

## PREFACE

This study originated in the major project proposal on Society-Economy and politics of Rajbanshis : A Development Study of Scheduled Castes In The District of Cooch Behar under Dr. Dilip Kumar Sarker, formerly Reader in Political Science, Presidency College, Calcutta and presently Controller of Examinations, North Bengal University, for which University Grants Commission, New Delhi, made the necessary funds available. This study has been an offshoot of the said major project submitted to the University Grants Commission. I would like to put on record my thanks and gratitude to University Grants Commission which has made this work possible.

Rajbanshis of the district of Cooch Behar have been a distinctive ethnic variety who have been termed as scheduled castes ever since the inception of the Constitution of India. In fact this social group had been included in the Schedule of the Government of India Act of 1935. Rajbanshis have a distinctive society and culture of their own who have been through ages experienced with both the processes of Hindunisation and Islamisation. This study has been a maiden attempt to understand the different aspects of social welfare administration of Rajbanshis of the District of Cooch Behar. Throughout this study attempt has been made to find out answers to the fundamental question whether the present administrative arrangement at the level of the District in the name of the social welfare administration is adequate enough to grapple with the problems of Rajbanshis of the district of Cooch Behar. Such a district level study on social welfare administration of Rajbanshi scheduled castes has been first of its kind ever attended by any scholar of the field.

While weaving social welfare of a distinctive scheduled castes community and social welfare administration together in frame-work the study on social welfare administration of scheduled castes in West Bengal, a study of Ranjbanshis of Cooch Behar is a novel one, not merely it probes into varied aspects of social welfare administration of Rajbanshi scheduled castes in the district of Cooch Behar but also examines society, economy, politics and existing administrative structure designed for the welfare of scheduled castes community in a multi-ethnic state of India. The study, being largely prescriptive in nature, may help in building up desired social welfare administrative structure for the scheduled castes in different parts, composing of six chapters the study includes some anexture as well.

The study based on the empirical research is intended to unravel the existing public policy of social welfare for Scheduled Castes and its implication to resolve the problem of rural poverty. The study looks primarily at the efficacy of social and economic assistance from the point of view of the under-privileged Rajbanshi Scheduled Caste of the district. To have clear understanding of poverty and backwardness, the present study addresses itself to the use of sociological knowledge in the policy arena. Various aspects of public policy such as policy planning, execution, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of welfare and development programmes for under-privileged community have been analysed with the help of micro-study conducted in ten selected villages of two Panchayet Samities of the district of Cooch Behar in the state of West Bengal. The study examines the social and economic assistance from the giver and user's perspectives. The study also highlights the necessity for both institutional and non-institutional changes and development to be induced in the action oriented programmes of distributive justice. The study examines the problem in depth in adopting welfare measures for Rajbanshi Scheduled Caste from the sociological and administrative angles. The study points out the crucial role of administration of welfare and development programmes for weaker sections. The micro-analysis and findings throw-up reflections and views on the problem of policy planning, administrative structure and functional aspects of implementation of welfare and development programmes for weaker sections in general and anti-poverty programmes, in particular. The importance of the study lies in the suggestion for creating a new public service delivery system in favour of weaker sections. Such a study will be helpful for policy makers, administrators and professionals of Social Welfare administration to ensure better understanding of the issues of welfare administration for the weaker sections and better implementation of Social Welfare and Development Programmes meant for them.

In Introduction, concepts, models, approaches, theories of social welfare administration, its operation both at the national, state and local level as well as studies under-taken by different scholars have been thoroughly examined. The Introduction starts with a brief sketch of Rajbanshis and includes objectives of the studies, study methodology and literature review. All these may be perceived as attempts at presenting the principal issue of the study at the outset. Chapter one

the study deals with the background of society-economy and politics of Rajbanshis and links this background with the present profile of Rajbanshis of the district of Cooch Behar. An elaborate attempt has been made to present the profile of the district, panchayat samities and ten villages under study. The second chapter relates to the profile of scheduled castes in India, West Bengal and the district of Cooch Behar. In this chapter a through investigation have been made to understand the morphology of the scheduled castes along with their socio-economic status. The third chapter concentrates on the different development programmes so far undertaken for bringing scheduled castes to the mainstream. The fourth chapter deals with a detailed case study of ten villages under two panchayat samities (Blocks) of the district of Cooch Behar: Operationalisation of the different development programmes and the constraints involve therein has been the central focus. This chapter attempts to analyse through micro level data, the factors and forces, issues and events associated with social welfare programme implementation process of the scheduled castes at the district level. The concluding chapter seeks to present certain concrete suggestions for arresting the problems at the grass root level and lays stress on redesigning the existing social welfare administrative structure for the development of the scheduled castes in the perspective of the existing limitations and constraints. Such suggestion would help building up good governance in India in general and success of scheduled caste welfare administration in particular.

**MOUSUMI DE SARKER**