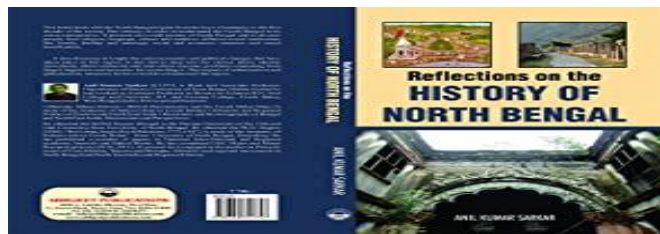


Book Review

Reflections on the History of North Bengal



The book is edited by Anil Kumar Sarkar, published by Abhijeet Publications, New Delhi 2018 which entitled Reflections on the History of North Bengal mainly dealing with the history of North Bengal after the partition of India. The present volume contains 14 articles that analyze the history of North Bengal from different aspects and picked up the right history of North Bengal respectively.

Actually in general North Bengal considers the northern part of West Bengal State which consisting the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Alipurduar, Kalimpong, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, and Malda. In these regions, a large number of various ethnic groups are living such as Rajbanshi, Nepali, Mech, Rabha, Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Toto, Jugi, Khen, Paliya, Deshi, Naisya Sekh, Bengali and Muslim, etc. After the partition of India, a large scale of migration from East Pakistan to North Bengal settle down and the naturally demographic scenario of this region has changed. After a few decades of independence, this process of regular settlement of refugees turned into a threat to normal life and also the existence of the indigenous people of North Bengal.

The first chapter deals with the Gorkhaland Movement especially for the recognition of Nepalese and they received support from a wide range of people, mass organizations, political parties and various state governments. The various national parties like CPI (Marxist), Janata Dal, BJP, etc lent their support to this movement. A national leader like Jayprakash Narayan in 1978 wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India to look after the matter and for consideration. In the year 1992 on 20 August, the Nepali along with Konkani and Manipuri recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The second chapter also highlights regionalism and the identity of the Gorkhaland movement. Regionalism as a movement may be defined as a cultural and political movement and other hands administrative and political movement which aiming the creation of a democratized and integrated governmental structure at an intermediate level between the state and traditional organs of local government. The third chapter deals with political threats to the people of the Duars area. After the received of higher education both boys and girls in this area became unemployed. But the governments have not solved the unemployed problems of these regions. In this situation, young boys are now going to other states for seeking their job. After migration, most of the local landlords lost their land. On the other hand, in the sources of inheritance, the land of the landlord was fragmented into different parts; some of the landlords lost their land and they became landless labourers. Many people of the old tea gardens areas are dying without food and also without Medical facilities. Forth chapter highlighting the women society of Uttar Dinajpur district of north Bengal which is composed of numerous

communities or groups like Adivasis, Rajbanshis, Santhals, Oraon, Mundas and some Biharis and they are economically backward Bengalees who migrated from East Bengal. These backward women of these areas help the male member of their families in cultivation and other agricultural-related works. The fifth chapter deals with the religious practices of the Rajbanshis who living in the villages of the border area of Darjeeling. The Rajbanshi people are worshipping various natural plants and on the other hand several animals, rivers and earth mothers. They believed that this animal and plants, as well as rivers, are very much protecting biodiversity in the ecology system especially earth and rivers which are essential steps for a healthy environment. This relation between the environment and religious practices is no doubt a positive step. The sixth chapter reflecting the history of roadways communication and the construction of several roads in the district of Jalpaiguri from 1885-1911. In this period several new roads were constructed to communicate the local areas of colonial Jalpaiguri. The seventh chapter is related to the emerging current issue of sub-regional movements in the northern part of Bengal especially the Gorkhland by the Nepalis of hill areas and on the other hand Greater Cooch Behar Movement by the inhabitants of plain areas of north Bengal. The goal of these movements is to attain equal rights with the majority community or political autonomy within the framework of the state. Both of the movements are negative and positive aspects and were raised for their separate identities in the northern portion of Bengal. The eighth chapter is highlighting the Rajbanshis Kamtapuri movement and concentrated its focus on the separate state for the Rajbanshi people as 'Separate Kamtapuri State' within the Indian Territory. Kamtapuri movement may be divided into three phases i.e. from 1891-1947 second 1947-1990 and 1990 to the present day respectably. The ninth chapter is the administrative re-organization of North Bengal. Different type movement was organized for the creation of the new administrative unit or new administrative body. The economic, social, political and cultural dissatisfactions were the main cause of these problems. The seed of separatist movements only germinates in the favourable condition of poverty and deprivation of the north Bengal area according to the author. The tenth chapter is dealing with the history of communication and transport of West Dinajpur. The main communication by roadways from Balurghat to Chopra was very difficult for official purposes as their headquarter was Balurghat. Due to poor communication, the peoples of Islampur Sub-Division suffered lots for their official work also. According to the author due to rail communication, the west Dinajpur was bifurcated in 1992 A.D. Eleventh chapter is dealing with the role of a social reformer in the colonial period was Panchanan Barma and his Kshatriya Samity. The main aims of the reformer and his Samity were to uplift the Rajbanshi community and to educate them and aware of their socio-economic condition. The twelfth chapter is the shadow administration of East India Company and officials of Nawab was acted as a machine of company. The early power of the company faced a hindrance from wandering mendicants namely Sanyasi and Fakir Rebellion from 1763 to 1800 A.D. Though it has little controversy. After that, the province of the whole of Bengal was under the disturbance. Thirteen chapters discussed the issue of the Greater Cooch Behar Movement headed by Banshibadan Barman and an ethno-regional movement which based on ethnic feelings and regional sentiments. The Koch Rajbanshi people are fighting for their own culture, language, tradition, and social values. Their ultimate goal is to initiate their mother-tongue in the school curriculum. They also demanded to include their mother-tongue in the Eighth Scheduled of the constitution. The fourteenth chapter is a movement of the sharecroppers demanding two-third instead of half as their share of production is known as the Tebhaga movement. The main issue of this movement was reduced rent to Landlords from 50% to 33% of the product by the Adhiars or Bargadars. Exploitation was going on as result the sharecroppers

revolted against Landlord. But the interesting issue is that the movement was led by the Communist Party of India and went for the mass movement.

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