other states for earning (Migrant Labour, 42).

Lower institutional birth among scheduled groups is due to lack of awareness, illiteracy, and inefficiency of ASHA workers, who are responsible for motivating pregnant women for institutional delivery. The district of Malda has shown significant improvements in toilet facilities since 2014, but open defecation still occurs. This is due to the preference for defecating far away from home and the time spent at agricultural fields. To prevent open defecation, a change in mindset and behavior is needed, involving local government and ASHA workers (Cultivator,50).

Bonded labouring is prohibited in India under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, but it still seen in the district. Scheduled groups, the poorest sections of society, often seek loans from moneylenders with high interest rates. They are required to work in other states under moneylenders, known as dadan, for a certain period, often facing lower wages, delayed payments, and harsh working conditions (Migrant Labour, 36).

The scheduled groups are backward in higher education. Their reserved seats in IIT's of India remain vacant. As their engagement in higher education is low, their engagement in government services also remains low which affects their living. The Kisan Credit Card scheme (1998) allows farmers to access loans based on their holdings with low interest rates for purchasing agricultural inputs. But the scheduled groups are mostly landless being deprived to avail such benefits.

Conclusion

The centuries of caste-based discrimination, segregation, and isolation have pushed Scheduled Castes and Tribes backward in the district. They are deprived in almost all spheres of life and living. It is found that only 20 percent and 6 percent of households of SCs and STs have pucca housing, which is lower compared to the district's overall population (23 percent). The share of households in drinking water sources within the premises for the overall population is about 36 percent which becomes lower for SCs and STs with only about 31 percent and 22 percent respectively. The tap water accessibility of the Scheduled Tribes is found very low with 6.5 percent due to their isolated living compared to the mainstream population. The share of households having toilet facilities in Malda district is 32 percent which is reported lower among SCs and STs with 29 percent and 9 percent respectively. The percentage of households using electricity among SCs and STs is 30 percent and 15 percent respectively, which rises higher for the district's overall population at 35 percent.

About 62 percent population of the district is literate which is lower for SCs and STs with 61 percent and 47 percent respectively. Though the work participation rate of SCs and STs is higher with 42 percent and 46 percent respectively than the overall population with 38.55 percent. Despite their better share in work participation, their living condition has not improved because most SC and ST population is engaged in low-grade economic activities due to their lower educational attainment. Besides, the higher percentage of SC and ST workers in agricultural labour compared to the overall population is linked with higher illiteracy observed among them. The share of other workers of SCs and STs mainly engaged in tertiary economic activities is recorded low compared to the overall population of the district. It is about 29 percent and 13 percent respectively among SCs and STs compared to the overall population with about 35 percent. The income level of these scheduled groups is comparatively lower than overall population of the district. It is observed that about 4 percent of households in the district of Malda earn more than ten thousand rupees a month which is lower among SCs and STs with 3.52 percent and 2.32 percent respectively.

The level of socio-economic status of SCs is reported high in the blocks of Kaliachak-I, English Bazar, Chanchal-I and Old Malda while it is observed low in the blocks of Harishchandrapur-II, Chanchal-II and Manikchak. The development level of STs is reported low in the blocks of Habibpur, Old Malda, Gazole, Bamangola, Harishchandrapur-II, Manikchak.

The culture of despondency, lack of awareness about their rights, liquor consumption despite limited financial stability are some of the personal factors responsible for their backwardness. Poverty, social segregation, isolation, landlessness, lower income level, lower job position, inefficiency in implementation of housing schemes, lack of schools and hostels with quality education, poor utilization of benefits of public health care services, unemployment, negligible presence in government services, least engagement in MGREGS play a vital role in the backwardness and deprivation of scheduled groups in the district. The isolated and segregated living of such scheduled groups prevents them from reaching health care centres. Due to lack

of wealth and lower income level, they face a low position in the society.

Establishing residential schools in SC/ST-dominated areas is crucial for educational development. Increasing scholarships, using mother tongues in instruction, and developing realistic curriculum can enhance tribal student enrolment. Addressing poverty and child marriage is necessary to reduce drop-out rates of SC/ST students. Improving the nutritional quality of mid-day meals under PM POSHAN is essential for supporting impoverished families. Providing concessional loans to poor farmers and eliminating gender wage bias in labour are vital. Enhancing transparency in MGNREGS will ensure timely wage payments for scheduled groups. Additionally, vocational training centres and women's self-help groups focusing on vermicomposting can boost livelihood opportunities among scheduled groups.

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