



## NORTH BENGAL PEOPLE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

North Bengal is the northern part of the Indian state of West Bengal. River Ganges splits West Bengal into two parts- North and South. North Bengal consists of the eight northern most districts of West Bengal. Covering an area of about 21750 sq. km, North Bengal has very significant as well as vulnerable geostrategic location as it shares international border with three neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Characteristically, North Bengal lags behind rest of West Bengal in terms of development, urbanization, society, culture and infrastructure. With the exception of some scattered urbanization, the territory is largely rural and agrarian in nature. North Bengal can be considered mini India in many ways as it is the home to a large number of people of different races, ethnicities, religion and languages having different cultures. Level of development of various communities is also varying in character. Despite this, the social life of North Bengal is generally calm and intact. The present book is an honest initiative, depicting people, society and culture from different corners of North Bengal and also portraying the socio-cultural transformation over time.

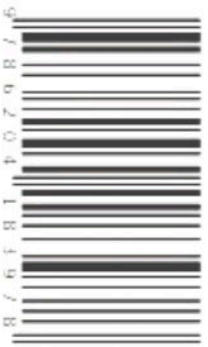


**Dr. Prabir Kumar Kundu** is an Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Geography, Siliguri Mainla, Mahabudhaya. His fields of interest are Population, Urban & Social Geography, *Impact of Partition and Bangladesh Liberation War on Urban Growth* & *Sustainable Urbanization in East India: Present Trends and Future Concerns*, are two important books of him.

Prabir Kumar Kundu

## NORTH BENGAL

People, Society and Culture



9 780204 183978

Prabir Kumar Kundu

LAP  
**LAMBERT**  
Academic Publishing

# Contributors

1. **ANURUPA SAHA**  
Research Scholar, Department of Geography, West Bengal State University, Barasat, West Bengal, India
2. **ARPITA SAHA<sup>a</sup> & ARUP KUMAR SAHA<sup>b</sup>**  
<sup>a</sup>State Aided College Teacher (SACT), Department of Geography, Chanchal College, Malda, West Bengal, India  
<sup>b</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Chandrapur College, Burdwan, West Bengal, India
3. **ASRAFUL ALAM<sup>a</sup> & MOSLEM HOSSAIN<sup>b</sup>**  
<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Serampore Girls' College, Serampore, West Bengal, India  
<sup>b</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Central University of Karnataka, Karnataka, India
4. **DIPA BHATTACHARYA MANDAL**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
5. **JOSNARA KHATUN<sup>a</sup> & UJJWAL KUMAR HALDER<sup>b</sup>**  
<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India  
<sup>b</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Gour Banga, Malda, West Bengal, India
6. **MAHUYA ROY CHOUDHURY (BHOWAL)**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
7. **MOITREE CHAKRABORTY**  
State Aided College Teacher (SACT), Department of English, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
8. **PAPIA DEB**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Maynaguri College, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India
9. **RATAN CHANDRA PAUL**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
10. **SAMIT GHOSH**  
Researcher & Secretary, Dakshin Dinajpur Heritage Society, Balurghat, West Bengal, India
11. **SANGHITA SARKAR**  
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
12. **SRIMOTI GHOSH SANYAL**  
State Aided College Teacher (SACT), Department of English, Siliguri Mahila Mahabidyalaya, Siliguri, West Bengal, India
13. **TARUN DAS<sup>a</sup> & D. K. MANDAL<sup>b</sup>**  
<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Siliguri College, Siliguri, West Bengal, India

# Contents

Chapter Number	Title	Page Number
<b>Section I: People</b>		
1.	Livelihood adaptation in forests: A case study of forest villagers in Alipurduar district, West Bengal <b>TARUN DAS &amp; D. K. MANDAL</b>	5-16
2.	Religious population composition of Malda district: An analysis (1991-2001) <b>ARPITA SAHA &amp; ARUP KUMAR SAHA</b>	17-28
3.	Plight of the Dalits in North Bengal: Balmikis of Darjeeling <b>SRIMOTI GHOSH SANYAL</b>	29-34
4.	Trends and differential of literacy rate in Koch Bihar district of West Bengal <b>ANURUPA SAHA</b>	35-44
5.	Probing the Autochtones: Anatomization of the Lepcha community of Darjeeling <b>MOITREE CHAKRABORTY</b>	45-50
<b>Section II: Society</b>		
6.	Working women in the social niche: A revelation from the study of the Cooch Behar town <b>WRITUPARNA CHAKRABORTY</b>	52-60
7.	Situating PESA and FRA on the broader aspect of Tribal Development: Relevance in North Bengal <b>PAPIA DEB</b>	61-69
8.	Trans-boundary river friendship is needed between India and Bangladesh: A North Bengal perspective <b>TUHIN SUBHRA MANDAL</b>	70-73
9.	Sustainable development in rural areas of North Bengal: Methodological issues <b>DIPA BHATTACHARYA MANDAL</b>	74-77
10.	Role of market participants in rural market centres and its impact on rural economy of Cooch Behar district <b>RATAN CHANDRA PAUL</b>	78-87
<b>Section III: Culture</b>		
11.	The unheard songs of the soil: Voices and life-worlds in the folksongs of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal <b>SANGHITA SARKAR</b>	89-93
12.	Food culture in Transition: Bengalis of Darjeeling District <b>MAHUYA ROY CHOUDHURY (BHOWAL)</b>	94-97
13.	Factors of socio-cultural transformation of the people of North Bengal <b>JOSNARA KHATUN &amp; UJJWAL KUMAR HALDER</b>	98-101
14.	The Geography of Koch Behar District, West Bengal: A Cross-sectional Analysis <b>ASRAFUL ALAM &amp; MOSLEM HOSSAIN</b>	102-113
15.	Peasant agitations of North Bengal by the political parties with special reference to Malda and West Dinajpur (1921-1967) <b>SAMIT GHOSH</b>	114-135

# Situating PESA and FRA on the Broader Aspect of Tribal Development: Relevance in North Bengal

## PAPIA DEB

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Maynaguri College, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India  
Email: piadeb.chanda@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Improving the system of governance in tribal India and enhancing the livelihood of Adivasis dependent on natural resources has been an important focus for policy planners. In this context, proper implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 and Forest Rights Act, 2006 are paradigm shifts that can impact the tribal communities favorably. These Acts empower them on matters relating to decision-making and development of their community by ensuring access to resources and rights which facilitate self-governance. However, despite the enactment of PESA Act nearly two decades ago and FRA a decade ago, these historical legislations have failed to impact the livelihoods of Adivasis. This article attempts to analyse the facts behind this. The paper has also the objective to understand the challenges and constraints faced by the communities involved in these initiatives and to understand the role of policies facilitating these initiatives in North Bengal area.*

**Keywords:** PESA, FRA, self-governance, adivasis.

### Introduction

Hundreds of millions of indigenous peoples live in nuclear villages across India. For them, life means living in harmony with the environment. It has made them feel deeply connected to rivers, trees and hills and brought their lives in its lap. So they cultivated a life of quite withdrawal. This habit is often interpreted as isolation or distance. It has long been recognized that some of the traditional views of tribal people 'as tiresome savages who caused troubles or as colourful and picturesque folk engaging themselves in sexual orgies, human sacrifice and head hunting or as backward, mired in superstition and squalor were unjust and unreal and needed to be changed. But tribal people are always treated as an inseparable part of our civilization and culture. Every aspect of their socio-cultural life be it religion, language, art, painting, dance, drama, music, fairs and festivals or literature bear a stamp of tribal identity. The motley crowd of tribal communities living across the length and breadth of India has enriched the cultural heritage of the state by their cultural diversities.' (Mishra, 2016)

Regarding tribal development and welfare, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emphasizes that our duty which come first is 'to preserve, strengthen, and develop all that is best in tribal society, culture, art and language. The second is to protect the tribal economic right. The third is to unite and integrate the tribes in a true heart unity with India as a whole, so that they may play a full part in their life. And the last is to develop welfare and educational facilities so that every tribesman may have an equal opportunity with rest of the fellow citizens who work in the fields, factories and workshops in the open country and the plains.'

Improving the governance system in tribal India and enriching the livelihoods of the natural resource dependent Adivasis has been an important goal for policy makers. In this context, the successful implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996 and Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 are paradigm shifts that can have a positive impact on tribal communities. These laws empower them in decision-making and community development issues by giving them access to resources and rights that facilitate self-government. In 1996, the Indian parliament approved what is arguably the most important legal measure for indigenous peoples since independence without much publicity and almost unnoticed. These are progressive laws that can impact the tribal communities favorably by ensuring access to resources and rights which facilitate self-governance.

Both PESA and FRA are rights-based laws with something in common. While the scope of PESA is limited to registered areas, FRA extends to all forests. The common chain that unites PESA and FRA is trust in Gram Sabhas as the decision-making unit. While Gram Sabha owns Minor Forest Produce (MFP) in PESA, the rights to MFPs in FRA is held by Scheduled Tribes (STs) as well as non-Tribal, known as Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs). However, these rights must be exercised in accordance with the decisions of Gram Sabha. In a letter dated February 13, 2015, the Minister of Tribal Affairs has made it clear that there is no conflict between FRA and PESA over ownership of MFPs and has called both as 'kindred statute'. However, one difference between FRA and PESA that can be inferred is that unlike