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**GRT** **THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND EDUCATION  
OF THE TOTO COMMUNITY WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO MADARIHAT BLOCK IN THE  
DISTRICT OF ALIPURDUAR IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

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**Abstract:-**The deprived groups can be classified in a number of ways, suffering from cultural, economic, political and social deprivation. The traditional method of classification is made in terms of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. People belonging to remote hilly areas, forest areas, desert areas and slum areas etc. are also classified as such. The entire tribal population comes under the category of deprived sections.

The present study has been determined with the socio-economic status and education of the Toto community with special reference to Madarihat Block in the district of Alipurduar in West Bengal. The Totos are generally divided into thirteen exogamous clans of family and their settlement area is divided into six distinct hamlets. The socio-economic status related to variable sex, family status, occupation, income, health, marriage, language, culture, food habits, religion, lifestyle etc. On the other hand education is related to educational institutions, rate of literacy and quality of education of this community. In this paper, I try to focus on the income status, occupations, health status, marriage custom, literate person and higher educated person within the findings and the measures for the better living of this community. The deprived or weaker section will be improved through the developmental policy and universal public helping hand.

**Keywords:** Toto community, historical background, Socio-economic status and education.

## INTRODUCTION

From the ancient period in India most of the backward class people have been living in the society with different culture, values and lifestyle out of the civilized society. According to the 1981 census, 7.76% of the total populations of India are tribal people and there are 427 sub castes in them. The national educational policy 1986, has been given stress upon education for the backward class people, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe community. In this context, constitution of India, Article no 29, 46, 338 and 340 really execute socially, economically and educationally to provide special opportunities for the weaker section of the society.

After the independence of India, the government has been trying to spread education for all people of our country. But education for the tribal communities is not remarkable spread in our country. We see the picture of children of inequality in educational opportunity among the tribal communities in comparison with that for the other higher communities. Now, the tribal communities are being deprived social, cultural and educational opportunities to fit themselves to the modern civilization of the society in West Bengal as well as in India.

### Significance of the study:

‘Toto’ is a rare community not only in West Bengal but also in India. This community is far behind in socio-economic status and education than the other communities. The people of this community have not come into contact

with education, socio – economic status, language, culture, occupation, health, family status, food habit, religion and life style of the present days. They are in the habit of primitive culture. They are backward mainly in education and socio – economic status. The socio – economic status and education are the burning issues and problems of the Toto community. So, the researcher has taken this topic for discussion to give a vivid analysis with logical arguments highlighting the measures to be taken for the betterment of the community.

**Objectives of the study:**

- ❖ To understand the socio-economic status of the Toto community in the district of Alipurduar in West Bengal.
- ❖ To acquire knowledge of the educational status of the Toto community in the district of Alipurduar in West Bengal.

**Limitation of the study:**

- I. The present study based on secondary data collected from various sources, no primary data is collected for the research.
- II. The study covers only Madarihat Block, District of Alipurduar in West Bengal, no compare is done here with other tribal people in west Bengal.
- III. The third limitation of the study is time factor. Due to short span of time it was not possible to carry on a depth study.

**Review of Related Literature:**

**A. Dasgupta, A. Gouwami (2009):** The research is empirical measurement on the socio – economic variables like, age, sex, education, family education status etc. and having importance in maintaining the health status on 320 Toto, Santal, Sabar and Lodha respondents of Jalpaiguri, Bardwan and Purulia District of west Bengal. The practice of education is found common in santal, Lodha, Toto and Sabar. Cultivation is the main occupation of maximum respondents of all selected tribes.

**J. Das (2011):** The research measures the socio-economic status of the Toto tribe and suggests suitable remedies. This research has been made to examine the rate of literacy and quality of education, occupational and employment pattern, size of landholding, level of income and expenditure with other socio-economic characteristics of the Toto tribe. The socio-economic and living conditions of the Totos provide several factors that are directly and indirectly responsible for the socio-economic backwardness, poverty and financial obligation in this Primitive Tribal Group of West Bengal.

**Methodology of the study:**

The area of the study is Totopara in the district of Jalpaiguri at the present district of Alipurduar in West Bengal. In the present context, the area of the study is very minimize and concise for the specific discussion to the concerned topic. There has been taken two variables the socio economic status and education of the Toto community in North Bengal. The methodology of research is theoretical analysis from the data collected.

**Collection of data:**

The present study basically is the collection of data from the various sources like books, journals, newspapers, reports of various government and non government organizations and documents of welfare department of the backward class under government of West Bengal.

**Geo-Physical Condition of Totopara:**

The village of Totopara lies within the Longitude 89° 20' East and Latitude 26° 50' north in the geographical position. The area of the village is 1991.59 acres or 808.03 hector. The length of the village is 2.5 miles from north to south, while the east-west distance is about 1 mile, with a narrow end at the north and south east corners.

The village of Totopara (J.L. No. 33/old No. 13) is located in Madarihat police station under Alipurduar Sub-division of Alipurduar district in west Bengal, India. It is situated at the foothills of the Himalayas towards in the south of the border between Bhutan and west Bengal. Titi forest, a tropical rain forest, runs along its West and south boundary and river Torsha flows to its east.

The village of Totopara consist the only primitive Toto tribal community in north Bengal, with elongated area stretching from north to south and it has a trapezoid shape is having six distinct hamlets namely Panchayat goan, Mondal gaon, Subha goan, Mitrang gaon, Dhumchi gaon and Puja gaon, where the Toto settlements are distributed.

### **Concept of Toto Community:**

The term Community is very generally used. It is given different interpretation and used in different ways to mean different things. In their casual talks, people often use the term community to refer to a racial community, or a religious community or a national community or a caste community or a linguistic community or a professional community or sometimes refer to the entire mankind in a restricted sense. It is used to mean an association or group, and in wider sense, it is used to refer to the entire humanity. In the present context, the name of Toto community is derived from the name given to them by their neighbours. Let us first turn our attention to the Bhutias. The word 'Toto-fong' in Limbu language means roasted meat eaters or the people who consume roasted meat. The Totos are inveterate meat eater and they do so often by simply roasting on fire. Similar to the origin of the name of the Toto tribe, no historical evidence has yet been unearthed about the place regard. Mr. Sunder states that, "the Totos are unable to say whence they came, but allege that they have been at Totopara for many generations. They are different from the Bhutias in many respects, and have a language of their own." M. Aris wrote in his book 'on Bhutan', about this community, "..... Small group of similar people are also found in the West. They are known as "Tok top" and live in two permanent villages south of spagra called upper and lower Toktokha,..... The 'Tok-top' males wear a peculiar garment woven from nettles called as 'pakhi' crossed over the chest and knotted at shoulders very much like the dress of the Lepchas. The other connections are might suggest is provided by the Toto people living in Jalpaiguri district of west Bengal, often through by anthropologists to be an ancient emigrant group of Bhutan".

### **Historical Background of the Toto Community:**

The community of Toto, an Indo-Bhutanees tribal, belongs to Mongloid racial group as Hindu, with flat nose, broad and square cheeks, thick lips, small eyes and black iris. They are generally divided into thirteen exogamous clans of family. Most of the families belong to five dominant clans, namely Dankobei, Dantrobei, Budubei, Boudubei and Bangabei and others of Dhiringchankobei, Nurinchankobei, Mantrochei, Manchinchei, Nubebei, Rekanjibei, Nischankobei, Digbei, Badanga, Lengajibei and Jantrobei are communities of people. The Toto community was first mentioned by Krishna Kanta Basu, a collector of British government employed at Ranagapur in 1815. After that, D. Sendars a settlement officer in Jalpaiguri, reported about the Totos in full seven pages. And then Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal described the Totos publicly. The Totos ware isolated from the society of the world from the long long ago. But the government had not taken any step for the development or welfare of the Toto community. The name of the Totos was not included in the list of scheduled tribe in the first 'Constitution Order 1950'. The list of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe was modified and the name of Toto as a tribal community was introduced first time on 29th October 1956. After the inclusion as a scheduled tribe, the Totos have to take benefit from our society.

### **Socio-economic status of Toto Community:**

Since 1951 different voluntary organizations and the government agencies started functioning in Totopara for the Social and economic development of the Totos. In this time, the 'Bharat Mahajati Mandali' a voluntary organization played a very crucial role in Totopara. After 1951, the Totos have been coming more and more in contact with the outside world and undergoing a process of cultural and development changes (Singh & pal, 1983). The Totos were the sole inhabitants of Totopara in 1901 (Das, 1999). But in 2011 they shared only 23.46% of the total population of Totopara. Beside the Toto, twenty Six other communities live in Totopara. They belong to thirteen Nepali speaking castes namely Tamang, Managar, Rai, Chhetri, Gurung Kami, Sanyasi Damai, Limbu, Ghate, Newar and sarki; five Hindu speaking groups namely Sunri, Sunwar, Marwari, Chamar and Muslim; Six triblal communities namely Gero, Oraon, Mech, Sherpa, Lepcha, Rava, and two Bengali speaking castes Goala and Rajbanshi. The main problem of the Toto tribe lies in the demographic imbalance in the locality with influx of migrant population. This has changed the man-land ratio which is ultimately putting pressure on this small agrain community of the Toto (Das, 1999). Another problem is that the ratio female members are being decreasing. Out of 1000 male the number of female was 1375 in 1901, 880 in 1911, 936 in 1921, 1569 in 1931, 1019 in 1941 and 994 in 1951 census. Finally in 2011 census the number of female members out of 1000 male members has become 882 only which reveals high mortality rate among women due to negligence of girl child.

**Table no: 1 Population Growth Rate in Totopara**

Year and source	Population		Total Population	Sex Ratio (female/1000 male)	Decadal Growth Rate
	Male	Female			
1901 (Census)	72	99	171	1375	-----
1911 (Census)	125	110	255	880	49.12
1921 (Census)	140	131	271	936	6.27
1931 (Census)	130	204	334	1569	23.25
1941 (Census)	159	162	321	1019	-3.89
1951 (Census)	161	160	314	994	-2.18
1962 (I.S.I)*	206	189	616	917	96.18
1971 (Census)	275	269	675	978	9.58
1981 (Census)	362	350	761	967	12.74
1991 (Census)	470	457	922	972	21.16
2001(Census)	620	575	1157	927	25.49
2011(Census)	737	650	1387	882	19.88

Source: Geo Analyst vol. no 1 & 2 \*I.S.I. India statistical Institution

**Family Status:**

The people of Toto community in Totopara of Alipuduar district in West Bengal live both in joint families and nuclear families. The average family size of Toto population is 5.16, small size of families consist of less than 3 numbers of member which represents only 28.89%. Most of the families consist of 4 to 5 family members i.e. only 45.56%. There is a tendency of becoming larger family units of the Toto population. About 14.44% of families constitute of 6-7 members only and 11.11% families have more than 8 persons who are classified under large type. The Totos generally prefer simple family. About 63.33% families belong to nuclear type whereas 36.67% families have joint kitchen (Source: Geo-Analyst, ISSN 2249-2909, vol. 1 & 2).

**Occupation Status:**

Totos, one of the primitive Himalayan tribe in the country, usually work as day labourers and porters carrying oranges from Bhutan to the local market in North Bengal and some of Totos are engaged in cultivation in their own land. The percentage of total workers of Totos population is 42.67. The majority of the main workers are working in the field as day labourers. The labour class workers are 53.98%, cultivators 38.91%, 2.51 % workers are involved in business and only 2.09% are in service (Source: Geo-Analyst- vol. 1 & vol. 2).

**Income Status:**

The average annual income of a Toto family is approximately Rs. 23600/- . Average annual income per capita is only Rs. 4574/-in most of the families; nearly 62.22% have very low annual income varying between Rs. 12000 to Rs. 24000. The 14.45% families have annual income between Rs. 24000-36000, 2.22% families have annual income between Rs. 36000-48000, 3.34% families have annual income between Rs. 48.000-60,000, 1.11% families have annual income between Rs. 84,000-96,000 and only 1.11% families have annual income Rs. 96,000

(Source Geo-Analyst, vol. 1 & vol. 2).

**Health Status:**

The primary health centre of Totopara recorded some tropical diseases of the Toto community like Hookworm, Cold and Caugh, Dysentery, Diarrhorria and Seabies, Ulcer, Leucoderma , Yaws, Malaria etc. and deficiencies of vitamin A,D,B- complex, Iodine and Calcium . The medical officer of Totopara P.H.C. stated that “deficiency of nutrition and un-hygienic way of life are the main causes for these diseases”. Most of the Totos do not get scientific medical treatment due to their own traditional cultural practice. The age old tradition of endogamy within the own clan leads them to the prevalence of thalassemia among the members of the Toto community. The disease has become a major threat to the survival of the tribe which consist 1,456 members (2010) only. In this context, the filmmaker, Joy Roy said “the Totos are very conservative and many within the tribe to preserve their ethnicity. This means that marriages take place between cousins too. The result is that many children born from such wedlock become thalassemic.” The custom of inter caste marriage is found in the society and it causes a short life span of about 35 years only.

**Marital Status:**

We find that both monogamy and polygamy are accepted socially in the Toto community. When a wife dies, the husband marries a younger sister of his deceased wife, but a woman can not marry her husband’s brother in case her husband death. On the death of a spouse, the husband or wife must remain single for twelve months before he or she is free to remarry. There are various ways of acquiring mates - (a) marriage by negotiation (Thulbehoea), (b) marriage by escape (Chor-behoea), (c) marriage by capture (Sambehoea) and (d) love marriage (Lamalami). There is no custom of divorce among the Toto people.

**Language:**

Hodgson and Grierson said, the ‘Toto language belongs to Tibeto-Burman family of sub-Himalayan group’. They don’t have any script of the language. At present most of the young people at Totopara speak Bengali and Nepali that helps the medium of instruction at the local schools. But other people speak in Hindi and Toto language generally. Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay, a research associate, Linguistice (Ansl), one of the prominent members of the research team, visited the hamlet of Toto tribe and said about this community, “Being a small community, we found that the Totos communicate among themselves in their own language, but the moment they leave their hamlet of Totopara in Madarihat block of Alipurduar district, they prefer to no communicate in the language even among themselves”.

**Culture:**

Both male and female of the Toto community wear almost the same clothes. Male Totos wear a piece of thick cloth of 4ft. in length and 2ft in width and female Totos wear the same cloth one on upper portion of body and one on lower portion of body. These clothes called generally lungee. But now female Totos wear blouse and male Totos wear shirt and pant. Both the male and female Toto use bracelets made of metal. In Toto language this bracelet is called Ering or Jaring. Onchu is the great festival of Toto community. On this occasion Totos wear new dresses and prepare delicious food of varieties. On each occasion Totos organize song and dance of their own culture and mother tongue.

**Food Habits:**

The Totos make their main meal from marua (a kind of millet). The staple food of Totos now includes rice, chura ( Parched rice), milk and curd. They eat meat also, generally of goat, park, vension, poultry and fish of all kinds. Women eat the same food as men and there are no restrictions of any kind on the widows. Totos also drink a fermented liquor called Eu, that it made from fermented marua, rice powder and malt, which is served warm in poipa (wooden glasses). Eu is drunk on all occasions.

**Religion:**

Toto tribal community of people claims themselves as Hindu. They have faith in mainly two Gods - Ishpa and Chemia. Ishpa is a male God and Cheima is a female God. Toto tribal community of people worships their God and Goddess to remain healthy and prosper. Ishpa resides in the Bhutan hills and causes sickness when displeased. They offer to him animal and Eu. Cheima remains in village and with the people suffering from the troubles and sickness. They also offer her rice, fruits and Eu. A few number of Toto people have been convert them as christain. But

most of the people belong to the tribal community at Totopara. On the occasion of the kalipuja, male and female Totos pray in chorus. They say-Mahakali do Kho/gai gai/Tara mara dekho/ lepu pe pi/ gole beru/dokhe chaujit, that means Mahakali you are great, greet and respect you, you are great powerful, be active to us, accept our little prayer and respect.

**Lifestyle:**

The life style of the Toto community is very simple. They live in elevated bamboo huts. These are raised on machas, one type of platforms and have straw thatches. The hut is set on a high ‘macha’ and it has single door to keep it closed at night. The female Totos like to wear silver ornaments and their favourite ornament is necklace set with coins on it. They generally eat rice of millet, dal and vegetables which they collect from the forest. Beef is the favourite dish of the Toto people and they drink EU prepare by themselves.

**Education status on Toto Community:**

The voluntary organization and agency of government had started functioning for the social and economic development of Toto community in 1951. In the time, the ‘Bharat Mahajati Mandali’ a voluntary organization, played a great role in primary education by setting up a welfare centre at Totopara. Jogendra Sarkar was appointed first time as a welfare organizer cum teacher for spreading primary education in Totopara. In 1955, the government of west Bengal had taken part for the development of Toto community through the welfare centre. Jogendra Sarkar, Dilbahadur Rana had started to teach the children of the Totopara. At that time about 20 children will be present daily. A school room was built in Totopara and Santosh Bhattacharjee joined to the post of teacher cum-welfare organizer in 1964. According to his view “perhaps there is no other tribal community in India which is as backward as the Totos in matters of education. So far only 15 to 16 persons have learnt to put their signature during the past 20 to 21 years since educational efforts were initiated way back in 1952”. Swedish mission constructed a pucca building of Toto kalayan Bidhyamandir in 1969-70. The mission also appointed a teacher to this school named John Ekka. In 1972 this school accorded recognition by the District School Board, Jalpaiguri. In 1991, the Toto Kalyan Bidyamandir was running with only 162 students. And another primary school had been organized by the integrated Tribal Development Project at Poargoan and teachers were appointed by the District School Board. One English medium nursery school had been established by a christain couple in 1991. The Swedish mission had also established a junior high school at Totopara in 1980 named Dhanapathi Junior high School. The mission also conducted adult education centre from 1976 to 1980. The Social Eudcation department, Govt. of West Bengal conducted five non-formal educational centres at Totopara during 1989-90. Now there are two primary schools, one Junior high school, one secondary high school, one Anganwadi centre, a rural library, and six Adult education centres. For the Impact of Right to Education Act-2009 and Right to Education Act-2010, it has become mandatory for the Schools of Totopara getting enrolment of all children of the locality and imparting compulsory education to them. As a result, the Toto community is being connected with the modern educational aspects, as well as entire Toto community is getting developed.

The percentage of the literacy is very low in Toto community. Only 30.35% of the Totos are literate. The percentage of male literacy rate is slightly higher than that of the female. Male literate is 36.36% and female is 23.53% among the total literate persons. A cursory glance at the composition of literate persons according to educational standard among Toto population reveals that the percentage of literate persons generally decreases with increasing standard of education. In respect to standard of education from VI-VII, there are only 5.19% out of total Toto pupation and college going population only 0.79%, 2.96% have secondary level of education .But it is noted that among all standard of education, female literacy is very low as compared to male literacy.

**Table no: 2 Rate of Literacy and Standard Education**

Standard	<V	V-VIII	IX-XII	B.A.	Total Literacy			Total Illiteracy		
					M	F	T	M	F	T
Male	173	46	28	9	36.36%	23.53%	30.35%	63.64%	76.47%	69.65%
Percentage	23.47	6.24	3.80	1.22						
Female	106	26	13	2						
Percentage	16.30	4.00	2.00	0.31						
Total %	20.12	5.19	2.96	0.79						

Source: Totopara I.T.D.P Primary school, Totopara Board Free Primary school, Dhanapati Toto Memorial high school, Lokswer patrika.



Suchana Toto had been the first women to complete secondary education in 2003, under the Rabindra Open School. She has been appointed for the post of assistant teacher at Puargoan Primary school at Totopara. The total number of graduate person at Totopara is 11. Male graduates are 9 and female graduates are 2 among the total population of the Totopara (2011). Rita Toto was the first graduation in the humanities stream from Prasanna Deb Women's College under North Bengal University in Jalpaiguri district in 2010. After completion graduation she was appointed as a social welfare officer under Backward class welfare Department in Jalpaiguri. Suva Toto has become second woman graduate among the Toto Community. She passed her graduation in Geography (Hons.) from ABN Shil College in Cooch Behar under North Bengal University.

#### Findings:

I.The community of Toto is completely indifferent about education and health, because they belong to backward classes of our Society. The gross literacy rate of India is 74.04% and the gross literacy rate of west Bengal is 77.1% in 2011, they lie within the gross literacy rate of 30.35 percent only. I think that awareness programmes related to education, health and hygiene are needed to be organized for the development of the Toto community.

II.The earnings of this tribal community are back footed in comparism with the gross national income Index. Different vocational courses are to be included in the educational and other organization for economic development of the Toto community. In this matter, both of the central and the state government should take some steps as soon as possible.

III.Most of the people of this community are being deprived from the main stream of the society. It is only education that can improve the social and economic status of the community. The Government is offering different stipend and special opportunities in the field of education to them to encourage knowledge and education in them, but it needs more.

IV.The Toto are not acquainted with various proffession other than cultivation. Most of the people are engaged in cultivation the land in the ancient traditional way. The development of Totos economic condition may possible by providing them with different agricultural programmes and teaching the modern techniques of cultivation and supply of other facilities like sources of water, pesticides and fertilizers and also supply hybrid different crops seeds .

V. The marriage custom of the Toto community is very primitive. The inter caste marriage system in them causes danger disease of the thelasmusia from the childhood. The Totos have a high carry of thelasmusic rate is 45 percent to the total population. Moreover, there is no development in language, culture, food habits and life style towards modern society. So, I agree with Dyaniyel "Literacy is..... both the index and agent to modernization".

VI.Only 1.22% of male members have got higher education like B.A. degree and only 0.79% of the female have got such education. It proves that the community is unable to get higher education or job facilities of higher status.

VII.Incentive scheme in operation for the promotion of the education of the weaker section may be evaluated as appropriate strategies evolved in the light of education.

VIII. In the curriculum, suitable changes should be made which may reflect the contribution of the deprived section in the national development. The curriculum should include the salient features of the culture of this group of people.

IX.In recruitment of teachers or any other services, the prescribed percentage of reservation should be ensured, so that the Toto community of people will be eager to learn and develop their economic status which will ensure their standard of living.

#### Concluding thought:

The study focuses that the socio-economic status and education of the Toto community are backward. The cultivation is the main occupation of the Toto community but their cultivating approach is very primitive now. The maximum numbers of people are illiterate due to want of awareness and interest of education. As a result most of the people are engaged in work of labour. Consequently most of the families of the Toto community live below poverty line. A few number of persons are in service and business in their locality. They have no change in their culture, food habits and life style accordingly with the modern age. A few numbers of persons have changed their language to the impact of various educational institutions. And they are isolated from the different culture and society as a result of their back footed socio-economic condition and education. For the better development of this society it needs national planning and policies of the government and also need for helping hand of the civilized people of our society.

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