

PROTEST MOVEMENT OF A DALIT COMMUNITY – A STUDY OF NAMASUDRA COMMUNITY OF COLONIAL BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

The Namasudras are recognized as the lower caste people of East Bengal. They constituted the largest agrarian caste in Eastern Bengal. They gradually emerged as a well-organized community so as to successfully challenge the hegemony of Hindu ritual order and the domination of high caste gentry in colonial Bengal. In the last decades of the 19th century, they organized a powerful movement among the schedule castes communities of Bengal. When schedule caste politics emerged in the province in the 1930s, the Namasudra community provided the same with both powerful leadership and popular support base. But their internal conflict weakened their movement. The alignments, defections, the splitting of leadership among the Namasudra leaders were breaking the internal coherence of the movement. The movement ultimately lost its independent entity that was there till 1937 before the elections. The result of the 1946 election showed a complete breakdown of their independent entity. The partition put the final nail on the coffin.

KEYWORDS *Dalit, Scheduled Castes, Harijan, Brahmanic Hegemony, Namasudra, Christian Missionary, Matua, Harichand, Congress, Swadeshi Movement, Non –Cooperation movement, Quit India movement*