

# Introduction

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The present proposed Dissertation will highlight both 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, ended as a political one. So the social problems were inextricably connected with the political problem. Both social and political movements influenced each other and finally led to the complexities of socio-political condition of the area.

In order to get a clear picture of the problems of the area I would like to provide a social structure of this region. At the same time I want to highlight also the importance of the selection of the period because the social problem which was gradually taking place at that time virtually led to the foundation of social conflict and discontent in the closing phase of my study. The year 1911 was a memorable year in the political annals of Bengal nay India, because Bengal was re-unified in 1911 but had lost the status of the capital of India. The year 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 emerged in the canvas of North Bengal as a social organization but within a short time this organization entered into the political arena of region. In fact, since the beginning of the election system particularly after the Montegu Chemsford reform of 1919 the Kshatriya Samiti fielded candidates in the Bengal Council election of 1921. Since they never looked back as a social organization but asserted them both as a social and political organization, this transformation of this social organization – the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti from a social body to a political organization created a serious problem in the political line 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 of North Bengal. In that year the first ethnic based political organization

named the Uttarakhand Dal was founded. The emergence of Uttarakhand 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.

### **Area of Study**

The area which I have selected for my research study is popularly known as North Bengal. The administrative areas which belong to the different area of North Bengal in undivided Bengal were the eight districts of Rajshahi division. They were Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Pabna, Bagura, Maldah, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Though Cooch-behar State was a native state, it was also considered by the people of North Bengal as a part and parcel of North Bengal. North Bengal was partitioned like Bengal during the great partition of 1947. After the partition practically one third of North Bengal belonged to India and two-third, to East Pakistan.

**Chapterization:** The whole research work is mainly divided into seven chapters.

**Chapter -1:** Mainly deals the Geo-political, social and demographic picture of North Bengal in brief, as North Bengal is a multi racial and multi lingual region.

**Chapter-2:** Generally discusses about the emergence of social organizations in two parts of North Bengal, (A) Hill North Bengal (B) Plain North Bengal. All these organizations were deeply connected with the process of socio cultural development of North Bengal.

**Chapter-3:** Provides a critical analysis about the socio-political movement of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas up to 1947. The Rajbanshis were the majority among the various races of North Bengal.

**Chapter-4:** Has been devoted to the study of post colonial administrative and political scenario of North Bengal. The year 1947 was an important landmark in the history of Bengal as well as in North Bengal. At that time the whole North Bengal was reorganized both administratively and politically.

**Chapter-5:** Mainly deals some post colonial political movements namely Banga Bihar merger movement, Berubari movement and Enclave problem. All these problems particularly the Berubari movement and Enclave problem were created due to the activities of the colonial Government.

**Chapter -6:** Depicts a painful picture of the men who had come to Bengal as a result of partition of India in the year of 1947. They had no food and shelter. They had become into marginal men. They were also known as refugees. So a burning question originated regarding refugees whose wave had touched North Bengal deeply.

**Chapter-7:** Gives an overall picture about the socio-political movements of some minor ethnic communities named Santal, Rabha, Chain and organization like TASO and Chhatrishha movement. All these communities had started movement for fulfilling their own aspirations.

The conclusion is part summarizing the findings of all the seven chapters of the research. In this chapter an attempt has made to prove the entire Hypothesis which has come to my mind.

### **Review of Existing Literature**

The number of major publications on this problem is very scanty. It is true that some works have been taken by the scholars upon the pre-independence period of the area. But with regard to the post-independence period I do not find any publication on this problem either in the book or monograph form. 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, I am giving the names of some books and, Thesis papers upon the period of my study.

**1. Caste, Society and politics in India by Sushan Baily, 2001:** In this book Sushan Baily explores the emergence of the ideas, experiences and practices which gave rise to the so-called ‘caste-society’ from the pre-colonial period to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**2. Social and Political Tension in North Bengal since 1947 (edi) by Dr. Sailen**

**Debnath-2007:** The book is a compilation of articles authored by eminent personalities. It contains the information and analysis on the Social and Political Movements in North Bengal since the attainment of independence in 1947. The authors have tried their best to bring into light the causal connections of the origins and developments of different movements and insurgencies vis-a-vis the role of the Government either in Kolkata or Delhi.

**3. Studies in Micro History: Political movements in some parts of India and Bangladesh (1857-1947) by Maloy Sankar Bhattacharya -2007:**

The book deals about the political and economic impact of the expansion of the British Empire, the spread of western education and modern communication systems, among other things, brought about significant changes in the life of the people evoking popular response which at times took the shape of the political agitation in due course.

**4. Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri (1869-1947) by Ranjit**

**Dasgupta-1992:** The book is an authentic study of the economic, social and political changes in Jalpaiguri district (North Bengal) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**5. Caste, Politics and the Raj (1872-1937) by Sekhar Bandhopadhyay -1990:**

The book explores the attitude of certain lower castes to Nationalist Movement in Bengal. It also shows that their aspirations were not accommodated within the mainstream of Nationalist Politics.

**6. Dynamics of Caste Movement:-The Rajbanshis of North Bengal (1910-1947) by Swaraj Basu, 2003:**

In this book the author deals about the sincere attempts of the Rajbanshis to establish themselves as Kshatriyas, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal.

**7. The Marginal Men by Prafulla kumar Chakraborty-1910:**

The book discusses about the history of the refugees coming from East Pakistan and their impact on the politics of West Bengal. The book also deals about what way the refugees had rehabilitated themselves occupying land by force, violating Government order.

**8. States and politics in India by Partha Chatterjee 1999:** The book is the combination of fifteen land mark essays that collectively presents an overall view of Indian politics. The essays analyze India's major political Institutions among other judiciary, bureaucracy and the party system and also possess domination and resistance that have been under way during fifty years of independence.

**10. Gorkhaland Movement - A study in ethnic separatism by Amiya Kumar Samanta- 2000:** The book discusses about the activities of the G.N.L.F (Gorkha National Liberation Front) and their gradual attempt to create a separate land i.e. Gorkha land in Darjeeling district.

**11. Caste, Class and Politics by Anil Bhatt- 1975,** the book is an empirical profile of social stratification in modern India. The author gives authentic account of stratified society of modern India.

**12. Caste in Indian Politics (edi) by Rajani Kothari-1970:** This book covers details of caste movement in Gujrat and Tamilnadu both from historical and theoretical perspectives. It also considers caste political movements in Rajasthan, Andhra and also in urban areas of Pune and Agra.

**13. Caste, Caste conflict and reservation by I.P.Desai-1985:** The book is a study of an Anti-untouchability movements of the Mahar of Maharashtra. The Mahar was called 'Dalit' in society.

**14. The Rajbanshis of North Bengal by Charu Chandra Sanyal-1965:** The book deals about the character, life and culture of the Rajbanshis living in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar.

**15. History of All India Gorkha League (1943-1947) by Bhai Nehar Singh and Kirpal Singh (edi):** The book gives some original documents which clearly indicate the purpose and motive of establishing A.I.G.L in Darjeeling district.

**16. Caste, Protest and identity in colonial India - The Namasudras of Bengal (1872-1947) by Shekhar Banerjee, 2011:** The book presents a curious case for being the largest Hindu caste group in Bengal and a census defined community in 1872. They disintegrated after the partition of India in 1947.

**17. Rajbanshi kshatriya Jatir Itihas- by Upendra Nath Barman- Jalpaiguri, 1966:** This is a book written in Bengali. The book deals about the history of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas critically.

**18. Nationalist Movement and Freedom Struggle in some selected area of Northern Bengal-N.B.U, 1986:** by Maloy Shankar Bhattacharya. In this Thesis paper, Dr. Bhattacharya throws light from the bondage of the British in some selected areas of Northern Bengal such as, Maldah, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar etc.

**19. The Dynamics of Social Mobility Movements among the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Assam-C,U,1976 by Biman Das Gupta:** This Thesis paper deals about the life and culture of the Rajbanshis and their movement for Kshatriya status in North Bengal and Assam.

**20. Ethno- Political Aspects of Regional Movements- N.B.U, 1997- D.N. Das:** In this Dissertation Dr. Das has discussed about the background and origin and development of the Regional Movement in the context of U.K.D (Uttara Khanda Dal).

**21. Protest Movements and the Political Process:- A Study of their implications, in Contemporary Indian Politics- N.B.U, 1998 by Srinanda Dasgupta:** This Thesis paper of Dr. Dasgupta deals about Protest Movements in different parts of India such as Gorkhaland Movement (Darjeeling), Kamtapur Peoples' Party's movement for a separate State of Kamtapur backward Castes movements in Punjab, Bihar, Gujrat and Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and women's movement for equality, liberation in Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Kerala.

It is evident from the above review that no author and researcher wrote any book or thesis paper on my theme. Someone has discussed about social and political movements with regards to India, someone has discussed about the political problems of North Bengal partly. Again some researchers have touched North Bengal partly. Therefore, it can be anticipated that the proposed study would be able to ventilate the social and political movements of North Bengal during 1911-1969.

## **Hypothesis**

The first major hypothesis which have come to my mind is that North Bengal is the origin of connection between North-Eastern India and Aryabarta. It is the gateway to North Eastern India. Due to this particular geographical location there was an advent of people of various regions here. There was not such arrival of new settlers to any other area like Uttar Banga. The new settlers came here and had transformed into local people. This is the main feature of demography of North Bengal.

The second major Hypothesis that pre-occupied my mind is owing to the development of Western education and culture a large number of social organization grew in different parts of north Bengal 1) Hill North Bengal and 2) Plain North Bengal. There was a micro difference between the organizations of Hill and plain North Bengal. For example, in Darjeeling Hill men's Union belonged to Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha races. They wanted to form a breach between the hill people and the plain's people with regards to political, ethnic and cultural grounds. In 1917 Hill men's Association was formed. Their activities had paved the way for the emergence of an ethnic political party named A.I.G.L. It started its career as an all India political body of the Gorkhas and Nepalis of the different nook and corner in India. But in plain North Bengal (Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Maldah, Cooch-behar) I do not find such type of this organization.

3. The third major Hypothesis is that the social structure and demographic pattern and cultural milieu of the area concerned are different from the rest of Bengal. The largest native settler of the region is the Rajbanshis Kshatriya. The paradox is that in the social structure of Bengal the Kshatriya caste did not exist. But the Rajbanshi claimed the Kshatriya status. Naturally it created a socio-psychological status conflict between the Rajbanshi Kshatriya on the one hand and the upper caste of the area.

4. The fourth major Hypothesis which came to my mind is that the year 1947 was an important land mark in the history of India. In that year India was partitioned. Side by side, North Bengal as a part and parcel of Bengal was re-organized both

administratively and politically. Consequently, a large number of problems gathered momentum like Barubari movement and Chhitmahal problems.

5. The fifth major Hypothesis is that in 1955 the S.R.C was formed to reorganize in West Bengal. Among the recommendations of the commission, one was the merger of Banga with Bihar. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy- the then Chief minister of Bengal and Sri Krishna Sinha – the then Chief minister of Bihar supported it for administrative and communicative facilities. The people of Bengal started anti-merger movement in 1956 and became successful.

Side by side the problem of Berubari and Chhitmahals - both are the major problems, according to me. They are peculiar geo-political problems of my area of study. Recently, an attempt has been made to solve these problems but these problems are not totally solved.

The sixth major Hypothesis that has come to my mind is that there was a strong background during colonial period which created communal feelings between the Hindus and Muslim. In a word, the Britishers had shown the seed of Refugee problem or Migration problem. The refugees had come from Pakistan to Bengal. But the Govt. failed to give them adequate shelter. So the refugees forcibly occupied land and formed colonies in Bengal, whose wave had touched North Bengal also.

The seventh major Hypothesis is that North Bengal was the habitat of different backward classes. These classes were exploited and oppressed by upper classes. So they were compelled to start movement for fulfilling their hope and aspirations. Among the backward classes, mention must be made of Santal, Rabha, Chain, Chhatrishha and Taso.

Lastly, in conclusion I have tried to solve all my hypothetical issues with regard to my research work.

## **Methodology**

In preparing this dissertation, I have followed different types of materials. The first is a traditional one and the second, the modern one. In regard to the first one, I have collected materials from the State Archives of India, National Library, District Collectorate Record Office and also the oldest libraries and Institutions. In regard to the second one I have collected materials from regional Institutions and persons. Apart from this I have given much importance on oral history study. Actually, I have left no stone unturned to give vent to my pent-up feelings by using every atom of my stamina to fulfil my long-cherished dream and aspiration. With this end in view, I, untiringly ran from pillar to post to meet a huge number of social and political luminaries of the region and interviewed them by presenting before them a printed questionnaire in respect of my Dissertation work. That's why; both field study and oral history study have played a dominant but significant role in the Dissertation work.