

Rup Kumar Barman, *Jati-Raajni, Jaatpaat O Dalit Pratarka: Pashim Banger Prekshapate Tapashili Jatir Abasthan (Caste-Politics, Casteism and Dalit Discourse: Location of the Scheduled Castes in the Context of West Bengal)*, Alphabet Books, Kolkata, 2019, pp. 211, Rs. 450.

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The book in Bengali titled '*Jati-Raajni, Jaatpaat O Dalit Pratarka: Pashim Banger Prekshapate Tapashili Jatir Abasthan (Caste-Politics, Casteism and Dalit Discourse: Location of the Scheduled Castes in the Context of West Bengal)*' by Rup Kumar Barman, (Alphabet Books, Kolkata, 2019. Price: Rs. 450/-Pages: 211) is a valuable addition for understanding the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes of colonial and post-colonial Bengal. The book is based on primary data and existing secondary literatures on caste, caste-politics and Dalit Studies in India in general and West Bengal in particular. Primary data as used in the book have been collected by the author and his research team from various districts across the state of West Bengal. The book is a unique one for its nature for better understanding the location of the Scheduled Caste communities of West Bengal. In this work Dr. Rup Kumar Barman has clearly described the caste-politics, casteism and various dimensions of Dalit Discourses from colonial Bengal to post-colonial West Bengal. The author has aptly highlighted the socio-economic status and political participation of the Scheduled Caste communities of colonial Bengal for understanding their political subordination in the electoral politics of postcolonial West Bengal.

In the first chapter titled '*Itihascharchay Banglar Ninmaborniya Samaj O Rajniti*' (*Society and Politics of Subalterns of Bengal in the Study of History*) Dr. Rup Kumar Barman has described the evolution of historical studies from colonial anthropology to Dalit Discourse. Administrative anthropology on caste-based communities of Bengal, various studies of Indian intellectuals on caste system of colonial period, sociological discourses on social stratification, structure, power and validity of the caste and subaltern perspective processes of political empowerment of the Scheduled Caste of Bengal and the evidences of intensive research on Scheduled Caste in post-colonial period have been briefly analysed in the chapter one. In the second chapter, the author has described how the middle class was emerging within the Scheduled Caste communities in Bengal. The author has also analysed the role of social and political movements of the middle class of the Scheduled Caste communities in colonial Bengal. This chapter also highlights various social and political movements of the Rajbanshis, Malos, Pundras and the Namasudras of West Bengal in the postcolonial period.

In the third chapter, the author has clearly indicated how the politics of Bengal has politicised the caste issue. He clearly mentions with evidence how the dominant political parties of West Bengal have utilised the Scheduled Caste communities as their vote bank and flag bearers since the first Legislative Election 1952 to 2016. He mentioned that the Scheduled Caste communities of

West Bengal were the political slaves of Congress Party from 1952 to 1966. From 1960 to 1976 the Scheduled Castes of West Bengal followed the commands of both the 'right' and 'left' political parties. Under the Left Front (1977-2011), the Scheduled Castes of this state were controlled by the left political parties. They shifted their trust from the lefts to the rights dominated by the All India Trinamool Congress since 2011. So since independence, The Scheduled Castes of West Bengal were trying to establish their identity by Right-Left-Right order. The author has also highlighted the participation of the Scheduled Caste communities in government since 1947 to 2016 in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the author highlights the casteism and caste-related violence in West Bengal in the context of the caste-based society in India. In this chapter, he analyses with evidences about the sociocultural violence and casteism, scenario of economic underdevelopment and casteism, religious/communal violence and casteism, evidences of torture of the Dalit women in India, casteism and caste-related violence of rural Bengal, continuity of social disintegration and untouchability as stigma, casteism and caste-related violence of urban Bengal. He cited one evidence how children of Scheduled Caste community suffering physical and mental torture within the school. A 13 years old boy named Umesh Bhagat from Ballavpur Taluka of Bhavnagar district of Rajasthan from Balmiki community said that "teacher and Darbar community treated us differentially. I clean my class twice a month and urinals once every week" (p 108). He mentioned that Scheduled caste communities are humiliated by upper caste in the form of oral casteism/soft casteism or behavioural casteism in West Bengal. He mentioned how the Scheduled Castes are humiliated by the upper castes in schools in West Bengal. He cited one evidence of soft casteism in school: one Bimal Ruidas a member of Munchi community had sitting in the last bench with other Scheduled Castes in his school days and he humiliated by his fellow upper caste classmates regularly (p 118). He also highlighted much evidence how the Scheduled Caste students and research scholars of colleges and universities are humiliated by their fellow upper caste classmates and teacher only for their caste identity in India, particularly in West Bengal.

In the fifth chapter, the author draws a link between the concept of Dalit and Dalit Discourse. He has clearly described the various dimension of Dalit Studies and 'Dalitology' and briefly analysis the main theme of Dalit Discourse. He highlighted some characteristics of Dalit Discourse in this chapter. He cleared the meaning of 'Dalitology' as 'an aggregate of Dalit ideology, actions, assertions and demand for justice, the struggle for existence and sharing equal location in the domain of knowledge' (p 147).

In the sixth chapter the author critically analysed various literatures produced by the Dalits of West Bengal including autobiography, creative writings and writing related to their caste identity. In this chapter, he briefs some literature of upper caste intellectuals on Dalit; which indicated how upper caste intellectuals thought about the Dalits on that time. He cited how famous Bengali writer Debesh Roy fixed the identity of his main character 'Bagharu' in his famous novel '*Tistaparer Brittanta*' as either 'Rajbanshi' or 'Bhatiya'. The novelist writes about 'Bagharu' as "*akkhan to tor haba nagibei, hay Rajbanshi, nahay 'Bhatiyar Ghar'*" (you are either Rajbanshi or Bhatiya) (p 162). Rajbanshi is a dominant Scheduled Caste community of North Bengal and Bhatiyas are

those who have migrated from the then East Pakistan to settle in North Bengal. Dr. Rup Kumar also cited some famous works of famous upper caste Bengali writers where we find the real socio-economic status of the lower caste communities of Bengal. As evidences he cited Rabindra Nath Tagore's 'Gora' (1910), 'Ghare Baire' (1916); Manik Bandopadhyay's 'Padmanadir Majhi' (1913); Tarasankar Bandopadhyay's 'Hansulibaker Upokatha' (1947); Satinath Bhadurir's 'Dhorai Charit Manas' (1949-51) (p 163). At the same time, he cited some literary works of the Scheduled Caste writers where they tried to establish their identity. Such works are Srimanta Naskar's 'Jatichandrika' 'Bratyakshatriya Parichaya'; Harakishor Adhikarir's 'Rajbangshi Kulapradip'; Upendra Nath Barman's 'Rajbangshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas'; Mahendra Mallabarman's 'Jhallamalla Parichay'; Dharmachand Mallabarman's 'Sangkhipta Jalla Malla Kshatriya Tatta' (p 165). He also cited some autobiography of the well-educated Scheduled Castes where we find how they were suffering from caste discrimination in every sphere in their life. He cited Mahamta Raicharan Sardar's autobiography 'Deener Atmakahani ba Satyaparksha'; Rajendra Nath Sarkar's autobiography 'Jiban Katha'; Upendra Nath Barman's autobiography 'Uttarbanger Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti'; Pramoth Ranjan's Thakur's autobiography 'Atmacharit Ba Purbasmriti'; (p 170,171,172). He cited the novel of Harisankar Jaldas's 'Jalputra' where novelist Jaladas briefs 'how fisherman lost their right of fishing in water by the pressure of other castes' (p 174). He also cited some recent writings of Scheduled Caste writers of West Bengal such as Manoharmouli Biswas's 'Amar Bhubane Ami Benche Thaki' (2013), Manoranjan Byapari's 'Itibritte Chandal Jiban' (P 176). Author Dr. Rup Kumar Barman concludes his study to highlight that the 'Dalit Studies and Dalit Discourses' have open the Pandora's box to the thirsty researcher of Social Sciences.'