



Original Article

Schemes Currently Being Run By the Government for the Upliftment of the Tribal Community in West Bengal: A Sociological Overview of Implementation, Impact and Outcomes

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Abstract

West Bengal has a significant Scheduled Tribes population. The State Government is implementing several tribal welfare schemes aimed at education, social security, skill development, economic empowerment and infrastructure development. The scheme is linked to the concepts of social justice, inclusive development and human development (Government of India, 1950; Xaxa, 2008). The study aims to analyse the nature, implementation mechanism, impact, sociological outcome and challenges involved in applying the major tribal welfare plan being implemented in West Bengal. In addition, the study offers policy suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of the schemes. The present study uses a descriptive and analytical research design. Secondary data from the Census, West Bengal Government reports, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Economic Survey, the OASIS portal, and published research literature have been used to analyse the data. The data were analysed using the Content Analysis method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004). The study shows that scholarships, Jai Johar Yojana, skill development programmes, LAMPS, tribal hostels, and infrastructure development programmes are contributing positively to the expansion of education, social security, employment, and economic opportunities. Digital services and Direct Benefit Transfer mechanisms have come a long way in making these programs more open and transparent. The digital gap, lack of awareness among beneficiaries, slow action by officials, documentation problems, and significant disparities between regions still limit the real success of these programs. From a sociological point of view, these programs do more than assist. These programs create opportunities for people to be included, learn new skills, and move up in life. What is still not strong enough is the focus on preserving culture and ensuring that local people are truly involved? (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008). In areas where tribal communities live, it takes effort to raise awareness, teach digital literacy, share information in local languages, improve coordination between departments, and Conduct regular social audits. It is important to offer training programmes that match the local economy instead of imposing something new. When education, social security, and cultural preservation are pursued together, rather than as separate and competing goals, the programs become much stronger. This integrated approach can help tribal communities grow fairly and inclusively. (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Government of (West Bengal, 2024).

Keyword: West Bengal, Scheduled Tribes, Tribal Welfare Schemes, Social Inclusion, Social Policy, Tribal Development, Sociological Analysis, Welfare State.

Introduction

1. Concept of Tribal Development in India

Tribal development in Indian society refers to improving the social, educational, economic, health, and cultural life of Scheduled Tribes. This concept encompasses equal opportunity, social justice, human dignity, equal access to resources and preservation of cultural identity and is not limited to income growth alone. In contemporary sociological discourse, tribal development is seen as a participatory, rights-based, and inclusive process in which active community participation is particularly important (Elwin, 1964; Vidyarthi, 1977; Xaxa, 2008).

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2. Constitution and Welfare State

The Constitution of India includes several Constitutional provisions to protect and promote the overall development of the Scheduled Tribes community. Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46, 244 and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules provide the basis for education, social justice, economic progress and administrative protection (Government of India, 1950). According to the concept of the welfare state, the state is responsible for the development of the socially disadvantaged section. Based on this approach, tribal welfare schemes promote social equality and inclusive growth (Marshall, 1950; Sen, 1999).

3. Need for Tribal Development in West Bengal

West Bengal's tribal landscape is woven into the very fabric of the state's social and cultural diversity. Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bhumij, Lodha, Mahali, and several other tribes call West Bengal home. As per the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes make up roughly 5.8 per cent of the state's population (Census of India, 2011). In many tribal-dominated areas, there is a strong presence of inequalities. These inequalities relate to access to education, health, employment, basic amenities, and social security. As a result, gaps in employment, basic amenities, and social security persist. Against this backdrop, targeted development plans emerge as more than policy instruments. These policy instruments mean social justice, human development and regional balance. (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Xaxa, 2008).

4. Study problems

The West Bengal government is implementing several tribal welfare schemes related to education, social security, skill development, economic empowerment, and infrastructure. Despite the availability of such schemes, many questions remain about beneficiary access, administrative efficiency, awareness, use of digital services, and regional disparity. Available research describes the scheme, but overall analysis of its implementation, impact, and sociological consequences remains relatively limited. This gap forms the basis of the central problem addressed in the present study. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

5. Importance of the Study

The present study presents a holistic assessment of the Tribal Welfare Scheme in West Bengal from a sociological perspective. The study provides an opportunity

to understand the objectives, implementation, impact, social consequences and challenges of the plan in an integrated manner. Its findings provide a useful basis for policymakers, civil servants, researchers, social workers and institutions related to tribal development. In addition, the study provides useful guidelines for future policy formulation on social inclusion, capacity building, cultural preservation, and sustainable development (Bourdieu, 1986; Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Tribal Community of West Bengal

The tribal community represents important historical, cultural, and linguistic diversity. The Scheduled Tribe community has a unique identity due to its natural resources, traditional knowledge, community life and cultural heritage. After independence, the social and economic conditions of the tribal community have changed due to education, urbanisation, industrialisation, and the expansion of government welfare schemes. Despite this, regional disparities, limited resources, unequal access to education and health services and livelihood challenges still exist. Without understanding the present situation of the tribal community, it is not possible to properly assess the need, impact and sociological consequences of the state's welfare scheme.

1. Status of Tribal Community in West Bengal

West Bengal is one of India's major tribal states. According to Census 2011, the population of Scheduled Tribes in the state is about 52.97 lakh, which is about 5.8 per cent of the total population of the state (Census of India, 2011). Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, West Burdwan, Birbhum, Jalpaiguri, and Alipurduar districts have a high tribal population. Remarkable progress has been made in education, health, housing, and social security. However, poverty, unorganised employment, limited income and unequal access to basic amenities are still prevalent in many sectors. The expansion of government schemes gives additional impetus to development, but continuous efforts are required to fully achieve the goal of social inclusion and human development (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024).

Table 1: Key Social Characteristics of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal

pointer	condition
Total ST population	Approximately 52.97 lakh
State's share in total population	About 5.8%
Major Residences	Mainly rural, partial urban expansion
Major Career	Agriculture, Agricultural Labour, Forest Produce, Industry & Services
Major Developmental Challenges	Education, health, employment, basic facilities
state interference	Education, Social Security, Skill Development, Infrastructure

Source: Census of India (2011); Government of West Bengal (2024).

The table above shows that tribal society in West Bengal continues to progress in development, but social and economic disparities still exist. This circumstance

underscores the need for targeted welfare planning (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

2. Major Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal

Different types of Scheduled Tribes inhabit West Bengal. These communities have distinct languages,

cultures, social organisations, and livelihoods. Santal is the largest tribal community in the state. Other tribes, including Oraon, Munda, Bhumij, Lodha, Mahali, Kora, Birhor, and others, enrich the state's social diversity. Communities differ in language, religious traditions, economic activity,

Table 2: Major Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal

tribe	Major Habitat Area
Santal	Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, West Burdwan, Birbhum
Oraon	Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Darjeeling
Munda	Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, North Bengal
Bhumij	Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram
Lodha	Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur
Mahali	Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum
Kora	Purulia, Bankura
Birhor	A limited number of people in and around Purulia
Other	Various districts of the state

Source: Census of India (2011); Singh (1994).

The geographical distribution of major tribes shows that development plans must account for local needs and cultural diversity. Area-specific strategies may prove to be more effective than a uniform policy for all tribes (Xaxa, 2008).

3. Linguistic Profile

The tribal society here is linguistically diverse. Santhali is the most widely spoken language and is also included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Table 3: Tribal linguistic patterns by language

language	Key user community
Santhali	Santal
Kudukh	Oraon
Mundari	A hornless bullock
Bengali language	Various Tribal Communities (Education & Administration)
Hindi	Inter-regional connectivity, employment and urban sector

Source: Census of India (2011); Singh (1994).

Multilingualism reflects the adaptability of the tribal society. While the mother tongue preserves the cultural identity, the increasing use of Bengali and Hindi expands opportunities for education, employment and administrative participation. Therefore, mother tongue-based education and multilingual administrative service should be given equal importance in the tribal development policy (Xaxa, 2008; Yogendra Singh, 1973).

4. Religious Composition

The religious diversity is clearly visible in the tribal community of this region. A large section of the Santal,

Table 4: Religious Composition of Tribal Communities of West Bengal

Religious Tradition	Major Communities condition
Sarna (traditional tribal faith)	A large section of Santal, Munda and other tribal communities
Hindu	A part of a different ethnic community
Christian	Especially some tribes of North Bengal, such as Oraon and Munda
Other	Local and Mixed Religious Traditions

Source: Census of India (2011); Singh (1994); Xaxa (2008).

Religious diversity indicates that tribal society is not uniform. Along with religious identity, local culture, language and community tradition are equally important.

and social organisation. Modern education, urbanisation, industrial development, and government planning have accelerated change in these communities' lives. Despite this, the cultural uniqueness of each community is still preserved today (Bose, 1971; Singh, 1994; Xaxa, 2008).

The Oraon community mainly uses the Kudukh language, while Mundari is prevalent in the Munda community. Due to administration, education and urban connectivity, the use of Bengali and Hindi is also increasing continuously. Multilingualism is an important feature of the tribal community. Many families use Bengali or Hindi as their mother tongue and in education and administrative work. This trend affects both cultural continuity and social inclusion (Census of India, 2011; Singh, 1994).

Munda and many other tribal communities follow the traditional nature-based belief system commonly known as Sarna Dharma or Adivasi Parampara Dharma. Over time, many tribal families have also embraced Hinduism and Christianity. Some communities also show a synthesis of local religious tradition and mainstream religious practice. Religious diversity influences the cultural identity, social organisation, and community life of the tribal society. Respecting this cultural diversity in implementing development planning is an important condition for social inclusion (Singh, 1994; Xaxa, 2008).

Therefore, cultural sensitivity should be given priority in the development program (Xaxa, 2008).

5. Ethnological characteristics

In early studies of Indian anthropology, most tribes of West Bengal were described as mainly Proto-Australoids,

and some communities of North Bengal were assigned to this category (Guha, 1935; Vidyarthi, 1977). Contemporary anthropology considers this classification historical and descriptive because modern research places more importance on ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity than on the concept of biological 'race' (UNESCO, 1950; Xaxa, 2008). Therefore, in the present study, this type of classification is used as a historical reference and not as evidence of biological variation.

6. Occupational Pattern

The livelihood of the tribal community is based on both traditional and modern economic activity. Agriculture is

Table 5: Major occupational structure of the tribal community of West Bengal

profession	Key position
agriculture	Major Career
Agricultural Wages	Wide Engagement
Minor Forest Produce	Important income sources in forest areas
endeavour	Employment in Mining, Construction and Manufacturing Sector
service	Education, Health, Administration and Private Sector
Self-employment	Small Enterprises, Handicrafts, Animal Husbandry & Trade

Source: Census of India (2011); Government of West Bengal (2024).

The diversity of occupation shows that modern economic activity has expanded alongside traditional livelihoods. This change broadens income sources and encourages social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Sen, 1999).

7. Population Distribution

The distribution of ST population in West Bengal is not uniform. The tribal population mainly resides in

Table 6: Distribution of tribal population in West Bengal

Basis of distribution	Key position
Major Districts	Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Bardhaman, Birbhum, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar
Rural areas	Majority of the tribal population
Urban areas	Increasing presence due to industrial and service sectors

Source: Census of India (2011).

The high concentration of population in rural areas indicates a need for region-specific development strategies to expand education, health, and infrastructure (Xaxa, 2008).

8. Population Literacy

The literacy rate of the tribal community has increased significantly during the last decade. The literacy

Table 7: Literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal (Census, 2011)

cla	Literacy Rate (%)
man	68.2
lady	49.4
family	58.9

Source: Census of India (2011), Primary Census Abstract for Scheduled Tribes.

The gap between male and female literacy points to gender disparity. Despite this, the increase in total literacy shows that government education schemes are having a positive impact. Further encouragement to women's education is essential for inclusive tribal development (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

the community's major occupation. At the same time, many tribal families are also engaged in agricultural labour. Communities dependent on forest resources earn income by collecting and marketing minor forest produce. Because of industrialisation and urbanisation, many tribal youth also work in industry, construction, and the service sector. With the expansion of government skill development programmes and cooperatives, there is also a growing interest towards self-employment and micro-enterprise. Such occupational diversity indicates economic change and social mobility in tribal society (Census of India, 2011; Sen, 1999).

Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, West Burdwan, Birbhum, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts. Most of the tribal families live in rural areas. At the same time, due to industrialisation, education and employment opportunities, the tribal population has also expanded in urban areas. This geographical distribution affects the prioritisation of development planning and resource allocation (Census of India, 2011).

rate of women is relatively low as compared to that of men. However, due to scholarships, residential schools, hostels and other educational schemes, the gap is gradually narrowing. The expansion of education is an important basis for human resource development, social mobility and the expansion of economic opportunity (Census of India, 2011; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024).

Literature review

Tribal development is an important subject of Indian sociology, anthropology and public policy studies. The available literature discusses the social structure of tribal society, cultural identity, economic change, education, displacement and the impact of the state's development policy and welfare planning. Several studies are available in the context of West Bengal as well. However, overall analysis of the implementation and impact of the

sociological perspective on the State-level tribal welfare scheme is currently limited. In this context, the literature review presented here is divided into four major parts.

1. Tribal Development in India

Verrier Alvin's contribution to the study of Indian tribal society is considered very important. Alvin emphasised the cultural uniqueness of tribal communities, nature-based living, and traditional knowledge as integral to development. According to him, development should maintain the continuity of tribal culture and community life (Elwin, 1964). L.P. Vidyarthi presented tribal society as a changing social system and identified education, economic change, and administrative intervention as the major factors in tribal development (Vidyarthi, 1977). N.K. Bose considers the increasing interaction between Indian society and the tribal community as the major process of social change and describes tribal society as an integral part of the broader Indian social structure (Bose, 1971). In the contemporary context, Virginius Khaka tried to understand tribal development in terms of rights, social justice, land, cultural identity and state policies. According to him, the evaluation of development should not be limited to economic achievement but should give equal importance to cultural dignity, community participation, and equal access to resources (Xaxa, 2008). Thus, the available literature presents tribal development as a multi-dimensional process in which economic, social, cultural and political dimensions are interlinked.

2. Tribal communities of West Bengal

Many important sociological and anthropological studies have examined the tribal communities of West Bengal. People of India: West Bengal, edited by K.S. Singh, offers a detailed introduction to the state's major tribes, their language, culture, social organisation, and economic life (Singh, 1994). P. O. Bodding's in-depth study of the language, folk traditions, and religious life of the Santal community explains the unique identity of Santal culture (Bodding, 1925). Studies on the Lodha, Bhumij, Oraon, and Munda communities discuss the impact of education, livelihood, social change, and state development policy (Bose, 1971; Vidyarthi, 1977). Contemporary research indicates that the pace of social change in the tribal community of West Bengal is increasing due to education, urbanisation, industrialisation, and government planning. On the other hand, challenges related to cultural preservation, land-based livelihoods, traditional knowledge, and linguistic identity still exist (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Xaxa, 2008). Striking a balance between development and cultural continuity remains an important policy question.

3. Government Schemes and Social Policy

The concept of the welfare state is based on social justice, equal opportunity and protection of the weaker sections. T. H. Marshall, emphasising the social dimension of citizenship, considers equal access to education, social security and public services as the basis of a democratic society (Marshall, 1950). According to Amartya Sen's

capability vision, the real purpose of development is to expand people's capabilities, options, and opportunities. From this point of view, the tribal welfare scheme should be evaluated based on changes in quality of life rather than the number of beneficiaries (Sen, 1999).

The concept of social inclusion is also important in analysing tribal development. This approach considers equal access to education, health, employment, social security and civil service as the cornerstone of development (Silver, 2015). Scholarships, Joy Johar Yojana, Skill Development, Hostels, LAMPS, and other schemes run by the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal are important efforts toward this inclusive development (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). The available literature indicates that the scheme marks the beginning of a process of positive change. But administrative efficiency, awareness and regional disparities remain challenging.

4. Research Gap

An analysis of the available literature makes it clear that substantial sociological and anthropological studies exist on the tribal communities of India and West Bengal. Most research focuses on tribal culture, social organisation, land relations, education, health, displacement, and economic change. Some studies also mention the government scheme. However, the overall sociological analysis of the Tribal Welfare Scheme currently administered by the Government of West Bengal is relatively limited. In particular, studies that examine the scheme's implementation, impact, social outcomes, social inclusion, and capacity building in an integrated manner are very few. This paper presents a sociological assessment of West Bengal's flagship tribal welfare scheme, keeping this gap in mind. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-demographic background of the tribal community, scheme structure, implementation process, impact, challenges and policy prospects. This study therefore presents an important contribution to the current literature.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to present a sociological analysis of the existing Tribal Welfare Scheme for the Scheduled Tribe community administered by the Government of West Bengal. The following specific objectives have been set for this purpose:

1. To study the nature, objectives and scope of the major tribal welfare scheme being run in West Bengal.
2. To analyse the administrative structure and implementation process of the scheme.
3. To assess the impact of the scheme on education, social security, employment and economic empowerment.
4. To analyse the sociological impact of the scheme on social change, social inclusion and tribal development.
5. To identify the major challenges existing in the implementation of the scheme and to make policy suggestions for their solution.

Research questions

The present study is based on an analysis of the implementation, impact, and sociological outcomes of the welfare scheme for the Scheduled Tribe community administered by the Government of West Bengal. The following research questions have been set out to provide systematic direction to the study:

1. What are the major welfare schemes for Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal at present?
2. How do the administrative structure and implementation mechanism of the schemes work?
3. What is the impact of these schemes on education, social security, employment and economic empowerment?
4. To what extent do the schemes affect the social inclusion, social change and standard of living of the tribal community?
5. What are the major administrative, social and structural challenges for effective implementation of the scheme?

Research methodology

Research methodology is the basis of a study's scientific credibility. The present study uses an appropriate research design, reliable secondary sources, and qualitative analysis to analyse the implementation, impact, and sociological outcomes of the existing welfare scheme for the Scheduled Tribe community administered by the Government of West Bengal. The research methodology was selected with the study's purpose and research question in mind (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004).

1. Type of Research

The present study is descriptive and analytical. The objective of the study is to present a systematic analysis of the structure, implementation, impact, and sociological outcomes of the tribal welfare scheme being implemented in West Bengal. The study takes an interpretive approach and makes a holistic assessment of the available facts and policy documents (Kothari, 2004).

2. Research design

Documentary Research Design and Qualitative Research Design have been used in the study. The study compared various government reports, policy documents, census data, research books, and research papers. Through this design, the study presents a sociological analysis of the plan's structure, implementation process, and social impacts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3. Sources of study

The study is based entirely on secondary data. The data and information have been compiled from the Census of India (2011), Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Backwards Classes

Welfare and Tribal Development Department of the Government of West Bengal, Economic Review (Government of West Bengal), OASIS Scholarship Portal, Annual Reports, Policy Documents, Research Papers, and Reputed Academic Publications. These sources were selected for their authenticity, reliability, and direct connection to the study's subject matter (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024).

4. Data collection

The study systematically reviewed government documents, statistical reports, official websites, census publications, research books, and peer-reviewed papers to collect data. The relevant facts were selected through comparative examination of the information received from each source. The study incorporates data and information from authentic and authoritative sources to ensure the credibility of the findings (Census of India, 2011; Kumar, 2019).

5. Data analysis

The material collected in the study has been analysed using the Content Analysis method. A comparative study of the facts received from various sources presents an analysis of the nature, implementation, impact and sociological implications of the scheme. A brief presentation of the data is also provided in a table at the appropriate place (Krippendorff, 2018).

6. Limitations of the study

This study is based on a secondary source. Therefore, the conclusions are based on available government data, published reports and previous studies. Without a primary survey or field study, this study does not include analysis of local experience and beneficiaries' perceptions.

Major Tribal Welfare Schemes Conducted in West Bengal

The Government of West Bengal is implementing several targeted welfare schemes for the social, educational, and economic development of the Scheduled Tribe community. The scheme aims to increase access to education, provide social security, encourage employment and skill development, strengthen economic self-reliance, and develop infrastructure in tribal-dominated areas. This program is mainly conducted in collaboration with the Backwards Classes Welfare and Tribal Development Department, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, District Administration, and various educational and financial institutions. From a sociological point of view, such schemes accelerate the process of social inclusion, human development and capacity expansion (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

Table 8: Classification of Major Tribal Welfare Schemes Operating in West Bengal

field	Key Plans
teaching	Pre-Matric Scholarship, Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS), Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), ST Hostels, OASIS Scholarship Portal
Social Security	Jai Johar Scheme
Skill Development	Skill Development Programme, Livelihood Development Programme
Economic empowerment	LAMPS, Cooperative Development Programme
Infrastructure	Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Tribal Infrastructure Development Programme
Education Loans & Competitive Aid	Adivasi Shiksha Rin Yojana, Yogyashree Scheme

Sources: Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024); Government of West Bengal (2024).

1. Education Plans

Education is considered to be the cornerstone of tribal development. The Government of West Bengal and the Government of India jointly administer several educational schemes for Scheduled Tribe students. The Pre-Matric Scholarship and Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS) help economically weaker students to continue school and higher education. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) strive to reduce educational inequality by providing quality residential education. Tribal Hostels (ST Hostels) provide safe accommodation facilities to students from remote areas. Through the OASIS Scholarship Portal, the application, verification, and scholarship disbursement process has become digital and more transparent. The implementation of this scheme has resulted in improved school enrolment, admission in higher education and educational continuity. From a sociological perspective, such welfare measures give practical expression to the concept of the welfare state. (Bourdieu, 1986; Government of West Bengal, 2024; Sen, 1999).

2. Social Security Plans

The West Bengal government operates the Jai Johar Scheme to provide social security to the weaker and disadvantaged sections of the Scheduled Tribe community. Under the scheme, eligible senior citizens receive regular financial assistance, reducing their economic insecurity. Through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, the amount is transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts, enhancing transparency and accountability. The social security scheme contributes to the dignified life, social protection and economic stability of the elderly members of the tribal community. From a sociological point of view, such schemes give practical shape to the concept of the welfare state (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Marshall, 1950).

3. Skill Development and Employment Scheme

The state government conducts various skill development programmes and livelihood development programmes to provide employable skills to the tribal youth. These programmes provide vocational training, entrepreneurship development, digital skills, handicrafts training, agro-based business opportunities and support for small-scale industries. Through such training, young people's

employability increases, and opportunities for self-employment expand. Many of the programmes attempt to connect local resources and traditional skills with the modern market. The skill development scheme also strengthens social prestige and community participation along with economic self-reliance. According to the capacity approach, this type of program expands opportunities and options for the general public (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

4. Economic Empowerment Schemes

Economic self-sufficiency is the mainstay of tribal development. The Large-Sized Adivasi Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) in West Bengal play a crucial role in connecting the tribal community with agriculture, minor forest produce, marketing, credit facilitation, and cooperative activity. The Cooperative Development Programme promotes marketing of local produce, financial inclusion and community entrepreneurship. The objective of such a scheme is to diversify income sources and make traditional livelihoods more economically sustainable. Cooperatives also strengthen the collective bargaining power of the tribal producer. From a sociological point of view, equal access to economic resources helps to reduce social stratification and increase social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Government of West Bengal, 2024; Sen, 1999).

5. Tribal Infrastructure Development Scheme

For the overall development of tribal-dominated areas, special emphasis was placed on developing roads, drinking water, electricity, schools, health centres, hostels, and other basic facilities under the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and the Tribal Infrastructure Development Programme. The programme aims to reduce regional disparities and connect the tribal community with essential public services. Improving infrastructure expands opportunities for education, health, transport and economic activity. From a sociological perspective, infrastructure development is a key foundation for social inclusion and regionally balanced development (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Planning Commission, 2013).

6. Education Loan and Competitive Examination Assistance

Schemes like Adivasi Shiksha Rin Yojana and Yogyashree Scheme are run to increase the participation of tribal students in higher education and competitive examinations. Through these schemes, students receive

educational loans, free coaching, study materials, and guidance. The objective of this initiative is to reduce social and economic barriers in higher education and competitive examinations. Such schemes play an important role in providing equal opportunities in education and create new opportunities for social mobility (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Sen, 1999).

Implementation of the Plan

The welfare scheme for the Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal is effectively implemented through a multi-tier administrative system. State Governments, District

Administrations, Educational Institutions, Local Bodies and Digital Service Centres are the key components of this exercise. Administrative responsibility, digital technology, and the Direct Benefit Transfer system play an important role in the scheme's operation. The objective is to deliver the scheme's benefits to eligible beneficiaries in a transparent, time-bound, and responsive manner. Despite this, challenges related to administrative coordination, digital access, and awareness affect implementation effectiveness (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024).

Table 9: Major Implementing Agencies of Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal

Plan/ programme	Major Implementing Agency	Mode of implementation
Pre-Matric & Post-Matric Scholarship	Backward Classes Welfare and Tribal Development Department	OASIS Portal, Schools & Colleges
EMRS	Ministry of Tribal Affairs and State Government	Residential Schools
ST Hostels	District Administration and Tribal Welfare Department	Hostel Management
Jai Johar Scheme	Department of Women and Child Development & Social Welfare and District Administration	DBT & Local Administration
Skill Development Programme	Tribal Development Department & Training Institute	Training Center
LAMPS	Cooperatives	Local cooperatives
Tribal Infrastructure	Tribal Development Department & District Administration	Development Projects
Yogyashree & Education Loan	Backward Classes Welfare Department	Online & Offline Application

Sources: Government of West Bengal (2024); Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024).

The table shows that implementation of the tribal welfare scheme relies on coordinated efforts across various departments and institutions. This multi-layered system ensures the scheme's effective operation; however, departmental coordination is the mainstay of its success.

1. Administrative structure

The Backwards Classes Welfare and Tribal Development Department mainly run the Tribal Welfare Scheme in West Bengal. This department is responsible for plan formulation, financial allocation, issuing guidelines, and monitoring at the State level. At the district level, the District Magistrate, District Welfare Officer, and the concerned departmental officer implement the scheme. Schools, colleges, hostels, training institutes, and panchayat institutions assist with beneficiary registration, document verification, and scheme dissemination. This administrative structure establishes a clear system of accountability from the state to the local level (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

2. Online and Offline System

With the expansion of digital governance, most of the scholarship schemes are conducted through the OASIS Scholarship Portal. The application, document verification, and scholarship disbursement process is done online. For beneficiaries who lack digital resources, the Bangla Sahayata Kendra (BSK), Jan Seva Kendra and the concerned government office provide offline assistance. This blended system also encourages digital inclusion while enhancing transparency. However, the lack of internet access and digital

literacy in remote areas remains challenging (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

3. Implementation at District Level

The district administration is the main centre for implementing the scheme. The district administration identifies eligible beneficiaries, scrutinises applications, makes recommendations, distributes benefits, and monitors progress. The scheme is also publicised through special camps, schools, and Panchayat institutions in tribal-dominated districts. Regular inspections and progress reports play a crucial role in the scheme's effective operation (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024).

4. Access to Beneficiaries

Government websites, the OASIS Portal, Bangla Sahayata Kendra, schools, colleges, and local administration bodies provide information about the scheme to beneficiaries. The financial assistance amount is transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism. This has increased transparency and reduced the role of intermediaries. Despite this, expanding awareness and digital access in remote areas is still necessary (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

5. Major challenges

Challenges such as delays in document verification, lack of departmental coordination, the digital divide, limited internet access and inadequate awareness about the scheme are also evident in its implementation. In many remote tribal areas, language barriers and limited administrative access further restrict access to the scheme. Addressing this challenge requires local awareness

campaigns, expanded digital support services, and simplified administrative procedures (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Xaxa, 2008).

Impact of the Plan

The impact of the Tribal Welfare Scheme run by the Government of West Bengal is visible in many areas such as education, health, social security, employment, women's empowerment and social inclusion. The scheme aims to provide financial assistance and improve the quality of life of

the Scheduled Tribe community, strengthening human development, social justice, and equal opportunity. Available government reports and research studies indicate that the scheme is accelerating the development process of the tribal community. However, there are also differences in its impact owing to regional disparities, awareness, and administrative challenges (Government of West Bengal, 2024; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

Table 10: Major Impact of Education Planning

plan	Major Impacts
Pre-Matric Scholarship	Continuity and financial support in school education
Post-Matric Scholarship	Admission to higher education and continuity of study
EMRS	Quality residential education and holistic development
ST Hostels	Residential facility for students from remote areas
OASIS Portal	Transparency and Timeliness in Scholarship Disbursement

Sources: Government of West Bengal (2024); Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024).

Table 11: Impact of Social Security Scheme

plan	Major Impacts
Jai Johar Scheme	Regular financial assistance for the elderly
DBT Arrangement	Transparent and Time-bound Payments
Social Security Program	Reduction of Economic Insecurity and Social Protection

Source: Government of West Bengal (2024).

Table 12: Impact of the Scheme on Employment and Income

plan	Major Impacts
Skill Development Programme	Development of Employable Skills
Livelihood Programme	Increase in self-employment opportunities
LAMPS	Promotion of Marketing of Agricultural and Minor Forest Produce
Cooperative Development	Increased Community Income and Economic Support

Sources: Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024); Government of West Bengal (2024).

1. Education

The education scheme makes school and higher education more accessible to tribal students. The scholarship scheme helps by reducing educational expenditure for students from economically weaker families. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and hostel facilities together provide quality education opportunities to students residing in remote areas. The application and scholarship disbursement process through the OASIS portal is becoming more transparent and streamlined. This initiative has led to increased enrolment, improved school attendance, and greater gender participation in higher education. From a sociological standpoint, education serves as the primary vehicle for social mobility, cultural capital, and promoting social equality (Bourdieu, 1986; Sen, 1999).

2. Health and Social Security

The Joy Johar Scheme and other social security programmes provide economic protection to weaker sections of the tribal community, especially the elderly. Regular financial support stabilises livelihoods and reduces feelings of social insecurity. Health awareness is also improving with the expansion of health services, nutrition programmes and basic facilities. The social security scheme strengthens individual dignity, social security, and confidence in the

state. Such schemes play an important role in establishing social justice (Dreze & Sen, 2013; Marshall, 1950).

3. Employment and economic situation

The Skill Development Programme, LAMPS and Cooperative Development Scheme are contributing significantly to strengthening the economic condition of the tribal community. Through vocational training, youth employability is increasing, and self-employment opportunities are also expanding. The cooperative society provides an organised basis for marketing agriculture, minor forest produce, and local products. As a result, income sources are diversifying, and economic self-sufficiency is being encouraged. Better access to economic resources is the basis for improving social mobility and living standards (Bourdieu, 1986; Sen, 1999).

4. Women's empowerment

The positive impact of the tribal welfare scheme is also visible on women's education, skill development and economic participation. The scholarship scheme is encouraging girls to pursue education. At the same time, skill development programmes are providing new income-earning opportunities for women. Increasing women's participation in self-help groups and cooperative activities is improving economic self-reliance and decision-making. Education and economic participation are also strengthening women's social status in the family and community (Sen, 1999).

5. Social Inclusion

The Tribal Welfare Scheme plays an important role in connecting the Scheduled Tribe community with education, social security, public services, and economic opportunities. Administrative transparency and accountability are increasing through Direct Benefit Transfer, digital services and institutional support. As education and employment expand, tribal participation in mainstream institutions is also increasing. On the other hand, the digital divide, regional disparities, and limited awareness continue to challenge social inclusion. From a sociological point of view, inclusion means equal participation in resources, opportunities and decision-making. The schemes currently in place indicate significant progress in this

direction; however, continuous improvement is still needed (Silver, 2015; Xaxa, 2008).

Sociological analysis

The impact of the welfare scheme for Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal is not limited to financial assistance or service delivery. The scheme also affects the social structure, education, livelihood, cultural life, social participation, and the relationship between the tribal community and the State. From a sociological point of view, development planning should be evaluated based on economic outcomes as well as social change, capacity building, cultural preservation and social inclusion. This section analyses the effects of planning in light of key sociological theories (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

Table 13: Sociological Impact of Tribal Welfare Scheme

Sociological Dimension	Major Impacts
Social Change	Changes in Education, Business and Social Mobility
modernization	Access to modern institutions, digital services and governance
Cultural Capital	Expansion of education, skills, knowledge and competitiveness
Capacity Development	Improving opportunities, choices and quality of life
Social Inclusion	Participation in Public Services, Education and Employment
Tribal Identity	Cultural Preservation and Promotion of Community Consciousness

Source: Sen (1999); Yogendra Singh (1973); Xaxa (2008).

The table shows that the effects of the Tribal Welfare Scheme are multifaceted. It is related to education, economic growth and social security, as well as cultural preservation and social inclusion. Therefore, the scheme cannot be evaluated solely on a limited basis, or only on economic criteria.

1. Social Change (M.N. Srinivas)

M. N. Srinivas links social change in Indian society to education, administration, urbanisation, and state development policy (Srinivas, 1966). The Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal is accelerating transformation among tribal communities through education, skill development, scholarships, social security, and employment opportunities. With increased access to school and higher education, occupational options for the new generation are expanding, and modern employment opportunities are developing alongside traditional livelihoods. This change promotes social mobility and institutional participation. However, its impact varies across regions (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

2. Modernisation (Yogendra Singh)

According to Yogendra Singh, modernisation in Indian society does not mean complete abandonment of tradition but reorganisation according to the changing circumstances (Yogendra Singh, 1973). The Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal is expanding access to digital application systems, direct benefit transfers, modern education, skill training, and administrative services; thereby, this transformation connects the tribal community with the modern institutional system. At the same time, many communities continue to retain their language, folk traditions and cultural identity. This situation reflects the

balanced coexistence of tradition and modernity (Singh, 1973; Xaxa, 2008).

3. Cultural capital (Pierre Bourdieu)

According to Pierre Bourdieu, education, knowledge, language, and social competencies form cultural capital that influences an individual's social status and opportunity (Bourdieu, 1986). Scholarships, EMRS, hostels, and skill development programmes are enhancing the academic achievement and vocational competence of tribal students and youth, thereby expanding their competitiveness and employment opportunities. Thus, government schemes create new possibilities of social mobility by strengthening the cultural capital of the tribal community (Sen, 1999).

4. Capability Approach (Amartya Sen)

According to Amartya Sen's capability approach, development aims to expand people's real freedom and life options (Sen, 1999). The Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal develops this community's potential through education, social security, skill development, and financial assistance. The scholarship scheme increases access to education, the skill development programme strengthens employability, and the social security scheme reduces economic insecurity. Together, these initiatives enhance the self-reliance, decision-making, and quality of life of the tribal community (Drèze & Sen, 2013).

5. Tribal Identity and Social Inclusion (Virginius Framework)

Xaxa's framework for tribal development with social justice, cultural identity, and rights-based development (2008). The Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal encourages mainstream participation in development through

education, economic assistance and social security. At the same time, mother tongue, cultural tradition and continuity of community life are also important pillars of tribal identity. When development policy gives adequate importance to local culture, language and community participation, social inclusion can be more effective. Conversely, neglect of cultural needs can lead to social distancing and developmental inequality. Therefore, inclusive development must be based on balanced coordination between economic advancement and cultural preservation (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

Major challenge

The Tribal Welfare Scheme run by the Government of West Bengal is contributing significantly to the development of the Scheduled Tribe community. Despite this, several administrative, social, technical, and institutional challenges hinder effective implementation of the scheme and achievement of the desired results. Such challenges have a direct impact on the reach of the scheme, the delivery of benefits, the quality of service and social inclusion. Therefore, proper resolution of the problem is necessary for the scheme's long-term success (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Xaxa, 2008).

Table 14: Major Problems in the Implementation of Tribal Welfare Scheme of West Bengal

Major challenges	influence
Administrative delays	Delay in Benefit Disbursement and Approval Process
Digital Divide	Unequal access to online services
Lack of awareness	Limited utilisation of the scheme by eligible beneficiaries
Social and Cultural Barriers	Impact on Scheme Approval and Participation
Lack of institutional coordination	Delay in departmental work and less effective use of resources

Sources: Government of West Bengal (2024); Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024).

The table shows that the scheme's challenges are not limited to financial resources; they also relate to administrative efficiency, technical access, social awareness, and departmental coordination, which equally affect the scheme's success.

1. Administrative challenge

The multi-layered process of document verification, eligibility determination, application approval, and benefit disbursement sometimes takes longer than expected. Limited human resources and administrative workload in remote areas hamper the pace of implementation. Regular monitoring and process simplification can mitigate this challenge (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

2. Digital Divide

Internet access, availability of smart devices, and digital literacy remain limited in many tribal areas. As a result, using the OASIS online portal is not equally feasible for all eligible beneficiaries. This situation affects equal access to the plan (Drèze & Sen, 2013).

3. Lack of awareness

Many eligible families lack information about the scheme's eligibility, application process, and benefits. Limited dissemination of information, lack of content in local languages, and limited administrative access to remote areas prevent the scheme from reaching the desired level of implementation (Xaxa, 2008).

4. Social and Cultural Challenges

Geographical distance, traditional ways of life, linguistic diversity, and limited educational opportunities often affect the scheme's effectiveness. If development programmes align with local culture, language, and community needs, beneficiary participation and the scheme's acceptability can increase (Vidyarthi, 1977; Xaxa, 2008).

5. Institutional coordination

Effective coordination among departments involved in tribal development, district administration, educational institutions, and local bodies is a key basis for the scheme's success. Information exchange, regular review, a joint action plan, and a clear accountability mechanism can make implementation more effective and transparent (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

Policy suggestions

The Tribal Welfare Scheme in West Bengal is contributing significantly to the social and economic development of the Scheduled Tribe community. Despite this, continuous policy interventions are necessary in education, employment, social security, cultural preservation, and administrative reforms to enhance the scheme's effectiveness. To make such a policy more effective, it should be designed with local needs, tribal cultural characteristics, and community participation in mind. Inclusive, responsive, and participatory administrative arrangements can further strengthen the long-term impact of the planning (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

Table 15: Policy Suggestions for Effective Implementation of Tribal Welfare Schemes

field	Key Tips
Teaching	Expansion of scholarships, digital education, hostels and higher education assistance
Employment	Skill Development, Linkages with Local Industries and Promotion of Self-Employment
Social Security	Ensuring the scheme's reach, awareness and timely benefit delivery
Cultural Preservation	Preservation of tribal language, art, tradition and local knowledge
Administrative reform	Departmental coordination, expansion of digital services and regular evaluation

Source: Government of West Bengal (2024); Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024).

The table shows that an effective strategy for tribal development should be multi-pronged. Along with education, economic opportunity, social security and cultural preservation, it is necessary to give equal importance to administrative reforms.

1. Education

Expansion of the scholarship scheme, an increase in the number of hostels, and the availability of digital learning resources and career counselling services should be strengthened in tribal-dominated areas. Financial aid and academic guidance for higher education and vocational education need to be made more accessible (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

2. Employment

The skill development programme should be linked to local industry, agro-based enterprise and traditional livelihoods. Sustainable employment opportunities can be developed for tribal youth through entrepreneurship development, marketing support, financial inclusion, and strengthening of cooperatives (Government of West Bengal, 2024).

3. Social Security

The eligibility, application process and benefit distribution of social security schemes should be simplified and time-bound. Special assistance camps should be organised in remote areas, and information should be made available in the local language so that more eligible beneficiaries can join the scheme (Marshall, 1950).

4. Cultural preservation

The development plan should provide institutional support for preserving tribal language, folk art, folk music, traditional knowledge, and cultural heritage. This can make development more inclusive and sustainable by encouraging local cultural identity through school curricula, cultural centres, and community events (Xaxa, 2008).

5. Administrative reforms

Coordination between various departments, district administration and local institutions should be strengthened. Regular social audits, independent evaluations, and the scheme's digital monitoring system and grievance redressal mechanism need to be made more effective. This will increase transparency, accountability, and beneficiaries' confidence in the scheme (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Government of West Bengal, 2024).

1. Key findings

The study shows that scholarship schemes, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), the Jay Johar Scheme, the Skill Development Programme, and the Tribal Infrastructure Development Scheme are contributing significantly to the expansion of education, social security, employment, and economic opportunities. The digital portal and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system are

strengthening transparency and accountability in the scheme's operation. On the other hand, the digital divide, limited awareness, administrative delays, and regional disparities are emerging as major obstacles to effective implementation of the scheme. Addressing these challenges can make tribal development more effective (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024; Sen, 1999).

2. Sociological implications

The study makes it clear that the Tribal Welfare Scheme is strengthening social transformation, capacity building, social inclusion, and human resource development. Institutional participation and social mobility of the tribal community are increasing through education, skill development, and social security. This suggests that maintaining a balance between economic development and cultural preservation is a basic requirement for inclusive tribal development (Bourdieu, 1986; Xaxa, 2008).

3. Future direction

Future studies could undertake a comparative analysis of different districts, tribal communities, and specific welfare schemes in West Bengal. A field study based on primary data can bring out the real social impact of the plan, the beneficiary experience and the local challenges more clearly. In addition, emerging topics such as digital governance, climate change, aspirations of tribal youth and cultural change should also be given due place in future research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Xaxa, 2008).

The success of tribal development depends not on the number of schemes but on their effective implementation, social acceptability, and active community participation. West Bengal's experience shows that long-term, positive change in the lives of tribal communities is possible when education, social security, economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and responsive administration are combined in an integrated approach. This approach is the basis of sustainable and inclusive development (Sen, 1999; Xaxa, 2008).

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