

Title of the Dissertation:

**Social and Political Movements of
North Bengal (1911-1969)**

The present proposed Dissertation will highlight both the major and minor Social and Political Movements of North Bengal during 1911-1969. The Social movements which emerged during this period created serious identity problem of different ethnic groups of this region. The movements though started as a social one but ended as a political one. So the Social problems were inextricably connected with the political problems. As a result the social and political movements influenced each other and finally led to the complexities of life and society of the region.

In order to get a clear picture of the problems I would like to provide a social frame of this region. At the same time, I want to highlight also the importance for the selection of the period. Because the social problems which was gradually taking place in this time virtually led to the foundation of social conflict and discontent in the closing phase of my study.

The area which I have selected for my research study is popularly known as North Bengal. Though administratively there is no place in the name. However, both the British administrators of Bengal and the Bengali literatures and historians used to describe this region as North Bengal in English and 'Uttarbanga or Uttar Bangla' in Bengali. The administrative areas which comprised North Bengal in undivided

Bengal were eight districts of Rajshahi Division. They were Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Pabna, Bagura, Maldah, Jalpaiguri; Darjeeling. Though Cooch-behar was a native state but it was also considered by the Northbengologists as a part and parcel of North Bengal during the period of my study. This geographical defined North Bengal was partitioned like Bengal during the Great partition of 1947. After the partition, practically one third of North Bengal came to India and two-third went to East-Pakistan. In my study I shall actually concentrate my major attention to that part of North Bengal which was in India at the time of the partition.

In regard to the period I would like to say something because the beginning and ending phase of the study was very much linked to the social and political events of the area of my research.

In the first place I shall explain the selection of the beginning year of the study. The year 1911 was a memorable year in the political annals of Bengal nay India. Because Bengal was re-united in 1911 but has lost the status of the capital of India. But 1911 was also an important year in the social annals of North Bengal. In this year the first caste and ethnic based social organization sprang up here. The name of the organization was 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti'. It was founded in 1911. It emerged in the canvas of North Bengal as a social organization but within a short time this organization entered into the political arena or region. Infact, since the beginning of the electoral politics particularly after the Montegu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Kshatriya Samiti has been fielded candidates in the Bengal Council Election of 1921 onwards. Since they never look back as a social organization but

asserted themselves both as social and political organization. The transformation of this social organization - 'The Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti' from a social body to a political organization created a serious problem in the political life of the region concerned. The present day political problem of the region is directly connected with the transformation of the 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti' during the period of my study. The year 1969 was also a remarkable year in the political atlas of my area of study. In this year I say the foundation of the first ethnic based political organization of the area. The name of the organization is 'The Uttrakhand Dal.' The emergence of 'Uttrakhand Dal' initiated a change in the political profile of North Bengal because this was not only an ethnic-based political organization but also an ethnic-based regional political organization. It is true that in the pre-independence period the 'All India Gorkha League' founded in 1943 in Darjeeling. It was also an ethnic and linguistic based political organization. But it was not a regional organization it started its career as an all India political body of the Gorkhas and Nepalis of different nook and corner of India.

The number of major publications on this problem is very scanty. It is true that same work have been taken up by the scholars in the pre-independence period upon the area. But in regard to the post-independence period. I do not find any major and minor publications of this problems ether in the books or monograph forms. Here I would like to draw attention to one important point. The point is that number of research academic publication on this theme is negligible. However, some non-academic researchers whom we want to say as a folk historians, have done something

on this theme though mostly, they were written in vernacular language specially in Bengal and Rajbanshis dialect.

In preparing this Dissertation, I have followed different types of Methodology. The first is traditional one and the second the modern one. In regard to the first one, I have collected materials from the State and National Archives, District Collectorate Records offices and also the oldest libraries and institutions. In regard to the second one, I have collected materials from regional institutions and persons. There will not be a lot of materials on my study in the Archives and National Libraries. So regional source materials will be used very meticulously. Apart from this, I have given much importance on oral history study; I have prepared a plan to meet with the large number of social and political celebrities of the region and interviewed them by presenting before a printed questionnaire in relation to my Dissertation work. So field study and oral history study will play an important role in the study.

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