



ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION OF NAMASUDRA IN ASSAM AND WEST BENGAL- A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Received: 13 December 2012

Reviewed & Received: 05 February 2013

Accepted: 05 February 2013

Abstract

The Namasudra is a major scheduled caste group found in Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh of India. This group of people are recognized as the socio-economically backward and enlisted in a schedule under scheduled caste category in our Indian constitution. Attitude of the human being has a great role in their life, which play as an internal force for all kind of development. It is found from the various study and observation that the Namasudra people living in both the states Assam and West Bengal are less conscious and having less favorable attitudes towards education in comparison to so called higher caste or general people, as a result their participation level in education is found very poor in comparison to many other communities. Again the participation level of Namasudra in Education in both the sates shows adiverse picture. The present study is an attempt to compare the development of education and to compare the attitude level of the community towards education among Namasudra in both the states. The study reveals that the Namasudra people living in West Bengal are more developed than the Namasudra in Assam. Again, the attitude level of West Bengal's Namasudra is higher than the Assam.

Key words: Namasudra, Attitude, Participation.

BACK DROP OF THE STUDY:

Now a day we are very often talking about inclusive growth and development in each and every sphere of the world. Inclusive means a sense of belonging feeling respected, valued for who you

are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work. The process of inclusion engages each of, not only, the individual but for the entire community in which they live. The very important quotation- "VasudhaivaKutumbakam" a Sanskrit phrase which means the whole world is one single family. The idea originates in ancient Indian texts called the Upanishads, and is considered as an integral part of the Hindu philosophy. Here, inclusion means a broader interrelationship among people across the society. In the eighteenth century, Adam Smith, the Scottish moral philosopher and a pioneer of political economy in his treatise, *Wealth of Nations*, mentioned "No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable". Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and a great vision may of the twentieth century also observe 'No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive'.

Namasudra is a community residing in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. The Namasudra is a major scheduled caste group found in Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh of India. This group of peoples are recognized as the socio-economically backward and enlisted in a schedule under scheduled caste category in our Indian constitution. At the very ancient time the Namasudra people were known as the 'Chandal' as because their social status was very low in the social scale, so they were considered to be clean untouchable group. The different synonymous of the Namasudra are used such as- Chandal, Chansal, Namasud and Nama. According to M.M. Das (AS. 81) "The word Namasudra is a combination of two words- Namh (blessing) and the Sudra (Lower caste). Namasudra are the offspring of a Brahman male and a Sudra woman. They say that their original mother was Matshawgondha (woman having the smell of fish) who was a low caste woman. According to another version Namasudra originates from the Kashyapa Brahmans by gradual association with Nishadar, Chandal etc., one section of the descendents of the Brahmin lost some traits and discarded even the sacred thread. After that they came to be known as Namasudra. The term Namasudra is found mentioning in ShyamcharanSarkar's VyasnaathaDarpan as a subdivision of Sudra caste (Lahiri& Dev: 1982: 155). And etymologically this term means a group of respected Sudra. Namah- names respected, and Sudra, is a classified section of people who holds the lower strata in the caste society. They are the follower of Sam Veda. They observe all the existing religious festivals in the year like other caste group. They engaged Brahmin to the every worship such as Puja, marriage ceremony and other social functions. In Sardha ceremony, they pay homage to their forefather on the 10th day after death. They are permitted to offer rice panda (funeral cake) in Gaya Pitha. It may be added here that "The Brahmin that served them were classed as a degraded Brahmin group" (Ghurya: 1969:317).

After the division of British India this community has mainly become uprooted refugees. A large section of this community is living below poverty line lacking all kinds of infrastructural facilities. They need economic boosting, jobs, better accommodations and better social acceptance. The Namasudra are a traditional agricultural community. Besides agriculture, navigating boat is also a traditional occupation among them. They are hard-working, very lively, enthusiastic and conscious of their own identity. They were also very honest but after the division of India there has been great deterioration. Their economic condition came down drastically. Only average literacy is observed among them. The numbers of people with higher education are engaged in all kinds of professions but those living in villages are engaged in agriculture. A very small number of their population is doing government and private jobs.

Attitude of the human being has a great role in their life, which play as an internal force for all kind of development. It is shows from the various study and observation that the Namasudra people living in both the states Assam and West Bengal are less conscious and having less favorable attitudes towards education in comparison to so called higher caste or general people. Again the participation level of Namasudra in Education in both the sates shows very diverse picture; actually this tempted the present researcher to study about the level of attitude toward education of this particular group and compare with this two states. The objectives of the study may be designed in the following ways-

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- (i) To compare the participation of Namasudra in education in Assam and West Bengal
- (ii) To compare the level of attitude toward education of Namasudra in Assam and West Bengal
- (iii) To find out significance difference if any regarding the attitude of Namasudra among the- Students, Parents and Community Members in Assam and West Bengal

SAMPLE:

By using purposive sampling method sample for the present study has been drawn. 300 students, 300 Parents and 300 Community members has been chosen from three district of Assam viz. Kamrup, Karimganj and Marigaon and same number of sample has been chosen from three district of West Bengal also. There are 18 districts in West Bengal. Out of that three districts namely, Nadia, North 24 Pargana and Jalpaiguri have been selected for the present study. There is $900 \times 2 = 1800$ sample (students, parents and community member total 300; i.e. $300 \times 3 = 900$ from each state) have been selected for the present study.

TOOL:

In the present study the researcher has used self prepared and standardized tools. The name of the tool is -**Attitude scale on education for Namasudra**. The reliability of the scale is 0.85 and in the process of construction of the scale, the researcher ensured that the face validity, content validity and construct validity has duly been taken care of while writing and finally selecting the statements by undertaking statistical technique and expert's opinion.

DATA COLLECTION:

The present study demands both primary as well as secondary data. The secondary data has been taken from the censuses reports, books, journals etc. The primary data for the present study has been collected by the researcher himself visiting all the selected districts from both the states.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION:

DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF NAMASUDRA IN EDUCATION

From the various reports it reveals that the Namasudra of West Bengal are very strong and dominant in all sides of development of the state in comparison to the Namasudra of Assam. The Namasudra living in Assam are belong to language minority, and they always feel that they are the migrated people, this feeling induces as a force which make them very weak than the other people, and its impacts on their development; not only in education but in other field also. But in case of West Bengal they do not have this kind of problems, and as a result they could prosper in all sides of development. Literacy rate of both the states is given below-

Table: 1
Comparative analysis of development and participation of Namasudra in Education in Assam and West Bengal in various censuses

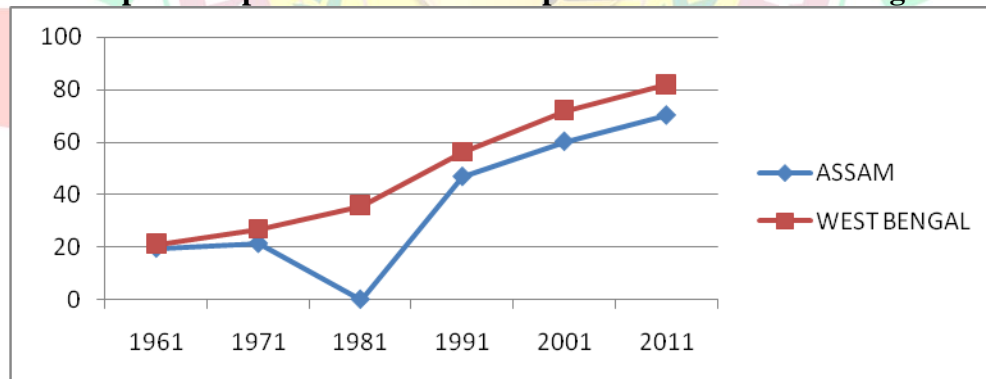
YEAR	ASSAM	WEST BENGAL
1961	19.5	21.03
1971	21.32	26.86
1981	NA	35.87
1991	46.79	56.18
2001	60.2	71.93
2011	70.2*	81.93*

Source: Censuses reports of Assam and West Bengal from 1961-2001

*** Projected data for 2011**

The above table- 1 expresses that the growth rate of Namasudra people in education of both the states are not equal, so far as their literacy percentage is concerned. It is found that literacy percentage of this group of people in the state Assam is lower than West Bengal in all the censuses reports. The table stated that literacy percentage of Namasudra in Assam was 19.5% in 1961 whereas 21.03% was in West Bengal. Again 21.32% in Assam and 26.86% in West Bengal in the census 1971, in 1981 there was no census in Assam, so no literacy percentage was found for the same, but in West Bengal it was found 35.87%. The census 1991 shows the literacy percentage of Namasudra in Assam is 46.79% and in a West Bengal 56.18%. In 2001 census of India shows the percentage of literacy among Namasudra in Assam is 60.2% and in West Bengal 71.93%. And, finally it is projected based on the overall literacy declared in 2011, that the state Assam will stand in 70.2% and West Bengal in 81.93% literacy of this community.

Figure: 1 Graphical representation of development of education among Namasudra



The above graphical representation shows the progress in education of Namasudra people in both the states as per their literacy shown in various censuses reports.

So, it is found from the above table that participation of Namasudra people in education is better in all the census reports of the state West Bengal. As it is mentioned above that Namasudra of West Bengal are developed in Bengal in undivided India, but due to certain political reasons they were forced to live in some rural areas and they were finally deprived from all sorts of facilities of government.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION OF NAMASUDRA IN ASSAM AND WEST BENGAL:

In the previous section it is found the development of Namasudra people in education Assam and West Bengal in comparative wise. It has been observed that the Namasudra in Assam are lagging

behind than the Namasudra of West Bengal so far their literacy rate shown in different census reports. This actually exemplify that the Namasudra people living in Assam are less conscious and having less favorable attitudes towards education.

Education of a child depends on various facets which influences the education. The present researcher has attempted to find out the level of attitudes towards education of this section of the society; to see the feeling, interest and views about education of the peoples of this particular community. In this section the researcher has gathered information about the attitudes towards education from the Namasudra students, parent and community members. An attitude of an individual gets influenced through their socio-economic condition, living style and the environment where he/she is grown up. If somebody lives in very high socio-economic condition, than certainly his/her mentalattitude towards any things will be far above than the people living in poor socio-economic condition. In the present study an attitudes regarding education has been collected through an attitude scale developed by the researcher himself.

So far the broad meaning of education is concerned; it comprises a number of elements, and every aspect has equal importance while forming the concept of education. So, here the statements of attitude regarding education are constructed from different dimensions which are closely related to the concept education. Dimensions involved in the attitude of education are such as- Society, Home, School, Teacher, Socio-Economic condition and Personal. Data collected through the attitude scale and scores secured by the respondents are may be analyze in the following ways-

Table No: 2 Comparison between Namasudra Students of Assam and West Bengal regarding level of attitudes towards education

Level of attitude of Students	Scores	Assam		West Bengal	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
High level attitude	130-192	27	9%	280	93%
Average level attitude	65-129	273	91%	20	7%
Poor level attitude	0-64	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

The above table exposes around 93% Namasudra students of West Bengal are having the higher level attitude towards education; whereas, only 9% students of Assam are having this level of attitudes towards education. Again 91% student in Assam and only 7% students of West Bengal are having average level attitudes towards education. Hence, it may conclude that Namasudra students in West Bengal are better in position in respect to their attitudes towards education. It is mentioned earlier that attitudes of any individual depends upon the life style of the people, social status and living standard of the life. In this aspect it is noticed that the state West Bengal leads better quality life in many aspects than that of Assam. As a result the Namasudra students in the state are better in position.

Table No: 3 Comparison between Namasudra Parents of Assam and West Bengal regarding level of attitudes towards education

Level of attitudes Of Parents	Scores	Assam		West Bengal	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
High level attitude	108-160	138	46%	249	83%
Average level attitude	54-107	162	54%	51	17%
Poor level attitude	0-53	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Again from the above table it is also reveals that like Namasudra students in West Bengal the parent of Namasudra in West Bengal are also having higher attitude towards education than the Namasudra parents in Assam. It is found that around 83% Namasudra parents of West Bengal having higher level of attitude toward education; whereas, only 46% of Parents from Assam possess higher level attitudes towards education. Majority of the parents in Assam possess average level of attitude towards education i.e. around 54%; whereas, only 17% of Parents from West Bengal possess average level attitudes toward education. From this it may be conclude that Namasudra parents in West Bengal are better in position regarding their attitudes towards education. When the parent will have the higher level attitude, at the same the children will also have their higher attitude towards education.

It is also found from the censuses reports that the participation level of Namasudra from West Bengal in education is far better than the counterpart state Assam. Actually, the development of any country, race, and communities of the world mostly depends on the level of attitude of the people of that particular place. So, it is established that the attitudes level of the Namasudra people in the state West Bengal compel higher participation in education despite their poor socio-economic conditions.

Table No: 4 Comparison between Namasudra Community Members of Assam and West Bengal regarding level of attitudes towards education

Level of attitudes	Scores	Assam		West Bengal	
		Respondents	%	Respondents	%
High level attitude	102-152	247	82.33%	251	83.66%
Average level attitude	51-101	53	17.66%	49	17.33%
Poor level attitude	0-50	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

The table no-4 reveals that Namasudra community members of both states have almost same level of attitudes toward education. It is found that 82.33% of Namasudra community members in Assam and 83.66% in West Bengal are have the high level attitude toward education, on the hand 17.66% in Assam and 17.33% in West Bengal have average level attitude toward education. Hence, from the data it may be conclude that community members of both the states are aware about the necessity of education in their life and society in general.

Table No.5 ‘t’ test regarding the attitude towards education between Namasudra students of Assam and West Bengal

Namasudra students	N	Mean	S.D	δD	CR	Significant of	
Assam	300	116.43	10.30	1.82	16.51	5%	1%
West Bengal	300	146.48	20.99			1.96	2.58%

The table no-5 reveals that there is a very sturdy difference between Namasudra students of Assam and West Bengal regarding the attitudes towards education. It’s found from the table that Mean value of Assam is 116.43 and Mean value of West Bengal is 146.48 and the Standard Deviation is 10.30 and 20.99 respectively. The calculated CR value 16.51 is quite larger than the table value in both levels of significance. Hence, it may be concluded that Namasudra students of Assam and West Bengal possess significantly different level of attitude towards education. It has already been mentioned that Namasudra students of West Bengal possess very high level attitude towards education than the counterpart of the state Assam. It is also mentioned that the life style

of Namasudra people in West Bengal is quite better than the people of Assam. It is noticed from the field observation by the researcher that the condition of schools, classrooms, road conditions, number of teachers and other facilities of the schools are far better than the Assam.

Table No. 6 ‘t’ test regarding the attitude towards education between Namasudra parents of Assam and West Bengal

Namasudra parents	N	Mean	S.D	°D	CR	Significant of	
Assam	300	108.00	9.61	0.81	10.41	5%	1%
West Bengal	300	116.44	10.31			1.96	2.58

The table no 6 reveals that there is a difference of attitudes towards education between Namasudra parents of Assam and West Bengal. The Mean score of Assam is 108 and West Bengal is 116.44 and the SD is 9.61 and 10.31 respectively. The difference between of two Mean is 8.44 which is quite large. The CR value 10.41 is quite larger than the table value at both levels of significance i.e. at 5% and 1% level of significance. It is found that the Namasudra parents of West Bengal possess higher level of attitude towards education than Assam. It has already been mentioned that the people of West Bengal are more progressive and developed, so naturally they are very positive regarding their education and their children’s education. In majority areas it is found that the Namasudra people in Assam are socio-economically backward in comparison to the West Bengal. The socio-economic condition of the people greatly influences their mental level, attitude, interest, aptitude and other psychological aspects of the human being.

Table No.7 ‘t’ test regarding the attitude towards education between Namasudra Community members of Assam and West Bengal

Community members of	N	Mean	S.D	°D	CR	Significant of	
Assam	300	111.34	11.78	0.96	0.00	5%	1%
West Bengal	300	111.34	11.79			1.96	2.58

The above table reveals that the Community members of Assam and West Bengal have quite similar types of attitude towards education. They have very highly favorable attitude towards education. From the field visit after consulting with the community members of both the states it is found that they are very much interested to provide education to their community’s people. The table reveals that the Mean difference of Community members of both the states is zero and the CR value also zero. Hence, it may be concluded that though they have a little difference regarding their attitude, but that difference is quite minor difference and is not at all significance at any level of significance. So, we may accept our hypothesis that there is no any significance difference between Community members of Assam and West Bengal regarding their attitude towards education.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

After analysis and interpretation of the data reveal in the tables above, the researcher has come to the following major findings of the study-

- (i) The literacy rate of Namasudra in West Bengal is far better than the state Assam.
- (ii) In 2001 census of India shows the percentage of literacy among Namasudra in Assam is 60.2% and in West Bengal 71.93%. And, finally it is projected that in 2011 the state Assam will stand in 70.2% and West Bengal in 81.93% literacy of this community.
- (iii) In all censuses reports it is reveals that participation rate of students in education of West Bengal is better than Assam.

- (iv) Around 93% Namasudra students of West Bengal are having the higher level attitude towards education; whereas, only 9% students of Assam are having this level of attitudes towards education.
- (v) Again 91% student in Assam and only 7% students of West Bengal are having average level attitudes towards education.
- (vi) It is found that around 83% Namasudra parents of West Bengal having higher level of attitude toward education; whereas, only 46% of Parents from Assam possess higher level attitudes towards education.
- (vii) It is found that 82.33% of Namasudra community members in Assam and 83.66% in West Bengal are have the high level attitude toward education
- (viii) Namasudra students of Assam and West Bengal possess significantly different level of attitude towards education.
- (ix) There is a very large difference between Namasudra students of Assam and West Bengal regarding the attitudes towards education.
- (x) It is found that the Namasudra parents of West Bengal possess higher level of attitude towards education than Assam.
- (xi) The Namasudra parents of Assam and West Bengal possess quite differences of attitude towards education. It is found that the Namasudra parents of West Bengal possess higher level of attitude towards education than Assam.
- (xii) There is no any significance difference between Community members of Assam and West Bengal regarding their attitude towards education.
- (xiii) The Community members of Assam and West Bengal have quite similar types of attitude towards education. They have very highly favorable attitude towards education.

SUGGESTION FOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION:

- For active participation of Namasudra people in education, it is urgently required to improve the economic condition of Namasudra families as the financial problem is the major problem in perusing education by them.
- It is necessary and urgent to make the parents understand about the importance of education, enrolment and continuation of study, at any cost by their children. In this mission the Govt. support system, N.G.O.s, schools and teachers have to be inter linked and they have to work under a common monitoring system.
- Another strategy may be the establishment of linkages between schools and the community. Improvement of parents-teacher association is necessary and essential. This is important to increase the attendance of Namasudra students in school.
- Involvement of teachers, head of the institution and community members is important in the planning of any educational programme provided for that particular locality.
- Appointment of educated and eligible scheduled caste individuals in Govt. or non-govt. job is necessary, especially in teaching and if so, those teachers are to be appointed in their local area. Job aspirations among the scheduled caste are to be increased.
- Some sort of guidance and counseling may be arranged for the Namasudra parents to make them aware about the importance of education in life, so that they can understand their responsibilities to provide all arrangement for their child's education.
- Establishment of educational institutions in rural areas in such a manner that they are within easy reach of the below poverty level people or downtrodden people.

- More, better and cheaper hostel facilities for the scheduled caste students should be provided.
- The minimum amount of scholarships should be increased. The amount of the scholarship should be granted starting from the minimum so that the students showing better results get more.
- Concession should be given to the scheduled caste people in tuition fee and other necessary fees of the school.
- Residential type of education may be arranged in the scheduled caste areas.
- More teachers should be appointed from the scheduled caste groups in those areas.

CONCLUSION:

Although the constitutional commitment is there to provide safe guard to the schedule caste people still that safe guard is hardly implemented and executed. The Government of India is making lot of efforts to implement it but, at the same time the politics is initiating counterproductive caste system by way of creating other backward class, which leads to half of the population of the country to become backward and schedule. Thus, attempt should be made to overcome these barriers by way of creating consciousness among the people in general through education and the schedule caste or the other backward communities to have education and become conscious to utilize the opportunities equally among themselves without becoming creamy layer, for which only government effort is not sufficient rather, public involvement is indispensable.

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