

CHAPTER - IV

SCHEDULED CASTE WELFARE : An Experience at the Grass-root

While undertaking the field level survey some selected mauzas (small villages) under five gram panchayats of each Panchayat Samity have been taken into account. The villages chosen for survey have been considered on certain parameters, such as, the density of the scheduled caste population, distance from the town, socio economic status of the village. While undertaking the village survey the criteria were observed both from negative and positive stand points. Villages often selected Gram Panchayats, five each from Mathabhanga-I and Cooch Behar - II Panchayat Samity respectively, have been brought under survey. The gram panchayats chosen under Mathabhanga-I Panchayat Samity are Sikarpur, Panchagarh, Hazrahat, Gopalpur, Kedererhat. One village of each gram panchayat has been studied thoroughly to understand the different trends and events, factors and forces operating at the grass root level for the realisation of the scheduled castes development programmes. These villages are Bharogharia Gharkuta under Sikarpur Gram Panchayat, Barokaudara under Panchagarh Gram Panchayat, Dhaibhangi Balasi under Hazrahat Gram Panchayat, Kharija Gopalpur under Gopalpur Gram Panchayat and Keshribari under Kedererhat Gram Panchayat. Simultaneously the Gram Panchayats chosen under Cooch Behar - II Panchayat Samity are Madhupur, Ambari, Gopalpur, Banerwar and Khagrabari. One village of each gram panchayat has been studied thoroughly to understand the different trend and events, factors, and forces operating at the grass root level for the realisation of the scheduled caste development programme.

These villages are Haripur under Madhupur Gram Panchayat, Bokalirmoth under Ambari Gram Panchayat, Harinmara under Gopalpur Gram Panchayat, Hatidoba under Banerwar Gram Panchayat and Banchukamari under Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. It is obvious to mention that the entire field research is based on the scheduled castes beneficiaries. Beneficiaries, hundred in number have been identified on the basis of data supplied by the gram panchayats and compared with the voter list available from the District election office.

The areas which have been thoroughly surveyed are : (a) age status of scheduled castes respondents; (b) household status of the scheduled caste respondents; (c) educational status; (d) pattern of land holding; (e) economic and occupational status; (f) benefit provided under different development programmes; (g) human development status; (h) impact on development programmes on scheduled castes; (i) perception of the respondents on the development programmes so far implemented; (j) perception of the respondents on the development of their own family; (k) perception on village development and gram panchayat; (l) political awareness of the respondents. While attempting to unravel the different facts as depicted above, following tables would provide us an understanding on the issues.

Age Status of Beneficiaries (in Per Cent) under Cooch Behar- II

G.P.	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Baneswar	Hatidoba	25	Nil	55	5	10	Nil	5	Nil	100
Ambari	Bokalmath	15	5	45	5	15	5	Nil	Nil	100
Madhupur	Haripur	15	5	65	10	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
Gopalpur	Harinmara	15	Nil	65	15	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
Khagrabari	Bonchukamari	20	Nil	45	10	15	5	5	Nil	100

Source : *Field Data*

Explanation :

1. Upto 30 years of age (Male);
2. Upto 30 years of age (Female);
3. 31 to 50 years age (Male);
4. 31 to 50 years age (Female);
5. 51 to 64 years age (Male);
6. 51 to 64 years age (Female);
7. 65 and above years (Male);
8. 65 and above years (Female);
9. Total 100 respondents

Age Status of Beneficiaries (in Per Cent) under Mathabhanga-I

G.P.	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sikarpur	Barogharia	10	5	60	Nil	15	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
	Gharkuta									
Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	15	5	45	5	20	5	Nil	5	100
Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	Nil	5	60	5	20	5	5	Nil	100
Gopalpur	Kharija	20	10	40	15	5	Nil	10	Nil	100
	Gopalpur									
Kedarerhat	Keshribari	15	5	35	20	20	5	Nil	Nil	100

Source : *Field Data*

Explanation :

1. Upto 30 Yrs. of age (Male);
2. Upto 30 Yrs. of age (Female);
3. 31 to 50 Yrs. of age (Male);
4. 31 to 50 Yrs. of age (Female);
5. 51 to 64 Yrs. of age (Male);
6. 51 to 64 Yrs. of age (Female);
7. 65 Yrs. and above age (Male);
8. 65 Yrs. and above age (Female)
9. Total 100 respondents.

From the above table it can be observed that out of total scheduled castes beneficiaries the age group of more than thirty one to fifty enjoyed the largest share of benefits. However there has been a tremendous sex bias while we compare scheduled castes male beneficiaries and scheduled castes female beneficiaries of the same age group. There has also been village wise variation on the issue of providing benefits to the male members and the female members of the same age group. Beneficiaries in the age group of fifty one to sixty four years enjoyed the second largest share of benefits and the male bias in providing benefit is also seen discernable. Beneficiaries below the age group of thirty years enjoyed more or less eighteen per cent of the benefits provided to the scheduled castes. The gender bias is comparatively lesser in this age group in getting benefits. This is presumably because of the growing consciousness of the female member of the society as well as the general consensus on the liquidation of heavily loaded long cherished culture of gender bias tilted heavily towards male. The lowest in the rung is the age of sixty five years. Such age group category could well be treated if there was scheme on oldage benefits. In the recent past a scheme on oldage pension has been launched, but no such beneficiary has been found in the survey.

Particulars of Household Population

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	Baragharia Gharkuta	100	84	16
Mathabhanga - I	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	100	76	24
Mathabhanga - I	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	100	82	18
Mathabhanga - I	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	100	84	16
Mathabhanga - I	Kedererhat	Keshribari	100	92	8
Cooch Behar - II	Baneswar	Hatidaba	100	81	19
Cooch Behar - II	Ambari	Bokalirmath	100	89	11
Cooch Behar - II	Madhupur	Haripur	100	87	13
Cooch Behar - II	Gopalpur	Harinmara	100	92	8
Cooch Behar - II	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	100	76	24

Source : Field Data

Explanation :

1. Respondents; 2. Household having more than five family members; 3. Household having at least five or less than five family members.

The table presents the household status of hundred scheduled castes beneficiaries of each village under study. For the convenience of the study two categories of household have been identified such as household having at least five or less than five family members and house hold having more than five family members. A little more than 87 per cent of the total families of the scheduled castes beneficiaries surveyed belong to the categories of families having more than five members, while the families belonging to less than five members category share only 12.7 per cent. However, there has been village wise variation in the percentage. Villages nearer to urban area shows a little more rise in the category of family having five or less than five members, for example, the village Panchagarh Panchayat under Mathabhanga - I Panchayat Samity and the village of Khagrabari Panchayat under Cooch Behar - II Panchayat Samity are having a little more percentage of families belonging to five members or less than five members category compared to the other villages surveyed. The reason is Panchagarh is nearer to Mathabhanga Municipal town and Khagrabari is almost attached to the Municipal area of Cooch Behar town, the District Headquarters. The impact of urbanisation and the message of family planning has some bearings on the villages nearer to urban areas. Another important factor of the presence of big families has been the predominance of the traditional agronomic culture. The agriculture based rural society of Cooch Behar still cherishes the survival of extended family either as an option or as a compulsion. The option comes out of the realisation of belonging together and the compulsion emerges from the fear of fragmentation of land. A common feeling among the respondents has been the increase in the number of family member means the potential increase of units of income in the family. For this simple reason the number of child labours has been on the rise, counter producing literacy mission a success. Moreover, measures on population control have not been found effective. Lack of awareness, education and paucity of the avenues of recreations have been some of the important reasons behind the growing size of families. Such big size of families has a negative bearing on the benefits to be accrued by a single member of the family. The benefits do have little impact on the quality of support services for catering of a growing quantum of family population.

Such large numbers of family size is essentially linked to the level of the education of the house hold of the scheduled castes beneficiaries. The following table provides the weak level of literacy status of the households of the scheduled castes beneficiaries.

Status of Literacy of the Households of the Scheduled Castes Beneficiaries

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	Banagharia Gharkuta	100	15	10	75
Mathabhanga - I	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	100	20	8	82
Mathabhanga - I	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi Balasi	100	5	18	77
Mathabhanga - I	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	100	10	10	80
Mathabhanga - I	Kedererhat	Keshribari	100	8	15	77
Cooch Behar - II	Baneswar	Hatidoba	100	15	7	78
Cooch Behar - II	Ambari	Bokalirmath	100	10	7	83
Cooch Behar - II	Madhupur	Haripur	100	14	5	81
Cooch Behar - II	Gopalpur	Harinmara	100	12	8	80
Cooch Behar - II	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	100	20	5	75

Source : Field Data

Explanations :

1. Total number of households studied;
2. Family with complete literate member (in per cent)
3. Family with complete illeterate member (in per cent);
4. Family with both literate & illeterate member (in per cent)

The households of the scheduled castes beneficiaries of the villages under survey represent a little more than 9 per cent state of complete illeteracy that is out of one thousand families studied, 93 families remain still complete illeterate. Despite sincere drives made by the district literacy mission some families have still remained unattended. This situation does not, however, mean that total literacy drive has been a failure in Cooch Behar. On the other hand one can well observe the impact of literacy movement while viewing 88 per cent of the one thousand families studied remains in the category of families with both literate and illeterate members and it has been observed that there has been a steady increase of percentage of these category of households. On the contrary nearly 13 per cent of the total households studied belongs to the first category that is families with complete literate member. It has also been observed that villages attached to the urban areas share a better percentage of families having complete literate members. Another point to be mentioned is that the percentage of illeterate member in the households under the mixed category that is families with both literate and illeterate member, has been low. Such a lowering tendency suggests that even among the

most backward scheduled castes families the awareness of being literate has been growing.

A survey of the educational status of the scheduled castes beneficiaries may be presented in the following table.

Educational Status of Beneficiaries (in Per Cent)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	Banaghoria	10	30	30	5	15	Nil	10	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
		Gharkuta											
Mathabhanga - I	Panchagarh	Barokavardaga		10	20	30	15	10	Nil	15	Nil	Nil	100
Mathabhanga - I	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi	15	35	20	Nil	15	Nil	15	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
		Balasi											
Mathabhanga - I	Gopalpur	Kharija	15	30	10	Nil	20	5	15	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
		Gopalpur											
Mathabhanga - I	Ledererhat	Keshribari	20	15	15	15	15	5	15	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
Cooch Behar - II	Baneswar	Hatidaba	5	30	35	Nil	10	Nil	15	Nil	5	Nil	100
Cooch Behar - II	Ambari	Bokalmirmath	5	25	25	5	20	5	10	Nil	5	Nil	100
Cooch Behar - II	Madhupur	Haripur	10	30	30	Nil	15	5	10	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
Cooch Behar - II	Gopalpur	Harinmara	5	30	30	5	20	Nil	10	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
Cooch Behar - II	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	10	35	30	5	15	Nil	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS:

1. Illeterate male; 2. Illeterate female; 3. Literate male; 4. Literate female; 5. Upto Class V male; 6. Upto Class V female; 7. From VI to X male; 8. From VI to x female; 9. XI to above male; 10. XI to above female; 11. Total respondants

The above table presents extremely pitiable state of educational status of the scheduled castes beneficiaries. Illiteracy of the respondents occupies the most dominant position. On an average 35 per cent of the total beneficiaries are completely illiterate. In most of the villages women's illiteracy has out numbered male's illiteracy. The beneficiaries in most of the villages are literate males. The number of literate females has also been low than that of the literate males. Most of the female beneficiaries have not seen the upper primary school and even not a single female beneficiary was found who graduated from higher secondary schools. Such a state of educational status repudiates any claim on the part of the government of success in spreading education at the grass root. The economic and occupational status of the scheduled castes beneficiaries of the villages under study may be presented in the following table.

Occupational Status of Beneficiaries (in Per Cent)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Primary Occupation			Secondary Occupation
		1	2	3	4
Cooch Behar - II	Baneswar	35	48	1	16
Cooch Behar - II	Ambari	30	46	4	20
Cooch Behar - II	Madhupur	35	36	1	28
Cooch Behar - II	Gopalpur	30	50	Nil	20
Cooch Behar - II	Khagrabari	30	40	2	28
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	30	49	1	20
Mathabhanga - I	Panchagarh	25	45	1	29
Mathabhanga - I	Hazrahat	20	60	1	19
Mathabhanga - I	Gopalpur	15	65	2	18
Mathabhanga - I	Kedererhat	16	68	Nil	16

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS :

1. Cultivation; 2. Daily Labour in Agriculture; 3. Other Job; 4. Jobs other than agriculture (Mason, Construction workers, Business)

The occupational profile of the respondents substantiates the argument that the rural society of Cooch behar is predominantly agricultural scheduled caste population comprising of the majority of the total population resembles in terms of their economic status with the rural populace of the district. It is heartening to note that the land man ratio of the scheduled castes population has been very much weak. The primary occupation of the scheduled castes beneficiaries under study has been that of cultivation. Out of one thousands scheduled castes respondents interviewed 26 per cent of them possess own cultivable land, however the quantum of land varies from respondent to respondent. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that they have land of their own but they have to loose land owing to different financial compulsions. The rapidly held marginalisation process has been the most fundamental factor behind the growing agony among them regimented and reflected through various social and political assertions. Moreover out of one thousand respondents interviewed majority of them (nearly 52 per cent) have been under compulsion to work as daily labourers in agricultural lands occupied by the dominant section of the rural society. Only nearly 2 per cent of the

respondents are engaged in rural agriculture related activities other than joining in field cultivation.

Since the district of Cooch Behar is a no industry district and an 'A' category backward district, there has been negligible number of population engaged in small and medium scale industries. However a little more than 20 per cent of the respondents is engaged in tertiary sector activities such as small scale trade, business, mason, construction workers etc. An important issue which has been identified during field survey is that there has been a rapidly growing tendency for having inter regional and interstate migration to search for a handsome wage for the people living in the remotest part of the district. A good number of relatives and relations of the respondents have been migrated to the different cities of northern and western India to search for a better livelihood. Such migrations are taking place because of the intrinsic financial compulsion of the poor families, most of them belonging to scheduled caste category. Because of the growing size of the family and the rapidly losing size of land, ablebodied adults and children of more than ten years age are pushed out from agriculture and a recent perception on the glossy feature in the cities and industrial areas pulled them out and made them attracted. Such a picture is not always wanted, however the compulsions compelled them to migrate. A pattern of landholding of the respondents may corroborate the abysmal financial status.

Pattern of Land Holding (in Per Cent)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4
Cooch Behar - II	Madhupur	Haripur	30	15	35	20
"	Ambari	Bokalimath	30	20	30	20
"	Gopalpur	Harimara	40	15	25	20
"	Baneswar	Hatidoba	50	10	25	15
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	45	15	15	25
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	Baroghoria Gharkuta	50	15	20	15
"	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	55	10	20	15
"	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	40	10	20	30
"	Gopalpur	Khariza Gopalpur	40	10	30	20
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	50	5	35	20

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATION :

1. Own unirrigated land; 2. Own irrigated land; 3. Land occupied through Operation Barga; 4. Non registered occupied vested land.

From the pattern of the land held by the respondents following points may be deduced : a) land owned by the respondent, in most of the cases is unirrigated; land. b) The total quantum of land under irrigated variety has been marginal; c) occupied by the scheduled castes respondents through operation barga has been considerable; d) A good number of percentage of the respondents occupies vested land.

The land-man ratio has been highly disproportionate which imposes acute financial constraints and provides a gloomy picture of the financial profile of the respondents of different villages under study. It has also been found that respondents living nearby to the town are financially better of than that of the respondents living in remotest villages.

The respondents interviewed, in most cases do not have any regular monthly income. It varies tremendously from crop seasons to non-crop seasons. In the absence of any data of permanent income of monthly income data on expenditure incurred by the respondents' families may be projected.

Economic Status of Respondents through Pattern of Expenditure (in Per Cent)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	1	2	3	4
Mathabhanga - I	Sikarpur	55	30	10	5
"	Panchagarh	60	30	6	4
"	Hazrahath	75	25	Nil	Nil
"	Gopalpur	55	30	10	5
"	Kedererhat	75	20	5	Nil
Cooch Behar	Baneswar	50	35	10	5
"	Ambari	50	35	10	5
"	Madhupur	45	40	10	5
"	Gopalpur	65	30	5	Nil
"	Khagrabari	46	40	5	7

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS :

1. Less than rupees one thousand per month; 2. More than rupees one thousand per month; 3. Between rupees two to three thousand per month; 4. Above rupees three thousand per month.

The pattern of expenditure has been in most of the cases, in consonance with the income of the family of the respondents. However, for sometimes expenditure

may exceed income. In such situation, borrowings take place. Thus expenditure profile does not accurately suggest monthly income profile of the respondents of Primarily two reasons : a) the physical amount of borrowings or loans; b) the amount of savings if any of the respondents. Both such data could not be collected. Despite limitations data on the pattern of expenditure may provide a general assumption on the pattern of income and the economic capacity of the respondents. Out of one thousand respondents interviewed 53.8 percent of them belong to the category of less than rupees one thousand per month. Even out of this category respondents living in the remotest villages do have the largest share. The percentage within this category varies from 45 to 75 percent. Out of total respondents belonging to different villages 31 percent belongs to the category of having an expenditure capacity of rupees one thousand but below rupees two thousand per month. While a little more than 7 percent of the total respondents belongs to the category between two to three thousand per month, 3.6 per cent only belongs to the category of more than rupees three thousand per month. It is in order to mention that majority of the respondents does have households comprising of more than five members. Thus, in an age of rapidly rising price for all commodities, it has always been impossible for the families to maintain their livelihood with this sorry state of expenditure capacity. Consequently majority of the population has to face extreme hardship to arrange for their minimum food, clothings and shelter.

The table presented above clearly shows that the villages under survey have been brought under almost all rural development schemes and specified schemes meant for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However, it is understandable that despite the existence of the schemes in the villages under survey there has been operational problems at the implementational level and the benefits to be accrued fall far short of reality.

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The following Table Provides in Details the Schemes/Projects for Scheduled Castes Development Operation at the Villages under Study

Cooch Behar-II P.S.

G.P.	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Baneswar	Batidoba	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Ambari	Bokalirmath	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
Madhupur	Haripur	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gopalpur	Harinmara	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x
Khagrabari	Banchukamari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Mathabhanga-I G.P

Sikarpur	Barogharia Jharkuta	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Panchagarh	BaroKauar- daga	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi Balasi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x
Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kedererhat	Keshribari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS :

1. IRDP/DRD 2. RLEGP 3. NREP 4. IAY 5. JRY; 6. TRYSEM 7.DWCR 8. Rural Low Cost Housing, 9. Fish Farmers Development Agencies
10. Cottage and Small Scale Industries 11. Health and Family Welfare 12. Pre Matric/Post Matric Schemeship 13. Relief and Welfare Works
14. Wido/Oldage Pension 15. Rural Electrifications.

[Right marks indicates scheme in operation. Cross mark indicate scheme not available]

Benefit Provided under Different Development Programme

Cooch Behar-II		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
G.P.	Mouza																	
Baneswar	Batidoba	45	50	55	45	20	80	30	70	95	30	70	35	65	50	40	50	90
Ambari	Bokalirmath	80	20	55	45	20	80	20	80	90	80	20	30	70	60	30	40	80
Gopalpur	Harinmara	35	50	70	30	30	70	20	80	100	65	35	35	65	65	40	35	90
Madhupur	Haripur	55	45	60	40	40	60	5	95	100	60	40	10	90	60	20	40	60
Khagrabari	Banchukamari	90	10	60	40	30	70	30	70	95	50	50	30	70	55	35	45	85
Mathabhanga-I G.P																		
Sikarpur	Barogharia	80	20	75	25	30	70	20	70	90	40	60	25	75	60	50	40	95
	Jharkuta																	
Panchagarh	BaroKauardaga	65	35	85	15	20	80	20	80	95	60	40	15	85	35	35	65	80
Gopalpur	Kharija	60	40	80	20	35	65	25	75	90	55	45	25	75	50	40	50	85
	Gopalpur																	
Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi	80	20	70	30	30	70	40	50	100	35	65	45	55	60	50	40	90
	Balasi																	
Kedererhat	Keshribari	40	60	85	15	20	80	35	65	95	50	50	40	60	60	55	40	90

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATION:

1. DRDA +IAY (Name of the Programme) 2.S.C.P. + IRDP (Name of the Progamme) 3. Poverty (Reason for taking loan) 4.Need (Reason for taking loan) 5. Year of Receiving loan (80-90) 6. Year of Receiving Loan (90-97) 7. Terms and Condition (Not refundable) 8. Terms and Condition (50% Subsidy) 9. Selective Authority (Panchayat) 10. Actual amount received (Amount below Rs. 8000)11. Actual Amount received (Amount above Rs. 8000) 12. House and Land (in terms of utilisation) 13. Others (in terms of utilization) 14.Assets maintained. 15. Possessed at present 16.Defaulter 17. Compulsion of family for being default.

A concerted survey had been undertaken to avail of an idea on the nature and quantum of benefits derived by the scheduled castes populace of the villages under study from the different development programmes operated and initiated at the village level. Attempt has been made to project the percentage of beneficiaries benefitted or derived benefits from the different development schemes on a specific scale. One hundred respondents from each village had been thoroughly interviewed for the purpose. The tables presented here have been self content in nature.

Benefits Accrued by Beneficiaries under Different Development Programmes

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mauza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Hatibba	24	99	16	14	12	2	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cooch Behar-II	Ambari	Bokalirmath	18	84	14	12	12	12	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cooch Behar-II	Madhupur	Haripur	20	86	12	12	14	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cooch Behar-II	Gopalpur	Hrinmara	10	74	10	7	15	3	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cooch Behar-II	Khagrabari	Banchukhamari	21	75	16	18	12	4	Nil	2	Nil
Mathabhanga-I	Sikarpur	Bharogharia Gharkuta	22	75	14	16	12	Nil	Nil	1	Nil
Mathabhanga-I	Panchagarh	Brokauardaga	14	70	12	6	10	4	Nil	2	Nil
Mathabhanga-I	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	8	74	10	7	12	2	Nil	1	Nil
Mathabhanga-I	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	21	74	9	6	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil
Mathabhanga-I	Kedererhat	Keshribari	7	84	10	1	Nil	2	Nil	1	Nil

Source : Field Data

N.B. Total Respondents = 100 in each village (Number of Persons)

EXPLANATIONS

1. Loans and subsidies on schemes under Special Component Plan; 2. National Rural Employment Programme; 3. Development schemes launched by District Rural Development Agency's Assistance (TRYSEM, IRDP, IAY); 4. West Bengal Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Finance Corporation's loan; 5. Fish Farmers Development Agency's Assistance; 6. Cottage and small scale Industry's Assistance; 7. Health and Family Welfare; 8. Rural low cost Housing; 9. Social and Agro Forestry

A comparative assesment of the above tables suggests clearly that scheduled castes populace of the villages under study has been deriving maximum benefits from the NREP. Indeed, National Rural Employment Programme has been a replacement of Food For Work Programme and has added some new aveneues to provide assistance to the rural poor. All the villages under study have been covered by this particular programme and the marginalised poor scheduled caste people

have been enjoying, although occasionally, bare minimum assistance for the maintenance of their livelihood. However, NREP objective in most of the villages has not been fully realised. The reason behind it has been that NREP as a programme sometime proved to be a halt owing to the irregular flow of fund. After NREP, the programme which has attracted the attention has been those schemes for providing loans and subsidies under special component plan. However these self employment generation schemes have not produced effective results due to the lack of identification of the scheme, absence of technical knowledge in project formulation, absence of strong monitoring agency at the implementation level and the incapacity to fix responsibility and improper institutional arrangement for loan repayment system.

The villages under study have been brought under the purview of West Bengal scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes Development and Finance Corporation. Such a Corporation has been constituted at the district level to provide loans and subsidies to the scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes populace. However getting of such development assistance has been an arduous task. The process requires a complex combination of stages for having loans, subsidies and aids. For this simple reason the illiterate scheduled castes mass with a weak socio-economic background has been in most cases is not in a position to utilise such a corporation specifically meant for their support and help. Sometimes officials associate themselves in identifying projects and formulating the project draft. The most weakest aspect has been the stage of monitoring evaluation and feed back.

In most of the villages (seven out of ten) Fish Farmers Development Agency has been operating. This Agency does not provide support to the individual fish farmer rather it inspires fish farmers co-operatives. Thus, the number of persons deriving benefit under this programme has been sizeably low because they constitute fisherman co-operatives. The other development Programmes operating in villages have not been able to create much impact and the number of scheduled castes beneficiaries deriving benefits from this programmes has been negligible.

With a view to ascertain the opinions in regard to utilisation of programmes, views of 100 officials and non officials/community leaders at the District, Block and village levels, were gathered to highlight the relative importance or different

programmes and schemes for the fulfilment of basic needs of scheduled castes. Respondents were asked specifically to indicate the programmes and schemes mostly utilized by the scheduled castes. The survey shows that rarely one third respondents gave their opinion exclusively in favour of the programmes like IRDP, TRYSEM, Programmes connected with eradication of poverty. Nearly twenty per cent respondents favoured programmes of eradication of poverty, education and employment generation line JRY, Pre-Matric and post Matric Scholarship for scheduled castes students and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA). Nearly majority of the respondents (48.5 per cent) have been of the opinion that beside the programmes of eradication of poverty, education and employment generation and such other related objectives should be utilized. These are related to health, housing electrification, family welfare, health and individual family welfare.

Any attempt at measuring such value-loaded term 'awareness' has been extremely difficult. Similarly, social scientists have been in difficulty to quantify the value-loaded term, 'political awareness'. However, application of scientific procedure of investigation enables the social scientists to quantify such concepts like 'awareness' or 'political awareness' within a given situation subject to the condition of space and time. In short, efforts have always been there to understand both conceptually and operationally the different related elements, issues and events, factors and forces which all together constitute the bases of the concretization of the value-loaded assumptions such as awareness or political awareness. These include level of education, level of political culture, level of political socialisation, role played in political communication, role played in political mobilisation, level of participation and non participation in politics and such other factors.

While quantifying the political awareness of the scheduled castes beneficiaries of the villages under study, techniques used and methodology followed had not been without fally. However serious attempts have been made by the investigator to have an insight on identifying an explaining the issues through the following tables.

Political Status of Beneficiaries (in Per Cent)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cooch Behar -II	Baneswar	* Batidaba	15	5	45	Nil	10	Nil	20	5	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	10	5	30	10	5	Nil	35	5	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	10	Nil	15	Nil	60	Nil	5	5	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	15	Nil	45	5	15	Nil	15	5	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	15	Nil	40	15	10	Nil	20	Nil	100
Mathabhanga-I											
"	Sikarpur	Baroghoria gharkuta	35	5	25	5	15	Nil	5	10	100
"	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	50	10	15	Nil	25	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
"	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	40	Nil	30	5	10	5	5	Nil	100
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	55	5	30	Nil	10	Nil	Nil	Nil	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	50	5	20	5	20	Nil	Nil	Nil	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS:

1. Politically Active Male; 2. Politically Active Female; 3. Left party Supporter Male; 4. Left party Supporter Female; 5. Anti Left Party Supporter Male; 6. Anti Left Party Supporter Female; 7. Male Percentage of no comments; 8. Female Percentage of no comments; 9. Total respondents.

Perception of the Beneficiaries about Political Activities

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Batibaba	20	55	15	10	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	15	40	10	35	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	10	70	15	5	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	15	60	5	20	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	15	65	10	10	100
Mathabhanga-I							
"	Sikarpur						
"	Jharkuta	Barogharia	40	45	Nil	15	100
"	Panchayat	Barokaurdaga	60	25	Nil	15	100
"	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	45	35	10	10	100
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	60	25	Nil	15	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	55	25	5	15	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS

1. Involvement in Political Activities; 2. Non-involvement in Political Activities; 3. No idea about Politics; 4. No comments; 5. Total respondents.

Consciousness of the Beneficiaries about Politics and Political Event

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Hatibaba	20	50	10	10	10	100	
	"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	10	65	5	10	10	100
	"	Madhupur	Haripur	10	40	25	10	10	100
	"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	15	45	20	5	15	100
	"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	15	60	10	5	10	100
	"	Sikarpur	Barogharia gharkuta	30	40	10	10	10	100
	"	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	50	20	10	10	10	100
Mathabhanga-I	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi Balasi	30	40	5	10	15	100	
	"	Gopalpur	Kharija	50	20	10	5	15	100
	"	"	Gopalpur						
	"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	45	25	10	5	15	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS : 1. Direct Participation in Politics 2. Indirect Participation in Politics 3. No Comments on Politics 4. Reaction to political event. 5. No reaction to political event 6. Total respondents.

It has been observed that scheduled castes beneficiaries of the remotest villages do have a strong sense of political awareness despite the absence of positive issues and events, factors and forces behind the formation of a kind of positive political awareness. Thus, before coming to a surprising conclusion, one can well perceive by observing the table stated above that the status of education of the respondents of the villages has been low, there exists a very weak political culture and at a low pace of political socialisation. The rate of participation in politics has been much lower than that of the non participation in politics. Here politics would mean participation in any of the level of elected panchayat structure or participation in village level politics by way of taking membership of different political parties and their frontal mass organisations at the grass root level. Throughout investigatin it has been observed that while a good number of respondents are politically aware to understand that participation in politics has been important for their survival as such participation would help them in availing the fruits of development meant for the rural poor and certainly percolated down through the panchayat structure. Thus despite the low level

rate of political education the urgency or the need of participating in politics has been high. On the other hand, the rapidly growing marginalisation of people at the grass root both in terms of politics and economics of scale, there has been the growing rise of discontent, dissensions and dismays among the marginalised rural people. Such discontent has given birth to a negative consciousness emanating from deprivation, maldevelopment, uneven process of growth and such other symbolic incapacities what Michael Hechter (1975) argued as attributes of internal "Colonialism". Such a state of awareness helps the rise of hectic political activities by way of regimentation of marginalised people suffering from the sense of relative deprivation. Such activities have provided a kind of political perception and awareness which have been developed without the presence of the issues and events, elements and attributes, factors and forces behind the formation of political awareness and perception.

The tables suggest that the males are much more politically active than that of the females. The male respondents have a greater linkage towards left parties than that of the females. While a negligible percentage of both male and female respondents preferred to remain silent on the question of their lineage to a political party, comparing to female a good proportion of male members have objectively shown their discontent against the left party in power of the state. The respondents living in the villages nearer to town have greater participation in politics and they have been much more vocal about their lineage to their political parties. However, the percentage of politically active respondents for villages of Mathabhanga-I Panchayat Samity have been much lower than that of Cooch- Behar -II Panchayat Samity. Non involvement in politics has been a common feature in the Mathabhanga - I Panchayat Samity which has outnumbered the percentages of people involved in direct politics however for Cooch- Behar - II Panchayat Samity. The data collected from the respondents provide a contrasting conclusion. But the villages under both the Panchayat Samities have provided an interesting data which provide that in all these villages the total number of politically non-active people have outnumbered the total number of people active in politics. It has also been observed that the rate of indirect participation in politics has outnumbered the rate of direct participation in politics. A considerable number of people had preferred not to comment about their involvement and participation. However

largest share of the respondents is of the opinion that they directly react to any political event which goes against their interest. Majority of the respondents have been of the view that they preferred in engaging in economic activities for their sufficiency rather than doing active politics.

The respondents interviewed have a low level of political participation. Barring few, majority of the respondents did not contest in the election and do not have political portfolio. However most of the respondents do have membership of political parties or of interest groups of the peasants such as Krishak Sabha, Agragami Krishak Sabha etc. Majority of the respondents do not participates in direct politics, however in some occassions they are mobilised by the local political party leaders. Neither, they have the political education, nor they have the political ideology. Such a state of participation in politics has created a kind of floating vote bank and in most of the cases this floating votebank joins hand with the political party in power of the state. During the recent past a new type of assertions have been cropped in the name of asseraining 'Kamtapuri' as a seperate language distinctively different from Bengali language and for a separate autonomous state for the Rajbanshi people. In the name of this new from of regional movement for statehood, hectic political activities have been going on and the rural innocent poor marginalised Rajbanshi people have been attracted in a considerable manner by the sentimental upserge of the movement. Such a new trend of hectic political operation has also geared up the respondents under survey and as a consequence the level of political participation of the respondents has become little more high.

Perception of Beneficiaries about Gram Panchayat(in Percentage)

Panchayat	Gram Panchayat		1	2	3	4	5	6
Samity								
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Batidoba	50	15	15	10	10	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	40	40	Nil	10	10	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	50	30	Nil	5	15	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	60	20	5	10	5	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	50	40	5	Nil	5	100
Mathabhanga -I								
"	Sikarpur	Barogharia gharkuta	60	15	5	5	15	100

"	Panchagarh	Barokauardaga	55	25	5	5	10	100
"	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi Balasi	40	30	10	15	5	100
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	50	20	10	10	10	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	40	40	5	10	5	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS : 1. In favour of Gram Panchayat as an active body 2. Not in favour of Gram Panchayat as an active body 3. In favour of Pro-people as an active body 4. In favour of Pro-party in power. 5. No comments. 6. Total respondents.

Perception of Beneficiaries about the Idea of Village

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Batidoba	5	60	15	10	10	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	Nil	45	45	5	5	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	Nil	55	30	10	5	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	10	55	15	15	5	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	Nil	70	20	10	Nil	100
Mathabhanga -I								
"	Sikarpur	Barogharia gharkuta	Nil	65	20	15	Nil	100
"	Panchagarh	BaroKauardaga	Nil	60	25	5	5	100
"	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi Balasi	Nil	40	30	15	10	100
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	Nil	70	20	10	Nil	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	Nil	40	45	20	5	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS : 1. Developed 2. Developing 3. Static 4. No Idea 5. No comments 6. Total respondents.

Perception of Beneficiaries about Village Development

Panchayat Samity	Gram Mouza Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5
Cooch Behar	Baneswar	Batidoba	55	20	10	15	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	30	45	15	10	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	60	20	15	5	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	60	15	15	10	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	65	20	15	5	100
Mathabhanga -I							
"	Sikarpur	Barogharia gharkuta	70	10	20	Nil	100
"	Panchagarh	Barokavardaga	70	20	10	Nil	100
"	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	40	20	20	15	100
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	65	15	15	5	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	35	30	20	15	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS : 1. In favour of the idea that the 'village is developing' 2. Not in favour of the idea that the 'village is developing' 3. No idea about village development. 4. No comments about village development 5. Total respondents

The beneficiaries interviewed have been mostly remained unanswered on the question of the development of Gram Panchayat of their own. Most of the respondents has the idea about the existence of Gram Panchayat. Most of them had been of the view that the Gram Panchayat was a kind of an agency of the government at the village level for the realisation of different rural development programmes. Panchayat as a unit of local self government and as a third stratum government has never been considered by them. Most of the respondents recognised the existence of a concrete structure of panchayat building and they never think the panchayat could able to solve the miseries of their life. Thus the perception of panchayat as the form of development oriented democratically decentralised local structure has been absent.

About the nature and status of development of the village, respondents' opinions sharply differed. While some respondents responded in an unequivocal term that there has been a massive socio-economic transformation taken place in the village owing to various factors such as honest political will of the political masters at the state level to realise the avowed objective of growth with equity, positive steps taken towards land reform, enhancement of people's participation in the development of the village, extension of the social base of the organised political force and liquidation of poverty such others. On the contrary, some respondents reacted sharply negatively on the issue of village development. Some floated the idea that despite certain structural changes no qualitative improvement has so far been made in the village economy, society and politics. The existence of enhancing rate of population growth, massive illiteracy, non availability of basic needs of life have been some of the examples. One should conclude with the argument that certainly there have been both quantitative and qualitative changes in the village economy society and politics. With the acceptance of the vary fact that there are multifaceted scope for development after lessering the limitations and bottle necks.

Such perceptions can also be assumed by the following table .

Perception of Beneficiaries about the Development of the Family

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cooch Behar-II	Baneswar	Batidoba	Nil	55	30	10	5	100
"	Ambari	Bokalirmath	Nil	30	60	5	10	100
"	Madhupur	Haripur	Nil	45	40	5	10	100
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	Nil	50	40	5	5	100
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	Nil	45	50	5	Nil	100
Mathabhanga-I								
"	Sikarpur	Barogharia	Nil	35	50	15	Nil	100
"	Panchagar	Barokavardaga	Nil	50	45	5	Nil	100
"	Hazrahat	Dhaibhangi	Nil	40	50	5	Nil	100
		Balasi						

"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	Nil	50	45	5	Nil	100
"	Kedererhat	Keshribari	Nil	45	45	10	Nil	100

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATIONS : 1. Uplifted family 2. Uplifting family 3. Static family 4. No idea about family development 5. No comments.

While interviewed, the respondents did not deny the benefits that they received from the Panchayat. Such benefits were directed primarily towards the improvement of the socio-economic condition of the individual beneficiary family. Unfortunately, however, most of the beneficiaries could not sustain the pace of development because of certain non-money factors. The growing size of family population, lack of awareness, absence of planning to run the family, illiteracy are some of the negative points which produce hindrances to the general upliftment of the family. Most of the respondents could not repay loan assistance what they have received for their upliftment. The absence of congenial atmosphere, lack of motivation, absence of trained man power and non commitment have been some of the factors behind the non fulfilment of development effort at the family level.

Measurement of human development status to understand and identify the basic needs of a target population has been a recent tendency in social science research, the techniques and methods of techniques which have been borrowed from the equalisation and theorisation made by the welfare economists. It should be mention at the out set that weighing of the indicators of human development in quantifiable terms even based on a sound assessment after following the methodologies of scientific social research has become a matter of chance and hence fallible. Keeping this limitation into consideration one may venture to analyse and assess the human development status of Rajbanshis of the selected villages under survey. Following table showing the achievement of human development is highly relevant.

Basic Human Development Indicators

(Numbers indicate respondents brought under different development indicators)

Panchayat Samity	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	1	2	3**	4	5	6	7	8
Cooch Behar	Madhupur	Haripur	45	30	15	35	60	25	10	50
"	Ambari	Bokalirmoth	30	30	15	25	35	30	30	40
"	Gopalpur	Harinmara	30	20	20	10	45	30	20	35
"	Baneswar	Hatidoba	40	20	15	25	50	25	20	45
"	Khagrabari	Banchukamari	55	20	35	30	55	20	30	45
Mathabhanga - I										
"	Sikarpur	Bbharogharia Jhakuta	35	30	25	30	45	30	25	45
"	Panchagarh	Barokavardaga	50	20	30	30	55	30	20	60
"	Hazrahath	Dhaibhangi Balasi	25	15	20	Nil	30	20	30	25
"	Gopalpur	Kharija Gopalpur	30	20	20	25	40	40	20	30
"	Kedererhat	Kesharibari	30	25	25	Nil	35	20	25	25

Source : Field Data

EXPLANATION :

1. Health [including health, Family Welfare, Child Care, Nutrition]; 2. Child Mortality's Prevention; 3. Sanitation; 4. Electricity; 5. Education [including literacy / formal/non-formal/adult/distance]; 6. Drinking water; 7. Housing; 8. Communication support [including roads and Bus]

N.B. One hundred persons of each village (Mouza) were asked separately about each of the indicators.

It is heartening to note that while the Rajbanshi Population of the North Bengal districts has been declining, there has been a continuous rise of Rajbanshi population in the district of Cooch Behar. The villages under survey have witnessed a steady rise of population growth over the years. The birth rate is normally high while compared to mortality rate. Despite the existence of abnormal high rate of child mortality population explosion has become a common feature. Child mortality has been very high in the villages under survey which has been well ahead of the all India percentage of child mortality rate.

The survey identified the average age of life expectancy which is within the age limit of fifty five to sixty a far below rate of life expectancy on the state of West Bengal or the all India rate of life expectancy which is sixty to sixty five. The nutritional facilities both for the mother at the pre natal and post natal stage and for the child have been abysmally low. The villages under survey do not have even a primary health center, even sub-centers located in some gram panchayat are not equipped with doctor and basic medicinal facilities. The entire population has to depend either on quack doctors, or non trained homeopaths and local indigeneous doctor called Kabiraj. Such a pitiable status of health facilities objectively ignores all consideration of human development. Likewise health, housing and drinking water facilities has been in a sorry state. Out of ten villages surveyed, only two villages are given drinking water facilities through pipe line administered by Public Health Engineering Department of the State government, however other villages under survey have been provided with deep tubewell. The respondents surveyed are mostly of the opinion that availability of drinking water through P.H.E. pipe line has been irregular and most of the tubewells remain non-functional throughout the year. Such a situation compells the inhabitants to use the local ponds, wells mostly unclean for drinking water purpose. like drinking water, electricity facilities have not reached all the villages under survey. However the lok deep yojona has improved the electricity status of the district. Out of ten villages surveyed eight villages have been connected with electricity and two still remain unattended. The responses of the respondents suggests that the power supply system has been extremely irregular which has made the rural electrification movement almost meaningless. A good number of respondents' households has not been brought under rural electrification.

The educational status of the Rajbanshis of the districts has been dealt with elsewhere in the study. The villages surveyed reflect all most low educational status of the Rajbanshi Scheduled Castes. Although the villages under survey do have primary school most of them do not have any middle, high, higher-secondary schools. Students are to move daily from one to three km. for attaining further education after primary education. Such a kind of constrains results into tremendous number of dropouts, especially, the girls dropout. The weak financial status, the existing prejudices and practices debar the girl child from attending schools. Thus educational status of the poor Rajbanshis has been extremely low and has fallen far

short of all India or West Bengal rate of literacy and rate of middle school, high school or higher secondary school going children.

The occupational openings of the respondents have been sterile in the sense that they are all most destined to be involved in cultivation and such other agricultural avocations. The weak financial status of the Rajbanshis restricts them to engage in any occupations none other than agriculture. This does not mean that as agriculturists they are a success. The incapacity to purchase standard variety of seeds and fertilizer and incapability of using technology in agriculture have been the principal limitations. In addition to these limitations, the low size of lands, the ill balanced over populated land man ratio and the non-land factors are the principal drawbacks behind the dismal state of agriculture in the villages under study. Despite efforts made by the government through different target oriented projects to accelerate and enhance the scope of occupational openings, the operational incapacities have made the projects, in most of the cases, a failure. The stringencies in getting bank loans, the impersonal and mechanical attitudes of the government offices engaged in different wings of development at the grass root levels, the inexperience and manipulations of the local political leaders are some of the frontal incapacities of the systems on whom the development of the rural poor depends. The differentiated pattern of lands such as small ownership, bargadari ownership, lease hold and patta hold lands has been a principal problem to establish a definite linkage of men over land.