

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

## 1.0 Introduction

The *Varna* system that was established in ancient India functioned as the larger framework within which the caste society was formed. Membership of a caste is compulsory and not a matter of choice, a person born into it. It is practically impossible for individuals to change their caste.

Indian society is a great complex of diversified population which is unique in the world for its mosaic of caste structure. In no large country of the old or new world, do we find such an amazing of castes and sub-castes, besides various races and tribes, religions and creeds, languages and dialects.

The caste system of India is deep-rooted, having its origin in the Vedic times. The institution of caste, depicted in four varnas, i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, can be traced in the early culture and literature of the Indo-Aryans who migrated to India circa 2500 B.C. The Brahmins, who made up the highest ranked Varna, monopolized the position of priest and teacher of the Vedas; the Kshatriyas took charge of politics and the military; the Vaishyas formed the commoner ranks of cultivators, herders and merchants; and the Sudras were relegated the position of servants.

Several Castes in Hindu society have been associated with unclean occupations and social restrictions and suffered from low socio-economic, educational and cultural condition. Various names have been used to refer to these sections. The names that one comes across for these people are 'Untouchable', 'Chandala', 'Avarna', 'Antyaja', 'Harijan', 'Depressed class', 'Scheduled castes' and 'Dalits'.

Scheduled Caste (SCs) population constitute about one-sixth of the total population of Maldah with a lot of spatio-temporal variations ranging from negligible (2.68% of Kaliachak – I) to as high as 49.87% of the total population of Bamangola block of the district.

Prior to independence and even later, scheduled castes had been the poorest of the poor, and socially and economically backward caste of the district. Their socio-economic condition is very bad compared to the general caste population of the

district. In spite of many socio-economic safeguards 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. Majority of them are not aware of constitutional laws and safeguards provided for them. This could be attributed to a variety of reasons such as illiteracy, social evils like gambling, liquor and litigation, superstition, dominance of higher caste, deprivation from socio-economic status due to their treatment as 'Sudras in the Society' stratification on menu system, inferiority complex against other castes and misuse of privileges and rights constitutionally provided to them.

After independence the scheduled castes of Maldah are going under social and economic changes in urban and rural areas. Various constitutional amendments gave rights to them. They are also given reserve quotas in various organisations in order to uplift their socio-economic status. Many of them are appointed under open category due to the educational development. 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 measures of family planning. They are now more conscious about the study centre, education and job of their children. Their attitude towards religion, child marriage, superstitions etc. are changing day by day.

There are a lot of spatio-temporal variations in the modes of socio-economic status and their standard of living with regard to structural relationship among sub-caste 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 village are more dynamic in their social change in comparison to their own counterpart living in remote and rural areas. The urban scheduled castes are educationally forward and politically aware of their rights and privileges provided in the constitution for the welfare of their community compared to rural areas. They are sending their sons and daughters to the other districts and other states for higher education.

The scheduled caste of both rural and urban areas of Maldah district 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, and 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, widow hood, superstitions etc.

Though the social parameters of these scheduled castes are changing and are making a new shape, yet conservatism is still prevalent in their society. Hence, their social change is slow as compared to that of urban scheduled castes. The effect of such conservative ideas may be observed in their large size of family as a measure for social and economic security. But the new and educated generation of rural scheduled castes which are in contact with their own community in urban areas or in the contact of higher castes does not believe in the conservative values regarding size, structure and system of the family.

The educated scheduled caste women are revolting against traditional social values. They are now motivated by the glamour, customs and costumes of urban life. The broad changes affected by politico – social power and the infiltration of urbanization to rural areas.

The scheduled castes are no more bonded, permanent and landless laborer. They have become more conscious about the economic gain and return 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 and have started working in non-agricultural sectors too.

At present scheduled castes community are now working in non-agricultural sectors like building construction, factories, road construction and in private shops in urban areas. The educated scheduled castes are engaged in banking, marketing, education, administration and judicial services. The rigorous implementation of SC reservation policy not only in employment but also in promotional avenues has given additional incentives to them for white collar jobs. A large number of scheduled castes have been benefited with various schemes of the government such as SCP (Special Component Plan), NSFDC (National Scheduled Castes Finance Development Corporation), MSY (Mahila Samridhi Yojana), NSKFDC(National

Safai Karmachari Finance Development Corporation) etc. which in turn have brought economic prosperity among them. Presently SCs students are availing the facilities like Ashram Hostel, Book Grant, Scholarship, Education loan etc.

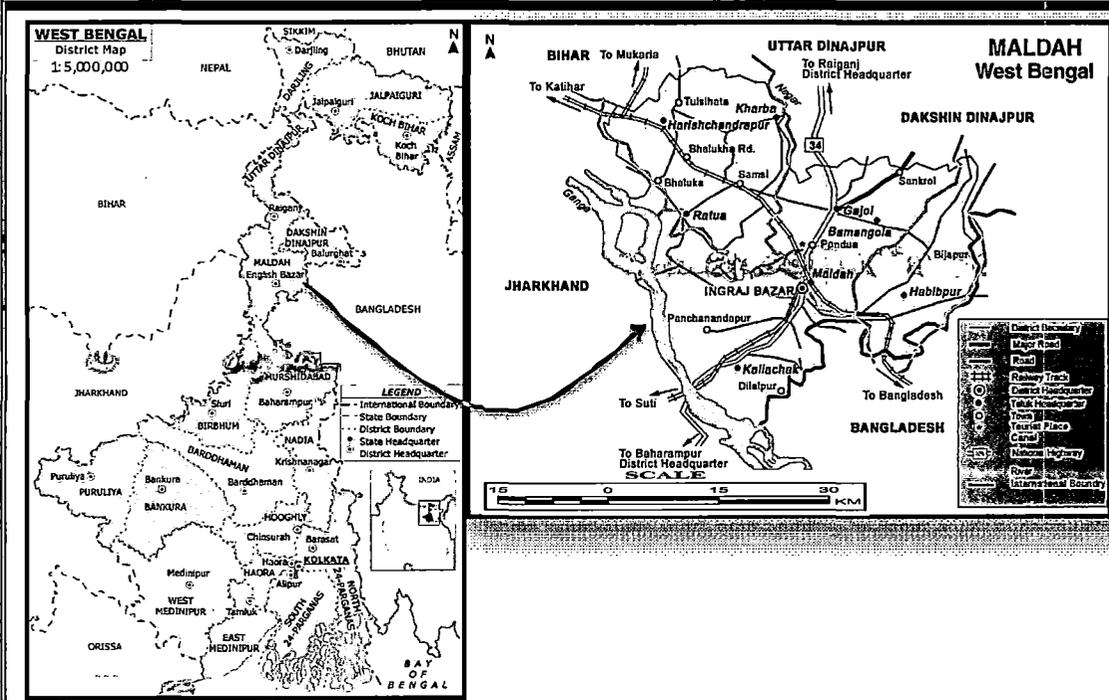
### **1.1 Study area**

Maldah district has been selected for in depth study on 'Socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes population'. Maldah district of West Bengal lies between 24°40'2" North to 25°32'08" North latitude and 87°45'50" East to 88°28'10" East longitude. Bihar and Jharkhand lie in the West and Bangladesh in the East of Maldah district. The Ganga River lies in the South and separated the district from South Bengal while Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal lie in the North of Maldah district.

There are two sub-divisions in Maldah district, Maldah (Sadar) and Chanchal Sub-Division. The area of Sardar sub Division is 2496 sq. km and Chanchal Sub-Division is 1082 sq. km. So, the total area of the district is 3578 sq. km. According to 2001 Census total population of Maldah Sardar sub-Division is 2212367 and Chanchal Sub-Division is 1078101. The total population of the district is 32, 90,468. The district has population density of 881 persons/sq.km. There are 554165 Scheduled Castes population which is 16.84% of total population of the district.

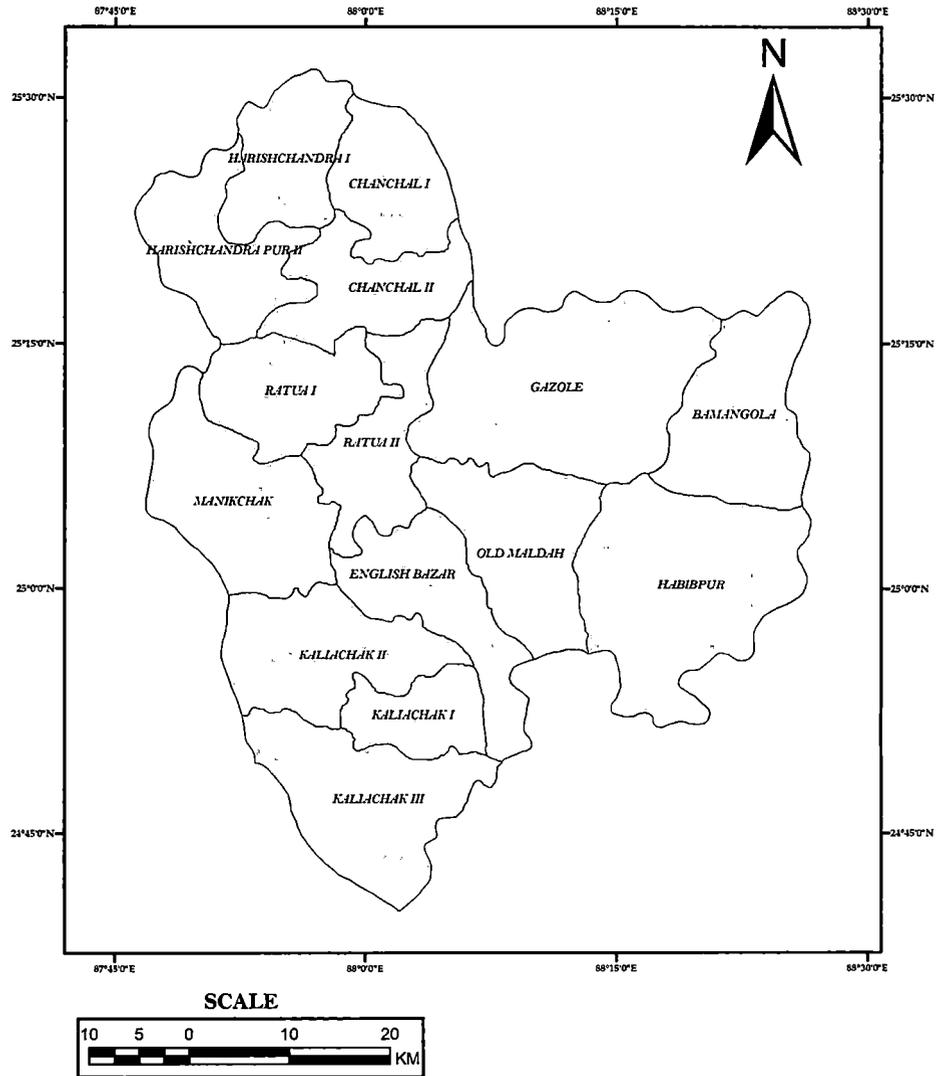
There are 11 police stations, 14 out posts, 15 Block Development Offices (Panchayat Samities), 146 Gram Panchayats, 2011 Gram Sansad, 02 municipalities (English Bazar and Old Maldah), 1814 mouzas and 3701 villages. There are 6 wholesale markets, 2 regulated markets, 5 jute purchasing centers and one mango research centre.

# LOCATION OF MALDAH DISTRICT



MAP 1.1

# C.D. BLOCK MAP OF MALDAH DISTRICT



MAP 1.2

## **1.2 Problems of the Study Area**

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. The scheduled castes are comparatively backward in occupational, educational, social, cultural, religious and political sector. The Scheduled Castes of Maldah District are not evenly distributed. There are wide gaps between scheduled castes & higher Caste in terms of level of income, standard of living, fertility & mortality, social parameters like education, marriage, family planning programmes, superstitions etc.

The following problems are present among the scheduled castes of the study area-

The literacy rate is very low among the Scheduled Castes compared to the general castes of Maldah district. The disparity in the literacy and the level of educational attainment is also observed in rural and urban Scheduled Castes. Gender disparity in males and females are also observed among Scheduled Castes. The dropout rates among the Scheduled Castes students are very high compared to general castes. Enrolment rate of student is low in rural areas compared to urban areas. The literacy rate in rural areas is very low than urban areas. Majority of Scheduled Castes are concentrated in rural areas and are illiterate. Therefore, general awareness about the facilities for development is very low. Consequently, the facilities mostly go unutilized or are utilized at minimal level. The urban Scheduled Castes use major share of these facilities. Early age at marriage (< 18 years) is still prevalent in rural areas. All most all the Scheduled Castes feel discriminated by the higher castes. Scheduled Castes discriminated by higher castes in work place and in marriages with higher castes. In 7 blocks (46.67%) majority of Scheduled Castes are below poverty line. Majority of the cultivators practice agriculture on subsistence basis. Number of Scheduled Castes beneficiaries is low than general castes in different government schemes. The consumption pattern for food and education of rural Scheduled Castes is very low compared to the urban Scheduled Castes. Nearly 50% rural Scheduled Castes respondents have no savings for future. Majority of the Scheduled Castes respondents join their first job below 14 years age. Lack of

sanitation facility is observed in rural areas. Though their socio-economic conditions developed in last one decade but still they are backward compared to the general population.

From the foregoing discussion regarding problems of Scheduled Castes of Maldah District it can be observe that the illiteracy among Scheduled Castes is very high. Due to poor economic condition their consumption pattern for food, cloth, housing, education, medical etc. are very low and they are forced to live in unhygienic environment.

### **1.3 Overview of Literature**

There are many books and articles written by many scholars on various aspects of scheduled castes like, history of origin and evolution, untouchability, various social reform, movements for betterment, role of national leaders in upliftment of scheduled castes.

The study is an attempt to investigate the socio-economic status of scheduled castes of Maldah district. The study of scheduled castes and their socio-economic parameters has been the basic theme of research and investigation of many disciplines such as History, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology and Economic since long. But during this century specially after Independence more studies have been conducted on scheduled castes and their various socio-economic characteristics These studies are mainly concentrated on distribution, density and few socio-economic parameters of scheduled castes, poverty and backwardness of scheduled castes.

The studies are entitled as 'Dalits – Role of Education (ed.) by Mamta Rajawat (2005); Caste, Race and Discrimination (Ed)by Thorat Umakanta ( 2004); Changing Patterns of Scheduled Castes by J.K. Pundir (1997); Struggle for Economic Freedom & Social Justice of Scheduled castes in South India ( Ashok Kumar-2005) give us general ideas about their poor socio-economic conditions. The book entitled 'Who Were the Sudras', written by Ambedkar in 1946 give the definition of 'Sudras' and highlighted their deplorable condition. Ambedkar's other book 'The Untouchables' (1948) give description of lower status and poor socio-economic condition of the

scheduled castes. After a discussion on basic issues and problems he has also suggested several measures to achieve these goals.

H.H.Risley (1891) while working on the Tribes and Castes of Bengal has highlighted the origin of the castes and prevalence of infant marriage in Bengal. Patwardhan(1973) has made a significant contribution in his study on 'Changes among Indias Harijans' in which he highlighted on various aspects of socio-economic changes of scheduled castes. In 1958 Alexander has highlighted the social mobility among scheduled castes of Kerala.

Books on various aspects of scheduled castes (Shabir-1997,Mandal,J.C. 1999,Dantwala-1998,Massey,1999) have been written in nineties. In 1977 Sinha in his book-The Harijan Elite has made a commendable study on scheduled castes wherein he has not only examined the social and economic changes in this caste but has also accounted its determinants. The book 'Caste system, Untouchability and the Depressed' edited by H. Kotani (1997) describes social discrimination in ancient India and economic changes in untouchables. While studying the socio-economic problems and the impact of Sanskritisation on the social changes, Mukherjee A.B., in his book 'The Chamars of Uttar Pradesh' (1980) has described and explained the distribution of scheduled castes and their socio-economic status. He has identified the determinants of their backwardness and has done a comparative analysis of the socio-economic condition of scheduled castes with other castes of the society and also suggested practical measures for their upliftment.

R.B Singh (2003) in his book 'Scheduled Caste Welfare – Myth of Reality' describes various government schemes for the upliftment of scheduled caste and effect of Panchayati Raj on upliftment of Scheduled Casts. R.V.K. Naidu (2004) while working on 'Empowerment of Scheduled Castes' has highlighted the various socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes

The awakening of Scheduled Castes towards their rights and privileges has created a lot of interest among the scholars of various disciplines in eighties and a large number of books come up during this decade (Pandey, A.K.,-1989,Kumar,V.,-1986 ,Parvatamma and Satyanarayana – 1984; Mathew – 1986; and Roy and Singh – 1987). There are many studies deal with social status, awakening, socio-economic

change and certain schemes of poverty elevation among Scheduled Castes (Joshi, R.B., – 1982; Yadav, S.K., – 1983; Sharma, N., – 1985; Prakash,N., – 1989). Similarly, many studies have been done in nineties dealing with almost with similar aspects of Scheduled Castes (Kumar, P., – 1991; Zellion,E., – 1992; Tripathi,R.B., – 1994 and Massey,J., – 1995). Bhatnagar's study on Jatav-chamars of Dehra Dun city highlights a comparative study of rural and urban Scheduled Castes and has described their changing socio-economic scenario.

G.G. Wankhede (1999) in his book *Social Mobility and Scheduled Castes* have described Socio-demographic profile and occupational mobility of Scheduled Castes. Many welfare departments have also conducted several studies, which have been published in the form of booklets, report and monographs. These studies based on demographic characteristics of Scheduled Castes with emphasis on their socio-economic conditions and their determinants.

In the book entitled, *Protection of Minorities and Scheduled Castes* (New Delhi, 1980) by S.K. Ghosh evaluated the impact of constitutional, legal and other government measures for the protection of scheduled castes and their social upliftment. Both the writers concluded that various measures taken by government for the upliftment of scheduled castes made very little contribution to improve the conditions of SC people. Majority of them (above 50%) were still living below poverty line (BPL).

The rural SCs, particularly landless labourers remained most vulnerable to social and economic oppression. Suvderaj, V., (2000) also pointed many specific hurdles; important among these were their illiteracy and backwardness, besides the poor implementation of laws, in his book *Scheduled Castes of Rural India*.

In the book; *Harijan- Upper caste conflicts*, D. Venkateswarlu (1990) makes a different study about the conflicts between the upper class and Harijan class. This research study shows that there is a new level of awareness and consciousness among them and has not only enhanced their aspirations and ambitions but also made them assertive. This is not tolerated by the socially and economically dominant caste Hindus.

To examine how the educational facilities and 'Welfare Schemes' has acted as a catalyst of change M. Showeb conducted a field study on Education and Mobility among Harijans (Allahabad, 1986). It was an empirical study of the chamars residing in the city of Varanasi. By studying the personal, educational and economic profile of their families he discussed the impact of education on modern behaviour pattern, and pragmatic attitude towards life. Under reservation many of them got government jobs and their income and economic status has improved. Their thinking has become more positive since they are aspiring for a better future for their children, it is more important.

Noor Mohammad (2006) in his book 'Socio-Economic Transformation of scheduled castes in Uttar Pradesh' – have highlighted on Socio-Economic Structure of scheduled castes, their level of social transformation, level of Economic transformation etc. The study of Noor Mohammad is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data related to caste, patters of land use, climate etc. have been collected from census publications, Directorate of Economics and statistics and Meteorology Department, where as primary data have been collected from field study from 30 villages.

The author describes, evaluates and explains the social transformation based on meaningful indicators such as education, marriage, family planning religiosity, political awareness and involvement and social mobility. It deals with various aspects of economic transformation selecting income standard of living, housing conditions etc., and presents logical conclusion, and gives suggestions and remedial measures for further improvement in the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes for the country as a whole with particular reference to Uttar Pradesh.

In the book 'Struggle for Economic Freedom & Social Justice of Scheduled Castes in South India', Y. Ashok Kumar (2005) highlighted on the paleru system and Socio-Economic and cultural profile of sample. The book deals with employment outside the country, Dearth of farm Labour, Advent of Aquacultures and migration of Agriculture Labour, Migration of Labour from East to West etc. He has suggested few measures for the upliftment of socially and economically backward palerus.

Dr. M.N. Sivaprakasam (2002) in his book 'Dalits and Social Mobilisation' tried to trace the Origin and Development of Dalit Community and their role in socio-political and economic system of India. In his book he described names and terms used for Dalits, Atrocities against Untouchables, background and choice of education of weaker section women, Dalit women and the changing development scenario, literacy levels of female workforce in India, etc.

Narayan Mishra (2004) in his pioneer work entitled 'Exploitation and Atrocities on the Dalits in India' has highlighted the cases of exploitation of the Dalits in Mithila belt, which is fearless and atrocity almost nil as compared to the Magahi belt. In this book he also described Atrocities on Dalits of Gaya, Economic and Political Area of Dalit Exploitation of Gaya, Social, Economic, Religious and Political Area of Dalit exploitation of Darbhanga and Atrocity on Dalits of Darbhanga.

In the book 'The Mobile Scheduled Caste – Rise of a New Middle Class', (Delhi, 1988), Nandu Ram have explored the magnitude and the causes and consequences of social mobility among scheduled castes population in Kanpur city. The study of the author was based on assessment of religious and other public places, integration of caste groups in schools, colleges and universities occupational mobility, share of political power, and residential desegregation.

Nesiah, D., (1997) has contributed a lot on Harijans in his book 'Discrimination with Reasons'. J.K. Pundir's book Changing Patterns of Scheduled Castes (Jaipur, 1997) highlights the social Development of Scheduled castes, Varying consequences of Rural Development on Scheduled Castes, participation in political process and decision making of S.Cs, S.C students in a Hostel in an urban setting, Panchayati Raj, Development and Alcoholism in S.Cs Rural Youth, Laws and the S.Cs. In his book pundir also described technology, production and social Justice to S.Cs. Ambedkar and changing patterns of Scheduled Castes in North India. In the last chapter of his book he highlighted the social change among S.Cs. in North India.

R. Chandra and K.L. Chanchreek in their book 'Shudras in Ancient India' (New Delhi, 2004) have described about origin and development of Indian Caste in Part I and Varna and Untouchability in Part II. The Part II of this book is core chapter of this book. In this section they highlighted on Varna (Position of Shudras, Brahmanas,

Kshatriyas, Various crafts in Vedas, Chandala and disabilities of the sudras and Dasas.

In his book 'Deprived Castes in India' N.J. Usha Rao (Allahabad, 1981) evaluated the success of various measures adopted by the state for their upliftment. According to N.J. Usha Rao, the success or failure of these measures largely determined the extent to which the SCs have been assimilated in the mainstream of Indian society. This book also highlighted that the funds sanctioned by government for various schemes had not been utilized fully due to administrative lapse.

Through a comparative field study in two villages of Orissa, in the book Dalit: A Sub-Human society, Rabati Ballav Tripathy (1989) tried to find out the types of political means adopted by Dalits. The study raised many questions like how social disabilities acted as constraints in their way and how held political power. Whether atrocities are merely law and order problem? The study also brings out the empirical evidence of the exposure to mass media and participation of the Dalits in panchayats and general elections and how this prompted them to resort to protest political action against their socio-economic disabilities. The study of R.B. Tripathy focused on the impact of their membership in different parties and elections to different bodies and the shape of different types of protests launched by them like public meetings, picketing, hunger strike, rallies etc.

The book edited by K.S. Singh (Calcutta – 2008), People of India- West Bengal (Part I & II) is based on origin, characteristics, distribution and socio-economic-political and religious conditions of SCs of West Bengal.

Prof. Ramesh Chandra and Dr. Sangh Mittra in their book Caste System in India (New Delhi 2003) highlighted on the caste systems in India, Evolution of Castes, Nature of Hindu Society and Untouchability, Constitution of India and need for legislation and pioneers of dalit awakening on caste system. In this book they also tried to find out the weak points of the Untouchability (Ofences) Act, 1955.

James Massey's book Dalits in India (1995) is divided into three parts. Part I highlights the historical roots of Dalits and historical background of the Christian Dalits. The Part II highlights the Dalit identity and basic rights and part III deals with the Dalits and enabling strategies and also discusses about the Dalit as a political

force, Factors responsible for the Emergence and Dalit politics in post-Independence India.

The book edited by Om Prakash Sangwan (1996), *Dalit Society and the challenge of Development* highlights on social structure and the evolution of classes, Depressed Classes: A Socio-economic profile, constitution and politics of Reservations, bonded labour in India, educational development of Scheduled castes and Dalits struggle for liberation.

S.K. Chatterjee (1996) in his book *The Scheduled castes in India* (Vol. I-IV) give detailed accounts on S.Cs. In Vol.-I Mr. Chatterjee described about origin and growth of caste in India, reformatory movements and effects of British rule on the caste system. In appendix B of this book he mentioned the occupations of the untouchables according to the Samhitas and Puranas and in appendix C, a scheme of political safeguards for the protection of the depressed classes in the future constitution of a self governing India has been described. The Vol. II deals with the framing of the constitution provisions relating to the scheduled castes. The Vol. - III deals with the genesis, growth and demographic pattern of the SCs, lastly, the Vol.: IV deals with the tables related to the SCs in India.

S.K. Chatterjee(2000) in his study entitled 'Educational Development of Scheduled Castes Looking Ahead' described the constitutional provisions for educational development for SCs literacy, special facilities for educational advancement of the SCs, advancement of SCs in Higher education, educational inequalities, and reservation for SCs in educational institutions and educational development and social integration. In his book he highlighted on enrolment ratio, disparities among SCs in the educational attainments, eradication of child labour and effect of education on marriage of SCs.

*Dalits and Law* edited by Mamata Rajawat (2005) highlights on statutory protection like justice under statute, social justice, right to equality, the safeguards for SC & ST, and role of court in reducing untouchability. In this book Rajawat described SC & ST orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 and SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Reserved vacancy recruitment, concessions and relaxations and promotions in job are also described in this book for SCs and STs.

Premlata Sharma(2002) in her book *The Problems of Dalits and OBCs* discussed the historical roots of the problems of dalits, the problems of scheduled Castes Development and social justice, role of Nehru on caste and reservation and the role of SCs in politics.

The book edited by S.Thorat and Umakant(2004), entitled *Caste, Race and Discrimination* gives idea about dalit intervention, caste, race and discrimination, dalit intervention, caste, race and internationalization and about discriminated groups in Asia and Africa. H.Kotani's edited book *Caste system, Untouchability and the Depressed* (1997) highlights the history of untouchability in India, depressed castes under British Colonial rule and liberation movements of the Depressed Castes.

A different kind of study was conducted by Dahiwale (1979) on *Emerging Entrepreneurship Among scheduled Castes: A contemporary study of Kolhapur city in Maharashtra* to examine the emerging entrepreneurship among scheduled castes of Kolhapur city. The focus of the study was on the occupational mobility of self employed individuals, those who had chosen the occupation where they could work independently as masters of their activities as against the beneficiaries of reservations. In this study it is clear that the growth of industry, modern education, various egalitarian laws and special measures etc. encouraged the scheduled castes to abandon their traditional, degraded occupations.

G.W. Brigg (1920) in his book *The Chamars* highlighted the cultural account of the chamars of Uttar Pradesh. J.M. Mahar (1972) has studied about untouchables in his famous book; *The Untouchables in Contemporary India.* He described the role of the untouchables in rural economy, religious reforms, government efforts to abolish untouchability and the social and psychological response to the change of status.

The book '*Scheduled Castes*' written by Kamble (1982) highlights the constitutional safeguards and observed legislative measures to abolish untouchability and bring them at par with other sections of Indian society by providing educational facilities and reservations in political, educational, occupational spheres which constitute the biggest core of welfare schemes for the SCs.

Anjali Verma (2004) in her book 'Harijan Students in Modern India' described the educational position of schedule castes after the British rule and analysed the results of attitude and level of aspiration.

The book edited by Rajni Kothari (1970) entitled "Caste in Indian Politics" highlights on the confrontation in India between the age-old caste system and the parliamentary form of government based on universal form of government based on universal suffrage vividly illustrates the manner in which old and historical societies get involved in, and provide content to, the modernizing process. The aim of the book is to examine the phenomenon of modernization in varying contexts in different national and sub-national setting, and through different methods of empirical investigation.

Om Prakash Sangwan (1996) in his book Dalit society and Challenge of Development (ed), described the social structure and the evolution of classes, Socio-economic profile of depressed classes, constitution and the politics of reservations and issues and problems of bonded labour in India. In this book Sangwan described the educational development of scheduled castes and their struggle for liberation.

Caste, Class, Gender edited by Manoranjan Mohanty (2004) focuses on the interface of social forces, Political institutions and processes. This book is divided into three parts. Part-I deals with caste and agrarian class of Bihar, the political economy and the working class movement in India. Part II of this book describes the caste system of India and reservation policy in India. Part III of this book deals with the gender inequality and social change.

The book, 'Caste Hierarchy and Individualism', edited by R.S. Khare (2006) highlights on Louis Dumont and the study of society in India and on elementary structure of castes in India. Susan Bayly in his book 'The New Cambridge History of India' described the caste, society and politics in India from the Eighteenth century to the modern age. This book highlights on historical origins of a 'caste society', the Brahman Raj, state policy and 'reservation', the politicization of caste based social welfare schemes in the every day life of Independent India and 'Caste Wars' and the mandate of violence.

J.K. Pundir's (1997) book on 'Changing Patterns of scheduled castes' has been designed to facilitate a factual understanding of the changing patterns and stages in the lives of the so far neglected sections of our Society. In this book pundir highlighted on the social development of scheduled castes, consequences of rural development on scheduled castes, Ambedkar and changing patterns of scheduled castes in North India and Social changes among Scheduled castes in North India.

Devanesan Nesiah's (1997) book 'Discrimination with Reason?' is based on the policy of reservation in the United States, India and Malaysia. The book deals with inequality and discrimination, India: Homo Hierarchicus', India : From 'Homo Hierarchicus' to 'Homo Equalis' and some recommendations.

B. Goswami (2003) in his book 'Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' described about different laws and acts made for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This book highlights on 'The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955(Act no.22 of 1955)' and The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (Act No. 33 of 1989) , and on 'The Bonded labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976.

Dr. M.N Sivaprakasham (2002) in the book 'Dalit and social Mobilisation' tried to trace the history of dalit community and their role in socio- political and economic system of India. The book is based on the Origin and Development of Dalit Community, Identification of Dalit Community, 'The Depressed : Dalit Women and described about the Dalit Politics and Christian participation.

The book 'Dalit Society and Upliftment' (Volume I), written by Sanjay Prakash Sharma (2004), described about social customs, welfare of Harijans, temple entry of sudras and social background of Scheduled Castes.

The book 'Caste in Question: Identity or Hierarchy?', edited by Dipankar Gupta (2004) highlights on the culture and institutions among 'Untouchable' Scheduled Castes in Karnataka, Dalits and their Politics in contemporary Punjab, Dalit mobilization and nationalist past and on caste system in rural Bihar.

K.L. Sharma's edited book ' Caste and Class in India' (2005) is based on the Caste, class and Politics in colonial Bengal, caste and power in West Bengal, caste-class situation in rural West Bengal, Caste- class situation in India etc. This book also

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describes about caste, land and political power in Uttar Pradesh, caste and class in Rajasthan, Caste and class in Maharashtra and caste, class and Social Consciousness: Reflections Contemporary Indian Situation.

In the book, 'Dalits in India' James Massey (1999), described about dalit history, dalit identity and Basic Rights, and dalit enabling strategies.

S.M. Michael's edited book, 'Dalits in Modern India- Vision and Values' (1999) is divided into four parts. Part I deals with untouchability and stratification in Indian Civilization, and who is a Dalit, Part II describes about Dalit Vision of a Just society in India and Dalit Movement in Mainstream Sociology, Part III highlights on Dalitisation, and Part IV is based on Scheduled Castes, Employment and Social Mobility.

B.R. Purohit and Sandeep Joshi (2003) in their book 'Social Justice in India' (Edited) highlighted the issues relating to the social justice in India. This book highlights impact of globalization on social Justice, social justice and political Empowerment of women and Gender Inequality and social justice in India.

The book 'Dalit Movement in south India, 1857-1950' by Dr. Swapan H. Samel (2004) provides information on Dalit Movements in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala states of South India.

Nripendra Kumar Dutta's book 'Origin and Growth of Caste in India' is the combination of I & II volumes. The Volume I of this book is based on the caste system, caste in the Rigveda, caste in the Brahmana Period etc. and the volume II of this book highlights on the divisions of Brahmanas in Bengal and Rise of new professional castes.

The book 'Social Inequality in India' edited by K.L. Sharma (2004) gives information on inequality in India and green revolution and social inequalities in rural India. Anirudh Prasad (1991) in his book, 'Reservation Policy and Practice in India' described the indispensable colonial and post-colonial background to the present crises over reservation policies in first two parts of this book. In part III, the author highlights on judicial gerrymandering and identification of backward classes extent of benefit therefore, Part V is based on the search of the alternative of reservational benefits.

Vimal P. Shah(1982) in his book 'The Educational Problems of Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribe School and college Students in India' tried to examine various programmes and problems for the educational development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. This book contains the census type statistical tables.

B.B. Mathur's (1994) book 'Women and Depressed caste population in India' (ed), is a collection of research papers based on various aspects of population. This book provides valuable information on woman and depressed caste population in India and on various aspects of population. This book provides significant and valuable knowledge to the research engaged in population studies.

V.Sunderaj (2000) has contributed a lot on education, intercaste relationship reservation, welfare schemes, socio-economic condition, political participation and social mobility of Scheduled Castes in his book, 'Scheduled Castes of Rural India :Problem Prospects.'

The book, 'Social Justice and Dalits'(ed) by Mamta Rajwat(2005) provides information on roots and spread of evil, struggle for stratification , social status, special provisions and supportive steps like reservations and various programmes and schemes for scheduled castes, welfare policy, role of commission and schemes and plans for the socio-economic development of scheduled castes.

The book 'Class Caste Gender' edited by Z.Hasan, G.Saha and Kuldeep Mathur (2004) is divided into 3 parts. Part I of this book based on class Structure and the state, Part II is based on caste domination and political power and Part III of this book on gender inequality and social change.

The book, 'Caste, Its Twentieth Century Avatar' edited and introduced by M.N. Srinivas (1996) gives information on backward class movement in Tamilnadu, backward castes and social changes in U.P. and Bihar, Job reservation and efficiency.

The 'Encyclopaedia of Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes'(Vol. I to IV) edited by C.P. Yadav (2000) is to understand and underscore the nature of change that is taking place among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the basis of recent changes in Socio-economic scenario in India.

The book, ‘ Poona Pact and Depressed Classes’, written by J.C. Mandal (1999) highlighted the historical context of Poona Pact, and show how Dr. B. Ambedkar could rose the popular sentiments of Depressed classes of India through his efforts. Though the pact was a compromise, it started the process of enveloping these marginal groups into the democratic umbrella of India.

The book, ‘ Reservation and Private Sector Quest for Equal Opportunity and Growth’ edited by S. Thorat, Aryama and P. Negi (2005) give accounts on caste and economic discrimination, merit and efficiency of reservation, globalization, liberalization and reservation and remedies against discrimination.

Pauline Kolenda (1997) in this book ‘Caste in Contemporary India’ emphasizes the idea of castes as decent groups. Social and cultural mobility within the caste system is also described in this book.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay in his book ‘Caste, Culture and Hegemony – Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal’ (2004) have described the historiography of caste in Bengal and social mobility and the status of women.

Considering the above mentioned pioneer works conducted on various social, economic, political, cultural and religious aspects of Scheduled Casts it is obvious that there are still a lot of gaps at regional and national levels. There is lack of studies done on the Scheduled Castes of Maldah district . Hence, there is a basic need to study Scheduled Castes in regional framework from socio-economic status. Therefore, Maldah district of West Bengal has been selected for in depth study.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study of Socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes of Maldah District.**

The study of socio-economic status of SC of Maldah Dist. has many ambitious aims and objectives but the majors are mentioned below –

- ❖ To describe the spatial variations in distribution of scheduled castes of Maldah district with reference to their major demographic characteristics;

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ To identify the major social parameters such as education, migration, marriage, religion, family planning programmes, superstitions, political awareness and involvement.
- ❖ To find out the determinants of socio-economic status of scheduled castes of Maldah district.
- ❖ To assess the rural urban variations in socio-economic status.
- ❖ To suggest practical measures for the upliftment for the socio-economic status of scheduled castes, and
- ❖ To suggest a viable short and long term perspective planning for effective implementation of suggested strategies for their upliftment.

## 1.5 Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a proposed explanation for an observable phenomenon. The term derives from the Greek, *hypotithenai* meaning "to put under" or "to suppose." A hypothesis is a tentative statement that proposes a possible explanation to some phenomenon or event. Hypothesis is a proposition, or set of propositions, set forth as an explanation for the occurrence of some specified group of phenomena, either asserted merely as a provisional conjecture to guide investigation (working hypothesis) or accepted as highly probable in the light of established facts. It is a mere assumption or guess.

The following hypothesis have been tested during the investigation of the of socio-economic study of the scheduled castes of Maldah district-

1) *The level of socio-economic status is better among the literate scheduled castes as compare to illiterate scheduled castes of Maldah District.*

**Rationale:** Level of literacy and educational attainment is one of the important indicators of social development. Education is one of the important variable affecting demographic components. The age of marriage, rate of fertility and mortality, work

participation rate as well as types and causes of migration etc. is affected by the level of literacy and educational attainment of the population.

It is revealed from the study that the blocks with the concentration of high crude literacy rates have better socio-economic status than the blocks of low crude literacy rates. Percentage of large families, participation in low level of economic activities, percentage of BPL families, discrimination from higher castes, low awareness of laws and government schemes, low awareness of family planning measures, prevalence of dowry, low political awareness, low monthly income, low expenditure for education and food, low level of mobility and less exposure to mass media etc. are observed in the Maldah district where the level of literacy among the scheduled castes is low. For example in the English Bazar (U) area the socio-economic condition of the scheduled castes is better due to high literacy rate than the other areas.

Hence, the hypothesis is true that the literate scheduled castes of the district have better socio-economic condition than the illiterate scheduled castes.

**2) *The level of socio-economic status is better among the urban scheduled caste compared to rural scheduled caste.***

**Rationale:** 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 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 group 5 and above is low compared to the urban areas. Majority of the rural scheduled castes are illiterate throughout 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 their study. Similarly 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. So; it is fact that the

socio-economic status of the urban scheduled castes is better than the rural scheduled castes.

**3) *The level of socio-economic status is better among the non- scheduled castes as compared to scheduled castes population of Maldah District.***

**Rationale:** According to the 2001 census the general literacy rate of Maldah is 50.31% and male and female literacy rate is 59.74% and 41.67% respectively. On the other hand the literacy rate of the scheduled castes of the district is 42.18% and the percentage of male and female literacy is 51.73 and 31.96. According to the report of the District Rural Development Cell, Maldah, there are 7 blocks with more than 50% scheduled castes living under B.P.L. families whereas in all the blocks the percentage of B.P.L. operational general families is less than 50%. The percentage of general population is high in other working group and low in agricultural labourers compared to the scheduled castes. As per census report of 2001, general caste work participation rate of the district for men and women is 78.03% and 21.68% respectively whereas the work participation rate for scheduled castes men and women is 66.43% and 33.57% respectively. The work participation rate among scheduled castes women is more because of the fact that majority of them are engaged as agricultural labourers due to the poor economic condition. So, it is true that the socio-economic status of non-scheduled castes is better than the scheduled castes.

**4) *The level of socio-economic status is better among the younger generation than the older ones of both rural and urban areas of the District.***

**Rationale:** The age composition of population is very important in the process of overall development of a region. Age composition helps in adoption of the new ideas, cultures, practices, attitudes which helps to bring benefits and prosperity. It is clear from the study that the blocks of Maldah district in which the percentage of the respondents of age group 30-45 years is more, are more receptive to various kinds of innovations and cultures. In these blocks small family size, high literacy rate, high enrolment rate in schools, low rate of dropouts, low rate of discrimination, low prevalent practice of dowry, better housing condition, more awareness in politics, family planning measures, high income etc. are observed. So, it is true that younger generation is more developed in socio-economic conditions than older.

5) *The level of socio-economic status is better among the economically rich Scheduled Castes as compared to poor ones.*

**Rationale:** The blocks of the study area in which the percentage of respondents with high income is more, are advance in socio-economic status. In these blocks the percentage of B.P.L families is low, literacy rate is high and dropout rate of primary students is low. Improved housing condition and high exposure to media is observed in these blocks. It is also revealed from that the majority of respondents of high economic status hold high level of occupation and majority of the respondents of low economic status hold low level of occupation.

## 1.6 Methodology

For the study of the socio-economic condition of the scheduled castes, the material and methods used for collecting and analyzing the data are explained under the following headings-

➤ **The Sample:**

- ❖ The households have been selected from the both urban and rural areas adopting Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement(SRSWOR) method. For the final selection a sample of 1% of the scheduled castes households from both the rural and urban areas has been drawn. The total number of sample households is 1071 rural and 73 urban.

➤ **Household Schedule:**

A household schedule has been used for conducting the field survey for collecting the primary data.

➤ **Variables Used for the Study:**

The variables used for the study are-

BPL families to total families ,Average family size, Large families (>6 members) to total families ,Earning population to total population ,Crude literacy rate, Male literates, Female literates, head of the families between 30-45 age group, respondents

preffering doctor profession for child , respondents preffering engineer profession for child, respondents preffering teaching profession for child, respondents preffering business profession for child, respondents' preffering cultivation profession for child, Respondent preffering private nursery school, Respondents completed education on regular basis , children who discontinued education, respondents' who think that financial problem is the cause of discontinuation in education , respondents' discriminated by higher castes, Respondents' aware of laws for Scheduled Castes, Respondents' preffering inter-caste marriage ,Dowry system presence in families, Respondents' aware in family planning , Respondents having separate Worship place ,Respondents casting votes regularly , Cultivators to total workers ,Agricultural labourers to total workers, House Hold Industry Workers to total workers,Other workers to total workers, Respondents having monthly income Rs. >10000, Respondents having monthly expenditure Rs >5000 for food, Respondents having monthly expenditure Rs. >1000 for education, mango producers to total workers, Respondents practicing fishing, Migrated respondents' , Respondents received loan , Respondents' appointed under reserve category, Respondents' believed that reservation is necessary in education and appointment ,Respondents' with savings, Respondents' disclosing caste never , families with increasing income level, families with improved economic condition, families with improved social status, families with improved educational level, families with improved housing condition,families with improved exposure to mass media, cultivators with increased agricultural products, cultivators with improved agricultural technology, families with improved food habit , families with improved dress pattern ect.

➤ **Statistical analysis:**

To find out the relationship between the social and economic parameters bivariate regression analysis has been worked out.It is used to analyse the strength of the linear relationship between dependent and independent variables. Correlation measures the closeness of the relationship two variables, i.e. one dependent and another independent variable. Correlation measures and analyses the degree or extent to which two variables fluctuate with reference to each other.

➤ **Cartographic Techniques:**

Cartograms such as bargraph, pie-graph etc. have been used to represent various socio-economic data for the depiction the result of analysis. To show the spatial pattern of distribution choropleth method have been used. For preparing the maps GIS packages have been used.

## **1.7 Data Source**

The study of 'Socio-Economic status of Scheduled Castes – A Case Study of Maldah District' is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through door-to-door survey and field observation methods, while the secondary data are collected from various government and quasi-government sources. The main sources of secondary data are –

➤ **Reports**

1961, Census of India

1971, Census of India

1981, Census of India

1991, Census of India

2001, Census of India

2006, District Statistical Hand book, Maldah

2010, EK Najare Amra, West Bengal Project office cum- District Welfare Officer, Maldah

2010 Report of the Additional Executive officer, Maldah Zilla Parshad Maldah.

2010 Report of the District Employment Exchange Officer, Maldah

2010 Reports of the West Bengal Scheduled Castes and scheduled Tribes Development Corporation, Maldah.

2010 Report of the Assistant Director of Fisheries, Maldah.

2010 Report of the BDO, Chanchal II Block

2010 Report of the BDO, Manikchak Block

2010 Report of the BDO, English Bazar Block

2010 Report of the District Rural Development Cell, Maldah

2010 Reports of the Directorate of Agriculture, Govt. of West Bengal

Besides these, various reports and documents have been utilized, district, state and national-level Gazetteers are consulted.

## **1.8 Research Design**

1. Introduction
2. Geographical Profile of the study area
3. Indian Social order and the Scheduled Caste of Maldah district
4. Social status of Scheduled Castes of Maldah district
5. Economic status of Scheduled Castes of Maldah district
6. Suggested Strategies for the development of Scheduled Castes of Maldah district
7. Conclusion