

CHAPTER: FOUR

EVOLUTION OF THE MOVEMENT AND PRESENT STATE

Partition of India was not only the most unfortunate events in the history of last century but it also destroyed the demographic equilibrium over the vast region of Indian subcontinent particularly in the Punjab, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and some other states of North East India. The unprecedented influx of Bengali refugees from the then East Pakistan in 1947 and then again in 1971 completely disturbed the demographic setup of North Bengal particularly in the districts Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and a large part of North Dinajpur where the Rajbanshi ethnic community was the largest population from the ancient times. Besides their demographic majority they had their own culture, tradition, and language with a rich history. But the waves of the refugees as depicted above submerged not only their demographic position but also their culture, tradition and language as they were forced to surrender before the advanced culture and language of the waves of the Bengali population in absence of the strong educated middle class among the Rajbanshi community. Now with the emergence of strong educated middle class among the Rajbanshi community they are trying to reestablish their own identity as a general rule of social science defying the authoritarian position of the Bengali community which form the ethnic conflict between the majority and the minority complex.

4.1 BENGALI REFUGEES AND THE IMMIGRANTS OF BANGLADESH

Whatever may be the causes of the division of Koch and Rajbanshis or whether they are really different races of origin, but there is no room to deny that both of them have imbibed their spirit from the Cooch Behar kingdom. One of the rare example of any kingdom in question of expanding their area of territory, long range of their reigning, their culture, their heroic past create the wave of emotion in their blood. It brought them to the memory of the royal court. An emotion knocks them, 'here there was their king, and their land was the land of their king. In their subconscious mind they feel the imaginary touch of the king's sceptre although most of them had no any scope even to see any king of Cooch dynasty. They feel thrill in seeing their similar appearance with the king. They heard the heroism of their king but they do not know the oppression of the king. They lived in the imaginary paradise.

When they came down to the soil of the reality the poverty and oppression is waiting for them. They heard they had the land but now they are landless. They heard that they had plenty of grains in there granary now there stomach is empty. They now ask where all of them had gone?

4.2 THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTER OF NORTH BENGAL

It should be kept in mind about the basic difference between the southern part of West Bengal and the Northern part of it. The social combination of North Bengal and South Bengal

was completing different. So when the influx of the refugees came from the East Pakistan they not only took shelter in the southern part of West Bengal but they also came to the Northern part of the state causing the same economic burden on both part of the state.

If the basic difference between the two parts of the state is not taken in to the account in discussion about the effect of the influx of the refugees in relation to the demographic set up and the consequence there in, the present ethnic unrest of North Bengal will not be understood.

For the partition of India, more specifically, the partition of Bengal if it is said that the refugees of Bengal only lost their homes it will be a mistake. The man of the soil, the Koch – Rajbanshis also lost their most precious things that are their identity as they are outnumbered with the incoming of the Bengali refugees. The devastating flood water washes what are on the surface on one hand, and on the other hand, it covers the soil with the incoming silt. Similarly, the unprecedented influx of the Bengali refugees not only outnumbered the demographic position of the Rajbanshis and marginalized them in question of their political strength, their culture, their language their history which had been developed through the ages of history lost under the incoming of the advanced Bengali culture and their language.

The refugees of Bangladesh were the victim of the political circumstances upon which they had no control at all, rather, they were the worst victim of the political decision for the Partition of the country and forced to leave their mother land leaving all their belongings. How many refugees came to India from East Bengal it is beyond of guess. But it cannot claim that the incoming of the people from Bangladesh has stopped. Those people who are still coming from Bangladesh crossing through the porous border between the two countries are not now call the refugees, they are now called the immigrants.

After the partition of the British India in 1947 into two independent countries. India and Pakistan, 15 million people crossed the newly defined border to maintain the sovereignty of the newly created two states. This exodus of the human waves was termed as the greatest migration ever recorded. In west Bengal alone received an estimated 30 lakhs refugees entered by 1960. That is not all. In the 1970s the state witnessed another human exodus from the then East Pakistan. But what has perplexed many that a little attempt has been made to evaluate the socio –political impact on the demographic position of the country specially in west Bengal and more specific in North Bengal where the Rajbanshis (Koch) communities were the dominating races and they had been going marginalized day by day for the influx of the population having different culture, language, and economic activities in the social structure.

Even after the formation of Bangladesh this incoming human flow crossing the border is still going on. These immigrants are spreading across the vast areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and many other parts of the country. In the year of 1972 the total number of voters in Assam was 63 lakhs. In the year of 1979 this figure reached 87 lakhs. The fear psychosis that swept in the

minds of the Ahom people that they are going to be outnumbered with the coming of this Bengali speaking refugees like the Tripura of Tripura which led them to form All Assam Student union (A.A.S.U) and Assam Gana Parishad (A.G.P). Their demand was to remove the Bengali speaking refugees from the soil of Assam.

No doubt, West Bengal was the largest recipient of refugees for reasons of her natural and geographical proximity to East Bengal; of course not all districts of the state were equally affected by the problems. The concentration of refugees was so high that they constituted nearly one tenth of the total population. Further, their concentration was the largest in three districts of 24 Paraganas (both North and South), Calcutta and Nadia.

In this context, one should remember that the refugees from East Bengal began to come to west Bengal even before the partition when the ugly Nowakhali Riots started against the Hindu community. From that time the upper caste well to do and middle class of the Hindu community began to come to the Hindu dominated West Bengal. At that time many of them could bring some money with them. Whole of North Bengal was sparsely populated. So a large portion of them prefer to this part of west Bengal mainly from the adjacent districts of East Bengal. The local Rajbanshi community sold their land as they found abrupt rise of the value of the land and could not restrain from the response to the beckon of the cash money without considering the effect of their future. Thus a considerable part of the agricultural land was handed over to the incoming peoples. Because of the physical proximity of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, and Malda to East Bengal besides Tripura and Assam they prefer to resettle in those districts of North Bengal.

During the study and from the records it is found that the refugees of East Bengal mainly concentrated to their respective adjacent districts. For example, most of the refugees of Maymansing and Rangpur dist. concentrated themselves in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. On the other hand, refugees from Dinajpur prefer the then West Dinajpur district. Although the concentration of the refugees was the largest in three districts of the then undivided 24 Paraganas, Calcutta and Nadia, there also showed such preference; most of the refugees who settled in Nadia, 24 Paraganas and Calcutta were from Joshahar district. The refugees of Kustia had the choice for Nadia district. That were the general trends of the refugees but the most of the refugees had no scope to exercise their choice even to settle in west Bengal. The unending stream of refugees that swamped over West Bengal had no where to stay not speak of choice for most of them. It is almost impossible to ascertain the exact number of people by and large Hindu who have crossed into West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya. According to Prafullya chakraborty in his book '*Marginal Man*' (Calcutta 1990, p3) recorded the figure that one time it totalled 3.5 million by the end of 1950¹.

Behind the ethnic unrest this influx of refugee waves played a pivotal role as the Rajbanshis who were the major ethnic groups on this land suddenly saw that they are not only marginalized demographically but also all sphere in the social life.

Since the total number of refugees was never evenly spread over the period under review, the government appeared to have been taken by surprise at every point. They were in such a perplexed condition that they were at fix whether this unending wave of human race will be defined as displaced or refugee. The government of India declared this unprecedented inflow of millions of distressed peoples who were the victim of the political lust for a few politicians and forced to cross the border of the newly state and enter into territory of free India. In their declaration they stated 'A displaced person is one who had entered India (who left or was compelled to leave his home in East Pakistan on or after October 15, 1947) on account of civil disturbances or on account of setting up of the two dominions of India and Pakistan. The leaders of India new fully well that the exodus of the people from East Bengal started before the partition. Even Mahatma Gandhi had to rush Noakhali of the then East Pakistan to stop the mass killing and rape of Hindu community by the communal section of the Muslims. But by giving this definition India Government kept the large section of the Hindu community beyond the definition.

4.3 REFUGEE AND MIGRATION

In the declaration of the U.N.O. the definition of the refugee was given in 1951. There it is stated.

"A refugee is a person owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of that country'.

For India another problem was there. Pakistan was not declared as the enemy country. Moreover, the incoming flows of population were the citizens of both the countries. So there was some legal binding to declare them as the refugees. Same was to define the migrant. Migrants mean those who change his place of residence willingly.

As the state statistical bureau in one of its reports on the refugees submitted in 1955 pointed out, 'Migrants in this report means any person who actually came over to India from Pakistan on or after 1st October 1946 in the case of those coming from the district of Noakhali and Tipperah and 1st June 1947 in the case of persons coming from all other district of East Pakistan. Any family having at least one migrant has been taken to be a migrant family. (Statistical survey 1955, Calcutta p 1).

But there were uncounted number of peoples who out of fear of imminent partition and riots in different districts also account for massive out flow from many other parts of East Pakistan even before India actually became independent and partitioned in to two.

Government decided to shut off all relief and transit camps existing in west Bengal by 1958 and refused to recognize any immigrants as displaced person beyond that date but the continuous flow of refugees although not in such magnitude was there. In the year of 1964, a fresh state of violent communal riots on the issue of Hazaratbal started in many parts of East Bengal and again an exodus of Hindu community swarmed over the Indian Territory because they became the target of the Muslim communal forces. So the government forced again to reopen the rehabilitation camp and noted them as migrants. Thus the official discourse did not seem to have taken any notice for those who were to cross over the border between 1st April 19 58 and 31st December 1963. In the word of Prof. Prafulla Kumar Chakraborty 'whose work on refugees is still regarded as the point of departure for any understanding of the subject. His review, according to him, shows that, 'the government work in this field was one of the non performance and in simple word that 'Government simply forgot them.'

Here, again, a comparative study between Punjab and West Bengal on the refugee issue may be mentioned here as both states are the victim of partition and the influx of refugee problems. First of all, the numbers who left for Pakistan is much more than those who came to East Punjab. Of the 49 lakhs of the refugees who came from West Pakistan only 24 lakhs settled themselves in East Punjab. While 40 lakhs left for Pakistan. On the other hand, in West Bengal alone 30.9 lakhs refugees came from East Bengal by 1956 and 2,58,117 Muslims evacuees who had migrated to East Pakistan came back by 1952 to add to the magnitude of the problems. Secondly, a substantial amount of evacuee property in the form of land and houses was available for the rehabilitation of refugees from West Pakistan. On the contrary, in west Bengal every refugee here is an additional number to the existing population and has to be fitted into the state with an over-burdened economy where the density of population was the highest among the 'A' class states (Das p 16).²

Government sought to put a stop to nearly unlimited immigration across the border by introducing passport system in 1952. But not only travels documents were forged but those who came to India with legal passport a big number of them did not go back to Bangladesh.

The then minister of West Bengal Sri Manab Mukherjee gave the statement in the assembly based on the Home Department report that between 1972 to 1992 those came to India from Bangladesh with the passport but out of them 6,75,195 did not go back. Those who remained 4, 81,368 were Hindus and 1, 89,068 were Muslims. This number who came to the state and registered their name with the emigration centre on west Bengal border only. According to the

minister, the number of immigrants who are living in this country without visa was about 27 lakhs.

The exact number of the unauthorized immigrants is not known. Different sources mentioned different numbers. Prof. Amalendu Dey in his book titled '*Prasanga: Anuprabesh*' mentioned the facts from different sources. 'According to Sanjay Hajarika this number between one core to one core forty lakhs (The Tegrath, 6th February, 92). Prof Shanti Mohan Roy of the Center for south Asian Studies said that within this decade at least one core Bangladeshi immigrated in this country.

The Ananda Bazaar Patrika, a leading Bengali daily in his article published on 27th march 1991 where the fact was given how the immigrant got the ration card and subsequently became the citizen of India in connivance with the powerful political forces.

The Number of ration card was issued in the Garden Reach area was 3lakhs 12 thousands in the year of 1988 but the number of voters in this constituency was 1laks 32 thosands 5 hundreds. In Sealdah constituency the total number of voters was 75 thousand in 1987 but the total number of ration cards was issued 1lakh 90 thousands. The total numbers of voters of Belgachia East and west together in 1987 were 3lakhs and 14 thousands the total number of ration cards were issued for these two constituencies 6 lakhs 80 thousands in 1988. The vast areas of these constituencies were known as the safe zone for the immigrants. How and under whose instruction such large number of ration cards was issued that remains a question.

4.4 EXODUS FROM EAST PAKISTHAN / BANGLADESH

From the census report an acceptable account may be taken. In the 1941 census the areas which constituted the East Pakistan had a population of 41,997,297. Among them the number of Muslim was 2,95,24,099 and the number of Hindus was 1,18,85,235. In percentage the Muslim was 70.3. From the 1991 census it is found that the percentage of the Hindu population came down to 12.6 percent. During this period out of total population 10,79,93,962, the number of Muslim was 94,385,882 and the total number of minority community of Bangladesh was 1,03,67,080. So during this 50 years the Muslim population of Bangladesh has been increased by 60,861,783(219.5 percent) whereas the number of Hindu population has been increased during the same period 533960 only.

Father R .W.Timan in his presentation title '*State of Human Right*' stated based on statistical analysis that taking the average growth rate of 2 percent the total population of the Hindus in Bangladesh would have been at least 3.25 crores. According to this calculation it can be presumed that at least 2 core Hindus left Bangladesh and took shelter in different parts of India presumingly in West Bengal. Father Timan is not alone other scholars like Mahiuddin

Ahmed in his article 'The Missing population published in the *Holiday* on 7th January, 1994, gave the detail about the demographic situation.

Prof. Ahmed stated

'The first census of independent Bangladesh registered the proportion of Hindus 13.5 percent of the total population. This proportion dropped down to 12.1 in 1981 and 10.5 in 1991. While the proportion of the Buddhist and the Christian remained stable, 0.6 and 0.3 per cent of the total population respectively in successive census years. The proportion of the Muslim population, however, increased from 85.4 percent in 1974 to 88.3 in 1991.

How to interpret this phenomenon? Population cannot wither away. In demographic terms, the situation has to be addressed using relevant parameters of fertility, mortality, growth and migration. The situation may be analyzed with the help of simple statistics.

It has been found that the total fertility rate (TFR) among the non Muslims is relatively lower than the Muslims, difference ranged from 7% to 8% in the eighties. It has never been claimed that Hindus have higher mortality rate. It is likely that they have lower mortality rate due to higher extent of immunization among their children (ref. Bangladesh Contraceptive Prevalence Survey 1991).

A 10% lower fertility rate for the Hindu population would be a safe proposition. Taking into the consideration of the extent of lower fertility and assuming uniform mortality rates the size of the Hindu population based on 'natural growth' can be estimated. Based on adjusted census data of 1974, the Hindu population was estimated to be 10.31 million. During the 1974-81 periods, the Muslim population registered an annual growth of 2.56%. A 10% lower fertility rate for the Hindu community would correspond to an annual growth rate of 2.30% during the period, and the population should have been 12.10 million in 1981. But the actual Hindu population in 1981 was 10.88 million which corresponds to an annual growth rate of only 0.77% during the 1974-81 periods. Such a growth is comparable to several European countries, and even lower than the United States, Canada and Japan where growth rate was 1% or more in the seventies.

Thus we encounter a scenario of 'missing Hindu population in the successive census periods. The extent of this missing population was about 1.22 million during the period of 1974-91. As many as 475 Hindus are disappearing every day from the soil of Bangladesh on an average since 1974.. How this phenomenon would be interpreted in term of demography? The relevant parameter is obviously 'migration' which provides a clue to the missing link.

The importance in discussion of the population of Bangladesh needs an explanation. Bangladesh is our neighbouring state. The expulsion of the people from Bangladesh means inclusion to our population. The refugee influx in 1946-47 then in 1964 following the Hazratbal

incident then again in 1971. Each time this wave of refugees disrupted the normal life and threatened to disturb the demographic scenario in the border states mainly west Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya. According to one estimates out of 7.1 million refugees who entered India by the end of July 1971 West Bengal alone received 5.3 million and another 1.2 million moved into Tirpura. Meghalaya, a small hill state was practically swamped by a population of over 0.3 million refugees (Bandhopadhya p 35).

West Bengal of course, bore the main brunt of the influx which raised the density of population of the state from 507 to 600 people per square Kilometre. In West Dinajpur district, the existing population and the migrants turned out to be of the same order, namely 1.8 million each. In the border district of West Bengal, the refugees at one point of time constituted 32% of the population.

Let the present study be concentrated within the limit of North Bengal. As it has been told earlier that a considerable number of Hindus mainly belonged to high caste left the then East Pakistan following the Noakhali communal Riots. Most of them could bring money with them and many of them settled in the urban areas of North Bengal. If the population pattern is to be looked into the towns of North Bengal like Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Balughat, etc it will support the statement. The incoming migrants not only began to dominate the local people economically but by dint of their advanced position both in education and cultural field their word became the last word.

Before the independence, for example, Siliguri, the largest town of North Bengal was the half like town. The local Rajbanshi was the main inhabitants of this locality. The areas of the town were known by the name of the identity of the particular Rajbanshi community. The refugees who could bring money with them purchased the land mainly belonged to the Rajbanshi (the price of the land appeared to be attractive at that time for them) and renamed the areas according to their choice .The identity of the Rajbanshis thus erased from the name of this town.

From the revenue record of 1930 it is found that the name of the present Deshbandhu Para was Rajeswari Jot, the name of the present Hakimpara was Braja Singh Jot, the name of the present Bharat Nagar was Jogen Jot ,Lomba Das Jogen jot was for the present Mahananda para, the name of the present Babupara was Sabur jot.

The present researcher is also belonged to a displaced family who came from Maymansingha just on the eve of the independence whose father purchased a land from one Rajbanshi. A group of Brahmin and Kasthya family also did the same thing. The Brahmins tried to rename this area as ‘Brahman para ‘ but the Kasthya groups to oppose it put the sign board in the name of Netaji the ‘Subhash Pally’ and hence this locality now known by that name.

How the identity of the original inhabitant , the Rajbansi has been lost being outnumbered by the incoming influx of human waves came from East Pakistan can be placed here from the own experience of the present researcher which was recorded in his published book '*Bichhinater Utsya Sandhane Kamtapur Theke Uttar Purba Bharat*' (p 383) ³.

4.5 A CASE STUDY (SANTU ROY)

The place is. College para, of Siliguri town, now a posh area of this town. Previous name of this para was Kaliprasanna Jot by the name of a Rajbanshi.

Time of this experience some 45 years back. (1965)



Fig: 4.5.1 The Land upon which the house of the grandfather of Santu where once they were lived, but now sold.



Fig: 4.5.2 The Land and building in front of which the grandfather of Santu, a Rajbanshi used to come to offer puja before the present landlord awake up.

It was winter morning of the month of December. At about 5 a.m the town was still sleeping in the midst of chilling cold. I had to go to purchase an emergency medicine from Hill Cart Road where I knew that a medicine shop provides day and night service. On going to Hill Cart Road when I was passing by the side of a big building at College Para I saw a rickshaw was standing in front of the gate of the building. Three persons were there. Two of them one old man and another was an old lady. The third one was a young man. All of them belonged to Rajbanshi community. I presumed that the young man was the rickshaw puller and came to him for my approach whether he is willing to go to Hill Cart Road and return. Seeing me it appeared that he got nervous. I saw that a lighted candle and some flowers and 'Batasa' (a sweet, made of sugar) which clearly showed that they were performing some ritual practice. The young rickshaw puller agreed to go if I am in a position to come back within short time. Out of my curiosity I asked the young man what they were doing in so early morning of the chilling winter. The young man told, the old man and the lady were his grandfather and grandmother. They were the owner of the land of the building in front of which they were offering the puja. His grandfather and grandmother still believed that their tutelary deity still living in the one part of the land where once they had their hut to live. The land was sold 75 rupees per khata , the present

market value of which is now more than 30 lakhs per khata . The purchaser of the land at the time assured them they would be allowed them at the particular date and they used to come on that date to offer their puja for their God. They were allowed to do the practice for some years. But after the death of the karta of that family his son did not allow them to enter in to the house and even when they came they were physically driven out by his sons .Still the old couple bearing their faith in their mind used to come on that day every year at early in the morning before they awake and left the place. The young man also said that he agreed to carry me because he thought that I might shout to give the alarming call to the owner of the house. The name of the young man was Santu Roy as he said. Now they were living at Rangapani a 10 kilometer distance from this town. There his grandfather purchased a piece of agriculture land but the yield of this land is not sufficient to provide the food. His father cultivates the land and he pulls the rickshaw.

After some years when I was writing the book on the ethnic unrest of North Bengal I liked to enquire about the present position of Santu as a follow up of my previous experience I gathered another striking experience that Santu was again displaced from this place as this area was acquired by the Tista Barrage Project uprooting the inhabitants like Santu.

I don't know whether Santu is still alive. But if so when Santu, the rickshaw puller carry the passengers and passes by the side of the house he surely remember those days when his grandfather used to come in front of the gate of that house like a thief and offered the puja . When he pushes the paddle of his rickshaw with his tired legs and crosses the posh areas where they once lived and now becomes a foreign land for him thinks within himself that they were the lord of this land, now he is a rickshaw puller carrying the 'Bhatias (the Rajbanshi community used to call the Bengali Refugees as 'Bhatia ' as they came from the land of ' Bhati' the lower stream of the river). To him the Bengali refugees appeared as the root of their misery. The word of national integrity will not give the soothing feeling over his wounds of loosing of identity and the displacement without having alternative for their subsistence except to become a daily labour or the rickshaw puller like him. All the discontentment and the suppressed anger triggered against another distressed peoples who were the victim of the forced circumstances upon which they had no control. Most of them were ill clad and hungry people. But a section of the refugees who were educated and some means to earn, they by dint of their educational skill and the money whom they were able to bring with them purchased the land and change their fortune. That section of people became the part of the representative of the Bengali refugee in the eyes of the Rajbanshis community.

When the issues of deprivation raised in relation to North Bengal many of the people tried to equate the problems with the economic position of the other districts of South Bengal without taking into the consideration of the ethnic position of the three districts namely Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and partly both the South and North Dinajpur and a part of Malda district.

The economic arrangement was also different from the other part of West Bengal. From the census report of 1890 not a single name of Bengali land lord was found. Nobody claim that people of Bankura, Purulia or Birbhum enjoy more economic benefit than the people of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri or Darjeeling but the culture and the identity of their people have not been lost by the incoming of the new coming influx of refugees as it has been experienced by the man of the soil of North Bengal like Santu.

4.6 CHANGE OF DEMOGRAPHIC POSITION

‘One important aspect of the refugees that has rarely been addressed either by the government or by the scholars is the cultural dimension of the refugee hood. It is erroneous to view the simply economic problem because the refugee’s self-identity is often anchored in on’s past, what he or she was than what she or he has become. What is true for the refugees of East Bengal it is similar true for the case of the Rajbanshis community.

From the state of record of the West Bengal Assembly that 1, 93000 refugees entered West Bengal between May to December of 1952. Most of them were the farmers of Barishal and Khulna districts of East Pakistan. Passport system was introduced in the year on 15th October, 1952. At the initial stage the rate of inflow of coming the refugees were comparatively lower but the government himself admitted that the number of immigrants was 1, 27,799 in 1954. In the second phase of the inflow most of them were land less labour of Bangladesh and belonged to the lower strata of the caste system of the Hindu community like Namashudra, Mahishya, and Sodgop. The Namasudra caste came to India at latest part of this influx because their leader Jogen Mandal who initially find a bondage with Muslim Community of Bangladesh as most of the converted Muslim belonged to the lower caste strata of the Hindu Community before their conversion. But at the end of the 50’s he also left East Pakistan and instructed his community to follow the same.

Besides this a large number of refugees having lost everything to sustain they took the shelter in different refugee camps. Among them there were many educated middle class and the people having different occupation. They organized the refugee movements. Under their leadership they occupied uncultivated barren land and established colonies over there. Virtually for their presence the local culture lost their presence. From the occupation of land labour to the small business went into their hands. The local inhabitants who lived there marginalized and forced to accept their supremacy. The influx of the refugee waves not only changed the demographic set up of North Bengal only but they did the same in some other states of North East India.

In that context the example of Tripura a tiny state of North East India will be a glaring example. Post-partition migration of 0.6 million had already resulted in complete migration of

Tripura's original settlers, i.e. the tribals. To make matters worse, another 1 million people from East Pakistan entered in to Tripura during 1969 March 1971 leading 36.3% rise in its population against an all India average of 24.5%. The 1971 influx added another 1.45 million refugees and raised the density of population per kilometre from 60.91 to an incredible 195.95 during 1971-81 (Tripura Dist gazetteers New Delhi, 1975, p129). A government of Tripura publication (1972) maintained that the state with a population 1.55 million (1971) accommodated more than 1.3 million refugees (from Bangladesh) in camps sprawling over the entire state .This shows that refugees threatened to outnumber the existing population of Tripura in 1971. Almost the same crisis gripped Meghalaya too. Refugees there formed 70% of the original population which was around one million in 1971.

An alarming call has been echoing throughout the North East states against the Bengali speaking population as they apprehend for becoming the outnumber by the inflow of the migrants as they were the witness of the present situation in Tripura.

There was no scope to deny that from the census report we can have a picture about the demographic position of the country but it does not reflect the real position in all respect. The census workers during the work of enumeration they ask regarding their age, place of birth, from where they came etc. and the answering person gives his reply according to their suit, so that he should not put in into difficulty by disclosing the fact. If he is the same language of people he can present himself as the man of that locality. In other case he can establish him as a citizen of this country by producing ration card or any other identity which he procured by any means. The enumerator has nothing to do except to record his name.

In this context Assam is the glaring example. The lion share of the refugees and the immigrants were Hindus in west Bengal but it was not so in Assam. There the Bengali Muslims were the immigrants at first phase. By the end of the 19th century the Muslims in large number began to settle on the Brahmaputra valley. In the census report of 1931 it is found that the Bengali Muslim Population stood 30% of the total population of the state although they were only 4.9 % of the total population of the state in 1891. Those immigrants coming from East Bengal were mainly farmer and settled in the fallen land. Their appetite for land had no any limit and they began to encroach the government reserved land and the land of the local people. So the government of Assam introduced a demarcation line. Under this rule the Bengali Muslim were not allowed to purchase the land of the Ahom. The Bengali speaking Muslims raised their protest against this declaration; on the other hand, the Hindus of the Ahom extended their support in favour of it. The Muslim of Assam supported the Bengali Speaking Muslim to spread their religion.

After the independence the immigrants problems still remained in Assam and in addition a part of the Bengali speaking Hindu refugees find their way to settle there. At the initial stage the

Hindu Ahom did not raise protest against the Hindu Bengali refugees to settle there to counter the Muslim population of the state. The rate of growth of the Hindu and the Muslim will speak the truth. During the period 1951-1971 the rate of growth of the Muslim Population was 81.25 and the growth the Hindu population was during the same period was 83.25. In explaining the reason behind that Dr. Bhupen Sharma stated in his article *'Immigration on an Politics in Assam ;Question relating to Human Rights'* he noted that 7 lakhs Bengali Hindu refugees settled in Assam during that period⁴. The Ahoms were on the cross roads They were apprehending of being outnumbered in question of religion and seeking the presence of the Hindu Bengali and on the other hand , apprehending for being marginalized in question of linguistic group which provoked them to launch the 'Bangal Khedao' (drive out Bengali) movement in Assam. Besides, the middle trade and business, like shops, whole sell, and contactor were in the hands of Bengali traders. The traditional Marwari business class were far behind them. Many of them, it is believed that they extended their support to ignite the anti Bengali feeling behind the screen. In that discussion one more important point should be remembered. The Marwari business community is the leading business community throughout the country but they confined themselves within their business arena and do not come out from this circle to interfere over the cultural field of the others. But the picture for Bengali is quite opposite. They do not confine themselves within their circle of profession but try to establish their cultural supremacy over the others. At the initial stage when the socio-cultural position of the local community is not so developed they will accept the cultural supremacy of the others until the education is developed to produce the middle class intelligentsia to lead their cultural movement. This the universal phenomena of the social history. The conflict begins from that point. When the educated middle class of the aboriginal people of Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and lastly, North Bengal, the area of the study of the research emerged in strong position they find that culture, history and even their identity in some extent has been subdued by the supremacy of the Bengali culture. Even the chairs of the administrative office including the mercantile organization and the educational posts which are generally the focus points of the middle class generation have already been occupied by the Bengalis who by dint of their educational and cultural advantage are placed in the pivotal role to determine the culture as a whole. It cannot be denied that during the 19th century the Bengalis specially the Hindu Bengali took the advantage by accepting the western education and their culture .That is why the Bengali could took the leadership throughout the country at that period. Now the situation has completely changed. With the emergence of strong educated middle class in other province now in a position not only to challenge the Bengali but even superseded them in many respect.

This is the process of history. The Bengalis were invited at that time to fill the vacuum of the intellectual work like to teach, administer the administration, to treat the patient, to do the practice in law. The Bengali responded to this invitation because they were also searching to employ themselves in different fields and contributed a lot to develop the educated middle class of the local community. Now when this newly emerged educated middle class wants to move

along their desired path they find that most of the path have already been occupied by the Bengalis ‘ Naturally they cannot accept the position by remembering their contribution towards their development , rather, they will treat them as the most obstacle in their progress .

What is true for Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura it is equally true for North Bengal where a different race of aboriginal community lived with their glorious past. When the social problems become the political issue for the sake of the poll politics searching of the roots of the problems do not find their place in their agenda. The present researcher has narrated elaborately the problems of immigrants from the neighbouring Bangladesh but as the present research study has been centralized within the limit of North Bengal the discussion may come back to that area. As the refugee influx caused the complete change of the demographic position of North Bengal I take the help of the experience from the other neighbouring states only to understand the impact of the refugee influx over this territory.

Siliguri is known as the self declared capital of North Bengal although no comparison is possible between Siliguri and the capital of the state, Calcutta, or any other capital of A class state or even the second or third city of many states of the country. However, Siliguri is known as the town of rickshaw. The Municipal Corporation of the town cannot give the exact number of rickshaw that is running in the town although they are the sanctioning authority of the Rickshaw for the town. From the corporation source although it is learnt that near about eight thousands rickshaws got the license but near about 40000 to 45000 rickshaws are operating in the town. Previously, almost all the rickshaw pullers were Bihari community coming to this town from Behar but now almost all of them either Rajbanshi or Bengali. Further, from the conversation during my field study for this research work it is revealed that most of the Rajbanshi rickshaw puller came to this town either Rajbanshi dominated villages of Cooch Behar or Jalpaiguri and most of the Bengali Rickshaw pullers came from Bangladesh crossing over the border by paying money to the agents. Keeping aside the corruption and the political implication it indicates a grave social scenario of this region. The Behari community ceased to come indicating that they are either getting employment in their own state or they get the offer to fetch more income by the other state for other attractive opportunity. On the other hand, the incoming of the flow of the Rajbanshi from the villages as mentioned early an indication of the poverty that they have faced in the villages. Rajbanshis were predominantly farmer by their tradition and introvert by their nature and tried remain in their native place and engaged in agriculture. When they are coming to Siliguri or any other towns of North Bengal it is a clear indication that they are becoming more and more land less labour and finding no job in the village they forced to migrate to the towns and take the job for the rickshaw puller for hire rickshaw.

Same can be said for the Bangladeshi who crossed over the porous border and entered the town and in many cases they have changed their Muslim identity and named Hindu name in

order to conceal their original identity and throw dust in the eyes of the administration from their Bangladeshi identity. One experience of this researcher in this context may be cited here.

4.7 A CASE STUDY

A young married woman was engaged as maid servant in my house. She identified herself by a Hindu name, had the 'Sindur (vermilion) on her Hair-parting and the shell-bangle on her hands as a mark of the married Hindu Family. She not only works in my house but she did the same for number of houses. She often asked the members of my family, 'being a Hindu family why we are not performing any ritual Hindu practice in our house as if she is an earnest devotee of Hinduism. It was noticed by some other house where she also worked that she is not taking any food during the holy Idd. In the next year when she was observing the Idd by not taking food during her work one house lady noticed it and directly asked her whether she is Hindu or Muslim. When that lady confessed that she is a Muslim not Hindu and came to India through the Fulbari Border as they had no any means to sustain their life in Bangladesh. The land lady of that house was a bigot Hindu and she immediately asked her to leave the job. I do not know whether and how she purified herself as she has taken the water from the hand of a Muslim. That lady came to my house to know whether she would be allowed to continue her work in my house because she was threatened by that Hindu lady that no Hindu house will allow her to work in their house. When my family assured her that she would be allowed to work as usual she gave us thanks but on the next day she ceased to come to my house. I tried to locate her house where she told she live but informed by their neighbour that with her husband (who worked as rickshaw puller) she left without telling them where she was going and even their neighbour (mostly Hindu) was not aware of their religious identity. Most probably she left that place out of fear that after disclosing her identity she would be pushed back to Bangladesh by the police.



Fig: 4.7.1 Once the owner of the land now became a rickshaw puller.

The carrying capacity of Bangladesh as stated by Begum Khaleda Jia the then Prime minister of Bangladesh in 1991 on the occasion of the World Population Day was 13 cores. Her warning was if the population crosses this carrying limit Bangladesh would be in severe danger 'At present the population of Bangladesh is near about 1, 62221000 more than the carrying capacity. (Manorama Year Book 2010 The danger not only for Bangladesh the danger like the flood water brought the devastating effect over India.

If the accumulation of water in the dam crosses the carrying capacity in order to save the dam it has to open the flood gate of the dam otherwise the accumulated water will explode the dam and bring the catastrophic effect over the vast areas and will not bind by any limit of the boundary. The situation of Bangladesh is now like that. In the first stage they forced the Hindus to cross over the border and take shelter in India and that has been narrated earlier. Now they are indulging the Muslims to follow the same to ease the explosive population pressure over the country. Even a section of the Bangladesh people demanding the 'Labe Sroun' theory for Bangladesh following the theory of Hitler for the greater land to live for the Germans. Their demand also a greater land to accommodate the vast population of Bangladesh.

Keeping the above fact one should examine the impact of the influx of the refugees on the local people and their role in the ethnic unrest of North Bengal. For that reason I am submitting the study on Jalpaiguri dist of North Bengal which I have selected taking the account of its historical background and ethnic diversity.

4.8 CASE STUDY OF A DISTRICT (JALPAIGURI)

Jalpaiguri Dist was a part of both the Kamtapur and Cooch Behar dynasty. So the history of this district is the history of those dynasty. The unique variety of the demographic distribution and the contrast in geographical features Jalpaiguri earned the name of a district of the museum of ethnic diversity. Jalpaiguri has 151 dialects and languages of which 35 are yet to be classified. Here one can find the hill tribes on one side and in another side it can be find the population came from the east along with the tribal peoples of the middle part of the country. Above all the refugees of East Bengal came in waves. So the heart beat of this district are multi faced.

Sishu Singha, the brother of Biswa singha, the founder of the Cooch Dynasty established the Baikanta pur Dynasty. He did not stay in this dynasty because he had to stay with his elder brother, Biswa Singha in the capital of Cooch Dynasty to expand that dynasty and to keep the security of the capital. In order to protect the fort on the Western border of the Cooch dynasty he built the fort and appointed his son as the authority of that fort. Here emerged the Baikantapur dynasty. Firstly its capital was established at Siliaguri (Present Siliguri) of the then Dabgram Mouza. At that time its name was Nijabaikantapur. After that during the period of Joyanta Deb the capital was transferred to the present Jalpaiguri. The history of the Baikantapur dynasty has already been discussed earlier.

The Nayeb of Rangpur during the reign of Suja attacked Baikantapur and took Bikram Deb and Darpa Deb as captive and put into the prison in Rangpur. The Moughal ruler converted the Baikantapur dynasty in to a paraganas, the area of which was 380 sq. miles out of which the area of the cultivable land was only 222.sq miles.

During the last period of Sirajuddla, the Nawab of Bengal both the political and economic position became worse. Kashem Ali the Fauzdar of Rangpur released Bikram Deb and Darpa Deb after seven years and again posted for the post of Raikat. But immediate after that the Bhutan army attacked Baikantapur taking the advantage of the inner conflict among the Raikat family and annexed the land from the foot hills of the mountain to a vast plain of Baikantapur kingdom. This area is known as the Duars or the Duar. The area of this duars is 1863 sq. miles.

During this period a group of people known as ‘Sanayasi’ gathered near the border of the Baikantapur kingdom. Although they were called Sanayasi because of their dress and hair but they were not at all Sanayasi or the hermit. They made their settlement between the river Mechi and Mahanada of Terai which was known as East Morang. This area was at that time part of Sikkim and the ruler of Sikkim was too weak to maintain the law and order from his capital. Taking the advantage of both the administrative and military weakness a large group of people in disguise of the hermit of the ‘Giri’ community and Fakir took the shelter in that inaccessible forest cover land. They lived in a group under a particular leader. They used to plunder in the areas of company and returned to this shelter before the rainy season.

The English company complained that the Raikats indulging the Sanasysis by giving shelter and even employing them in their army and sent the troops against the Baikantapur kingdom. Darpadeb fled from the capital and after living incognito for more than one year he sent the surrender proposal before Warren Hastings. Hasting approved his appeal and imposed more tax for that. From that period the name of Jalpaiguri began to use widely. In the year 1773. 3rd February, Captain Robert Sturat used the word ‘Julpiguri’ in his letter sent to Milners Decars of Rajmahal on a matter of Darpadeb. No doubt this ‘Julpiguri is the present Jalpaiguri. (N.B. from the present research work on ‘Sannyasi’ rebellion contradicted them as plunderer as claimed by the English ruler and some of the research work even claimed it is really a rebellion against the colonial rule. However, this issue is out of place here, it is mentioned only to denote the geographical as well the political context of Jalpaiguris)⁵

In the discussion of Jalpaiguri or the Baikantapur dynasty the relation between Bhutan and Jalpaiguri and also the relation between Bhutan and the Company become an automatic choice to be discussed. Because the present Jalpaiguri and the distribution of demographic pattern and the present area of the district closely related with Bhutan.

The issue of conflict between the Colonial rule and Bhutan even after the rule of crown was the trade relation with Tibet. For that reason the ‘door’ of Bhutan which presently known as

Dooars was so important for both the Colonial ruler and Bhutan. The traders of Bhutan belonged to the royal family of Bhutan. So the interest of trade and the interest of the country became same. For the English they prefer to establish trade relation with Tibet rather to expend their territory over this region. The English force engaged with battle with Bhutan to save the Cooch Behar dynasty from the attack of Bhutan but when the request came from Stashi Lama of Tibet on behalf of the defeated Bhutan the company immediately responded that request. The company ruler accepted the demand by handing over the areas on the bank of the Tista, namely Jolpesh, Kranti, Ambari Falakta of Baikantapur to Bhutan. Even when the Bhutan army occupied a portion of territory beyond those areas the company remained silent in the hope that in exchange of that area Bhutan would allow their territory for them for the trade with Tibet. When there was war between China and Nepal in the year 1775, the company acted neutral inspite of the request of Nepal to extend their support in that war because of the request came from Tibet to remain neutral in this war. The company hoped that by doing this they could win the heart of Tibet and would open their door for them for the trade. In doing this the company helped to establish the influence of China over Tibet than that of England.

In the year of 1816 Nepal was defeated in the hands of the English Army. In the next year, i.e. in 1817 in the month of February, the company entered with a treaty with Sikkim which is called Tatulia agreement. Under this agreement the areas between the Mechi and the Mahananda river known Morang which was taken way by Nepal handed over again to Sikkim. But the relation between Bhutan and the company could not remain friendly. The army of Bhutan under the direct participation of the members of the Royal Family used to attack the princely state that the company rule had the obligation to protect. So the Crown Rule marched their army against Bhutan in 1864. The English ruler realized that through this dense forest it would not be possible for them to proceed further but from the they began to think to establish the administrative set up on the border of Sikkim to watch the political situation of the kingdoms of the Himalayas. To achieve this objective they required the Dooars as mentioned earlier.

4.9 DOOARS AND TEA PLANTATION

The area of the Dooars was 1860 sq. miles. the revenue earned from this area during the period 1866-67 was 1laks 3 thousands rupees. In exchange of the Dooars the Company agreed to pay the compensation to Bhutan 25 thousands rupees per year and it had been increased from the subsequent years 35 thousand, 45 thousands and on the fourth year 50 thousands.

The colonial ruler organized the Dooars into three divisions:

(1) the areas between the Tista and the Torsa rivers marked as the first division, and its administrative office was in Mainaguri.

(2) the second division was between the river Torsa and Sankosh, Its administrative office was in Alipurduar.

(3) The third division was the hilly areas which was known as Dalimkot. The administrative head of those division was designated as the Deputy Commissioner.

1st July of 1867 Dalimkot was annexed with Darjeeling. Under the jurisdiction of the deputy commissioner of the West Dooars were Boda, Sannyasikata, and the Fakirgang police station of Tatulia of Rangpur. The revenue department was under Rangpur. In the year of 1869, 1st July Tatulia subdivision separated from Rangpur and annexed with the Dooars and that area took the place in the map as the district of Jalpaiguri.

If one wants to compare Jalpaiguri dist with any of the district of West Bengal he will find that this district has no match with any other district neither in respect of its geographical features nor in respect of demographic distribution or languages. This district is comparable with its own only.

The ratio between the total number of population and the tribal population it is higher among the other districts of the states. In the year of 2001, the total population was 34, 03,204 out of which 5, 89,255 was the tribes, in percentage 21.04 of the total population; 10,35,917, belonged to scheduled caste representing 36.99% of the total population. As it has already been mentioned that in this district there are 151 mother languages. Out of which 8 are classified as foreign languages, 35 languages yet to be classified. Out of the remaining 101 languages 46 belonged to Aryan groups of languages, 24 belong to Bhot-Chinese, 19 belong to Austric, and 12 belonged to Dravidian group of languages. In one word, Jalpaiguri district is the little edition of the Indian subcontinent.

With the establishment of the tea gardens in 1874 the labours from the other parts of the country were brought to this place to clear the forest and plant the tree bush. The local Rajbanshi community were not willing to join in the plantation. Not a single worker in the tea garden in Dooars was found from Rajbanshi community. At the initial stage labours from East Nepal was brought but they could not withstand the humid and hot temperature of the plains. So the planters had to engage the agents known as 'Arkati' to bring the labour mainly from poverty stricken tribal areas of Chhotanagpur Plateau and Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

In the year of 1874 the first tea garden of Dooars was at Gajoldoba which was washed away due to the change of the course of the Tista. In the hilly areas of this district the inhabitants were the tribes like Bhutias, Doara, Toto, Dupka etc. In the plain land of the south of this district the inhabitants were Mech, Rava, Garo, Toto, Tundu, Doara, Pani, Koch, Khenia, Lepcha, Jalda and some others. Those inhabitants were engaged in shifting cultivation. Land was plenty although the vast areas were covered under forest. Their demand was minimum. Everyone has their own language. And mostly confined within their own territory. Here the geographic factor played a very important role in their social distribution. As it was densely forest and separated from each other by rough terrain so every community circled within the narrow space of their own territory.

After the establishment of the tea garden and with the rapid speed of their expansion more and more tribal labours were brought to clear the forest and prepare the land suitable for the tea gardens. Those tribes were brought from the middle part of the land for which they are still called 'Madeshia' by the local people were ,Oran, Munda, Santal, Kheria, Asur, Mahali, Bhumij, Kora, Nagasia, Shabar, Ho, Malpaharia, Parhaiya, Birhar etc.

From the very fact that it was very difficult to collect the labours for the tea garden in absence of the non participant of the local peoples. That may be an interesting point of discussion for the social scientist as well as the geographer to study the factors in establishing the industry of a region, particularly which industry is labour oriented industry. In almost in all plantation economy the labours are required to bring from the outside specially where the local population is sparse. For example, banana plantation of Philipines, Coffee plantation in Brazil, Sugar cane plantation in Cuba and tea plantation in Ceylon. In every case there find at least a section of participation from the local people. But in the case of tea plantation of Dooars not a single name could found in the list of the tea plantation worker who belonged to the Rajbanshi and other aboriginal community of this region.

The agents could collect the tea labours from the tribal belt of Chotanagpur and Orissa because during that period no mines was practically discovered in this area .On the other hand , the land was not fertile at all. It was the poorest area of the country. So the labour was also cheapest. But they had no idea the pathetic environ of the Dooars. Wild animals, snakes lichen black fever, malaria above all unbearable exploitation by the planters. Many labours were died in the plantation areas. From the book titled '*History of the Indian Tea History*' it is found that from 1863 May to 1866, 1st May, during this three years number of labours from the tribal areas were brought for the plantation work were 84,915. Out of which 31476 were died⁶.

The tea plantation in North Bengal was first started in Darjeeling. The English planters could realize that this area would bet the paradise for the tea plantation. The Palatation of tea Act was passed stating that the planters had to give tax for the leas land which had been given for the tea garden. But the tax was so minimum it was almost free for the planters. Taking the advantage of this act Bruham first established the tea garden in the Dooars area at Gajoldoba which was washed way due to the change of the course of the river Tista. After that one by one tea gardens like Fulbari (1875), Dalimcot (1876), Bagracot (1876), Kumlai (1877), Damdim (1877), Washabari(1877), Manbari (1877), Money hope (1878), Patabari (1878), Ranichora (1878) and others tea gardens were grown. And by 1930 there were 150 tea gardens find its place in the map of only in Dooars.

The Dooars can be divided into two: West Dooars and the East Dooars. The East Dooars includes Kumargram area and the West Dooars includes Mal and Bagrakot area. Here it should

be noticed that the number of tea gardens of West Dooars was far more than the East Dooars. One of the main reasons for that Mal or the western Dooars was trade route for the trade from India to Bhutan and Tibet. It was connected with Jalpaiguri over the Barnish Ghat of the Tista. In the year 1878 this area was connected with Jalpaiguri through the Northern state Railway. For the need of the tea growers Bengal Dooars Rail way was established in the year 1896. In case of Eastern Dooars, the rail connection was made far later.

Initially tea garden was not allowed to establish in the agricultural land. But under the pressure of the tea growers' government began to allow the agricultural land for the tea plantation. As a result, more and more farmers were uprooted from their agricultural land and became the landless labour. The Rajbanshis were farmers by their birth. They could not think any other profession except the agriculture and its allied items. Being uprooted from the agricultural land they became the landless labour but no one joined in the plantation work.

4.10 POPULATION PATTERN OF JALPAIGURI

Before the partition many peoples from East Bengal were coming to get the agricultural land as there was plenty of land for agriculture. From the census report of 1881 it is found that from Darjeeling, Dinajpur, Rangpur, and Cooch Behar the number of 44118 peoples came to settle here. The number of this incoming population increased day by day. In 1881 the Rajbanshi community in Dooars was 45% of the total population. But in 1992, it came down 30 % of the total population.

The ownership of the land also went from the hand of the Rajbanshis to the incoming people. From the field study and from the enquiry from the most of the local people revealed that most of the new owner were money lenders. That means they used to lend the money at higher rate taking the advantage of their poverty and ignorance and ultimately grabbed the land. From the records it is found that in 1905 only in Falakata the number of 205 Jots were sold. The purchasers of those lands were Marowari, Non Bengali traders and Kabuli. In Totgaon, Udalbari, Sangaon, and Fulbari of Mainaguri Tahasil 102 jots were sold at the same time. Most of the purchaser of those lands were money lenders (Grunning).

Let's have a look about the increase of the population of this newly formed district. From 1872 to 1921 the rate of the increase of the population of this district was 244.2% at the same time the increase of the population of Alipurduar subdivision was 1042.3%. The major part of this incoming population was farmer. Most of them came mainly from Rangpur, Dinajpur, Pabna, Malda, Rajsahi, Bagura, Goalpara and Mayamansingh. Land lords of this district welcomed them because they were eager to convert the forest land into the agriculture land and the local labours were not available. The problems started after 1920. The fallen lands were distributed. The

incoming farmers were the experienced farmers so they could produce the surplus product and thus earned the money to purchase the agricultural land of the Rajbanshis. The incoming population on one hand and on the other hand, losing the agricultural land the local Rajbanshis becoming land less 'Refugees' in their own home land.

Table 4.1	
Number of immigrants from 1901 to 1961	
Year	No. of immigrants
1901	95,899
1911	1,52,174
1921	1,63,024
1931	1,58,757
1941	1,56,765
1951	2,78,842
1961	4,54,177

From the census report of 1961 it is found that 2, 14,381 persons of this district were born in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. From the same census it shows that a number of 1, 71,617 immigrants coming from the then East Pakistan made their settlement in the villages of the district.

At the time of the independence the Jalpaiguri district was also victim of the partition not only in question of the burden of refugees but also in question of the areas as a vast part of the district went to East Pakistan. The west part of the Tatulia P.S, Panchagar, Banda, Debigang, and Patgram covering an area of 672 sq. miles went to East Pakistan. At that time the numbers of Hindu refugees were almost equal to the number of Muslims who went to Pakistan but after 1951 the picture was completely reversed. The number of the Hindu refugees crossed over the border to settle here was several times more than the Muslims who went to East Pakistan. This was reflected in the population growth rate of this district. During the period of 1951-61 the rate of growth of the population was more than double than that of the average growth rate of the population of the state. From the census report of 1971. It is found that the population of the district was increased by 3, 90,867. Out of which the increase of population in the villages was by 3, 46,601 and in the same time the increase of the population in the urban areas was marked by 44,266.

It should be noted here that most of the Rajbanshis were farmer and they were confined in the villages. But this pressure of incoming population made the Rajbanshis more and more landless peasants and driven them from the village in search of work. It was beyond of the

imagination some decades ago that the women of the Rajbanshis community coming out from their orthodox society and doing work as a 'jogali' (helper) of mason.

Jalpaiguri was the divisional town and in the divisional office so there needed number of educated administrative stuffs. From their records it revealed that none of them from the Rajbanshis community. Those who joined in the administrative post most of them belonged to upper caste Bengali Hindu. They came mainly from East Bengal. The lawyers of subdivision or the district court were also from the same place.

It is the irony, the district which was developed with its vast population, imagined its golden economy with the establishment of the tea gardens, brought the labours by sending the 'arkati' to the central part of the country now becoming a dying town. In the year of 1951 the total number of the tea garden workers in Jalpaiguri was 1, 76,196. In the year of 1980 this number came down to 1, 43,022. This retrenched workers tried to make their shelter in the villages. The conflict between the Bodo and the Santal is the result of this new phenomenon. The number of the Santal tea workers in the tea plantation represents a lion share. Many of the members of their family also engaged in the farming occupation. A group of the retrenched tea workers entered into the area of Assam which was adjacent to West Bengal and dominated by the Bodo community, The Santals entered the forest area and began to clear the land for the cultivation. The Bodo used Shifting cultivation and they were apprehending the losing of their shifting cultivation land, the consequence of which both the tribal community engaged in to conflict which took some life.

From the name of the Paras of Jalpaiguri, like Hakimpara, Keranipara, Babupara, Ukilpara, etc. indicates that the employees coming from the outside took the leading role in cultural field of the town. Another notable things may be brought into the account, inspite of the rule of the Rajbanshis for more than 400 years a very few of them engaged in the tea plantation. Except two or three names like Raja Prasanna Naryan and BhojNarayan Singha no others name could be found in the list of the tea planters of this district.

The cultural activities in town and villages which gave a name of Jalpaiguri a district of cultural district the local Rajbanshis had no place in it. Under the dominance of the Bengali culture the Rajbanshi culture was becoming more and more marginalized and they even forgot their mother tongue. So uprooting from the land on one hand, on the other hand, being marginalized in the cultural field their conceit turned in to the utter grievance.

Demand for the recognition of the Kamtapur language as the principal language needs a separate chapter to discuss. But before going into that chapter lets have glance over this subject in the context of Jalpaiguri.

4.11 LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY OF JALPAIGURI

In the census report of 1961 it is found that 7,40,829 out of the total population of 13,59,292 i.e. 54.5% had enrolled their mother tongue as Bengali. Most striking feature is that, not only the Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims had stated Bengali language as their mother tongue but most of the Rajbanshis, a substantial number of the Mech also among them who enrolled their mother tongue as Bengali. At that period the total number of the Rajbanshis of the district was

3,16,020. Out of which only 18,687 means only 6% of the total Rajbanshis of the district stated that their mother tongue was either Koch or Rajbanshi. Rest of them recognized Bengali as their mother tongue. The number of the Mech at that time was 13,178. Out of which 9,936 or 75.39% of their total population recorded their mother tongue as Mech (Tibet-Burma). After Bengali language the Kuruk language occupied as the second largest language of this district. The number of the Oraon at that time was 1,61,953 and 89% of their total population recorded their mother tongue either Oraon, or Kuruk Oraon or Kishan Kuruk or Lohari Kuruk.

In the Gokhaland movement in the same way, Subhas Gising, the Chairman of the DGHC, claimed their language is not Nepali, but Gorkhali. The total number of Nepali during this period in Jalpaiguri was 1,13,043. Out of which only 60 people declared their mother tongue is Gorkhali. 296 noted their mother tongue is Gurung, 75 recorded their mother tongue as Limbu, 5 recorded Kami, 495 noted Mongar, 1,09,253 recorded their mother tongue is Khaskura Nepali, 28 Newari, 109 Rai, 46 Sherpa, 2,667 Tamang.

Another interesting matter that is found in this district is that 76,610 Munda declared their mother tongue as Sandri. This language that has evolved in Jalpaiguri which can be compared with the formation of Urdu language. The origin of this language is recent time. Ho and Munda of this district specially in the tea garden area speak in the newly formed Sandri language. Near about one lakh Ho or Munda live in the tea plantation area of Dooars. 'They live in scatter way. In the tea garden majority of the workers are Oraon and they are the dominating group. In outer field they have to use either Hindi or Bengali. As a result a mixed language of Oraon, Munda, Bengali and Hindi have been originated known as Sandri.

The present discussion is not aimed at the language formation or the distribution of language in the district of Jalpaiguri. So there is no need of giving the statistics of each language of this district. But in the discussion it will be an inevitable point of discussion that when the most of the Rajbanshis community declared their mother tongue as Bengali in the census then how the very language Rajbanshi now playing the most powerful catalyst in the formation of the such emotive outburst for the demand of a separate state.

When the Rajbanshi declared himself as Hindu they adopted more and more Bengali culture to become more and more Hinduised. The Royal family adopted Bengali as their royal language.

During the Muslim period to know Pharsi and during the period of English rule to know English was the symbol of pride and in the same time those two languages were the instruments for the entry in to the establishment in the administrative field as well as for the elite society. Similarly when the royal family of the Cooch Behar dynasty adopted their court language Bengali, this language also became the pride for the newly grown educated middle class in the nineteenth century. Even now a section of the educated Bengali feels pride in saying that his son or daughter cannot speak in Bengali but very much strong both in speaking and writing English. Under the tremendous domination of Bengali culture the Rajbanshis as a general rule accepted Bengali culture including Bengali Language. Now with the emergence of the educated middle class intellectual in the Rajbanshi Community and the question of identity and their glorious past as a general rule of the social history become the strong weapons of the Rajbanshi community.

4.12 THE ROLE OF THE BENGALI THE MAJOR DOMINATING GROUP OF PEOPLES OF NORTH BENGAL

In the west the demand of Jharkhand, in the plains of north the demand for Kamtapur and in the hills there is cry for the Gorkha land. The Bengali is the major group of population and now feels the responsibility of being the majority community. They are now between two fires. Both the hills and the plains are looking at the majority group of population of the state. In their eyes Bengal is for Bengalis. The capital of West Bengal is the capital of Bengali. Two stages are formed in this state. On one stage there is the Bengali, the majority group of population and on the other stage there are the minority groups of the people. Two stages are looking each other with utter suspicion. One stage suspects that although economically weak but culturally advanced the Bengali population with the advantage of their demographic majority will grab their cultural and historical identity. Other stage suspects the minority groups of population trying to disintegrate their authority by demanding the separation in the name of self determination and identity. A state of distrust influenced the whole environment. One front being displaced from their homeland known as the refugee is trying to resettle here. On the other hand, the others front try to consolidate themselves against this incoming peoples out of fear that they will not only lose their identity but may be forced to be displaced with the wave of the influx of the incoming peoples.

So the issues are social, economic, and cultural. The issue of the settlement of one group of population and on the other hand, it is the issue of losing the identity of the others. The problems circling around the focal point of these issues. So the problems are mental, social, historical, economical, environmental and geographical. So these problems cannot be solved in the name of separatist movement and cannot be curbed taking it as a law and order problems.

4.13 THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF MAJORITY COMMUNITY

It should be remembered that the democracy as it is accepted by the majority it may not beat the same feelings for the minority. The majority by dint of their demographic supremacy can implement of their wishes. So to him, oppose the decision of the majority means against the democracy. He considers him as the main stream and takes the other as the sub stream of the main stream. As a result, when the minority group of races challenges the decision of the majority races it amounts in the eyes of the majority as the disobedience from the part of the minority.

On the other side, when the minority feels that their sentiments and opinions are not getting the due weight by the majority a sense of inferiority complex may grow in their mind . They think that they have to revolve around the mercy and decision of the majority like a satellite moving around the planet. This feeling ultimately produces the two fronts, one 'they' and the other 'us'. Conflicts thus start. This conflict between the 'us' and 'they' not only in West Bengal or India but beating the war drum throughout the world.

To prescribe the proper medicine against the disease it requires finding out the root of the disease. Similarly, to solve the conflict before it turns into armageddon between the two one should try to understand the basic causes of this conflict without any pre conceived conjecture.

Who were living in this north eastern part of Bengal is the archaeological subject to dig it out but the ancient inhabitants of this part of Bengal is the Koch /Rajbanshi is the reality of to-day. If they find that their symbols are erasing from the history under the pressure of the incoming flow of the community that will hurt their sentiments, this reality has not find in the minds of the major groups of the population.

The aboriginal people of North Bengal similarly feel a pain when they see that the incoming weaves of the new peoples of different origin of races not only turned them in to a minority group of population but also removing the names of the places and the institutes bearing their symbol of identity to install the names and the identity of the new comers. No races of the world accept such kind of obliteration of their identity due to the cultural invasion of the other.

Here lies the difference between the North and South Bengal after the partition of the country and the impact of the influx of the refugees in this stare. Where the culture, language, and tradition of the local peoples were at stake even in the South Bengal they raised their voice against the incoming peoples to save their culture and tradition. But the situation in that context in North Bengal is such acute and deep that no comparison is possible to measure the fathom of their gravity between these two parts of the state. It should bear in mind that the demographic patter of the North and South of the state is quite different from each other.

During my field study on this issue I came across a glaring example in this context which was duly recorded in my books Under the title ‘ *Bichhinater Utsya Sandhyane Kamtapur theke Uttat Purba Bharat*’(P 204).

4.14 A CASE STUDY: CHANGE OF THE NAME OF A SCHOOL FROM DARPANARAYAN TO VIVEKANANDA SCHOOL

The place is Siliguri. The name of the area is Hakim Para. The present price of the land is 30-40 lakhs rupees per khata. There is a school named Vivekananda School. This school was constructed on the land of near 40 khatas donated by Sarat Burman belonged to Rajbanshi community on the condition that this school would be by the name of his father late Darpa narayan. The committee members all belonged to Bengali Community and agreed this condition and named the school after the name of his father ‘Darpa Narayan School.’ But after five years without giving any prior information to the donor of the land they changed the name of the school from “Darpanaryan School” to “Vivekananda School.”



Fig: 4.14.1 Siliguri Vivekananda Bidyalay

There is another school in this town in the name of Terai Tarapada High School. One tea planter named Tara pada Banerjee donated some money with a condition that the name of the school would be such name as it mentioned.

The name of Swami Vivekananda is a name of utterance of a great person, no doubt, but if a Rajbanshi young of today raises a question, is there anybody will dare to change the name of Teri Tarapada High School to rename it after a great name of great personality? He asked me, If the name of that school would have been in the name of any name of a Bengali instead of Darpanarayan whether there is any body to dare the change of name without having a prior consent from the donor? So many examples of this nature are there. . The Rajbanshi community of today now thinking that as they are now being marginalized with the incoming influx of the Bengali community they are losing their identity and their names are obliterated by the new names.

The names of the roads, newly constructed bridges are named in town or other locality by the names of the great names. These names are almost chosen from the names of the Bengali personalities. But there were so many names in the Rajbanshis community who had a great contribution in the history of these regions. Their names did not find any place in the mind of those authorities who were taken the task of naming the same. For example, Siliguri College is now a college of reputation in the state. A big area of land covering several acres were donated by one Rajbanshi educationist of Siliguri, named Biren Roy Sarkar. This area is a posh area of Siliguri town. The present price of the land is not less than 40 lakhs per khata. The question is not the price of the land, Question lies elsewhere. The members of the family of late Roy Sarkar expressed their opinion during an interview with this researcher that 'you the Bengali refugee did not bother to remember the name of Biren Roy Sarker. So many names are ascribed in the college but no where there is a single mention of the name of Biren Roy Sarkar who donated the land for the college.' These feeling of deprivation not only knock the heart of the Roy Chowdhury family but it knocks sentiments the door of the whole community.



Fig 4.14.2 The land of Siliguri College was donated by one Rajbanshi landlord.

Raja Rammohan Roy the pioneer of the renaissance of the 19th century. He is memorable of every one. But history never tells that he ever visited North Bengal. The name of the place where the North Bengal University is situated is newly named after the name of Raja Rammohon Roy, Raja Rammohan pur. Perhaps, at the time of naming that place those people who named it never thought another great name of Thakur Panchanan Burman the pioneer of the Renaissance of North Bengal. He was a great educationist and social reformer. Very recently a university by his name just going to set forth his journey which is a welcome step no doubt. If the said gesture was shown a few years back when the feelings of deprivation was just in the nascent state it would not get the scope to germinate in to the ethnical unrest . The very name either of the place where the University of North Bengal is established or the name of the first university of North Bengal would be given in the name of Thakur Panchanan Burman as said by so many educated youth during the interview that was made for this study.

Throughout the centuries the Rajbanshis of North Bengal kept the flame of their independent identity and their culture when the other dynasty one after another surrendered their independence in the hands of the mighty invaders. The new comers, mainly the wave of the Bengali refugees if paid an attention to keep the cultural identity of the local people the relation would have been otherwise. There are so many roads in Siliguri but at least one main road should be contributed for the remembering of Thakur Panchanan Burman. The culture and the integration of different communities develop on mutual respect and mutual recognition of each identity.

It is often found that the middle class educated people take the other classes who were behind then in respect of education and culture in disrespectful eyes .The Bengali refugees were not exception. In the Rajbanshi community the senior member of the family or the society called their junior '*Bahe*'. This address was like as the '*Bapu He*', which usually used by the elders to their junior members of the family. The incoming Bengali refugees began to address the members of the Rajbanshi community as '*Bahe*' and then again as '*Bau*' just to mark as the disrespect towards them. Even the little boys and the girls of the Bengali community used this word without taking in to the account of the impact of such disrespect.

The researcher of this study during his boy hood heard such address made by the Bengali in general. This was just the defamatory addresses '*Native*' or '*Nigar*' made by the colonial ruler towards the subjects.

Now the Rajbanshi community raised the very basic question whether they are Bengali or not, which answer needs to be given by the Rajbanshi Community itself. The Bengali needs to introspect why after so many years living side by side and taking themselves as the part of the Bengali as a whole, why the Rajbanshis now feeling alienated from the Bengali and even feel to need a separate state for their own as they are the major community like the big brother of the family. It was the primary responsibility of the Bengali community not to indulge such behaviour

toward the minority community so their sentiment should not be hurt because the minority as a general rule has the feeling of insecurity from the majority.

The Bengali could not claim that they are secular and united in general. An experience narrated by Prof. Baniprasanna Mishra of North Bengal University during his visit at Meghalaya which I included in my book as depicted before. He told that while he was travelling by a car his driver during some conversation said that the Bengali are very dubious in nature. Prof Mishra out of his curiosity asked the reason of this remark against the Bengali. The khasi driver replied that the Bengali could not remain united. They divided their land in the name of the Hindu Bengali and the Muslim Bengali in to East Pakistan and West Bengal. Now they are trying to teach them about the national integrity and advised them to remain united.

Prof Mishra told that almost an uneducated Khasi tribe appeared to him as the eye opener. He told that the customs and the non secular image which he proudly kept in his heart for long years would be exposed in such miserable condition in the eyes of an uneducated taxi driver that was beyond imagination of Prof. Mishra.

What would be the answer of him, Prof. Mishra asked himself. How he claimed himself as a Bengali that that Bengali is a true secular by their culture. Bengali Should a Bengali only. But they could not break the wall of religious division the Hindu Bengali and the Muslim Bengali by creating two separate identities West Bengal and East Pakistan.

4.15 PARTITION OF BENGAL

Let have a glance of the pages of the history of that episode where the Bengali were divided in two separate identities as mentioned earlier. It was 3rd June 1947. The Viceroy of India, Lord Mount Batten divided the provincial assembly of Punjab and Bengal in to two (excluding the European members). In this division there would be the representative of the Muslim dominated districts and on the other division there would be the representative of the Hindu dominated districts. The population would be taken according to the census report of 1941.

Whether the province would be divided would be decided on the opinion of the divided representative of the respective districts .If one division of the divided assembly passed their resolution in favour of division of the province by a simple majority of votes then the province would be divided.

If the decision is taken the province would remain intact then the all representative of the said province would take the decision to which country, either India or Pakistan they prefer to join.

In 1947, 29th July, the assembly of Bengal was held. In this assembly, the Muslim league was majority. They adopted the resolution to keep the Bengal intact and join with the Pakistan by simple majority of votes. After this resolution the representative of the Hindu majority areas and the representative of the Muslim majority areas sat separately and passed the resolution that the Hindu majority areas would join in the Union Territory of India and the Muslim majority areas would join in Pakistan.

One may give so many explanations in support or against the partition of Bengal. But in the eyes of the Kashi taxi driver that the Bengali community as a whole divided their mother land on the basis of communal division and they are now advocating for the integration and asking the others to maintain the communal harmony so that everybody should remain close to each other.

The neighbouring states are very much anxious about the Bengali. During my field study a young man of Assam told me, 'you Bengali people could not live together for long time. You quarrelled. You even divided your country still you have an international recognition. You have your language even in the United Nation. Bengali as a nation, the Bengali language as a language. The Bengali song as the national song has been recognized. If India disintegrates in the far distance or due to any other reason you can call for a greater *Bangla* but what will be our fate?

A fear psychosis to lose their identity against the Bengali community in the North east states is clearly visible in the minds of the local people that like as Tripura the Bengali influx will one day make their state a Bengali majority state.

To understand the ethnic unrest one needs to understand the very basic reason of this fear psychosis of the aboriginal people. For this reason I made a sample survey in some states of north east India like Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya where the ethnic unrest in many occasions aimed at the Bengali community. I like to see whether the ethnic unrest of those states have influenced the present unrest of North Bengal.

4.16 A CASE STUDY: TRIPURA

At the very outset let me present here one experience that I earned during my interview with a young man of Tripura at Maharani near the extreme eastern border. That young man disclosed his political identity but he did not say his real name although it was an appointed meet with the extremist organisation of Tripura. The said interview was published in my Book about which I mentioned earlier.

It was a small tea stall of Maharani Bazar of Tripura. On the appointed time the said young man appeared there. We got a code language to know each other; the detail of the interview will

be out of place in this study. I like to mention only a few lines of the interview. My question was 'Why you prefer the path of violence where there is an avenue of democracy to move to fulfil your demand?'

The reply from the young man was dramatic, He replied, 'Democracy'? There was a little pause, then he again began, 'Democracy produces a sweet sound to your ears because you are 72 percent of the total population of the state. We are man of the soil and this land was ours. Now we are only 23 percent of the total population of state. He continued to say, 'if Democracy is the meaning of the voice of the majority it has a meaning to you but it produces the different meaning to us, the meaning of acceptance of the suzerainty of your will. That is why we have taken other voice. It is the voice of the 'gun'.

More or less the same sentiments were echoed in other states like Assam and Meghalaya. Most of them apprehending the danger from the Bengali community. An in depth study as revealed it to me that most of the cases the middle class educated youth took the initial lead in this ethnic movement. The reason behind this that most of the administrative post in both the government and the merchants office were occupied by the Bengali educated people from the past when there was no local candidate was available due to the absence of education at that period. Now the situation has completely changed. The educated young middle class has strongly emerged from the local community. As a general tendency of the educated young to fetch a job either in the government office or in the merchant department. In finding the jobs they see that this chair was already occupied in many cases by the educated Bengali People. They also in dominating position in the cultural front. The newly emerged middle class of the aboriginal people thinks that these Bengalis are their competitors and are the sole cause of their deprivation without taking the note of the historical background of coming of these Bengali people in the state and their leading role in building the middle class intellectual of the local people of the state.

What is true for the states of North East of India it is similarly true for North Bengal. It has been already stated that the present North Bengal, specially three districts, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar has the special history which is quite different from the rest of the districts of the state. The demographic pattern of these three districts was also quite different from them. Majority people of these districts belonged to the separate group of origin of the races whom had different characteristic from the incoming people.

Not very much is known about the Khen dynasty who reigned before the Cooch dynasty. But it is known that the society was completely based on the agrarian economy. The land lord was himself a farmer who tilled his land by his own hand. During the period of Kamata dynasty this area went under the Muslim Rule for a short period. At that time some people converted in to Muslim religion. Those converted Muslim was known as 'Nasya Muslim'. This sect of Muslim

only seen in this part of Bengal. Although they converted into Muslim but they retained their most customs that were practiced when they were Hindus. So the difference between the Hindus and the Muslim are very little in comparison with the Hindus and Muslim of the other districts of the states.

The geographical features of North Bengal are also shows a great contrast in comparison with the South Bengal. The northern part of North Bengal is hill region and covered with dense forest. Moreover, there were series of invasions of the Bhutanese army. As a result no population growth was there on the North and the North West of Northern Bengal. With the progress of the tea plantation and annexation of Duars with the East India rule population began to grow in this region. From the east and west people came from Gour Banga. The peoples from Assam and Northern hill region came here from the east. In question of their livelihood there were great differences from each other. Peoples of Gour Banga and Assam were expert in agriculture. They cleared the forest land for the cultivation. If necessary they could get the uncultivated land as there was plenty of land for cultivation. The forest was infested with the wild animals. In order to clear the forest to convert it in to the agricultural land there need to live together and that was shown from the beginning .The head of the group was called ‘Dewania’. He was land lord in one hand and in another hand he was a farmer who tills his land. They were all in true sense farmer. So there was no caste division in that society as it prevailed in the other part of the Hindu society of West Bengal. The internal communication was very bad. As a result the surplus product could not be transported for marketing. But the farmers of Rangpur and Dinajpur could sell their surplus product in the nearby market. So they were more affluent than that of the farmer of the east. That was the reason why Rangpur became the cultural centre of the Rajbanshi Community after wards.

The remarkable difference that was found in the social system of North Bengal in comparison with the other districts of West Bengal was the harmonious relation between the Hindu and the Muslims .The shadow of communal feeling could not cast over the relation of the people of North Bengal. The reason for this unique social relation was that both the Land lord and share coppers plough their land. Zamindari attitude as it was found in the rest of Bengal was not found here.

4.17 THE LAND SYSTEM OF COOCHBEHAR

The land system and the characteristic of the owner- ship was completely different from the other districts of Bengal. So the change in the social life was also different from the others. In the feudal system the non agricultural land lord used to take leading part of the extortion in one hand, and on the other hand, they also take part in many cases in the processes of social reform. That type of landlords got the education. They spent whatever small it may be from their profit

for the purpose of social causes like the digging ponds, set up educational institute, cultural front etc.

Here, both the land lord and the share coppers used to tilt their land. The mode of life of both of them were almost similar and their demand and need for their daily livelihood was minimum. Besides, the surplus amount was also less and they consume it by themselves. Moreover, there was a long stable dynasty like Cooch Behar. As a general rule no dynasty encourage the individual thought and endeavour rather it treated as the rebellion against the dynasty and try to suppress this attempt. Every program evens the digging of pond and well needed the prior permission of the king.

The measurement system and the demarcation of the boundary were primitive. There was plenty of uncultivated land. The boundary of the land was marked by some natural objects. That practice continued up to the first part of the 19th century. The tax collector was called '*Sajoal*'. In the second part of the 19th century the English ruler peeped their nose into the rule of the kingdom. They abolished the Sajoal system and introduced the '*Ijaradari*' System. This system completely changed the land system. After the introduction of this system, a new system was introduced known as '*Lagani*' system. Under this system the land lord used to hand over the ownership of the land in the hand of the '*Ijaradar*' and plough the land under him.

Here we can find another land distribution system. It is known as '*Bhagiari*'. If there are more than owner of a land the owners handed over this land to others for cultivation. This system is known as the Bhagiari. And under whom the land is given is known as '*Dewani*'. If any poor relative of the land lord used to cultivate his land the required implements for the cultivation are given to him by the land lord. This farmer is called '*Praja*'. This praja in course of time converted in to '*Adhiar*'.

Here, the land was more than the demand. Moreover, if one asked the forest cover land for the cultivation it was granted easily. As a result the land distribution was made directly. Another remarkable characteristic of this region which differentiated in question of the basic nature of the social system of other districts of West Bengal must be remembered in this context. In South Bengal. Most of the land lord or the Zaminder were not farmer by occupation and were not directly related with the land. They used to live away from his Zamindari mostly in urban areas and the '*Nayeb*' (rent collector) was entrusted with the responsibility to look after the Zamindari on behalf of them. But in this region almost all the landlord were the farmers by their occupation and they used to plough the land along with the other cultivators in the field 'One can note the fact that the number of conflict between the land lord and the farmers were minimum in comparison with the South Bengal because of the basic character of the land lord and the farmers of that region.'⁷

Here, another type of resistance gradually took the shape which was absent in the South Bengal. The dynastical oppression was very much present here. The administration was in the hand of person most of whom came from the outside. They collected the revenue and imposed the law. In the eyes of them they were the administrators and the oppressors. So when the protest and resistance and number of direct conflicts against the landlords were seen in South Bengal, here the farmers and the Jotders (land lords) combined together against the officials of the Royal administration. Because they were the symbol of the oppressor. It is true that the anger against those outsiders administrative staffs although belonged to Bengali community did not turn into communal conflict but from the beginning of the 40s of the last century, started to take the political shape. That culminated in the form of the Kamtapur movement.

Here again, a remarkable characteristic was seen in the social system of the Rajbanshi/ Koch community. In the villages of the most part of West Bengal the Brahmins the highest position in the caste dominated society occupied the prime position in the society. Here such supremacy was absent in the Rajbanshi/Koch society. The Koch kings brought the Brahmins from Varanashi. They were Vaidic Brahmins. There was a difference between them and those Brahmin came from Nabadwip and Shrihatta. The Brahmins of Varanasi were 'Kaunaji' Brahman. They followed the Vaidic practices. They were not strict to the stricture of the Smriti Samhita but they allowed to continue the local practices of the Rajbanshis community when they introduced the practice of the Hindu religious rituals. So one can find a local practice or prescription in the Hindu religious system which is different from the Nabadwip – Bhattapalli prescription. In course of time in demarking the Koch and the Rajbanshis when the Kshatriya movement started in Rangpur and the presence of the Brahmins of Nabadwip, whether is the result of the conflict between the two schools of the Brahmins as described here is the matter of study for the social scientists. Those Kaunaji Brahmin who came to Cooch Behar in response to the invitation of the Cooch royal family prescribed the practice taking in to the account of the local environment that were written in books in eight volumes named *Kaumadi*. Those Kaunaji Brahmin are now permanently settled in Khagrabari of Cooch Behar. Here one can find a Brahmin known 'Adhikari' Brahmin. They performed the Hindu rituals mainly in the villages. This adhikari Brahmin is only finds in the Rajbanshi community.

Here again, one can find a different social strata which played an important role in forming the social movement. Both in East Bengal and South Bengal the Brahmins along with Kasthya, the two dominating high caste Hindu were the most influential class of the village society. They ultimately emerged as the strong middle class to establish the social movements. In the village society of Cooch Behar no such predominating caste was emerged. So no such middle class could be developed as in other part of West Bengal until first decades of 40s, to mobilize their aspiration.

In order to search the roots of the ethnic unrest one should cast the light over this phenomena of the society. Because in building the movement for the establishment of the identity and the

self rule, this middle class at the initial stage play the pivotal role. If the middle class in the Rajbanshi community had been marked their strong presence as it was seen in other places of West Bengal the history of Cooch Behar would have been written other forms. It can be easily presumed that would not demand either to merge with Assam or Bengal. There would have been a strong demand for the greater Kamtapur state before the independence and before the separation of Goalpara from their dynasty and annexed with Assam.

Taking the advantage of the absence of such middle class in the Rajbanshi society the educated Bengali went to that region and got easily the employment in different sectors specially in the administration in the Royal Court. They came from the higher society in question of the western education and cultural field.

Those peoples specially who belonged to the higher caste of the Hindu society were not farmer by occupation. So they settled in the urban areas. Those who acquired the agricultural land by taking the advantage of their position in the administration they never plough their land like the Kochs and they thus introduced the zamindari nature which was absent in the Koch land system but very much present in the other districts of West Bengal. But due to their presence urbanization process started with their settlement. From the settlement pattern it is found that the Kastyas began to settle firstly in Dinahata and Mathabhanga. After that, Vaisya (a trading Class) came this areas from Maymansing and Manikganj of Dacca.

The Muslim society also marked a special characteristic. In the village they were not treated out caste as the member of the society as it was seen in the other part of West Bengal although their number of population was not negligible at all. From the census of 1891 it is found they represented 30% of the total population of the region. Most of them were Naisya Muslim. And the number of Pathan and Sayed were very negligible. Most of them came from Rangpur – Dinajpur districts. As there was not very difference in question of social and economic position between the land lord and the cultivators the communal harmony showed a exceptional example in relation of the other part of the state.

4.18 EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

As it has been said earlier in my study that the middle class plays the most crucial role in the development of the urban civilization and Cooch Behar is no exception. Like as the urban centres of the other region the urban societies were grown in Cooch Behar with the coming of the educated middle class as depicted earlier. Many of them came from the Bengal Civil Service. Their aim was to introduce the English system of administration in the administration of Cooch Behar kingdom, so that the English rule could be easily introduced in the kingdom. The Dewan of Cooch Behar, Kalika Das came from Dacca. The law and the administration system converted in to the British form. So the lawyers who knew the English laws were invited in the courts of

Cooch Behar. Before the introduction of the British laws in the Rajbanshi society faith and the word of mouth were the common practice in the village society. But to follow the complex English laws and its jurisprudence the role of the incoming lawyers became very important.

The business followed the two streams. The Bengali traders made Mathabhanga as their centre of trade. They mainly came from Pabna, Sirajganj and Narayan ganj and deals in jute and tobacco. The non Bengali traders were in the business in money landing and lease hold property. They maintain their relation with Calcutta.

Nobody can deny the contribution of the incoming caste Hindu population for the growth of the towns of Cooch Behar including the Cooch Behar town itself. The most of those caste Hindus came from the districts of Dacca, Faridpur, Maymansingh and Pabna. They were educated and for their initiative the educational institutes were set up in different parts of Cooch Behar Kingdom. They were all Bengali and for their influence Bengali language began to use widely as the instruction of education and media for cultural expression. As a result the local Rajbanshi language became more and more cornered and on the verge of oblivion due to the non use of the local language.

The middle class of Cooch Behar could not give the leadership in building the social and Cultural Revolution because those who supposed to give the lead, the educated middle class at that time were the administrator of the state. They were confined within the bindings of the service conduct rule of the Royal kingdom. Without the prior approval no collective or the individual initiative could be taken in the kingdom. This restrictions were imposed through the incoming high caste Hindu bureaucrat who happened mostly Bengali. During the British rule Cooch Behar kingdom became the tributary state. Under the strict vigilance of the king the middle class of the Cooch Kingdom could not make connection with the middle class of the other state not even with the middle class of Cooch Dynasty. So when the wave of national movement spread throughout the country it could not touch the heart of the people of the kingdom. When the legal practitioners of the country took the vital role in building the social movements their counterpart of the kingdom had no any scope to do the same because they had to move within the boundary of limit prescribed by the king. But with urbanization the civic facilities which were not at all within the agenda of the feelings of the people now they began to feel. The urban demands are derived by the extortion of the rural wealth. The principal source of the extortion is the tax imposed upon the land. More the tax upon the rural resources more the anti feeling against the Bengali bureaucrat as if they were imposing the tax.

In Cooch Behar kingdom both the land lord and the cultivators were engaged in the ploughing of the agricultural land so the caste Hindu bureaucrat appeared to them as the class enemy as they had no idea about the role of the caste Hindu in the national movement. To them the leadership of the caste Hindu, and the basically Bengali bureaucrats appeared as the same in

the eyes of them. After the independence large section of the Rajbanshi of Cooch Behar kingdom was reluctant to join with West Bengal the reason of which might be out of that sentiment.

After the independence the influx of Bengali Hindu refugees converged in this region mainly from Rangpur, Mayamansingh, Pabna, Dinajpur, and Dacca including from other districts of East Pakistan. They came from the developed areas both in agriculture, education cum economic position. Their cultural sense and the agricultural skill were much higher than that of Cooch Behar–Jalpaiguri zone. The Rajbanshi community reached at the bottom line under the pressure of the advanced incoming waves of the Bengali refugees.

The other districts of the state were the part of West Bengal. The Cooch Behar kingdom was the independent kingdom for more than 200years and another 200 years as a tributary state and never a part of West Bengal.

‘The demand was raised for the Greater Cooch Behar state merging the Dooars of jalpaiguri district. In this context a leaflet that was published in the Madhuparni of their Jalpaiguri special Number may be placed here:

<p>Table 4.2 Leaflet No.1 ‘My Brothers of West Dooars</p>	
<p>‘--The English are leaving India. Under this circumstances Cooch Behar, the land of peace and prosperity of our forefathers is our source of strength and shelter. We think it a proper to include Dooars in Cooch Behar kingdom in order to keep our tradition and civilization. Let come, we together pray before the King of Cooch Behar by appearing before him. We hope that His majesty will fulfil our desire and merge the Dooars with Cooch Behar.</p>	
<p>Year, 1354, 12th Shraban Sri Bidhu Bhusan Karjee Village Pabor Par Sri Gopal Chandra Roy Village: Silbari</p>	<p>yours sincerely, Shri Tarini Kanta Roy Village Roy Cheng Shri Tarakeswar Basunia Village: Kheti Phul Bari’</p>

<p>Table 4.3 Leaflet No.2 ‘To Rajbanshi and the Muslim Brothers,</p>	
<p>‘Today is not the day for the Rajbanshi and Muslim brothers to sleep. It is a day for great wake up. All of you know that the Dooars was a part of Coochbehar before the British rule. During the British regime the Dooars was separated from the Cooch Behar Kingdom. Now the British are leaving so we demand to get back the Dooars, land of our forefathers, before the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. To fulfill this demand the Raibanshi and the Muslims of this land should unite</p>	

To understand the demand of the Kamtapur state one should understand the history of the demand. This area was always outside the territory of West Bengal. The language, culture, and the economic structure of this region were quite different from Bengal. This area was also outside of the administrative jurisdiction of Bengal. This area could be merged with West Bengal because of the presence of the majority number of Bengali people who came from outside of Cooch Behar. If any invitee come and join in the family it becomes the responsibility of the host family to provide more comfort so that they should feel ease in the home and opt for stay.

A large section of the people of Cooch Behar was against the merger with West Bengal. But leaders of West Bengal by their political influence could win over the leaders of the centre to merge it with their state. They brought the land and their people under their political boundary but when the question came to recognize their culture, language in their cultural and literature they put it in the culture and literature of Assam.

After long persuasion when the central government informed in the month of December, 1949, that they had taken the decision to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal, Bidhan Chandra Roy the then Chief Minister of the state expressed his gratitude through a letter addressed to Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel the then Home minister of government of India stating the fact that this inclusion was not only for the growth of the state but it would be an addition of psychological strength to the state.

On 1st January 1950, Bidhan Chandra Roy , the then chief minister of West Bengal came to Cooch Behar to accept the deed of the merger of Cooch Behar with west Bengal from Nan Jhanna , the administrator of Cooch Behar. In the air port besides Nan Jhanna, Lalit Baxi, the Chief Secretary of Cooch Behar government, and Kumar Gautam Narayan, the family member of the Royal family and many others were present to receive the Chief Minister of West Bengal. A public meeting was organized on that occasion. The chief Minister of the state declared Cooch Behar as a special district. He declared that until the provincial assembly election is held two nominated representatives would represent in the assembly. Thos two nominated representatives were Umesh Chandra Mandal and Satish Chandra Singha Roy⁸

If today they feel that the Cooch Behar was annexed with West Bengal only to establish the over lordship of the Bengali community over the minority Rajbanshi community it is the primary task of the Bengali community , being the majority, to remove the inferiority feelings of the Rajbanshi.

It will be a great mistake if one tries to judge the unrest of North Bengal in the eyes of law and order problems. It should be judged on the social perspective.

4.19 DISPLACED AND REHABILITATION

After the independence of our country more and more lands are acquired for different projects uprooting the people from the soil. It is found that among those who had uprooted from their soil most of them are the man of the soil Walter Fernandes, J.C. Das and Sam Rao gave a detail account about this displacement in their article 'Displacement and Rehabilitation-an Estimate of Extent and Prospect,' published by Indian Social Science 1989 where they mentioned that up to 1989 a number of 1,65,00,000 people were displaced, from their soil and only 39,50,000 people were rehabilitated.

After the tea plantation a wave swept over a vast areas of North Bengal for the plantation of pine apples. Large number of agricultural land mainly the plains of Darjeeling district, North West Dinajpur district and part of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar district were taken over by newly emerged Bengali and Marwari pine apple planters. Most of the land owners were Rajbanshi. They sold their agriculture land to the pine apple planters to get instant money with the assurance of getting the employment in the pine apple garden as workers. At the first instances there was a boom in production of pine apple, thanks to the use of chemical fertilizer, ignoring the warning of the environmentalist for the devastating effect of the near future. Now it shows twine effect. Firstly, many of the pine apple gardens are now abandoned being lost their fertility to yield. Many of the newly formed pine apple planters lost their all capital due to the wrong choice of land and application of chemical in the hope to get more production. Secondly, those people after selling their land, most of whom were Rajbanshi and as a general rule spent their cash in the consumer market and became the land less labour. In the pine apple garden they lost their job and moved to Siliguri or other urban centres to pull the rickshaw or other manual jobs like the helper of the mason.

Again, a mad rush has been found in small tea plantation in the agricultural land even ignoring the stipulation that it needs to prior approval of the government to convert the cultivable land in to the tea plantation As a result land syndicates are now operating in this area to purchase land not only for the tea plantation but also for the speculative purpose. Its social impact proved dangerous. The local people mostly Rajbanshi are losing their land and becoming the landless daily labour.

The alienation from the land and alienated from their culture and language produce a sense of isolation from the so called mainstream which are dominated by the Bengali community by the position of their majority. This sense of isolation produce a sense of separatism which ultimately gave birth the call for a separate geo-political boundary for their own community as they hoped that such boundary would establish their lost glory and prosperity.

The demand for a separate Kamtapur state was first heard in 40s of the last century which has already mentioned in this study. The waves of the Tibeto-Burmese origin of the Mongoloids races, desperately tried their entry in to the Brahmanical society. But they could not make inroad in that society easily. For that they had to satisfy the Hindu Brahmins in many ways. For example, the Kachhari, Garo, Lalung, Koch, Mech Rabha all belongs to Indo–China races of origin. They had to give up the habit of eating of beef and to accept the Hindu Brahmin as their priest to get the passport for the entry into the Hindu Brahmanical society. Still, the poorer sections of the Rajbanshi were not accepted by the caste Hindus. At the beginning of the 20th century Nagendra Nath Basu published his encyclopaedia, where he mentioned the Rajbanshi as ‘Barbar’ (uncultured) and ‘mlechha’ (Untouchable). In the year of 1911 by an order the entry of the Rajbanshis community were forbidden in to the Puri Temple.

The attitude of the high caste Bengali naturally ignited the anger in the minds of the newly emerged middle class of the Rajbanshi Community. This anger and sentiments were burst out through the movement of Thakur Panchanan Burman. If one is included in the Hindu society he would get the proper respect such broadness is not expected in the caste Hindu society. As a result the Rajbanshi community had to launch their social movement to establish their position in the Hindu society. The demand for the recognition as the Bratya Kshatriya initiated in the year of 1891 was its example. The wearing of the sacred thread is also another example to establish their position in the caste rank of the Hindu Society.

Although through the caste movement the Rajbanshi were trying to establish their position in the Hindu caste society but this movement brought the division among then in the name of Koches and the Rajbanshi and they drifted apart from each other. But the irony was that when the Rajbanshi community separated themselves from Koches demanding that Koches are not Rajbanshi and Rajbanshis are the Bratya Kshatriya and thus they belonged to the caste Hindu, a section of the caste Hindu jumped to oppose their demand actively. In the year of 1912 on 10th February when the Rajbanshi were performing their wearing of the sacred thread as a mark of the Kshatriyahood at Perolbani of Rangpur the high caste Hindus organized to attack them to baffle their programme. In order to give them protection a large police forces under the command of G.S Miller, the district magistrate of Rangpur had to present there.

This social difference between the Bengali and the Rajbanshi creating a feeling of some short of anger throughout the years. At the initial stage the Rajbanshis were introvert and passive but with the contribution of the Royal family in education the Rajbanshi community became a dynamic modern community. Mainly with their direct patronization the Bengali Intellectual who came there to settle and spread the education. The education does not move alone it moves with his culture. The English education came to Bengal but simultaneously it brought the English culture also. Similarly with the influence of Bengali intellectuals the newly emerged Rajbanshi community not only educated themselves from the Bengali intellectual at the same time they

imbibed the Bengali culture also. With their influence the Koch languages and their culture went back behind the screen but at the same time this helped to minimize the difference between the Koches and the Rajbanshis.

Now the Language could be the bridge between the relation of Koches and the Rajbanshis. Although what would be the name of the language becomes a debatable points between the Rajbanshi community; one in favour of naming it Kamtapur language and another section prefer to call it Rajbanshi language. Whatever may be the difference in naming the language the very language is the bridge between the Rajbanshi and the Koches as both of them accepted this is their mother language. One should remember the fact that every community loves his mother tongue and sees his identity through his language. The movement for Bengali language in Bangladesh is the glaring example of this statement. The said Bengali when sitting in the glass house and taking the advantage of their demographic position declared the Kamtapur or the Rajbanshi language is the dialect of Bengali he should not forget his own glorious past in establishing his mother tongue when there was an attempt to belittle it by the ruler. The fight for the prestige of the mother tongue ultimately gave birth a new sovereign country Bangladesh.

There is yet to give the definition of the dialect and the language for the commonly accepted. Those languages are termed as the dialect and placed in the secondary position at one time; almost all of them through the progress of social transformation either converted in to standard language or went in to obliteration. The English is the glaring example which once a language of Germanic tribes now becomes the strongest language of the world. So it appears meaningless to invite the conflict and hurt the wounds of the community by describing their mother tongue as the dialects of Bengali, rather this produced a sentiment against the Bengali community as expressed by many Rajbanshi during my interview with them.

In this context it is necessary to see what are the views of the peoples of the aboriginal people of the areas under my survey.

4.20 MOVEMENT OF KSHATRIYAHOOD AND THE ROLE OF THE BENGALI COMMUNITY

The relation between the Rajbanshi and the Bengali community requires to be examined as both community feel a sense of misunderstanding one from the point of majority complex and another from the point of the minority feeling. The difference of understanding initiated from the demand of the Rajbanshi community, although there was no reason to make it a point of confrontation between the two communities.

The Rajbanshi community claimed that they originally belonged to the Kshatriya caste of the Aryan tribes. They left their original places of birth when Parasuram the mythological character of the epic of the Mahabharata took the vow to destroy the Kshatriya from the soil and took

shelter on the sacred river, the Sankosh. According to their own explanation Rajbanshis belonged to the Aryan races which are quite different from the origin of the Bengali. They never claimed during the movement of their Kshatriya hood that they belonged to the Bengali community and such the claim might appear as the anathema to the caste system of the Bengali Hindu. The kshahtriya although not present in the Bengali caste system but it was very much with the all India Caste phenomena. So the Bengali Hindu had no reason to oppose this movement and thus entered in to a confrontation with the Rajbanshi Community.

In North Bengal where the Rajbanshi community hold a very large number of their population faced a strong confrontation with Bengali community of Rangpur. When the Rajbanshi placed their demand to register them as kashatriya in the census report the upper caste Bengali community raised their protest claiming that no such caste is existed in the Bengali caste system. But the Rajbanshi Community asked them to be registered as the 'Bratya Kshatriya' as they were defected from their original place of living and renounced their profession of ware fare for the Kshatriyas of Aryan origin. So the Bengali community had nothing to do with this demand placed by the Rajbanshi community. But in doing so they brought a sharp division between them.

The Bengali community was very critical about the demand of the Kshatriyahood of the Rajbanshi community on the plea that the Hindu Bengali society is composed of Brahmins, Baidya, Kaysthas, and Sudras. It is believed that this caste hierarchical belief has created a psychological war between two communities, because in the mean time a sizeable number of upper castes Hindu Bengali came and settled in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri besides Rangpur where they settled much before. The Hindus of the upper and even lower caste Bengali residing in this area usually did not drink from the hand of the Rajbanshi community. A psychology grew in the minds of those Bengali that if the Rajbanshi is elevated in the caste position in the Hindu caste system they may claim the equal position in the caste arrangement.

But the basic question rose by many post-modern subaltern scholars in this regard. It is seen in the Hindu caste society that there are four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Baishya and Shudra. Theoretically the Baidyas and the Kayasthas were included in Sudra Caste (Ghosh). But in Bengal, the Baidyas and the Kayastha demanded higher caste status and they enjoyed it without social and sastra's sanction. Now those are widely accepted even by the orthodox Brahmanical society of different schools. The kayastha and the Baidyas of the Bengali community are very influential caste in question of their education and economic position and earned the respect from all the society. This unsanctioned social position of the Baidya and the Kayastha of the Bengali community never faced any question from any quarters of the Hindu school but when the question of recognition of Kshatriya hood for the Rajbanshi community the same Bengali community raised their head in protest.

A psychological cold war which began in the colonial era in question of the recognition of the Kshatriyahood status of the Rajbanshis where the so called upper caste Hindu Bengali was reluctant to accept it and even the post colonial era the same 'bhadralok' Bengali intellectuals are hesitant to show their impartiality with regard to the Kshatriya status of the Rajbanshi.

The cold caste war exposed into open caste war when the Rajbanshi community submitted to the government to include them as the Kshatriya in the census report in one hand on the other hand to include them in the Schedule cast category status. This contradictory demand, elevation of the social status and simultaneously to enjoy the benefit of the scheduled caste status created the field for the conflict of interest which ultimately became a social tension and a point of dispute between the 'Deshi' and the 'Bhataia' in Cooch Behar and its surrounding areas. The Cooch Behar which includes all the aboriginal community finds that their demands are echoed in the memorandum of the Hitasadhani Sabha.

REFERENCES

1. Chakraborty, Prafulla, (1990), The 'Marginal Men'; The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal, Rahara
2. Das, Samir Kumar (2000), Refugee Crisis; Responses of the Government of West Bengal in Refugees in West Bengal (ed) Kolkata , Calcutta Research Group. Pp7
3. Nag, Soumen (2003) 'Bichhinater Utsya Sandhaney Kamtapur Theke Uttar purba Bharat, Kolkata Saptarsi Prakashan.
4. Sharma, Bhupen (2001) 'Immigration and Politics in Assam; Questions Relating to Human Rights in Refugees and Human Rights (Ed) New Delhi Rawat Publicatios pp361
5. Nag, Soumen, Ibid
6. Bhowmik, Sharit (1981), 'Class Formation in the Plantation System 'New delhi People's Publishing House
7. Chowdhury, H.N (1903) Cooch Behar and its Land Revenue Settlement p 441
8. West Bengal District Gazetteer; Koch Bihar Durgadas Majumder 4