Tripura Legislative Assembly: A study on the Legislative role of SC MLAs for the development of the Scheduled Castes.

Saiki Das*

Former Post-Graduate student, Department of Political Science, Tripura University.
Suryamaninagar, Agartala, West Tripura district, Tripura-799022.

Abstract: Tripura is a Multi-ethnic and Multi-cultural society, where the Scheduled Castes occupy a vital place, especially economically and politically. The study examines the role of SC MLAs in the legislative process of the Tripura Legislative Assembly and their effective contribution to the development of the Scheduled Castes. In particular, it examines how elected representatives have contributed to the implementation of policy proposals and development programs through discussions in the assembly. The study is based on the analysis of SC MLAs' interviews, recorded data, SC welfare data, Census data, Election Commission data, and Assembly proceedings. It has also reviewed the initiatives of some elected SC MLAs, especially in the areas of education, health, employment, and social justice. The active role of SC MLAs in the implementation of various welfare schemes of the Central and State governments for the development of the Scheduled Castes has emerged as an important aspect. This also explores the historical background of the Tripura Legislative Assembly & Party position, legislative representation of SCs, challenges faced by the SCs and SC MLAs, SC population & literacy rate, etc., and provides necessary recommendations to the MLAs. Finally, it can be said that SC MLAs of the Tripura Legislative Assembly have played an important role in the development of the Scheduled Castes by discharging their constitutional and political responsibilities. In the future, more effective policy adoption and strong political desire will accelerate the socio-economic development of this community.

Key Words: Multi-ethnic, Multi-cultural, Scheduled Castes, Representatives, Implementation, Discharging, Accelerate.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study titled "Tripura Legislative Assembly: A study on the Legislative role of SC MLAs for the development of Scheduled Castes" explores how the elective representatives belonging to the scheduled castes contribute to the upliftment of their community within the state's legislative framework. The Tripura Legislative Assembly, established in 1963 after the formation of the Union Territory and later attaining full-statehood in 1972, serves as the significant law-making body of the state. It functions under a Unicameral system with 60 members, representing numerous social, political, and ethnic backgrounds. Among these, a certain number of seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in accordance with the constitutional provisions to ensure adequate political representation of historically marginalized communities.

The Scheduled Castes of Tripura constitute a vital section of the state's population, making a substantial contribution to its socio-economic and political life. The Census of 2011 shows that the SC population in Tripura stood at around 17% with communities like the 'Jalia Kaibarta', 'Muchi', 'Namasudra', and others forming the major groups. Despite constitutional safeguards, SC communities continue to face social discrimination, economic and financial crisis, lack of proper education, and employment. The representation of SC MLAs in the Legislative Assembly, therefore, holds immense significance as it provides a democratic platform to address their issues through laws, policies, and welfare programs. SC MLAs in Tripura have

played a vital role in voicing the concerns of their communities and advocating for policies that aim to improve their living standards. Through their participation in legislative debates, communities, and development initiatives, they attempt to bridge the socio-economic gaps between the Scheduled Castes and the rest of society. Their contribution has been visible in areas like education, health, social welfare, housing, employment generation, and civil rights.

However, several challenges continue to hinder the effective role of SC MLAs in the state. Like, political dependence on dominant parties, limited resources, Nepotism, and the lack of autonomy in decision-making often restrict their ability to bring about substantial change. Many SC MLAs face difficulties in balancing constitutional demands with community-specific needs, as well as in ensuring that welfare benefits reach the masses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Legislative role of SC MLAs in the development of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura is a subject matter of academic and policy-based discussion. The literature tends to describe the socio-political dynamics of Tripura, which has a significant number of Scheduled Castes, and legislative processes intended to cater to their needs.

The study emphasizes the demographic spread of SCs in Tripura, emphasizing their dispersed nature and socio-economic vulnerability across the state. The legislative role is analyzed in the context of policy making, recorded data, advocacy, and implementation of welfare schemes aimed at improving the Scheduled Castes community. The Indian constitution creates a framework for the protection and development of the Scheduled Castes, and the SC MLAs have an important role to play in translating these constitutional provisions into practical policies at the state level.

2.1. Jaffrelot and Bhargava note that affirmative action in political representation has resulted in greater legislative involvement. This work examines the role of Tripura SC MLAs in policymaking, supported by these scholars, in legislative discourse on SC welfare.

2.2. Dr. Yadav and Chandra point to administrative inefficiency, the absence of resource allocation, and socio-political resistance as key barriers to SC development. This study found similar challenges in Tripura's local system, indicating that MLAs can introduce and support useful policies, but their implementation is often hampered by bureaucratic and procedural problems.

3. RESEARCH AIMS

3.1. To examine legal measures and actions taken by SC MLAs for the development of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura.

3.2. To examine Government schemes and programs for the development of the Scheduled Castes.

3.3. To identify the obstacles and limitations that SC MLAs face in the SCs' development.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1. How much representation does the SC community have in the Tripura Assembly?

4.2. What are the factors that hinder the development of the SC community despite legislative efforts?

4.3. What are the major legislative steps taken by the SC MLAs of the Tripura Legislative Assembly?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods, merging document scrutiny, discussions, and budgetary review.

5.1. Data Gathering Methods

Primary Data:
- Interview with the SC MLAs, Government officials, and policymakers.
- Field visits to SC-dominated areas to assess the impact of policies.
- Survey of SC beneficiaries to gauge policy effectiveness.

Secondary Data:
- Legislative Assembly records (bills, debates, policy discussions).
- Government records on SC development.
- Budget documents for SC welfare schemes.
- Reports from the SC welfare schemes.
- Census Data.
- Election Commission Data.

5.2. Sampling Method:

- Selected 10 SC MLAs from various political parties.

Year	Congress Seats	CPIM Seats	BJP Seats	Regional Party Seats	Chief Minister	Winning Alliance
1963	27	13	0	0	Sachindra Lal Singh (INC)	Congress
1972	41	18	0	1	Sachindra Lal Singh (INC)	Congress
1977	11	56	0	2	Nripen Chakraborty (CPIM)	Left-Front
1983	4	51	0	5	Nripen Chakraborty (CPIM)	Left-Front
1988	31	29	0	0	Sudhir Ranjan Majumder (INC)	Congress-TUJS
1993	10	44	0	6	Dasarath Deb (CPIM)	Left-Front
1998	13	49	0	0	Manik Sarkar (CPIM)	Left-Front
2003	13	41	0	6	Manik Sarkar (CPIM)	Left-Front
2008	10	46	0	4	Manik Sarkar (CPIM)	Left-Front
2013	10	50	0	0	Manik Sarkar (CPIM)	Left-Front
2018	0	16	36	8	Biplab Kumar Deb	BJP-IPFT
2023	3	11	32	14	Prof. Dr. Manik Saha	BJP-IPFT

- SC Welfare Department officials.

6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TRIPURA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The political journey of the Tripura Legislative Assembly starts with the ancient Manikya Dynasty, which ruled the state for centuries. The monarchy ended in 1949 when Maharani Kanchna Prabha Devi, representing the minor king, signed the Merger Agreement with the Dominion of India. This change turned into a Part 'C' State. The first step toward popular representation came with the formation of the Tripura Territorial Council in 1957, which included 30 elected members. This council was upgraded to the Tripura Legislative Assembly on 1st July 1963, through the Government of Union Territories Act. Congress leader Sachindra Lal Singh became the first Chief Minister, and the initial Assembly had 30 members.

The major change happened when Tripura became a full state in 1972, increasing the Assembly's strength to 60 seats. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Left-Front then dominated the political scene for many years, building a strong foundation. In the 2018 elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the regional party Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) formed the Government for the first time. This marked a major shift in the political landscape. The BJP and IPFT overthrew the Political rule of the CPI(M) over 25 years, from 1993-2018.

The BJP remained in majority in the 13th Assembly, elected in 2023 and continuing until 2025, although a new significant regional force, the Tipra Motha Party, emerged as the second largest party and holds a key player in the state politics. Prof. Dr. Manik Saha is the new CM of the state.

The current structure of 2025 is largely made up of the ruling BJP-led coalition and a vital opposition party led by the CPI(M), Congress, and sometimes Tipra Motha, because the relationship of BJP and TMP is mixed neither fully in support nor fully opposed.

Table 1: Party position and Elections in Tripura from 1967-2023.

Source: ECI Tripura.

Key Trends and Takeaways (1972-2023)

- Congress hegemony (1972-1977) established the state's politics but imploded under tribal unrest and surging Left power.
- The Left Front supremacy (1977-1988, 1993-2018) was fuelled by land reforms, tribal mobilization, and welfare policies, but gradually, stagnation and anti-incumbency eroded their grip.
- The Congress-TUJS interregnum (1988-1993) demonstrated that alliances could temporarily oppose the Left but did not possess staying power.
- BJP's emergence (2018- present) remade Tripura politics, connecting with tribal disgruntlement and development assurances.
- The rise of regional parties, such as the Tipra Motha Party (2023), hints at a possible change in tribal politics and presents fresh challenges to national parties.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION OF SCs IN TRIPURA

The Indian Constitution mandates the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in legislative bodies to ensure their adequate representation and participation in the policymaking process. Articles 330 and 332 of the Indian Constitution specially address the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies, respectively.
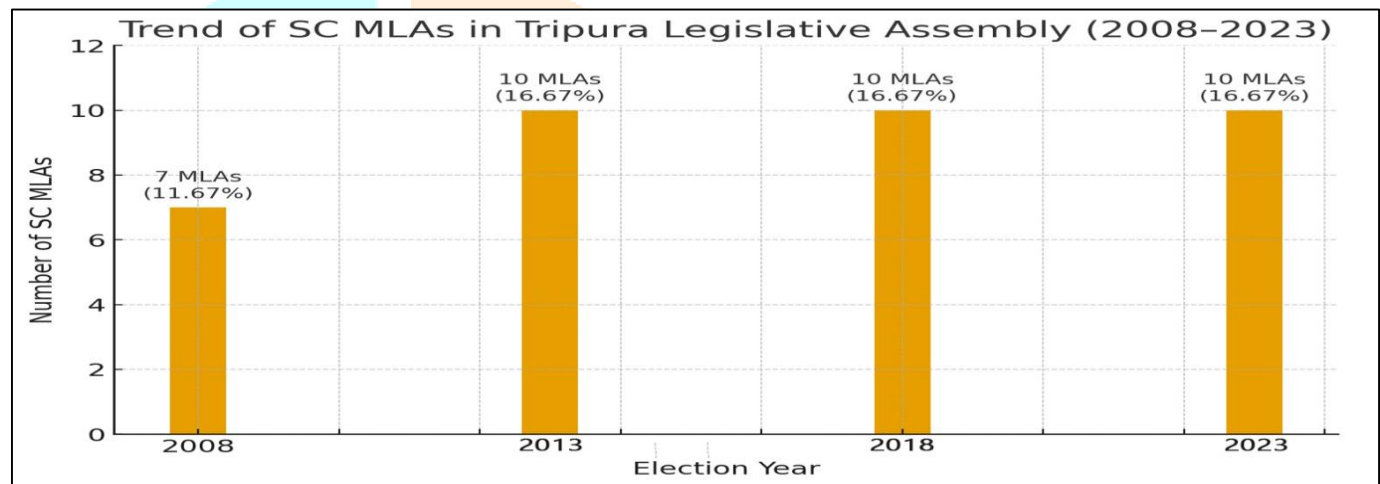
In Tripura, the number of reserved seats for SCs is determined based on their proportion in the state's population. This reservation ensures that SC voices are represented in the legislative assembly, enabling them to advocate for the interests of their community effectively. The representation of Scheduled Castes (SC) MLAs in the Tripura Legislative Assembly has been structurally guaranteed consistently since the state achieved full statehood. The total number of seats in the Tripura Legislative Assembly has remained at 60 since Tripura's formation in 1972. The number of seats reserved for SC candidates has generally stabilized, initially fixed at 7 seats following the 1976 order and later increased to 10 seats after the 2008 delimitation.

Table 2: Reserved Seats for Scheduled Castes in Tripura Legislative Assembly (Recent Terms)

Assembly Term	Total Seats	Reserve SC Seats	Percentage of SC Seats
2008	60	7	11.67%
2013	60	10	16.67%
2018	60	10	16.67%
2023	60	10	16.67%

Source: Tripura Legislative Assembly.

Graph 1: Trend of SC MLAs in Tripura Legislative Assembly (2008-2023)

Source: ECI, Tripura.

8. ELECTORAL TRENDS OF SC CONSTITUENCIES FROM 1972-2023

The electoral trends in the Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved constituencies of Tripura, starting from 1972, have largely reflected the state's overall political landscape. This landscape is primarily characterized by an intense and fluctuating bipolar competition between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))-led Left Front and the Indian National Congress (INC). More recently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emerged as a dominant force in the region. Initially, the number of SC constituencies varied between 5 and 7. However, it was standardized to 10 seats out of the total 60 Assembly seats in subsequent delimitation processes, specifically from the 2008 election onwards.

Key Electoral Trends (1972-2025)

i. Initial Congress Dominance (1972)

In the first state election of 1972, the Indian National Congress (INC) performed strongly across the state, including in the Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved seats, which numbered 5 at the time. This marked the beginning of a broader, though short-lived, period of Congress rule in the state.

ii. The Era of Left-Front Domination (1977-2018)

- The 1977 election marked the beginning of the Left Front's enduring dominance in Tripura politics; a trend consistently reflected in the SC constituencies.
- The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], the main component of the Left Front, successfully cultivated a strong base among the Scheduled Caste and other marginalized communities. As a result, their candidates frequently won a majority of the SC seats in almost every election from 1977 until 2013.

- **Deviation (1988-1993):** The only significant break during this period occurred in the 1988 election, when the INC, often in alliance with regional tribal parties, managed to form the government. This indicated a temporary shift in the SC seats, although the CPI(M) generally retained significant influence. The Left Front quickly regained its control in the 1993 election. During this period, the number of reserved seats for Scheduled Castes in the Tripura assembly increased from 5 to 7 seats.

iii. **The BJP Wave and Complete Shift (2018 Onwards)**
- The 2018 Assembly election brought a historic political realignment, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies decisively defeating the decades-old Left Front government.
- This massive shift saw the BJP sweeping the majority of the SC reserved seats by successfully attracting the support base that had traditionally voted for the CPI(M) or INC, marking a complete break from past trends.
- The 2023 Assembly election confirmed this new pattern, with the BJP and its alliance maintaining a commanding lead in the SC seats, establishing themselves as the new dominant party in these constituencies.

8.1. LIST OF TRIPURA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SC CONSTITUENCIES AND 2023 ELECTION WINNERS

In the 2023 Tripura Legislative Assembly Election, there are ten (10) seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the Assembly out of 60 seats. These are mentioned below;

Table 3: List of SC MLAs (2023 Election)

Constituency No	Constituency Party	Winning Candidate (2023)	Winning Party (2023)
3	Bamutia (SC)	Nayan Sarkar	CPI(M)
4	Barjala (SC)	Sudip Sarkar	CPI(M)
13	Pratapgarh (SC)	Ramu Das	CPI(M)
14	Badharghat (SC)	Mina Rani Sarkar	BJP
21	Nalchar (SC)	Kishor Barman	BJP
33	Kakraban-Salgarh (SC)	Jitendra Majumder	BJP
34	Rajnagar (SC)	Swapna Majumder	BJP
46	Surma (SC)	Swapna Das Paul	BJP
50	Pabiachara (SC)	Bhagaban Chandra Das	BJP
51	Fatikroy (SC)	Sudhangshu Das	BJP
Total SC Seats: 10		**BJP: 7, CPI(M): 3**	

Source: My Neta portal.

9. LEGISLATIVE ROLE OF SC MLAs IN TRIPURA

The Tripura Legislative Assembly, an Unicameral assembly of Tripura, plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural landscape of the state. Formulated by 60 elected MLAs, it carries out the primary responsibility of making rules, deliberating on policy, and holding the executive accountable.

In the Tripura Legislative Assembly, some seats are reserved for SC candidates. Presently, out of 60 assembly constituencies in Tripura, 10 seats are reserved for SC candidates. The reserve is geared towards a constitutional commitment to social justice and historical difficulties and marginalities faced by the Scheduled Caste community. These roles can be briefly classified as follows:

9.1. Law and Policymaking:

SC MLAs play a crucial role in shaping state legislation by introducing, debating, and voting on key bills. Their efforts particularly focused on advancing social justice, promoting economic development, and ensuring the protection of rights for the Scheduled Castes. Through their active participation, they champion the issues that matter most to our communities, driving meaningful change and fostering equality for all.

9.2. Welfare Portfolio Leadership:

Scheduled Castes MLAs who hold ministerial positions, such as Sudhangshu Das (Minister of Welfare for Scheduled Castes, Animal Resource Development Department & Fisheries) and Kishor Barman (Cabinet Minister since July 2025), are responsible for the direct execution and implementation of welfare policies for the SC communities.

9.3. Constituent Representation & Grievance Redressal:

As elective representatives, the main responsibility of SC MLAs is to represent the interests of their citizens. MLAs who are elected from the reserved constituencies have the added dimension of speaking for the special

needs and aspirations of the SC community living in their constituencies. They act as an important bridge between the people and the government, communicating the grievances and worries of their people to the appropriate authorities.

9.4. Accountability and Questioning:

In Tripura, opposition SC MLAs such as Ramu Das (CPI-M, Pratapgarh) and Nayan Sarkar (CPI-M, Bamutia) employ legislative mechanisms like raising questions and moving motions. They hold the government accountable for the poor implementation of welfare schemes, faculty shortages, and the lack of basic services in their constituencies.

9.5. Budgetary Allocation for the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan:

The Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) is an essential strategy for directing funds towards the development of Scheduled Castes (SCs). SC Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) play a vital role in examining the allocation and use of these funds, advocating for increased and fair distribution across different sectors. In the FY 2024-2025, the government of Tripura allocated 198.45 crore for SCSP.

9.6. Committee Work:

SC MLAs are mandatory members of the Assembly's Committee on the Welfare of SCs, OBCs, and Minorities. In this role, they formally review the performance and expenditure of the Department for the Welfare of SCs and suggest improvements.

9.7. Encouraging Societal Justice and Equivalence:

The legislative role of Scheduled Caste MLAs is intimately linked to the overall goal of encouraging societal justice and equality aimed at the Scheduled Caste community. By pushing for the implementation of anti-discrimination laws and raising awareness about the legal protections that Scheduled Castes MLAs avail themselves of, they help build a more inclusive and adequate society.

Their performance and active contribution in the lawmaking process is a powerful message of the state's obligation to societal fairness & the enablement of marginalized groups.

10. LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTIONS OF SC MLAs FOR SC DEVELOPMENT

SC MLAs in the Tripura Legislative Assembly can influence policy and resource distribution for Scheduled Caste (SC) development through various legislative tools.

10.1. Introducing Private Member Bills and Resolutions:

Although government bills often dominate the legislative agenda, Private Member Bills and Resolutions provide an important avenue for individual MLAs to address specific issues. SC MLAs can introduce bills aimed at:

- Strengthening affirmative action policies.
- Establishing new institutions for SC welfare.
- Amending existing laws to better protect SC rights.

10.2 Participating in Debates and Discussions:

Debates on the Governor's Address, budget proposals, and various bills offer crucial chances for SC MLAs to:

- Highlight the challenges faced by SC communities, such as land alienation, limited access to education, unemployment, and discrimination.
- Propose amendments to bills that would benefit SCs.
- Bring attention to the gaps in the implementation of SC welfare schemes.

10.3. Raising Questions in the Assembly:

Question Hour is a crucial tool for legislative oversight. Scheduled Caste (SC) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) can ask two types of questions:
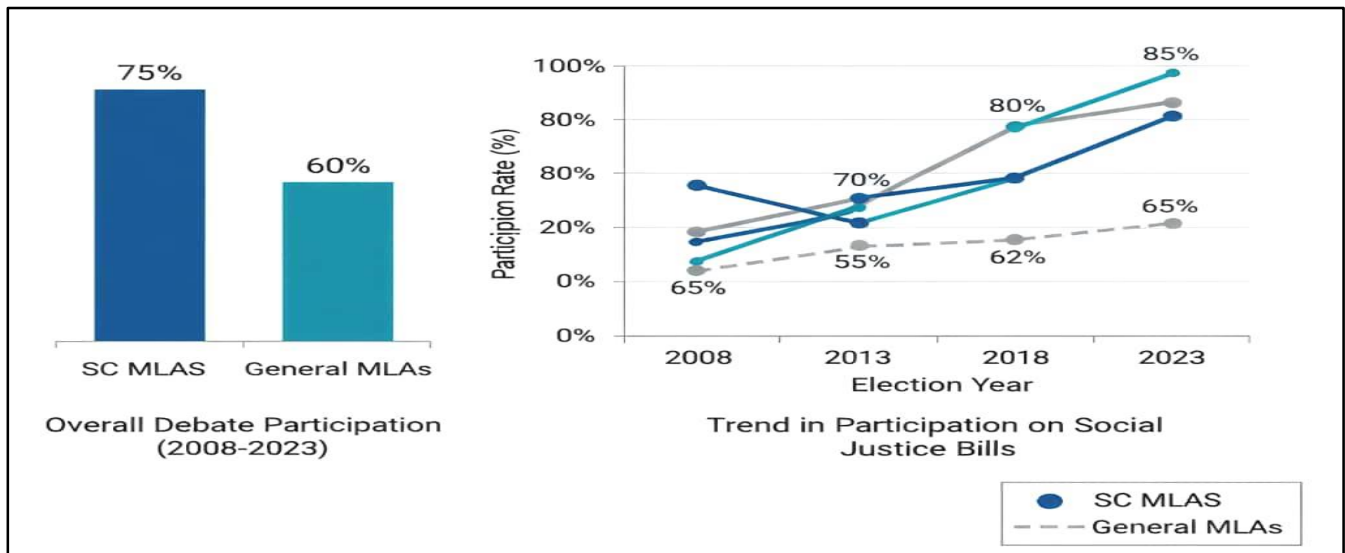
- **Starred Questions**: These require oral answers and often lead to supplementary questions, prompting immediate government responses on issues such as the progress of SC welfare schemes, allocation of funds, and reasons for delays.
- **Unstarred Questions:** These seek written answers and provide detailed information on a wide range of topics related to SC development, such as statistics on beneficiaries and actions taken by various departments.
- **Short Duration Discussions:** Allow for discussions on matters of urgent public importance that affect SC communities.

10.4. Participation in Legislative Committees:

Much of the detailed legislative work occurs within committees. Key committees focusing on SC development include:

- **Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes**: This specialized committee examines reports, scrutinizes government actions, and makes recommendations on policies and programs benefitting SC welfare. SC MLAs on this committee have a significant influence on shaping policy.
- **Departmental Standing Committees**: SC MLAs who serve on committees related to education, health, rural development, social welfare, and other areas can ensure that the needs of SCs are incorporated into broader departmental policies and budget allocations.
- **Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Estimates Committee:** SC MLAs can monitor how funds allocated for SC development are used, ensuring financial accountability.

Graph 2: Tripura SC MLAs Participation in Debates on SC Welfare (2008-2023)

11. BILLS INTRODUCED IN THE TRIPURA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR SC WELFARE

The Tripura Legislative Assembly has introduced several bills over the years aimed at improving the social, educational, and economic status of Scheduled Castes (SCs). These bills focus on ensuring representation, access to welfare schemes, land rights, education, and social justice for these communities. These are some important bills mentioned below.

Table 4: Several SC Welfare bills that MLAs introduced in the Tripura Legislative Assembly.

SL No.	Bill Title	Year of Intro.	Conforming Act. / Notification.	Primary SC Purpose of the Bill.
1	Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Reservation Bill (3rd Amendment)	2018	The Tripura Bill No. (10 of 2018)	The main objective of the Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Reservation (Third Amendment) Bill is to update the percentage of reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in educational institutions and government jobs.
2	Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Reservation Bill (4th Amendment)	2020	Act No. of 2020 (Gazette 27/10/2020)	The Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Reservation (Fourth Amendment) Bill, 2020, aims to restore reservation provisions for Ex-servicemen in government services, which were unintentionally removed in a previous amendment. The bill proposes a 2% reservation for ex-servicemen in direct recruitment for positions within the State Government and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in Tripura.
3	Land Revenue & Land Reforms (12th amendment) Bill, Tripura.	2024	Land Revenue & Land Reforms Act, 1960 (12th amendment) (Act 11 of 2021).	The main goal of the "Land Revenue & Land Reforms (Twelfth Amendment) Bill, Tripura, 2021" is to modernize and enhance land administration and protection systems. This bill specifically aims to secure land rights for marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), while also improving land governance in Tripura.
4.	Tripura Appropriation Bill (No.1), 2024.	2024	Tripura Appropriation Act, 2024 (No.1) (Financial Bill).	The primary aim of the 'Tripura Appropriation Bill (No. 1), 2024' is to authorize the state government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of Tripura to cover expenses for the financial year 2024–2025, as approved by the Legislative Assembly. This bill also enforces the mandatory allocation and spending of funds under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP).
5	Tripura Appropriation Bill (No.2), 2024.	2024	Tripura Appropriation Act, 2024 (No.2) (Financial Bill).	The primary purpose of the 'Tripura Appropriation Bill (No. 2), 2024, is to legally authorize the withdrawal of additional funds from the Consolidated Fund of the State of Tripura. These funds are intended to be allocated for specific services and purposes during the relevant financial year.
6	Tripura Scheduled Caste Development Corporation (Reconstruction) Bill.	2024	F.8(3)-Law /Leg./2024 Law Department, The Government of Tripura.	The Tripura Scheduled Castes Development Corporation (Reconstitution) Bill, 2024, is a legislative initiative by the Government of Tripura aimed at strengthening, modernizing, and reorganizing the Scheduled Castes Development Corporation (SCDC). Its main goal is to enhance the socio-economic empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the state by establishing a more efficient institutional framework.

Source: Tripura Legislative Assembly.

12. NOTABLE SC MLAs' INITIATIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES

I. Kishor Barman:

As a Legislative Assembly member belonging to the ruling BJP, Kishor Barman (MLA of 21-Nalchar, SC) is linked to different government schemes for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura.

- He attended the inauguration of a Krishak Bandhu Kendra (KBK) in the Nalchar block. This scheme focuses on helping farmers, a large number of whom are probably from the Scheduled Caste community in a farming state such as Tripura.

- Kishor Barman attended an event where the Chief Minister of Tripura emphasized different welfare programs launched by the state government and the Department of Scheduled Caste Welfare since 2018-19. These schemes include the 'Prime Minister Adarsh Gram Yojana' (PMAGY), the 'Babu Jagjivan Ram Hostel Scheme', and different self-reliance schemes, all seeking to benefit Scheduled Caste families through financial support and the construction of infrastructure.

- In 2023, Kishor Barman eased training and equipment supply to 100 rubber farmers at Nalchar with the support of the Tripura OBC Corporation. Though the scheme was large-scale, most recipients belonged to SC groups. This initiative enhanced earning prospects through the provision of advanced techniques and gadgets for farmers.

- Kishor Barman is also an important figure as the Chairman of the Government. Assurance Committee and a member of approximately 10 vital committees of the Tripura Legislative Assembly. His active involvement in 20 numerous committees signifies his wide-ranging involvement in various aspects of governance & policymaking in the State of Tripura. He is also the Chairman of 'Purbasha'. It is an organization that promotes handicrafts in Tripura.

II. Bhagaban Das:

Bhagawan Das (50-Pabiachara SC), a prominent Scheduled Caste leader from Tripura, came from a humble family and became one of the faces of Scheduled Caste empowerment in the state after the BJP's historic victory in 2018. He is known as the first Scheduled Caste leader to hold a ministerial position in the BJP-led government in Tripura (2018-2022).

- As a Scheduled Caste MLA, he implemented the 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana' (PMAY-G) for Scheduled Caste families in rural areas. He worked to improve the distribution of Scheduled Caste scholarships, like pre-matric and post-matric, ensuring timely distribution to students.

- Through his intervention, Scheduled Caste Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been strengthened, and livelihood training has been provided through projects under the Scheduled Caste Welfare Department.

- Due to Bhagawan Das, awareness programs on the Scheduled Castes/Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act have been actively promoted.

- He proposed establishing coaching institutes in Agartala for SC students preparing for competitive exams like the UPSC.

Bhagwan Das has played a significant role in bridging the gap between government schemes and the Scheduled Caste community in Tripura. His tenure as Minister has seen a combination of welfare-oriented initiatives, community engagement, and institutional reforms to improve the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes.

III. Sudhangshu Das:

As the current Scheduled Caste Welfare Minister of Tripura, Sudhangshu Das (51-Fatikroy, SC) was actively involved in initiatives aimed at the development and empowerment of Scheduled Castes. His contribution focused on policy implementation, financial assistance, and infrastructure development for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste community.

- He has pushed for higher funding under Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY), requesting an increase from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore for each Scheduled Caste-dominated gram panchayat.

- Under his leadership, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has approved Rs 700 lakh for Scheduled Caste hostels in Tripura and has also proposed four more new hostels.

- He has worked on the Income Augmentation Program and Skill Development Initiatives under Pradhan Mantri Anusachit Jati Avhudaya Yojana (PM-AJAY), allocating Rs 196 crore for SC welfare for 3 years.

- He launched the 100 Days Goal to implement important welfare projects for the Scheduled Caste community, to ensure the timely implementation of development projects.
- He advocated for better scholarship opportunities for Scheduled Caste students, urging the central government to resolve the technical issues of the National Scholarship Portal (NSP).

Sudhanshu Das is dynamically involved in policy making and grassroots development to ensure better opportunities for the Scheduled Castes of Tripura.

13. CHALLENGES FACED BY SC MLAs OF TRIPURA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES

The SC MLAs in Tripura face numerous challenges in their efforts to promote the development of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community. One of the main difficulties is the limited financial resources and budgetary constraints of the state, which hinder the effective implementation of welfare schemes designed to uplift SCs. Many MLAs struggle to balance the demands of their constituents with the broader developmental needs of marginalized groups. Additionally, bureaucratic delays and administrative inefficiencies slow down the execution of projects aimed at SC welfare, resulting in uneven progress across various districts.

Another significant challenge is the lack of awareness among some members of the SC population regarding government schemes and their rights. This makes it difficult for MLAs to achieve the intended outcomes of welfare policies. Socio-economic backwardness and low literacy levels among SCs further limit their participation in developmental activities. Furthermore, political competition and shifting party dynamics sometimes lead to the neglect of long-term welfare priorities in favor of short-term political gains. In rural and remote areas, poor infrastructure and communication gaps exacerbate the challenges faced by MLAs in addressing the specific needs of SC communities. Moreover, caste-based discrimination and social inequality persist in subtle forms, hindering the full realization of inclusive development. MLAs often face pressure from various social and political groups, which can affect their ability to focus solely on SC development. Despite these obstacles, legislators continue to advocate for policy reforms, educational opportunities, and social empowerment to enhance the living standards of the Scheduled Castes in Tripura.

Additionally, Tripura's SC MLAs face complex and multifaceted challenges in their efforts to address the needs of the Scheduled Caste community. These challenges are deeply rooted in socioeconomic inequality, political and administrative barriers, deficiencies in the implementation of development plans, and communal and educational barriers.

14. ABOUT THE SCHEDULED CASTES IN TRIPURA:

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Tripura are an important part of the state's social and cultural landscape. According to the census of India 2011, they make up about 17.82% of Tripura's total population. The study found that the West Tripura district has the largest SC population, with 192,475 individuals, which is 20.96 %. In contrast, North Tripura has the smallest Scheduled Castes population at 14.51 %. The SC populations live in rural villages and areas. The total Scheduled Castes population in Tripura is 654,918, making up 17.82% of the state's population. Out of this, 437,993 people live in rural areas and 216,925 in urban areas. Historically, these communities have faced social exclusion and economic struggle, much like other regions in India. The SC population in Tripura mainly includes 'Jalia Kaibarta', 'Muchi' (Rishi), 'Namasudra', and 'Patni', etc. Traditionally, most of these groups worked in fishing, leatherwork, and manual labor.

However, in recent years, there has been a gradual shift towards education, government jobs, and small business activities. The state government, following the constitutional provision of India, has launched various welfare schemes and programs for the development of the Scheduled castes. Despite these initiatives, schemes, and programs, challenges like limited land ownership, unemployment, and lack of access to higher education still hinder mobility. Social reforms and Political participation have raised awareness and representation for SCs in Tripura's governance. The reservation of seats in the Tripura Legislative Assembly led to gradual but meaningful social change, improving the integration of Scheduled Castes into the state's development process. The population of the Scheduled Castes as per the **5 Census** is exposed under:

Table 5: SC Population

SL No.	Census Year	Total Population	SC Population	Proportion (%) of the Scheduled Caste Population
1	1971	15,56,342	1,92,860	12.39%
2	1981	20,53,053	3,10,384	15.11%
3	1991	27,57,205	4,51,116	16.36%
4	2001	31,99,203	5,55,116	17.37%
5	2011	36,73,917	6,54,724	17.80%

Source: SC Welfare Department.

Table 6: In Tripura District-wise Scheduled Castes Population (Census 2011)

SL No.	Name of the District	Scheduled Caste Population			Percent of Scheduled Castes.
		Population	Male	Female	2011
1	West Tripura	192475	97687	94788	20.96%
2	Sepahijala	82558	42526	40032	17.07%
3	Khowai	63062	32310	30752	19.25%
4	South Tripura	65737	33705	32032	15.26%
5	Gomati	74430	38306	36124	16.86%
6	North Tripura	60554	30958	29596	14.51%
7	Dhalai	61688	31461	30227	16.31%
8	Unakoti	54414	27417	26997	19.98%
Tripura		**654918**	**334370**	**320548**	**17.82%**

Source: Census data.

15. MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SCHEDULED CASTES IN TRIPURA

Tripura's Scheduled Caste community faces various socio-economic, political, and cultural issues, despite numerous government schemes, programs, and constitutional provisions; this group remains saddled with problems like poverty, discrimination, illiteracy, unemployment, and poor political representation. In recent years, these problems have increased rapidly.

15.1. Delays or incomplete distribution of financial support:

SC students who cleared B.Ed. in 2023 took to protest, about 3,200 students, only 60% had received their scholarship by January 2024; the rest were waiting after 8 months. They protested due to the delayed disbursement of their scholarship. These delays can lead to vital hardship, increase the risk of dropouts, and result in a burden of debt.

15.2. Reservation Rights violations:

In Tripura, the Scheduled Castes are dealing with the 'Vacancy-Lapse' issues. Reserved posts stay unfilled for long periods. Authorities let these posts lapse instead of moving them forward or filling them based on merit when there are no eligible SC candidates. Recent examples involve sports recruitment notices where SC quotas were set lower than the required percentage. There are also M.B.B.S. seat reservations where unfilled seats could not be legally moved from reserved categories. These lapses deny SC aspirants opportunities and violate constitutional and statutory reservation rules.

15.3. Infrastructure and Basic Services Gaps in SCSP villages:

In Tripura, many SCSP villages & areas lack essential services, like drinking water, electricity, sanitation, safe roads, and health facilities. Although the SC Welfare Department of Tripura identifies these areas as priorities in its development plans, the implementation remains inconsistent.

15.4. Social Discrimination and Identity Issues:

Although Tripura has received praise in previous reports for the relatively better status of SCs, such as high literacy rates among SCs, discrimination and exclusion continue in many everyday situations. There are also problems with false or invalid SC certificates and the processes of verifying 4these certificates. These can lead to both misuse of benefits and the execution of legitimate applicants.

15.5. Poverty, Unemployment, and Limited Livelihood Options:

In Tripura, many SC families have unstable incomes. They rely on agriculture and small animal husbandry, among other activities. They also have limited access to credit, the market, and assets. Due to poverty and inadequate access to better education, many SC students have dropout their school.
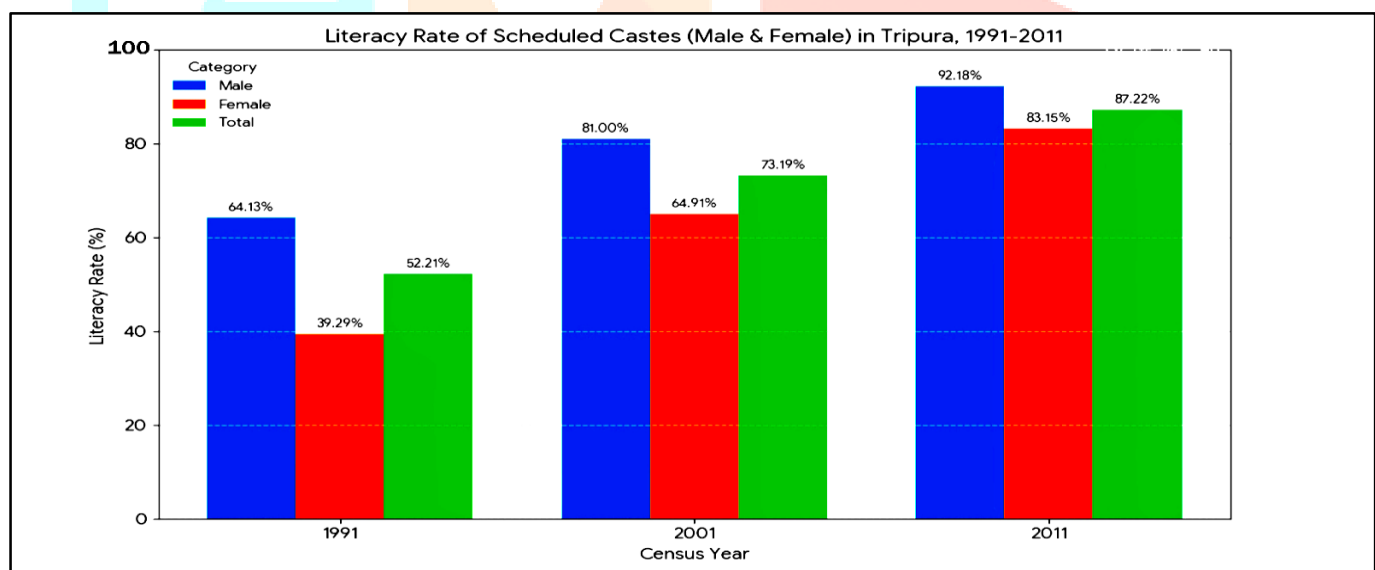
16. LITERACY RATE OF THE SCHEDULED IN TRIPURA

The literacy rate among Scheduled Castes in Tripura has shown significant improvement over the past few decades, reflecting a growing emphasis on education and social development within marginalized communities. According to the 1991 Census, literacy rates were low, with male literacy at about 64.13% percent and female literacy at only 39.29% percent and the overall literacy rate was 52.21%. This substantial gap highlighted the educational disadvantages faced by Scheduled Caste women and the overall lack of literacy within the community.

However, with the gradual implementation of educational schemes, scholarships, and awareness programs, there was noticeable progress by the 2001 Census. During this period, the male literacy rate rose to approximately 81.0%, while female literacy increased significantly to around 64.91%, and the total literacy rate was 73.19%. This improvement indicated a growing participation of Scheduled Caste women in education and a narrowing of the gender gap.

In the 2011 Census, Tripura had made remarkable strides in literacy among the Scheduled Castes. The male literacy rate reached about 92.18%, and the female literacy rate climbed to nearly 83.15%, reflecting a much smaller difference between the two; the total literacy rate was 87.22%. Overall, the trend from 1991 to 2011 reveals consistent improvement in the educational status of Scheduled Castes in Tripura, with both men and women benefiting from expanded access to schooling and literacy programs. This is illustrated in the Histogram below:

Graph 3: Literacy Rate of Scheduled Castes (Male, Female & Total) in Tripura from 1991-2011.

16.1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEDULED CASTES

To endorse SC communities, the Tripura government bears full responsibility for their growth. The state administration has recognized 404 villages as SC-dominated areas under the SCSP plan, comprising 236 homesteads with a SC population ranging from 20% to 40%, and 168 villages with more than 40% SC residents. Consistently, 17% of plan funds target the enhancement of SCSP areas. This fund supports SC development across several fields, including farming, gardening, animal resources, and aquaculture sectors, as well as healthcare, education, drinking water, road creation, power connection, and water systems.

17. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study titled "Tripura Legislative Assembly: A Study on the Legislative Role of Scheduled Caste MLAs for the Development of Scheduled Castes" examines how Scheduled Caste (SC) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Tripura have contributed to the social, economic, and political upliftment of their communities. The findings reveal that SC MLAs have played a significant role in addressing the issues faced by the Scheduled Castes, particularly in education, employment, housing, and social justice. Through legislative debates, inquiries, and committee participation, they have advocated for welfare schemes and protective laws to tackle caste-based disparities.

However, the study also highlights that political constraints, party dominance, and inadequate financial allocations for SC-specific programs often limit their effectiveness. Despite these challenges, there has been notable progress in literacy rates, access to government schemes, and representation in governance.

The analysis concludes that stronger institutional support, enhanced autonomy, and capacity-building measures are essential to strengthen the legislative role of SC MLAs in promoting inclusive development and achieving constitutional equality for the Scheduled Castes in Tripura.

18. CONCLUSION:

The study examines the legislative role of Scheduled Caste (SC) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Tripura, focusing on their impact on the development of SC communities. While constitutional protections are in place, the role of legislators in implementing grassroots policies is crucial. The study finds that both SC and non-SC MLAs advocate for SC welfare in a manner that is limited and inconsistent. Several factors, including socioeconomic status, education, and party affiliation, influence the performance of SC MLAs. Additionally, structural barriers such as racial inequalities and inadequate training hinder their representation.

Despite the existence of welfare projects, poor monitoring and oversight have led to inefficiencies in their execution. Legislators require more empowerment to ensure effective monitoring of these projects and to address relevant issues. The study also highlights the under-representation and low visibility of SC women MLAs. To improve legislative performance and advance SC progress, the study calls for a stronger legal framework, capacity building for legislators, inclusive policies, and increased grassroots participation.

This research serves as both a diagnosis and a guide, urging legislators, political parties, and civil society to recognize the importance of legal intervention in achieving justice and equality for disadvantaged groups.

19. MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The study titled "Tripura Legislative Assembly: A Study on the Legislative Role of SC MLAs for the Development of Scheduled Castes" presents several key recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Scheduled Caste (SC) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and promote the holistic development of Scheduled Castes in the state.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Increased Participation**: SC MLAs should be given greater opportunities to actively participate in legislative committees focused on welfare, finance, and development issues.
2. **Budgetary Allocations**: The study advocates for increased budgetary allocations specifically dedicated to Scheduled Caste development, along with transparent monitoring mechanisms to ensure their proper utilization.
3. **Strengthening Welfare Departments**: It emphasizes the need to strengthen the role of the SC Welfare Department and improve coordination between government departments and MLAs for the efficient implementation of welfare schemes.
4. **Community Awareness**: Promoting community awareness about government programs is crucial, as well as improving educational and employment opportunities for the Scheduled Castes.
5. **Political Empowerment**: Ensuring the political empowerment of SCs through enhanced representation at all decision-making levels is also recommended.

If implemented, these measures would enable SC MLAs to perform their legislative duties more effectively and significantly contribute to achieving social justice and equality for the Scheduled Castes in Tripura.

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