

Book Review-2

Arnav Debnath, *Political Violence in a Block of West Bengal: Hariharpara (1984-2011)*, Berhampur: Shilpanagari Printer's, 2017, Price: 150, pp. 145

"Practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world."

-Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) German Philosopher

In recent times, 'Political Violence' has emerged as an incurable disease, disrupting the peace and order of society. In marginalized areas where people are not aware of education, law, and politics, political violence becomes more of an epidemic and leads people astray. In this context, "Political Violence in a Block of West Bengal: Hariharpara (1984-2011)" by Arnav Debnath is an important and insightful book. The author attempts to present a thorough analysis of various issues related to political violence during a specific period (1984-2011) in Hariharpara block of Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

The author explores how the block became a hotbed of political rivalry, factionalism, and violence, especially in the period of 1984-2011. Debnath analyses the intricate network of connections among local politicians, party members, and law enforcement that fuel the increase in violence. Debnath also explores the social and economic issues that contributed to the violence, such as land conflicts, poverty, and joblessness. He contends that the political parties manipulated these complaints for their own gains, resulting in a vicious cycle of violence and reprisals. This book is divided into five chapters, each focusing on a specific aspect of the political violence in Hariharpara.

The first chapter deals with the context and narratives, the problem of conceptualization, and the local arena. It has been shown that every political action, occurrence, and event are shaped by and confined within their specific context, whether within the boundaries of family, community, nation, society, or the global stage. Since politics is influenced by local elements, it takes on characteristics from social interactions, making society an essential context for comprehending the advantages and disadvantages of its political changes and activities. The author clearly states that the specific history and characters play a vital role in shaping the unique conditions of the local area, influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors, ultimately impacting its political landscape.

The second chapter explains Political Dynamics, Society and Politics, and Crime and Politics of Hariharpara block. Hariharpara had a few key elements for understanding the functioning of the socio-political dynamism that impacted

the designated time period related to this subject. Although it was a Muslim-populated block, there were also Tribal villages like Nishchitapur of Choan G.P or Daspara where most of the people are cobblers (Muchi). There also lived a very small number of Malpaharis in the block. There was another community in this block who adopted and practiced Baul ways of life. The direction of politics of Hariharpara included a diverse mix of political organizations, such as Congress, CPI(M), SUCI, Muslim League with their respective disparate ideologies, objectives, and programs.

In the third chapter, the foundation and the organization of the Hariharpara Nagarik Kalyan Parishad (HNKP) have been discussed historically, taking into consideration the political consciousness and socio-economic background. The HNKP is perceived as a restructuring of individuals who appeared more formidable than ever to the triad consisting of testimony from Sarkar, law enforcement, and administrative authorities, as well as to the anti-social elements and the marginalized and underprivileged masses of Hariharpara. The author sheds light on politics and popular agitation, state violence: victims and perpetrators through appropriate evidence and meaningful discussion.

The first part of the fourth chapter highlights the issues of groups, politics and representative democracy, elections, struggle for power, and political parties of Hariharpara block. Political violence occurring at various levels of representative democratic institutions, such as the central, state, district, and local levels, is a result of the inherent contradictions and conflicts among the primary actors of representative democracy, namely the political parties. In the second part of this chapter, while analysing various facets of autotelic political violence in Hariharpara, the author makes a constructive analysis of the extent to which issues such as supplement repetition, transgression had an impact.

The fifth chapter explores the religion politics, sectarian violence, religious violence, and communalism at the local level politics in Hariharpara block. Religious politics might not consistently operate in the same manner as party politics or politics associated with matters of elections, land, and territorial control. Because not only the micro-level factors tend to be local issue-oriented, but also due to the fact that it is much more sensitive than the first one to much which can easily convert itself into the flare-ups of violence. In Hariharpara block, the 'Bauls' as a sect have been subject to political violence in the form of sectarian violence. The Bauls in Hariharpara block had been under pressure due to their hidden 'Dark Side' since the 1970s. A reform movement against the Bauls was initiated in February 1973 in the Nowda block. This movement soon emanated to Hariharpara block by a militant group of Muslim fundamentalists backed up by political support.

The relationship between society and politics is seamless, inseparable. The history of a particular society preserves the politics that took place within that social context, the multiple elements, processes, and forms of politics. Recently, political turmoil and acts of violence are appearing in multiple ways, steering

the trajectory of history in various directions. From this perspective, this book is an important addition to the students and researchers of social sciences. The book will help develop a clear understanding of political dynamics, political activities, formation of political parties, creation and impact of political violence, and abuse of power at the regional level, especially at the block level.

Jahangir Biswas
Ph.D Research Scholar
Aliah University