



Social Discrimination and Identity Issues among the Scheduled Castes in Tripura: A Contemporary Analysis.

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Abstract: The research explores various aspects of Social discrimination and Identity challenges faced by the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the northeastern Indian state of Tripura, which has a unique demographic structure. Despite constitutional protections and affirmative action policies, the Scheduled Castes communities still face systemic barriers to social, economic, and political opportunities. The primary aim of the research, to examine the contemporary forms and expressions of social discrimination & identity issues against the Scheduled Castes communities. In methodology, the study draws on a Socio-Political perspective. The research uses both Primary (field study in various areas) and Secondary analysis, which includes government reports, scholarly articles, recent data, census data, legal frameworks, and the events documented in the past years, including caste-based discrimination, identity crisis, and socioeconomic marginalization. In addition, the study highlights the population, structure, and literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes, also including some incidents of discrimination and identity challenges faced by the scheduled castes. Lastly, the article provides policy-based recommendations for future research perspectives.

Keywords: Scheduled Castes, Discrimination, Demographic, Marginalization. Mainland, Northeastern.

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I. Introduction

The Scheduled Caste (also recognized as 'Untouchables' or 'Dalit') have a long history of victimization through violence, discrimination, embarrassment, identity issues, and exploitation. They have endured various forms of abuse, including murder, rape, molestation, sexual assault, verbal abuse, forced migration, and even being treated as slaves by the upper and dominant castes. Many strict laws were enacted after India's independence, but the incidents of embarrassment and violence against the SC communities have not significantly reduced. The caste structure in India is founded on the notion of 'purity' & 'pollution', which leads to the SCs being considered as impure by the higher castes. Sometimes, women from the lower caste are often targeted by men from the upper caste during caste battles, which aim to block the voice of lower caste people. Statistics reveal that one person from a Scheduled Caste in India faces a crime every day. As per the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), more than 40,000 incidents of atrocities and violence against the Scheduled Castes are reported every year. According to the NCRB's 'Crime in India 2023' report, 57,789 cases of crimes against the Scheduled Castes were registered nationwide.

Tripura is a small state in North-East India, which has a unique socio-cultural landscape characterized by ethnic and caste diversity. As per the 2011 Census, the Scheduled Castes numbered 6,54,918, constituting 17.8% of the state's total population of 36,73,917. Of this population, 3,34,370 males and 3,20,548 females belong to various Scheduled Caste communities, including Namasudra (the largest group), Mahisyadas, Jalia Kaibarta, Dhoba, Chamar, Muchi, etc. According to the Census 2011, 34 notified SC groups are living in Tripura. Tripura's demographic composition is diverse, with about 31.8% of the population belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs), and the rest belonging to the General Categories and Other Background Classes. This ethnic mosaic creates a complex social environment where caste-based discrimination and identity intersect with tribal-non-tribal tensions, regional politics, and historical migration patterns, unlike other states in India where the caste system has deep historical roots spanning eras, caste dynamics in Tripura have been significantly influenced by the wave of Bengali migration from East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) during the partition of 1947 and in the following decades. The influx of Bengali refugees, many of whom belonged to Scheduled Castes such as the Namasudra, Cobbler, Jalia Kaibarta, etc., and faced religious harassment, radically changed the

demographic balance of the state and transformed a caste-based social structure into a region that was largely tribal.

Despite legal & constitutional protections, the Scheduled Castes communities in Tripura still face social discrimination, economic challenges, and limited job opportunities etc. This article reviews existing research on caste discrimination and identity issues in the northeastern state of Tripura. It presents updated demographic and socio-economic data on the state's Scheduled Castes conditions. The article also examines gaps in education and employment based on caste, assesses the impact of affirmative action policies, and explores how Scheduled Castes groups express their identities and pursue their interests within Tripura's political landscape.

Figure 1: District-wise SC population in Tripura.

SL No.	Name of the Districts.	Scheduled Caste Population.			Percentage of SCs.
		Population	Male	Female	2011
1	West Tripura	192475	97687	94788	20.96%
2	Sepahijala	82558	42526	40032	17.07%
3	Gomati	74430	38306	36124	16.86%
4	South Tripura	65737	33705	32032	15.26%
5	Khowai	63062	32310	30752	19.25%
6	Dhalai	61688	31461	30227	16.31%
7	North Tripura	60554	30958	29596	14.51%
8	Unakoti	54414	27414	26997	19.98%
Tripura		654918	334370	320548	17.82%
State Literacy & Poverty rate.					
Literacy Rate- 89.1%		Poverty Rate- 28.5%		Higher Education Enrolment- 20.7% (2021)	

Source: Census 2011.

II. Research Objectives

1. To analyse current forms and terms of social discrimination & identity issues among the SCs in Tripura.
2. To look into recent and documented cases of caste-based violence from previous years.
3. To assess the identity challenges faced by the Scheduled Castes communities across Tripura.

III. Research Methodology Of The Study

The research uses both Primary and Secondary data analysis. The Primary source of the research includes Field studies (household surveys, focus groups, slum areas). In the Secondary analysis, the research uses government reports, census data, SC welfare data, NCRB data, NCSC data, PIB report, Scholarly research, and contemporary news. In sampling, the study follows (simple Random sampling) and selects SC community people randomly from various blocks, Panchayats, and Municipal areas of Tripura.

IV. Forms And Expression Of Discrimination Against The SCS

Historically, Tripura has faced various forms of social discrimination, which have excessively affected marginalised communities. These discriminatory practices operate at both systemic and interpersonal levels, affecting vulnerable populations within the state, including the Scheduled Castes, STs, religious minorities, and women. Social discrimination against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Tripura occurs at various interconnected dimensions, perpetuating systemic marginalisation. The SC constitute about 17% of the total population of Tripura, with significant communities being the Jalia Kaibarta (fishermen/boatmen), Muchi (Cobbler/leather workers), Mahisyadas, and Namasudra families. These communities still face several forms of social discrimination that hinder their socio-economic mobility and affect their human dignity.

4.1. Occupational Discrimination and Traditional Caste-Based Work:

Occupational discrimination is one of the most fundamental forms of caste-based discrimination. Historically, the caste has forced certain groups into 'polluting' or menial jobs. In Tripura, the SC communities have traditionally been confined to specific roles and have limited opportunities for development and choice. A study conducted on the "Muchi" (Cobbler) community under the Agartala Municipal Corporation found that 17.5% of the people work as traditional or leather workers, representing their community, while 8.75% are daily wage labourers. 7.5% are casual labourers, doing whatever they can. 15% work as rickshaw pullers. 31.25% play a musical instrument. The remaining 20% work as casual or fixed-wage labourers for the municipal corporation, focusing on cleanliness and sanitation. This situation reflects forced occupational flexibility due to

economic desperation rather than genuine choice, as members of this community flee traditional work due to 'lack of favourable working conditions & lack of investment'.

The study's field survey revealed that in rural areas of Tripura, artisans and workers from the SC communities face price discrimination when selling their goods or services. In particular, 'Jalia Kaibarta' fishermen reported that they receive lower prices for their catch than other communities. On the other hand, Cobbler leather workers face challenges in obtaining raw materials at fair prices from upper-caste suppliers, which pushes them into exploitative relationships.

The study also revealed that some SC communities are still working as manual scavengers. Manual scavenging is another form of job discrimination that impacts SC communities. Even though the 'Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, makes this practice illegal, SC individuals still find themselves in degrading sanitation jobs. These roles face verbal abuse and social exclusion at their jobs.

4.2. Educational Discrimination:

Education presents a double-edged sword for the Scheduled Castes in Tripura. On a positive note, the literacy rate of Tripura is primarily better than the National literacy rate. But the state faces challenges in access to quality education and the uneven distribution of educational materials. Scheduled Castes students face social discrimination in education, including caste-based discrimination in education in peer relationships and classroom seating preferences. Historically, girls from Scheduled Caste communities faced rigorous discrimination, facing dual barriers based on both caste and gender that limited their educational advancement and economic opportunities.

A concrete case in 2023, roughly hundreds of Scheduled Castes (SC) students who passed the B.Ed. Examination in 2023 staged a protest in front of the SC Welfare Department office in Gorkhabasti, demanding their scholarships that have been pending for eight months. Students from several institutions in the state are facing economic and academic challenges due to the delay in getting their scholarships. They said they have contacted the department several times, but have been given false assurances and excuses. According to the students, only 60% of the 3,200 SC students who passed the B.Ed. Examination in 2023 received their scholarships by January 10, while the rest are still waiting. They said they were promised that all scholarships would be disbursed by January 15, but that deadline has also passed. The students also blocked the main gate of the office and raised slogans against the department and the state government. They said they will continue their protest until their demands are met.

In October 2024, a major ragging incident took place at Tripura Medical College (A renowned medical college) in Hapania, Agartala. An FIR was filed against 18 senior students based on the complaint of the college administration. These students are accused of threatening junior students and forcing the students to make marriage proposals to their senior students, as well as insulting and misbehaving with newly admitted MBBS students through a WhatsApp message. In this incident, many students of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, OBC, and the General category students were subjected to this discrimination and oppression. They have endured countless physical and mental tortures. In response to this incident, the college imposed severe punishments of Rs 10 lakhs on the accused students, expulsion from the hostel for one year, and mobile monitoring for six months. Therefore, the crime of ragging in educational institutions like Tripura Medical College is truly a shameful matter.

The NIT Agartala has witnessed several incidents of ragging. A notable incident took place in March 2018, when senior students attacked a first-year student from Arunachal Pradesh and several other junior students under the guise of ragging. The incident resulted in the expulsion of two senior students and the imposition of disciplinary fines on others. Seven students were expelled, and the police reports were filed, which attests to the seriousness of the situation and the institutional response. The victims (SC/ST/OBC/Gen. students) alleged physical and mental abuses, as well as identity-based targeting. It has raised concerns about racial and social discrimination along with ragging. This was a shameful incident in the history of NIT, Agartala.

4.3. Domestic Violence & Discrimination:

Domestic violence is a common form of caste discrimination. Primarily, rural women within the SC community are the victims of this type of discrimination. Scheduled Castes (SC) women in Tripura experience deep-rooted domestic violence and caste discrimination. These issues arise from patriarchal systems and the rigid caste hierarchy in Indian society. The situation poses a significant human rights concern, as multiple layers of marginalisation increase the vulnerability of SC women in the state.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted from 2019-2021, around 37.0% ever-married SC women in India reported experiencing some form of intimate partner violence. In contrast, this figure is 24.4% among women from the General category. This 12.6% gap highlights the increased vulnerability of SC women. Physical violence is the common form of abuse, with sexual violence reported by 6.6% of SC

women compared to 4.6% of General women. In Tripura, official records show shocking violence against women. Between 2023 and January 2025, there were 9,308 reported cases of crimes against women in the state. This includes 144 cases of rape and 31 murders of women during the fiscal year 2023-2024. While state authorities report a 55% year-on-year decrease in crimes against women, the actual numbers are still troubling, especially from many cases involving specially since many cases involving SC women go unreported due to social stigma, fear of retaliation, and obstacles within the police and judicial systems. During the field survey, it was found that many Scheduled Caste women are being tortured by people close to them, but they do not dare take legal action, and they are threatened with death. Women in some families are victims of exploitation and physical and mental abuse, but avoid taking legal action out of concern for their children, especially in some rural areas of Tripura, where incidents of such torture are found. The Tripura Commission for Women, established under the Tripura Commission for Women Act of 1993, serves as the main body for addressing women's issues. However, enforcing the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 faces serious challenges. These include not enough Protection Officers, limited legal aid, delays in registering cases, and poor investigation by police of SC victims.

4.4. Economic discrimination & House Segregation:

Economic inequality and housing segregation continue to affect the livelihood of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura. Many SC households face limited access to stable employment, land ownership, and credit. This exacerbates long-term economic vulnerability.

One example is Longtarai RF village under Manu block of Dhalai district of Tripura. According to the 2011 census, Longtarai RF village has a total of 2,019 families, with a population of 8,644. The literacy rate of this village is 59.8%. Out of this population, only 587 individuals belong to the Scheduled Castes, comprising 327 males and 260 females. That is, 6.8% of the people are Scheduled Castes, and the rest are ST and other castes. Most Scheduled Castes people in this region earn their living by farming, cultivating land, working as daily wage labourers, selling livestock, and running small shops. Here. Moreover, the literacy rate in this region is very low. The people here are economically backward compared to other educated people in Tripura. The state government should pay more attention to the people of this region and bring them into the light of development. There are many other rural areas in Tripura, like Longtarai village, where people are suffering a lot in terms of livelihood, socio-economic status, education system, roads, ghats, daily earnings, and medical facilities. And even though budget allocations or money are spent on the development of infrastructure in these areas, the expected development does not happen due to corruption.

4.5. Reservation Rights Violations:

The Scheduled Castes of Tripura have an important place in the state population. Although the government has enacted various laws to ensure legal protection for them and equitable representation in jobs, they still face systemic discrimination related to reservations in various aspects of society, from admission to employment. The study highlights some incidents of reservation discrimination.

4.5.1. Dibyoyoti Das vs. The State of Tripura (2013)

According to this case, 86 medical seats were at issue (45-UR, 15-SC, 26-ST). Eight SC candidates were high scorers in the common entrance test. After 3 withdrawals, 5 joined on general merit. By law (Sec. 5), those 5 should have been added to the 15 SC reserved seats. Instead, the state treated them as if they had taken 5 of 15 SC seats, allowing 5 unreserved candidates in those spots. The petitioners argued that this unlawfully reduced SC seats. In this regard, the Tripura High Court agreed that reserved seats cannot be cut because an SC candidate admitted based on merit. Citing *Ritesh R. Sah vs Y.L. Yamul* (1996), it held that SC candidates admitted based on merit cannot be considered as reserved class candidates for purposes. The court reapplied the 1995 Administrative Guidelines, which addressed SC/ST vacancies, and ordered that any vacant seats of SC candidates be redistributed based on their merits. This clearly prohibits the SC quota reduction and directs the state to fill all the deficits by 21st August 2013.

4.5.2. Sports Department recruitment quota violation (2025):

In February 2025, a major controversy arose over the recruitment of 'Junior Physical Instructor', Group-C in Tripura. It began as a result of allegations of violating the reservation quota by Pradyot Kishore Debbarma. The conflict started after the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports issued a recruitment circular on February 7, 2025. Pradyot Debbarma officially challenged the notice in a letter to the state's Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Tinku Roy. He accused the department of ignoring the legal rights of the tribal and Scheduled Caste communities without adhering to the required reservation percentage. The complaint of Pradyot Kishore focuses on the dissonance between the legally required reservation quota and the actual number

of posts reserved for marginalised communities in the notice. According to the Tripura Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribal Conservation Act, 31% of the vacancies in government jobs should be reserved for ST candidates and 17% for SC candidates. However, Mr. Debbarma noted that the notification had only 18 posts reserved for tribal candidates, which is about 6% of the total vacancy, which is much less than 31% required. Similarly, the allotment for Scheduled Caste candidates was limited to 35 posts, which is about 12%, which is less than 17% of the legal requirements. He argued that this problem is not only a common mistake but also a violation of constitutional rights that marginalised the indigenous and Scheduled Castes of the state.

Besides, in Tripura, the SCs face challenges with 'Vacancy-Lapse'. Reserved posts often remained unfilled for long periods. Authorities allow these posts to lapse instead of filling them based on merit when there are no eligible SC candidates. These gaps refute SC aspirants' opportunities and go against legitimate and statutory reservation rules.

V. Identity Issues Among The Scheduled Castes: A Critical Analysis

Tripura presents a unique demographic and social landscape where questions of identity intersect with ethnicity, migration, and constitutional categorisation in complex ways. According to the 2011 Census, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Tripura, representing approximately 17.82% of the state's population, face distinctive identity challenges rooted in the region's historical transformation from a princely state to a modern Indian state marked by large-scale demographic shifts. Many SC communities are living in Tripura; each community has its own socio-cultural traditions, but shares experiences of marginalisation.

The identity crisis among Tripura's Scheduled Castes primarily arises from the state's dramatic demographic restructuring following the partition and the subsequent influx of refugees from what was formerly East Pakistan. This migration fundamentally altered Tripura's social fabric, creating what scholars describe as a "fear-psychosis" among indigenous communities and generating an "insider-outsider" syndrome that permeates social relations. While much attention is focused on tribal communities, Scheduled Castes have also experienced displacement—not just physically, but socially and in terms of their identity—as traditional occupational structures, residential patterns, and community networks were disrupted by the arrival of dominant Bengali-speaking populations.

Caste-based discrimination compounds these identity challenges in significant ways. Even with legal protections and Tripura's progressive political history, caste discrimination persists in both overt and subtle forms. Minister Bhowmik himself acknowledged in 2022 that caste discrimination continues to affect those who "do not belong" to dominant social groups. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has noted that liberalisation policies have particularly disadvantaged SC communities, with privatisation reducing public sector opportunities where reservations provided crucial access. Additionally, the mechanisation of agriculture has displaced many Dalit agricultural workers. This economic vulnerability directly impacts identity formation, as powerlessness—defined as the deprivation of physical security, economic independence, and self-respect—remains a core issue for Dalits across India.

The Scheduled Castes in Tripura experience what sociologists term a "spoiled identity," where stigmatisation becomes internalised and transmitted across generations. This is particularly acute for communities with traditional occupations considered "impure" within the caste hierarchy. The Muchi community, traditionally associated with leatherwork, and the Dhobi community, engaged in washing clothes, face social exclusion that extends beyond economic deprivation to affect social recognition and self-worth. Educational backwardness further entrenches these identity issues, as lower literacy rates and limited access to quality education restrict social mobility and perpetuate stereotypes about capability and worth.

Political representation adds another layer to these identity challenges. Although Tripura has implemented reservation systems since 1950, with the Left Front government strengthening these provisions in 1978, the actual political agency of SC communities remains constrained. A study of SC MLAs in Tripura reveals that the remaining statutory provisions ensuring political representation, their legislative role in genuinely articulating community needs, face limitations from both institutional constraints and the dispersed nature of SC populations across the state. This creates a paradox: formal political inclusion coexists with substantive identity marginalisation.

Cultural identity among Tripura's Dalits is nuanced and evolving. Many identify strongly as Hindus and Bengalis, sharing in the region's mixed Bengali culture. Caste identity is often downplayed in everyday life; traditional practices of untouchability are relatively rare in Tripura, and Dalits join in village festivals alongside others. Nevertheless, caste awareness persists. National discussions occasionally resonate within Tripura, with SC leaders engaging in broader religious and cultural debates. Notably, in 2024, SC Welfare Minister Sudhangshu Das publicly proposed the creation of a "Sanatan Board" for Hindus, akin to the Waqf Board for Muslims. This merging of Dalit and Hindu identities illustrates the complex cultural landscape SCs inhabit as members of both Hindu society and historically oppressed communities. Within social contexts, some Dalit families maintain distinctive traditions, such as specific 'Kuladevata' worship or unique folk music, while fully

participating in mainstream Bengali culture. Subtle discrimination prevails; Dalits may be excluded from local caste associations or subjected to slurs regarding their heritage. A legislative incident in 2025, where a state minister used a derogatory caste term against an opposition leader, sparked backlash over the unconstitutionality of caste-based attacks, highlighting that identity-based insults occur in Tripura's public life.

Legally and institutionally, Dalits in Tripura enjoy formal protections but still face vulnerabilities. The Indian Constitution provides robust protections for SCs, including reserved quotas in education, employment, and local governance, along with specific welfare initiatives. Tripura has implemented these provisions through a dedicated Scheduled Caste Welfare Department, which manages scholarships, housing programs, and economic grants for Dalits. The state has also established cooperatives and credit unions for SC communities. Also, anti-discrimination laws apply, with any violence against Dalits triggering the national Prevention of Atrocities Act. However, many SCs lack the resources or information to assert their rights well. The identity of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura is influenced by a combination of socio-political, economic, cultural, and legal factors.

5.1. IDENTITY ISSUES & FAKE SC CERTIFICATES BY OTHER CASTES IN TRIPURA

The Indian Constitution protects the Scheduled Castes under Articles 15 and 16. These are intended to address centuries of historical oppression and marginalisation. However, this protective framework often faces a significant problem, with fake caste certificates obtained by individuals from Non-Scheduled Caste communities systematically undermining these constitutional guarantees. When privileged castes fraudulently claim Scheduled Caste status, they directly deprive genuine SC candidates of their legal rights, including access to government jobs, educational admissions, scholarships, and political representation.

In Tripura, the complex identity issues and crisis can be traced back a long time. For example, in 2002-2003, approximately 703 fake Scheduled Caste certificates were detected, showing that people from other ethnic communities were using fake caste certificates to enjoy the benefits of the Scheduled Castes. On the other hand, genuine Scheduled Caste communities are struggling with definitional confusion and identity disputes. The 'Supreme Court of India' has ruled that the abuse of fake certificates is "Fraud on the Constitution". This dual crisis – the vagueness of the statutory project of social justice and the ability to self-determination of the community, and the ability to achieve cooperative empowerment.

According to the 2010 National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) report, out of 106 fake Scheduled Caste certificate cases across India, A total of 87 cases were reported in Tripura. The Tripura had 82% of all reported cases. This massive corruption raises questions about the serious failure of Tripura's Scrutiny and Verification system, which directly harms the Scheduled Caste community. The 2010 NCSC data is not just a warning; it demonstrates how unchecked fraud can undermine the purpose of reservation policies and exacerbate social injustice.

Figure 2: Fake Scheduled Castes Certificates.

SL. No.	Name of the State.	Number of Cases.
01	West Bengal	04
02	Punjab	07
03	Assam	01
04	Maharashtra	03
05	Chandigarh	01
06	Tripura	87
07	Haryana	02
08	Bihar	01
Grand Total		106

Source: Press Information Bureau.

5.2. MAJOR FAKE SC CERTIFICATE CASES IN TRIPURA

I. The 2002-2003 Scam Exposure: The most significant discovery took place during the 2002-2003 financial year when Tripura authorities found 703 cases of fake SC certificates among government employees. The consequences were severe: 133 employees were dismissed from government service, 70 fake certificates were annulled, and 16 certificates were surrendered voluntarily. Meanwhile, 484 cases remained under investigation for years after. This fraud affected educated professionals. Doctors and Engineers who had gained admission through SC quota seats using fake certificates were among those dismissed. These individuals occupied posts in government institutions that should have been filled by legitimate SC candidates.

II. Sri Partha Das vs The State of Tripura (2008-2018): The most well-known and politically sensitive case in the history of Tripura was associated with the 'Revolutionary Socialist Party' (RSP) MLA Partha Das, who

represented Shalgarah-Kakraban (SC-reserved) constituency. The case was one of the longest-running fake certificate controversies in Tripura.

February 2008: Partha Das was elected as an MLA from the reserved seat for the Scheduled Castes (SC) on the RSP ticket while he was part of the ruling Left-Front.

August 2008: Partha Das's elder brother, Chandan Kr. Das, a government homoeopathic doctor, was dismissed for using a fake SC certificate. This caused scrutiny of the entire family's caste claims.

March 2010: West Tripura, Sadar SDM submitted a confidential report, which was later leaked to the media. The report stated that Partha Das's SC certificate was fake. It stated that: (a) Partha Das's father, Lt. Paresh Chandra Das, was migrated from Hidrabad village in Brahmanbaria district, Kumilla (now Bangladesh). He got a job under the Postal Department under the 'General' category. (b) Partha Das was admitted to Pallimangal School in the 'General' category. (c) The family belonged to the 'Kayastha' (General) community, which is not recognised as a Scheduled Caste group.

July 31, 2012: After 4 years of investigation, the 'State Level Investigation Committee' (SLSC) formally cancelled Partha Das's SC certificate on 31.7.2012. The SLSC resolved that the investigation found Partha Das's SC certificate to be fraudulent. It's a fake document.

November 20, 2012: The Imphal Bench of Gauhati High Court (Justice T.N.K. Singh) upheld the SLSC decision, declaring, "After considering all the available documents, it is found that the SC certificate of RSP MLA Partha Das is fake."

October 9, 2018: A division bench of the Tripura High Court (Chief Justice Ajay Rastogi and Justice Arindam Lodh) dismissed Das's final appeal, definitively upholding the decision to cancel the certificate.

III. The Sukanta Bhuiya Case: The case involves the cancellation of a Scheduled Caste (SC) certificate obtained through fake documents and the impact on educational qualifications obtained through fraudulent claims. Sukanta Bhuiyan obtained a caste certificate from the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) on March 13, 2007. He used this certificate to get admission in the MBBS course at the Government Medical College, Agartala, for the academic year 2008-2009. Later, a complaint came to light that his caste certificate had been obtained through forgery.

The State Level Verification Committee (SLSC) investigated and determined that Bhuiyan actually belonged to the 'Lashkar' community, which is not recognized as a Scheduled Caste in Tripura. The SLSC issued a show-cause notice and cancelled his SC certificate on January 7, 2014. Bhuiyan challenged the cancellation in the High Court but ultimately admitted that the certificate was fake. However, he tried to keep his MBBS degree obtained with a fake certificate. The single judge, citing the Supreme Court judgment in *Dattu v. State of Maharashtra*, allowed him to keep his degree while cancelling the certificate. The judge noted that the cancellation notice came after a significant delay and that Bhuiya had already completed his MBBS course.

The court found that Bhuiyan had deliberately and fraudulently denied admission to a qualified SC candidate. However, since cancelling the degree would prevent a trained medical professional from working and would waste national resources spent on his education, the court reluctantly allowed him to keep his MBBS degree. However, it imposed a hefty monetary penalty, directing Bhuiyan to pay Rs 5,00,000 to the state government in monthly instalments within six months. If he fails to do so, his degree will automatically be canceled. The verdict stated that he will not receive any additional reservation benefits in any field.

IV. Sri Sew Prasad Biswas vs. The State of Tripura and Ors: This case from the High Court of Tripura involved two petitioners: Sri Sew Prasad Biswas (father) and his son, Sri Abhisek Biswas. They challenged the cancellation of their Scheduled Caste (SC) certificates by the State Level Scrutiny Committee (SLSC) through writ petitions under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

The dispute began in 1998 when a complaint questioned whether Sew Prasad Biswas truly belonged to the 'Namasudra' community, which is recognized as SC in Tripura. The SLSC cancelled his SC certificate in 2007. The case went through multiple rounds of litigation over two decades. The High Court initially sent the matter back to the SLSC for a fresh examination and a proper opportunity for the petitioners, but the SLSC cancelled the certificates again in 2016. This prompted another High Court intervention, which remitted the matter for re-hearing on 3rd February, 2021. The State challenged this order before the Division Bench, but the appeal was dismissed on 6th December, 2022.

Later, the SLSC conducted new proceedings and, on August 17, 2023, issued a final order cancelling the SC certificates of both petitioners. The SLSC examined whether the petitioners provided enough additional documents to disprove allegations of acquiring false certificates, and whether their father's and other relatives' certificates were obtained lawfully. The SLSC found that Sew Prasad Biswas obtained his SC certificate on 1st February, 1978. His father's caste status changed from 'General to SC' only in 1981, three years later. The Committee concluded that the petitioner's certificate could not have been based on his father's SC status. Additionally, the petitioner did not provide any authentic government documents from his ancestors that dated before his own certificate. The Committee assumed the petitioner had used his official position to obtain the certificate through improper means.

The High Court upheld the SLSC's decision, noting that the Committee had followed the required procedures under the Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Reservation Rules, 1992. The Court referenced Supreme Court judgments stating that High Courts should not re-evaluate evidence in writ proceedings unless the findings are clearly wrong or affected by bias or lack of authority. The Court confirmed that the SLSC's findings were based on reasonable assumptions and proper investigation. As a result, the writ petitions were dismissed, and the cancellation of both SC certificates was upheld.

The research found that there are also many other cases in Tripura where it was found that people from other communities have been enjoying the benefits of the Scheduled Castes for a long time by issuing fake SC certificates. And these incidents or cases of fake caste certificates are directly and indirectly related to the identity problems of the Scheduled Castes.

VI. Major Recommendations Of The Study

The research offers several policy-based recommendations for the development of the Scheduled Caste people and addressing social discrimination and identity-related issues.

6.1. Strengthening Enforcement of Reservation Policies: The state government should ensure strict adherence to reservation rules in public employment, education, and local governance. A dedicated Reservation Compliance Monitoring Cell could be set up to investigate issues like vacancy backlogs, roster mismanagement, or misuse of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes.

6.2. Targeted Educational and Skill Development Programs: Introduce various scholarships focused on SC students, remedial coaching, digital learning facilities, and job training through government institutions and community centres. These programs can help address the structural disadvantages of generational marginalization.

6.3. Legal Literacy and Access-to-Justice Initiatives: During the field survey, the study found that many SC community individuals have no idea about the lawful protections and legal options. Legal awareness camps, advice, and provision desks in district offices can progress the reporting and resolution of discrimination, violence, and entitlement denials.

6.4. Community-Based Identity Empowerment Programs: The study suggested that cultural revival and dignified initiatives need to be encouraged in SC cultural centres. In addition, record the history of different communities and recognise local leaders.

6.5. Land, Housing, and Livelihood Security Measures: Introduce targeted land distribution, housing schemes, and support policies for livelihoods in rural and semi-urban SC areas. Social security programs like pensions, insurance, and reforms in the Public Distribution System (PDS) should focus on the most marginalised groups identified through socio-economic surveys.

6.6. Monitoring of Social Inclusion in Institutions: Monitoring social exclusion requires clear and enforceable anti-discrimination rules in schools, sports recruitment, workplaces, hostels, and law enforcement agencies.

6.7. Data-Driven Policy Reform: Regular state-level surveys on caste-based discrimination, dropout rates, job segregation, and access to welfare programs will support evidence-based interventions that meet real community needs.

VII. Conclusion

The social discrimination and identity issues faced by the Scheduled Castes in Tripura highlight a complex mix of fundamental protections and ongoing social inequalities that require close examination. Tripura stands out with its relatively high literacy rates among Scheduled Castes and the lack of overt caste violence, setting it apart from many other Indian states.

However, it still experiences the systemic exclusion found in caste-based discrimination across the country. Although there are laws meant to protect the rights of Scheduled Castes, including policies for affirmative action and job reservations of 17 per cent in government roles, gaps in implementation and hidden discriminatory practices continue to weaken real empowerment. The identity formation of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura exists under two main pressures: legal support measures that can inadvertently commercialise identity and deep-rooted social structures that keep marginalisation alive. Studies show that Scheduled Castes in India suffer significantly greater levels of deprivation compared to other backward classes, with systemic exclusion affecting their access to basic services, land ownership, housing conditions, and job opportunities.

In Tripura, historical land loss after migration has worsened identity crises among Scheduled Castes, who deal with economic vulnerability as they strive to assert their rights through voting and participation in local administration. Recent research indicates that true solutions need to go beyond mere symbolic measures. We need real institutional reform, especially by improving access to education, developing skills, and creating economic opportunities. The ongoing discrimination shows that building identity for the Scheduled Castes still relies on both acknowledgement from outside their community and affirmation from within it. Their integration into wider society hinges on significant changes to the system, not just on legal provisions.

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