

CHAPTER: ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM-CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

In the past few decades movement for ethnic autonomy has marked the political discourse not only in North Bengal and North East India but throughout the country as a whole which even we can describe it as a problem of global phenomena. While some of them strongly advocating the need for autonomy within the present administrative set up, other resolutely expressed their support for more militant or secessionist ideas of political and geographical demarcation of territory.

Ethnic diversity as well as the geographical location and its environment along with ethnic politics are playing the decisive role in question of social relation and watering the germination of the feeling of regionalism which ultimately led for the march of demanding a separate state to accumulate the political power to govern the region where they claim demographic majority within region. It also is playing a decisive role not only the functioning of state power but also becoming the important factor in creating the social and political unrest in almost all countries of the world. India is not an exceptional one.

Geographical location which is one of the most vital factors in determining both the physical and mental environment including the population distribution and their economic activity and the question of development should take into account for the understanding of the problems. Further, geography played an important role in bringing about unity among different ethnic groups of different cultures and linguistic groups. The hills-plains dichotomy was frequently alluded to by the ethnic leaders in order to give their movement a distinct geographical identity.

In the recent period of history of North Bengal attracted the attention of the scholars, politicians, administrators as it has become the focal point of political agitation on ethnic issues of variegated nature and characteristics. Keeping aside the Naxalite movement – all in sequence or contemporaneously reflected the complex realities of socio–geopolitical and economic condition of North Bengal.

Apart from hill areas of Darjeeling District and a little part of adjacent areas of hills of Dooars of Jalpaiguri District the dominating racial origin in the rest of North Bengal is Rajbanshi community. Although this majority people of singular racial origin had given a new shape to the socio –cultural characteristic of this region. Many conflicting theories of their origin and identity were advocated by both foreign and Indian scholars during the colonial period long before the remarkable work of late Charu Chandra Sanyal, entitled, *The Rajbanshi of North Bangal (A Study of a Hindu Social Group)*, published by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, ¹ in 1965, where an

attempt was made to throw enough light on their origin and identities. But his observation about the origin and the identity of the Rajbashi as Koches, a non Aryan origin has been challenged by the dominant section of the Rajbanshi community. The demand for a Kamtapur state or the Greater Cooch Behar state by the Rajbanshi community is a riddle wrapped in ethnic controversy inside an enigma which demands a conclusion to be drawn in characterization of the nature of this movement taking into account of the ethno-socio-geo-politico dimension.

Many theories have been advanced by social scientists for defining and identifying the nature and causes of ethno-national movements based on shared meaning of common descent, real or imaginary those elites in the appropriate group formulates in order to mobilize political support for a variety of objective ranging from autonomy to secession to state hood.

It is well settled that ethnicities located in specific territorial boundaries have a claim to be classified as regions and therefore have legitimate claim to the autonomy at the political and economic levels. In fact, the urge for self governance and aspiration of economic development is at the root of such a claim. (Report of the Regional Autonomy Committee, 1999; 11 as quoted by S .Chaturvedi, The Ethno and the Geo-Politics of Autonomy in a Boarder land named Jammu &Kashmir).²

The question of autonomy in general relates to the complex interplay between the ethno—cultural moorings of the individual or group identity and a rather seductive of geo-political reductionism and territoriality (Chaturvedi). It cannot be denied that this issue is complex and no single theory is capable to explain its root and nature of the movement.

Territoriality is the attempt by an individual or groups to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationship, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area. It is a rather complex strategy and the device through which people construct and maintain spatial organization (Robert Sack; 1986; 19-20,216).³ No doubt geographical concentration of group or community is an essential factor to territorial autonomy but at the same time this particular consideration, in many occasions becomes highly problematic in places characterized by heterogeneity or mega-diversity or hybridity.

In general, it is explained, one of the most basic factor for this kind of movement in the uneven development in economic and social field within the state itself. Again, the cultural dominance by the dominant group may be considered as another cause of watering the germination of regional movements. Further, the geographical location may contribute fuel for firing the feeling of isolation from the main stream land which ultimately gives birth a psychological state of mind, what is known as ‘identity crisis’. In this context it requires to examine whether in the name of national integration the meaning of national integration should be another name for assimilation. It is again required to examine the very concept of

‘mainstream’ identity as it has been seen that in the name of mainstream of national identity an attempt is made to absorb the weaker section of the community in the fold of the stronger section causing the feeling of alienation by the former. This also may be considered as one of the cause for this kind of ethnic movement.

Language plays the important role in case of establishing the identity, glaring example of which is the creation of Bangladesh separating herself from Pakistan, irrespective of its demographic size and shape. In a multilingual country like India this factor also requires to take into consideration of ethnic movements.

North Bengal along with a considerable part of Assam, the areas of the present survey is not merely a geographical region of this subcontinent but they offer a historical contrast. While discussing about the ethnic diversity and conflict in the depicted survey areas we must take the fact into account that the Eastern part of India was the most densely populated part of the subcontinent with its fertile soil. On the other hand, the northern part of present West Bengal and Assam-Arakan Basin and ringed by the Southern Himalayan Rim, was the sparsely populated cross road for traders, migrating tribes and fortune seekers warriors. It does not mean there is no similarity in this eastern part of subcontinent. There were and are still many similarities as well, notwithstanding the fact, historically and culturally, the differences between the two regions are many. Similarities stem partly from the contiguous geographical location and partly from a shared colonial experience.

In search of the source of the present ethnic conflict we need to explore the pages of history to understand the present situation. History reveals the facts that this region has long been the site of bitter conflicts over resources between strategic interest groups. During the nationalist upsurge the ethnic conflict did not surface because during this colonial period the conflict was mainly articulated against the colonial ruler and their feudal collaborators.

Feudal structure of our country of course is not the creation of colonial rule but it was used by the colonial administration in the articulation of a different mode of productions. This ultimately formed a new form of social relations between different groups of peoples. After the end of colonial rule this are continued to simmer in the rural areas, with the conflict between different classes in the agrarian sector. This kept alive a process of renegotiation of resource sharing and social relation. Although it is difficult to see the struggle or movement as homogeneous and linear in its programmes but they still date remained the fulcrum on which the political changes are affected. It may be cited one glaring example as the Naxalite movement in North Bengal which signifies the ideological shifts and epistemological break in the understanding of aspiration of somewhat amorphous masses.

There are issues that emerge not only in the eastern part of India but also in North East India which should also be taken into consideration in this context. A small but significant part of the

Himalayan Rim is linked to this region and contributed certain issues which may be taken as a catalyst if not as a direct contributor for the ethnic disturbances in the plain. Darjeeling Hills may be cited as one glaring example to substantiate this contention.

It should also be noted here that, Darjeeling's earliest link to metropolitan capital is signified by the fact that it was made a part of the province of Bengal while culturally it belonged to the Himalayan Rim. Similarly, Cooch Behar which was an independent kingdom for more than two hundred years before becoming a princely state during the colonial rule merged with the province of west Bengal after independence ignoring the fact that it nursed a distinct identity and culture for the indigenous people who rule this part for more than four hundred years under the umbrella of their kingdom. This conflicting condition still remains a factor that provokes the demand for autonomy either in the form of autonomous region or the form of statehood within the boundary of the country.

A question may be surfaced again how far is the movement of the autonomy autonomous itself? Whether both internal and external agencies are taking advantage of unique strategic position of North Bengal to their projected programme.

This question perhaps bear the importance in determining the causes of the present ethnic problems in this part of areas because despite the high level of education, land continues to be the main source of livelihood but immigrants encroach on it and that causes shortage. The Bengalis namely Bangladeshis are such immigrant group but not only one. A considerable number comes from the Hindi heart land of Bihar and Utttar Pradesh. Many local communities resent the fact that immigrants prosper on the land by encroaching upon while they are left behind.

The conflict begins with attacks on outsiders and slowly turns into ethnic conflict within the region. In the context of the land shortage by encroachment and failure to invest in productive job, as its exclusive rights so each community rewrites its history to claim on indigenous status and the exclusive rights over resources in a given area. Ethnic conflicts are direct consequences of such hardened ethnic identities and exclusive claim.

The present study is to find out the source of this ethnic movement by Rajbanshis, one of the major ethnic groups of North Bengal and a part of adjacent Assam. It also needed to acknowledge the inherent attitude of man in general. The aspiration of population to determine its destiny by itself has long been recognized by nation legitimized by the history of human civilization. The persuasion for the demand of self determination in the form of a state as demanded by Rajbanshis community arises out of historically evolved distinct identities of different ethnic groups that gave birth to different socio-economic formation.

1.1 ROLE OF LANGUAGE

Language always plays the vital role for the establishment of identity and becomes the most powerful instrument to ignite the emotive sentiment for the question of self determination.

It is even more powerful than that of religious fanaticism for the establishment of own territory as it is established in the formation of Bangladesh. The linguistic criterion which has been adopted for the identification for the group for federalist solution to the problem of right to self determination has largely fulfilled the aspiration of distinctive large population groups but in the case of smaller groups the same principle could not be applied.

Kamtapur or the Rajbanshi language is not the dialect as claimed by the Bengali intellectual, it is a principal language as the other principle language like Bengali was the initial voice of the movement of Rajbanshi community. Now the demand for separate Kamtapur state has placed its deep root in their mind and the movement is revolving around the movement for separate state and declared that their mother tongue which has been denounced by the Bengali community will be crowned as the state principal language of their proposed Kamtapur state. It is therefore required to examine the role of language in examining the present movement for the Kamtapur state.

An attempt has been made to accommodate their right to self determination. A generic identity has been conceived of under the nomenclature of 'Scheduled Tribe' and political space has been provided for them under the constitutional provision of Fifth and Sixth schedules. But the present crisis shows that these provisions are not the answer. So it needs further exploration to measure the fathom of the crisis as well as to the driving factors behind them to prescribe the remedy. The basic question knocks. How does one think? The question is important whatever the issue or the area of one's concern, because of this thinking on the nature and adequacy, the ultimate effectiveness of how one acts, in the matter. It is the diagnosis of disease which determines its treatment. In the same way it is the explanation or understanding of social reality or aspect of it, which indicates the prescription, of the necessary, purposeful action from the part of the society as a whole.

1.2 ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic conflict which ultimately turned into ethnic separatism within nation state demonstrated the spectacular phenomenon since the last century. The disintegration of mighty Soviet Union, break up of Pakistan, fragmentation of Yugoslavia, are the few glaring example of the manifestation of these centrifugal force in the recent history of international politics.

1.3 ETHNIC IDENTITY CONCIOUSNESS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Ethnic politics is playing important role in the functioning of modern nation states, the world over. While the process of development had contributed largely to integrative tendencies in many states, it has produced tendencies in others. On one hand the developed countries has succeeded a lot in containing ethnic problems through process of nation building and modernization, on the other hand, in the developing poor countries it has worked the other way i.e. it has contributed to disintegrative process and given rise to large scale ethnic assertions. In case of India, ethnic group consciousness has risen in post independent era. On the context of terming these claims as law and order problems, the Indian state in most of the situations has acted in a repressive manner to counter these ethnic assertions, which have produced violence on large scale (Sing, 2008).⁴

1.4 ETHNO NATIONALISM

Brass defines ethno national movements as ideological movements based on shared meanings of common descent, real or imaginary that elites in the appropriate group formulate in order to mobilize political support for a variety of objectives ranging from autonomy to secession, to statehood.

On the one hand the ethnic minorities are the problem for the nation state where they are located in terms of their increasingly political assertion regarding identity, culture, language, religion etc. On the other hand, the nation state is a problem for them in terms of their perceived or genuine discrimination particularly regarding the fulfilment of their legitimate political and socio-economic aspiration (Sing 2008)⁵

1.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC CONCIOUSNESS

Notwithstanding the fact, the focus of the present study is to examine the Kamtapur movement ignited by the Rajbanshi community , the largest scheduled caste of West Bengal (Mukhapadhyay; 2003)⁶ the ethnic upsurge has become a challenging situation throughout the world both for multi-ethnic developed as well as developing countries. The very basic problems of most of the developing countries are more or less same. They have the plural societies and their territories were developed and marked to serve the interest of the colonial administration as most of them were under the subjugation of colonial rule. These territories were the conglomeration of different ethnic groups. Their aspiration and feeling had no any place to be considered. The aim of the colonial rule was only to exploit the resources by establishing their administrative authority over this area. When the anti colonial struggle reached to its pinnacle, the various ethnic communities, native to these colonized territories joined to this movement

with a hope that they can regain their lost authority as well as identity by the termination of the colonial rule.

The receding colonialist left this territorial dispensation with hard and defended borders. These borders were not the outcome of any painstaking effort of geographers but were the result of geo strategic and politico-economic consideration of the colonial masters. They were not built on any rational consideration. The receding powers left these occupied territories as lumped together diverse and antagonistic human groups or homogeneous groups were divided to suit the motives as convenient to them. So nation state in major part of the world did not come into existence through natural process of historical evolution as in case of Europe, but were artificial creation of outgoing master who left problems of ethnic minorities of all sorts unresolved in order to keep their hold intact in future.(Sing 2006 as quoted in H. Sing 2008)⁷

India is not the exception as depicted above; rather it has more complexity than others having much more diversity in language, culture, religion, customs and geographical variation. Its attempt to build national integration along with nation and state building simultaneously but the same was blocked by the plethora of highly sensitive and emotional forces, political boundaries, problems of languages, ethnic conflict and violence, cultural identity and intra tribal relations. Without taking the account of the historical fact none can find the path to reach the destination. The present study for the Kamtapur Movement also demands the historical analysis of the country to understand the origin of its movement. In the same time the geographical location of this area should also be taken in to the consideration how far it has played as a catalyst in promoting the felling of isolation from the so called mainstream.

Before the establishment of colonial rule India was divided in to kingdoms and fiefdoms according to the linguistic, cultural and demographic variation. Every group had its own administrative freedom. But after the establishment of British colonial rule the colonial ruler tried to web India under a single administrative umbrella to consolidate their exploitation. So they brought various small territories comprising various ethnic groups keeping them aloof regarding the sentiments of ethnic communities under a same roof and in most cases merging them with big province.

There is no scope to deny the fact that before the advent of colonial rule large numbers of ethnic communities were historically never a part of what is called Indian mainstream, rather they were enjoying autonomy, independence during those period. Before leaving India the colonial ruler amalgamated these ethnic communities with the hard borders. In that case neither the British ruler nor the nationalist leader paid any attention to consider any natural and demographic division. The dominant community at that time exploited emotionally the minority ethnic groups and asked them to be part of the vast nation as partner of the united front of nationalist movement against the colonial ruler with the assurance they will be allowed to enjoy

the freedom to represent themselves in the socio-economic and political matter and must have proper sharing in the administration and governance of state. Their identity will be preserved and their customs and culture will find the due prestige without the interference from any corner.

It appears that ethnic minorities become more concern about their identity and demand their separate ethnic identity and reacted against the steps of encroachment on their affairs. In that case language appears to be the strong instrument in question of establishing the identity. In support of the above contention the recognition of the language may be cited here. According to the census report of 1961 the total number of languages in India were 1652, among them one fourth of the total number were the mother tongue of the tribe communities. During the period of 1971 and 1981 census this figure came down to 221 and 106 respectively. It was done in response to the instruction of census department that if the number of speaker of the particular language is bellow 10000 it should be excluded from the list of independent language and that should be included in the name of that language that they use to speak outside their territory. The said contention is supported by the fact that 48 mother tongues had lost their position in the census list and incorporated in Hindi alone as a result the Hindi speaking people jumped from 29.67% in 1971 to 39.94% in 1981. It should be bear in mind that India is not a monolingual nation like USA. It ought to be taken in to the account that the attempt to assimilate minor language in the so called major language may emerge as counterproductive near or distant future as it has already been pronounced in many part of the world. The emergence of Bangladesh from the grip of Pakistan is a glaring example. Apart from geographical and economical factors the Bengali nationalism ignited like catastrophic fire against the imposition of Urdu upon them. It again requires examining the role of the dominance of the Russ language over the other languages of the then the Soviet Union for the fragmentation of the mighty nation and emerges as the separate states according to the respective mother language. Mother tongue is the symbol of glory and identity of the community. No community whatever may the demographic position be able to accept his mother tongue to be recognised as the sub-language of the language of any other community. In the case of Kamtapur Movement which is under this study initially peeped its head with the demand for the recognition of Rajbanshi/Kamtapuri language as an independent language denying the official version as it is a sub language of Bengali and require to examine its role to convert this movement from the recognition of language to the demand of a separate state under the jurisdiction of Indian constitution.

1.6 THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The Indian state had often questioned the separate ethnic existence of minority groups while ignoring their demands. This has generated a type of urge in them for the identity furtherance and thrust on its exclusivity. Had the state followed a proper policy of nation building, rather than the state building, a common identity could perhaps have emerged as its identity (Baljit in Singh, 2008).⁸

The role of development and distribution of resources by the state machinery should also be taken into consideration in explaining the ethnic movement. The state should provide the opportunity to the people to participate in development programme. It does not mean people's participation in a particular field. It means open access of the people in wider range of social, political and economic programme. Participation in economic field not only provides the requirements for their survival but it also enables people to realize their potential and offer their contribution to the society. It also gives them a strong feeling of self respect and dignity which can be considered as vital to the participation to all other aspect of life. Economic growth is meaningful if it can be translated in to betterment of human life which ultimately becomes the cementing force for the feeling as an honourable partner of the society as a whole.

The uneven development had resulted inequality in sharing the fruits of development due to which certain groups and regions are at the receiving end. Due to this discrimination and development (actual and perceive) these ethnic groups are being alienated from the national mainstream, indulged in a type of political strangulation perceiving themselves as internal colonies (Singh). The majority dominating centre is being termed as oppressor. So these socio-psychological, cultural and economic variables have further strengthened the politicization of ethnicity, which had given fillip to its mobilization effort (Singh).

1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the purpose of present study the literatures which have been used may be divided into the following three categories.

1. Theoretical writings on cultural territorial movements.
2. Scholarly contribution on ethnic questions of India and the issues of nation states.
3. Writings on Kamtapur movement and the historical account of the Rajbanshis

A large number of theoretical works available on the problems of cultural-linguistic-racial-territorial mobilization and political movements as experienced in recent years. But from these studies no single conclusion can be achieved and how ethnic unrest could be solved.

D.P.Moyanihan's '*Beyond the Melting Pot*' (1963) may be considered as one of the pioneering contribution to the field of cultural-racial identity and mobilization in U.S.A. It is also a ground breaking study that pointed out how strongly America's various ethnic groups have resisted assimilation. D.P Moynihan argued that the level of deviance in US society had increased beyond the point that it could afford to recognize. As a result, it has been redefining deviance so as to exempt much conduct previously stigmatized and also quietly raising the 'normal' level so that behaviour seen as abnormal by an earlier standard is no longer considered

to be so. This publication helped to understand the concept of racial identity in the present study although it was done in different context and historical period.

N.Glazer and D.P. Moynihan edited '*Ethnicity, Theory and Practice,*' (1975) deserves special mention. They present a paradigm shift. Multi –culture flourishes in apolitical economic milieu of unity of power elite drawn from different sector of the society .According to Glazer and Moynihan ethnicity is a distinct category of social process and social differentiation. But in a society articulation and social mobilization will follow ethnic lines. From their observation it appears that cultural-racial identity or ethnic identity is a universal social phenomenon and ethnic mobilizations are as natural as class movements. They argued that conceptually any group of distinct culture and origin must be regarded as an ethnic group. According to them an ethnic group should have the following characteristics:

- (a) Must have distinct identity which helps mobilization;
- (b) Some objective factors like culture, race language, religion do exist but not essential;
- (c) Such groups are forms of social life

A.D.Smith and J. Hutchinson in their '*Ethnicity*' (1996) classified various conceptual works on ethnic cultural movements in to two categories; 1) primordialist and 2) instrumentalist. The article '*Integrative Revolution*' by Clifford Geertz in his edited volume '*Old Societies and NewStates*'(1963) may be classified as a primordialist as he finds that primordial ties , like, race, language, religion, culture, region are the most influential factors to provoke public action despite the establishment of modern state. Instrumentalist, on the other hand observed, ethnic mobilization is a weapon for the pursued of political and economic goals. D.L.Horowitz's '*Ethnic Groups In Conflict*' (1985) and L .A. Desspres's '*Ethnicity and Resource Competition In Plural Societies,* (1975) may be included in this category. In their works they tried to identify the connection between cultural–ethnic movements and political–economic interest.FedricBrarth in his '*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, The Social Organization of CultureDifference* '(1969); argued that ethnic identity was a means to create boundaries that enabled a group to distance themselves from one another. To Berth ethnicity was a perpetually negotiated and re- negotiated by both external ascription and internal self determination. Berth's view was that ethnic groups are not discontinuous cultural isolates or logical a *priorius* to which people naturally belong. He wanted to part with anthropological notion of culture as bounded entities and ethnically as a primordialist bonds, replacing it with a focus on the interference between groups.

Jean Phinney in '*Ethnic Identity and Acclluration* (2003) and '*Ethnic Identity*' (2000) maintains that, ethnic identity is dynamic multidimensional construct that refer to one's identity or sense of an ethnic groups (2003).From her perspective one claims on identity within the context of a sub group that claims a common ancestry and shares at least a similar culture, race, religion, language, Kingship or place of origin. She goes on to add that ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic

background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individual becomes aware of their ethnicity, within the large (socio cultural) setting (2003)

Paul R. Brass in his '*Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*' (1991) subscribes the instrumental thoughts. As a matter of fact Brass made a strong pointed critique of the position as opposed to the primordialist one. The distinction in Brass the primordialist and the instrumentalist point of view is very important. Brass draws our attention to the fact that ethnic identities are variable, and hence his larger anti primordialist point; there is nothing inevitable about an ethnic conflagration. In Brass's view, the military officers, professionals, the landed and urban middle classes, are all member of the elite category. When ethnic identities are created and released by these manipulating elites, the identities are not pristine in character but are significantly distorted for combative purposes. Brass observes elite conflict for resources as the main cause of ethnic mobilization.

M.Hechter study '*Internal Colonialism*' (1975) locate the ethnic problem in a phase of particular type of economic development. He argues that the capitalist domination is the basic cause of ethnic conflict.

In comprehending the problems of ethnicity in India some of the writings appeared quite useful. Among them M.R.Barnet's '*The Politics of Cultural Nationalism In South India*' (1976) needs to mention. Here he explained the Darvida movement in Tamilnadu from the point of view of cultural nationalism. UrmilaPhadnis in her '*Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*' (1989) and R.A.Schermerhorn's '*Ethnic Plurality in India*' (1978) explained its ethnic cohesion in a multi-cultural society.

Myron-Weiner's '*Son of the Soil*' (1978) explained the problems of cultural-territorial movements in Assam from the angle of ethnicity. A.Majeed's '*Regionalism; Developmental Tensions in India*' (1984) and SajalBasu's '*Regional Movements*' (1992) tried to locate the socio economic causes behind such movements. Susana B.C.Devalle's '*Discourses of Ethnicity and Protest in Jharkhand*' (1992) and Dipankar Gupta's '*The Context of Ethnicity*' (1997) offered valuable insights on ethnic movement in India taking in to the account of Jharkhand and Sikh consciousness in Punjab respectably. H.Gohain in his remarkable contribution; '*Assam; A Burning question*' (1985) and N. Senguptas '*Fourth World Dynamics; Jharkhand*' (1982) should be mentioned in this context where both of them took the economic factors to explain the ethnic problems in historical context.

With reference to ethno-historical background of the Rajbanshis in general and Kamtapur movement in particular the following literature are found quite important.

Charu Chandra Sanyal's remarkable study entitled '*The Rajbanshiss of North Bengal*' (1965) deserve special mention. Dr. Sanyal in his study described the culture and customs of Rajbanshis community with a beam of light how their ethnic identity began to change with the progress of time.

Dharma Narayan Barma's 'A Step to Kampta Behari Language' (1991) is an attempt to establish the Rajbanshi language as the principal language and is the driving force behind the ethnic unrest in North Bengal. Gunadhar Burman's 'Kamtapur Katha' (1991), Ranjana Roy's 'Uttarbanga BhasaSamasya' (2003) are directed to the same direction.

UpendraNathBurman's 'Rajbanshis Kshatriya Jatir Itihas' (1388 B.S) demanded that the Rajbanshis are carrying the Aryan blood. His argument purely based on mythological description.

Khan Chowdhury Amanalulla Ahmed's 'A History of Cooch Behar (1936) may be regarded as one of the documentary evidence and help for knowing the history of Rajbanshis kingdom particularly, the history of Cooch in detail.

'Uttarkhanda Movement A Sociological Analysis' (1987) by Rajatubhra Mukhopadhyay is a valuable contribution in locating not only the basic sociological factors but also the historical causes that have contributed greatly to present ethnic unrest in North Bengal. 'Conservation Vs Construction: A Discourse on Hindu Identity of the Rajbanshi' (2008) is an in depth study to understand how the ethno-religious and the historical as well as the political factors played the role for the Rajbanshi community to embrace Hinduism. It is again, 'A Note on the Cultural Background of Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal' is an important study in the field of Kamtapur movement to examine the social and cultural factors which are supposed to be the instruments that ignites the desire of cherished statehood named Kamtapur and launch the movement to achieve their goal.

'Ethnicity, Ethnic Movements and Social Structure in North- East India' (2007) by B.K.Roy Barman observes that ethnic entities/or ethnicity need not necessarily be seen only in terms of conflictual relationship and that their dialogical relationship and potential to the creation of a non- hegemonic social order from local to global level should also be recognized.

'Ethnic Identity Problem and Administrative Efficacies in North-East India' (2007) by R.k. Bhadra presented the ethnical account of the indigenous inhabitants of North East India which provides useful ethno –historical factors to understand the ethnic relation of the indigenous people of North Bengal particularly Rajbanshi community under this study.

The unpublished thesis of Dharendra Nath Das , entitled 'Ethno-political Aspect of Regional Movements: A Study In The Context Of Some Regional Movements In The Plains of North Bengal' (1999) is a useful contribution in explaining the present ethnic unrest in North Bengal.

Manuel Castles in his 'The power of Identity' (1997) gave, perhaps the most cogent definition of identity and conceptual analysis. According to him, identity, as refers to human being in society, is the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes that is /are given priority over other sources of meaning.

Manning Nash, contributed a rich explanation in his '*The cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*' (1989) where according to him the concept of ethnicity is also fuzzy in the large body of literature on the subject, there appears to be no consensus on what ethnicity is.

GopalGuru, ed, (2011); '*Humiliation; Claims and Context*' is a notable contribution where he defines the concept of humiliation within the interdisciplinary frame work.

Javeed Alam (2004) discusses the process of identity formation among the oppressed castes, whom, borrowing a phrase from Partha Chatterjee, he describes as having been and experiencing '*collective unfreedom*'

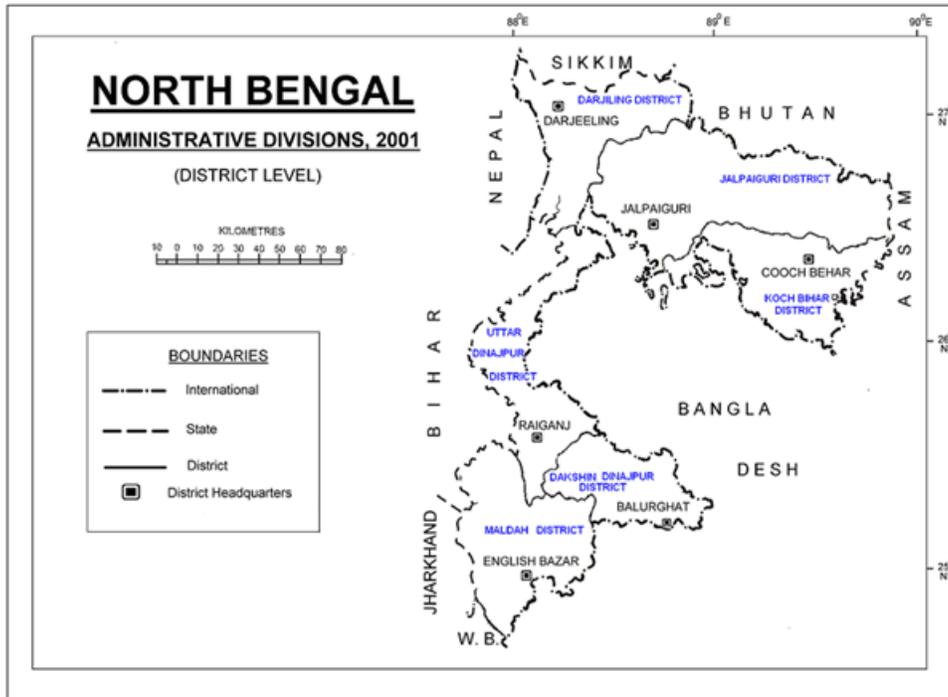
There are ,good number of research works on ethnic movements in India but little (often sporadic) attempt has been so far made to study Kamtapur movement led by the Koch-Rajbanshis from ethno- historical perspectives. The proposed research is an attempt to fill up that gap.

1.8 THE STUDY AREA

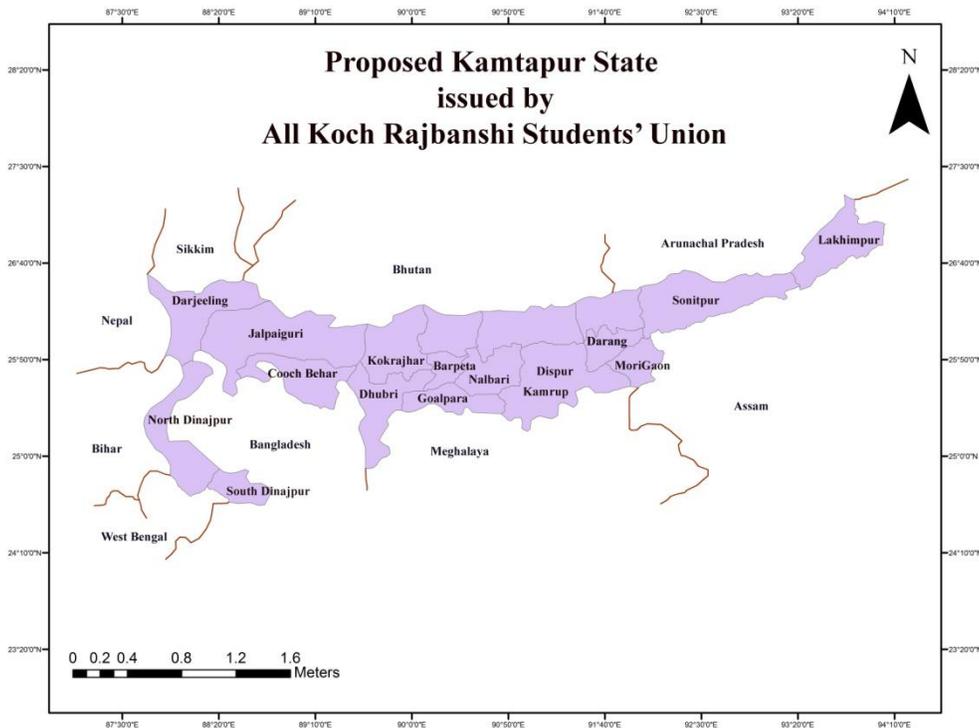
North Bengal, as the name implies, is the northern part of a larger regional entity, namely West Bengal, which is a state in the Indian Union. The North Bengal lies between latitude 24° 40' 20'' to 27° 13' in the northern hemisphere. The easternmost extremity is marked by the 89° 54' 35'' east longitude and its westernmost extremity by 87° 45' 50'' east longitude. Six districts comprise the whole region and these are Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda . (**Map No. 1.1**)

The All Koch Rajbanshi Student's association had proposed the Kamtapur State which covers the districts of North Bengal and part of Assam State also. (**Map No. 1.2**)

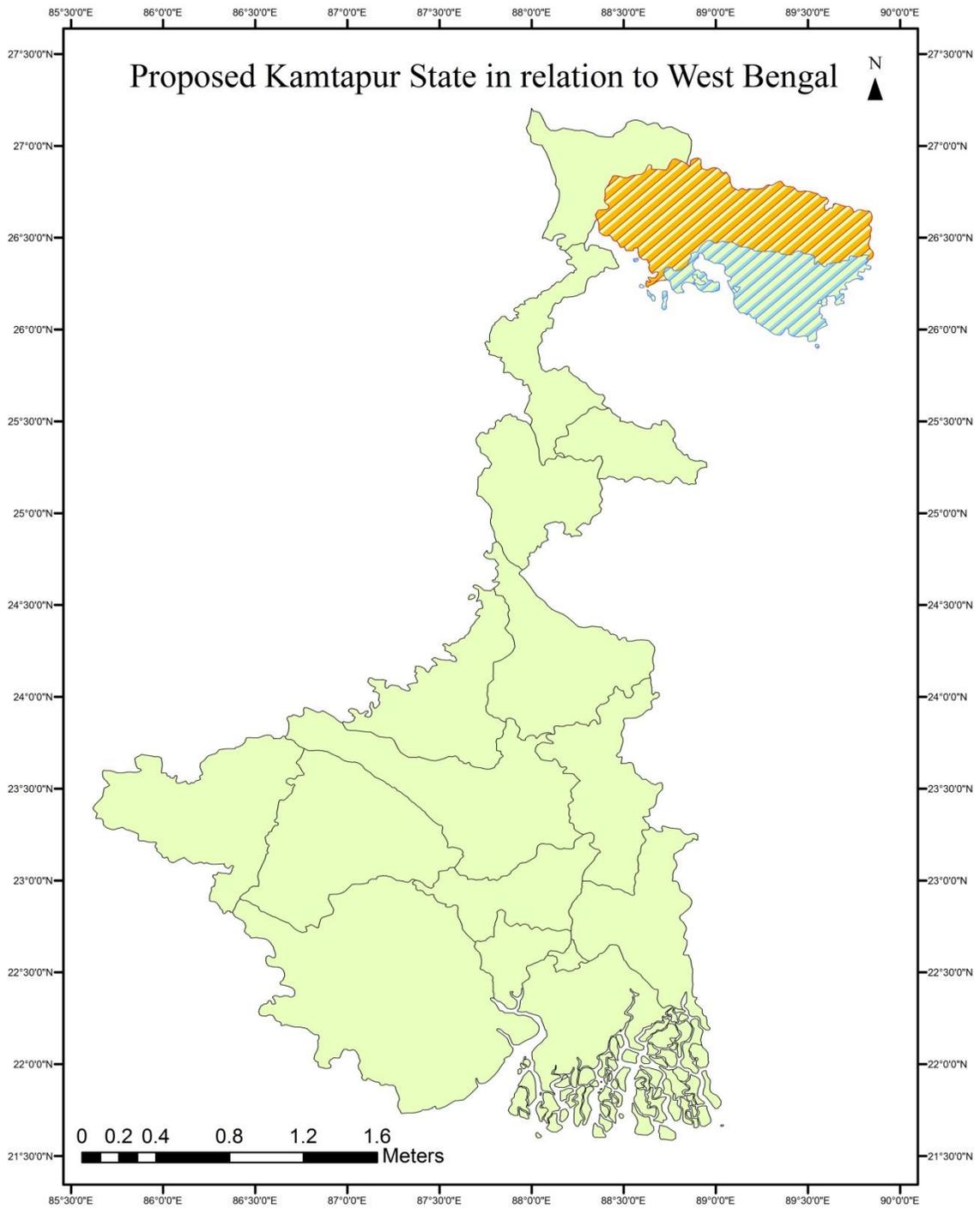
The origin and development of Kamtapur movement backed by the Rajbanshi, the major ethnic group of North Bengal mainly exist in two districts viz. Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and the people of these districts had an ethnic bondage with North Eastern states of India. (**Map.No. 1.3**)



Map No. 1.1



Map No. 1.2



Map No. 1.3

1.9 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

North Bengal of today constituting the district of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. Three districts namely Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling as a whole had an ethnic bondage with North-East India. So the economic, political and social unrest which are going on these districts over three decades need a through scrutiny. Further, North Bengal is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups like Rajbanshis, Nepali, Mech, Rabha, Oraon, Munda, Santal, Malpahari, Toto, Kharia, Jugi, Khen, Pan, Paliya, Nasya-Sekh etc. Many of them still preserve their ethnic identity and language/dialects.

The primary objective of the present research is to examine the origin and development of Kamtapur movement backed by the Rajbanshi, the major ethnic group of North Bengal. This study also intends to throw some lights on how the problems of marginality have been grown up in the sphere of language, demographic composition, cultural homogeneity that ultimately led to an asserted move in demanding a cherished statehood, called Kamtapur.

The separation of Goalpara from North Bengal and merger with Assam in 1874 is another important event as it divided Rajbanshi community from the traditional belt of Rajbanshi homogeneity and because for the first time after 1874 a section of them have formed a common platform Greater Kamta United Forum for the common interest of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilini of Assam.

It has been found that a number of studies has been conducted over the ethnic issues covering the regional movement of Rajbanshi community or the formation or Kamtapur state but there is hardly any comprehensive study which addresses the following question;

How the Rajbanshi community as a whole feel alienated from their land firstly by the tea plantation which caused the influx of labour forces from the adivasi belt namely, central part of India then by different project works and pine apple plantation, besides, by the land grabbing by the land syndicate for the speculative trade forcing them to become the land less labour?

Why does the Rajbanshi community feel in general that their history and culture are gradually marginalized in the present geographical boundary of West Bengal?

All these aspects need an enquiry with reference to ethnic question in the case of Kamtapur movement from historical perspective. From the available literature it appears to me that majority of studies on this ethnic movement generally put emphasis on single factor. Of course there are few studies where attempts had been made to accommodate more than one factors and some studies have also stressed on the historical and contextual elements.

The aim of the present study is to explore and address the problems of Kamtapur movement from political, historical, sociological, geographical and economic frame of reference. The objective of this study may be concentrated as depicted bellow:

- 1) To examine the background evolutionary history of the demand behind the movement of Kamtapur Movement.
- 2) To examine the social, political, economic and geographical and other factors those have greatly contributed in demanding for a separate state.
- 3) To examine the influence of other ethnic movements of the neighbouring states including the demand of Gorkha land state over this movement for creation of a Kamtapur state.
- 4) To examine in what extent the history of this region is playing a part to ignite the emotional aspiration for separate state.
- 5) To examine the inter relation between the various factors which are responsible for creating the separatist sentiments as reflected in this movement.

The primary objective of the proposed study is to examine the emergence and growth of Kamtapur movement in ethno historical context. It will investigate in detail the factors which have been exploited greatly in mobilizing the indigenous people in favour of that movement on ethno-cultural and territorial terms.

1.10 HYPOTHESIS

The present works tries to assert the truth or falsity of the following proposition:

1. Ethno-Cultural identity is the root cause of Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal.
2. Marginalisation has given birth and development to the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal.

1.11 DATA SOURCE & METHODOLOGY

As my object is to understand the ethnic unrest of North Bengal, the impact of socio-geographical environmental factors on that issue especially on the movement of Kamtrapur was necessary both for paper works and field study. I have gone through the books and articles on this issues including the related books and literatures to know and understand the ethnic problems and the contextual explanation on the subject explained by different scholars. The

name of the books and articles including the documents both private and officials which I have consulted to collect the primary data for my study are mentioned in the context of 'Books Review'.

I thought that, in order to understand the problems and read the mind of the concerned people it is necessary to study the life of the Rajbanshi people at close quarters by living with them so as to get an insight into their social life and how they are affected by the influx of the new comer known as the Bengali Refugees with their advanced culture and dominated demographic position so as to get an insight into their social life and how it is affected. By merely interviewing some members of the community on specific points one cannot cover the sentiment of the whole community. Moreover, the results may not be very accurate as there is a difference between what people say and what actually exists. This happens mainly when opinion are sought. Certain facts are not influenced by the opinion of the respondents, like the type of the family or house hold, or the number of inter community marriages that has taken place. These exist on their own and a census will give the correct answer. But if I want to know whether the inter community marriages especially between Rajbanshi and Bengali are encouraged or not, or whether dependent parents are responsible for their children or not or whether the Bengali neighbour wanted it or not I presume that I should not rely entirely on interviews. Because, in such case there is a tendency to express the ideal and not the actual condition. So I thought it to be necessary to select three places to stay for the sample survey for my study.

1.11.1 FIELD WORK

Method adopted: In this section attempts have been made to give an idea about the method, tools, and technique adopted, selection of areas, pattern of analysis, period and limitation of present study.

Sources of Information: For the present study both primary and secondary sources of information are used. However, emphasis has been given on first hand information directly collected from the areas which I adopted for my research study.

Primary data has been collected personally from three areas with the help of the field guide. In my study the area is the unit of enquiry not the object. It is not the comparative study of the Rajbanshis living in three different areas that I have adopted. The principal aim is to study the socio-ethno-geo-environmental impact upon the historical events that provoked the Rajbanshi community to feel them being deprived in relation to the Bengali community and ultimately led them to organise ethnic movement throughout North Bengal. In my study the knowledgeable persons of each areas under my study like the elected representatives, village headman, educated person, senior members of the locality , and number of common people across all the sections of the population were my key informants in providing first hand information. In these areas, I

have selected the houses of the each selected areas when I used to stay in these areas. All of them are interviewed with the household scheduled containing a set of questions, like name, age, education, marital relation,-whether inter community marriage, their feeling about the past heritage, opinion about mother tongue, ethnic relation amongst the different communities, whether in favour of merging with West Bengal or prefer to remain as a separate state, opinion about the medium of instruction in the education, whether connected with any organization etc. Besides these, some random questions according to the situation which gave me a chance to ask more about information following their answer to my questionnaire.

Secondary data have been used as and when required mainly to inspect the historical background of the community and evaluate their social transformation. Census documents have been used for demographic details and social classification of the Rajbanshi community. Ethnographic details have been collected from the available books and literatures. History of the community has been critically examined from their earlier literatures, history, folktales and even heresy.

1.11.2 RATIONALE FOR THE SELECTION OF AREAS

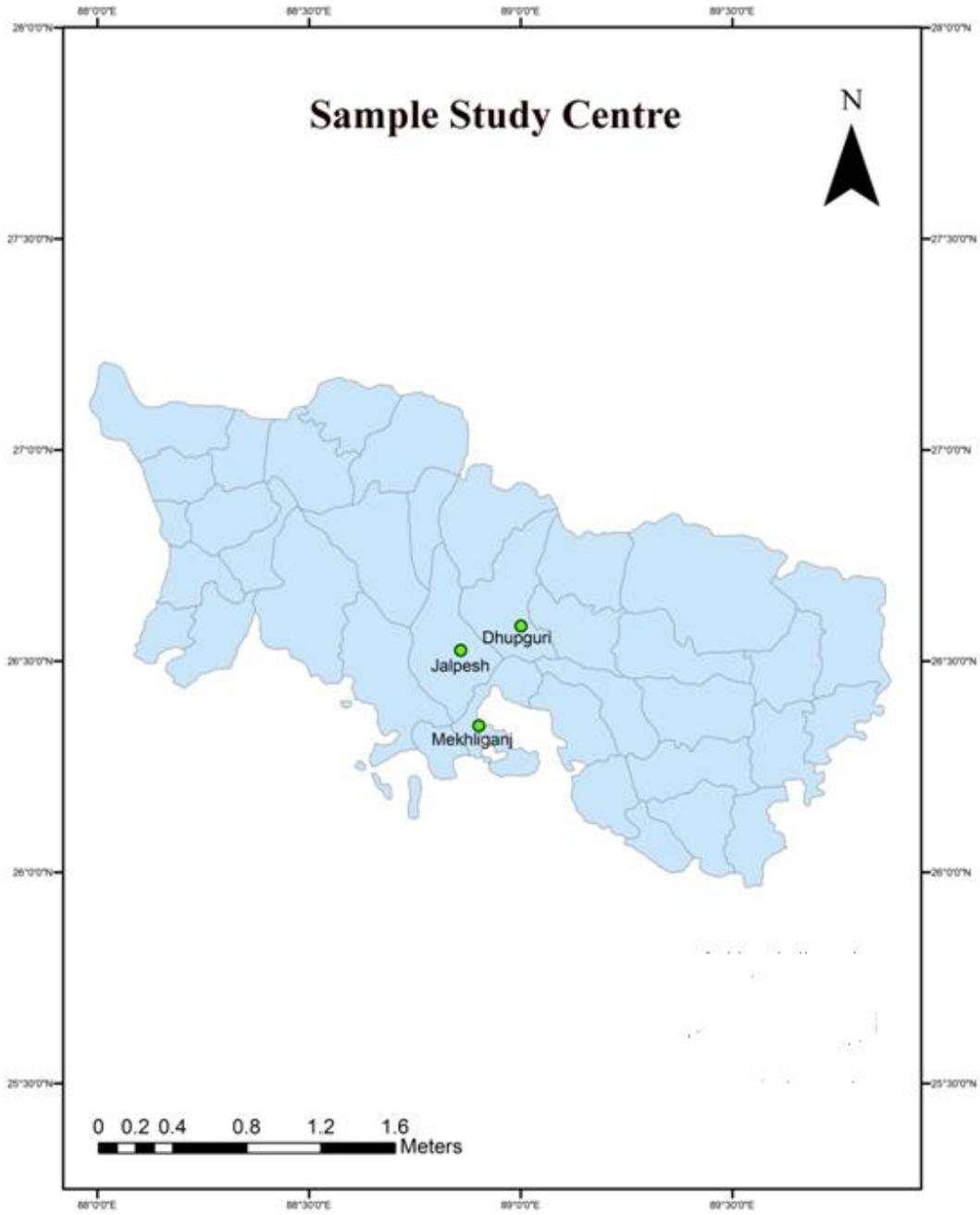
Mekhligang has been selected because of its active participation in the movement for both the Greater Cooch Behar and for the Kamtapur State movement. Most of the Rajbanshi leaders of the ethnic movements hailed from this area. Once a completely agricultural area now becomes a trade centre and mixed population having the domination of the Rajbanshi community inspite of the influx of the Bengali refugees settled here. This area is well connected with the district headquarters, Cooch Behar and enjoys both the rural and urban flavour.

Jalpesh: It is a village (J. L. No. 68) of Mayanaguri police station. It is situated on the bank of the Jhorda River and famous for its Jalpesh Temple reconstructed by Pran Narayan, the king of Cooch Behar. This area was selected for taking into account of its historical background and pattern of its mixed demographic position.

Dhupguri: The third area that was selected is Dhupguri, the birth place of Utterkhanda Dal. It is a densely populated area of Jalpaiguri district and connected both by road and railway transportation system.

All these three centres have purposely selected on practical consideration and convenience.

Studying just one station intensely, one cannot generalise the sentiments of the community as a whole. This was not our intention either. A study of this sort would be at the most a journalistic attempt and a piece of sociological research. My stay at the selected stations gave me an insight into the sentiment of the community of my study .With this background I was able to continue my investigations in other neighbouring areas also. (**Map No. 1.4**)



Map No. 1.4

1.11.3 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

In order to achieve my objectives I have collected both qualitative and quantitative information.

Quantitative informations have been gathered from each of the house hold. As two areas, namely, Dupguri and Mekhliganj were big urban areas and densely populated I have considered both the census technique and sampling that are suitable for the purpose. The area Jalpesh is a small village and sparsely populated. Here I have considered census technique most suitable than sampling. All the areas have been enumerated with the help of household schedule. Household level primary data have been obtained by direct interview preferably with the head of the family.

During this conduct of the field study I find close observation that seems more suitable and feasible than that of participatory observation.

Some time I participated in a variety of social, cultural, religious and ritual events organised both at the individual and social levels.

1.11.4 PATTERN OF ANALYSIS

Data collected both from the primary and secondary sources have been later analysed and presented in simple tabular forms. No sophisticated statistical techniques are used for the study. Secondary data collected for demographic profile are used to show the status and position of the Rajbanshi in North Bengal.

The qualitative information gathered from the field survey, key informants, linkman, and literatures are analyzed and interpreted mostly to judge their social and historical position in the present context. All information provided by the key informants are put to cross examination and analysed minutely to get the most appropriate result. Observation regarding the areas of the community are being discussed with field guides and key informants to get their opinions.. The elected representatives and the elders of the community are consulted to gather qualitative information and their opinions. A number of cases have been recorded and analysed with due importance.

1.11.5 PERIOD OF STUDY

I have divided the project in to two broad phases, collection cum processing of data and analysis of data. Secondary data have been gathered much before going to the field survey for collecting primary data. Available literatures have been reviewed at the initial stage of the study.

In choosing of the field study I have covered some months for each of the station depending upon the area and the demographic volume of the selected places.

1.12 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research work is spelt out into eight chapters and these are as follows: -

Chapter: I - Introduction –The Problem-Conceptual Frame Work

Chapter: II-The Region and the People

Chapter: III-Kamtapur Movement: Genesis and Social Context

Chapter: IV-Evolution of the Movement and Present State

Chapter: V-Locating Kamtapur Movement Among Some other Ethnic Movements in North East India

Chapter: VI-Ethno Linguistic Aspects of the Movements

Chapter: VII-Identity–Autonomy Question and the State: The Kamtapur Experience

Chapter: VII-Conclusions

1.13 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

I cannot claim that this study is complete analysis of the origin and causes of the ethnic unrest of North Bengal. No one can claim complete perfection and ours is not exception to that.

In the present study I have tried to identify the origin and the influence of economic, geographical, environmental and historical as well as social influence upon the present ethnic unrest of North Bengal. Any question centring on social formation needs to be examined from multi dimension taking into consideration their economic, political, social, historical, linguistic, anthropological and religious angle. Historical dimension is only one aspect of such concept. As the present study is time bound and individually organised and financed we could not take into account of the aspect of social formation as the part of the study. Only few outlines have been discussed when and where it became necessary.

As all the movements of the Rajbanshi took their historical past as the base points for the establishment of their identity and claimed a geo-political boundary for their own in the name of the state, I have explained mainly the historical background of the Rajbanshi community and the

present influx of the refugees of East Bengal in the first phase and in the later phase the migration of the same community from the then East Pakistan. Besides, historical background, the impact of the influx of the incoming refugees are given due weightage.

I have purposely selected three stations of different areas from two districts. So that one sample result should not influence the other. All the three stations have mixed populations and the Rajabanshi community demographically occupy the dominating position. So it enabled me to get a complete picture of the social transformation in the Rajbanshi community.

As indepth interview and not participant observation seems to suitable, many aspects of social relations and attributes peculiar to the society can only be investigated through touch with the community. Many aspects of such society may be very symbolic or happen without any apparent causal relation with other. The best method I consider for such happening is close observation and direct interaction. But I could not do justice because of my certain limitation which I could not overcome inspite of our best effort

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