CHAPTER: EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to study the nature of the Ethnic Unrest of North Bengal and the impact of historical, social, geographical, and environmental factors upon this unrest situation of, the Rajbanshi Community of North Bengal. We have traced the origin of this ethnic unrest of the Rajbanshi Community, their social life, its changes, and how the present social changes are gradually influencing their social thought in establishing their self identity through the various means.

In this chapter, which is the concluding chapter, I shall present a summary of the discussion that has been made for the preceding chapters and the role of the various institutions responsible for the unrest which has been depicted as my subject of research and the suggestions based on the facts that are collected through my study.

8.1 THE HETEROGENEOUS NATURE OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The present unrest in North Bengal whether it may be the demand for the Gokha Land State or it may be the demand for the Kamtapur or Greater Cooch Behar State has been   revolving around the fulcrum of the ethnic sentiment. It is therefore, on the ethnic relation among the different shades of people and their effect upon this unrest. For that purpose I have searched the history of the ethnic conflict as well as the ethnicity to judge the present state of unrest of North Bengal. The ethnicity along with the ethnic unrest is not a local issue and it is the global phenomena that are why I have to peep   into the back ground of the ethnic history as a whole.

The regional Autonomy Committee in their report (1991;11) stated:
'It is well settled that ethnicities located in specific territorial boundaries claim to be classified as 'regions' and therefore have a legitimate claim to the autonomy at the political and economic levels. In fact, the urge for self governance and aspiration of economic development is at the root of such a claim.'

Almost all the ethnic unrest culminated in to the demand for autonomous boundary which is apparently, growing contestations over the question of autonomy in general relate to the complex interplay between the ethno-cultural moorings of an individual or group identity and a rather seductive appeal of geopolitical reductionism and territoriality. The demand of Kamtapur state or the Greater Cooch-Behar state or the demands of Gorkha Land are the manifestation of this phenomenon.

According to Yash Ghai (2000-8) 'it is a device to allow ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity those powers which covers common interests'.

Ghai further points out that , 'more than any previous age, ours is marked by ethnic conflicts response to ethnic conflict have ranged from oppression and ethnic cleansing to accommodations of ethnic claims through affirmative policies, special form of representation, power sharing and the integration of minorities . One of the most sought after, and resisted, device for conflict management is autonomy'.

The purpose of this study is to map out the key guiding principles of what we would like to describe, both in a generic sense and in the specific context of Kamtapur or Greater Cooch Behar, as 'Autonomy of Autonomies' Such principles, we will argue and illustrate, relentlessly question the assumptions of the geo-political boundary of a state are the fulfilment of a historical destiny, rather than a containment. We would like critically to examine various understandings, representation and discourses of autonomy, both past and present in an about the ethnic unrest of North Bengal in the light of these principles.

In more specific terms, the key intention behind this study is two- fold. First, to expose the partiality of territorialized geopolitical visions, which in turn continue to remain hostage to colonial imperial ethnographic mapping practices and the resultant categories, rooted in govern- mentality. Such govern mentality, however, is not necessarily restricted to intellectuals and institutions of statecraft. It can also be found among non- state, politically motivated, ideological groups, actively engaged in the pursuit of primacy through the exclusion of the 'Other' and the 'Alien'.

Secondly, while critiquing the manner in which various competing, often colliding, definitions of autonomy, continued to be imprisoned by such categories (related to religion, ethnicity, caste, colour, creed and gender) this study intends to show that autonomy is not something that is determined , dictated and driven structurally from above by the intellectual and institutions of statecraft. On the contrary it is or at least ought to be, integral to democratization process; enabling people to make as well as realize choice of their own, without compromising their legitimate moral and political claims to human dignity and diverse socio-cultural identifications as citizens practicing without fear or favour the norms of reciprocal civility.

8.2 IDENTITY CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

'Ethnic politics is playing important role in the functioning of modern nation states, the world over. While the process of development had contributed largely to integrative tendencies in many states, it has produced fissiparous tendencies in others. On the one hand, the developed countries has succeeded a lot in containing ethnic problems through process of nation building

and modernization, on the other hand, in the developing poor countries it has worked the way i.e. it has contributed to disintegrative process and gives rise to large scale ethnic assertions. In case of India ethnic consciousness has risen mainly in post–independence era. On the context of terming these claims as law and order problems, the Indian state in most of the situation has acted in a repressive manner to counter these ethnic assertions which have produced violence on large scale' (Singh).

Ethno–nationalism has been defined by various corners in various forms from different outlooks but one outlook may find the common place that it is form of particularism and exclusivity. The ethno–nationalism has resulted in functional behavioural pattern between the very ethnic minority groups present in the state and state itself.

8.3 ETHNO-NATIONALISM

The ethno–nationalism is working as a double–edged sword. On the one hand, the ethnic minorities are problems for the nation state where they were located in terms of their increasingly political assertion regarding identity, culture, language, religion etc. On the other hand, the nation -state is a problem for them in terms of their perceived or genuine discrimination particularly regarding the fulfilment of their legitimate political and socio-economic aspirations. Ethno-nationalism can be further divided into two variables. One is national self awareness of ethnic groups concentrated in compact geographical areas. For example, Sikhs in Punjab, Tamils in Srilanka, Baluchi in Pakistan. The Muslims in India and the Hindus in Pakistan are the examples of the second variety which is dispersed throughout the country and therefore cannot claim any compact territory as its home. Various parts of the world are feeling the heat of these ethnic assertions. Czechoslovakia, USSR, and Yugoslavia disintegrated in the near past mainly on ethnic lines. More and more states are facing the struggle between the supporters of politicized ethnicity and those of anti-ethnic integrationists. In the third world country mainly from Asia and Africa, which emerged after the decolonization process as independent state, have been the hot beds of these ethnic assertions and resultant conflict.

Ethnic movement in India is a multi dimensional phenomenon having several components. Further, Indian society is a plural society and the sub-structure on which the modern political superstructure has been built up is characterized by primordial factors. The components of the ethnic unrest may vary from region to region and from time to time. But in the context of the ethnic movements of North Bengal such components may be classified as ethno-identity, ethno-linguistic, ethno-historical, ethno-geographical, ethno-environmental and socio-economic and political. A brief discussion of these components is discussed bellow.

8.4 QUESTION OF IDENTITY

'Ethnic upsurges have produced similar problems and challenging situation both for multi-ethnic developed as well as developing countries but state response in the two has been different. Whereas the developed states have responded to the irredentism and ethnic upsurge through accommodative mechanism using the crisis management and conflict resolution techniques , the state response in third world countries have been without any significant exception, of seeking military solutions , thus producing conflict and violence on unprecedented scale' (Singh).

The developing countries like ours having plural societies were the colonial territories of developed ones. These territories were mostly conglomeration of different ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups joined hands together to out the colonial exploiters as those ruler exploited their territories throwing them in to the wallow of misery. During the struggle for eliminating the colonial rule ethnic identity was blurred behind or under the nationalist rubric and these ethnic groups forced a collective action. The anti imperialist was mainly based on the slogan of self determination and was successful to free their territories from the hand of the colonial rule. The receding colonialists left these territorial dispensations with hard and defended borders. But that borders was not created through the painstaking efforts of geographers or demographers but were the result of the geo-strategic and politico-economic considerations of the colonial masters. These were political borders and not built on the rational considerations.

'The receding powers left these occupied territories, as such lumped together diverse and antagonistic human groups, or homogeneous groups were divided to suit the motives as convenient to them. So nation-state in major part of the world did not come into existence through natural process of historical evolution as in Europe, but artificial creations of outgoing masters who left the problems of ethnic minorities of all sorts unresolved in order to keep their hold intact in future (Singh).

Identity and its relation to ethnicity and community, on one side, and conflict, on the other, have emerged as the salient topics for scholarly investigation in the social sciences. This study investigated the trends in this engagement in the et mmmmmmmmmmmhnic unrest of North Bengal particularly the Kamtapur movement of the Rajbanshi.

8.5 COMMUNITY

Identity has become pervasive among different communities in different parts of the world. In India, language that did not originally have a term to designate the concept of identity have now evolved terms, often based on Sanskrit roots or adopted an existing word for the purpose (Jayram 2004). The fact that identity did not have a semantic location in many Indian languages is a significant factor that should be taken in to consideration in understanding people's concern with their collective identities today.

Identity and its relation to ethnicity and community, on the one hand, and conflict, on the other, have emerged a salient topic for scholarly investigation in the social sciences. Internationally, there has been a steady outpouring of research study which indicates its importance in the present social process. In India too with the increase of the number of ethnic movements in different parts of the country either in the name for the recognition of the language or in the name of the state for their own names of the community causing the grave concern in question of the national integrity. This study also intended to survey the roots of the ethnic unrest of North Bengal in the name of the establishment of the identity of the Rajbanshi Community.

Identity, however, has an important sociological connotation. It is in the collectivist sense that the concept of identity gets linked to the concepts of community and conflict. The focus of this research is primarily sociological and the different components as mentioned earlier which played the important role in this sociological aspects.

Within the limited scope of this research study it was not possible to study all the components which lead the ethnic movements. What is done here is to delineate the thematic of the subject as revelled by empirically and significant studied with reference to ethnic movements of North Bengal.

Identity has immense import for collectivises, just as the identity of the collectivity has immense import for the individuals belonging to it. The concept of ethnicity is also fuzzy; in the large body of literature on the subject, there appears to be no consensus on what ethnicity is. The terms ethnicity and ethnic groups are among most complicated, volatile and emotionally charged words and ideas in the lexicon of social science'. (Nash 1989).

Identities expressed in collectivist terms of community or ethnic groups are often the outcome of consultation and confabulation, especially in situations where multiple communities or ethnic groups exists.

The "we and they " and "us and 'them' feelings integral to community and ethnic identities are often phrased in antagonistic / belligerent terms and bring communities so articulated into conflict with each other. (Jayaram, 2012). Many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choice less identity and the cultivated violence associated with identity conflicts seem to repeat itself around the world with increasing persistence. (Sen 2006). India has been a theatre of conflict between communities–communal conflicts involving religion/ sect based groups, caste conflicts, ethnic group conflict, linguistic group conflicts and the likes (Jayaram 2011). Often these conflicts have been violent as it is seen in the ethnic movement of North Bengal, resulting in destruction of life and property and the hardening of community veins.

Theoretically, the analysis of identity as a sociological phenomenon is intrinsically tied to the idea of ethnicity and community on the one hand, and conflict and violence, on the other. We tried to understand the various levels, dimensions and aspects of dynamics of identity of the Rajbanshi Community as revealed through our research study.

8.6 IDENTITY AND NATION

The broadest identity for human being is naturally their species being Homo Sapiens, an identity that distinguishes them from other animal species .In contrast to race and civilization as identity makers, the ideas of nation and its derivative "nationalism" have animated the elite and the masses and generated considerable scholarly discussion. It is no doubt that our concepts of nation and nation state have been derived from the west. But the western thought is not in a position to give the full answer to the problems of Indian nationalism. There is a familiar problem in approaching the history of Indian nationalism, namely, the partially helpful, partly obstructive presence of Western political theory' which has produced as much confusion as help in understanding our nationalism' (Kaviraj 2010).

The age of globalization is also the age of nationalist resurgence. On the one hand, there is the "widespread (re) construction of identity on the basis of nationality, always affirmed against the alien" and on the other hand, there is the "challenge to establish nation from within" (Castells1997).

The globalization of economy and the internationalization of political institutions the universalism of a largely shared culture, diffused by electronic media, education, literacy, urbanization, and modernization and scholarly assault on the very concept of nations declared to be 'imagined communities, (Anderson1983)

Michael Mann (2005) identifies four supposed "threats" to contemporary nation states– capitalist transformation, environmental limits, identity politics and post militarism. He cautioned;

"We must beware the most enthusiastic of the globalists and transitionalist. With little sense of history, they exaggerate the former strength of nation–state with little sense of global variety, they exaggerate their current decline; with little sense of their plurality, they down play the international relations. In all four spheres of 'threat' we must distinguish : (a) differential impacts on different types of states in different regions ; (b) trends weakening and some trends strengthening nation states;(c) trends displacing national regulation to international as well as transitional net work ; and (d) trends simultaneously strengthening nation states and transnationalism (2005)'

Here it should be taken in to the account of the special characteristic of Indian subcontinent and the phenomenon derives from the fact that India is not a single nation but a plurality of

nations. The socio -political construction of 'India as nation' is a colonial phenomenon and it is well captured in the post- independence concern with nation building (Srinnivas 2002).

Fig: 8.6.1   Demand for Kamtapur State

In India, sub-nationalism has manifested in two ways – (I) the demand for separate state hood or autonomy (called regionalism), which is articulated within the constitutional frame work of the state and in that case does not challenge the idea of India as a Nation .and (II) the demand for self- determination (dubbed as secessionism), which by definition challenges the idea of India as a nation state. The latter manifestation is often described as region within region (Kumar2011). The agitation for the separate state of Telangana is the example of the former. Equally the demand for the separate Kamtapur State also falls under this category. On the other hand, the Kashmir problem is the example of the latter category.

Sub-nationalism of the north east states including the demand for kamtapur state:-

The expression of sub-nationalism in north east India including North Bengal is different in that tribal ethnicity is an intractable issue there and insurgency has been a perennial problem for Indian state. A key element in the social construction of India as nation was the division of the sub-continent and the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

The changes in the social and political landscape of Bengal resulting from partition and the creation of minorities, the Muslims in West Bengal and the Hindus in Bangladesh has a tremendous effect upon the social position not only in West Bengal but throughout the states of North East India as a whole.

The most fundamental cleavage in modern India has been in terms of religious affiliations. The demand for partition was made on religious grounds and that Pakistan was formed on the principles of Islamic thoughts, at least partly aggrandizement in terms of religion in the post independence era. The religious groups in India are not just different in terms of doctrine and rituals. They are for the most part, also different in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance patterns, family and kingship, gender norms and behaviour, and occupational specializations, economic position and educational attainments.

The religious groups in India are amorphous and they are characterized by regional differences internally. Overlooking intra-religious differences has frequently resulted essentialising religious identities and communalism. In India, the term communalism essentially carries a negative connotation implying the hardening of communal veins and intercommunity conflicts and violence.

Here lies the unique social harmony in the Rajbanshi Community. Here also exists the religious groups mainly the Hindus and the Muslims. I could not find a single incident of communal riots in course of my research study. Even when the communal riots had been rocking the whole of Bengal the social atmosphere of the Rajbanshi community remains calm maintaining the religious harmony among them.

8.7 THE TRANSITIONAL ACCOUNT OF THE RAJBANSHI COMMUNITY

To understand the present ethnic unrest which is the major ethnic community of North Bengal I tried to trace the transitional account of the Rajbanshi community. Although there are different opinions about the racial identity of the Koch–Rajbanshi community but it revealed from my study that the Koch-Rajbanshi of North-Eastern India are group of various Bodo-speaking tribal communities that have a long, roughly 1500 year long, processes of sanskritization moved from Bodo speeches to Sanskritic Language, from shifting hoe agriculture to settle plough agriculture, from relative non oppressive gender relations to restrictive practices imposed on women, and from a non-state society to kingship and more or less stable state formation that lasted for more than four hundred years until it was absorbed into the Indian Union in 1950 (Nandy 1997). And yet the integration of this group into caste society remains ambiguous and the status of its identity is becoming a political issue.

Our study explored the processes involved in Sanskritization and showed the conflict between them and the older culture and society. It is this tension at various levels that has kept this group suspended between tribe and caste and has now opened up vistas of nationality formation.

The core area of the Koch-Rajbanshi spreads over three countries, Nepal, India and Bangladesh. In India they live in six North Bengal districts of West Bengal, the lower Assam, with great concentration in Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup and Darrang districts. In Bangladesh they live in Rangpur, Dinajpur and North–Eastern Maymansingh.

Beyond the core area the Koch-Rajbanshi are to be found in significant numbers in all the plains districts of Assam and along the Indian–Bhutan border.

Until the advent of the Koch state in early sixteenth century AD, there are very few historical records of these people except Hiuen Tsangs account and Minhaju-S-Siraj's 1261 AD account of Bakhtiar Khilji's exploits in this region. In Mahabharata we find the name of a king, Bhagadatta of this area who took part in the Kurukshetra war.

Dynasties and warfare are recorded until we reach the Kamtapur kingdom of the Khens, a Hinduised, Bodo speaking tribe which has merged mostly into Koch –Rajbanshis and some into Bengali Hindu Groups. Apart from kingdoms and king lists, the record since 1000 AD. mention a group of local, land chiefs who, through this areas, are referred to with the conventional number twelve–Baro Bhuiyans. The presence of these chiefs suggested some spread of settled agriculture. But it is certain that this spread of settled agriculture was extremely uneven. Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's there was still some jhumming in the plains of the area.

From Bakhtiyar's defeat, the state of Kamrupa, the rise of Koch –Rajbanshi Power we get three hundred year account of intermittent strife in which the prominent actors are Kamtapur, Gauda, and later the Ahom kingdom immediately before Biswa Singha establishes Koch power and his sons expand and consolidate it in the middle of the sixteenth century, Kamtapur lay devastated by a war with Gauda and the region itself left in a power vacuum. Into that vacuum and reliable documentary history, the Koch Rajbanshi then steps in.

8.8 SANSKRITIZATION

The Bodo-speaking origin of the Koch–Rajbanshi is there, implicitly and explicitly, in the two important origin myths that are of Brahminical provenance. One story is that the Koch is Kshatriyas who fled to escape the murderous wrath of the Brahmin Parusuram into the jungle by the side of the sacred river Sankosh of the North East India. There they lost their culture and forgot their past. So degraded had they become that forgot to wear their sacred thread in proper way. So in the middle part of the twentieth the '*Bratya Kshatriya*' movement started under the leadership of Thakur Panchnan Burman, where they performed the ritual practice of wearing the sacred thread as symbol of their identity as Kshatriya.

The Second story begins with a Mech chief (Mandal) named Haria who lived somewhere north-east of the Brahmaputra port of Dhubri. From the description of his cultivation it assumed that he was a typical Jhum cultivator. His two wives, Heera and Jeera were two sisters. This accords well with the customs of some Bodo–speaking tribes to this day, such as the Garos, who allows a second wife for "permitted" causes such as childlessness etc but insist on the second wife being a uterine sister or a lineal cousin, thus keeping the relations between the lineages undisturbed.

Biswa Singh the founder of the Koch dynasty was the son of Heera. Here the Brahmins have inserted their familiar twist into the story indicating their penetration in to the tribal society of this area. The story is that Biswa was not the son of Haria, the Mech or Bodo. The lord Mahadev is said to have taken the form of the Mech (this name is, according to some linguists, a corrupted form of the word 'Mleccha') and impregnated Heera. The Bodo connection is thus severed, given the Brahmincal view of procreation. Biswa and his entire descendant automatically qualify out of the rank of the mlecchas, and became Kshatriyas. How the logic of this story qualifies all other Koch to promote them in the same way is not clear.

 Before I part with the mythological story I tried to find the tribal connection in the process of present transformation of the Koch–Rajbanshi. It is found that Biswa singh gathered a number of chiefs of the Mech tribe and established an empire. It is found that the presence of many centres of power throughout the whole history of dynasty would attest to the presence of a tribal confederacy where various clans or lineages ruled under the umbrella of a paramount chief. The Raikats of Jalpaiguri, the Darrang of Bijni, and Sidli chief-all are claiming royal lineage or the ubiquitous Bhuiyan chiefs who keep moving in and out of texts attested to something more than a tribal organization but perhaps less than the trapping of full sovereignty vested in a person.

The processes of sanskritization in this region over the centuries has resulted in a tribe–caste continuum with the tribes whose ways of life remains more or less unaltered by the Sanskrit culture at one end of the continuum and fully Hinduised castes at the other end.

In my study I find that the Koch claims to belong to one Gotra, the Kasyap Gotra, violating the cardinal principal of caste endogamy. Their religion is a curious blend of nature worship, Shaktism, Vaishanavism, Tranticism, Siddha and even Sufism. Much of their worship is associated with agricultural operations and the warding off evil spirits. Most of their rituals are performed by their own kinsmen-'adhikaris' and the 'deosis' along with the 'shudra 'holders of ritual offices in Assamese Vaishanavism and even untouchables. The Bengali Brahmin who gave the certificate to the Koch –Rajbanshi on their Kshatriya status in the twenties and the thirties of the last century nevertheless refused to officiate for them. Apart from the taboo on ploughing and the menstruation taboo, Koch- Rajbanshi women are subjected to few restrictions. Marriages are dissoluble on the initiative of the women as well as the man without any difference in social

legitimacy. Children outside wedlock were not outcasted. Most of the Koch-Rajbanshi conforms to the beef eating taboo, but other food taboos of the Hindus are acknowledged publicly but it is seen in many cases violated privately.

From my above observation it can be said that the Koch–Rajbanshi are not by any means fully integrated into caste society inspite of centuries of sanskritization. This was largely due to a resistance to the full scale absorption in to the Hindu social order as subaltern at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The present ethnic unrest of North Bengal originated from   that social condition where the Koch-Rajbanshi did not feel that they are the part of the Bengali community due to that incomplete absorption.

8.9 THE REASON BEHIND THE RESISTANCE

Fig: 8.9.1   Collecting drinking water from the polluted river Murti.

It becomes imperative to study the reason behind such resistance to assimilate with the major community of the Bengal inspite of long association with them. The reasonable reason is that the Koch–Rajbanshi resides in a peripheral region very far from the Ganga–Jamuna "Doab" where the Sanskrit story began. It is taken to be granted that cultural diffusion over long distance takes a long time. It can be compared with flow of water. The movement of water over the uneven terrain where high grounds are left behind as islands while the water rushes behind them. These high grounds should be seen as the pockets of cultural resistance built upon ecological, social, and political circumstances. The Bodo speaking tribes of the plains and the Koch-Rajbanshi of North–East represent a history of such resistance.

With the coming of the Jhuminng Tribes under the fold of the Koch who by that time were adopted the settled farming is the important transition in the Koch- Rajbanshi society. With the know-how of the settled farming came the requirement for linguistic adaptation. The Koch-

Rajbanshi managed successfully to make this transition to the plough and new Sanskrit based language. This language, which represents a morphological sea change from the agglutinative Bodo speeches but which retains many words from the old languages and many aspects of old phonology, is now known as Kamtapuri, Goalparia or Rajbanshi. It remains strong in North Bengal, Northern Bangladesh, and three westernmost districts of Assam inspite of official language policies and laws medium of instruction in education they do not get any favour from the government. Although it is not yet standard modern, but becoming one would not take a long if state patronage were available. This is very important as the language plays the vital role in question of the establishment of the identity.

Here we find an interesting point to note that while accepting the Hindu god and goddess and declared themselves as the Hindus as caste they kept the entry in to it open and they demanded an exit, as in Assam quite successfully, right in to the highest caste of Kalita–Kyastha who wield equal social and ritual power in the dominant Vaishnav milieu with the Brahmins. It revealed that they remained suspended between tribe and caste. Therefore the question came how they managed such position in the strong waves of social transition. It revealed from my study that the first and foremost reason for such unique resistance was the retention of the state power over centuries. The Brahminical forces had to moderate their proselytizing in the face of a political power which negated any subaltern status. To retain this power it was needed to mobilise the tribal solidarity. Such needed solidarity prevented the chiefs to take the usual technique to converting the chiefs and elevating him and his lineage to a high caste status and then the trickling down of the caste medicine to the populace below and trapping them into subalternity. (Nandy 1997).The requirement of solidarity prevented the ruling group from taking their supposed differentiation from the rest too seriously. So, even when the rulers in Cooch Behar at the time of Buchanan-Hamilton were highly sensitive about their Koch background and wanted to be known only as Rajbanshis, they had not and could not differentiate themselves ritually from their tribal folk inspite of Brahmin incitement to do so for a long time.

Griersion summed up this process "There can be little doubt that the original Koch was the same as the Bodos. The Koch, Mecch, and Bara or Bodoal connoted the same tribe or at most different sects of the same tribe. The name Koch in fact connotes a Hinduised Bodo who has abandoned his ancestral religion for Hinduism and ancestral Bodo Language for Bengali or Assamese. Rajbanshis are the Hinduised Koch of Rangpur and Goalpara" (Grierson1927: 95).

Biswa Sing became the patron of Hinduism and rebuilt the holy Kamakhya temple. He imported and supported many Brahmins. His son, King Naranaryan was the patron of Sankardev and maintained him. But in this phase of sanskritization the interaction largely remained confined to the tribal chiefs and with the Brahmins busily providing respectable lineages to the rulers.

It is also found in my study of the social transformation of the Koch–Rajbanshi community that the entry in to Koch status was not a one–shot–affair. There were stages in the process as evidence by the different subdivisions of the Koch enumerated in the 1891Census. There were Madahi, Sarania, Heremia, Saru and Bar Koch. Each steps up the Koch ladder requires the upper group to give a daughter in marriage to the next lower for the latter to rise in status for example, in the eastern part of our area, the Bar Koch may and do rise into the Kalita status by the same mechanism.

8.10 THE KOCHES AS A CASTE

It needed to search this answer because there is not only the difference of opinion but a conflict between the two groups of Koch- Rajbanshi community surfaced in question whether the Koch and the Rajbanshi are the same caste in their origin. While one school of thoughts under the leadership of Dharma Naryan Burman claimed that the Rajbanshi and the Koch are different in origin, the Rajbanshi being the Kshatriya in their origin they cannot be placed with the same seat of the Koch. On the other hand, another school of thoughts like Prof. Girija Shankar Roy strongly believed that Rajbanshi and Koch are the same in their origin.

The consolidation of the British power in this region brought about change of the whole situation. It eroded the political power and autonomy of these people and radically altered the social equilibrium. The introduction of the market forces destroyed the natural economy in terms of which they entered settled agriculture and they lost political power which once one of the main instrument for their resistance to total subordination in the caste hierarchy.

The introduction of the zamindari, English education and birth in the administration helped to establish upper-caste (Bengal and Assames) nationality which in turn strengthened sanskritization. The movement of the 1920s and 1930s in Assam and Bengal essentially challenged the hegemony of the upper caste, though in opposite ways. In Assam the Shankaradeva Sangha and the Haridhaniyas were ideologically committed to the anti–Brahminism and initiated many movements challenging the Brahminical hegemony. On the other hand, the Koch–Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Rangpur initiated their movement under the leadership of Thakur Panchanan Burman and the Rajbanshi–Kshatriya Samaj demanding the status of the twice born. They donned the sacred thread and got the Brahmins of Calcutta, Nabadwip and even Benaras to legitimize their claim. But this very Brahmin refused to administer to these people.

Neither the movement of the Shankardev Sangha and the Rajbanshi-Kshatriya Samaj could ensure equality of status. They were categorized in Bengal as the Scheduled Castes and in Assam they have been classified along with OBCs.

The reality, however, is that they were not a caste in the accepted sense of the term nor they have remained a tribe. They also perceive this ambiguous status of theirs. Their movement also reflects this perception. The movement for a separate state of Uttarakhand and Kamtapur including the six districts of North Bengal and recently the Greater Cooch Behar comprising Goalpara in addition to the six districts of North Bengal, the demand for the recognition of their language, kamtapuri / Rajbanshi are all indication of a nascent nationality consciousness.

8.11 ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Our country like many of the developing countries was the colony of the British ruler having plural societies. The territories were the conglomeration of various ethnic communities. When the colonial masters exploited these territories the ethnic communities' native to these colonized territories joined hand together to rout out the exploiters. The anti imperialist drive was based mainly on the slogan of self–determination and they were able to push out the imperialist power from their territories. The receding colonialist left these territorial dispensations with hard and defended borders. These borders were not the outcome of the painstaking efforts of geographers or demographers but were the result of geo-strategic and politico-economic consideration of the colonial masters. So nation- state in major part of the world did not come into existence through process of historical evolution as in case of Europe. Our country is no exception.

8.12 NATION BUILDING PROGRESS

Our country as in other newly independent states is ethnically heterogeneous but mostly they are being administered with central administrative set up. The resources being meagre at their disposal, they have been unable to meet the aspiration and demands of people within their boundaries. Unable to get their demands fulfilled the minority ethnic groups comprising these states think to get themselves acknowledged through their ethnic communities to get justice and fulfil their aspirations. The inability of the state elite to fulfil their developmental need has led to the decline in state authority. This affected the process of state sponsored nationalism adversely. Ethnic identities of minority are questioned quite often due to which they feel alienated and threatened because the majority fails to accept them as separate groups. Most of the developing countries being heterogeneous in their composition the colonial power during their colonial rule dealt differently with certain ethnic groups according to their convenience. Some of the groups were advantageous position in comparison to others. The exit of colonialists deprived most of these groups the privilege and special treatment to which they were accustomed. In post–colonial setup these privileged groups not only lost their privileges but also had to face a situation of deprivation. In an effort to resist the state they mobilized their groups reminding the memories of lost territory or independent or state of pre dominance invoking suitable periods of history (Singh 2008).

The history of the Koch-Rajbanshi collaborate the statement. The Kamtapur state or the greater Cooch-Behar demand placed the history of the Koch dynasty and their glorious past. Here the condition of the relative political deprivation and economic discrimination became the rallying point in ethnic identity of the Koch–Rajbanshi for their consciousness and mobilization.

8.13 EFFECT OF MOBILIZATION

The processes of industrialization, urbanization and spread of education has failed to integrate diverse minorities in contrast to European countries where in states were built and nation consolidated before societies were modernized. On the other hand, it had formed the basis of cultural awareness and identity consciousness. For the purpose of mobilization of ethnic groups by minority ethnic elite various factors are taken into account but language, religion and politics are the critical factors that are used to build political identities. Through these factors minority's emotional as well as psychological elements are aroused and exploited in the masses comprising it. As a political force, when ethnicity has taken reins of political manipulation it has mobilized the groups against state nationalism and its integrative policy. This type of reactive nationalism had been the result of not only uneven development or distinctive culture of peripheral communities, but also emergence of a political leadership. The leadership mobilized support by employing a nationalistic ideology depicting the peripheral regional ethnic community as potential nation (Singh 2008).

Ethnic community promises individual the justice and equality in political, economic and social spheres, which is supposed to be denied under the existing social condition. The articulation of demands with threat to identity in terms of culture, language, religion, etc. had ultimately pushed the movement for fulfilment of their ethno-regional demands into secessionist movements as it happened in Bangladesh in Pakistan. The emotional factors are attached with particular geographical region or area which culminates into the demand for separate state.

8.14 ATTITUDE OF THE STATE

The ethnic unrest not only rocking the soil of North Bengal but the similar unrest is felt throughout the different parts of the country. The Indian state had often questioned separate ethnic existence of minority groups while ignoring their demands. This has generated a type of urge in them for their identity furtherance and thrust on its exclusivity. Had the state followed a proper of nation building, rather than state building, a common identity could perhaps have emerged as its identity (Sing 2008) in addition to that the coercive attitude of the centre, the inability of delivering justice even on genuine grounds by the state system, all these factors collectively have been responsible for simmering of volcanic type of feelings against the state giving rise to ethnic movement.

The uneven development had resulted in inequality in sharing the fruits or development due to which certain groups or regions are at the receiving end. Due to this discrimination and deprivation these ethnic groups are being alienated from the national mainstream, indulged in a type of political strangulation perceiving themselves as 'internal colonies' (Singh 2008).

In case of North Bengal we find the picture during our study which more or less echoed the same voice. The natural resources of North Bengal are not used for the development of this area. The owners of the tea estate are outsider. They are earning profit but not investing any money for the local development. Wealth of forest is reaped by the government but they are South Bengal bound. Not a single wood based project has been taken in North Bengal. The newly emerged educated middle class expressed their discontentment regarding the domination of the intellectuals of Kolkata over them. For example, there is North Bengal University at Siliguri but till now no 'son of the soil' has adorned the chair of its Vice-Chancellor. Even the interviews for the recruitment of teachers and officers are held in the University's Kolkata office.

Fig: 8.14.1   Once landlord, now vegetable seller on the footpath.

This uneven distribution both in economical and social sectors created a serious discontentment not only among the Koch-Rajbanshi but many of the members of other community also showed their anguish and discontentment and joined hands with the movement for greater regional autonomy. I met a group of students of North Bengal University .They belonged to the Bengali community. But in reply to my question they surprised me with their answer saying that they would support the regional autonomy as they think, that the whole of North Bengal is a colony of Kolkata and if they get the autonomy and have the right to administer the area they would enjoy the privilege as the people of a very small state like Sikkim enjoy.

I made search over this sentiment and found that it has the long roots in the social and cultural background beside the uneven distribution of progress. West Bengal still one cantered state, Kolkata. Not another single city has emerged   up till now because all the projects and distribution of wealth have been concentrated in and around Kolkata. Outside Kolkata and its surrounding districts like Hooghly, Howrah, and a part of 24 Paragans and Burdwan districts are the few which got big project.

North Bengal represents about 20% of the total land area of the state and about 22% of the total population of West Bengal but not a single project has allotted on the soil of this region. 67% of the agricultural lands do not get any irrigation water.

In that context let me mention a comparative study between West Bengal and Punjab. The state of West Bengal is only one centered state Calcutta but in Punjab there is no such domination by any district or centre over the other districts. The percentages of the urban population of both the states are more or less same. In west Bengal it is 26.49% and 27.72 in Punjab. The population of the largest city of West Bengal, Kolkata was 91, 65 650 in 1981 while the population of Ludhiana, the largest town of Punjab was 6, 06,250 in the same time. It indicates that while 63.5% of the urban population of West Bengal live in Kolkata, 13.5% of the urban population live in Ludhiana. The numbers of big and small towns are increasing in Punjab with the decentralization of wealth of the states resulting more and more peoples are in a position to enjoy the civic facilities than that of West Bengal. With accumulation of resources and political power in a single centre, an authoritarian attitude is bound to form in the minds of the middle class people of the centre.

It became imperative to search about the participation of some of the people belonging to the Bengali community in the movement for Kamtapur state or autonomous status. I had to overturn the pages of history to understand this issue and could not leave it as a stray incidence. Before establishing the British rule Dacca was the principal sector for both the political and cultural affairs of Bengal.   After the coming of British Empire Calcutta became the capital of the British Kingdom and Dacca lost her importance. The middle class educated youth most of which belonged to either the big land lord known as zaminder or middle land lord called talukder had to come out to fetch their new opportunity due to the changed political situation. Many of them came to Calcutta and a large number of fortune seeker middle class youths ventured to North Bengal and Assam where the British rule offered them in the administration department of newly annexed Assam province with their kingdom and railway and tea plantation areas. The king of Cooch Behar who adopted the British administration system in his kingdom offered the same to them. They enjoyed a leading position in political and cultural field of this area. With the growing influence of Calcutta (Kolkata) they lost that position and had been suffering from an inferiority complex which ultimately provoked them to match their voice with the voice of the

kamtapur movement in the hope that would enjoy the leading position both in political and cultural field.

This is not uncommon in the history of the resent past of our country. In support of my statement I can cite the example of Assam.

Those organized caste Hindu claiming themselves as the torch bearer of the Assames literature and language came to Assam only 300- to 500 years before. Shankar Deb came to Assam 500 years ago. He was originally a Bengali and came from Sylhet. The legendary personality of Assam, Raibahadur Kanak lal Barua was originally a Bengali belonged to Sushni Kayastha of Bengal. In an interview Hemen Bargohangi, journalist cum writers of Assamese language told that many of the leaders of the Assames ethnic movement originally Bengali in origin came to Assam some 200 to 300 years back.

As I have said earlier that the disparity of the distribution of the wealth of the state is the breeding ground of the separatist movement. Let see the economic distribution position towards North Bengal at a glance .I have gone through the statement of IDBI(1990) where it said that the share of the region in the IDBIs 'Refinance Assistance sanctioned to the state of West Bengal has varied marginally. As a percentage of assistance flowing to the backward region of West Bengal, North Bengal's sharer has been decline from 26% to 18%. Again from the same source 'WBFC has assisted so far about 400 medium scale industries in the state ;about 90% of these units have come up in South Bengal, while North Bengal's share is only about 5%.

Here again, it has been seen that while the 95% of the total industrial workers of west Bengal engaged in South Bengal, North Bengal represents only 5% of them where in absence of any big and medium industry in North Bengal they all work in either SSI or unorganised small industry.

In my study this disparity in the distribution of the wealth between South and North appeared as major cause of the discontentment among the peoples of North Bengal which dragged them in to the movement to register their protest against this disparity as depicted above.

8.15 POPULATION INFLUX

In my preceding chapter I have discussed the influx of the refugee population in west Bengal. In my study it has been revealed that what the proper attention ought to have been given to judge and mitigate the problems due to the sudden influx of the population was not given by the government although it is known that it will affect the political, economical, and social condition of the areas. The incoming increased population needs house, food, cloth education, health and

means of earning. To meet these demands there was need to take different economic projects which was completely absent in case of North Bengal.

8.16 KOLKATA CENTRISM

An undercurrent we felt, that is flowing not only in the minds of the newly emerged middle class educated youth of Koch-Rajbanshi but also in the minds of the large number of the Bengali peoples against the centralised political, and cultural domination of Kolkata which may draw them into the fold of this ethnic movement as it has been seen in the case of Assam if proper care is not taken immediately.

Sailen Debnath, Professor of Alipurduar College and well known writer and author of several books belonged to Bengal community expressed his strong feelings against the dominance of Kolkata in his much published books ' *West Bengal in Doldrums'* and wrote under the caption title '*Kolkata Centrism and the Denuding of West Bengal* where he expressed his anguish with this word,' 'kolkata! Kolkata! kolkata!', there is no other state in India where people talk so much of the metropolis because they have other big cities too with all facilities; that is why they need not talk all the time of the capital city' (2009; 310) He goes on saying 'There is a pitiful sense of ego also cherished in the minds of the Bengalis since. There are people who think if they don't say they are living in Kolkata , their prestige and dignity may be in jeopardy, they may be under-estimated as uncultured rural rustic'.

Prof. Debnath is not an ordinary average educated people. He is highly learned senior professor of a collage having Post Doctoral Degree in his cap. His numbers of books are highly acclaimed by the scholars throughout the country. His anguish regarding the domination of the intellectual of Kolkata over the other districts can be taken as the index of the sentiment of the other common people of North Bengal. So the present unrest of North Bengal is not only due to the ethnic movement of a particular community i.e. Koch- Rajbanshi but it is due to the sum of the agglomeration of the discontentment of different cross section of the people of North Bengal.

8.17 THE ROLE OF THE SOCIO ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE KOCH-RAJBANSHI IN THE ETHNIC UNREST OF NORTH BENGAL

Koch-Rajbanshi has been recognised as a major Schedule Caste in North Bengal. By caste identity about 14% of people of North Bengal are Koch-Rajbanshi. The present feeling of deprivation among the Koch-Rajbanshi and their antagonistic attitude towards the other population primarily those who came as refugees could partially be understood from a comparative study of socio- economic data available from census. This study helped us to

ascertain why the Koch- Rajbanshi launched Kamtapuri - Uttarakhand movement during mid eighties demanding a separate state Kamtapur and again Greater Cooch Behar state.

This study was aimed to know the factors which prompted this movement during the mid eighties of the last century. This study took the major part of the data up to the census year 1971.

It is found that the relative proportion of the Rajbanshi to total population of North Bengal has decreased from 14.32% to 13.85 in 1971. On the other hand, the proportion of other Scheduled Caste has increased from 7% in 1951 to14% in 1971.The other scheduled caste had the highest (271%) population growth as opposed to 94% among the Rajbanshi. On socio-political consideration such a demographic change has considerable effect. This massive growth of population of other Scheduled Caste is due to the immigration from East Bengal presently known as Bangladesh. This influx of immigration ultimately led to tough competition over control of existing natural resources of North Bengal.

It was also found in my study that proportion of the urban population among the Rajbanshi was less than 1% in 1951 which was raised lazily 1.28% in 1971. It clearly indicates that the change in the way of life associated with the urbanization had been minimum in the case of the Rajbanshi.

Literacy is the index to judge the advancement of any community. It was found that the literacy rate of the Rajbanshi was only 16% in 1971 while it was 28%, 18%, and 11% among the non-Scheduled, other scheduled Caste and the Scheduled tribes respectively. It clearly indicates that the Koch–Rajbanshi was not given proper opportunity for the attainment of literacy and education which hindered their progress in socio–economic and cultural front. These are also other important factors for the present ethnic unrest as they behind in the competitive socio–economic field. This statement will be more relevant when we studied the position in case of the higher education of the Rajbanshi. In 1971 only 3% of the Rajbanshi literates were matriculate. In the urban areas only 2% of the Rajbanshi literates were graduates or post graduates. During the decade 1961-71, there was only one percent increase in the number of Rajbanshi literates holding university degree. Less than 1% of the Koch /Rajbanshi literates had degree in medicine/ engineering/agriculture etc which further shows their backwardness in the specialized professional jobs. Tea work participation rate was low among the Rajbanshi. In general field in 1971 only 27% of the Rajbanshi were workers. The corresponding percentage were 29, 30 and 34 for the no-Scheduled people, other Scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes respectively. It should be noted here, that the relative proportion workers among the Koch/ Rajbanshi has decreased from 34% in 1961 to 27% in 1971.In terms of decadal growth, there was nine percent fall in work participation rate of the Rajbanshi, In contrast, there was more than sixty four percent increase in the number of workers among the other Scheduled castes and fourteen per cent among the non scheduled people.

Among the Koch / Rajbanshi of urban areas the growth rate of workers was high being 71% and relatively better than that of the others. It indicates that there were better employment opportunities for the Koch / Rajbanshi in urban areas. But when the proportion of the urban Koch/ Rajbanshi is so small the overall economic advancement cannot be judged at all from such growing labour participation rate in urban pockets only. Moreover, this advancement confined only to class of educated–urban based Koch / Rajbanshi which is only a negligible part in proportion to the whole community.

Economically, the Koch/ Rajbanshi are dependent on primary sector. The participation rate of the Koch/ Rajbanshi was less (4%). Along with a sharp fall in the number of cultivators, there was considerable increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers among the Koch/ Rajbanshi. The substantial increase of agricultural labours among the Koch/ Rajbanshi was partly due to land alienation between 1961and 1971.

In urban areas about 59% of the Koch / Rajbanshi workers were dependent on agricultural activities. So there was little change in the means of livelihood of the Koch-Rajbanshi who were otherwise urban by their residential background. The participation of the urban Koch-Rajbanshi in service was less (19%). The corresponding percentage were 32, 28, and 38 for the no-Scheduled people, other Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively (Mukhopadhy 1995).

From the above discussion I like to draw my conclusion on the issue which I have taken for the study of my research. First of all, I like to present my observation in to the main issue around which the Koch- Rajbanshi launched social movement both before and post independent period.

By the end of the 19th century the Koch- Rajbanshi aspired to elevate their social status by claiming themselves as Kshatriya. Through the processes of Kshatriyaization they wanted to be recognized as promoted from a lower to a higher birth in the caste hierarchy in the Hindu caste system with a hope to earn greater prestige and respectability in terms of the conditions of caste system that were prevailing at that period. But a major weakness of that social mobility movement was at that time they could not make their bridge and fill the gap between the existing secular status of the Koch–Rajbanshi masses and their claimed ritual status. So when through such a mobility movement the Koch –Rajbanshi wanted to come at par with the immigrants' upper caste of this region, Kshatriyaization mainly succeeded in creating a class of urban based gentry' elites in the Koch-Rajbanshi society. The social position of the poor, Koch –Rajbanshi, however, remained unchanged because of their deplorable economic conditions, (Mukhopadhyay 1987; 30). It is therefore, despite adoption of Kshatriya status, the nature of socio –economic relationship between the Rajbanshi and the non–Rajbanshi and the rules specifying the relationship remained unaltered. Rather, this movement enlarged the gap between social strata of

the community itself as the Kshtriyization tried to make a distinction between the Koch and the Rajbanshi and the later claimed themselves as the 'Bratya Kshatriya' and denounced the Koch as the outcaste of the society denying the historical and anthropological facts that both the Koch and the Rajbanshi are the same clan originating from the same origin as depicted in the previous chapter.

Such the anomalous position of the Rajbanshi of being a Scheduled Caste on the one hand, and claim as the Kshatriya, the symbol of the higher caste of the Varna System of the Hindu caste society created a great confusion among themselves regarding their real social identity. On the one hand, the leader of the Kshatriyahood movement claimed that they belonged to higher birth caste being named as the Bratya Kshatriya in the caste division of the Hindu Society and in the other hand, they included themselves in the list of Scheduled Caste meaning voluntarily branded as backward low caste hierarchy just to avail the certain privileges which were meant for the backward and low caste peoples in the caste based society of the Hindu society.

After the introduction of the various development programmes for the scheduled caste in different Five Years Plans the overall socio-economic condition of the Koch–Rajbanshi remain almost as same as an even worse than it before. Rather, it was found in our study the economic condition of the Koch- Rajbanshi are relatively backward than the people belonging to other social groups. This backwardness, prevailing for long years ultimately enunciated a feeling of relative deprivation among the Koch-Rajbanshi. Their discontentment had been accumulated throughout the years but the policy makers of the state did not bother to look in to the matter and never tried to eliminate this discontentment taking in to the consideration of their special position before the merger of the Koch kingdom with West Bengal. Kamtapur–Uttarakhand movement was obviously an ultimate manifestation of this discontent.

It should bear in mind that the unprecedented influx of the Bengali Refugees in 1947 from the then East Bengal and again in 1971 from the then East Pakistan completely over ran not only the demographic position of the local people but in the same time they almost absorbed their culture , language, and economic means throwing them in to the wallow of misery which completely brought about the significant change in the population structure of this region and effected the emotion and sentiment of the minority community under the changed situation. So they began to feel that this large immigration of refugees has resulted not only the case of their economic misery and hardship but also their ethnic identity as a group of people like others.

We have already discussed the fact in our previous chapter that, since independence the relative proportion of the Koch-Rajbanshi to total population as well as the Scheduled Caste population of North Bengal has decreased considerably. At the same time, mostly due to immigration, there was phenomenal growth of scheduled caste (other than the Rajbanshi) population in northern part of West Bengal. The non scheduled population also grew at a higher

rate. Here it is important to note that the Kamtapur-Uttarakhand movement were basically the result of the clash of interest between the indigenous Rajbanshis and the non- Rajbanshis population over the control of economic resources of the region (Mukhapadhyay 1995).

In my study it also revealed the fact that till the economic activities of the Koch–Rajbanshi were mainly restricted on agriculture as we have given a comparative data where it has been shown that up to 1971 the Koch-Rajbanshi workers did not show their interest in participating in non agricultural occupations. One of the reasons, they had their agricultural land in their hand and the other reason was behind that they had their limited chance to get absorbed in these occupation in competition with the alien population because they were true sense the son of agricultural community and could never thought any job other than the agriculture. But the influx of the immigrants completely altered the basic character of the region as the local inhabitants the Koch- Rajbanshi lost their lands in the hand of the incoming population. Uprooted from the land the Koch-Rajbanshi came to find other jobs about which they had no any idea before and naturally they were not in a position to compete with others mainly those who came as refugees from East Bengal and settled.

It is thus seen from the demand of the Uttarakhand Dal where they demanded for the reservation of jobs for the local people in state and semi state–government establishments, private farms and most remarkably for tea gardens in the Rajbanshi tract revealed the fact about their incapability to face the competition. We mentioned the demand for the reservation of work of the tea garden for the Rajbanshi community is most remarkable because during our study in tea garden areas to know the impact of the tea plantation on the Koch-Rajbanshi community we could not find a single Rajbanshi tea workers in the tea garden although the tea planters at that time tried their best to attract the local people to work as the labour in the tea garden. Finding no response from the local people the tea planters brought the labours from the tribal dominated areas of the middle part of India.

From the charter of demands of another organs of Rajbanshi community known as Kendriya Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti (KRKS) where they placed nine points charter of demands before the Prime Minister of India. Of these nine points demands we can mention four to see that were exclusively on the issues of special economic privileges and reservation of jobs for the name of the 'sons of the soil'. This is a clear indication that due to the alienation from the land they were forced to change their traditional mode of living. Those four demands are:

i) Reservation for Scheduled Caste unemployed people of North Bengal should be increased from 15% to 80% in which special quota 55% should be reserved for Rajbanshi candidates for recruitment in government and non government office of North Bengal.

ii) In order to uplift the economic status of the Rajbanshi, 55% bus route permit, industrial license to be allotted for the people of Rajbanshi community.

iii) Large scale industries should be installed in North Bengal immediately to provide employment to the landless cultivators and labourers of the Rajbanshi community.

iv) Adequate financial aids through bank loans, governments grant should be given to the unemployed Rajbanshi under self employment Scheme (KRKS 1987).

From the above demands it is clear that the Rajbanshi/Koch were not satisfied with their scope of employment in the non-agricultural sectors. They find it difficult for them to face the competition to get the employment opportunity. So they demanded more reservation for them in order to overcome this feeling of insecurity.

It is also found in our study that during the decade 1961-1971 there was sharp fall in the numbers of cultivators and large number of increase of agricultural labourers among the Rajbanshi which clearly indicates that the Rajbanshis were alienated from their land in large number.

Fig: 8.17.1   Deforestation in the name of Eco-tourism.

It is also found that the transfer of land from the hands of the Rajbanshi to others started in large scale since late nineteen century in different parts of Northern part of Wes Bengal. We have described how the big jotes (lands) were started to change hands from the Rajbanshi land owner and concentrated in the hands of the non Rajbanshi in our preceding chapter.

During the period of 1960 a new waves of the pine apple plantation started in this region which again uprooted the Rajbanshi from their agricultural land. At that time a new groups of upper middle class mainly belonged to the Bengali community and then the Marwari traders began to establish pine apple plantation without taking the consideration of the environmental and its social impact of this venture. They procured agricultural land mostly belonged to   the Rajbanshi community alluring them by offering   higher price than that of the prevailing market rate and planted the pine apple trees converting the agricultural land into the pine apple garden . The Rajbanshi farmers again became landless and within no time they spent the money what they got by selling their land and some of them employed in the pine apple garden as daily workers. As the soil of this region was not suitable for this pine apple garden it lost its fertility within a span of seven to ten years. It has two results: first of all, this land turned in to barren land with the use of more and more chemicals with the fruitless hope to gain more. Thus the entrepreneur left the land with heavy loss. Secondly, its socio economic effect has been tremendous. .The Rajbanshi community   lost their jobs on one hand, and on the other hand, they became completely land less daily labour and crowded in the turban centres like Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Islampur and other towns. Siliguri, the largest town of North Bengal is now called as the 'city of Rickshaw.' Nobody even the Siliguri   Municipal Corporation has the correct figure in their record how many number of rickshaw are there in the town. An unofficial record stated that more than forty thousand rickshaw are engaged in carrying the passengers in the town every day. From the field study it has been observed that almost all the Rickshaw pullers are now Rajbanshi replacing the Bihari rickshaw puller who were the only community who pulled the rickshaw in the town even up to the first half of the 60s.

During the course of my interview with the rickshaw pullers almost all of them told that they had their agricultural land but it was sold and spent all the money they got. Now they came to these towns for the bread and their wife who were very orthodox even during those periods now working as maid servant or the helper (jogali) of the mason which often create some kind of social tension among the Rajbanshi community.

Many Rajbanshi land owners have also lost their raiyati (occupancy) holding through mortgage or sale. This also led them to join hands with movements when they found that the organization like Uttar Khand Dal raised the demand, land which were sold due to their distress call should again be recovered as it was done in many cases of the Tribal property. The demand of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti was more aggressive as they demanded 'the Bhatias' (usually the Bengali Immigrants are called) to whom the Rajbanshi had sold his property must be thrown out from this area to accommodate the Rajbanshi Community who had sold their land in distress.

'There was demand raised by the Kendriya Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti (KRKS) in 1971 , transfer of land by the Rajbanshi since 1971 are to be return back to the transferers in free of cost introducing 'Restoration of Alienated Lands Act' and be effected on and from 1971.

8.18 <u>SUMMARY</u>

Before giving my conclusion based on the data that I have narrated in different chapters I like to give the summary of the each chapter as follows:

CHAPTER: ONE
Introduction: The problem-Conceptual Frame Work. This first chapter dealt with the objective of the research work on the ethnic unrest of North Bengal and under the valuable guidance of Dr Sushama Rohatgi, the Head of the Dept of Geography and Applied Geography of University of North Bengal according to the chapterisation as submitted in Synopsis.

CHAPTER: TWO
The region of the people: This chapter tries to give the account of the historical setting of the naming of northern part of Bengal. North Bengal as no such name has been officially recognized, still the name of North Bengal has been widely known even accepted by different official organization by naming such name. It was the epicentre of different historical events of not only during the period of puranic ages but also during the period of both middle and modern age. At present it consists of six chapters also dealt with the brief account of the Rajbanshi community, the most dominated social group of Bengal before the partition of the country. In this chapter an account of the Kshatriya movement under the leadership of Thakur Pananchanan Burman in whose name a university has been established recently has been described to make it understand its impact on the social movement of the Rajbanshi/ Koch community.

CHAPTER: THREE
Kamtapur Movement; genesis and social context: This chapter dealt with the historical account of the Kamtapur dynasty which was one of the strongest kingdoms during the period of the seventh century. This kingdom believed to be emerged as an independent political unit in the first half of the eighth century but until the fourteenth century its history remained under so many speculations. Vaskarvarban was the most known king of Kamtapur dynasty during the period of the seventh century dynasty. This chapter dealt with the historical account of those dynasties to find ethnic relation between the different ethnic communities of that period.

This chapter also dealt with the historical account of the Kshatriya Movements and the leadership of Thakur Panchanan Burman and the role of the Cooch dynasty. This chapter also tries to bring the other branches of the Cooch Dynasty in the light for discussion. The branches of this dynasty are Baikanthapur Dynasty, Panga Dynasty (Rangpur), Cachar Dynasty, Darang Dynasty, Bijani Dynasty, Beltala Dynasty.

CHAPTER   FOUR
Evolution of the Movements and the present state: *The* 'Bengali Refugees and the Immigrants of Bangladeshi' dealt with the largest refugee influx of the world following the partition of the country. This unprecedented influx of refugee's waves brought about the devastating effect over the whole of India particularly East Pakistan and West Bengal including the states of North East India. In North Bengal it not only affected the demographic pattern but it also caused a serious concern over the ethnic position of the whole of the area. This influx of the Bengali refugees not only outnumbered the Rajbanshi community but also marginalized them in question of their language and culture affecting their ethnic identity. This chapter tried to trace out its effect upon the present ethnic unrest of North Bengal.

CHAPTER FIVE
Locating Kamtapur movement among some other ethnic movements in North East India:
  Koch–Rajbanshi or Koch versus Rajbanshi? Dealt with the very question whether the Koch and the Rajbanshi are different races from the angle of their origin. This chapter analyses, not exhaustively, but through selected documents to find both the mythological as well as anthropological accounts about their origin. In order to search this question we have to cross the boundary of the area of the research study and had to go up to the extent of Tripura as this state along with the other states like Meghalaya and Assam had the feeling of loosing of their identity in the face of the incoming of the refugee influx in the respective states. The ethnicity related with the anthropological relation, so this chapter also gives an account of the athoropolgial relation between the different ethnic groups of North East India.

    Community tried to prove that their language is a dialect of Bengali. When there is no commonly accepted definition of the dialect and the standard language such claim may caused the non–issue into the issue of conflict and misunderstanding between the Koch/ Rajbanshi and the Bengali community and handed over the strong weapon in the hands of separatist thinking of the minority community.

CHAPTER SIX
Ethno linguistic Aspects of the Movements: Language and its Impact on the Movement': This chapter has been included in my study. But this is not the deviation from my proposed chapter as mentioned at the time of my submission of the synopsis. In my synopsis I mentioned factors that are responsible behind the ethnic unrest of North Bengal that would be included in my field of study. With the progress of the study we find this factor very important at the beginning for my proposed hypothesis but now appeared   one of the most important factor which   are playing vital role in the present ethnic unrest of North Bengal. Language is such a factor .This chapter dealt with role of the language in the present unrest of North Bengal. Nobody can deny the fact that language is the identity of the race. It generates the emotion and brings the unity among the community, in one hand, and promotion of the sectarianism in the feeling of one to the other on the other hand. We find the letter written by Maraja Naranarayan of Cooch Behar dynasty

addressed to the Ahom king which has been claimed by the Bengali intellectuals as the oldest prose letter (composition) of Bengali language. But the Rajbanshi community demands it as the example of Rajbanshi/ kamtapuri language. This chapter also gave the account of the history of Kamtapuri languages which we do find in the Assam Burunji.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Identity-autonomy question and the state: the Kamtapur Experience: In this chapter we provided information about the formation of the Hitasadhani sabha and its demands .This organization launched their programme for the demand of Greater Cooch Behar State. The left intellectuals ignored Hitasadhani Sabha on the plea that this organization had been sponsored by the landlords being blessed by the Royal family. But they failed to understand why the organization had enjoyed such overwhelming support from common people of the state. The mammoth gathering and the tremendous success in the election showed their popularity among the common mass. So this chapter dealt with social and economical factors behind the movement of the HitaSadhani Sabha. In the organization there were different streams, one was in favour of joining with the Dominion of Pakistan, another prefer to remain as separate states and the third one was in favour of merging with Assam. The organization ultimately lost its existence due to the inner conflict but the demands for Greater Cooch- Behar raised by it again surfaced which proves it remained in dormant state.

This chapter provides information of important incidents after independence. Among them the merger of Cooch Behar State with West Bengal is important. This merger was not an easy matter as there was strong opposition from the different sections among the Rajbanshi Community itself. The pro Pakisthani group hoisted the Pakisthani flag in support of their demand. Another section wanted to be   merged with Assam. There was a strong third force who demanded that Cooch Behar should remain as a province under Indian Territory. The other force, with support of the Bengali opted for the merger with West Bengal. The supporter for the merge with Assam province was so strong that Jawaharlal Nehru, the then the Prime Minister of India was forced to announce in the public meeting that a plebiscite will be made to decide with which province it will be merged. But ultimately the leaders of Bengal could convince the central leadership to take the decision that Cooch Behar will be a district of West Bengal. This chapter describes the impact of the separation of Goalpara from West Bengal and merger with Assam.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Summary and Conclusion: Finally I came into the conclusion chapter based on the facts that we have collected through different sources as mentioned in the proceeding chapters with my observations and suggestions.
North Bengal at present has six districts, Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch-Behar. All this points   as mentioned here clearly suggest that the ethnic unrest of North Bengal is not an isolated social phenomenon but it is a part of the social

transformation that is taking place throughout the world. It is a social issue and should be dealt with social objectives not as law and order problems .The state having state and nation – building agenda in its projected frame work perceives the demands and uprising of the ethnic minorities as anti national and secessionist. Terming it as an obstacle to the nation building processes and for strengthening national integration state had tried to counter these ethnic assertions with a heavy hand to suppress it but rarely through accommodation attitude (Sing 2008).

In case of Koch–Rajbanshi of North Bengal there is no denying fact that they have become marginalized due to the incoming influx of refugees from East Bengal and they lost not only their land but also their culture including their language. As a result of which there is a feeling of the lost of their identity. The newly emerged educated middle class among the Koch-Rajbanshi, as rule of the social science, now taking the lead in establishing their identity as distinct community taking their glorious past as means of their weapons. They were influenced by the ethnic movements of the neighbouring states and above all, the demand for Gorkha Land movement. It is the movement of the middle class aspiration that separate political geographical boundary in the name of their community as they hope that they would enjoy the economic and political privileges for their interest. The neighbouring small states Sikkim inspired them as that state has their own Secretariat where the sikkimese are getting the preference in employment. The state has their own High Court, own Public Service Commission, College Service Commission, even has the scope to fulfil the dream to become minister to administer their own political fortune.

So this movement should be looked upon as an effect of various indigenous and exogenous forces. The unrest had been the result of uneven development as mentioned in the proceeding chapter. It is also the result of the cultural domination by the Bengali by dint of their demographic majority over them. Nobody has yet to give a definition or make any correct differences between the dialects and the principal language. Ignoring this fact a section of the Bengali intellectuals described the Kamtapur / Rajbanshi language as the dialect of Bengali language inflicting wound in the sentiment of the Koch-Rajbanshi community as a whole.

If this unrest is allowed to continue in this border line part of the state it will not only aggravate the ethnic conflict but also cause a serious impact upon our national integration and security.

In view of all these problems I can see that while studying social changes it is necessary to observe the society in a comprehensive form so that I can solve these problems bringing them into the confidence across the discussion table.

In my study I find whatever may be the considerations of the small state that have been formed in different parts of our country but in case of the demand for creating a separate

Kamtapur/greater Cooch Behar state does not enjoy the support from both the objective and subjective angles. Most of the members of the Koch-Rajbanshi community agreed with this observation during the conversation that made during our field work in course of our study. But the recognition of Kamtapuri/ Rajbanshi language can be and should be given and the Bengali intellectuals should restrain to impose their egoistic view upon them in question of their language. Immediate steps should be taken to uplift their economic position taking into the consideration that Cooch Behar was not a part of West Bengal and it enjoyed as an independent status for near about 400 years before it was merged with West Bengal after independence. In the same time special steps should be taken for economic development taking it for granted that no project has yet been initiated for the vast areas of North Bengal and the unequal distribution of wealth is one of the prime cause of the discontentment among the people of North Bengal.

In short, I cannot reduce the causes of this unrest to one or two factors as no single factor leads to a transformation. I am in strong opinion that Kamtapuri and Uttarakhand movement and demand for the formation of a separate state as demanded by Uttarakhand Dal or Greater Cooch Behar State as demanded by Greater Cooch Behar People's Party cannot be the solution to mitigate the ethnic problems. Such a regional movement of separatist nature cannot be the only weapon which could successfully met all the emerging needs of the Rajbanshi leaving aside other institutional means and state intervention. But the point is unless the widening disparities between the Rajbanshis and others in the spheres of socio- economic advancement is narrowed down, this indeed is bound to generate a feeling of animosity between the locals (particularly the Rajbanshi) and the immigrants. Kamtapuri-Uttarakhand movements were an outbreak of said feeling (Mukhopadhya; 1995).

As the conclusion suggests, because of the constraints of time and resources, I have not been able to carry out a satisfactory structured and detailed analysis of the data collected through this research study. The facts presented are based on aggregative simple average and is therefore, limited in scope and content. We can perceive the emergence of certain broad features, and insight has been obtained about some areas of interest requiring more in depth study, and I hope to use the survey materials for further research.

Finally, I can say that the study of different socio-economic structures of a multi structural society does not offer a solution to the problems of that society, but merely paves the way to it. It does this not by simplifying and reducing, but by complicating and extending the front of research (Bhowmik 1981).