

CHAPTER: THREE

KAMTAPUR MOVEMENT; GENESIS AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Kshatriya Movement which was one of the most remarkable social movements in the early part of the 20th century . The role of Thakur Panchanan Burma in taking the leading role of this movement which was aimed to elevate the Rajbanshi Community in the caste status of the Hindu caste system is also an important event of this movement. The biography of Thakur Panchanan Burma is depicted here to show how he had to face the evil practice of the caste Hindu which led him to take leading part in the Kshatriya Movement. It also dealt with the account of sanskritization in the Rajbanshi society which inspired them to embrace The Hindu ritual and customs and led to form the Kshatriya Movement which played a pivotal role to inspire the Rajbanshi community as a whole to raise their voice to elevate them in the second rank in the caste based Hindu society in one hand and on the other hand, made them to believe that they had been originated from the Aryan blood. It is therefore, becomes imperative to give the account to evaluate the critical observation of this movement .This chapter also depicted the historical account of the Koch Dynasty and their branches that ruled in different parts of East Bengal and Assam.

3.1 THE KSHATRIYA MOVEMENT

The 20th century has been regarded as the turning point for the establishment of ethnic identity of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal. In the colonial literatures the Rajbanshis were generally as purified group of Koch, a semi aboriginal tribe who had adopted Hindu manners and customs by renouncing some of their traditions and cultural practice. The Kshatriya movements initiated by Panchanan Burman the first intellectual in all respect under the title Kshastriya Sava can be described as the torch for the self introspection which ultimately gave them light to search about their own identity and historical back ground. Although this movement is not free from controversy but this movement can be taken as the age of the forward movement of the Rajbanshis community as Young Bengal movement of the Bengali during the period of 18th century which is considered as the turning point of Bengali rejuvenation in their modern socio-political history.

3.2 THAKUR PANCHANAN BURMA: HIS ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT

Panchanan Burman, regarded as the father of Rajbanshis community, originally named Panchanan Sarkar born on 13th February 1872 AD and lived an active up to 19th Sept. 1935. The name of the village where he was born was Khalisamari located under Mathabhanga subdivision of Cooch Behar district. His father, Shri Khosal Sarkar was a respectable personality of this locality having big agricultural land. On that day the person having a respectable amount of

agricultural land and education used to work in estate of landlord or zaminder for maintaining accounts and official records had been designated as 'sarkar'. 'By virtue of his education and respectability in the society Shri Khosol Sarkar endowed with the surname Sarkar.

Panchanan Barma from his very child hood showed his extraordinary talent. After his primary education from his village primary school he admitted in the English medium school at the nearest sub divisional town Mathabhanga. His brilliant result in the School Board Examination in 1855 AD was reported by the Educational Superintendent Shri Kalidas Bagchi. Shri Bagchi reported:

Panchanan Sarkar, a native of Cooch Behar, who passed in Matriculation Examination in the first division from Mathabhanga School, succeeded to secure the first place in the general list of the Rajshahi Division'. After the middle education Panchanan Barman was admitted in Jenkin High School of Cooch Behar town which was the only English medium high school in the district. From there he was admitted Victoria College of Cooch Behar town. After obtaining the bachelor degree he obtained both his Master and Law degree from Calcutta University. Here it should be noted that he was the first post graduate and law graduate among the Rajbanshis of that time.

Panchanan Barma experienced caste hatred from his childhood. In his early life he touched by mistake or out of curiosity the Gita of his family priest during his visit in his house. He was shocked that even the conduct of an innocent child was grossly condemned through an alarm of hue and cry. He was cautioned that being a non Brahmin he had no privilege to touch a holy book that too written in Sanskrit, the 'Deva Bhasa. (Mandal, 2002,¹). Almost simultaneously another incident took place in the Normal School hostel at Mathabhanga. One Rajbanshi boarder put one step into the hostel kitchen for something. The entire cooked food of the hostel was thrown away because the caste Hindu demanded that those foods became polluted due to the entrance of a Rajbanshis student into the kitchen. Ironically, the teachers' community came in support of the demand of the caste Hindu student. The entire cooked food of the hostel was thrown way in the street and fresh food was cooked after performing ritual practice in purifying the kitchen.

Even after establishing himself as a brilliant lawyer in Rangpur court he faced the same caste hatred. Once in Rangpur court, Panchanan Burma by mistake put on the hat of his colleague named Mr. Maitra, who happened to be a caste Hindu. Mr. Maitra subsequently refused to use that hat by an open declaration that 'I hate to use a toga used by a Rajbanshi, (Mandal)².

During the early 19th century the whole of the nation saw a new wave of national spirit not only in question of political sphere but also in the field of social status. The movement against the untouchable practice of the caste Hindu and demand for the improvement of their position in

the rank of the caste Hindus. The application submitted to the census commission in the 1911 will support the statement.

Panchanan Burma obtained the highest degree from Calcutta University but he was not given the honour what he deserved even by native state ruler of Cooch Behar not to speak of the dominating Bengali community. He was not given any honourable post in the court of Cooch Behar; rather he was expelled from the state on the pretext of silly matter. He took an exile to Rangpur, a neighbouring district and started his law practice and built their own association which became the pioneer to initiate the Kshatriya movement the seedling ground of present movement for the establishment of their self identity.

Panchanan Burman was fearless and a man of full energy. He had an indomitable urge to work for complete awakening and regeneration of the downtrodden of his region in general and the Rajbanshis in particular. He initiated his movement for regaining the racial glory, eradication of poverty, enriching the Rajbanshis Language and highlighting the glorious past of their culture and finally for complete empowerment.

After arriving at Rangpur he established the Uttarbanga Sahitya Parishad. He had the belief that the cultural and philosophical foundation can make consolidation among the community to build the movement to achieve the destination. He became the editor of the journal published by the Rangpur Sahatiya Parishad. He began to write articles on the racial past and historical glory of the Rajbanshis community. He was no doubt a powerful writer and his pen became the powerful weapon in mobilising the Rajbanshis community for the cause of the establishment of their self identity. His articles also earned the appreciation from the scholars of different shades and communities. Renowned scholars like Nagendra Nath Bose in his appreciation wrote 'Panchanan Burma's scholarly pursuit is like bright flame and his work on language provided me with more research materials.

The bitter experience from his boyhood about the caste prejudice in the society drove him to fight against this ugly social practice. Notwithstanding the fact, that he belonged to a well-to-do family but he could not escape the caste hatred. He took a different method from the other reformers as they fight against the untouchability accepting the lower position of the so called lower caste in the Hindu society. He began to search the past glory of his community to establish that the Rajbanshis community was also belonged to the upper caste of the Hindu community. In order to establish his demand he began to cultivate the historical back ground of the Rajbanshis. He founded an organisation called 'The Rangpur Bratya Kshatriya Jatir Unnati Bidhiayani Sabha' in Rangpur under the Chairmanship of Mr Harmohan Roy (khajanchi), the zaminder of Shyampur in Rangpur District. He initiated his famous 'Upanayana' movement, a symbolic Kshatriyahood on the bank of holy Korotoya River in 1912 AD. He adopted the thread of Upanayan to demonstrate themselves as the Kashatriya a warrior class among the upper strata of

the Hindu community. He declared that through this movement his community not only would be able to establish their caste and social position but also their glorious past in the history of modern India and in the same time would obtain some kind of relief out of the 'Kshatriya Upanayan' from the Hinduistic social hatred. He changed his surname from Sarkar to Burman as a mark to belong the warrior community of Kshatriya race.

This Kshatriya movement shall be taken as turning point of self identification movement for the Rajbanshis community. During this time the whole of Bengal were primarily dominated by Hindu upper caste society in social, political and economic respect although this state was demographically overwhelmingly dominated by the Muslims and so called lower caste in the Hindu community. The lower caste people were used to be socially persecuted and denied their human dignity by the economically powerful upper caste Hindu community. Their occupation used to be determined by their caste identity. The more the lower position in the Hindu society more the disrespectful and straineous used to be his job. They were used to be engaged for the most laborious productive and service oriented work such as farming, fishing carrying, cremation work etc. The lower caste manual labour never used to get the wages so that they feel economically comfortable condition to lead their social life.

The conditions of Rajbanshis were peculiar. There was no such caste division as it was in the Hindu society. But when the non Hindu Rajbanshi king became the ardent followers of Hinduism the whole of the Rajbanshi community was placed in the lower strata in the Hindu community. The Rajbanshi kings tried to become more and more nearer to the caste Hindu by inviting the caste Hindus in the higher royal post in the court as well as other important administrative service of the kingdom that marginalised the own community. When Panchanan Burman being the first post graduate and lawyer among the Rajbanshis community demanded the deserved administrative post in the royal court the native king of his own community denied to accept him. It has every reason to believe that the upper caste Hindu who was already in the respectable administrative position in the royal court influenced them against him and the king obliged them as they recognised his position in the upper strata in the Hindu caste society. The rule of the land was virtually in the hands of the upper caste Hindus.

Thakur Panchanan Barman, no doubt the most eminent leader of the Kshatriya Andolon but this movement was initiated earlier before he took over the leadership of the second phase of the movement during the period of 1901 to 1919. This movement was begun by the Rajbanshis of North Bengal in the last phase of 19th century and continued all through the half of the 20th century. Here it should be remembered that the Brahmo propagation followed by the royal family inspired a section of educated Rajbanshis of North Bengal to build up the movement known as 'Rajbanshis Kshatriya Andolan for caste –cultural identity of the Rajbanshis. Although it originated in Rangpur but became popular throughout North Bengal, and part of Assam including Cooch Behar state the then a princely state. This movement could be classified in to two phases. Firstly, they renamed themselves Rajbanshis, lineage of the Raja or king. Secondly,

in the association with this renaming they announced themselves as kshatriyas, warrior class of the four caste system of the Hindu Society.

There were several direct and indirect causes which inspired this movement to get the momentum; and of these causes the most important one was that the migration of many Bengalis from East and south Bengal and being patronised by the king himself changed the social strata of this region. Most of them were upper caste Hindus and followed the caste division practice and placed the Rajbanshis in the lower strata in the Hindu caste system. The Rajbanshis felt the heat of discrimination and hatred. Even how Ray Saheb Panchanan Burman was dishonoured by his fellow lawyer in the law court of Rangpur was described here. So it can be easily imaginable what was the social condition prevailed during this period. However, this discrimination in Cooch Behar was not as discernible in the rural society as the Rajbanshis were overwhelming majority in villages. So the movement against this discrimination and recognised them as the Kshatriyas in the Hindu society was initiated by the educated Rajbanshis of urban areas and the villages flock simply responded to the call of their leaders.

3.3 SANSKRITIZATION

Some of the researcher like M.N. Srinavas stamped this movement as of sanskritization syndrome. But their argument could not find the sufficient ground. As it is evident from the historical fact that Northern Bengal had been culturally more advanced even than many other parts of Bengal in the ancient time. Long before the beginning of the movement the Rajbanshis had been Hindus. It has been argued that the Rajbanshis might have been branched out stock of the ancient Dravidians having blood mixture with the Australoid and the Mongoloids. Now, it cannot be denied that Hinduism was not a contribution of the Aryans only. The Dravidian stock of people also contributed a major role to the development of Hinduism. So Hinduism when generally denotes the synonymous with the Aryans it is nothing but the distortion of history. The Rajbanshis therefore, when declared them as kshatriya it should be taken granted that this declaration was the beginning a sanskritization movement, rather it may termed as the beginning of the tradition bound movement asserting higher position in the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. Sanskrit culture had already been the very part and parcel of the culture, faith religious practice of the Rajbanshis way of life. They did not have to be sanskritised, since they had the officiation of Brahmins in their worship of Hindu pantheon. The Rajbanshis used to worship the god and goddess as the Hindu worship the same in different parts of India. For example, lord Shiva (believed originally a non Aryan god and latter included as the most popular god of the Hindus, particularly for the so called lower caste community of the Hindu society) had been the most attractive and prevalent festival among the Rajbanshis long before the origination of the Kshatriya movement.

Originally, in the social custom, there was no strict caste division as prevailed in the Hindu society before they came into the fold of orthodox Hindu customs and practices. But when their king began to associate himself with the Hindu Brahmmonical society and invited them with offering royal post and land he began to alienate him with common masses as this new influx of the Hindu upper caste introduced the practice of the division of the caste system placing the Rajbanshis in the lower strata of the Hindu caste system. This alienation of the Rajbanshis from their Royal Family of Cooch Behar kingdom also one of the cause to stimulate them to switch their movement into Kshatriya movement.

It is again , in search of the present ethnic unrest and the division among them in question of the Kamtapur and Rajbanshis, one has to go in to the depth of the social context that were prevailed during those period centring Cooch- Behar on one side and Rangpur on the other side. In the same time the role of Goalpara at that time and the effect of separation of Goalpara, a Rajbanshis dominated region annexed with Assam should be taken as important factor in this context.

Nripendra Narayan, the king of Cooch Behar married to Sunita Devi, daughter of Keshab Sen a Calcutta based intellectual. He was also one of the pioneers of Brahma Samaj. It was obvious the royal family became Calcutta (now Kolkata) bound and under the influence of Keshab Sen who was the renowned educationist and social reformer, Raja Nripendra Narayan inspired to establish the western education in the state. During the period of Sultan rule Dacca had the important role for the administrative position. It enjoyed that position even during the first period of British company rule. It was also not only the political centre but also the learning centre almost parallel with Calcutta. But when Calcutta became the capital of British Crown and enjoyed the political and economical supremacy. Dacca lost his importance both in political and cultural areas. The upper caste of the Hindus of East Bengal mostly belonged to land owner class known as zaminder and talukder who played the important role and position in the administrative centre of Dacca lost that position and their sons began to search new areas for their resettlement. At that time the British ruler annexed Assam with their colonial territory after discovering the potentiality of the tea emperor and took the massive programme for set up the railway lines. That gave the opportunity for the educated Bengali who was searching new areas for their employment. At that time either in Assam or in Cooch Behar educated middle class was virtually absent. Bengali educated youths filled those vacancies. Those who came and settled here most of them belonged to upper caste of Hindu society. It was obvious with their coming and with the direct patronage of the royal family the Brahmins came to settle and they were gifted landed property for their subsistence. But still the Rajbanshis population was overwhelmingly majority in the state. So, caste discrimination although very much there but it could not so discernible as in Rangpur.

On other hand, the condition of Rangpur was far behind in comparison with Cooch Behar State. Because Rangpur was populated by multi-caste people and exclusiveness between the

castes were more intolerable than in Cooch Behar. They still had their unquestionable allegiance to the royal family. But a difference of invisible screen began to emerge between the royal administration and the Rajbanjis of Rangpur for the reason as at that time, when the Koches or Rajbanshis became victim of inner caste hatred and humiliation they hoped that the royal family would extend their help and redress their agony as they often requested them to do so.

This apathy brought the frustration among the local people on one hand and on the other hand gave more opportunity to the educated people of Calcutta and other parts of Bengal in the post of Royal administration and in the judicial system. That was because the English educated king of Cooch Behar heavily guided by the British in all respect and followed the English judicial procedure replacing the traditional customs. For that reason they needed the English educated people who knew the English rules for administration and English judicial system but at that time English educated middle class in the Rajbanshis community was in very initial stage.

With the emergence of the educated middle class, as a rule of history, they found that almost all the key position in the administrative post, including others important social fields had already been occupied by those people. That phenomenon was the common feature not only in this region but the same picture could be traced almost all major part of the North East states. The reason was more or less same for those states also. An anti Bengali feeling that were found among the newly formed educated masses of the different ethnic groups of the North East region had been originated as they thought that due to the presence of those Bengali people they are not getting their opportunity without taking in to the historical back ground of this position.

The Rajbanshis began to feel the ill of discrimination in one side and on the other side they felt that they were denied their legitimate right to be absorbed in the administrative post at least in their native state taking the consideration as they are the man of the soil. Such feeling added some stimulation to ignite the fire of movement. At the first phase of this movement it was not at all intensive and confined within the small pockets, especially in Rangpur. It did not enjoy any support from the royal family. Rather they were against that movement. That was the main cause for not providing the proper post for Ray Saheb Panchanan Burman in the royal administration of the princely state of Cooch Behar. Even he was expelled from Cooch Behar by the order of the king.

In the first phase of the movement it remained confined within the rename of Koch to Rajbanshis that could be revealed in the census report of 1891. During the census, F.A. Skyne, the Superintendent of census operation stationed in Rangpur directed to record the name of all Rajbanshis as Koch only. But the objection came from the Rajbanshis, particularly, from Rangpur with the claim that since the ancestors of the king of Koch Behar had been akin to the ancestors of other Koches in the states, therefore, following the lineage of the king, they all should be named 'Rajbanshis'.

‘It may be assumed that, perhaps, at that time the Koches had been looked down upon by others, consequently, they disliked to be identified as ‘Koch ‘ - a sense of collective or group-ego might have passed them all and a strong intention propelled the learned among them to assert the claim of kshatriyahood, of course just following the footsteps of their king, as though, all of them were off spring or at least clan of Raja or Kin’, (Debnath)³

That protest was not fruitless. In the census of 1901 Koches were named only Rajbanshis. But the renaming the Koch into Rajbanshis did not give the desired result as it could not elevated the position of the Rajbanshis in the upper caste of the Hindu society. Therefore, the second phase of the movement started (1901to1918). This movement got momentum with joining of Thakur Panchanan Burman.

3.4 EXTRANEOUS FACTORS

Some extraneous factors might be taken in this context. The impact of the modern education and westernisation of thinking still remain virtually absent in the Koch or Rajbanshis whatever the name they were called. On the other hand most of the amenities of the modernization were in the hand of the immigrants in Cooch Behar, the reason has already been discussed. The original inhabitants of Cooch Behar namely Koch /Rajbanshis had already been exploited socially by the Varendri Brahmins in the states as those Brahmins were possessive of the lands of the kingdom and the local inhabitants were simply exploited tenants or peasants. With that situation the tillers of the land, however, could manage their living although with great difficult but somehow tolerable adjustment.

The introduction of the so called modernization under the control of the caste immigrant Bengali made the situation worst by not only exploited them economically taking the advantage of their primitive agricultural practice but on the same time hatred discrimination on the caste basis. One glaring example may be mentioned here how the Rajbanshis were looked downwardly. It was the custom in the Rajbanshis Community that the elder of the family called the junior as “*Bapu He*”. The Bengali people polluted that address as ‘*BAHE*’ to show the disrespect and marked them as the down caste people of the society. At that situation the Koch /Rajbanshis whether living in Cooch –Behar or Rangpur or Jalpaiguri lost their level of tolerance and for the amelioration of their condition responded to the call of the movement which kept on evolving in a few stages of transition nearly for sixty years. The first stage may be termed as formative stage where simple demand was placed to the census department to be registered as Rajbanshis as in the census of 1891 recorded them as ‘Koch’. Here the most significant fact was that the leaders of the movement separated them from the Koche and identified them as separate community by describing themselves as ‘Rajbanshis’.

Such demands separating themselves from the Koches were perhaps ,placed forward with the apprehension that the Kocheses had been looked down upon by the ‘Bhadralok’ Bengali and the only way out of that ignominy was to establish the claim to higher caste –origin by adopting the name of Rajbanshis’ (Debnath).⁴

After the joining of Panchanan Burman in the movement it became the turning point of the movement. A brief account of the early history of Panchanan Burman had already been mentioned in this study. He was Master of Arts in Sanskrit and Bachelor of Arts of Law. But this bright degree could not invite the attention of the king to offer him a proper place in the administrative post. Out of disgust and frustration he left Cooch Behar and joined at bar in Rangpur. The caste humiliation that he received from his own colleague prompted him to begin to contemplate upon the possibilities of retrieving the prestige and dignity not only for him but also for his whole community. He reorganised the movement with the aim to re-establish the glorious past and place them in the upper caste position of the Hindu society. He was a Sanskrit scholar and used his scholarly knowledge in the effort of detecting a way out in order to upstage the position of the Rajbanshis. He founded the Kshatriya Samity. He studied the Sanskrit literatures including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Purans and other Vedic literatures meticulously and came into conclusion that thousands of Kshatriyas for fear of Parashuram who took the vow to eliminate the kshatriyas form the earth fled the eastern part of India and renounced their way of life as a warrior and took the practice of cultivation by clearing the forest. Under this changed circumstance they devoid of rites and rituals and other activities as prescribed for the Kshatriys and fallen to be degraded off their previous stature of kshatriyahood. This fallen state was called as ‘Bratya kshatriya’ and thus he claimed that the Rajbanshis should be placed in the census list as Bratya Kshatriya. Panchanan Burman took the help of the Brahmins mainly from Bhatpara of Nadia who regarded as the guardian of caste Hindu of Bengal. It should be mentioned here that the Royal family of Cooch Behar invited the Brahmin from Ujjain, another school of Hindu caste society.

It should not be taken easily that the Hindu society will take everybody who wants to be the part of the Hindu mainstream, particularly in the series of upper caste. Here it was easier to leave the Hindu identity rather to come in. It needs the sanction of the upper caste of Hindu specially Brahmins .Inspite of this restriction number of races and tribes Garo, Rava, Lalung, Mech, practicing many old practices and food habits like the eating of beef had to be given up.. Even obliging all this conditions they were not placed in the upper caste list of the Hindu society.

The social transformations in the Rajbanshis community also deserve to be examined. Dr. Cambel, the then superintendent of Darjeeling attended the ritual practice on the death of the king Sarbba Deb and wrote in his opinion on 20th January 1848 in the matter of dispute on the legal authority of the throne:

‘The Raja could not properly be called a Hindu although ambitious of being considered within the privilege pale. His family is the Koch Tribe now, however, designated as Rajbanshis and affecting to be equal of the Chattris, although retaining many usages and habits quite irreconcilable to their pretensions.

The 18th ruler of the Raikat dynasty Jogendra Deb died on 1878. The dispute again raised in question of the legal heir to the throne which went up to the Privy Council. The privy council gave their verdict upon the argument of the plaintiff;’

‘Although the Baikunthapur family had nominally come under Brahmanism, they had at the same time retained customs inconsistent with their being closed as Hindus, not being by race, and some other customs at variance with Hindu Institution.

Privy Council in his judgement agreed with the argument with King Phanindra Deb in saying that,

The family property cannot be divided as it done in the Hindu society,

The practice of adoption of son is not legal like as in Hindu society.

The wife cannot claim the right of property after the death of her husband like Hindu widow.

The Privy Council passed their judgement. ‘The Baikunthapur family, the head of which bore the title Raikat, belonged originally to the Koch tribe in the T. W frontier of Bengal and was not Hindu (sanyal)

On the plea that they were not Hindu and was not guided by the Hindu property act and Raja Phindra Raikat could retain his throne. But the same Raikat family took the completely opposite argument in the year of 1956 before the Calcutta high court in the same matter.

After the death of Prasanna Deb the 21st Raikat in the year of 1946 his wife inherited the landed property of her husband. Ashrumati Debi had no son. After her death her daughter Prativa Debi inherited her property. She married to an upper caste Hindu (S.K. Basu, happened to be the elder brother of renowned political personality like Jyoty Basu, ex chief minister of west Bengal). Smt Dipti, the daughter of Prativa Debi also married to another upper caste Hindu, Mr. Dilip Roy Chowdhury. In that case their authority to heir the property of Prasanna Deb was challenged taking the judgement of the Privy Council as depicted above by some members of the Raikat family. In that case the defendant placed their argument that during the course of time the Koch family by adopting the Hindu ritual and practices and establishing the marriage relation with the upper caste Hindu duly recognised by the Hindu Brahmanical society they have now become the integral part of the Hindus. Honourable High court agreed with the argument.⁵

In response to the call of the time and with the progress of the courses of social transition different races along with their culture gave birth a new history. These two examples may be taken as the glaring example of the above contention.

In the second phase of the movement under the leadership of Roy Saheb Panchanan Burman was to exculpate the Rajbanshis of their sins of being fallen from the Kshatriyas duty. In order to achieve this goal a large number of Brahmins were invited in order to officiate the performance of rite of exculpation and atonement. Panchanan Burman called upon the Rajbanshis to perform the ritual by shaving of the head and wearing the sacred thread named 'Paita' as the symbol of Kshatriya identity. This performance was known as the 'upanayan' a ritual practice performed by the upper caste Hindus. Thousands of Rajbanshis responded to this call and assembled on the bank of the Korotoya and performed the Upanayan. Again a remarkable step was taken. In order to mark them as the member of the caste Hindu under the leadership of Ray Barman they renounced their ancestral titles and adopted the titles of Kshatriya like Roy, Barman, Singha etc. Previously, following the funeral ritual practice of the lower caste of the Hindu society in case of penance where the son has to perform for thirty days after the death of his father or mother. On the other hand the upper caste Hindu performs this penance for fifteen days and less in case of Brahmin. After adaptation of Kshatriya hood the Rajbanshis were instructed to perform the penance for thirteen days as a mark of their social position at par with the upper caste Hindu.

To represent the characteristic of Kshatriya hood Panchanan Burman asked the Rajbanshis to demonstrate their virility, courage, and mettle in the battle field. He believed that the First World War gave them the scope for that demonstration. He inspired them to join the Royal army. In response to his call few hundred of young Rajbanshis joined the army. He himself applied for the same. Known as introvert by nature who were reluctant even to go out beyond their own territory this incidence was a remarkable progress for the Rajbanshi community which was duly acknowledged by the British Government by conferring Panchanan Burman under the title 'Ray Saheb and M.B.E.

The Rajbanshis Kshatriya Samiti was a centrally controlled organization .In order to spread the movement into the grass root 'level different sub branches were formed under the respective names. Village level organization was named Patti. Ten to twelve pattis formed a Gadiani. Five to seven Gadiani formed mandalis. A few mandals formed Maha-Mandal. According to the available documents such 300 Mandali Samitis came up between the periods 1913 to 1926. The Mandalis were entrusted to function as court to settle the socio- religious disputes. They were also given the task to look after the economic progress and the development in addition to the task of preaching the ritualistic reforms. The mandalis and the Kshatriya Samitis encouraged for the better agricultural practice and entrusted with the task to look after the education of the children of the peasants' family. They made arrangement for the scholarship for the serious and

intelligent students. In short, the Kshatriya Samiti became a social organization for the poor community among the Rajbanshis. Naturally it appeared a parallel organization in the eyes of the ruling section of both the colonial as well as the native princely ruler.

The third phase of the movement started after the end of the First World War. In this period two important incidents happened. The death of Thakur Panchanan Burman the pioneer of the movement in the year 1935. Panchanan Barma had a hope that he would return a good service from the British ruler as had rendered his service to the government during the war. Another important incident was the Government of India Act 1935. After the war the Montague-Chemsford Act spelt out reservation facilities in government service for people who were lagging behind in term of economy and education. Ambedkar the doyen of dalit movement in India started his movement after the War and laid the foundation for the facilities given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It has to be noted that because of the arousal of the Rajbanshis leaders to this new situation, the Rajbanshis were also declared as Scheduled Caste and entitled to get the service in the reservation quota.

Another important characteristic that marked the third phase of the movement was the participation of the Rajbanshis women in the movement. These new phenomena included training of women flock for martial art and physical training for self defence. Panchanan Burman formed two women wings; one Nari Raksha Sevak Dal and Nari Raksha Vivag within the Kshatriya Samiti. Abduction of women and robbed of their chastity happened in many occasions. The women were inspired for their self defence in remembrance of the Mahabharata specially the inspiring character of Chitrangada. Panchanan Burman along with Govinda Roy of Dinajpur composed many inspiring poems to the effect of apprising all people about women's dignity, chastity and respectable position in the society. The Rajbanshis women used to put on a piece of long cloth reaching down the knees tightly bound over the breast. The unmarried girls used to put on 'rihe' (lower garment) and mekhla (upper garments). The Kshatriys Samiti also directed the dress code of the women befitting for the modern society. They asked all the women to put on saris and not one piece of cloth or 'rihe' and mekhla. This dress code might had been done to keep the modesty in the modern society, but they also restricted the women to go to the market place for selling goods and buy other commodities. This later step ,no doubt was the regressive steps for the women which was no doubt contrary to the progressive programmes that were taken by the Samity though it was argued that it was taken for the safety of the women to save them from the abduction and lost of their chastity. No doubt male dominated societies always take the same plea against the freedom of women.

Thakur Panchanan again be remembered for his contribution in the field of publication of journal. Under his able leadership a monthly journal named 'Kshatriya' began to publish where articles on socio-economic and political condition of the country published regularly. It also gave the news of incidents of abduction which indicates such incidence became a factor in the society.

Thakur Panchanan with the collaboration of Surendra Nath Roy Chowdhury, a notable intellectual personality of Rangpur formed the Uttarbanga Sahitya Parishad. Under the auspices of the Parishad a monthly journal, named Sahitya parishad under the editorship of Thakur Panchanan began to publish.

Panchanan Barman wanted to make the presence of the Rajbanshis Kshatriya Andolon in national level. In view of this intention he along with some of his fellow men including Upendra Nath Barman, notable personality of Jalpaiguri attended the All India Kshatriya Sammelan held at Alower and Indore respectively in 1924 and 1928. That exposure brought him in the national arena and gave greater awareness while ultimately gave them a newer and better field of understanding, and that was Indian Politics and the condition of the oppressed class of the country as a whole. Before that, the movement for kshatriyahood was confined within the narrow space of recognising in the Hindu caste system, now this broader understanding opened their mind to grasp earnestly all facilities given to the depressed classes in colonial India and after wards to the Scheduled caste in free India. In order to avail the prospective facilities given to the depressed class of people and the Scheduled castes, Thakur Panchanan felt it necessary to establish solidarity in right earnest with other depressed classes of Bengal. He joined with the 'Bangiya Jana Sangha' an organization of the back ward class of the state. That can be regarded as also a remarkable part of the movement as in that phase the Rajbanshis Kshatriya movement crossed their narrow geographical boundary and show their eagerness to join in the mainstream of the movement of the backward classes of West Bengal. Thakur Panchanan was honoured in the Bangiya Jana Sangha as one of their head and on behalf of them he submitted a memorandum to the Indian Franchise Commission in 1932 and extended their support for the provisions for reservation of seats and separate electorate for the depressed classes and separate electorate for the Rajbanshi. Later on this demand was modified in the Poona Pact-Reserved seats but Joint electorate.

The most important contribution of the third phase of the movement was the evolution of the political ideas and consciousness in the Rajbanshis community and participation in the electoral politics. Thakur Panchanan took part on national politics. He attended the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1905 held in Maymensing. As he was more concern about the development and the social position of the Rajbanshis than that of the national politics he withdrew his devotion from national politics and devoted himself for the cause of the Rajbanshis. For this purpose he consolidated his Kshatriya Samiti rather than to represent any national party and organise the Rajbanshis through electoral politics. He along with Nagendra Narayan Roy contested the election and became members of the legislative council of Bengal in 1920, 1923, 1926, and 1929. After his death in 1935, Upendra Nath Barman of Jalpaiguri represented the Rajbanshis in the legislative council. But Poona pact in 1932 became the turning point of the Rajbanshis as from this pact the leaders of the Rajbanshis began to think that they need national support in order to accept from the part of the government. It was this continuity of national contact that

brought dividend in the long run. We can summarise the Kshatriya movement in three phases; in the first phase it was for the name of the 'Rajbanshis; in the second phase to recognise as the Bartya Kshatriya; in third phase electoral participation and relation with national stream.

3.5 A CRITICAL OBSERVAION ON THE KSHATRIYA MOVEMENT

As the Kshatriya movement was the turning point for the political and social position of the Rajbanshis and a stepping stone to move further and ultimately reached to the present position it needs a critical eyes on the movement to find out the motivating factors to drive the present ethnical question which ultimately led to the ethnic unrest over this region. The first question who are the Rajbanshis? Who are the Koches? What are the difference between the Koch and Rajbanshis? Above all what are the relationship between the Rajbanshis and Bengali? All these questions need to solve to find the solution of the present problems.

At the very outset let see what are the basic foundation about the claim that the Rajbanshis was originally belonged to Aryan tribes and they are not related with the Koch. Again why the Brahmins also conceded to their claim of Kshatriyahood. Kshatriya, according to the caste division among the Hindus who were the warrior class.

H.H Risley said 'there was no historical foundation for the claim of the Rajbanshis to provincial variety of the Kshatriyas⁶. Others scholars like Ramaprasad Chanda, Rakhil Das Bandopadhyay, Sunity Kumar Chatterjee, and Nihar Ranjan Roy opined that the Kambojas later on came to known as Koch. Edward Tuite Dalton also pointed out that since the Koch King Viswa Singha having been apostatized to Hinduism took the title 'Rajbanshis'', therefore it could be a clue afterwards for all the Koches to take for themselves the name Rajbanshis.⁷ But according to Hadgson, J.N Bhattacharya and N.N. Acharya suggested that the Koches king of the Cooch Behar till the end of their dynasty rule consistently introduced themselves as Koch and not Rajbanshis. They also suggested that the Rajbanshis were Mongoloids origin.

It needs to give an explanation about the necessary to give an anthropological account of the origin of the Koches or Rajbanshis. The present problems of North Bengal related to the issues of identity of Rajbanshis as well as the relation with the Koches invites elaborate discussion. Firstly, the question of the language of Rajbanshis and its recognition as an independent language as claimed by the Rajbanshis and counter claim by the Bengali as it is as their dialects needs to be solved as it becomes the focal point of disputes between the two communities which ultimately turned for the demand of separate state in the name of Kamtapur State .Here again, a sharp disputes surfaced regarding the characteristic of the language of Rajbanshis /Koch. A large section of the Rajbanshis claimed that this language is not only the independent language but older than Bengali and should be called as Kamtapuri language. On the otherhand, other section of the same community claimed this language as the independent language as believed by others,

but they called it is not Kamtapuri but Rajbanshis. It should be kept in mind that difference has some significance in question of present ethnicity as two demands has been surfaced in the same time, one for the creation of Kamtapur State other demand for Greater Cooch Behar State.

Prof. Sailen Debnath in his ethnographic and linguistic study about the origin of the Rajbanshis alias Koches has put forward the argument 'that the Rajbanshis or the Koches were a mixed people but in the ancient time it had originated from a Dravidian stock of people 'He further argued 'that the original religious faith and beliefs of the Rajbanshis had much similarity with the religious belief and practice of the early Dravidians.' He further argued that the Koch Royal family of Koch-Bihar originally from the paternal side Mech and from the maternal side Koch^{8.}'

Here also an interesting point to be noted that Viswa Singha the founder of the Koch Dynasty discarded his original title 'Mandal' and adopted the title 'Singha' and his progenies adopted the title 'Narayan'. If we take into account of this fact then the claim to Kshatriyahood would find the historical support.

The question now comes about the role of the Brahmins who came from Mithila to the invitation of Koch- Bihar King and the Brahmins from Bhatpara of Nadia to the invitation of Kshatriya Samiti on the occasion of the ritual function of Upanayan. Both of the Brahmin group accepted the claim that both the groups either the Koch King or the Rajbanshis belonged to the Kshatriya Samiti were Kshatriya and belong to the caste Hindu.

Similar facts found in the pages of history. For example it can be mentioned the fact about the Rajputs. The Rajputs of India so far the history reveals the fact that they are the mixed origin of all the invaders like the Greeks, Sakas, Kusans, Parthians etc to India. They established their powerful position in India and even establish their kingdom and patronized the Brahmin taking into the account of their social position of North India. The Brahmins were intelligent enough for their self interest and could easily judge their strength and wealth. So they were not hesitant to recognize them as the caste Hindu and included them in the second higher caste position in the Hindu society by accepting them with the Kshatriyahood. Similarly Sivaji was not given at first instance to be recognised as in the upper cast fold of the Hindu society by the Maharstrian Brahmins and declined to perform the rituals involved in the coronation of Sivaji as a king because Sivai was a Mayal community by his birth. So the Brahmins from Mithila were invited to perform the ritual and an offer of huge wealth was given. Rajbansish were not powerful as Rajputs or Chattra pati Sivaji but their number could not be ignored. Priest hood of such vast number of peoples might had been their point of consideration. Moreover, the king of Cooch Bihar enjoyed both power and wealth at that time.

As a general rule and the call of the social transition that the caste barrier and the importance of the recognition of the Brahmins becoming meaningless. The movement for the caste

recognition gradually diluted. Now the question which has become the most important in determining the social position is the economic position accompanied with the scope of establishing their cultural identity has now the focal point of the social movement.

In post independent India North Bengal faced different problems. A problem of losing the cultural identity of the man of the soil. Political and cultural and economic activities became more and more Calcutta based and controlled by the high caste urban elites. A new Brahmin replaced the religious Brahmin. They are the city based elites. These phenomena not only found in North Bengal it is a general phenomena throughout the world. What once the movements against the religious priesthood in the middle and even during the period of the mid 20th century it turned now into the battle between the section of the people who by dint of their demographic majority or by their political and economic power tried to ignore the culture and racial identity of the others and those people who tried to re-establish their identity.

A time comes when the situation demands the evaluation of the past. As such the kshatriya movement needs to evaluate in the light of the present state of ethnic unrest of North Bengal bearing in mind that every present has its past. The kshatriya movement started in the period when India witnessed progressive Renaissance and thinkers like Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda preached the idea of against the caste system of the Hindu society. They were preaching against the low and high caste system in the society and preaching for the equality not in question of economic field but also in the social system abolishing the caste system. A question may arise whether the Kshatriya Movement was progressive or regressive in the light of the social movement taking account in to the fact that when the society was fighting against the untouchability and abolishing the caste system the movement for the restoration of the caste system in the name of Kshatriyahood was an attempt to strengthen the caste distinction rather than eradicate this ill system. Moreover, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe presented the ideas of humanism, naturalism, liberalism, reason and above all the spirit to fight against the priesthood. Although the Renaissance of Europe had far reaching influence upon the light of progress of the human march for future but it may appear that the leaders of the Kshatriya Movement seemed untouched by the great changes round the world. It could not be denied that many of the Rajbanshis of Cooch-Behar, Jalpiguri, Dinajpur, Malda were reluctant to join the movement and even opposed to it, that does not indicate they did it as they imbibed the spirit of the European Renaissance or the thinking of the Indian social reformers. The present study will examine whether this movement has any contribution in germinating the seeds for the present movement.

In this context it should be noted that inspite of the reluctance in supporting the rite of Upanayan by a section of people as depicted earlier but they showed their complete unanimity when the Rajbanshis representative in the legislative assembly placed their demand for declaring the Rajbanshis as Scheduled Caste showing that they were not against the basic objective of the

Kshatriya Movement. Their reluctance or their opposition to the movement were not based on any higher thoughts of philosophy. One thing must be taken in to the account in this discussion the role of the Royal Family of Cooch Behar Kingdom. The royal family of Cooch Behar under the regency of Indira Debi not only opposed the Kshatriya Movement but also asked Thakur Panchanan Burman to leave Cooch Behar as he criticized the queen for her alleged proximity with the upper caste Hindus. The Rajbanshis in general was loyal to the king but knowing it fully well that there was no blessing from the royal court to the said movement they took part in the movement and to some extent it achieved their goal. It is therefore one must admit that although there was no such noble ideas of humanism carried in the movement people in general extended their support and challenged the caste hatred and discrimination prevailed in the society with the blessing of so called upper caste members of the Hindu community specially from the immigrants Bengali elites. No one deny the fact, although Bengal feel proud for her progressive thinking not only in case of against the colonial rule and even for the social reform under the leadership of so many great noble men but the curse of the caste system could not be abolished even from the mind of the present society. A movement ends but it planted the seeds for the germination for the future generation. So the movement that was initiated during the nineteenth century and after wards under the leadership of Thakur Panchanan Barman which culminated with the organization of the movement of Upanayan must have their relevance in the present study.

3.6 ETHNO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE KOCH IN NORTH BENGAL

The present study is to examine the roots of the ethnic unrest that are now vibrating the soil of North Bengal. It is not possible to discuss the problems without bringing the historical accounts of the aboriginal inhabitants of this land. North Bengal, including the North Eastern states of India is rightly called the ethnological museum. One example may be sufficient in support of this statement. Jalpaiguri, a small district of North Bengal has 151 languages and dialects and at least 35 of which is yet to be classified.

Apart from the Darjeeling hills, the majority population of a singular racial origin in North Bengal belong to Rajbanshis community. But a dispute remains who are the Rajbanshis and whether there is difference between the Rajbanshis and the Koches. The North Bengal and the North East Sub Himalayan states including its plain areas are inhabited by different stock of people namely, the Koches, Nagas, Bodos, Ahoms, Khasis, Mizos, Manipuris, Lusshis, Mikirs, Mech, Bhutias, Nepalis Lepchas etc. Ethnographic categories and other distinguishing criteria may find a similarity one to another for each of the races except the Koches. A general view are prevailed that the people of North Eastern India belong to the Mogolide blood but the same cannot be said in case of the Koches or the Rajbanshis. Naturally the question arises what are the origin of the Koches or Rajbanshis. Answer of this question is necessary in order to explain the ethnic unrest of North Bengal.

Here the eminent scholars placed the divergent opinions about the origins of the Koches and they are even expressed their divergent views on the question whether there is any difference between the Koches and the Rajbanshis.

Prof. Sunity kumar Chattapadhyay in his book 'KIRATA-JANA-KRITI' regarded as one of the most authentic document on ethnology wrote "The masses of North Bengal areas are very largely of Bodo origin or mixed Austric-Dravidian-Mongolide, where groups of peoples from lower Bengal (Bhati-Desh) and Bihar have penetrated among them. They can now mainly be described as Koch, i.e, Hinduised or Semi Hinduised Bodo who have abandoned their original Tibeto-Burman speech and have adopted the Northern dialects of North Bengali (which has a close affinity with Assamese); and when they are a little too conscious of their Hindu religion and culture and retain at the same time some vague memory of the glorious of their people, particularly during the days of Viswa Singha and NaraNaryan, they proud to call themselves Rajbanshis and to claim to be called kshatriyas; yet they are quite content at the same, for the sake of political advantages, to be classed as a scheduled caste, among the lowly in the Hindu society whose past disabilities are now sought to be atoned for by giving the some special privileges. Nothing much is definitely known about the Koches of North Bengal prior to the 16th century; they may be described as Western Bodos, an extension of the great Bodo race of Assam and East Bengal which at one time occupied the entire Assam valley from Sadiya right up to North Bengal, the Garo Hills, Maimansingh, and Sylhet districts, Kachar district and Tippera (Comillah) district and Tripura State, forming a ring round the Austric (Mon-Khmer) area of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and flanked in the east and south-east by their near kinsman the Nagas and their distant cousins the Kuki-Chins" (Chatterjee;112)⁹

Prof. Chatterjee further stated in the same book 'during the rule of the Palas in Bengal—the Koches were gathering strength, and, like their kinsmen in Assam, had become, at least outwardly, Hinduised and it would appear that by the middle of the 10th century A.D. they ousted the Pala ruling house from Gauda and established themselves as rulers, at least in North Bengal' (ibid).

Charu Chandra Sanyal in his monumental work entitled '*The Rajbanshis of North Bengal (A Study of a Hindu Social Group)*' published by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, in 1956 stated that the Koches are non Aryan in origin. Some of them adopted Hinduism and became Rajbanshis. These Rajbanshis later on claimed to be Kshatriyas'.

At present the koches inhabit the Brahmaputra valley and the districts of Darang, Kamrup, Sibsagar Cachar and Goalpara in Assam, the districts of North Bengal. They also live in Meghalaya and some part of Sikkim and lower Bhutan.

In the Western Sikkim there is a group of people named Kirati living in some old villages they have been identified with the Koches. The practice, usages manners and religious belief of the hilly Kirat are apart from those of other Sikkimes-the lepchas, Nepalis and Bhutias. The Kiratis use cow dung and worship God Siva. (Sailsbery, Debnath p 42).¹⁰

In North Bengal they have been living from an unknown past. They were once regionally dominant political power and founded many several powerful kingdoms. Their precise origin, status folk history, however still remained obscure. Though they are a homogeneous people without caste division, there are amongst them, on the basis of regional differences, some sub groups namely-the Pani Koches, Polliyas, or Polayitas and the Khens. But now hardly difference is observed due to the social inter course throughout the ages. The Koches are now called 'Radiances'. In order to challenge the caste Hindus they got their changed in the nineteenth century and took the title Rajbanshis as they belonged to the race of the king or Kshatriyas. But this newly adopted name as they did in exigency has not been weighty enough to brass out their past identity in all discernible characteristics. (Debnath P 25).¹¹

H.H Raisely stated that there was no historical foundation for the claim of the Radiances to provincial variety of the Kshatriyas.

The existing history is largely based on the accounts left by the colonial administrators and colonial ethnographers on one hand, on the other hand, the most of the Rajbanshis /Koch scholars depend on the mythological accounts of their origin and strongly denied their argument about their ethnic identity. In that case they based mainly on quotes from the Hindu Scriptures and epics for the support of their argument. When the argument and the counter argument now took place in the present situation of ethnic unrest , the present study cannot deny the importance to examine both the argument where one tried to base on the anthropological argument and other based on the mythological narration where emotion prevails strongly to determine the present demand for a separate state by one section of the Rajbanshis and recognition for the Kamtapur/ Rajbabshis language as an independent language.

The literary evidence that we find that ancient Bengal known as Paundravardhana or Varendra and Kamrup are inhabited by people other than the Aryans .They were called by different names in different times namely, Paundras, Kiratas, Kambojas and Kaibartas etc. The Aitareya Brahmana described the Paundras as the most degraded caste in the Hindu society and brethrens of other non- Aryans people like the Sabars, Pulindas, Andhras, a Mutivs. The Aryans called the non Aryans 'Das' or 'Dasyus'. From the Manu Smriti it is seen that it did not discriminate between the regional name and the racial names. Manu regarded the Khambojas and the Kiratas were the same people. Both the Kambojas and the the Dravidas did not consulted the Brahmin and omitted their dictation to perform the rites thus they were fallen in the same downward caste in the eyes of the Brahmin during that period. No distinction was made between the Kambojas and the Dravidas for they were akin to each other. Scholars like Rama Prasad

Chanda believed that those who once were called Kambojas later on became known as the Kochs. He was supported by other scholars like Rakhil Das Banerjee, D.C.Sarkar, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and Nihar Ranjan Roy. If that view is accepted then it may be taken into granted that the Kaivartas too who lived in North Bengal and Assam, were not a people apart from the Kambojas or the Koch. Thus it may be concluded that the Kirats and the Khambos were the same stock and later on they were called the Koch.

In searching the pages of the history, it demands the open mindedness embedded in the phenomenon, its negotiable locus and its ever-contesting nature. The new times dispensing new positioning to different ethnic groups would necessitate a new reckoning of identities of their part, indeed a new politics of identity, a new politics of position which, as Sturat Hall observes ‘Has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental ‘law of origin. (Dr Roy p155).¹² The Rajbanshis were no exception.

The notable scholars and the leading personality among the Rajbanshis community Prof. Girindra Narayan Roy observed that the struggle in the post colonial context has proved to be more complex giving rise to more of heterogeneity within the community itself rather than a discursive and ideological consolidation, but it has certainly been more politicized and culturally more aware and active in terms of a more sharpened politics of difference. (Roy p156)¹³

It was this politics of difference that provided the Rajbanshis with the discursive dynamic to establish their identity as kshatriyas as against the denomination of Koch that hung on to them from both a Puranic and the historical past. At least they had to swallow this ascription as it was made public by the modern historical, anthropological and philosophical scholarship, especially because of their fallen condition Vis –a Vis the Hindu cultural milieu (ibid).

A systematic study that was started in the mid nineteenth century by the western ethnographers. All of them arrived at the conclusion these people were Koches and abandoned their original culture and adopted Hinduisim when the first Koch king Viswa Singha embraced the Hinduism. B. H Hudson who was supported by W. W. Hunter came their conclusion that after the conversion of Viswa Singha named his kingdom ‘Behar’ and the people who lived there came to be known as Rajbanshis. Although, the Rajbanshis now the most popular and widely accepted identity of this vast population but this name could not found in the history of the distance past and not even in the modern history. The reference of this name is absent neither in the Persian books of account nor in the Assam Buranjis or in Darang Raj Vamsabvali, a genealogical account of the Koch royal family. Even in the Brahmavaivarta Purana which contains the exhaustive list of mixed castes there is no mention about Rajbashis though there is reference to the origin of the Rajbanshis. Herbert Risley, E.A. Gait and Dalton were in the same opinion that the Rajbanshis were of the Dravidian stock with an intermixture of the Mongoloid blood. But in that case they had in their mind of the Rajbanshis of Rangpur in one hand, and on

the other hand, those who lived in Goalpara, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. But it is very interesting to note that these different views of the educated elites among the Rajbanshis community put them in the both advantage and disadvantage at the same time. Dr. Roy narrated the both situation in his articles ‘ *The Rajvanshis Identity Politics; The Post Colonial Passages* ‘ As an advantages, it facilitated their identity movement in terms of a politics of difference, a difference that they tried to establish on evidences of history, anthropology and culture in order to secure a higher status in the Hindu caste hierarchy as Kshatriyas to separate themselves from the Koches who were considered aboriginal and untouchable. Now from the Rajbanshis stand point it was difficult and dangerous to draw such a line of difference between the Koches and the Kshatriyas within the community. On the Other hand the disadvantage in the fact that the Koches are as real entities whose difference was to be articulated by the Rajbanshis for their identity as Kshatriyas did not exist. They were as much Rajbanshis and hence as much Kshatriyas as the movement makers claimed themselves to be. So it was the denomination that was wrong and had to be changed. So the quest for identity easily crossed the Rubicon of the first decade of the sixteenth century when the Koch kingdom was established and looked as far as back in to the past as possible.

It is the natural phenomena that in question of establishing the identity a recovery of the past and its glorification becomes the strong instrument. In the case of national movement in India nationalist leaders did the same thing by glorifying the Hindu past in a bid to challenge the colonial projection of it inferior to them. Similarly, in the case of establishing the seperate identity of the Rajbanshi, they also brought the heritage worth the name beyond the present fallen state but also tried to establish their history of the Kshatriya kings in the regions of Pragjyotishpur, Kamrup and later Kamtapur and Behar.

In order to examine the roots of the ethnic movements we need to examine the colonial attitude towards the different ethnic groups as the present ethnic crisis not only in North Bengal but throughout the country is the result of their treatment to serve the colonial rule.

The great revolt of 1857 not only shocked the British company’s rule over India and established the direct colonial rule in India but in the same time they began to think about their future danger. It should bear in mind that the great revolution of 1857 did not change their attitude but it changed their way of rule. They now tried to understand the feeling of the people of India as the introduction of Enfield Cartridge was the sparking source to ignite the anger against the British rule which forced them for the anthropologization of colonial knowledge to adopt the policy of non intervention in the tradition, customs and convention. They realised that ethnographic knowledge could explain why such massive rebellion could occur and how to avoid such dissatisfaction in future. So they tried to find out the new ways to earn the loyalty of their subjects on the basis of their customs, and culture through the study of their historical past .That historical knowledge ultimately inspired them to convert it into anthropological knowledge. It is observed from the district level manual and gazetteers that the devoted major part of their

chapters to the ethnography of caste and customs where caste became a central object of investigation which ultimately through the imperial survey becoming the representing character banishing history from the Indian sensibilities.

The impact of this approach was very much noticeable. Caste ridden Hindu Society got a tremendous boost along this caste line. Castes hitherto considered lower in the hierarchy and fuzzy demanded to be accorded a higher niche by the colonial ruler and that was enumerated accordingly in the census. The caste system and classification on caste basis was very much dominated position in the Hindu society and of course there was discontentment among the lower caste of the Hindu Community as a result of which large number of the Hindu population belonging to the lower niche converted in to Muslim. But with the onset of the census operations the whole situation assumed a new dimension. Those who are coming up from below looked to the Census Commissioner for public recognition of their higher status, for it would ensure a soft attitude from the indigenous society (Bandopadhyay; 1990, 99-100)¹⁴

So far as the Rajbanshi caste movement was concern it was not the Rajbanshis alone but many other communities all over the country who also in different times claimed Kshatriyahood. However, they did not simply look to the colonial census; they secured the opinion of the Brahmanic Law givers in their favour.

‘If identity politics is about expressing one’s agency and creating new forms of collective agency, then the Rajbanshis did that by playing on the politics of difference and of identity at the same time . Their caste movement was a negotiation of difference to register an alterity from the projected view about themselves as Koches. But in virtue of that alterity what it aspired to be identity with high ups in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Since caste ranking is necessarily interactional rather than purely attributional, the Rajbanshis required a long process of social and discursive interaction on this score. But another counterforce queered the pitch for them, so much so that it was engulfed in it, proving there by the presence of a more compelling imperative in them to act as a community / ethnicity rather than a caste. It was enlisting them as a scheduled caste and joining the movement. This inevitable contradiction as much as contemporary politics soon eroded the edge and credibility of the Kshatriya movement. No wonder, their history happened to be more of a fulfilment as a scheduled caste rather than as Kshatriya. It was from this contradiction and failure of resolution that the post colonial phase of their identity movement got its different start’ (Roy’ 161).

3.7 KOCH DYNASTY OR COOCH DYNASTY

The district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri comprises of both the plains and hills. Cooch Behar is their neighbouring district. The slope of the hills also gives a touch of the district Cooch Behar. The breeze of the Tista and Brahmaputra is blowing over this state. So like the waves of the earthquakes the vibration of one area vibrates the other places. The heat of the Gorkha land movement heated the water of Tista of Jalpaiguri and the water of the Torsa of Cooch- Behar similarly creates the ripple in the flow of the Punarbhaba of Dinajpur and the Mahananda of

Malda. The current of the river Brahmaputra splashed over the layer of the demographic pattern on the man of the soil of North Bengal. So the billows of the current of the Brahmaputra may try to make a concert of the unrest over the whole area. To understand the nature and the source of the ethnic unrest of North Bengal one should not only peep into the door of the mind of the Koch–Rajbanshi but also visit the places from where they were originated leaving the present political and geographical boundary. The Koches emerged as a very strong political power in early 16th century, in the Kamata region with the establishment of the Koch kingdom by the Koch chieftain Biswa Singha.

3.8 FOUNDER OF THE COOCH DYNASTY



Fig: 3.8.1 The Palace of Cooch Behar King

Haridas Mandal was the first person of the history of the Koch dynasty. Mandal was denoted as the chieftain of the community. It was known that the region of present Goalpara, situated between area of the Manas river on the east and the river Sankosh on the west and the Himalayas on the North reigned Haridas or in other types of the kings/ruler/ Mandalesh or Mandal is one of them. Among them whose income was more than ten lakhs ‘Karjya’ (Kahan) was elected as Mandalik. By dint of their seniority the Mandalik could be elevated as the king. In that case it needed to have the approval of the subjects.

In the end of the 15th century the local landlord Haridas (Haria) Mandsal and his sons established the kingdom. This dynasty was a unique in the sense that the long tenure of a dynasty which emerged from the root of the soil. While one Hindu dynasty one after another lost their existence due to the invincible of the Muslim attack and the several dynasty disintegrated due to the inner conflict this dynasty that emerged from the core of the soil lasted without any interruption for more than 435 years. This should be taken as the rarest example in the history of

the dynasty. Especially on the face of the ever increasing power of the sultanate dynasty of the then Gour (Bangla) they were able to exist their independent position inspite of constant conflict with the mighty sultan. It must be taken not only as their inherent strength in the dynasty but in the same time it is a rare example of the indomitable spirit of the freedom of the subjects. When the relation between king and subjects were oppressor and the oppressed and the subjects did not find any of their interest in case of the battle taking it as a conflict between the two oppressors the subjects of the Koch Dynasty always stood with the side of their king to defend them and took it as the attack against their freedom. This rare example cannot be ignored in case of the study of the present ethnic conflict where they again in the name of the Koch Behar king demanded the Greater Cooch Behar State. Here also the ills of the dynasty like the conspiracy for the power, and oppression were very much existed but when the question of preventing the invaders the subjects stood in defence of their kingdom. Knowing the fact that the history of the dynasty and their royal family can never be the history of the common people; the smile of the king is not the smile of the subjects, on the other hand, the tears of the subjects does not reflects in the eyes of the king, but there is no option but to place the history of the Koch Dynasty or the history of the Cooch - Behar kingdom in search of the root of the ethnic unrest of North Bengal for the reason as already been depicted above.

In the anthropological context the Koches has been originated with mixing of blood between the Dravidian and Bodo racial groups. But as we have already seen the scholars of different schools in different opinion in this regard, many of them prefer to give importance on the opinion of the different mythological texts to anthropological evidence. Like all the Dravidian and the Austric groups of northern India, this isolated Koch racial groups also accepted the Aryan languages. After that when they mixed with the incoming inflow of the Bodo racial groups along the path of the Brahmaputra basin there formed a new race which is now called the Koches.

It should be bear in mind that the identification on the basis of the Anthropological data are now unable to give the specific answer. It is just like the water of the vast ocean. Almost countless rivers and stream of different origin converged into the ocean and lost their individual identity. If one wants to identify the water of the stream taking out of the some of the water of the ocean it will prove fruitless except for academic discussion.



**Fig : 3.8.2 Maharaja Nripendra Narayan
The architect of modern Cooch Behar Kingdom**

Bengal accept the gold and silver coins introduced by king Naranarayan was used throughout vast areas of North Bengal and even Assam and Bhutan till the beginning of the British era. Maharaja Naranarayan entered a friendship treaty with the Moghul Emperor Akbar. When Akbar himself accompanied with his general marched with his army to attack Daud Khan, the king of Gaur in 1774 Maharaja Nara Narayan helped the Moghual Emperor by sending big army for the battle. Taking the advantage of the treaty he could extend his kingdom up to the bank of the Ganga. From Akbarnama it is found that the area of the Cooch Behar kingdom was extended from Trihut (Mithila) on the west, Tibet on the north, jorhat and hilly region on the south. After the death of Naranarayan his son Lakshinarayan became the king (1587-1627). He was a weak ruler and tragically enough he had spent his entire life fighting with his cousin, Raghudev the ruler of Koch Hajol. He could not retain the area of the kingdom. He brought the engineer to construct the newly shifted capital Atharo khota of the present Cooch Behar. Though Lakshinarayan never had the vision and ability of his forefathers, he still could be remembered by the people of North East India particularly Assam as one who declared 'Vaishnamism as the Rajdhrama of his kingdom (Chowdhury p 151)¹⁵ Madhadeb, the chief disciple of Sankardev took assylam in Kamta after Raghudev Narayan turned hostile against Vaishnavism and asked Madhadeb to leave his kingdom. Here it is also a very interesting irony in the history of Chilari, the father of Raghudev Narayan was the chief patron of Vaishnavism and saved Sankardev from the wrath of his brother king Narayan. Damodardev and Vaisnavite saint also faced the same sequence and took the shelter in Kamta. Damodardev wrote Bhakti Ratwanwali and Krishna Janma Rahashya and Govinda Mishra translated Madbhagavat Gita with the patronage of king Laksinarayan. In later period these creation has been regarded as the valuable treasures not in Bengali literatue but in the literature of Assam. It is again interesting to note that Sivvarti kaumadi and Gauhan Kaumadi which were written by Sidhanta Bagish by order of Lakshinarayan became the part of Bengali literature. After the death of Lakshminarayan his son Bir Narayan ascended the throne in 1632 A.D. During his period no remarkable incident took place but the power of the Koch dynasty decreased day by day and during his reign, the king of Bhutan stopped paying the tribute. Pran Narayan became the king on 1632 A.D. after the death of his father Bir Narayan. He would be remembered in the history of the Koch-Kamta as he tried to recapture the lost territory of the undivided Koch-Kingdom which went in to the hands of the Moghul during Laksinarayan time. He even captured Dhaka the capital of Bengal for a short period while Suja, the subedar of Bengal was way from the capital for fighting a battle against Aurangajeb in 1661. But he was defeated by Mirjamulla the governor of Bengal and fled from the city. He recovered his kingdom when Mirjumal was heavily engaged in war with the king of Assam.

After the death of Prannarayan in 1665 his son Modhnarayan ascended the throne and ruled up to 1680. He died leaving no issue. His nazir Yaga Narayan tried to capture the throne with the help of the Bhutan king but the ministers of the royal court did not extend their support to him and sent the message for help to the brothers of Raikat of Jalpaiguri. They helped Basudeb Narayan, step brother of Modan narayan to occupy the throne. Yaga Narayan again attacked the

capital with the help of the Bhutan king .Actually from this period internal politics of Biswa Singha's dynasty became more tragic due to the internal conflict in the royal family which gave the scope for outsiders to interfere in the Koch Politics. The Bhutanese directly interfered the political arena of the Koch politics and they take the advantage of making the king of the kingdom. Mahendra Narayan ascended the throne. At that time Mahendra Narayan was a boy and taking this advantage the employees of the royal court became unruly and autocratic. The premature death of Mahendra Naraya made the situation more badly. Jayga Narayan who was the son of the brother of Maharaja Bir Narayanrayan again claimed the throne. The Raikat of Baikantapur dynasty who was the staunch enemy of Jagya Narayan attacked him but in that time they were not only defeated but were also killed in the battle. After that Kumar Rup Naryan became the king and the throne again came back from the dynast of Sisha singha to the hands of the dynasty of Biswa Singha.

During the reign of Rup Narayan the Moughal attacked his kingdom and captured its eastern part of the kingdom including Boda and Patgram. Maharaja Rup Narayan shifted his capital from Athara Khota to Guriahati. This Guriahati is the present Cooch Behar town. 'He will be remembered also as he established the famous Madan Mohan tample and the Idol. The throne was succeeded by his son Upendra Narayan. After the death of Upendra Narayan his son Debendra narayan who was then a child of five years old became the king. Here the tragic end which was the traditional incidents in almost every dynasty happened here. When the child king was playing in the Royal garden the hired killer killed the child king. After that tragic incident when there was conflict and uncertainty was about to turned into civil war the members of the royal family and the others members of the court tried to avoid that dangerous situation by election for the successor of the throne. The nephew of Maharaja Upendra, Kharga Narayan's third son Dhajendra Narayan, was elected unanimously as the successor of the throne. Dhajendra Narayan had a fear that his elder brother may revolt and try to overthrow him from the throne. He invited his elder brother Ramnarayan in his palace pretending himself as ill and killed him by his own hand.

Ramnarayan had a good relation with the Bhutan King. This treacherous killing grew indignant not only in the mind of the Bhutan king but in the same time discontentment spread among the subjects as a whole. So he wanted to attack Koch kingdom to capture Dhajendra Narayan and place his brother Rajendra Narayan on the throne. Before doing this he obtained the permission from Stisu Lama the King of Tibet. After the death of Rajendra Naryan, the son of Dhajendra Narayan, Dharendra Narayan was placed on the throne by the court members of the King ignoring the suggestion of the Bhutan king that the son of Ramnarayan who was assassinated in the palace be given the post of kingship.

The king of Bhutan attacked the Cooch Behar kingdom and the queen mother fled with her minor son king Dhreandra Narayan to Rangpur and sought the help of the British Collector of

the East India Company. The English Force engaged with war with the Bhutan king and rescued Maharaja Dhajendra Narayan from the prison of Bhutan King.

Dharendra had to sign a treaty with the East India Company to get rid of the troubles from the Bhutan forces. 5th April, 1773 is a black day for the Koch–Behar Dynasty. It lost his independent position which they enjoyed several hundred years since the establishment of the dynasty and became the native state of British India and continued so till it joined with Indian Union.

The history of Cooch- Behar dynasty is the history of Native state of Cooch Behar. When Cooch Behar was included in the British Empire Rangpur was taken out of the Koch–kamta Kingdom as a result of the treaty. Again in the later period between 1900 to 1908 during the period of King Nripendra Narayan Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling went to the British as it is claimed by Rajbanshi Scholar and important leader of the movement of Kamta –Behari language of North Bengal in his article '*Rajya Cooch -Behar; Jela Cooch Behar in Prag*'¹⁶ there he wrote that while king Nripendra narayan was in England , Kalika Das Dutta exchanged Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling with Bhola and Chakla with the British Government. It is believed that he signed a treaty with the British regarding this most probably in the year 1908. When the king returned from abroad, he got angry, but there was nothing left for him to take any effective step. After a few days, he went to England and died. Although Dharama narayan, Burma claimed that Darjeeling was a part of the Cooch Behar dynasty but no record supported this claim.

After becoming the native state the history of the Cooch Behar dynasty is the history of other native state of India. The role of the native state and the role of the native king do not bear any significant influence in question of the ethnic upsurge. So in that context this study will be confined in mentioning the names of the native kings only although some of them may need to be mentioned as per the demand of the discussion.

Daijya Narayan, (two terms, 1775 and 1783) Harendra Naryan, (1783-1840), Sitendra Naryan, (1840-1847), Narendra Narayan (1847-1863), Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911). Rahendra Naryan (1912-1913), Jitendra Narayan (1913-1922), Bijeli Council (1922-1936), and Jagaddish Chandra (1936-1950).

3.9 THE BRANCHES OF THE COOCH BEHAR DYNASTY

The movement of the Kamtapur or the demand for the Kamtapur state no doubt an ethnical upsurge of one of the most ancient ethnic group of North Bengal. But from the above discussion it is cleared that although it is now confined within the geographical boundary of North Bengal but as the ethnicity has the characteristic to make the ripple like in the ponds it may cause the

similar ethnic ripple even among the ethnic community of the same origin of races which is now detached from its epicentre. As the issue is the issue of the ethnic identity it is necessary to trace out the branches of this ethnic race. In keeping this view not only the dynasty of the Cooch Behar kingdom established by Biswa Singha is enough to measure the depth of the present unrest but it also demands the other branches of the same clan which was formed by the brother of Biswa Singha to be brought in to the light.

The brother of Biswa Singha (in other opinion, his step brother) Sisha Singha although initiated the Baikantha Pur Kingdom but there is reason to believe that he could not build the king palace there. He was so busy with his elder brother to expand his kingdom and for the establishment of administration it was very much difficult for him to engage himself to build the houses for his own. Most part of his life he remained with his elder brother. For the security of the kingdom he constructed a fort on its western border. There the Baikantha Pur kingdom was established. At first its capital was established at Sialikguri (Siliguri) of Dabgram Mouza. After that it was re named as Nij Baikhanda pur. From its initial history it is found that these two branches of the kingdom originated from the same source marched with hand to hand with each other. After the establishment of the Baikantha pur Dynasty the ruler of the dynasty did not declare as the king rather they retained their title Raikat. The king of Cooch- Behar adorned themselves by the title Naryan but the ruler of the Baikantha pur did not use this Naryan title as mark of their allegiance to the cooch Behar dynasty. The history of the later period of course is the traditional history of the Royal family where conspiracy, lust for power and jealousy etc. were the common character.

After Sishwa Singha his son Manikya Deb became the second Raikat, after him the Raiklat was his son Maruti Deb. Shib Deb the elder son of Maruti Deb was the fourth Raikat. After the death of him two sons of Mahadeb, Bhujdeb and Jaideb Raikt earned fame during their tenure as Raikat. After Joy Deb Bhiswa Deb became Raikat After the death of Biswa Deb his brother Dharma Deb became the Raikat by killing his two nephews. Dharma Deb shifted his capital from Baikanthapur to. Jalpaiguri. It is learnt tha the present Raikat of Jaipaiguri are the descendents of that family.

The elder son of Dharma Deb, Bhup Deb, and after him his brother Bikram Deb became the Raikat. But the disputes rose in question of the legality of the inherance of Bhop Deb for the position of the Raikat. His brother Darpadeb became the 12th Raikat. After that his son Joyanta Deb and the Minor son, Sarba Deb became the 13th and 14th Raikat. As Sarba Deb was minor his uncle was appointed as his guardian but after some years serious disputes surfaced between them and Sarba Deb apprehended that his life would be danger in the hand of his uncle and took the shelter in Rangpur. The Mushidabad Provincial Court gave their verdict in favour of Sarba Deb.

After the death of Sarba Deb again the disputes arose between his two sons. The claim of Markat Deb was challenged by his step brother Rajendra Deb, on the ground that the mother of Markat Deb was not the same origin of their caste. She belonged to Gope community as such her son cannot claim the Raikat although he was the elder son of his father. But the civil court approved that inter caste marriage and Markat Deb became the 15th Raikat.

After the death of Sarba Deb his youngest brother Chandra Shekhar Deb and then his youngest brother, Phanindra Deb became the 16th and 17th Raikat respectively. The youngest son of Sarba Deb Raikat Phanindra Deb Challenged Jogendra Deb in question of the Raikat ship in 1866 may be mentioned here to demonstrate the rapid social change in the Koch-Rajbanshi community.

In the year of 1800 A.D. after the death of Joyanta Deb his minor son Sishu Singha became the 14th Raikat. but his uncle Pratap Deb raised the objection in the Provincial court of Murshidabad that they are not governed by the Hindu Succession law and such according to their Koch-Rajbanshi custom in case of death his brother will inherit family property not the son of the deceased person. Though the court passed their verdict in favour of Sarba Deb but in the same time they agreed that the members of the Raikat family belonged to the Koch-Rajbanshi and therefore the custom that the property will be inherited by the brother of the deceased inspite of the fact that his son is there cannot be ignored.

After the death of Sarba Deb the claim of Duga Deb for the throne was again challenged by one of the son of Sarba Deb. In the court he put the argument that the mother of Durga Deb was not the legal wife of Sarba Deb. On the other hand, he is the son of the legal wife of Sarba Dev because this marriage was solemnized through 'Phul Biya' which is the recognized practice of marriage in the Rajbanshi community. But the second son of Sarba Deb Makaranda Deb Challenged this argument in the Rangpur Court that his mother was the legal wife of Sarb Deb as this marriage was solemnized through the religious practice of 'Gandharba Marriage'. The court in their verdict recognized both the marriage as legal and awarded in favour of Markand Deb.

The '*Phul Biya*' is just the Baidik practice of the marriage. This marriage is recognized in the Rajbanshi community in general. In this marriage the presence of an 'Adhikari Brahmin' is must and who can afford he can engage the 'Kamrupi Brahmin'. On the other hand "*Gandharba marriage*" is somewhat different from the Hindu Practice of marriage. In Hindu practice, the brides choose their bride groom, but in the Rajbanshi society the guardian of the boys and girls arrange the marriage and here no religious practice is performed. The bride and the bride groom exchange their garland before a lighted candle.

Dr. Cambel, the Superintendent of Darjeeling attended the condolence meeting of Sarba Deb at Jalpaiguri on 20th January, 1848 and wrote in his Comments:

‘The Raja could not properly be called a Hindu ambitious of being considered within the privileged pale. His family is the Koch tribe now however; designate as Rajbanshis and effecting to be equal of the Chattris, although retaining many usages and habits quite irreconcilable to their pretensions.’

The 18th Raikat Jogendra Deb was died on 1878 (March). The disputes on the heir-apparent on the throne went up to the extent of the Privy Council of England. The contesting parties of this dispute were Phanindra Deb Raikat, the youngest son of Sarba Deb on one side and the adopted son Gadididra Deb on the other side. The Privy Council in their judgment passed the following verdict in support of the argument of Phanindra Deb as follows:

“Although the Baikunthapur family had normally come under Brahammanism they and at the same time, retained customs inconsistent with their being closed as Hindus, not being by race, and some other customs at variance with Hindu Institutions’.

In support of Phanindra Deb Raikat, the Privy council rejected the claim of the adopted son on the ground ‘The Baikunthapur family, the head of which bore the title Raikat, belonged originally to the Koch Tribe in the N. W frontier of Bengal and was not of Hindu origin’.

Raikat Phanindra Deb argued on that occasion that they did not belong to the Hindu origin and obtained the verdict of the Privy Council in his favour. But in another case in the year of 1956 the same Raikat family placed the complete opposite argument before the Calcutta High Court.

After the death of the 21st Raikat Prasanna Deb his widow Ashrumati Debi (daughter of B. Chowdhury belonged to Rabha community), inherited the property of her husband. Ashrumati devi had no son. She died in 1954. Her Daughter who married to a high caste Hindu S, K. Bose (the brother of Jyoti Basu Ex. Chief minister of West Bengal) . The daughter of Pratibha Debi, Dipti Debi married to another high caste Hindu Dilip Roy Chowdhury, In that case the question of inheritance of property came before the High court. Here from the defendant side argued that the Koch Family during this period adopted the Hindu customs and practices and by establishing the marriage relation with the caste Hindu and they are now the part of the high caste Hindu community.

During the course of time and the social progress the different races and their custom transformed in to a new form and gave birth a new identity. These two examples are the glaring example of this social phenomenon. Five hundred years ago from today Biswa Singha the founder of the Cooch Behar Dynasty created a post of Raikat meaning the commander of the fort for his brother. That post in course of time has converted an identity as well as title of a family and the identity of their genealogy.

3. 10 PANGA DYNASTY (RANGPUR)

Most of the scholars in course of their research study confined themselves within the frame work of the study of the Cooch Behar Dynasty and their family forgetting about the other branches of the Koch Dynasty who originated from the same source. If we fail to look upon the other branches of the dynasty the study will remain partial.

The eldest son of King Biswa Sing, Nara Singha was the founder of this dynasty. This Dynasty practically was like a zaminder (Land Lord) and never surfaced except in the litigation during the period of Raikat Sarba Deb. Now the members of that dynasty, it is found during the field study of this research work are living in Jalpaiguri almost unrecognizable in the present crowd of Jalpaiguri town. If anybody still residing in Rangpur that is not known to this researcher.

3.11 CACHHAR DYNASTY

The brother of Maharaja Narayan, Kamal Narayan was initially the representative (Morangi) of the king at Lakhipur Dist. He became the first 'Dheain' or the king of Cachhar. He was very polite, religious minded and peace loving in nature. He divided his clan into eighteen classes and each class was assigned for specific job. They are still doing more or less same jobs in Cachhar district. About 17th century the descendant of Kamal Narayan virtually disappeared and his general Udit Narayan ascended the throne. The last Raja of that dynasty Gobinda chadra was killed by the unknown conspirator. The East India Company took the charge of this area directly in their hand.

3.12 DARANG DYNASTY

In the beginning of the 17th century, Raja Parikhit Narayan was captured by the Moughal forces and kept captive in their prison. His brother Bali Narayan established a kingdom on the west of the Darang district. That was known as the Darang kingdom. The king of Ahom established a friend ship treaty with him and honoured him by awarding him the title "Dharmanarayan". During the period of Indra Narayan the fifth king of this dynasty the Darang kingdom extended upto the Subarnasree on the east, Goi Kamal Ali on the north, Bar nadi on the west and the Brahmaputra on the south. After the death of Indra Narayan family conflict made the kingdom split in to two. But that could not bring the peace. Taking the advantage of that situation the East India Company took the direct control of this kingdom.

3.13 BIJANI DYNASTY

From the family of Kumar Chandra Narayan (Bijit Narayan), the son of king Parikhit, two kingdoms were formed named Bijani and Beltala Dynasty. When king Parikhit was captured by

the Moughal forces and put into their prison Chandra Narayan was then minor. Chandra Narayan waged war against the Moughal forces but ultimately he accepted the terms of the Moughal Empire. But Chandra Narayan was not a man of to accept the authority of others and again engaged with the war of the Moughal forces. He died in the battle field and his son Joy Narayan became the king.

The forest of the Bijanir was famous for the elephant. At first the king of Bijni paid Rs 5998 rupees as yearly tax, thereafter in lieu of this money they gave 68 elephants to the emperor. This practice had been continued until the East India Company took over the charge of the dynasty.

3.14 BELTALA RAJBANSHA

The grandson of Raja Parikhit was Joy Narayan. The sons of Joy Narayan, Hara Narayan, (In another opinion, Gaja Narayan) under the control of the Ahom king establish the Beltala Dynasty near the southern part of present Guwahati. But this dynasty has no contribution to be mentioned.

It is to be noted that the history of Kamtapur, Koch kingdom or the history of Ahom kingdom cannot be understood with the present political boundaries of the states. For example in order to explain the history of Bengali it needs to break the political boundary between the West and East Bengal and has to take the whole territory of two Bengals together. Similarly, in order to understand and evaluate the present sentiment of the Koch-Rajbanshi who are the man of the soil of this region the present state boundary between west Bengal and Assam needs to be overlooked. It was thought that the Berlin Wall has been the permanent division between the East and West Germany. But the political boundary could not become the boundary of the heart beat of the Germans. They again came together. The mighty wall has turned into rubbles. The history will tale whether the communal boundary which turned into the political boundary dividing the Padma and the Ganga in to two separate stream will merge again to unite the heart beat of the Bengali into one and the history will be re write a matter of guess. Similarly, whether the aspiration of the establish of the ethnic identity of the Koch–Rajbanshi community will emerge through a new boundary of a new state by rearranging the present state boundary of both the state of West Bengal and Assam is a matter of conjecture for future . But nobody can deny the fact that neither the present geographical boundary of Assam is the reflection of the past nor the present boundary of West Bengal represents its near past also.

The present Ahom Kingdom was confined within the limit of upstream of the Brahmaputra. The Koch kingdom covered from Kamrup of lower Assam to the northern part of the then undivided North Bengal. Both Assam and west Bengal have been formed by the bifurcation of this vast race and at the same time their history and the ethnic identity also bifurcated. So it should not be termed this unrest is the unrest for the separatist attitude rather this unrest is the unrest for the establishment of their lost glory and identity and make them into a united fold. It is for this reason one should search their history to reach the core of this ethnic unrest.

As it is true that the Cooch dynasty since their inception they began to accept the Bengali culture but it is also similarly true that in the anthropological context the Cooch Behar was more nearer to the Bodos than the Bengalis. Prof. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee told in his book, 'The place of Assam in the History and civilization of India, 'King Naranarayan of Koch Behar geographically belongs to Bengal, but ethnically as North Bengal is an extension of the Bodo Land of Assam and East Bengal and as he had under him a good part of Assam and Bengal and culturally also with the rest of India'

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