

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **Conclusion**

## 7.0 Conclusion

It is proved from the previous studies that the Scheduled Castes were kept apart from the rest of the society due to the prevalent practice of untouchability. The Indian caste system based on the notion of purity and pollution believed that the Scheduled Castes were impure and polluted. Prior to independence and even later, they had been the poorest of the poor, and socially and economically most backward caste of the country. In spite of many socio-economic securities provided to them in the constitution and by the government, they are still comparatively less educated, backward and in the dilemma of privilege and exploitation. This could be attributed to a variety of reasons such as illiteracy, social evils like gambling, liquor and litigation, superstition, dominance of higher castes, deprivation from socio-economic status due to their treatment as 'Sudras in the society' stratification on Manu system, inferiority complex against other castes and misuse of privileges and rights constitutionally provided to them. The schedule castes are comparatively backward in occupational, educational, social, cultural, religious and political sector.

After independence Scheduled Castes are going under social and economic changes both in rural and urban areas. Various constitutional amendments gave rights to scheduled castes. They are also given reserved quotas on various organizations in order to abolish untouchability and other taboos. All these have led to changes in their attitude towards society and social values and norms. They are gradually not only accepting but have also started practicing certain measures of family planning. They are becoming more conscious about the education and job of their children. Their attitude towards religion, child marriage, superstitions, etc. is changing. Economic transformation is also not lagging behind. By and large, they are no longer bonded or permanent labourers. They are now gradually becoming marginal farmers and have started working in non-agricultural sectors too.

But there are a lot of spatio-temporal variations in the modes of socio-economic status among them and their standard of living with regard to structural relationship among sub-castes and social contacts with other castes of the region of their habitation. The scheduled castes residing in urban areas or in urban fringe or even in

immediate surrounding urban villages are more dynamic in their social change in comparison to their own counterpart living in remote, distant and rural areas. Educationally they are forward and politically aware of their right and privileges provided in the constitution for the welfare of their community. They are now willingly adopting the practice and measures of family planning in order to provide better food, clothes, education and medical facilities to their children. Socially they are adopting modernity and now they believe more in adult marriage, remarriage, love marriage and even in freedom of women but less in litigation, superstition, gambling, drinking and such other social mysticism. But the rural scheduled castes are in slow process of moving out from the grip of old and traditional bound social values like child marriage, widowhood, superstitions etc. Though the social parameters of these scheduled castes are changing and are taking a new shape, yet conservatism is still prevalent in their society. Hence, their social change is slow as compared to that of rural scheduled castes. The old and uneducated generations of rural scheduled castes are still fantastic and they consider any change as providential event and as a human choice. The effect of such conservative ideas may be observed in their large size of family as a measure for social security and instrument for generating economic pursuits. But the new and educated generation of rural scheduled castes which is in contact with their own community in urban areas or in the contact of higher castes of the society does not believe in conservative values regarding size, structure and system of the family. The educated scheduled caste women generally treated backward among backwards among backwards are protesting against traditional social values. They are now motivated by the glamour, customs and costumes of urban elite. The broad changes affected by religious movements and other process of change such as westernization, sanskritisation, individual upward mobility of scheduled castes for material advantages, politico-social power and the infiltration of urbanization to remote and rural areas altogether have affected the social life of these rural scheduled castes to a considerable extent.

The scheduled castes are no more bonded, permanent and landless labourer. They have become more conscious about the economic gain and returns from their

various pursuits. Many of them after getting land by government under different schemes of land distribution to landless, have started agricultural practices and hence, have become marginal farmers. A considerable segment of rural scheduled castes community are now working in non agricultural sectors like building construction, road construction and its maintenance, factories and in private shops in urban centres within and outside the region. The educated rural scheduled castes now prefer non-agricultural activities and the considerable number of such youth is in banking, marketing, education, administration and judicial services.

Education is crucial parameter of social and human development. Thus, education has emerged as the only hope for the deprived and to improve their socio-economic status. While the definition of equality has changed over time, the provisions for positive discrimination incorporated in the Indian Constitution combine equality of access with that of outcome. This explains the preferential treatment in the form of 'reservations' for the Scheduled Castes in the educational institutions and in the Central and State Government organizations.

The policy of reservations enabled the hitherto deprived sections to receive higher education and also move into the organized sector occupations thereby opening channels of mobility for some of the Scheduled Castes. This has given rise to the debate as to whether the Scheduled Caste 'elite' who have benefited from the policy of positive discrimination or affirmative action should continue to enjoy these privileges and whether the policy of positive discrimination or affirmative action should continue to enjoy these privileges and whether the policy should be modified to exclude them. These questions were relevant when this study was undertaken. Even now they continue to be part of the public debate, though almost all the respondents still want the reservation facility for the education and job of their children.

In the five decades since independence, a plethora of studies on the Scheduled Castes have been undertaken. Yet very few have focused on the specific question of

the interlinkages between social context and occupational mobility using education as the intervening variable.

India was declared as Welfare State after independence and the growth of social justice and social order maintenance are considered ultimate objective of social welfare policy. The policy making bodies were constituted by the Union and State government as well as Cabinet and legislature in the parliamentary democracy. The role of planning commission and NDC (National Development Council) in the different type's policy making for the development of Scheduled Castes is very important. Beside these two crucial committees, Estimate Committee and PAC (Public Accounts Committee) at central level are also playing vital role in welfare of backward classes.

There are a number of laws, both central and state which provide safeguards to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The government policy is guided by the protective discrimination towards the weaker sections of the society. After independence Indian constitution has provided special concessions for the development. For this reason, few castes and tribes have been included in the scheduled based on social and economic disabilities.

The constitution of India which contains Directive Principle of the State Policy, laid down in Article 15(4) that the State to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 16(4) enable the state to make the provisions for the reservational posts in favor of any backward class of citizens. It is specified in Article 46, that the state promote with special care, the education and economic interest of the weaker sections the people and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Specific provisions have been outlined in Articles, 16, 27, 33, 34 & 35 of the constitution of India in order to fulfill the promise of Directive Principle of State policy. Reservations of seats for Scheduled Castes in the State Legislation and in the Parliament are also provided by these Articles. The Article 35 of the constitution needs the state to take into account, the claim of the

number of Scheduled Castes in the appointment in various services. It is clearly mentioned in the Article 17 of the Constitution that untouchability is abolished and the practice in any form is forbidden.

Before the Poona Pact (1932) the representation of the Scheduled Castes in the public services was negligible. The main cause for this situation was educational backwardness amongst the Scheduled Castes. The term 'Scheduled Castes' was used for the first time in the Government of India provided reservation at the rate of 8.33% for the Scheduled Castes in vacancies filled by direct recruitment through open competition in August 1943. Relaxation in the upper age limit and concession in the examination fees prescribed for appointment to a service or post were also announced in favour of Scheduled Castes candidates.

Most of the SCs have experienced dramatic change in their status due to educational and occupational mobility. The occupational mobility is intra generational as well as inter generational. In order words, there is drastic improvement in the occupations of the sons, who are the respondents in the study, in comparison to those of their fathers. In addition, quite a few of them have had to work on temporary, part-time and casual jobs. The present jobs are not necessarily their first jobs although it is the present jobs which have provided occupational mobility and the much desired social mobility.

The rigorous implementation of SC/ST reservation policy not only in employment but also in promotional avenues has given additional incentives to them for white collar jobs. Some scheduled castes have started even their own commercial and industrial enterprises under self-employment schemes of the government. A large number of scheduled castes have been benefited with various schemes of the government such as loans, subsidies and animal husbandry etc. which in turn have brought economic prosperity among them.

### **Correlation Between Variables:**

A correlation is a single number that describes the degree of relationship between two variables. The correlation is one of the most common and most useful statistics. The correlation between variables of the study are represented in the following tables-  
Table-7.1 Showing the correlation between *B.P.L Scheduled Castes families* and important socio-economic variables-

Variables(X)	
Large Families(>6 Members)	.811
Crude Literacy Rate	-.739
Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group	-.964
Respondents Preferring Private Nursery School	-.821
Respondents Completing Education on Regular Basis	-.906
Discontinuation in Education	.636
Respondents Discriminated by Higher Castes	.477
Awareness of Laws for Scheduled Castes	-.742
Respondents Preferring Inter-Caste Marriage	-.808
Dowry System Present in Families	.756
Awareness of Family Planning	-.850
High Monthly Expenditure for Food(Rs.>5,000)	-.634
High Monthly Expenditure for Education (Rs.>1,000)	-.687
Mango Production	-.768

Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed).

Source: Calculated by Researcher Based on Field Work.

Table- 7.1 represents that among the 14 parameters there are 4 variables which have strong positive correlation with B.P.L families and 10 variables are negatively correlated with the B.P.L families. The values of correlation depicts that there is positive relationship between the percentage of B.P.L families and large families, B.P.L families and discontinuation in education, B.P.L families and discrimination by higher castes and B.P.L families and dowry system present in families. Negative correlation is observed between B.P.L families and crude literacy rate, B.P.L. families and awareness of family planning etc.

Table- 7.2 represents that there are four variables which are positively correlated with the large family size and nine variables have negative correlation with the large family size.

B.P.L. Families, Discontinuation in Education, Dowry System Present in Families ect. are positively correlated with the Large Families. Crude Literacy Rate, Respondents Completing Education on Regular Basis, Awareness of Laws for Scheduled Castes, Respondents Preferring Inter-Caste Marriage, and Awareness of Family Planning etc. are negatively correlated with the large size families.

Table: - 7.2 showing the relationship between *Large Family Size of Scheduled Castes* and important socio-economic variables-

Variables(X)	
B.P.L. Families	.811
Crude Literacy Rate	-.644
Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group	-.840
Respondents Preferring Private Nursery School	-.938
Respondents Completing Education on Regular Basis	-.743
Discontinuation in Education	.593
Awareness of Laws for Scheduled Castes	-.560
Respondents Preferring Inter-Caste Marriage	-.780
Dowry System Present in Families	.621
Awareness of Family Planning	-.619
Fishing Activity	.582
Preference of Medical(Doctor) Profession	-.509
Preference of Engineering Profession	-.821

Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed).

Source: Calculated by Researcher Based on Field Work

Table -7.3: represents the positive and negative relationship between **crude literacy rate among SCs and** other variables. It is clear that of the 15 variables four have strong negative correlation with the crude literacy rate while remaining eleven have positive correlation with the crude literacy rate. B.P.L. Families, Discontinuation in Education, Dowry System Present in Families and Large Family Size are negatively correlated with the Crude Literacy Rate. Awareness of Laws for Scheduled Castes, Preference of Inter-Caste Marriage, Awareness of Family Planning, High Monthly Income etc. are positively correlated with the Crude Literacy Rate.



Table: - 7.3: Showing the relationship between *Crude Literacy Rate* of Scheduled Castes and important socio-economic variables-

Variables(X)	
B.P.L. Families	-.739
Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group	.779
Respondents Preferring Private Nursery School	.654
Respondents Completing Education on Regular Basis	.729
Discontinuation in Education	-.591
Awareness of Laws for Scheduled Castes	.730
Respondents Preferring Inter-Caste Marriage	.855
Dowry System Present in Families	-.783
Awareness of Family Planning	.643
Preference of Medical(Doctor) Profession	.525
Preference of Engineering Profession	.658
Large Family Size(>6 Members)	-.644
High Monthly Income(Rs.>10,000)	.638
High Monthly Expenditure for Food(Rs.>5,000)	.687
High Monthly Expenditure for Education (Rs.>1,000)	.643

Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed).

Source: Calculated by Researcher Based on Field Work

7.4: Showing the relationship between families with *high monthly income* (Rs.>10,000) and important socio-economic variables-

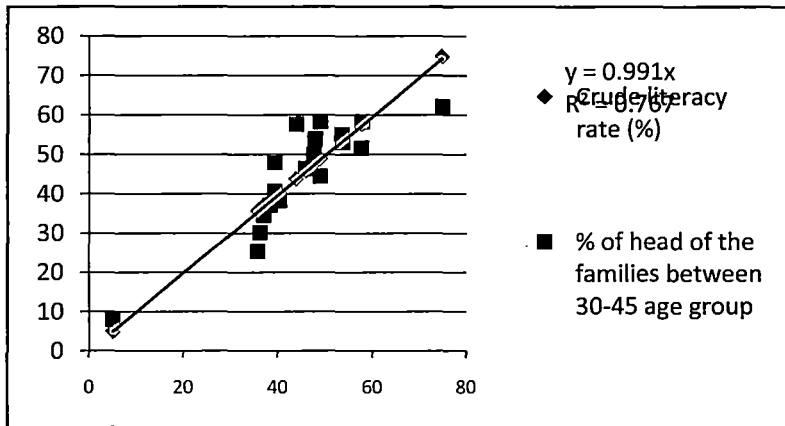
Variables(X)	
Large Family Size (>6 members)	-.320
Crude Literacy Rate	.638
Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group	.651
Respondents Preferring Private Nursery School	.306

Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed).

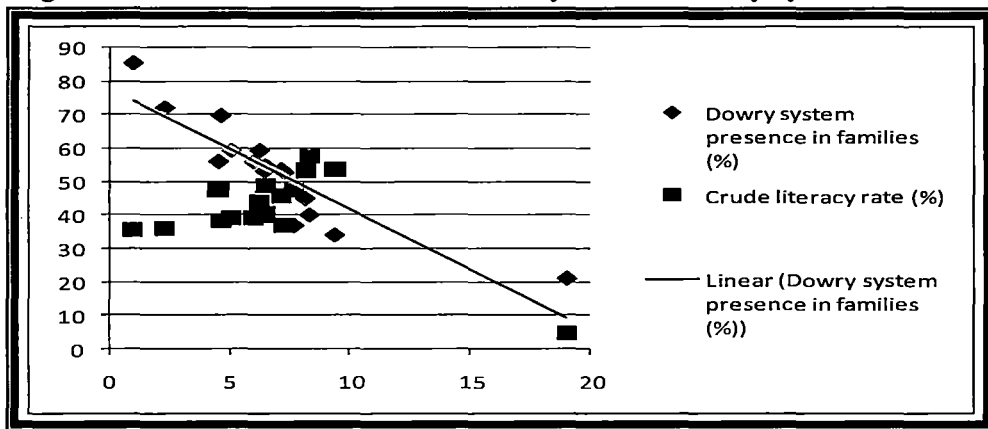
Source: Calculated by Researcher Based on Field Work

-7.4 represents the positive and negative relationship between families with high monthly income and other variables. It is clear that of the 4 variables large family size families are negatively correlated while remaining 3 (Crude Literacy Rate, Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group and Respondents Preferring Private Nursery School) have positive correlation with the families with high monthly income

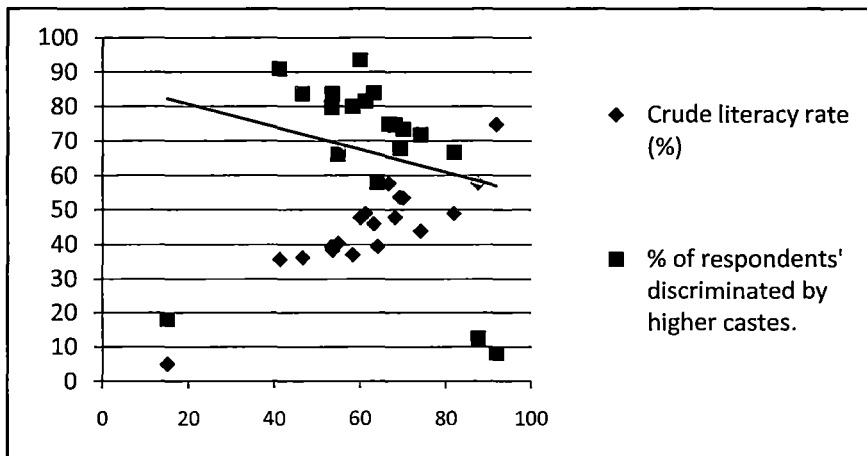
Positive Correlation between Head of the Families Between 30-45 age group and Crude Literacy Rate



Negative correlation between crude literacy rate and dowry system-



Negative Correlation between Crude Literacy Rate and Discrimination by higher castes



The major findings of the study helped to fulfill the seven objectives –

❖ *The first objective of to describe the spatial variations in distribution of scheduled castes of Maldah district with reference to their major demographic characteristics;*

It is revealed from the study that there is high variation in the concentration of the SCs. The highest concentration of SCs is found in Bamangola block (49.87%), while the lowest concentration is found in Kaliachak block (2.68%). Depending on the percentage of the SCs to total population of the block, Maldah district is divided into 3 zones i.e. areas of low concentration (<15%), the areas of moderate concentration (15-30%) and areas of high concentration (>30%).

The blocks –Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II, Kaliachak-III, Harischandrapur-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II and Manikchak with the concentration of SCs <15% falls under areas of low concentration .Harischandrapur-I, Old Maldah and English Bazar are the areas of moderate concentration accounting percentage of SCs 15-30%, to total population of the block. High concentration of the SCs is found in the 3 blocks of the district viz. Gazole, Habibpur and Bamangola with concentration of SCs >30%.

The sex ratio of scheduled castes is highest in Chanchal-II block (996) while it is lowest in English Bazar Block (921). The encouraging fact is that the child sex-ratio (0-6 age) is 1006 and 1020 in Ratua I and Ratua-II blocks respectively. The sex ratio of the total SCs of the district is 946 and the child sex ratio is 966.

The majority respondents are aware of family planning programmes and they are adopting the family planning programmes. The gender biasness is clearly reflected in adopting family planning programmes, because more than 80% respondents have favoured female adaptation while 20% respondents have favoured male adaptation.

In the Maldah district both internal and international migrations among the scheduled Castes respondents have been observed. Out of total 1071 rural respondents 392 (36.60%) are migrated and out of 73 urban respondents 30(41.10%) are migrated. 26.28% rural respondents and 13.33% urban respondents are

international migrants. The main cause for the migration in rural areas is economic and in urban area is social.

❖ *The second objective is to identify the major economic parameters such as occupation of scheduled castes, their standard of living, food, clothes, house type, recreation, mode of transport etc.*

In 7 blocks out of total 15 blocks majority of the Scheduled Castes families are living below poverty line, while there is not a single block in the district which has BPL families more than 50% in terms of total population. In Chanchal II and Ratua II blocks more than 75 % Scheduled Castes families belong to B.P.L. In rural areas 46.04% population are earning and in urban areas 32.73% population are earning population. Among the scheduled castes 23.88% is cultivators, 38.98% agricultural labourers, 8.30% household industry workers and 28.84% is other workers (2001). Of the total cultivators 64.50% produce crops on subsistence basis. 70.14% farmers produce vegetable on subsistence basis. The percentage of Scheduled Castes beneficiaries is very low compared to the general beneficiaries under different schemes of sericulture department. Of the total 827 fruit producers 96.86% produce mango, for which Maldah district is famous.

Majority of the Scheduled Castes respondents (84.06% rural and 83.05% urban) got their job under reserve category. Majority of the Scheduled Castes (90.91% rural and 75% urban) got their promotion under reserve category. According to 49.58% rural and 87.67% urban respondents' reservation had fulfilled their purpose. According to 92.16% rural and 90.41% urban respondents' role of reservation policy in the improvement of their socio-economic status is to a large extent.

The findings of the study on job are –

➤ Majority of the rural respondents (50.70%) joined their first job below 14 years of age, whereas only 1.37% urban respondent joined job before 14 years of age.

➤ Maximum (43.77%) rural respondents leave their job to get better job while maximum urban (47.83%) respondents leave their first job for government job.

➤ Study revealed that of the total 696 rural respondents of low socio-economic status 423 (60.78%) hold low income level occupation while of the 171 respondents of high socio-economic status, 130 (76.02%) hold high income level of job.

#### Findings on Housing Condition:

➤ In urban area 95.89% respondents have pucca house while in rural areas only 10.27 respondents have pucca house. It indicates the poor condition of the rural areas.

➤ All the urban respondents have sanitation facility while in rural area 81.79% have this facility.

Of the 1071 rural respondents majority (56.86%) have kutcha, only 10.27% have pucca and 32.87% have party pucca and party kutcha house. In urban areas 95.89 % houses are pucca and 4.11% are partly pucca and partly kutcha. Rural-urban disparity is again observed in house type. All the urban respondents have sanitation facility while in rural area 81.79% have this facility.

The monthly income 82.19% urban scheduled castes families is Rs.10, 000/- and above and only 24.74% rural families earn Rs.10, 000/- and above. The consumption for food Rs >5000 per month is found in 82.19% urban and only 9.24 rural families. The educational expenditure of maximum rural families (43.98%) is Rs.<300 per month, while it is for maximum urban families (41.10%) is Rs. 1000 – 2000. Only 51.82% rural respondents have savings for future, whereas 95.89% urban respondents have savings.

The use of A.C., air-cooler, micro-oven in rural areas is nil even majority of the respondents don't know about micro-over. Of the total urban respondents 18(24.66%) use A.C and Air-cooler and 16(21.92%) use micro-oven. Exposure to mass media is an important indicator of socio-economic development of a society, because it affects knowledge, attitude, and opinion of individual. An

attempt has been made to assess the level of exposure of the respondents by asking the questions regarding various sources of mass-media such as radio, T.V., newspaper, computer with internet etc. It is observed that the urban scheduled castes are more exposed than rural.

71.27% urban and only 12.42% rural families take milk every day in a week. Majority of the urban families (57.53%) eat fish 3 days per week whereas maximum rural families (30.63%) eat fish 2 days per week. Egg is comparatively cheap than fish and meat and used more as food by the both rural and urban families. Meat is very costly and only 347 (32.40%) rural families out of 1071 eat meat regularly in week whereas remaining 67.60% eat occasionally. On the other hand all the urban families consume meat weekly.

The dress pattern of the urban respondents is more developed and modern than rural. Majority of rural respondents purchase dress 1-2 times, whereas majority of urban respondents purchase more than 3 times in a year.

Of the total respondents 26.23% and 65.75% are owner of cars and motor bikes whereas in rural areas only 0.47% and 11.48% respondents are owner of cars and motor bikes. Bi-cycle is the main personal mode of transport of rural respondents (93.46%).

❖ ***The third objective is to identify the major social parameters such as education, migration, marriage, religion, family planning programmes, superstitions, political awareness and involvement.***

Findings on the study of education are –

- Majority of the Scheduled Castes are illiterates throughout all the three successive generations, respondent, father and grandfather.
- The majority of the urban respondents and their father and grand-father are literates over three successive generations.

➤ Of the 216 rural respondents who achieved different educational qualifications compared to their fathers, 211 (97.69%) have moved up where as 5 (2.31%) went down in educational attainment.

➤ Compared to the grandfather out of 455 rural respondents who achieved different educational qualifications, 451 (99.12%) have moved up where as only 4 (0.88%) have moved down in terms of educational attainment.

➤ 269 (95.37%) fathers of the total 281 fathers in rural areas with different qualification compared to the respondents' grand-father have moved up in terms of educational attainment.

➤ Percentage of respondents who completed their education on regular basis is more in urban (88.41%) area than rural area (63.87%).

➤ 190 (40.86%) respondents of rural areas and 9(13.04%) respondents of urban area have discontinuation in education. The rate of discontinuation in education is high (44.21%) at primary level in rural area whereas in urban area the rate is high (66.67%) in college level.

➤ Majority of the urban (55.56%) and rural respondents (84.21%) had discontinued their education due to the financial problem. Dropout rate of children is observed more in rural areas at primary level.

➤ Majority of the urban respondents (52.17%) had completed their education without job during study whereas only 12.69% rural respondents completed their education without job.

➤ Majority of the rural respondents (53.92%) did not avail any facility at school level due to the lack of knowledge and they used to feel bad to disclose their caste.

➤ Majority, 298 (64.09%) of the rural literates belong to the low socio-economic status and of them only 52 (17.45%) achieved high, 87(29.19%) achieve medium and 159(53.36%) achieved low educational level. So, level of literacy of the majority respondents highly depend on the socio-economic status of their families

**Findings of the study on migration are –**

- 26.28% rural respondents and 13.33% urban respondents are international migrants.
- The main cause for the migration in rural areas is economic and in urban area is social.

**Finding of the Study on attitude towards marriage, dowry system and family planning measures:**

Followings are the findings of the study on attitude towards marriage, dowry system and family planning measures:

- The attitude of SCs respondents has undergone a major change like discouraging child marriage, encouraging widow marriage, love marriage and inter-caste marriage; 34.97% females are married in rural area in the age group 14-18, whereas no female is married in this age group in urban area.
- They are becoming more liberal and receptive to modern ideologies;
- They are aware of disadvantages and limitations of childhood marriage;
- At present they are conscious about the age of marriage of their child. More than 50% respondents have opted more than 18 years as age of the marriage for their daughter;
- They prefer love marriage which is a sign of social transformation;
- Respondents have given their choice for inter-caste marriage which also indicates the sign of social transformation;
- The dowry system in the society is still prevalent though there are different laws and legislations. According to majority (54.25%) rural respondents'



dowry is prevalent in their society whereas according to only 17.81% urban respondents dowry is prevalent in urban society;

➤ Respondents opted for inter professional marriage for their children. It indicates the social transformation;

➤ The urban respondents are more aware of family planning programmes than rural and they are adopting the family planning programmes; and

➤ That gender biasness is clearly reflected in adopting family planning programmes, because more than 80% respondents have favoured female adaptation while 20% respondents have favoured male adaptation.

#### **Findings on religion –**

➤ The majority of respondents believe in religion moderately & strictly;

➤ Percentage of respondents who believe in religion is more in villages compared to towns.

➤ 64.52 % respondent of villages and 56.16 % of respondents of urban areas follow religious rules strictly in routine life.

➤ The majority of urban and rural respondents visit religious places of the district frequently while number of urban respondents who visit religious places of other districts and states frequently is than rural respondents.

➤ Almost all the respondent offer special puja before starting new job.

➤ Almost all the respondents worship more at the time of hardship and distress.

➤ Religious superstition is found in family of majority of respondents.

➤ Rural and urban respondents arrange puja and the expenditure for puja per year exceeds Rs. 1500 of 03.73% rural and 83.56% urban respondents.

➤ 61.72% rural and 47.95% urban respondents have separate place of worship.

➤ More than 90% urban and rural respondents believe that happiness and sorrowness in their families comes from god.

**The findings on the study of the political awareness of the respondents are –**

- Urban respondents' are more politically aware than rural.
- Number of respondents working of party election is more (43.98%) in rural area than urban (23.29%).
- Almost all the respondents are aware of the fact that frequent holding of election is high expensive for country.

❖ *The fourth objective is to find out the determinants of socio-economic status of scheduled castes of Maldah district.*

**Literacy rate and educational attainment:**

Literacy rate and educational attainment is very important determinant of the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes. Literacy rate influences the fertility, family planning, choice of schools for the children and preference of job for children. The findings of the study are as follows-

- The literacy rate of the population varies among the scheduled castes in rural and urban areas. In urban areas **81.51%** male and **77.27%** female are literate while **18.49%** male and **22.73%** female are illiterate. In rural areas **60.36%** male and **51.55%** female are literate and **39.64%** male and **51.55%** female are illiterate. So the gap between male and female literates is about 12% and 4% in rural and urban areas of Maldah district respectively.
- In rural areas maximum (38.66 %) families prefer teaching profession for their daughter and 01.77 % families prefer medical (doctor) profession for their daughter.

➤ In urban areas maximum (47.95%) families prefer teaching profession for their daughter and 21.92% families prefer medical (doctor) profession for their daughter.

➤ Teaching profession is also preferred by the both maximum rural (57.42%) and urban (41.10%) families for their son.

➤ In rural areas 32.68 % families and in urban areas 10.96 % families prefer Nursing or Multipurpose profession for their daughter.

➤ Maximum disparity is observed in rural and urban areas for the choice of medical (doctor) profession due to the poor economic condition and educational backwardness of rural scheduled castes.

**Reservation:** Reservation plays very vital role in the socio-economic development of the scheduled castes. The findings of the study are-

➤ Majority of the Scheduled Castes respondents (84.06% rural and 83.05% urban) got their job through reservation.

➤ Majority of the Scheduled Castes (90.91% rural and 75% urban) got their promotion under reserve category.

➤ According to 49.58% rural and 87.67% urban respondents' reservation had fulfilled their purpose.

➤ According to 92.16% rural and 90.41% urban respondents' role of reservation policy in the improvement of their socio-economic status is to a large extent.

➤ Majority of the rural respondents (50.70%) think financial support can improve their socio-economic status while according to maximum urban (43.83%) respondents believe that general awareness can reduce the social distance between Scheduled Castes and higher castes.

➤ Though the majority of the respondents reported that their socio-economic condition has improved and political awareness has increased during last

decade, still they are very backward compared to general caste population of the district.

### **Discrimination and Distance from Higher castes:**

The findings of the study are-

➤ The large numbers of SCs are residing in the regions where the upper castes Hindus live. Though majority of SCs of the district are living in their own colonies, no ecological segregation is enforced on them;

➤ They are free to construct house in other than own locality is proved from the opinion of the affirmative answers of respondents, who have said that they are free to construct houses outside their locality where upper castes Hindu live;

➤ At present the SCs of the Maldah are using freely all the live amenities like common public tap, roads, school, hospitals, common place of toilet and common temples;

➤ The relationship with higher castes is improving day by day. If the respondent is having an intimate friend from upper caste, be it a forward caste or backward caste, he will be invited to have lunch or dinner with them, and it is not the other things that decide the matter;

➤ A significant number of SCs have commensal relation with upper caste Hindus, however, the majority of them have commensal relations with the backward castes only;

➤ The majority of SCs having commensal relation with the higher caste Hindu are getting equal treatment with the others, on the occasions of interdining, with a few exceptions;

➤ All the SCs are allowed to visit all temples in the district and they participate in common village festivals. So, there are no religious restrictions imposed on the SCs;

➤ The discrimination to some extent is noticed in the work place, when the respondents are very poor and completely dependent on the employer;

➤ The previous practice of using caste name as suffix or prefix is decreasing due to fear of discrimination by higher castes Hindus. So, this is found

during the study only very few respondents are using their caste name along with their name;

➤ The large number of SCs respondents feel that they are discriminated by upper class Hindus;

➤ The SCs respondents feel that unclean occupation and fear of pollution are the reasons for the distance between the SCs and upper castes.

➤ Almost all the respondents feel that birth in the Scheduled Caste is the significant reason for the upper castes to maintain distance from SCs;

➤ Majority of SCs feel that the important remedies to reduce the social distance between them and upper castes are economic development ,education and better employment;

➤ The majority of respondents are not aware of the protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and do not know about the existence of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

❖ ***The fifth objective is to assess the rural urban variations in socio-economic status;***

Rural-urban variation among scheduled castes is observed in all the socio-economic aspects. The study covers 1071 rural and 73 urban households. It is clear from the study of socio-economic condition of the rural and urban respondents that the both socio-economic condition of the urban areas is more developed than rural areas. The result of the study on the rural urban variations in socio-economic status are-

➤ Both the male and female literacy rate is high in urban areas than rural areas. The percentage of population with higher educational level is more in urban areas.

➤ The study revealed that the dropout rate in rural scheduled castes is very high and the enrolment of the children of age 5 and above is low compared to the urban areas.

➤ Majority of the scheduled castes are illiterate throughout the three successive generations (respondent, father and grandfather) whereas majority of the urban respondents are literate throughout all the three successive generations.

➤ It is also observed that 52.17 % urban respondents completed their entire education without job during study; on the other hand only 12.69% rural respondents completed their education without job. The urban scheduled castes are more aware about the laws and schemes, political affairs, family planning measures etc.

➤ The income of the majority of the urban respondents is very high compared to the rural respondents. The monthly income 82.19% urban scheduled castes families is Rs.10, 000/- and above and only 24.74% rural families earn Rs.10, 000/- and above.

➤ The consumption for food Rs >5000 per month is found in 82.19% urban and only 9.24 rural families.

➤ The educational expenditure of maximum rural families (43.98%) is Rs.<300 per month, while it is for maximum urban families (41.10%) is Rs. 1000 – 2000.

➤ Only 51.82% rural respondents have savings for future, whereas 95.89% urban respondents have savings.

➤ Out of total 1071 rural respondents only 7.00% and 7.47% are aware of Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. So, majority of the respondents are not aware of these laws whereas the urban respondents are more aware of these laws.

➤ The urban respondents are more aware than the rural about different schemes of educational and economic development.

❖ ***The sixth objective is to suggest practical measures for the upliftment for the socio-economic status of scheduled castes,***

Majority of them have no knowledge of beneficial and welfare schemes provided to them (like –S.C.P, N.S.F.D.C, M.S.Y, M.K.Y, N.S.K.F.D.C and Education loan up to Rs.7.5 lakh-15lakh for medical, Technical, M.B.A. etc) by the

state and central government. So, it is suggested that there is need of aware from urban to rural level about these schemes for their socio-economic development. The rate of interest of loan should be decreased and ceiling of income for loan should be increased for their economic development

There are a number of laws, both central and state, which provide for safeguards to scheduled castes like the Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955), The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act; 1989, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, the child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act; 1986, The Minimum wages Act; 1948, The Pnachayat (Extension to the scheduled Areas) Act; 1996, etc. SCs must be aware about these social and economic safeguards.

❖ ***The seventh objective is to suggest a viable short and long term perspective planning for effective implementation of suggested strategies for their upliftment.***

Pre-matric scholarship was started in 1977-78. The main objective of the scheme was to provide financial assistance for children of those engaged in the so-called unclean occupations, viz., scavenging, tanning, flaying and sweeping. Post-Matric scholarship was launched in 1994-95. The scholarships are given to students who are children of industrial workers having an income upto Rs.60, 095 per annum. There are 5 Ashram Hostels in Maldah District, 3 located in Gazole block and one each in Bamongola and Harischandrapur-1 blocks. These schemes are launched for the educational development of scheduled castes. Educational development is vital for their awareness about schemes for development and constitutional safeguards. The Article 335 states that “the claims of the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of the State.” The constitution also made

provisions for their socio-economic and political development besides reservation in employment. The programme of entrepreneurship development among women through the formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) has a very positive impact on women empowerment. Government should involve mass of the women in SHGs. So, all the scheduled castes must be aware of these facilities.

Out of total 1071 rural respondents only 7.00% and 7.47% are aware of Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. So, majority of the respondents are not aware of these laws. Only 19.89% rural respondents are aware of welfare schemes for economic development. According to the majority of the rural respondents (50.70%) the financial support can improve their socio-economic status while according to maximum urban (43.83%) respondents the general awareness can reduce the social distance between Scheduled Castes and higher castes. To improve the socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes population after independence the Government of India made several efforts and constitution of India provided several social, political, economic and religious safeguards to Scheduled Castes. But the present study reveals that though their socio-economic condition has improved and political awareness has increased during last decade, their socio-economic status is very low compared to the general caste population of the district.