

CHAPTER-VI

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Social mobility was a common phenomenon in Colonial India. The Hindus were constituted the majority of the population and it had to take place within the structural framework defined by the caste system. Its historical roots provide base for its evaluation. Glimpses of the self-conscious social mobility movement among the Rajbanshis of Bengal in demand of 'Kshatriya' status have been appeared in abundant detail throughout the Indian Census Reports of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We have to discuss the Rajbanshi social movement in two broad aspects of the community –viz. 'Kshatriya' identify and politics of the caste movement. Before entering to these questions, we have to concentrate on the existing caste system and social mobility in Bengal first.

I

If we follow the historical records, it would be cleared to us that in Bengal, as well as in India, there had been consistent movements for upward mobility within the caste. The principal objective of this movement was its promotion from a lower to a higher berth in the 'varna'/ caste hierarchy and greater respectability in terms of the given conditions of caste system in a region. Either an aspiring caste laid claim to a higher traditional rank by calling itself by a 'varna' name, or it has dissociated itself from it; low rank by acquiring an entirely new name.

The following statement shows the claim of different castes in Bengal for specific 'varna' affiliation as had been recorded in the Census Report from 1911 to 1931. ¹

Table 6.1: 'Varna' status claimed by different castes in Bengal during the Census Report of 1911, 1921, and 1931.

Name of the castes	Varna status claimed
1. Namasudra, Jogi, Kamar, Napit (Kamar claimed kshatriya in 1921 and Vaisya in 1911; Napit claimed Kshatriya in 1911)	Brahman.
2. Kayastha, Aguri, Mahisya, Goala, Sundi, Pod, Mayra/Modok, Bagdi (Mahisya claimed Vaisya in 1901, Rajbanshi claimed kshatriya in 1911, their earlier claim being Bhanga or Bratya Kshatriya)	Kshatriya
3. Sadgop, Tili, Gandhabanik, Tambulibanik, Barui, Tanti, Subarnabanik, Saha, Chasadhoba (Claimed as Vaihsya in 1911, their earlier claim Being Sadgop)	Vaishya
4. Jalia-Kaibarta	Mahishya.

Sources: Census Report of India 1911, 1921, 1931.

From the above table it is evident that many castes in Bengal sought three types of *varna* affiliations- Brahman, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*, the three classical "twice-born" *varnas* amongst the Hindus. However, it has been further observed that in terms of respective claims the *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya varnas* were regarded as better reference models of social mobility than the Brahman model. The real motive of such *varna* preferences was adaptation of *varna* status. Some intermediate castes claimed up to the respectable rank in the caste hierarchy through other social mobility process. ² Caste pride was also very prominent and usually the upper castes claimed to be culturally superior to those lower down. There were numerous examples of daily

usages of hierarchical behavior in Bengali life, which clearly indicates the mentality of the upper castes towards the lower castes.³ Such caste related cultural stereotyping often-generated social tension. But it was difficult to visualize any alternative means to register their protest or ventilate their grievance, the aggrieved lower castes looked for a solution within the caste structure itself by claiming higher status.

II

In the discussion of socio-political stirring of the period under review, it is important to take account a movement that emerged and spread among the Rajbanshi Hindus of Northeastern part of India particularly of Northern districts of West Bengal, Rangpur, Dinajpur, the Princely State of Koch Behar and Goalpara district of Assam. The movement came to be called the Rajbanshi *Kshatriya* movement by its leaders and participants.⁴ Now, if we look at the Rajbanshis in the context of existing social position, it will be easier to understand the genesis of the Rajbanshi social movement.

In the social position of Bengal, the Rajbanshis were placed at the bottom of the structure, along with the *Namasudras*, the Pods and the other *antajas* castes. Those among lower caste were not ready to bear this lower caste stigma, they argued and appealed in favour of their higher status. In this chapter, we have to examine their motive of new identity. Shekhar Bandopadhyaya in his book *Caste, Politics and the Raj* argued that in Bengal, around the beginning of the twentieth century the idea of social equality ingrained in the tents of Christianity by several Christian missionary agencies. It was gradually being dissimilated among

the people living at the bottom of the social hierarchy and the conversions that took place, like the earlier conversions to Islam, symbolized attempts on their part to break away from the stranglehold of the caste system.⁵ As a result, of all those liberalizing influences a number of *ajalchal* and *antajas* castes around the middle of the nineteenth century became conscious of their separate social identity arising out of their inferior position in society. Swaraj Basu has observed that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries apart from the Rajbanshis, several other lower and intermediary castes in Bengal as well as in other parts of India were also trying to claim higher caste status.⁶ He also argues that the local social situation also provided a sufficient ground for the Rajbanshis' assertion of a *Kshatriya* identity and their endeavour to build up caste solidarity.⁷ In the Chapter No. IV, it has been discussed that the gradual settlement of other caste Hindus in what were traditionally the Rajbanshi dominated areas of North Bengal, the existing balance in local power structure had been changed. The immigrant people in course of time had become the most dominant group in the field of social, political, and economic field. They managed the local administration and by virtue of their closeness to the administrative power and their shrewdness, emerged as the dominant landholding class. They also acquired a respectable position in society. On the other hand, the Rajbanshis with a tradition and culture of their own failed to get a respectable position in the status. There were sharp dissimilarities between the cultural practices of these two groups. The immigrant people treated the Rajbanshis as 'backwards', 'uncultured' and even *antajas*.⁸ They used to refer to the Rajbanshis as 'bahe' implying their cultural inferiority. It is to be mentioned here that the word 'bahe' was a distortion of the word 'babahe' by which the Rajbanshis generally addressed a person like fatherly /motherly relation, which was also discussed in the

Chapter No. V.⁹ As a result the indigenous Rajbanshis used to refer to the outsiders as 'bhatia', meaning an outsider (from East Pakistan) to their land. Thus, the attitude of cultural superiority of the immigrant people and their general tendency to look down upon the Rajbanshis prevented a closer relationship between the two communities. This alienation from the other caste did indirectly promote caste solidarity among the Rajbanshis according to Basu.¹⁰

There were other causes of alienation among the Rajbanshis. They have faced insults and humiliation from the Brahmanical culture of the caste Hindus. The immigrants with a strong awareness to caste started interacting with indigenous Rajbanshis in differential terms. There are numerous instances of humiliation and objectionable identities of the Rajbanshis by the other caste immigrant. Few such instances of racialism interpretation and social suppression are Nagendra Nath Basu in the early twentieth century while writing his *World Encyclopedia (Biswakosh)* mentioned the Rajbanshis as barbarians or *mlechha* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya in *Bango Darshan* moots that the Koch identity. The immigrant people regarded the Rajbanshis as *antajas* who had no right to enter the places of worship on any public places/ celebration of *pujas* or to enter the kitchen in the upper caste households. Dharma Narayan Bhakti Shastri has mentioned that the Caste Hindus did not accept water from the Rajbanshis.¹¹ Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, writing on the social history of Jalpaiguri has mentioned that caste system was strictly maintained there and the people of higher and lower castes used to sit in different rows on any public lunch or dinner. He also mentioned that the Rajbanshis were regarded as *ajalchal* and they were not allowed to touch the wells of the caste Hindus. However, after the beginning of the *Kshatriya* movement the situation gradually became changed.¹² Upendra

Nath Barman, in his biography of Panchanan Barma namely *Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jeeban Charit*, has mentioned that one day by mistake the lawyer Panchanan Barma went to the court room wearing the 'Toga' (the cap) of some Maitra ,who was one of his high caste colleagues in the bar. Realizing his mistake, when he was going to back the cap to Maitra, the latter angrily threw it away and said, "I hate to use a 'Toga' used by a Rajbanshi".¹³ Upendra Nath Barman has also mentioned the incident of Rangpur Normal School boarding house where a Rajbanshi student had entered the kitchen of the hostel to enquire from the cook whether the food was ready or not, but on this plea instantly two or three boys, belonging to the upper castes, refused to accept food, which ultimately had to be thrown away for the consumption of the cows and fresh food had to be prepared.¹⁴ In his autobiography, *Uttar Banger Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti* (Bengali), Upendra Nath Barman has mentioned an incident of his student life at Cooch Behar Victoria College (1916-20) as follows.

"There were two dining halls in the college hostel. The students took food in either of these halls according to their liking. But one day the hostel superintendent in a notice declared that one hall would be reserved for Brahmins and the other for the *Kshatriyas*, while a separate arrangement would be made for the students of other communities for taking their food. Upendra Nath Barman protested against this caste discrimination by the hostel superintendent and complained to the state administration. Ultimately, the matter was brought to the notice of the college principal, who made it clear to the hostel superintendent that Victoria College hostel is not for those who observe caste distinction."¹⁵

Another personal memoir related to the *Swadeshi Days* (i.e. first decade of the twentieth century) mentions that in the Rajshahi College hostel a

Rajbanshi student who was not allowed to enter the dining hall, was ultimately compelled to have his meal in the hostel courtyard. To add to all these, the students of the lower castes were required to wash their own utensils.¹⁶ There are numerous incidents of the caste hierarchy in the society under review.¹⁷

From the above instances, it is clear that the position of the Rajbanshi in local social life was not respectable to the caste Hindus. Consequently, a sense of alienation and a spirit of community solidarity among the Rajbanshis have been developed. Their search for *Kshatriya* identity was only a symbolic cultural expression of this emergent collective self-consciousness. Swaraj Basu argued that being marginalized by the upper caste gentry in the field of power race, both in economic and political, the Rajbanshi elites used the caste idiom to voice their grievances. Thus, the aspiration for higher social status and political power motivated the Rajbanshi elites to develop among the Rajbanshis in general an articulate caste consciousness in order to launch a well-organized movement for social justice.¹⁸

The Government policy of enumerating Hindu castes in the census reports based on 'social precedence as recognized by native public opinions' geared the Rajbanshi caste leaders to mobilize their community members to claim a *Kshatriya* status. In this regard we may quote L.S.S.O' Malley's reports- "there was a general idea in Bengal that the object of the census is not to show the number of persons belonging to each caste but to fix the relative status of different castes and to deal with questions of social superiority.... This warrant of precedence gave rise to considerable agitation at the time and proved a legacy of trouble".¹⁹ The census operations had created notion among the members to the various

lower caste that if they could have their names listed in the census reports in the category of twice born, their social rank would automatically be raised and recognized by the indigenous society. Thus, this notion of legitimacy of the census operation created in local society led the sudden growth of caste associations and caste movements. However, A. K. Ray has remarked, though immediate cause of the caste movement originate through the Census of India, the basic origin of *Kshatriya* movement could be located in the hatred and ill-treatment received by the community at the hands of the upper castes of the Hindu society.²⁰ Buchanan Hamilton had noticed at the turn of the nineteenth century the prevalence of legends associating the Rajbanshi of North Bengal with the *Kshatriyas* of classical age. Indeed, it was from this time onwards, that some important Rajbanshi families, such as that of Mahiram Chaudhuri had started claiming *Bratya Kshatriya* status.²¹ Simultaneously, a movement for wearing sacred thread had also started among the *Kayastha*, under the initiative of Raj Narayan Ray, the '*Kayastha*' '*zamindar*' of Andal and Raj-Narayan Mitra.²² Shekhar Bandopadhyaya has remarked, "These movements were, however, more elite-oriented and could not involve the mass, as in the case of the *Namasudras*, and were, therefore, much less effective. Nonetheless, they signified a modest beginning."²³ On the other hand, Shib Sankar Mukherjee refers to two other reasons of '*Kshatriy movement*'. He observes, i) the claimants to Rajbanshi and *Kshatriya* lineage increased in the number of economically well-to-do landlords from the autochthonous population. This rise was the result of changes in agrarian relations associated with changing political and land revenue systems over time ; (ii) the upper echelons like '*jotedars*', '*babus*', and elites of Rajbanshi society ,because of their secular position demanded a corresponding high rank in caste hierarchy and organized articulated caste agitations in the last quarter of nineteenth

century.²⁴ The intention was to consolidate their social status. Therefore, the movement for *Kshatriya* status was expressive of the aspiration of particular sections of the Rajbanshi community distinct in the social background and historical origin. It was of course against the ill-treated humiliation by the caste Hindu. They became conscious of their low social position and wanted a higher berth in the local caste hierarchy.

III

Now the question, how did the Rajbanshis start the movement of *Kshatriyazation* ? The Rajbanshis caste leaders followed to move upward in the caste hierarchy like the path that pursued by the other castes in Bengal. According to Census Report of 1911, the common practice was to claim of affiliation to one of the three twice born *varnas*, and then in support of that status, to change the norms of religious-cultural behaviour to create myths to prove their claimed origin, and to appeal to the *pandits* for favourable rulings or *vyavasthas*.²⁵ A legend may be mentioned here as follows.

The Rajbanshis of North Bengal wished to be styled *Bhanga* or *Bratya Kshatriyas* and to be classed amongst the twice born castes. They follow various stories of their origin, the favourite one being the well-worn legend that their ancestors were the descendants of *kshatriyas* who discarded their sacred thread, when fleeing from the wrath of Parasurama.²⁶ In the Rajbanshi accounts the legend is constructed more elaborately. The Rajbanshis claimed that they were originally to the *kshatriya varna* and left their original homeland and took shelter in a region called Paundradesh corresponding to the districts of Rangpur,

Dinajpur, Bogra, and the adjacent areas in fear of annihilation of Parasurama, a Brahman sage. In order to hide their *kshatriyas* identity they gave up their sacred thread and started living with the local people and gradually came to be known as the *Bhanga Kshatriyas* or the fallen *kshatriyas*.²⁷ The Rajbanshis used the reference of *Bhramari Tantra*, *Kalika Purana* in support of their *kshatriya* origin.²⁸ It was supported in the writings of the famous eighteenth century Rajbanshi poet Rati Ram Das. In his *Jag-Samgeet*, Rati Ram Das spoke about his royal lineage and social that because of Paraushram's threat to the *kshatriyas*, they had come to North Bengal of present West Bengal and were living there as *Bhanga kshatriya* Rajbanshi.²⁹ Another reference may be produced here that the Rajbanshi people introduced to their memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission-

“They (the Rajbanshi *Kshatriya*) were once the ruling race in this part of the country sometimes with divided territories and different capitals, their last capital being Kamata Behar known also as Gosanimari now with the district of Cooch Behar. About 450 years ago sudden aggression made by Mohammedan invaders from Bengal brought about secretly by some non-*kshatriya* traitors surprised and made away with the late *Raja* Kamateswar, leaving the people quite consternate and without a recognized head.”³⁰

Though there are certain differences in these three accounts, the common thread that binds all of them together is the effort to create a convincing myth to provide their *Kshatriya* origin. The caste name ‘Rajbanshi’ that they used also implied their royal lineage or *Kshatriya* status. The first two accounts would describe them as an immigrant group; the third one appears to have been deliberately constructed to prove that they were the original ruling class in the Northern parts of

Bengal. There is a popular belief that the Rajbanshis to be the descendents of the Cooch Behar royal family, but the Rajbanshi caste leaders never equated themselves with this Cooch Behar royal family. However, the tribal origin of the Cooch Behar royal family was well documented in historical narratives. However, the Rajbanshi '*kshatriya*' leaders traced their origin from the legends rather than from the recorded history of the 'Cooch Behar Raj' to separate them from the Koch. The Rajbanshi caste leaders rather used certain legend for the reformation of socio- religion and cultural practices of the community. Hari Kishore Adhikary, one of the publicists for the caste movement , suggested three steps for the up gradation of the status of the Rajbanshi community viz., (i) adaptation of *kshatriya* like customs, (ii) shortening of the period of '*asauch*' and (iii) acceptance of *kshatriya* titles such as Singh, Barman, Ray etc. in place of existing ones like Sarkar ,Das, Mandal etc.³¹ Chandreswar Ray also prescribed some measures to raise their social status. They were as not to allow their women to roam around in the market and the fields, widow remarriage was to be discontinued, food items which were not be permitted by Hindu religion were not to be partaken of by the Rajbanshis either.³² Along with these measures, initiative should be taken to get favourable *vyavasthas* from the *Pandits* of various places in support of their claim to *ksahtriya* origin and their right to wear sacred thread. ³³

At the initial stage, the Rajbanshis caste leaders typically attempted to improve their social standing by altering their customs to resemble the ways of life of 'twice- born'. As a formal work of 'twice- born' they started wearing sacred thread and adopted *gotra* (clan) name. They also reduced the period of mourning and ritual pollution (*asouch*) from thirty to twelve days to corresponding with that of the *kshatriya*.

Discarding their origin 'Das' title, many of them adopted *kshatriya* surname like Barman, Burma, Singha and Ray etc. The Rajbanshis started settling their daughter's marriage at her early age and keeping their women behind curtain. They also gave up the practices of informal connubial relations, polygamy, widow-remarriage, and drinking of liquor. Traditional priests (Adhikaris) a section of the Rajbanshis established new '*jajmani*' relation with the immigrant '*storiya*' Brahmans. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Rajbanshi *kshatriya* movement also felt the need of participating in formal education and white collar jobs by their community men. But very soon the Rajbanshi leaders realized that without a proper organization this movement for *kshatriyaization* could not be carried further. The growth of various associations among the other castes might have also influenced the thinking of the Rajbanshi leaders. Thus, with the process of establishment of a formal organization network among the Rajbanshis was closely associated with their caste movement.

It has already been mentioned that the census operations gave an impression to the lower castes that if they could achieve official recognition of their claim for higher *varna* status, social recognition for the same would soon follow. Influencing by this impression of the Census authority the Rajbanshi leaders at the same time of every census tried to convince the census officials about the authenticity of their new claim. Upendra Nath Barman has written around 1891 Census, when the Government tried to lump together the Rajbanshis and Koches as members of the same caste; the Rajbanshis were hit by the caste sentiments and created a movement within the community.³⁴ The circular of the census authority barred the people of the community to register their caste as *kshatriya*. This created resentment among these

people and in many places in Rangpur, Dinajpur, and other part of North Bengal, they refused to disclose their names to the census officials and field workers. Many untoward incidents also took place, Rangpur became the centre of *kshatriya* movement.³⁵ Under Sri Harimohan Ray Khajanchi, a local 'Zamindar' of Shyampur (Rangpur), a movement against the census authority had been started and claimed that the Rajbanshi are '*kshatriya*' by caste.³⁶ He had established an association named 'Rangpur Bratya Kshatriya Jatir Unnati Bidhayani Sabha' for improvement of his community.³⁷ Harimohan Ray Khajanchi had been working to awake the Rajbanshi '*Kshatriyas*', urging them to give up their inertia and exert their right and influence as they used to do in the past. He realized that to give spontaneity to the movement it was necessary to educate the Rajbanshis that will help to know their glorious past, history, society, and tradition. To fulfill his aim he began to collect history, proverbs, traditions, cultural heritage of the '*Kshatriyas*'. He also met many Brahmins '*Pandits*', '*Naiyayikas*', '*Sastrakars*' of Rangpur and Kamarupa, and other elite sections of Hindu society in Rangpur. To his credit, he was successful in getting recognition of his caste from the 'Pandit Samaj' of Rangpur and Kamarupa and a section of the elite group in Rangpur.³⁸ In his two books- *Vratya Mochan Paddhati* and *Kshatriya Uponayan Byavastha* he published the opinions of the '*Pandits*' of Mithila, Kamarupa and Bengal stating that Rajbanshis were '*Kshatriyas*' and had become '*Bratya*' due to the non-observance of certain Vedic rites but can regain their '*kshatriyas*' position.³⁹ Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh observed that such progressing and scientific thinking of Harimohan Ray Khajanchi that the consciousness of glorious past could only convert the movement into spontaneous one was made from a rural place of Rangpur and such ideas were at that time only the monopoly of the Calcutta based intellectuals.⁴⁰

On 10th February 1891, a protest letter was lodged with the District Magistrate F. A. Skyne urging him to recognize Rajbanshis as a separate caste from the Koch and allow them to enroll as '*kshatriyas*' in this census. The letter referred the matter to the local '*pandits*' for this opinion. On their behalf, Mahamohopadhaya *pandit* Yadaveswara Tarkaratna gave the verdict that the manners and customs of the Rajbanshis were superior to those of the Koches. He further suggests that they practiced ritual and ceremonies, which were similar to those of the upper caste Hindus. He also drew references from the '*sastras*' and finally concluded that the Rajbanshis of North Bengal were '*kshatriyas*'. They should be recognized as '*Bratya Kshatriya*' not '*Bhanga Kshatriyas*'.⁴¹ The District Magistrate accepted the opinion of the *Pandit* Yadabeswar Tarkaratna on behalf of the 'Dharma Sabha', a mouth piece of Hindu religion and an association of the '*pandits*' and issued a fresh order on February 17, 1891. The order stated that the Rajbanshis would be permitted to refer themselves as '*Bratya Kshatriya*'. However, few '*zamindars*' and a section of elite of Rangpur town lodged a protest to the Magistrate against the decision. The District Magistrate then referred the matter back to the '*Dharma Sabha*' for a solution.⁴²

The '*Dharma Sabha*' called a meeting on 15th March, 1891 of Brahman '*Pandits*', '*Sastrakars*', '*Naiyayiks*' and influential members of the Hindu religion from Navadwip. The *Sabha* had also interviewed a large number of Rajbanshis, important Brahman '*Pandits*' of different places to know the social customs, habits and religious practices of the Rajbanshis. The convention was held in Rangpur town under the president ship of Prasanna Nath Choudhury where more than 400 representatives of the *Pandits* among of Hindu religion participated. On

the other hand, Navadwip *Pandit Mandali* was under the leadership of Mahamahapadhyaya Bhubaneswar Vidyaratna, the greatest *Naiyayik* of his time and five other learned *pandits*'s also participated in the convention. After a prolonged discussion, it was concluded that the Rajbanshi of North Bengal had Kshatriya descent and were Hindus. They had fallen as degraded from the Kshatriya position because of non-observance of *Vedic* rites and rituals and should be considered as '*Braty Kshatriya*'.⁴³ The decision of the convention was conveyed to the District Magistrate on 18th March, 1891. According to the opinion, Skyne issued an order on 18th May stated that from 1st *Jyistha* 1298 B.S. (May, 1891) the Rajbanshis would be permitted to refer themselves as *Braty Kshatriya* in all Governmental Deeds. This pacified the *kshatriyas* and the movement came to a temporary halt in 1891.⁴⁴ The movement, however, created a great enthusiasm among the people who began to shake off their inferiority complex, declare themselves openly as *kshatriya* and adopt *kshatriya* customs and titles. However, although it was getting popular and social awakening was visible; its nature was still sporadic and localized. By this time, the leadership was taken over by a more competent dynamic and forceful personality namely Panchanan Sarkar latter known as Panchanan Barma, an advocate of Rangpur originally an inhabitant of Cooch Behar State. It is to be mentioned here that when Panchanan Barma could not find any satisfactory job in his native place, he had decided to leave his birthplace and began to practice at court in Rangpur. It is also to be mentioned that he was the only first M.A. among the Rajbanshi community of his native state.⁴⁵

In 1901 Census the Rajbanshi *Kshatriya* were categorized as Rajbanshi only and this naturally caused resentment among them. The Rajbanshi leaders met in Rangpur and in a protest note to P. C. Maitra,

the District Magistrate of Rangpur on 1st February, 1901 urged him to recognize the Rajbanshis as *kshatriyas*. However, the latter in his order on 2nd February 1901, refused to reopen the case. Then it was quite clear that the recommendations of F. A. Skyne in 1891 were not accepted. The Rajbanshis there upon appeared to the Census Superintendent who also turned down their prayer, as it was too late to issue any fresh order on the point. On 19 April 1901, the Rajbanshis submitted a memorandum to Sir John Woodburn, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who in a letter of 22nd April informed them that their application had been referred to the Secretary of the Revenue Department for necessary action. However, no further action had been taken. In the Census Report of 1901, the Rajbanshis and the Koches were therefore, again classified as members of the same caste.⁴⁶

The Rajbanshis were disappointed and launched a vigorous movement with new enthusiasm. They now consented mainly on social issues. The movement had been spread throughout North Bengal of present West Bengal and touched even in the village level. Charges in religious rules like reduction of the mourning days on death of either parent from thirty days to twelve days like upper caste Hindus were carried out particularly in Dimla (Rangpur) and Mathabhanga (Cooch Behar). Many Rajbanshis, as a Singh of 'twice born' (Dwijja) began wearing sacred thread (Upabita) imposing their higher status like Shri Josh Rath Adhikary and others of Mekhliganj police station.⁴⁷

Under the leadership of Panchanan Sarkar, the movement had been got a new impetus. He urged to the Rajbanshis that unless the *kshatriya* stood on their own feet, no body will give them their *kshatriya* status and they should achieved it by merit and their right. He brought the

historical past and traditions of the Rajbanshi *kshatriyas*. He had started his campaign with the contention that Rajbanshis were different from the Koch who were a degraded caste and the because Rajbanshis were of royal lineage. According to the history narrated by him, the anti-*kshatriya* king Nanda, popularly known as Parasuram II lodged a fierce attack on the Paundra King, i.e. King of Paundradesh in North Bengal and Western Assam. The descendants of his agnates for many years to come concealed their sacred thread (which Panchanan claimed the Rajbanshis had) and their *kshatriya* identity. Panchanan also argued that being of royal lineage the descendants of the agnates now claim to be Rajbanshis. The popular notion quoted by Hunter (1879) that Rajbanshis were similar to the Koch Royal family of Majo, Bijni, Sidly and Cooch Behar. But Panchanan did not support this view. The agnates of Paundra king Panchanan Sarkar had started once broke away from the *kshatriya* ancestry they now claim to be *Bhanga Kshatriya*.⁴⁸ Panchanan claimed the *kshatriya* status for the Rajbanshis cited *Jaga Sangeet'* a kind of *Palagan* composed Ratiram Das during the time of Warren Hastings (1777-1785). Ratiram Das was a famous person of this time who launched an armed peasant Rebellion against the tyrannical Izaradar, Debi Singha, appointed by East India Company with the collaboration of a *Zamindar* of Itakumari, district of Rangpur namely Shib Chandra Ray with Rajbanshi *kshatriya* followers.⁴⁹ He further stated that Rajbanshis were not non- Aryan. While considering the physical structure of the Rajbanshis the 'principle of heredity' should not only be noticed but also the place, geographical condition, climate, food habits as well as the language, customs, religious rules, historical past which proves that Rajbanshis were *kshatriyas*.⁵⁰

But the Rajbanshi *kshatriya* movement inevitably brought about face to face confrontation with other castes as the latter were not prepared to accept the *kshatriya* status of the Rajbanshis. Even Brahmins began to refuse to serve the Rajbanshis as priests in religious and social ceremonies and some officials refused to record the caste of these people as *kshatriyas*. But *pandits* of Mithila, Kamrup and some local Brahmins continued to support their cause and even participated in the movements.⁵¹ In the meanwhile, enthusiastic attempts were made to collect proverbs, traditions, history, songs, sayings, and popular folktales, which made the task easier to be established *kshatriya* identity. Harikishore Adhikary, a well versed in Sanskrit and Hindu scripture published a booklet namely *Rajbanshi Kula Pradeep* in which he established that the Rajbanshis were *Paundra-kshatriyas*. The Rajbanshi literary works of *Pandit Jagatmohan Singh* namely, *Kula Kaumudi*, “*Kshatra Sangeet*” *Gobinda Chandra Ray*’s *Kshatra Sangeet*’ and *Maniram Kabya Bhusan*’s ‘*Rajbanshi Kula Dipak*’ also supported this view. *Panchanan Sarkar* was also a man of letters. He was the Secretary of *Rangpur Sahitya Parishad*, a branch of *Bangio Sahitya Parishad* wrote a number of traditional ‘*chhilkas*’, sayings, proverbs, myths, folksongs, tales of the community which were published in *Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika*.⁵² *Panchanan* and other leaders decided to form a platform of the movement. With this idea a conference was convened on May 1, 1910 (18 *Baishakh* 1317 B.S.) in Rangpur town at Rangpur Natya Mandir which resulted in the foundation of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. It included Rajbanshis from Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Bihar, Dinajpur, Dhubri Goalpara, Bogra and Mymensingh amounting to almost 400 representatives. The aims and objectives of the *Kshatriya Samiti* were formulated with *Sri Madhusudhan Ray* a pleader of Jalpaiguri Bar as president and *Panchanan Sarkar* was the secretary of the *Samiti*.⁵³ In the conference it was decided that Rajbanshis were

Lancelst Hare, the Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal and Assam at Dacca and Census Commissioner E.H.Ghoite in Calcutta and conveyed them their demands and grievances. A memorandum signed by more than 2000 Rajbanshis from Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar was also given to the Lieutenant Generals of East Bengal and Assam in January 1911. The Rajbanshi caste leaders at last succeeded in getting recognition of *kshatriya* status in the Census Report of 1911 as a separate Hindu caste, 'Rajbanshi', with *kshatriya* in bracket.⁵⁶ During the census operations of 1921 and 1931, they once again mobilized the community and appealed to the census authorities to return them as only '*kshatriya*' instead of 'Rajbanshi *kshatriyas*'.⁵⁷ Thus the Rajbanshi caste leaders tried to mobilize the community around the census to attain a respectable position in social hierarchy. By using this issue of census, the leaders wanted to develop a community consciousness among them. It could be further strengthened through the process of '*sanskritization*' and westernization.

In course of time, the *samiti* was formally registered and it developed its own constitution to regulate its various activities. The *Kshatriya Samiti* convened its second annual meeting on 20th and 21st May in 1911. The *Kshatriya Samiti* was approved and formally registered with its Head Office at Rangpur.⁵⁸ The organizational structure of the *Samiti* was as follows;

- i) An executive committee to formulate and implement *Samiti*'s policies,
- ii) A finance committee to look after the financial matters, and
- iii) A publication and publicity committee.

According to the article 14 of the constitution of the *Kshatriya Samiti*, the members were classified into three categories-i.e. (a) '*Manya*' or respectable members who paid hundred rupees or more at a time to the

Samiti's fund, (b) '*Ganya*' or distinguished members who would donate whole time offer to the work of the *Samiti* and paid Rs. 2/- each as annual subscription. They would get invitation to all the meetings of the *Samiti* and were able to vote as well and (c) '*Sadharan*' or ordinary members who also had right to vote.⁵⁹ The governing body of the *Samiti* was called '*sanad*'. The members of the '*sanad*' were chosen every year from only amongst the '*ganya*' and '*manya*' members. Swaraj Basu has observed that though the association tried to bring in all the common Rajbanshis under its fold, the strings to control it were retained permanently in the hands of the upwardly mobile elites of the community.⁶⁰

In order to reach out to the mass of the Rajbanshi peasantry, territorially spread over a number of districts, the *Samiti* set up an organizational network as follows:-

Kshtriya Samiti, \longrightarrow *Mahamandali* (in each subdivision),
 \longrightarrow *Mandali* (consisting of one, two, or more village) and
 \longrightarrow *Autarmandali* (consisting of some 'paras' or neighborhood).

The village units are as followed- '*mandali*' was at the top and '*patti*' was at the bottom. Ten or twelve '*pattis*' formed one '*gadiani*' and five to seven '*gadianis*' formed '*ghata*'. In each, '*patti*' there was a '*pramanick*' or '*Pttanayaka*'. The '*gadians*' of five to seven '*gadianis*' and the '*pattanayakas*' formed a '*ghata*' or '*mandali*'.⁶¹ The working committee of every '*mandali*' was comprised of active young social workers. The '*mandalis*' had to introduce socio- religious reforms with in the community, to supervise its various social functions and to persuade the common people to accept social practices befitting their *kshatriya* status. All of them being directly answerable to the central committee of the

“*Kshatirya Samiti*” located at Rangpur.⁶² The *Samiti* appointed many ‘*pracharakas*’ which included good number of Maithili and Kamrupi Brahmin to carry on the movement down to village level.⁶³ By 1926. three hundred ‘*madali*’ *samiti* had been established. The organ of the *Kshatriya Samiti* also continuously tried to help their peasant members by regularly giving them practical advice on scientific agricultural methods. A *Kshatriya* Bank was established at Rangpur for the benefit of the Rajbanshi peasants. Thus, the *Kshatriya Samiti* had managed to spread its organization network far a wide in order to mobilize the common Rajbanshi peasants in its support.⁶⁴ To develop an articulate caste consciousness among the students, an association of the students called *Kshatriya Chhatra Samiti* was established in 1917.⁶⁵ which acted as a sister organization of the *Kshatriya Samiti*.⁶⁶

Panchanan Barma, the secretary of the *Samiti* declared the ceremony of ‘*upbita*’ (sacred thread) for the Rajbanshis in the third annual conference of the *Kshatriyas Samiti*. It was a notion shared not only by Barma but also by even a casual reading of the Rajbanshi caste literature would to give impressive to the community to be practiced what was thought to be the *kshatriya* religious, prescribed by the Brahmins of different places. These practices or rituals should be followed to get back its lost glory of the community. Under Panchanan’s initiative, they sought the opinion of the Hindus *Pandits* who recognized them as *kshatriyas* and suggested methods of performing ‘*prayaschityas*’. *Pandits* like Mahamohapadhyaya Siddhinath Vidyabagish and others of Cooch Behar, Diseswar Bhattacharya and other of Kamrupa; *Pnadit* Srestha Mahamohapadhyaya Kamkshanath Sharma and others of Calcutta; *Panditraj* Yadebeswar Tarkaratna and others of Rangpur, Mahamohapadhyaya Bhubanmohan Sharma and others of Nabadwip;

Ramsastri Bhattacharya, *Pandit* Chandra Bhusan Sharma and others of Kashidham (Benaras) , Mahamohapadhyaya Chitradhar Mishra of Mithila and others depressed their consent that Rajbanshis were *kshatriyas* and can adopt sacred thread.⁶⁷ The suggestion of these *pandits* was distributed among the community members for building up a favourable public opinion. The secretary of the *Samiti* was thereupon given the responsibility of declaring the time and place for the organization of a mass thread wearing ceremony. It was fixed on 27th Magha in 1319 B.S. for adopting *upabita* and performing '*prayaschitya*', '*anusthana*' at Deviganj near Jalpaiguri on the bank of river Karotoya, the holy river to the *Rajbanshi kshatriyas*. Two days before the occasion Debiganj overflowed with people and a fair was held. The *pandits* of Nabadwip, Mithila and Kamrupa initiated thousands of Rajbanshis with the sacred thread according to the prescriptions of the Hindu *shastras* and the ceremony continues for three consecutive days. By the end of 30th *Chaitra* in 1319 B.S. almost 1, 82154 Rajbanshis took *upbita*, there were at least 251 '*milankshetras*' in different districts and Rs. 89512 /-(Rupees eighty nine thousand five hundred twelve only) were collected from them.⁶⁸

Taking of sacred thread is not only the ritual obligation for the Rajbanshis, but it is a symbol for being accepted as a Hindu castes. The Rajbanshis appear to treat the sacred thread as a social equalizer.⁶⁹ The sacred thread for them because a symbol for social mobilization as a since 1912 a number of mass thread wearing ceremonies (*Mahamilan kshetra*) were organized in different districts, where thousands of Rajbanshis went through the ceremony of ritual rebirth and began to do the sacred thread as a mark of their *kshatriya* status.⁷⁰ Along with this they began to adopt *kshatriya* surnames ; some of them arranged early

marriages for their daughters and some began to confine their women behind the 'purdah'.⁷¹ In addition to this, regular ritual of worship, known to have been observed by the *kshatriyas* such as *Gayatri*, *Sandhayapuja*, *Achman*, *Gitapath* etc. were also introduced. The *Kshatriya Samiti* published a number of pamphlets containing of these ritual and appealed to be performed by the members of the community. One of the important aspect of religious reforms was the introduction of the worshiping of goddess 'Chandi' as 'Chandi' is regarded as the symbol of 'matri shakti'. It became a regular practice and custom of the *Samiti* to worship *Chandi* (goddess of Shakti or power) before every annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti*.⁷² In fact, at a time when the Rajbanshis of North Bengal were going out of the Hindu fold and embracing other faith. Panchanan Barma raised the claim that the Northern Rajbanshis were *kshatriyas* and his claim accepted by the *pandits* of Benaras. The Rajbanshis began to take sacred thread and declared themselves as *kshatriyas*. Not all scholars may accept his contention but it is certain that he saved the Rajbanshis of Northern Bengal from leaving the Hindu fold. This was his greatest contribution to the Rajbanshis in fact to the Hindu society.⁷³

In addition to these measures, another important aspect of the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya* movement was the growing concern about the protection of the honour of their women. In reality, the Rajbanshi women enjoyed more freedom than the upper caste community did. However, as their caste movement made process, following upper caste models of feminine behaviour, the *Kshatriya* caste leaders urged certain changes in the existing practice of the community. They followed the *pardah* system, introduced early marriage, not allowed the women to go market freely etc. like the upper caste. On the other hand, the Rajbanshi women by

losing their status as equal partners of their husband gradually became objects to be protected from others. This attitude became much more pronounced with the gradual development of a concern among the leaders of the *Kshatriya Samiti* about the physical protection of their women from the Muslim goondas. The issue appeared repeatedly in the agenda of the annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. Finally, in the 13th annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti* a proposal was accepted for the formation of volunteer groups with proper training in every village 'mandali' to save the women from hooligans. Panchanan wrote in Rajbanshi language/ dialect, a rather inflammatory poem, namely "*Dangdhari Mao*" (mother, with the power to protect) to grow *kshatriya* spirit among the Rajbanshis.⁷⁴ The members of the *Samiti* took efforts to bring back the abducted women; Panchanan himself joined such mission to bring back the women. The women who are saved were given shelter in the *Samiti* for a certain period of time within which they were trained to fight back the abductors mostly Muslims with bamboo sticks and daggers. He inspired the *kshatriyas* to fight against the anti- social and to protect the chastity of women. He urged the men of his community that it was the 'Dharma' or duty of the *kshatriyas* to stand by the women and to protect against injustice.⁷⁵ The measures taken by the *Kshatriya Samiti* against the abductors for which not only the Rajbanshi women were relieved but also women of the other communities too was appreciated by intellectuals like Ramananda Chatterjee.⁷⁶

Here Panchanan Barma advised to the *kshatriyas* like that-

"Hindu Musalman bichar naire, manusjan to noy bhin/
Ulsi dhaya arter uddhar ai kshatriyer chin".⁷⁷

[Free translation :There is no difference between the Hindus and the Muslims, rather it is the duty of the *kshatriyas* to help the others who is in danger.]

The issue of abduction of women had actually become a more general concern.⁷⁸ Swaraj Basu has observed that it was a growing and in fact a more psychological concern of the Hindus all over Bengal as well as India. The fear of the Muslim abductors was in fact more metaphorical than real.⁷⁹ In the early twentieth century cultural milieu, women were regarded as the symbol of chastity of the community and abduction of women by the Muslims was regarded as an effort to the community pride. The *Hindu Mahasabha* had made it a major social concern all over India and appeal to the administration as well as to the Hindu to save the honour of their women from Muslims.⁸⁰ However, the government did not accept this view. In reply to a question raised by Panchanan Barma in the legislative council on the issue of abduction of women in Rangpur, H.L. Stephenson, in charge of Police Department, presented the figures of abduction case in various subdivisions of Rangpur. From the figures it became clear that it was not Muslims alone who could be seen in the role of abductors, nor were only the Hindu women abducted always.⁸¹ Therefore, it had nothing to do with the reality; it was a deliberate communal strategy, which captured the popular imagination. Apart from this, Panchanan was aware of the physical fitness of the men of his community. To fulfill this object he met with Pulin Das and Sri Ramesh Chandra Das to provide physical training and to teach them the use of defensive weapon like bamboo sticks, daggers, and others. In 1330 B.S. due to frequent incidents of female abduction, physical training and the training of using daggers also became popular among the Rajbanshi women. From time to time teams of the trained

teachers were used to send from the central office to this centre for inspection and open new centre that created great enthusiasm among the Rajbanshis.⁸²

By publishing, '*Kshatriya*' in 1328 B.S., the monthly journal and the mouthpiece of the *Kshatriya Samiti* dealt with various economic problems facing the Rajbanshis.⁸³ The *Samiti* condemned in strong terms any move to emulate the caste Hindu practice of giving dowry by the parents of bride, though they (Rajbanshi) adopted most of the practices of the caste Hindu. In the seventh annual conference of *Kshatriya Samiti* in 1323 B.S., a resolution was adopted stating, "Bride-Price' is bad. The custom of giving dowry to the bridegroom is a heinous crime".⁸⁴ Through *Kshatriya* movement, *Rajbanshis* were not only benefited by the leaders of Panchanan Barma, but its result effected on the other tribes of North Eastern part of India like Jalda, Hajong, Dhimal, Madai, Rabha etc. These tribes were united themselves through this '*Kshatriya*' movement and able to establish their social right and status.⁸⁵

IV

Education is considered one of the important means of social aspects. The Rajbanshi social leaders were painfully aware of the fact of educationally backwardness of the community. They realized that without an improvement in educational standard, the community would not realize the value of the social reforms. Therefore, the social leaders of the Rajbanshi society took initiative measures to promote education among the members of their community. The *Samiti* took provision for financial help to the needy students of the community. It also took initiative to set up *Kshatriya* Hostel for the Rajbanshi students. A general consciousness and

awareness programme was also taken by the *Samiti* among the peasants about the value of education for their children. In the Chapter No.IV, it has been already discussed about the poor condition of education scenario of the Rajbanshis. In this regard, the *Kshatriya Samiti* pleaded to provide scholarships to the needy students. From the report of the sixteenth annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti* it appears that it had by then spent more than Rs. 10,000 by way of providing financial help to about 70 students.⁸⁶ The *Samiti* also collected funds from among the members to construct hostel for the Rajbanshi students in Rangpur district school along with the Government contribution. The members of the *samiti* also felt that if the Government assured some employment to the educated Rajbanshis, then many more people would be attracted to education. Therefore, Panchanan Barma fervently appealed to the Government to provide some special facilities to the Rajbanshis in matter of public employment as were given to the Muslims. He argued that Government assistance was necessary in order to spread education among the Rajbanshis and subsequent improvement of their social status.⁸⁷ He also argued that students hostel which would serve as an umbrella for unifying the Rajbanshi Kshatriya students and would help to continue the '*kshatriya*' movement in future.⁸⁸

Apart from education, the Rajbanshi social leaders were also conscious about the problems of the peasants. The '*jotedars*' and prosperous peasants of the community raised a common fund so that it to be spent for the general welfare of the community. They also set up a financial company, known as "**Barma Company**", located at Ganibandha in Rangpur district. The basic objects of the company was to provide loans to the poor to protect against the landlord and moneylenders.⁸⁹ They urged the cultivators to improve their agricultural

practices and called upon them to organize co-operative credit societies. Accordingly, in 1320 B.S. a decision was taken to open a bank but due to the absence of energetic *Kshatriyas* in Rangpur the proposal was postponed. It ultimately succeeded in 1327 B.S. when the 'Kshatriya Bank' was established at Rangpur.⁹⁰ It was placed in the worthy hands of Kshetro Mohan Sinha. It flourished and won the confidence the people with a very short time. One or two branches of the bank were opened in different localities of the district, which helped not only the poor cultivators, but other needy people of the community. In this respect, it may be assumed that the *Kshatriya Samiti* had initiated for rural development by establishing "**Kshatriya Bank**" in 19th century while Nobel Laureate Md. Yunus Khan of Bangladesh had succeed in his mission of "**Rural Bank**" in the 21st century. However, the bank unfortunately closed down after the partition of India in 1947.⁹¹

In addition with these attempts of '*Kshatriyazation*' and regeneration, the Rajbanshi leaders also tried to develop linkage with the 'All India Kshatriya Movement'. Upendra Nath Barman narrates how from 1912 A.D. onwards, Panchanan Barma had been trying to establish contact with the *Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha*. Panchanan was successful in making contacts with Rajputs and other *kshatriyas* of North and Western India through Krishna Mohan Sinha, a descent of Rajput *Kshatriya* whose family resided in Cooch Behar for generations. The Rajputs at that time formed an all India platform for the unification of the *Kshatriyas* scattered all over India as well as improve their conditions. An Eastern Branch of *Mahasabha* leaders through its eastern branch got in touch with Panchanan Barma and invited him to join all India Kshatriya Movement and bring its eastern *kshatriyas* namely, the fold of *Mahasabha*. In 1922,(1328 B.S.) Panchanan Barma was elected as the

Vice- President of the Bengal Branch of the *Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha*, known as Bengal *Prantik Sabha*. At that time, he came to close contact with Janaki Pal Singh, a Punjabi *Kshatriya* who had taken an active interest to bring the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* into an intimate relationship with *Mahasabha*. Under his initiative, Panchanan Barma and some other members of *Rajbanshi kshatriya Samiti* went to Puri to attend the conference of the *Kshatriya Upkarini Mahasabha*, which was presided over by the Maharaja of Sailana. In 1924, the Maharaja of Alwar and Maharaja of Sailana became the president and secretary of the *Mahasabha* respectively. In the same year the conference of the *Bengal Prantik Kshatriya Sabha* was held at the University Institute Hall in Calcutta, Maharaja of Sailana presided over the conference and was attended by Panchanan Barma. In the same year Panchanan Barma, Kamini Kumar Singha, and Upendra Nath Barman went to Alwar to attend the conference of the *Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha (BKM)*. In 1927, Panchanan Barma and Harikishore Barua attended in the Indore Conference of *Bharatiya Mahasabha*.⁹² In 1333 B.S., Panchanan was recognized the title of "Thakur" by the *All India Kshatriya Mahasabha (AIKM)*. He also met with the *Kshatriya* leaders of Ujjaini, Dwaraka, Chitor, and Ajmeer.⁹³ To give a return to the visits of Thakur Panchanan, the *Mahasabha* had also sent a delegation consisting of Dalabant Singha, Suryabamsa Singh, Janaki Pal Singh, Mahendra Pratap Sinha at the nineteenth annual conference of *Kshatriya Samiti* held in 1335 B.S. at Votemari, Rangpur.⁹⁴ Janaki Pal is said to have also attended the Gaibandha, Chekdalia conferences of the *Kshatriya Samiti*, as the representative of the *All India Kshatriya Mahasabha*.

Swaraj Basu has pointed out that the growing initiative on their part to develop interaction with the *Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha*

had two main purposes. Firstly, the Rajbanshis needed the recognition of their Kshatriya status in other parts of India that would provide some sort of legitimacy to their social claims. Secondly, the leadership had realized the importance of a close collaboration between their association and the *All India Kshatriya Mahasabha*, as this would ensure the much-required political support of the all India body for their own cause. It was perhaps through this channel that the *kshatriya* movement of the Rajbanshis hoped to enter the terrain of modern institutional politics of colonial India.⁹⁵ Sekhar Bandopadhyaya, however, has pointed out that by the contact with the *All India Kshatriya Mahasabha* they were way to establish "A Greater Pan Indian Horizontal Unity."⁹⁶

V

In the First World War the British declared war against Germany and India, being a colonial country also got involved in war. Since the *Kshatriyas* were regarded as a martial group, in order to develop the "*kshatriya spirit*" among the Rajbanshis, the *Kshatriya Samiti* tried to inspire the youths to join in the army. The *Kshatriya Samiti* resolved, almost every year in their annual conference to appeal to the Government to recruit the *kshatriyas* in large numbers for the army and to form a separate '*Kshatriya Regiment*'.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the *Samiti* also appealed to the youth to join in the armed forces. In this regard, the *Samiti* tried to inspire them by citing examples of those heroes of the Rajbanshi community who had done so well in the past. Apart from this, the opportunity came to the Rajbanshis to prove their '*Kshatriya Spirit*' during the wartime. Responding to such appeals, about 400 Rajbanshis had joined the army during the First World War.⁹⁸ These men

fought in Belgium, France, and Egypt. Panchanan Barma described it as a response to a divine call and argued that the Rajbanshis had joined the war, considering it their sacred duty. Thus, by god's grace, he thought, the *kshatriya spirit* had been raised among the members of this community and appealed to the Bengal Government to form a separate regiment for the Rajbanshis.⁹⁹ In a 'Bengali' (17/09/1916), it was published that 'during the World War- I two of the important persons who worked for the collection of soldiers were Dr. Sarat Kumar Mallick, and Panchanan Barma. However, the Rajbanshis proved to be brave soldiers and was stated by the head of the Karachi Garrison to Panchanan Barma that 'The men (Kshatriya) community make better soldiers than most of the others'. The men of the *Kshatriya* community formed 50% of the total recruits from Bengal. The British Government also praised the bravery and courage shown by the soldiers and in recognition of the service of Panchanan Barma rendered in the wave effort; he was conferred upon the "**Member of British Empire**" (MBE) and the title of "**Rai Saheb**".¹⁰⁰

But, Panchanan Barma could not escape from the criticism of the caste Hindus. The caste Hindus criticized that he had inspired the Rajbanshi youth to join in the War to fulfill his self-interest rendering the title of "**Rai Saheb**" and "**Member of the British Empire (MBE)**". However, it is said that the symbolic invocation of the '*Kshatriya*' spirit was skillfully tagged to the more practical questions of material well-being, to be ensured by the creation of a new jobs exclusively for the Rajbanshis. This strategy of mobilization was more directly manifest in their leaders attitude towards education and public employment.¹⁰¹

It is interesting to note that while the *Kshatriya* movement gets its popularity in Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, and Dinajpur, it was faced strong opposition from the Cooch Behar State authority. As the administration was under the control of the upper caste Hindu gentry and the local people being backward in education, they could not compete with them for positions of powers.¹⁰² The state officials were reluctant to accept the *kshatriya* status of the Rajbanshis. There were numerous instances of opposition to the thread wearing ceremonies i.e. *Mahamilankshetra* held at various places in Cooch Behar. It was reported in the fourth annual conference of *Kshatriya Samiti*, that in many places including Mathabhanga subdivision, the *Mahamilankshetras* were faced strong opposition by the caste Hindus. Priya Nath Ghosh, the *Dewan* of Cooch Behar State, sent an order that, "in Cooch Behar the funds raised in each of the *milankshetra* should be retained within Cooch Behar, no *milankshetra* should be organized within the estates of Cooch Behar. It was also mentioned in the order that the leaders of the *Kshatriya Samiti* will be charged for offensive acts and their immoveable properties would be confiscated".¹⁰³ In reply, Panchanan Barma expressed his inability to follow the order of the *Dewan*. Consequently, harassment of the *Samiti* leaders within the Cooch Behar State increased and the state authority tried to disrupt the subsequent *milankshetras*. We may refer many instances of opposition from the State Government in this respect. In Baneswar, Cooch Behar district during the *Asokashtami* fair and on the bank of the river Gadadhar and Tufanganj during the ceremony time the State Police forcefully prevented the Rajbanshis from wearing sacred threads.¹⁰⁴ It is believed that Cooch Behar king opposed *Kshatriya*

mobility because Panchanan Barma did not allow the members of Cooch Behar *Raj* family to accept sacred thread, as he believed that successors of the Royal family were Koch and Mech admixture.¹⁰⁵ Panchanan argued that Koch were much a degraded caste which cannot equal the *Rajbanshi kshatriyas*.¹⁰⁶ Regarding the opposition of the upper caste Hindus of the Cooch Behar State, the *Kshatriya* leaders assumed that '*bhatias*' were opposing the social regeneration of the local people, they argued because they felt that their dominance in local society would be undermined. "If we, the *kshatriyas* raise our voice, resolved the *Kshatriya Samiti*, 'they' would lose their domination over us. So being sacred, they are not allowing us to unite and to awaken our *kshatriya spirit*." ¹⁰⁷ Swaraj Basu has observed that the construction of a new identity for the Rajbanshis also assumed a dimension of territoriality, as their conflict with the upper castes was defined in terms of a construction between the autochthons and the outsiders, both contending for power.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the non-cooperation of the Cooch Behar state towards the *Kshatriya* movement, an unthinkable event took place in 1926. that not only the life of Panchanan Barma but also the great shock of the history of the Rajbanshis. Panchanan Barma was banished from the state of Cooch Behar by a notice of 24 hours. In addition, it is further ordered the said Panchanan is prohibited from entering the state for a period of five years from the date of this order is communicated to him without the special permission, previously obtained of the Regency Council.¹⁰⁹ The banished order was as follows:-

**NOTICE OF EXPULSION OF PANCHANAN BARMA FROM
COOCH BEHAR STATE.**

**Extract of Notification regarding Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma, a
Jotedar of Cooch Behar:**

And whereas the Council consider it necessary in the interest of the state ,that the Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma should be prevented from carrying on a mischievous propaganda in the State and also to mark their displeasure at his disloyal and scandalous conduct in getting up the forged petition referred to above and utilizing in a manner calculated to bring Her Highness the Maharani Regent and the Regency Administration generally into contempt with the subjects of the state and the public generally and to create discontent in the State against Her Highness the Maharani Regent and the Regency Administration generally.

It is hereby ordered that the said Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma is prohibited from entering the State for a period of five years from the date this order is communicated to him without the special permission, previously obtained of the Regency Council.

It is further ordered that ,if at any time the Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma enters into any part of the State in disobedience of this order, he will be liable to be arrested by the Police and removed from the State and that he shall also be liable to prosecution on connection, to be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months or with fine which may extent to five

hundred rupees or with both provided that no such prosecution will be undertaken except with the sanction of the Regency Council.

By order
Sitesh Chandra Sanyal
Registrar, Regency Council
Cooch Behar.

The biographers of Panchanan Barma have given various explanations to this issue, Sri U.N. Barman writes that Panchanan had great honour for women and had openly protest against its disrespect for which he was banished from the State for five years. Still Panchanan remained unmoved from his ideal.¹¹⁰ Dharma Narayan Bhakti Shastri Sarkar has also provided that the misdemeanor for which Panchanan was punished is unknown still today. Thakur Panchanan has never told the reason personally and he did not prefer to mention it. However, it was probable that due to his protest against an incident for that he was banished for the State.¹¹¹ It may also be mentioned that the Royal family did not tolerate Panchanan's leadership in Cooch Behar State because the Koch Royal family would not agree to allow any superior personality than royal prestige. However, Panchanan's daughter in Law Hemlata Devi, the wife of his only son Late Pushajit Barman stated in an interview that Panchanan had commented about the character of Maharani Indira Devi of Cooch Behar for which he was banished from the state.¹¹²

During the lifetime of Panchanan Barma, he was not allowed to enter his kshatriya gospel in the Cooch Behar. Though the *Kshatriya Samiti* had sent letter through Prince Nityendra Narayan to the superintendent to withdrew the banishment of *kshatriya* movement from Cooch Behar state-“ In view of the amelioration of the Rajbanshi

kshatriya community of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Bogra, Goalpara and Cooch Behar socially morally, religiously and educationally this assembly for the Rajbanshi *kshatriyas* of above districts, most respectfully prays to His Highness, the Maharaja Bhup Bahadur of Cooch Behar in council of extend sympathetic help towards the movement inaugurated by the *Kshatriya Samiti* and respectfully prays that His Highness Government be graciously pleased to issue general instruction to all the officers to take a friendly attitude towards the *Samiti's* act.”¹¹³ But the authority was in deaf and Prince Nityendra Narayan conveyed the inability of Maharaja of Cooch Behar to *Kshatriya Samiti* through Telegram:-¹¹⁴

“THANKS TELEGRAM, HIS HIGHNESS CAN NOT WITHDRAW MR. COLLIN'S ORDER UNTIL IT IS FULLY PROVED YOU ARE NON-POLITICAL AND DO NOT CAUSE ANY INCONVENIENCE WHATEVER TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.”

PRINCE VICTOR

However, Cooch Behar did not seem to be moved by such appeals and it was only after the demise of Panchanan Barma, under the patronage the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Jagadwipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, the *Kshatriya Samiti* in Cooch Behar was established. Maharaja himself was the secretary of the society and had donated lands for construction of the office of the society and for *Panchanan Smriti Bhavan* to be used as a Hostel for Rajbanshi students' in Cooch Behar town.¹¹⁵ It is much lately after 1949, that the 'Mansai Setu' in Cooch Behar has been renamed as *Panchanan Setu*, the Women's College at Cooch Behar has been renamed as 'Thakur Panchanan Mahila Mahavidyalaya', road has been named as

Panchanan Sarani etc. Very recently, the West Bengal Government has under taken the birthplace of Thakur Panchanan Barma, Khalisamari for 'Panchanan Museum' on 27th Magh 1415 B.S. ¹¹⁶

VII

Panchanan Barma's view of struggle for the amelioration of his community was not confine to socio- ritualistic reforms only but on mass mobilization programmed that circumscribed the scope of success of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. So, beyond *kshatriya* movement, the Rajbanshi caste movement was mainly confined to the articulation of the demand for being enlisted as a Scheduled Caste. The social leaders tried to secure special protection in education, employment and in matters of reservation in the legislative council and the other local bodies of administration by this policy.

The colonial officials since the late nineteenth century were intending to prepare a list of caste, which needed special protection from the Government. Meanwhile, the Calcutta University Commission in 1884 A.D. prepared a list of 21 castes, that required such special assistance and called these the "depressed classes." Later the Government gradually expanded this list by including more and more caste at different stages. At the initial stage, the Rajbanshi leaders argue that they were educationally and economically backward and demanded the inclusion in the list of 'Depressed class'. However, the local associations viz. The *Bangiya Brahman Sabha*,(BBS) The Indian Association, The Bengal Provincial Hindu *Sabha* (BPHS) etc. had strong view against the demand of the Rajbanshis.¹¹⁷ Only the 'Bengal Depressed Classes Association'(BDCA) (1932) argued that the move by certain groups to

excluded the Rajbanshis and some of the lower classes from the list of the depressed classes was to deprive the backward section of the society of their legitimate rights. Therefore, the Rajbanshis should be included in the list of Depressed Classes. Panchanan Barma also argued with the 'Bengal Depressed Classes Association', but the term 'depressed classes' bore social stigma and it smacked of social inferiority. He suggested that instead of 'depressed classes', it should be termed as 'backward classes' and education could be made the criteria for ascertaining backwardness.¹¹⁸ From 1920s, the *Samiti* regularly reiterated its firm loyalty to the British Government. A resolution was adopted in seventeenth annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti* (Assar 1333 B.S) that "..... wethe *Kshatriyas* are expressing our sincere and firm devotion and loyalty to the British *Raj*"¹¹⁹ In its various resolutions it concentrated on the demands for formation of a Rajbanshis *kshatriya* battalion, nomination of adequate number of Rajbanshi *kshatriyas* to the district board, union boards, municipalities, etc. that is local Self-Government institutions, suitable measures for spread of educations and increased job opportunities for the educated Rajbanshi *kshatriya* youth.¹²⁰

In the meanwhile, the Lord Lothian committee in 1932 A.D. was appointed to enquire for the franchise for Indian people. The Commission excluded the Rajbanshis for the "Depressed Classes" as it was classified that those were untouchables and do not have the right to enter the temples. The commission also stated that the previous definition of 'Depressed Classes' created problems as high caste could also demand representation being "educationally and economically backward". The Rajbanshis were excluded because it was clearly incompatible with their insisted demand to be recognized as 'twice-born' or *kshatriya*. The

committee commented, "The Rajbanshi is a well organized community. They want to run with the hare and hurt with hound."¹²¹ The commission's rejection was, 'to prevent the danger that they may swamp the general interests of the genuine depressed classes.'¹²²

Certain castes like, Tele, Mahishya etc. had voluntarily withdrawn their names from the backward classes. A meeting was convened in *kshatriya Samiti* office at Rangpur to discuss whether the Rajbanshis should be included or not in the list of backward classes. Some section of the Rajbanshi community has a strong feeling that this would be inconsistent with their *kshatriya* status and would lower with their social dignity. Panchanan Barma then a member of the Bengal Legislative Council tried to convince his fellow caste leaders that without protection and reservation in politics, education and administration, a backward caste could not improve its social position merely by capitalizing on caste pride. He also cited the example of Brahmin who worked as cooks and did not earn the respect of their caste. Therefore, exclusion of the Rajbanshis from this list of "Depressed Class" would be detrimental to the interests of the community. He was ultimately able to persuade the other members of his society in favour of inclusion to the list.¹²³

After the Franchise Committee of 1932 A.D., Simon Commission and First Round Table Conference came in the Indian political scenario. Panchanan Barma now met with Sir William Prentice, the Home Minister and sent a telegram to the Secretary of the State. Sir William Prentice suggested the term "Scheduled Castes" in the place of "Depressed Classes" and it was accepted by the Government of India's Resolution dated 16th January 1933 A.D. Untouchables, temple entry,

etc. were to be taken into consideration not by themselves only, but along with other factors such as educational economic and political position of the caste. The committee finally declared that "The social and political backwardness of the castes and the necessity of securing for them special representation in order to protect their interest was recognized."¹²⁴ It was the resolution of the Government of India 1933 A.D., the name "Depressed Classes" was replaced by "Scheduled Castes". Put forwarding the new definition applied for Scheduled Caste, the *Kshatriya Samiti* leaders argued that the category for 'Scheduled' was not related with ritual and social hierarchical status of a caste and that the categories 'Scheduled Caste' just referred to certain castes included in a schedule for economic and educational purposes, hence there was no ground for having any misgiving.¹²⁵ Finally at the end of 1933 the final list of Scheduled Caste for Bengal was published by the Bengal Reforms Office and the Rajbanshis were included in it.¹²⁶ And after independences, as per article 341 of Indian Constitution and orders of 1950 and 1956, the Rajbanshis remains as Scheduled Castes in West Bengal. It was due to the systematic thinking and farsighted views of Panchanan Barma that the Rajbanshis could secure the facilities of the Scheduled Caste, reservations in jobs and in political sphere. Panchanan's efforts had contributed largely of amelioration and awakening of the community both social and political¹²⁷, but at this as an opportunistic maneuver of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. By demanding reservation for Scheduled Caste, the Rajbanshis had identified the backward socio-economic status, which is the prime criteria for reservation, is contrary to the realization of *kshatriyazation*. Thus, *sanskritization* and reservation perhaps appeared to them antithetical to each other.

In spite of this controversial antithetical theory of the Rajbanshis, under the leadership of Panchanan Barma the Rajbanshis has secure reservation of jobs in Bengal provincial service and entered in the politics as representative from backward classes. It was "Poona Pact" in 1932 which also been given the constitutional reservation for the 'Depressed classes'.¹²⁸ The Government of India finally accepted it and its proposals regarding electoral changes were incorporated in the Government of India Act, 1935. Under this new act, the first general election to the Provincial Legislative Assembly was held in 1937. In this election Puspajit Barma, Kshetra Nath Singh from Rangpur, Upendra Nath Barman from Jalpaiguri and Premhari Barma, Syama Prasad Barma from Dinajpur won the election as the candidates of *Kshatriya Samiti*.¹²⁹ For the first time, such a large number of Rajbanshi leaders could win the election and this was a direct benefit derived from the reservation of seats. In 1941, under the leadership of Fazlul Hoque, the Progressive Coalition Party formed government and Upendra Nath Barman as a representative of Rajbanshi was inducted into cabinet with the portfolio of Forest and Excise in its' Ministry.¹³⁰ It is also to be mentioned here that the Legislative Assembly Election in 2006 in West Bengal, out of 298 seats 76 seats are reserved for backward classes and out of 76 seats 51 seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes people. In the 7th Left Front Government in West Bengal three cabinet Ministers – Sri Ananta Ray, Sri Jogesh Chandra Barman, and Sri Paresh Chandra Adhikary are given the portfolio of Forest, Welfare of SC/ST and Backward Classes and Food respectively. All of them are Rajbanshi *kshatriyas* and secured the seats for the Scheduled Caste reservation.¹³¹ But in comparison with upper caste, the Rajbanshis are still far behind in education, economic and political consciousness in the age of globalization.

VIII

The *kshatriya* movement was enormously got popular among the Rajbanshis of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Malda, and Dinajpur. However, the impact of the *kshatriya* movement has been less in Assam. As it apparent from the list of annual conference of the *Kshatriya Samiti*, that only one meeting was held at Dhubri, Assam and the activities of local *Kshatriya Samiti* are not also much vigorous.¹³² It is interesting to be noted here that though Goalpara district lying adjacent to the Northern part of Bengal, the Rajbanshi people of that district do not get themselves seriously involved into the affairs of the central *Kshatriya Samiti*. There was an organized movement and association in Assam called “The *kshatriya Phelam Samiti*” which had strongly opposed against *kshatriya* movement. The *Zamindars* of Gouripur did not support the Rajbanshi *kshatriya* movement and did not like that Rajbanshis should be regarded as *kshatriya* and his non-patronizing attitude was one of the causes why Panchanan Barma could not get any hold in the Goalpara district not even in the western part of it.¹³³

It is to be noted in this connection that Panchanan Barma had to operate from the base of Rangpur and Jalpaiguri and only when the popularity reached its zenith in that areas then only the popular pressure could make it spread in Cooch Behar so easily. However, this local pressure was lacking in Goalpara due to the Sankar Deviate influence of the Koch and Rajbanshis of Goalpara.¹³⁴ In addition to this, the Rajbanshis of Bengal and Koches of Assam are two separate communities; Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma was the chief exponent of this view. The Rajbanshis of Assam on the other hand, have strongly believed that the Koches and the Rajbanshis belong to the same stock. In support

of this view, they have founded the *Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani* in Assam in difference with the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* of Bengal. That is why; the Rajbanshis of Assam did not support the *kshatriya* movement of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma.¹³⁵ In 1921, the peasants of Goalpara started an agitation against the *Zamindars* under the leadership of Jnan Mandal, a Rajbanshi social leader. Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma requested Jnan Mandal to start the *kshatriya* movement but the latter did not agree with him. Therefore, a conflict had been started between the two. The reality was that Koch Rajbanshis of Assam could not subscribe the view of Rai Saheb on the origin of the Koch Rajbanshis.¹³⁶

On the social identity question, the situation of the Rajbanshis of Assam was, however, somewhat different while their kinsfolk in West Bengal secured some special protection because of their recognition as a Scheduled Caste, the Koch Rajbanshi in undivided Assam could not find any place in the said list. How and why the administrators could mete out differential treatment to the same ethnic category distributed between two political units remains a sociological mystery though this forms only part of much bigger mystery pertaining to the adhoc approach to our over all nationality question.¹³⁷ The aggrieved Koch- Rajbanshi of undivided Assam moved to the Backward Class Commission headed by *Kaka Saheb Kalekar* on whose recommendation they were declared as O.B.C. (Other Backward Community) in 1953 A.D. They were further categorized into two segments- the Koch Rajbanshis of undivided Goalpara district were categorized as M.O.B.C. (Members of Other Backward Community), while the rest of them in other districts of Assam remained as O.B.C. (Other Backward Community). As observed by P.S.Dutta, the same ethnic group thus achieved three different statuses for official purpose –SC in West Bengal,

MOBC in Goalpara district and OBC in other district of undivided Assam.¹³⁸ This different identical question of the Rajbanshis leads another crisis in their social identity construction.

After the demise of Panchanan Barma, the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and other parts of Bengal absorbed in attaining *kshatriya* status and in strengthening further their achievements. On the other hand, an effort prevailed in Goalpara district along with the other districts of Assam to build up a parallel organization, namely *Sadai Assam Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani*' bringing the threaded and non-threaded Koch and Rajbanshi under a common banner. The educated Rajbanshis leaders of Goalpara have been with them along with the non- Rajbanshis, that they can enter the periphery of the regional caste order".¹³⁹

Apart from this, the Koch and the Rajbanshi of Assam formed a party of All Assam Backward Classes Central Committee in 1953 at Dibrugarh and the members are Mech, Koch, Rajbanshi, Ahom, Kaibarta, Miri, and others. There it is seen that by merging themselves with the other backward classes, the Koch- Rajbanshis of Assam virtually receded from *kshatriya* movement which so much up held by the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri of North Bengal. While the Rajbanshis of Bengal do not admit that there is no any cultural link with the Koches, the Rajbanshis of Assam have not only united with the Koches for bring social amelioration but also with other tribal and Scheduled Castes of the area just to uphold their secular cause. The recognition as *kshatriya* has become subsidiary and secondary in Assam.¹⁴⁰

Recently a new move has been initiated by the international forum of the Koch Rajbanshi for demand of tribal status. The demand for conferring ST status to the Koch-Rajbanshi has been mooted in an international conference of the community concerned held at Bhadrapur in Eastern Nepal during 9-11 March 1996. Delegates from Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, Assam, Bihar, and North Bengal participated in the conference under chaired by Sri Purna Narayan Singh, a former M.P. from India, and the sitting president of Koch Rajbanshi International Committee. The main resolution adopted in this conference is that for overall uplift of the under privileged Koch-Rajbanshi, they need to be immediately recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in India and in the neighbouring states where they inhabited in large number. In the conference, the Koch –Rajbanshi urged upon the cultural integration with the main stream of the society.^{141(a)} Very recently, on 5th May ,2007, the All Koch –Rajbanshi Students’ Union(AKRSU), Chila Rai Sena and All Koch- Rajbanshi Mahila Samiti had submitted a memorandum to the Hon’ble Prime Minister, Govt. of India, New Delhi for creating separate homeland called ‘Kamatapur’ and Status of Scheduled Tribe (Plains) for Koch–Rajbanshi community of Assam.^{141(b)} This demand of Koch Rajbanshis as ST status was not touched in social hierarchization movement started by Rajbanshi ‘*kshatriya*’ of North Bengal.

IX

The social mobility among the Rajbanshis through *kshatriya* movement represented an endeavour to find social identity and status for the Rajbanshi Hindus in a situation of considerable flux and contained significant elements of opposition to upper caste domination.¹⁴² Through

the social mobility the Rajbanshi used three fold of mobilization viz. from the level of Koch to Rajbanshi (Tribalism to Hinduism); from Rajbanshi to Rajbanshi *kshatriya* (from lower to higher caste order) and from Rajbanshi '*kshatriya*' to Scheduled Caste (from higher to degradation).

In the first instances, being morally and intellectually superior, an affluent section of Koches in the sixteenth century, abandoning their impure practices radically adopted the manners and customs of the Hindus and assumed the name of Rajbanshis to distinguish themselves from the more plebeian brethren. They thus came to be regarded as a distinct caste and socially superior than the Koch. A large section of the poor Koches who failed to embrace Hinduism and styled them as Rajbanshi had apostatized to the faith of Islam. Das Gupta¹⁴³ labeled them as Rajbanshi Muslims and is now confused with the general Mohamedan population of Northeastern part of Bengal. They were also called '*Nasya sekh*' in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, and Dinajpur.

In second instances, through *kshatriya* movement the Rajbanshis exhibited '*sanskritizing*' tendencies with an assertion of Aryan origin and string for the higher social status of "*Kshatriyas*" by borrowing higher caste customs and rituals. They emphatically rejected the suggestion to the effect that the Rajbanshis and Koch are the same and had common tribal or semi tribal past.'¹⁴⁴

In the third instance, the Rajbanshi leaders manifested the socio- economic backwardness to enter the Scheduled Caste list to acquire the special protection in education, and economic development. The Scheduled Caste drive is contrary to the realization of '*Kshatriyazation*'. It appears to them as an antithetical to each other.

However, by this protection the '*Rajbanshis*' secure social, economic and political reservation for the community. The question of inclusion in the list of Scheduled Caste also raised sharp debates within the community though it was over come latter on.

Apart from these, the appeal of the '*kshatriyazation*' movement contained a mixture of evocation of the past glory of the Rajbanshi '*kshatriya*' and Hindu revivalism with at these explicit anti-Muslim tones. *Nari Niryatan* or out rage of sexual purity of Rajbanshis and other Hindu women by Muslims became a recurrent issue. The ideal of "DANGDHARI MAO" or weapon welding Hindu women was put forward.¹⁴⁵ The *Kshatriya Samiti* developed a close relation with the *Hindu Sabha* and sent its representatives to the latter provincial conferences.¹⁴⁶ It is interesting that at least within one or two years a few Muslims took part in the *Samities* conferences.¹⁴⁷ The '*Kshatriya Samiti*' also referred to the need of unity between Hindu and Muslim of local origin against the immigrants (*Bhatias*). But Hindu revivalism predominated and precluded common programme and common organization for the Rajbanshis Hindus and Rajbanshi Muslims.¹⁴⁸

X

However, the *Kshatriya* movement of the Rajbanshis has some limitation of its own. The social movement of the Rajbanshis that initially began for achieving superior status in the caste hierarchy was thus ultimately reduced to merely a politics for reservation. In due course, that led to certain confusion, contradiction, and change in social identity of the Rajbanshis. Apart from this, the movement was one, which

sought only to improve the position of their own caste within, and there was no attack on the existing caste system has been launched or not has done a critique.¹⁴⁹ In contrast to some other caste movements with a radical opposition and rejection to Brahmanical authority like the *Satyasodhak Samaj* in Maharashtra¹⁵⁰, the Rajbanshi *kshatriya* movement attempted to get recognition from Brahman *Pandits* and 'Shastric' sanction. Moreover, due to the inherent economic differentiation within the community itself, it was not always possible for the power section to emulate the ritual traits and customs of upper caste and those were confined exclusively to the wealthy. Thus, the social mobility movement got a class character where poor Rajbanshis were less represented and less concerned to the issue involved. Ultimately, on the issue of *kshatriyazation* process, a social distance emerged within the Rajbanshi community. The *Samiti* failed to create further interest among the poor Rajbanshis on the issue of socio-cultural reforms. There was no issue of economic reforms in agenda of the *Samiti* except the issue of economic problem of the Rajbanshi peasant. Therefore, it did not have any programme for the poor peasants and *adhiars* who constituted the bulk of the Rajbanshi Hindu peasantry. The movement remained confined in the main, among the large *landlords*, *Jotedars* and better of peasants. It is to be mentioned here that two occasions the representatives of the *Kshatriya Samiti* in the Bengal Legislative Council had to taken a stand on moves to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. In 1922, Panchanan Barma was made a member of the committee to consider such amendments, while on the question of relations between landlords and *Jotedars* who were either tenure-holders or *rayots*, he was keen to further interests of these two-groups against the *zamindars*, on the question of giving recognition to the *adhiar* or sharecroppers his position was decidedly against the *adhiars*. The incident happened in 1928 when Nagendra Narayan Ray the only

council member representative of the *Samiti*, who took his position against the *adhiars*.¹⁵¹ Thus, attitude towards agrarian relations kept the potential of the movement considerably limited.

In addition to this, at the later phase of the *kshatriya* movement, the *Kshatriya Samiti* reduced to a merely politics for reservation than social movement. Entering election process, the *Kshatriya Samiti* diverted its social activities to the reservation of politics. Very few well established members of the *Kshatriya Samiti* got chance to take part in the election process. Those who could afford election expenditure were benefited with the reservation of politics. On the other hand, lion share of the Rajbanshi people could not get such benefit. As a result, most of the people within the community itself were deprived by the reservation in politics. Thus, the *Kshatriya Samiti* gradually bypasses its main purposes viz. spread of education among the Rajbanshi people, the propagation of cultural activities within the society and economic development of the society rather it concentrated more and more to participate in the election. Consequently, the potentiality of the *Kshatriya Samiti* by which it had in its initial stage was set back. Participating in election very few of the well-established Rajbanshi people took the advantage of reservation but most of the people of this society were deprived and the social condition of the masses would not improve at all.

In spite of these limitations, it can be traced that it was the need of the time when *kshatriya* movement took the initiative to secure the social right of the Rajbanshis. The work and achievements of the movement can be understood in the light of the contemporary society when most of the Rajbanshis were embracing other faiths. Panchanan Barma and the *kshatriyas* movement not only saved the Rajbanshis

community from embracing other faith but also showed the right path at right time towards the progress of the society. The situation of the early twentieth century politic in Bengal made it clear that unless the *kshatriya* leaders enjoyed a proper share of political powers they had no prospect of competing with the already advanced upper caste elites. However, the upper caste elites would not accept the '*kshatriyazation*' movement and the reservation of Scheduled Caste of the Rajbanshi simultaneously. In the meanwhile, the indigenous 'son of the soils' is lagging behind in all the fields of education, economic and power politics, rather than the upper castes elites. From this issue of differentiation gradually arises between the immigrants (*bhatias*) and the indigenous people (son of the soils) that have and have-nots. It was this depression that led to generate the indigenous to revive their economic and social position through political power issuing separate state, autonomous power throughout North Eastern part of India would be discussed in the next chapter.

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8. A.K.Ray; *Some Notes on the Kshatriya Movement in Northern Bengal* ,in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Vol.XX,No.I, p.48.

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- 11.D.N.Bhakti Shastri Sarkar; *Rai Saheb Panchanan* (Bengali), Rangpur, 1391,B.S. p.16.
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19. *Census of India*,1911, Vol. V,Pt. I, p. 440.
20. A.K. Ray; *op. cit.*, p. 49.

21. Montgomery R. Martin; *History Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, (London), 1838, vol. II, p.741; Upendra Nath Barman, *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas* (Bengali) ,Jalpaiguri, 1941, pp.1,51, 52.
22. Sashibhushan Nandi Barma; *Kayastha Puran* (Bengali) ,2nd edition, (ed) by Girish Chandra Vidyalkar ; Calcutta, 1335 B.S. p. 339.
23. Sekhar Bandopadhyaya, *op..cit.*, p.99.
24. Sibsankar Mukharjee; *The Social Role of a Caste Association in The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 31(I), 1994, pp. 92-3.; Rajat Subhra Mukhapadhyay, *Kshatriyaization Among the Rajbanshi: An Appraisal; Man in India*, 79(384) pp. 347-358.
25. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Pt. I, pp.440-3.
26. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Pt.,I, p.382.
27. M. Kabyabhusan, *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Deepak*(Bengali) ,Dinajpur, 1318,BS, pp, 23-24, M.Barman; *Kshatriya Tattva*(Bengali), Santal Paragana, 1335B.S. p, 22; Deb Singha Barman, *Kshatriya Rajbanshi Kula Kaumundi*, pp.33-7.
28. *Bhramari Tantra*, Patala- II,
Nandisuta bhayatbhime Paundradeshat Samagata,
Bardhanasya Panchaputra saganaibandhabai saha ,
Ratnapithang bibasante kaladwipairasamgamat,
Kshatradharmamadpakranta Rajbanshi kshatriya bhubi.

[Free translation: Fearing from the wrath of the son of Nandi (Parasurama) the five sons of Vardhana of Paundradesha along with their kins came to Ratnapitha. They abandoned the Kshatriya identity and identified themselves as the Rajbanshis.]

- of Paundravardhan) took shelter in Ratnapitha and some one took shelter in Yonigarva Pitha.] Written by Pandit Rupnarayan, the disciple of Shankara Deva in *Kamateswara Kulakarika*, Quated in Dharma Narayan Barma and Dhaneswar Manta ;*Kamrupa Ksamata Kuchbehar Rajyer Itihas*, Cooch Behar, 2005, pp. 24-25.
30. *Kshatriya Samiti Memorandum* to the Indian Statutory Commission, Indian Statutory Commission written evidence, Bengal ,Vol. III, 1930, p. E/Bengal 720.
31. H.K. Adhikary; *Rajbanshi Kula Pradeep* (Bengali) ,Calcutta, 1314 B.S. pp. 97-9.
32. C.Ray; *Uttar Baga Rajbanshi Samaj Niti* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1333 B.S. pp. 12-15.
33. Deb, Singha Barman, *Kshatrriya Rajbanshi Kula Kaumandi*, pp.2-63.
34. Upendra Nath Barman; (1941) *op. cit.* p. 3
35. A.K Ray; *op. cit.*, p.49.
36. Haripada Ray, “*After Prishtha Thake Kshatriya Andolan*” *Swaranika, Rai Saheb Panchanan Barmar 125 the Birth Anniversary Publication*, Calcutta, 1991, p.30.
37. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.8.
38. Ray, A.K. *op cit.*, p. 50.
39. Kshetra Mohan Sinha, *Rai Saheb Panchanan Barmar Jiban Ba Rangpur Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 10.
40. Ananda Gopal Ghosh; “*Rajbanshi Kshatriya Andolaner Samajik Patabhiumika* “ in *Kanchanjangha*, Raja Rammohunpur, 1984, p.6.
41. U.N.Barman; *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, *op.cit.*, pp.4-7.; Dharma Narayan Bhakti Sashtri Sarkar, *Rai Saheb Panchanan, Mathabhanga*, 1346,BS,p.21; A.K.Ray, *op. cit.* pp.49-52; Dahlia Bhattacharjee , *Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma: Life and Times(1866-1935)*, Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, NBU, 2001,p.19.

Kalikapurana patal 77/30-31;

Jamadagna bhayatbhita kshatriya Purbameba ye

Mlechhadmanupadaya Jalpishang Sharang gata.

Te Mlechhabacha Satatamayabashach sarbada

Jalpishang sebamaste Gopayanti cha tang haram.

[Free translation: Being feared wrath of the son of Jamadagna, the Kshatriyas took shelter at Jalpesh in disguise of impure ones (mlechha) and after being used the mlechha rites and manners, adopted the mlechha language.]

29. (a) *Hai re Rajar Banshe Laviya janam*

Parasuramer bhaye ebara saram,

Rane bhanga dia mora edese ashiachi

Bhaga kshatriya Rajbanshi ei name achi.

[Free translation: The Rajbanshis were born in the Royal family but due to fear of Parasurama, they gave up their royal identity and took new identity as ‘*Bhanga kshatriya Rajbnashi.*’] Quoted in Deb Singh Barman, *Kshatriya Rajbanshi Kula Kaumandi*, p.49.

(b) *Chhiria galar dari Kshatra china lupta kari*

Pranbhaye it uti palanta sakali

Sangramak bhaye kari bhanga kshatri nama dhari

Apanake maen keha Rajbanshi buli,

Bardhansuta Panchjana Ratnapithe nila thana

Aea keha lukailo Yonigarva pithe.

[Free translation: Torn off the sacred thread the Rajbanshi abandoned the Kshatriya identity, they flew off here and there. Flew from war field they took a new identity as *Bhanga Kshatriya*; some one identified themselves as Rajbanshi. The five sons of Vardhana (king

- of Paundravardhan) took shelter in Ratnapitha and some one took shelter in Yonigarva Pitha.] Written by Pandit Rupnarayan, the disciple of Shankara Deva in *Kamateswara Kulakarika*, Quated in Dharma Narayan Barma and Dhaneswar Manta ;*Kamrupa Ksamata Kuchbehar Rajyer Itihas*, Cooch Behar, 2005, pp. 24-25.
30. *Kshatriya Samiti Memorandum* to the Indian Statutory Commission, Indian Statutory Commission written evidence, Bengal ,Vol. III, 1930, p. E/Bengal 720.
31. H.K. Adhikary; *Rajbanshi Kula Pradeep* (Bengali) ,Calcutta, 1314 B.S. pp. 97-9.
32. C.Ray; *Uttar Baga Rajbanshi Samaj Niti* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1333 B.S. pp. 12-15.
33. Deb, Singha Barman, *Kshatrtiya Rajbanshi Kula Kaumandi*, pp.2-63.
34. Upendra Nath Barman; (1941) *op. cit.* p. 3
35. A.K Ray; *op. cit.*, p.49.
36. Haripada Ray, “*After Prishtha Thake Kshatriya Andolan*” *Swaranika, Rai Saheb Panchanan Barmar 125 the Birth Anniversary Publication*, Calcutta, 1991, p.30.
37. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.8.
38. Ray, A.K. *op cit.*, p. 50.
39. Kshetra Mohan Sinha, *Rai Saheb Panchanan Barmar Jiban Ba Rangpur Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 10.
40. Ananda Gopal Ghosh; “*Rajbanshi Kshatriya Andolaner Samajik Patabhiumika* “ in *Kanchanjangha*, Raja Rammohunpur, 1984, p.6.
41. U.N.Barman; *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, *op.cit.*, pp.4-7.; Dharma Narayan Bhakti Sashtri Sarkar, *Rai Saheb Panchanan, Mathabhanga*, 1346,BS,p.21; A.K.Ray, *op. cit.* pp.49-52; Dahlia Bhattacharjee , *Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma: Life and Times(1866-1935)*, Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, NBU, 2001,p.19.

42. A.K.Ray, *op. cit.* p.51.
43. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, pp.10-11; Dhananjay Ray, *Uttar Banger Dharma O Samaj Sanskar Andolan*, Malda, 1989, p.117.
44. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.* p.11.
45. A.K.Ray; *op.cit.*, p. 52.
46. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, pp.11-13; Dhananjay Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48; Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp.21-22; Ray, *Ibid.* pp.49-52.
47. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.13.
48. *Karyabibarani*, first annual meeting *Kshatriya Samiti*, Rangpur, 1317, B.S.
49. “*Rane bhanga diya mora aye deshe ashilam, Bhanga Kshatri Rajbanshi aye name achi.*”
[Free translation: We have left out landing due to the fear of Parasurama and breaking from the Kshatriyahood, we have labeled ourselves as *bhanga kshatriya*],
Ratiram Das; Jagsangeet; a *Palagan*, cited in Dahlia Bhattsacharjee, *op.cit.*, p.25.
50. *Karyabibarani* first annual meeting *Kshatriya Samiti*, 1317 B.S.
51. *Proceediungs of the Ninth Annual Conference, Kshatriya Samiti*, Doma (Rangpur), 1325, B.S.
52. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.12, Dharma Narayan Bhati Sastri Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
53. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.16.
54. M.K. Singh; *op. cit.*, pp.11-15; Barman, *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.
55. Dahlia Bhattacharjee; *op. cit*, p.28.
56. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, pp.8-10.; Ray, *op. cit.*, pp, 55-6; Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam General (Miscellaneous), File No. IC-2g/11, B, March 1921 Proceedings Nos. 27-41, Cited in Basu, *op. cit.* p. 71; Dhananjay Ray; *op, cit.*, pp.38-39, 50-51.

57. G.B. Political (political), File No. 8A-4, B, December 1931, Proceedings Nos. 394- 406; Cited in Basu, *op.cit.* p.70.
58. U.N. Barman ; *op. cit.*, p.17.
59. Memorandum and Article of the *Kshatriya Samiti* in G.B., Political (Political), File No. 8A- 9,B, July, 1924 Proceedings Nos. 169-71, *Kshatriya* (Bengali), *Push-Chaitra*, 1333 B.S. p.208.
60. Swaraj Basu; *op. cit.*, p.72; Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp.354-55.
61. Eight Annual Report of the *Kshatriya Samiti* (Bengali) Rangpur, 1327, B.S. p.57
62. A.K. Ray; *op. cit.*, p.56; *Kshatriya Samiti Nabam Barshik Britta Bibarani* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1325, B.S. pp. 8-11, *Kshatriya, Baishakh*, 1331, B.S. p.15.
63. Eighth Annual Report of the *Kshatriya Samiti* (Bengali) Rangpur, 1327, B.S. p.57; Barman, U.N., *op. cit.* pp. 16- 29; Swraj Basu, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.
64. Sekhar Bandopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, pp.144-145.
65. *Kshatriya, Baishakh*, 1331 B.S., pp.21-22.
66. Swaraj Basu; *op. cit.*, p.73.
67. *Vyavastha Patra* (ed) Panchanan Barma, 1319 B.S. *Kshatriya Samiti*. This booklet consists of the opinions of the *pandits* of various parts of India. It was distributed throughout North Bengal, Purnea, and Goalpara. It was represented by *Panchanan Swarak Samiti*, Alipurduar, 1995.
68. U.N. Barman; *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, Jalpaiguri, 1941, pp.66-67; *Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jeeban Charit*, pp.21-23; *Uttarbanger Sekal O Amar Jeeban Smriti*, pp. 46-47; Bandopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p.117; *Proceeding of the Forth Annual Conference Kshatriya Samiti*, Rangpur, 1320 B.S.

69. Biman Dasgupta; *The Dynamics of the Social Mobility Movements among the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Assam*, Calcutta University Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1976, p.112.
70. Sekhar Bandopadhyaya; *op. cit.*, p.117.
71. Sekhar Bandopadhyaya; *Protest and Accommodation Two Caste Movement in Eastern And Northern Bengal, 1872-1937*, *The Indian Historical Review Vol. XIV*, Delhi, 1990, p.225.
72. U.N. Barman; *Thakur Panchanan Barmaer Jeevan Charit*, p.45.
73. C.C. Sanyal, *op. cit.*, p.19.
74. U.N. Barman; *op. cit.*, pp.50-54.
75. Barman, *Ibid*, p. 30; Nikhil Sinha, "Arta Samaj Annyer Jibanta Pratiki Dangdhari Mao" in Koch Rajbanshi Mahila Sammilan, 22nd Conference, Gauripur, Assam, 1918.
76. Manmohan Ray; (ed) *Baraniyo Jiboner Katha*, Jalpaiguri, 1993.
77. U.N. Barman; *op. cit.*, p.52.
78. P.K. Dutta; *Carving Blocks; Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth Century Bengal*, Delhi, 1999, Chapter No.4 where he has shown that in early twentieth century Bengal how a careful organized attempt was made to whip up communal consciousness by creating an image that Hindu women were abducted by Muslim 'Goondas'. Through this was imaginary the protagonist, of Hinduism perhaps wanted to cover inter and intra- caste tensions within Hindu society.
79. Swaraj Basu; *op. cit.*, p.76.
80. *Hindu Mahasabha Paper*, File No. 6-8, 1934-37, M M L, Delhi cited in Basu, *op. cit.*, p.76.
81. *The Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings 13th Session Vol. XIII*, 1923, pp.72-373.
82. K.M. Singha, *op. cit.*, p.32.
83. *Ibid*, p. 32.

84. *Proceeding of the Seventh Annual Conference, Kshatriya Samiti, Rangpur, 1323 B.S.*
85. Madhab Chandra Adhikary; *Samaj Chintaya Manisi Panchanan: Ekti Anusandhan*” (Bengali) in *Sovenior, The 19th Rajya Bhawaya Sangeet Pratiyogita O Mela, 2008, Cooch Behar, p.53. ; Paschim Banga, Raisaheb Panchanan Barma, Special Number, 1411 B.S. Tathya O Sanskriti Bibhag, West Bengal Government, 2005, p. 35.*
86. *Kshatriya, Jaistha, 1332, B.S., p. 44.*
87. *Working Report of Kshatriya Samiti’s First Conference (Bengali) Rangpur, 1317, B.S. 18th Baishakh (1910 A.D.), pp. 18- 19.*
88. Ananda Gopal Ghosh; *op. cit.*, p. 7.
89. *Kshatriya Samiti, Eleventh Annual Conference Report, 1326, B.S. pp.15-16.*
90. A.K Ray., *op. cit.*, p.57.
91. K.M.Sinha; *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33; Dharma Narayan Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp.66-88.
92. Dharma Narayan Bhakti Shastri Sarkar; *op. cit.*, pp. 83-85; U.N. Barman, *op. cit.*, pp.23-24; *Kshatriya, Sraban, 1331, B.S., p.69;* Memorandum on the list of Scheduled Castes from the Secretary, Indian Association to the reforms officer to the Government of West Bengal, dated 15th February, 1933, G.B., Appoint(Reforms) File No. I-R-2, 1934, Proceedings no. 9-61.
93. K.M.Sinha; *op. cit.* pp.55-56.
94. *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Conference, Rangpur, 1335 B.S.*
95. Basu, Swaraj; *Op. cit.* pp.79-80.
96. Sekhar Bandopadhyaya; *Protest and Accommodation: Two Caste Movement in Eastern and Northern Bengal 1872-1937; The Indian Historical Review, Vol.XIV, Delhi, 1990, p. 225.*

97. *Kshatriya, Ashadh*, 1331, B.S. *Sraban*, 1332, B.S. ; *Sraban*, 1333, B.S.
98. *Kshatriya Samiti*, 10th Annual Report (Bengali) Rangpur, 1326 B.S. pp.37-39.
99. U.N.Barman; *Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.
100. *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference, Kshatriya Samiti*, Jalpaiguri, 1335 B.S., U.N.Barman, *op. cit.*, pp.30-44.
101. Swaraj Basu; *op. cit.*, pp.77-78; Madhab Chandra Adhikary, *op. cit.*, p.52.
102. Most of the Officials of the Cooch Behar State were higher caste. The official lists of the state shown this facts ,Durga Das Majumder; *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Behar*, *op. cit.*, 1937, pp. 2-9.
103. *Kshatriya Samiti, Britta Bibarani*, 1319 B.S. p. 36.
104. *Kshatriya Samiti, Forth Annual Conference Report*, 1320, B.S. pp. 36-37; *Kshatriya Samiti, Third Year Britta Bibarani*, Rangpur, 1319, B.S.
105. Biman Das Gupta; *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.
106. *First Year Karyobibarani, Kshatriya Samiti*, Rangpur, 1317 B.S.
107. *Kshatriya Samiti, Forth Annual Conference*, Rangpur, 1320 B.S. pp. 36-37.
108. Swaraj Basu; *op. cit.*, p.81.
109. Dugadas Majumder; *op. cit.*, p. 120.
110. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.*, p.53.
111. Sarkar; *op. cit.*, p.18.
112. Interview had taken by Dr. Nripendra Nath Paul and Biman Chakraborty, *Madhuparni*, Special Number, Cooch Behar, 1396 B.S. p.503.
113. *Forth Year Karyobibarani, Kshatriya Samiti*, 1320 B.S. pp. 36-37.
114. *Ibid*; p.37.

115. Dharendra Nath Adhikary; *Cooch Beharer the Kshatriya Societir Du Katha in Swaranika Patrika*, W.B., 1990, p.25.
116. Leaflet, *Panchanan Smriti Raksha Committee*, Mathabhanga, 2008, and the author was personally present at the ceremony on 27 Magh 1414 B.S. (1st February, 2008) at Khalisamari, the birth place of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma.
- 117.G.B. appoints (Reforms) File No. I-R-2 of 1933, April 1934 Proceeding Nos. 9-61, Serial Nos. 10, 11,12; Basu, *op. cit.*, p.89- 90.
- 118.*The Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, 35th Session, Vol. XXXV*, 1930, pp. 763- 66.
119. *The proceedings of the Kshatriya Samiti, 17th Annual Conference*, 1333 B.S. ;U.N.Barman, *Uttarbanger Sekal O Amar Jeeban Smriti*, *op. cit.*, pp.31-36.
120. *Ibid*.
121. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.* pp.58-59.
122. Report of the Franchise Committee (1932), Calcutta.
123. U.N.Barman; *op, cit.*, p. 63.
124. *Ibid*, p. 65.
125. U.N.Barman; *op. cit.* p.77; Biman Dasgupta , *op. cit.* 1992, p.145.
- 126.G.B.appoint (Reforms) File No.IR-2 of 1933 April, 1934, Proceedings Nos. 9-61 serial no. 50.
127. U.N. Barman, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
128. By the 'Poona Pact' Ambedkar agreed to give up his claim for a separate electorate in return for increase in number of lower caste seats from 71 given by communal Award to 148 (Later on 159) seats in the provincial legislative assemblies. The system of separate electorate was replaced with joint electorate.

129. G.B. Home (Constitution and Election) ,File No. RBE- 27, May 1937, Proceedings Nos. 1- 13; U.N. Barman, *Uttarbanger Sekal O Amar Jeevan Smriti, op.cit.*, p.70.
130. Gautam Chattapadhyaya, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862- 1947*, Delhi,1984,- p,173, U.N.Barman, *op. cit.*, p.98.
131. *Paschimbanga, Legislative Assembly Election 2006*, pp.3-11.
132. *Eleventh Annual Conference, Kshatriya Samiti*, Dhubri, Assam, 1327 B.S.
133. Biman Dasgupta ; *op. cit.*, p.121; *Karyobibaranj, Kshatriya Samiti Fifth Annual Conference*, 1321 B.S.
134. Ranjit Kumar Ghosh ;(ed) *Mati O Manush*, Calcutta,1977, pp.64-68; Shankar Dev was a Vaishnava preacher and had spread its gospel among the Rajbanshis. He was popular among the Rajbanshis of Assam.
135. Sailen Debnath; (ed) ,*Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)*, Siliguri, 2007, p.141(Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh; Administrative Reorganization of Bengal and Assam in 1874 and its impact upon the Rajbanshi Identity: Question of Northern Bengal and Western Assam)
136. *Ibid*, pp.141-142.
137. P.S. Dutta; 1978, *Movement for Scheduled Status in a Poly-ethnic Society: The case of Koch- Rajbanshis of Assam*, *Journal of North East Indian Council for Social Science Research, Vol. II*, pp.29-39; *Change in Social Identity of the Rajbanshis, Journal of Indian Anthropology and Sociology Vol. 34*, 1999, pp. 133-138.
138. Dutta, *op. cit.*, p.31.
139. Biman Dasgupta; *op. cit.*, pp.123-124.
140. *Ibid*, pp.126-127.

- 141.(a) *Uttarbanga Sambad*, 10th March, 1996.
- (b) A Memorandum submitted to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Govt. of India, New Delhi by the All Koch- Rajbanshi Students' Union(AKRSU), Chila Rai Sena and All Koch- Rajbanshi Mahila Samiti on 5th May, 2007. The Copy of the Memorandum also submitted to Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Hon'ble President, AICC, Rajnath Singh, President of BJP, Sivraj Patil, Hon'ble Home Minister, Govt. of India.
142. Ranjit Dasgupta; *op.cit.*, p,91; Swaraj Basu, *op.cit.*, p. 82; Bandopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p.129.
143. Biman Dasgupta; *op. cit.*, p.12.
144. *Ibid*, p. 92.
145. *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference, Kshatriya Samiti*, Patgram(Jalpaiguri) in *Mid Asad*, 1335 B.S. (June-July 1928); Dharma Narayan Bhakti Shastri Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp.73-81.
146. Hindu *Sangathan* and Hindu *Sabha*, "*Kshatriya, Jaistha*, B.S. 1331(May- June. 1924) p.24 and Resolutions on "*Hindu Sangathan*" adopted in *the Fifteenth Conference, Kshatriya, Asad*, B.S., 1331.
147. *Kshatriya, Sraban*, 1332, B.S. p. 96.
148. Ranjit Dasgupta,; *op.cit.*, pp. 127-128.
149. *Ibid*, *op. cit.*, p.92.
150. Rosalind O' Hamlon; *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, CUP, 1985 Cf. Ranjit Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
151. D.N.Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.97; *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings* Vol. XXX, 2, 13th Session, 1928, Proceedings Nos. 14 and 15, pp. 76-82, 96-107; Land Revenue File No. 2-A-I, Proceedings Nos. 11-19, 1923.