

## Book Review

**Bappa Mohanta**

Assistant Professor of History, Vivekananda College, Alipurduar, W.B.

Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Madhab Chandra Adhikary, (eds.) *Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma: A Legendary Social Reformer of Un-partition India*, New Delhi: Kunal Books, 2023, pp. xl+307, ISBN: 9789395651394.

This volume is a humble attempt to make a comprehensive biography of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma, the greatest social reformer of North Bengal and North-East India. Manishi Panchanan Barma (1866-1935), whose ideas and ideology brought a fundamental change in the Rajbanshi society of North Bengal in the first half of the twentieth century, played an important role in empowering society in general and women in particular. Thus, he became a shining star and a multilateral talent because of his vibrant life full of positive actions in the different fields such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and politics of the Rajbanshi community of North Bengal particularly in Cooch Behar and Rangpur. He was known by different names, such as Panchanan Sarkar, Panchanan Barma, Thakur Panchanan Barma, and Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma. Son of Khosal Chandra Sarkar and Champala Devi, he was born on 13<sup>th</sup> February in 1866 at the village of Khalisamari in the Mathabhanga sub-division of Princely State Cooch Behar. The main objective of this work is to revisit and evaluate of activities of Panchanan Barma and the Life Philosophy of Panchanan needs to be made public. A variety of themes regarding Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma with divergent approaches have been included in this volume, but they all seem to throw some light on the life and activities of Rai Sahib. The present work has been compiled in an attempt to fill these gaps in existing literary work regarding Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma.

In this volume, nineteen articles covered the life and activities of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma. This is not the final attempt but an initiative to expose Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma in Queen's Language to the reader. The editors' first endeavour to bring out Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma in Queen's language as still now no such kind of work has been published except Sukhabilsh Barma's '*Indomitable Panchanan*' which mostly covered the political aspect of Rai Sahib. All the leading personalities who have written in this volume are well-established in their respective fields.

The First Chapter entitled, 'Childhood of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma and Contemporary Society of the Princely State of Cooch Behar' written by Madhab

Chandra Adhikary and Keshob Mandal shed light on the childhood of Panchanan Barma in the contemporary society of the Cooch Behar State where modern education was introduced in the second half of the Nineteenth century. Nirmal Chandra Roy in his second Chapter deals with the Rajbanshi Society on the eve of the formation of the Kshatriya Samity in 1910. The third and the fourth chapters written by Amal Kanti Ray and Binay Barman focused on the contemporary Bengalee Society of Bengal and Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma. They argue that the Contemporary Bengalee did not support the sanskritization process of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Movement.

The chapter fifth written by Rajarshi Biswas deals with Panchanan Barma's historical journey from Cooch Behar to Rangpur. In this chapter, the author shows the reasons Panchanan Barma left Cooch Behar, his motherland and settled in Rangpur. The chapters six to nine and twelfth have been written by renowned personalities who deal with the different organizations of the Rajbanshis society. These chapters also deal with the Kshatriya movements which was launched by the Rajbanshi Community. In the chapter tenth entitled, 'Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma and the Peasant Class of Undivided Bengal' written by Madhab Chandra Adhikary, Sajib Barman and Latika Barman discuss the economic thinking of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma which later tried to save the peasant society from the tyranny of the contemporary society. The Chapter eleventh entitled, 'A Brief Assessment Regarding Relationship between Kshatriya Samiti and Bharatiya Mahasabha', Purnaprabha Barman deals with the Panchanan Barma's idea of Pan Indianization setting up the relationship between Kshatriya Samity and Bharatiya Mahasabha.

Chapters thirteen and fourteen written by Madhab Chandra Adhikary, Keshob Mandal and Bhupali Roy deal with the education thought and Contribution of Panchanan Barma to women's emancipation respectively. In chapter fifteen, Lalit Chandra Barman deals with Panchanan Barma's idea to form a Kshatriya Regiment by which he wanted to raise the ideal of Kshatriya Community. Chapter sixteen written by Sukhbilas Barma deals with the relevance of Panchanan Barma in 2023. In this chapter, the author tried to show that in every aspect of present-day Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma is relevant. The Rajbanshi society did not fulfil the dream of the Panchanan Barma yet. However, chapter seventeen deals with the Philosophical Ideas of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma (1866-1935 AD). In these chapters, the author Madhab Chandra Adhikary has given the social Philosophical thinking of Panchanan Barma in every aspect of the life of the Rajbanshi society which proves the farsighted approach of Panchanan Barma. This practical thinking of Rai Sahib is reflected in the social aspect of the Rajbanshi and the latter benefited and enjoyed different constitutional facilities. Chapters eighteenth and nineteenth written by Ananda Gopal Ghosh, provide a details book list, periodicals, Magazines, Articles, Pamphlets and research work on Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma. In his last chapter,

Sablu Barman discussed the relevance of Panchanan Barma's ideology in contemporary times.

The present book demands the novelty of the theme, dealing with various aspects of the Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma like his social sacrifices, political affairs, literary activities, educational and economic thinking, women's emancipation, philosophical ideas etc. This work is analytical and critical and the essays presented bear ample evidence of painstaking research and mature scholarship. Above all, the volume is free from factual errors and the presence of an exhaustive index, glossary and appendix have added to the value of this book. After carefully studying the book are found some minor spelling errors in this volume, however, do not detract from the merit of this book in which the editors have brought to light the hitherto scattered and fragmented information in a most professional manner. The book shall prove to be of immense value to both students and teachers and pave the way to come up with decisions that could be disseminated among historians, scholars and general readers. The overall get-up of the book, too, is impressive. I hope that this editorial collective will provide researchers, academicians, teachers, students and general readers with a short biographical sketch of Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma.

#### **Declaration of conflicting interest**

The author declared that there are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of book review.

#### **Funding statement**

The author did not receive any financial assistance for the research, authorship, and/or publication of book review.