

Socio-Economic Conditions Of Scheduled Caste Population

A STUDY IN MAJULI DISTRICT, ASSAM

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Abstract

Scheduled Castes are those castes/races, which have been specified in a list in accordance with Article 341 of our Constitution. The Scheduled Caste (SC) population, according to 2011 Census, is 201378372 constituting 16.63 percent of the total population of India. As per 2011 census the total scheduled caste population in Assam was 2231321 constituting 7.15% of India's total SC population. This work has been carried out to study the socio-economic characteristics of the SC population in Majuli district, Assam. The socio-economic structure of Scheduled Caste population is different from that of the other castes. The levels and variation in the demographic characteristics are more likely to be affected by the socio-economic variation among the Scheduled Caste population. Therefore, the study of socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Cast population is of great importance. This study will attempt to explore the unexplored uniqueness of the SC society in Majuli district. The researcher feels that in order to improve the life style of this community and eradicating poverty and unemployment from their area, it is now very much essential that the government departments, NGO's, local public be involved in rural development work and suitable technology for development of rural area infrastructure be made.

INTRODUCTION

Majuli, the largest inhabited river island of the world, is a natural creation of the mighty river Brahmaputra. According to 2011 census, the total population of Majuli is 1,67,304, out of which the Scheduled Caste population is 23878 i.e. 14.27 per cent of the total population. Around 23 percent of the inhabited villages of the district are scheduled caste villages. The economic conditions of this population group is very poor and majority of the population are engaged in agriculture and fishing activities, and a very few persons are engaged in secondary and tertiary sectors. Due to poor economic conditions they are not in a position to take up different entrepreneurial activities. This paper highlights the socio-economic characteristics of scheduled caste population in Majuli district. Among the various Scheduled Caste population living in different states of India, Assam is one, where 16 communities are found. There are (1) Bansphor (2) Bhuinmali, Mali (3) Brittial Bania, Bania (4) Dhupi, Dhubi (5) Dugla, Dholi (6) Hira (7) Jalkcot (8) Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo (9) Kaibortta, Jalia (10) Lalbegi (11) Mahara (12) Mehtar, Bhangi (13) Muchi Rishi (14) Nama-Sudra (15) Patni and (16) Sutradhar. In Majuli district, three SC communities are found, i.e., Kaibortta, Bania and Malo. Among them majority of population are Kaiborttas. There are 62 no. of SC villages of which 45 are Kaibortta villages and 10 are Bania community village and 7 villages are of Malo community.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study aims at investigation the following objectives:

1. To examine the socio-economic characteristics of Scheduled Caste Population in Majuli District, Assam.
2. To analyse the income distribution of the Scheduled Caste Population in Majuli District.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on field data collected through the stratified simple random sampling technique from the sample of Scheduled Caste households of Majuli District. Majuli District comprises 2 (two) development blocks. It has 68 nos. of SC revenue villages of which 62 are inhabited. Accordingly a sample of 8 SC villages from Majuli block and 8 villages from Ujani Majuli block is purposively selected. Thus, the total number of sample villages is 16. From each sample villages, 15 percent of the sample households are selected. The numbers of sample households thus comes to 200 (102 Majuli block & 98 of Ujani Majuli block). Accordingly, required data have been collected through personal interview from the respondents. To supplement the primary data, secondary data were also collected from different published and unpublished secondary sources.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE SCHEDULED CASTE POPULATION

The socio-economic structure of the Scheduled Caste population is different from that of the other castes. The socio-economic characteristic, i.e., size of family, sex-wise distribution, educational status, marital status, economic status and occupational distribution of Schedule Caste population of Majuli District are discussed below.

DISTRIBUTIONS OF POPULATION

FAMILY SIZE

The size of the family explains the social economic and political prospects of any society. The earlier family structure in our society was mostly joint family system and most of the communities were basically dependent on agriculture preferred large families to meet the labour force requirement. However, as civilization progressed, the idea of individualism promoted nuclear families. To some extent industrialization, urbanization and education supported small families. Population influx and immigration are also contributing factors in reducing the family size. Following table (1) shows the distribution of sample households by size of family.

TABLE NO. 1

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY FAMILY MEMBERS

NO. OF FAMILY MEMBERS	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE
1—3	7	3.50
4—6	135	67.50
7—9	45	22.50
10 & MORE	13	6.50
TOTAL	200	100.00
MEAN FAMILY SIZE	6.03	

Source: Field Survey-2018

The distribution of the Schedule Caste households in Majuli District according to the number of family member is presented in Table-1. It is seen that about 67.50 percentages of the households are having a family size of 4-6 members. The percentage of households having a family size between 1-3 members is found to be 3.50%. The highest percentage i.e. 67.50 per cent of household has family size 4-6 members. The average family size for the Scheduled Caste population is worked out at 6.03 members.

AGE GROUP AND SEX

Sex and age exert considerable influence on aspects of the composition and structure of the population. Age influence other factors like education, employment, marriage, retirement, occupational composition, death rate and certain social and culture of the community. The sex ratio has equally important in social and economic bearing. It is affected by past fertility, mortality and migration and plays an important role in birth and death rates of the marriage and number of legitimate births. The distribution of the sample population according to age-group and sex is shown in Table-2.

TABLE NO. 2

DISTRIBUTION OF SC POPULATION BY AGE GROUP & SEX

Age Group (in year)	Male	Female	Total	Sex-ratio
Less than 10	84	78	162	928
10—19	72	85	157	1180
20—29	219	180	399	821
30—39	56	71	127	1268
40—49	64	67	131	1046
50—59	58	54	112	931
60 & above	62	56	118	893
Total	615	591	1206	961
	(51.00)	(49.00)	(100.00)	

Source: Field Survey-2018

It is found that out of 1206 number of total population, 51.00 percent is male and 49.00 percent is female. Thus the sex-ratio is found out at 961 female per thousand male, which is higher than the sex-ratios of Majuli District (955) and Assam as a whole (958) as per the estimates of 2011 census.

It is also seen from the table that the sex ratio is higher at the age group of 30-39, i.e. 1268, where number of male is 56 and number of female is 71. The sex-ratio is lower at the age group of 20-29, i.e. 821, where the number of male is 219 and number of female is 180.

EDUCATION STATUS

Education helps to correlate many other socio-economic and political problems faced by the population. Here we have analysed the educational attainments of sample Scheduled Caste households at different levels i.e. primary, middle, high school, secondary, college, graduation, post-graduation, technical degree or diploma and professional courses etc. The age group-wise distribution of Scheduled Caste population in Majuli District (excluding the population of 0-6 years) according to educational levels is presented in Table-3.

TABLE-3

AGE GROUP WISE DISTRIBUTION OF SC POPULATION (EXCLUDING THE POPULATION OF 0-6 YEARS) ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Age Group (in year)	Illiterate	Primary Level	Middle School	High School	H.S. Level	Graduate Level & above	Total
7-15	4	52	62	12	-	-	130
16-25	33	45	97	73	77	36	361
26-35	31	23	38	29	39	47	207
36-45	45	28	33	4	6	10	126
46-55	62	27	14	-	2	-	105
56-65	67	20	13	-	5	-	105
66 & above	27	7	5	2	2	2	45
Total	269 (24.93)	202 (18.72)	262 (24.28)	120 (11.12)	131 (12.14)	95 (8.80)	1079 100.00

Source: Field Survey-2018

Regarding the literacy level of the sample population, it is found that 24.93 per cent of population are illiterate and 75.07 per cent are literate. The effective literacy rate is found to be 75.07 which is marginally lower than the district (Jorhat) level average (90.39%). It is nearest to the Majuli District average (77.72%) as per 2011 census. But this higher effective literacy rate of the sample SC population does not reflect the quality improvement of human resources.

MARITAL STATUS

Marital composition helps in understanding the social condition of the population. In this study the marital status is enumerated on the basis of age group.

TABLE – 4

MARITAL STATUS OF THE SC POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Age Group	Married		Un - Married		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-15	-	-	109	148	109	148
16-25	46	72	144	102	190	174
26-35	36	60	80	19	116	79
36-60	142	136	-	-	142	136
60 & above	58	54	-	-	58	54
Total	282	322	333	269	615	591

Source: Field Survey-2018

Table- 4 presents the marital status of the Scheduled Caste population of Majuli districts classified by age-group. It is evident from the table that out of 1206 populations 602 sample populations are married and 604 populations are found unmarried.

ECONOMIC STATUS

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Occupational structure helps in understanding the economic condition of the population. It is related to social, political and educational status of the people. The occupational structure are distributed in the following table-5

TABLE -5

Occupational structure of SC Population

S1 No.	Occupational Category	Nos. Of Person	Percentage %
1	Agriculture	620	51.40
2	Fishing	37	3.07

3	Service	20	1.66
4	Business	26	2.16
5	Daily Wagers	97	8.04
6	Dependent	406	33.66
	Total	1206	100%

Source: Field Survey-2018

It is observed that 51.40 % of the total population is found to be engaged in agriculture and 3.07% people are engaged in fishing. From the field study it is found that only 1.66% engaged in various govt. departments within the District. It is seen that 33.66% of the total population do not have any source of income.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

It is very difficult to ascertain the income of the population because most of the people do not maintain any income records. The income can be measured by agricultural and non agricultural occupation sources. The income pattern of the sample households is analysed in the table 6.

TABLE – 6

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD BY FAMILY INCOME

INCOME PER MONTH (IN RS.)	NO OF HOUSEHOLD	PERCENTAGE
Up to 1000	29	14.44
1000 – 2000	41	20.50
2000 – 3000	45	22.50
3000 – 4000	20	10.00
4000 – 5000	9	4.50
5000 – 6000	13	6.50
6000 – 7000	17	8.50
7000 – 8000	15	7.50
8000 & above	11	5.50
Total	200	100.00

Source: Field Survey-2018

The table shows that out of 200 households 29 no. of households' (14.44%) monthly income is only Rs. 1000. About 20.5% of the total population is found in the income brackets of Rs. 1000 to 2000. The highest percentage of total population (22.50%) is found in the income brackets of Rs. 2000 to 3000. It indicates that majority of people are living with a low level of income.

Some members of the villagers are engaged in business sector, but their earning is very poor. Due to lack of capital and sufficient knowledge they can not engage in big business. Those who are highly educated and well placed; they settle in town or out side the district. So, the service holders of the village

are not of a higher rank. Their economic condition is also not very sound. Some facts of the surveyed village are shown in the table-7.

TABLE – 7

TYPES-OF RESI-DENCE	PER CENT	ELECTRI-FICATIO-N	PER CENT	TYPE S OF FUEL	PER CENT	SOU RC-ES OF DRIN KI-NG WAT E-R	PER CENT	LAV A-TOR Y TYPE S	PER CENT
RCC	1.00	With Electrifica-tion	31.00	LPG conne-ction	19.00	Tube well	82.00	Forest	19.00
Bricks wall & galvanize d roof	10.00	Without Electrifica-tion	69.00	Fire-wood	81.00	Well	3.00	Servic e Latrin e	64.00
Half wall wood batam	14.00		-		-	Pond	2.00	San-i-tary	17.00
Bamboo hut	75.00		-		-				
TOTAL	100.00		100.00		100.00		100.00		100.00

Source: Field Survey-2018

In my survey I found that only 1percent household has RCC building. The highest percentage of total households (75%) have Bamboo hut. It is found that majority of people (69%) are living without electrification and only 17% have sanitary latrine in my observation.

FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are:-

1. Regarding the occupational pattern of SC people,It is observed that 51.40 % of the total population is found to be engaged in agriculture and 3.07% people are engaged in fishing. From the field study it is found that only 1.66% engaged in various govt. departments within the District. It is seen that 33.66% of the total population do not have any source of income.

2. Regarding the literacy level of the sample population, it is found that 24.93 per cent of population are illiterate and 75.07 per cent are literate. The effective literacy rate is found to be 75.07 which is marginally lower than the district (Jorhat) level average (90.39%). It is nearest to the Majuli District average (77.72%) as per 2011 census. But this higher effective literacy rate of the sample SC population does not reflect the quality improvement of human resources.

3. There is large scale unemployment and underemployment found in scheduled caste population in Majuli District due to lack of alternative employment opportunity.

4. The standard of living of the scheduled caste population is very low. They have been facing many problems like lack of capital, hygienic sanitation, drinking water, electricity etc.

CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion, it is obvious that effective measures need to be taken for improving the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled caste people in Majuli district. As the District is flood prone, the rural infrastructure and the economic situation is miserable. 60%-70% of the population depends heavily on agriculture and fishing activities. Thus, in order to improve the standard of living of this village community and for eradicating poverty and unemployment, it is now essential that the government departments, NGO's, local populace should be involved in rural development works and suitable technology for development of rural area infrastructure to be introduced. Since, the important means to enable the SC people in order to improve their socio-economic status is dissemination of education among them. Therefore, more attention should be given in the field of job oriented education which can provide job opportunities to the rural people.

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