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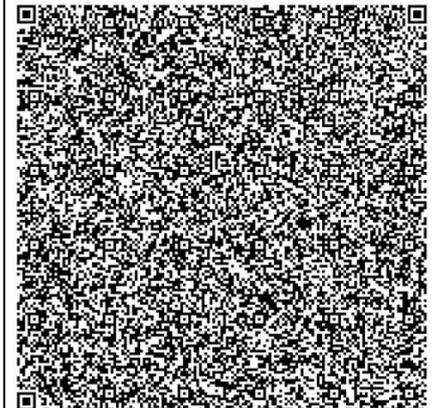
MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: ADDRESSING CUTTING-EDGE ISSUES IN SOCIAL EQUALITY

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Abstract

As a constitutional democracy, India ensures that every individual has equal rights. However, because of things like historical injustices, social exclusion, economic disadvantage, and ethnic prejudice, some groups of people still experience systematic marginalization. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), women, children, religious minorities, people with disabilities, and others are examples of these marginalized groups. This study investigates the current socioeconomic circumstances of these villages using secondary data and qualitative analysis. The report highlights the necessity of improving their economic empowerment, social fairness, poverty reduction strategies, and access to opportunities. It assesses how well the government's current programs and policies for inclusion and advancement are working. Additionally, the study suggests inclusive policies aimed at enhancing social integration, education, healthcare, capacity building, quality of life, and sustainable economic development for India's underprivileged people.

Key Words: Marginalized Communities, Cutting-Edge Issues, Social Equality, Government Initiatives, empowerment, Constitutional Provisions.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Marginalized communities refer to those castes, communities, or classes that are backward, marginalized, neglected, and deprived of all the opportunities of society. Those who face obstacles in participating in society's social, economic, cultural, and political processes are deprived of their rights—those who are considered to be among the unimportant and powerless classes in society. The term marginalized was first coined by Robert Paris (1928). In his words, "Marginalized is a symbol that refers to processes by which individuals or groups are kept at or pushed beyond the edges of society."

Education is the backbone of the nation. Education plays a vital role in building an appropriate and wealthy society. Just as the values, norms, cultural heritage, language, and tradition of the society holistically influence education, different aspects of education improve society. In the current education system, equal opportunities for all and an inclusive, multidisciplinary approach have been talked about. Education article No. 21A has been said to "guarantee free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 and 14." Marginalization is a separate concept of society. At present, even if we want a differentiated social system, it is not possible. Some influential classes appease the people of one class according to their convenience, and gradually those classes fall behind socially and economically. Therefore, it is very important to lift them out of that situation and give them social recognition, bring them back to the mainstream of society, improve their human resources through education, and improve the society and the country.

By marginalized group, we do not mean any specific group. By marginalized group, we mean all groups such as women, men, dalits, elderly, children, disabled, minorities, poor, etc. This research explores the most pressing social equity issues facing marginalized communities today. Through a qualitative approach, it examines the lived

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experiences of affected individuals, analyses policies and initiatives aimed at fostering equity, and provides recommendations for future action. By broadening our understanding of these challenges and identifying practical solutions, this study seeks to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ghosh, S. (2023) examines that, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of human rights for India's underprivileged communities. Even while the government has taken action to uphold and defend these rights, much more needs to be done. Human rights activists and civil society organizations are essential in promoting the adoption of laws and regulations that safeguard underprivileged groups and making sure that those who violate human rights are held accountable.

Thorat, S. (2015) explored that in India, the caste system has significantly impacted the human rights of underprivileged groups. Caste discrimination is still a major problem that needs constant attention and action, despite efforts to alleviate it and advance social justice. Promoting the human rights and dignity of every person in India requires addressing the problem of caste prejudice.

Sahoo, K. C. & Sahoo, S. K. (2013) said that India has a lengthy and intricate history of marginalization, discrimination, and social inequality. In India, marginalized populations have long experienced economic exploitation, violence, and discrimination, among other human rights abuses. A brief historical overview of the effects of human rights on India's underprivileged communities will be given in this thesis.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study in today's society is enough. Through this research, we can suggest ways to solve those problems by highlighting the current perspective of the marginalized class. This research will play an effective role in building a healthy social and discrimination-free society. This study will shed light on social, economic, political including the digital divide, environmental justice, healthcare disparities, and systematic discrimination etc. By raising awareness of social justice and human empowerment, increasing the capacity of autonomy and self-determination in people and communities so that they can act in self-determination for their rights and interests.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research work has been undertaken to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To explore the issues and challenges faced by marginalized communities in a social context in India .
- 2) To examine the Government Initiatives and Constitutional Provisions for Marginalized Communities in India
- 3) To explore the role of technology in the empowerment of marginalized communities.
- 4) To suggest some effective recommendations to promote equality, equity, and justice.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study is completely qualitative research based on the officials' documents and secondary data gathered from different sources such as government reports, books, magazines, journals, websites, research articles, etc., to bridge up conclusions. Furthermore, this study is analytical in nature. Various documents are analyzed based on qualitative data.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. The Issues and Challenges faced by Marginalized Communities in Social Context

Many social, political, and economic obstacles prevent marginalized communities from fully engaging in society. Systemic discrimination, historical injustices, and societal biases that support inequality are the causes of these problems. Marginalized groups face a number of obstacles that limit their chances for advancement, ranging from poor access to healthcare and education to financial difficulties and political underrepresentation. They struggle even more to break the cycle of poverty and discrimination because of social stigmatization, exclusion, and violence. Fostering an inclusive society where everyone has access to equal rights and opportunities requires an understanding of these difficulties. Various issues and challenges faced by the marginalized are discussed below;

- **Poverty:** For India's underprivileged communities, poverty is one of the most important problems. Many of these communities struggle to meet their basic necessities and live below the poverty line. Their economic vulnerability is increased when they are unable to access resources, land, and work possibilities.
- **Limited Access to Education:** For marginalized populations, access to high-quality education continues to be a significant obstacle. Their educational success is hampered by social discrimination within educational institutions, limited access to schools, and poor infrastructure. The cycle of poverty and marginalization is therefore sustained.



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- **Healthcare Disparities:** Higher rates of illness and mortality are a result of marginalized communities' frequently restricted access to healthcare services. Two major issues are the prevalence of malnutrition among Adivasi tribes and the dearth of proper healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Numerous marginalized groups experience exploitation, violence, and violations of their human rights, such as forced evictions, hate crimes, and police brutality. Additionally, the legal system could be biased and provide them with less protection.
- **Employment:** Discrimination in the workplace limits marginalized groups' access to employment possibilities. They are frequently forced into manual labour occupations that pay poorly and offer little job security. Accessing formal employment presents extra hurdles for women from these communities.
- **The Discrimination Based on Gender:** In marginalized communities, LGBT people and women experience twofold prejudice. They face societal constraints that impede their ability to advance both personally and professionally, assault, harassment at work, and a lack of reproductive rights.
- **Land Rights:** Adivasis and Dalits, in particular, are among the marginalized communities who frequently experience landlessness. Their economic vulnerability is exacerbated by their lack of solid land tenure or land ownership, which frequently results in migration.
- **Social Discrimination:** The everyday lives of marginalized communities are still impacted by discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, or ethnicity. Social segregation, violence, and restricted access to public areas are just a few of the ways that this discrimination might appear.
- **Digital discrimination:** Research indicates that underrepresented communities are disproportionately impacted by algorithmic bias in financial lending, hiring, and law enforcement. Interviewees discussed encounters with biased employment algorithms that exclude particular ethnic groups and racial profiling in automated surveillance systems.
- **Environmental Injustice:** Low-income neighbourhood participants emphasized how climate change is disproportionately affecting them, with communities more at risk of being displaced as a result of extreme weather events and rising sea levels. There aren't enough focused climate adaptation plans for underserved populations, according to policy evaluations.

6.2. Government Initiatives and Constitutional Provisions for Marginalized Communities in India

With an emphasis on social justice, economic empowerment, and inclusive development, India has put in place a number of initiatives and programs meant to elevate underprivileged groups. The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, special protections, and affirmative action for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), minorities, and economically weaker sections (EWS), child with disabilities, women. These are discussed below;

6.2.1. Government Initiatives

SC/ST communities are shielded from prejudice and violence by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989. The Protection of Civil Rights Act of 1955 guarantees equality and prohibits untouchability. OBCs' interests are protected by the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC). Through the provision of bank accounts to economically disadvantaged groups, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) ensures financial inclusion. The National Social Assistance Program (NSAP) offers pensions to widows, the aged, and those with disabilities who come from low-income families. Affordable housing is provided under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to economically disadvantaged groups, such as SCs and STs. Reservations in the State Assemblies, Lok Sabha, and Rajya Sabha guarantee SC and ST political participation. Anywhere in India, underprivileged groups, particularly migratory labourers, can obtain food security benefits through the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC). The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) is centered on universal access to high-quality education and inclusive education. SC/ST/OBC/Minority Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships are provided for students from underprivileged families. Students from SC, ST, and OBC are eligible to receive financial aid for studying abroad under the National Overseas Scholarship (NOS). To guarantee high-quality education for tribal pupils, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) were established. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) gives rural households 100 days of paid work. The Stand-Up India Scheme encourages women and SC/ST individuals to start their own businesses by offering financial support. The Skill India Mission provides skill development and vocational training to improve job prospects.

6.2.2. Initiatives Taken by the West Bengal Government



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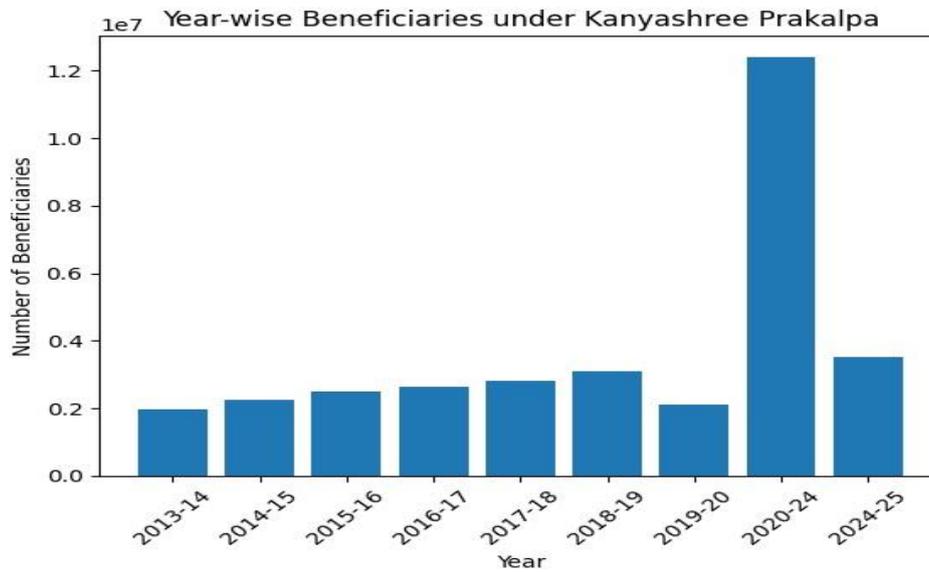
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The Government of West Bengal has implemented various initiatives to support marginalized communities, focusing on social welfare, education, financial assistance, and legal protections. Some of these;

- ❖ **Kanyashree Prakalpa:** This program offers financial incentives to female students with the goal of encouraging education among ladies and discouraging early marriages.

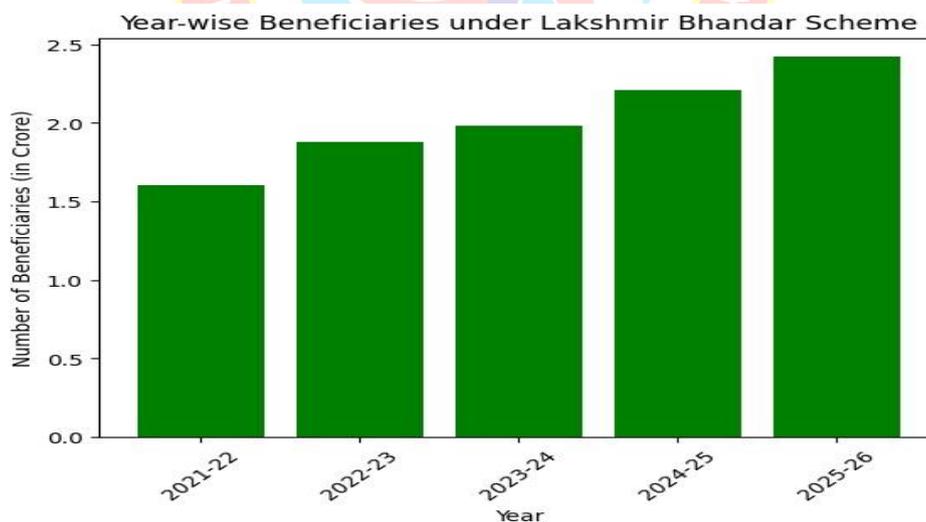
Figure 1: KANYASHREE PRAKALPA SCHEME YEAR-WISE BENEFICIARIES IN LAKH (2013-2025)



SOURCE : <https://wbkanyashree.gov.in>

- ❖ **Lakshmir Bhandar:** This initiative helps women from underserved communities become more financially independent by providing them with basic income support.

Figure 2: GROWTH OF LAKSHMIR BHANDAR BENEFICIARIES WEST BENGAL (2021- 2025)



Source: <https://socialsecurity.wb.gov.in/login>

- ❖ **Manabik:** A program that ensures social security and inclusion while offering financial support to people with impairments.

Figure 3 : Department of Women & Child Development & Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal (Manabik Prakalpa), 2018–2025.



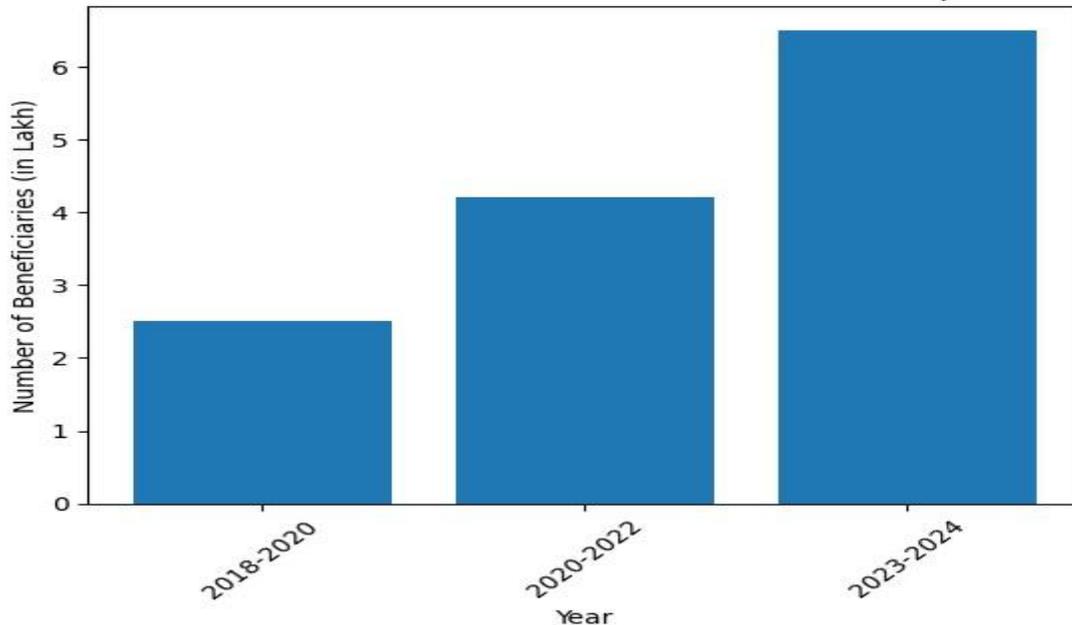
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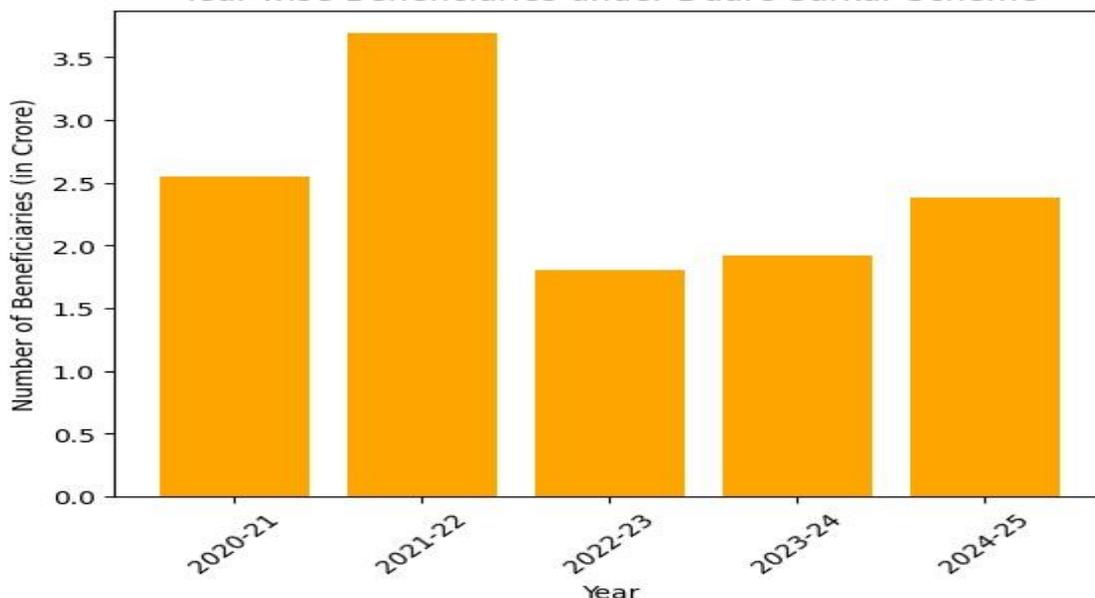
Year-wise Beneficiaries under Manabik Prakalpa



- ❖ **Cha Sundari:** This program improves the living conditions of tea garden workers by offering housing and other welfare benefits.
- ❖ **Duare Sarkar (Government at Doorstep):** The West Bengal government created the extensive outreach program Duare Sarkar (Government at Doorstep) to provide government services directly to residents, guaranteeing that underserved populations can access social programs without facing administrative obstacles.

Figure 4 : DUARE SARKAR SCHEME YEAR-WISE BENEFICIARIES (2020-2025)

Year-wise Beneficiaries under Duare Sarkar Scheme



Source: <https://ds.wb.gov.in/>

- ❖ **Jagadish Bose National Science Talent Search (JBNSTS):** JBNSTS, an independent organization supported by the West Bengal government, finds and develops gifted science students and offers mentorship and grants to support scientific innovation and research.



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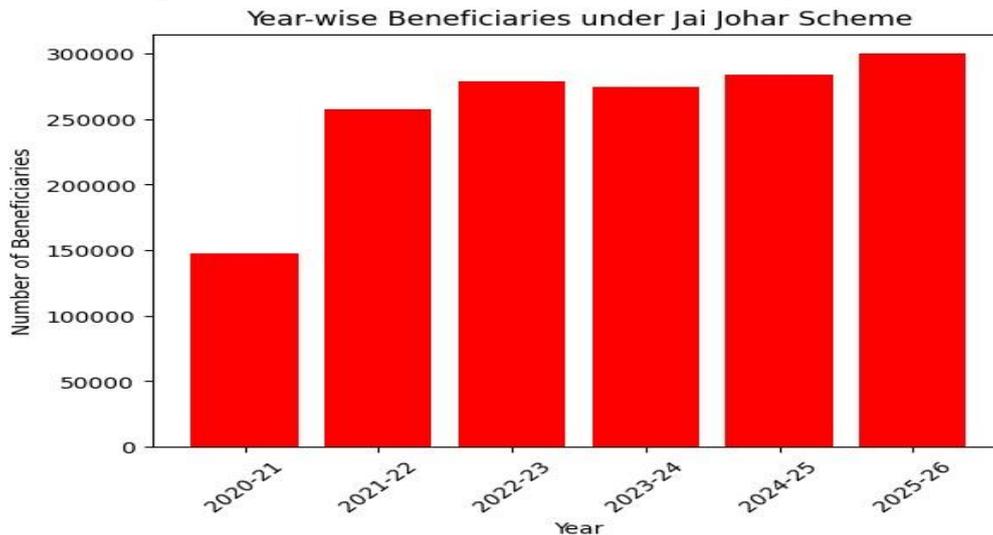
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- ❖ **Jai Johar:** The Jai Johar initiative, which was introduced in March 2020, offers monthly pensions to elderly members of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population with the goal of enhancing their standard of living and providing financial support.

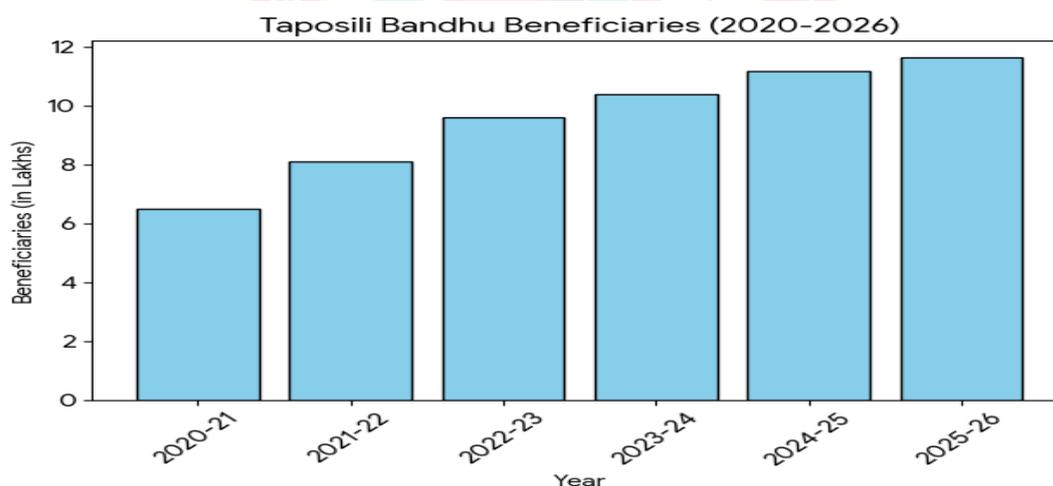
Figure 5 : JAI JOHAR SCHEME YEAR-WISE BENEFICIARIES (2020-2025)



Source : jaibangla.wb.gov.in

- ❖ **Taposhili Bandhu:** Like Jai Johar, the Taposhili Bandhu scheme was launched in March 2020 to provide a monthly pension to elderly members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, guaranteeing their social security and financial stability.

Figure 6 : YEAR WISE BENEFICIARIES GROWTH TAPOSHILI BANDHU



Source : <https://bcwd.wb.gov.in/>

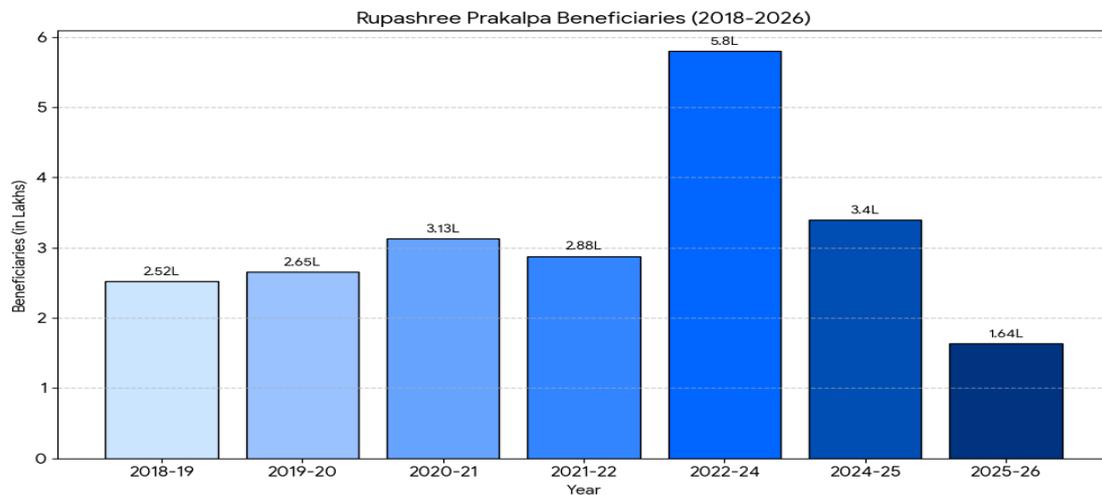
- ❖ **Rupashree Prakalpa:** This program aims to reduce financial burdens and stop child marriages by providing a one-time financial gift to economically disadvantaged families at their adult daughters' marriages.

Figure 7 : YEAR-WISE BENEFICIARIES RUPASHREE PROKALPA



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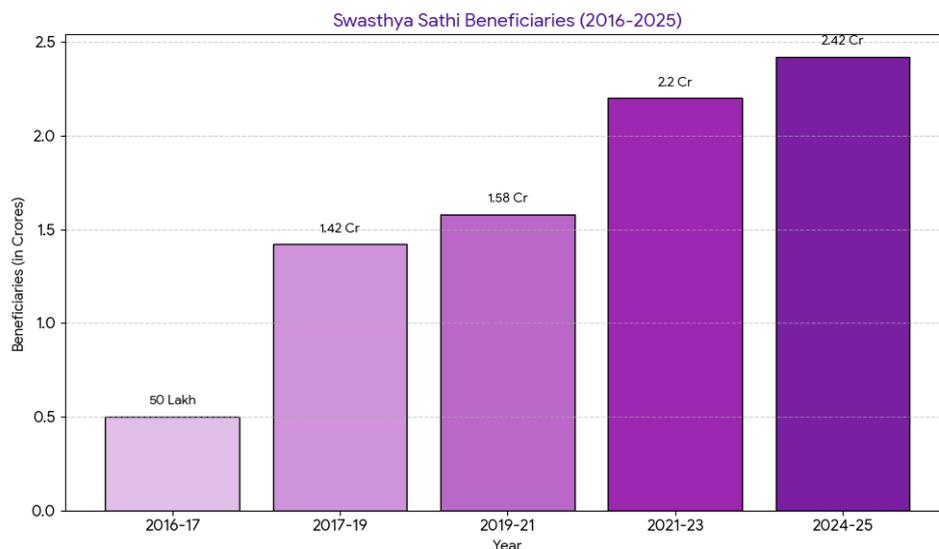
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Source : rupashree.wb.gov.in

❖ **Swasthya Sathi:** With an emphasis on unorganized sector workers and underserved communities, Swasthya Sathi is a comprehensive health insurance program that provides cashless treatment to families while guaranteeing access to high-quality medical care.

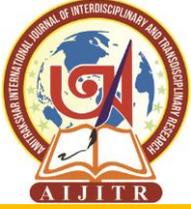
Figure 8 : GROWTH OF SWASTHYA SATHI BENEFICIARIES WEST BENGAL (2016- 2025)



Source : Government of West Bengal, Swasthya Sathi Portal

6.2.3. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 14:** The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- **Article 15:** Allows specific provisions for SCs, STs, and socially backward groups and forbids discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, race, sex, or place of birth.
- **Article 16:** Equal chances in public employment are guaranteed, which also establishes reservations for OBCs, SCs, and STs.
- **Article 17:** Outlaws the practice of "untouchability" in all its manifestations.
- **Article 19:** Guarantees that underprivileged groups can engage in society without facing discrimination by protecting their freedom of speech, movement, and employment.
- **Article 38:** Directs the state to minimize economic and social inequalities.



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- **Article 39(a):** Ensures the right to livelihood for all citizens.
- **Article 41:** Provides the right to work, education, and public assistance for disadvantaged groups.
- **Article 46:** Promotes the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and weaker sections while protecting them from exploitation.
- **Article 330 & 332:** SC and ST seats are reserved in the State Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha.
- **Article 335:** Ensures that SCs and STs be taken into account when hiring government employees while preserving efficiency.
- **Article 338 & 338A:** Creates the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) to protect their rights.
- **Article 340:** Gives the president the authority to research the plight of the underprivileged and suggest welfare initiatives.
- **Articles 29 and 30:** Preserve minorities' rights to culture and education.
- **Article 350A:** Language minorities are required to receive primary education in their mother tongue.
- **Article 355:** Ensures the Union protects states from external aggression and internal disturbances, safeguarding vulnerable communities.

6.3. Role of Technology in Empowerment of Marginalized Communities

Technology has a significant impact on improving access to healthcare, education, social empowerment, and financial inclusion in underserved communities. By facilitating greater opportunities, closing the digital divide, and promoting social inclusion, technology has had a major impact on behaviour of marginalized community.

- **Closing the Digital Divide:** Programs such as Digital India give underserved and rural areas access to the Internet so they can engage in the digital economy.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** It's critical to upgrade the internet infrastructure in underserved communities. Governments and institutions ought to spend money on increasing network dependability and broadband availability.
- **E-learning Platforms:** Apps like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and e-Pathshala have enabled marginalized students to access quality education.
- **Training in Digital Skills:** It's critical to provide thorough training in digital literacy. With an emphasis on useful skills that can enhance job chances and general well-being, these programs ought to be customized to the unique requirements and interests of the community.
- **Affordable Access:** Efforts to offer low-cost or subsidized digital gadgets and internet connections can help impoverished people and families have easier access.
- **Community Engagement:** Creating support systems and community involvement helps promote the adoption of digital technology. Promoting the value and advantages of digital technologies can be greatly aided by local groups and civic leaders.
- **Social Media as a Voice for the Marginalized:** Communities can campaign for their rights and increase awareness thanks to sites like Facebook and Twitter.
- **Programs for Digital Literacy:** To improve digital literacy among underserved populations, governmental and non-governmental organizations are offering training courses.
- **Language Accessibility:** AI-powered translation tools help break language barriers, making education more inclusive.

Technology has positive impact on empowerment of marginalized communities by enhancing their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. However, digital literacy, affordability, and cybersecurity challenges must be addressed to ensure equitable benefits for all.

6.4. Some Effective Recommendations to Promote Equality, Equity, and Justice

Encouraging equality, equity, and justice for underserved populations necessitates a multifaceted strategy that includes social, legal, educational, and economic reforms. Active policy implementation, community involvement, and ongoing efforts to remove structural hurdles are necessary for sustainable growth. We can build a future where everyone, from all backgrounds, has an equal chance to succeed by promoting an inclusive society. Some effective recommendations are discussed below;

- ✓ **Encourage inclusive education:** Encourage inclusive education by making sure that curricula and instructional strategies take into account marginalization issues and represent the variety of the community.



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- ✓ **Increase awareness:** To educate the public on social justice issues, equality, and equity, plan workshops, seminars, and campaigns.
- ✓ **Challenge prejudices and stereotypes:** To destroy negative attitudes and ideas, promote critical thinking and candid discussion.
- ✓ **Encourage political participation:** Motivate marginalized groups to take part in politics and hold elected officials responsible.
- ✓ **Human empowerment:** Human empowerment can help people discover their talent, build a greater sense and realise their potential.
- ✓ **Promote gender equality:** Its remove gender bias and refers to equal right responsibilities and opportunities for man and woman.
- ✓ **Support community-owned business:** To promote rural economic advancement and increase community participation, empowerment in local planning and development.
- ✓ **HealthCare support:** Encourage communities to prioritize their health and well-being through program that promote healthy eating, physical activity and stress management.
- ✓ **Accessible resources and environmental justice:** To ensure the communities free and comfortable access to clean water, green spaces and other natural resources that are essential for well-being.
- ✓ **Support student with disabilities:** Creating positive environment including child with disabilities feel welcome respected and able to participate fully.
- ✓ **Policy reforms and positive action:** Its refers to changes in policies and practices to address systematic inequalities and promote the inclusion of marginalised group.

7. CONCLUSION

The economic, social, environmental, and structural issues that continue to disenfranchise marginalized communities in spite of constitutional protections and forward-thinking policy initiatives have been examined in this study. These groups have been denied meaningful engagement in mainstream society due to persistent systemic inequality. More than discrete actions are needed to address these gaps; an all-encompassing, intersectional strategy that incorporates political inclusion, economic empowerment, education, and awareness is needed. For marginalized people to play an active role in government and the improvement of society, it is essential to increase their ability through equitable resources, knowledge, and skill development. Sustainable transformation also requires cultivating a cultural ethos based on accountability, empathy, and teamwork. Governmental organizations, civic society, policymakers, and the communities themselves must work together consistently to reintegrate marginalized communities into the institutional and social fabric. In the end, the basis of a more inclusive, democratic, and resilient society will be strengthened by the pursuit of social justice and the equitable distribution of rights and opportunities.

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