

Conclusion

The present study is the first ever attempt to analyze historically the origin, growth and decline of the Uttarkhanda Dal in the academic field. Therefore, it has explored many virgin and untouched areas of the subject under review. Though the scholars, historians and social scientists have attempted academic discourse on the Noxalite movements of the 60s, Gorkha land movement of the 80s of the last century, occurred in northern part of North Bengal of West Bengal but unfortunately a very little study has been made on the Uttarkhanda Dal and its movements by the academicians. A few scholars have attempted to discuss the Kamotapuri movement organized by the K.P.P. but without attempting to find out the root of that movement. In fact, the Kamotapuri movement was started by the U.K.D. for the first time in the region of our study nay in West Bengal in the 80s of the last century. Therefore, without analyzing the history of the origin and growth of the U.K.D., any discussion on the Kamotapuri statehood movement remains incomplete. But the history of the origin and growth of the U.K.D. is completely an untouched area of historical research. Considering this, the present study has attempted to analyse critically and historically the present theme.

It is well known to the scholars, historians, political and social scientists that the development of the regionalism or sub regionalism and the socio-political movements of the marginal ethnic group of people and thereby the emergence of numerous regional and sub regional political parties had become a general phenomenon in the post independence political scenario of India. The regional aspiration, the socio-political aspiration of the small ethnic group of people, regional and sub regional socio-economic and political disparity, the scholar generally argue, work well behind such development of regionalism. Scholars like Shekar Bandopadhyaya argue that the main reasons of such regional or sub-regional movements, generally organized by an ethnic group of people or scheduled caste group are because of their socio-political and economic deprivation for a long period of time and also because of the domination of the upper caste people (Shekhar Bandhopadhyay- *Jat Pater Rajniti, Paschat Pat*, in Bengali, published in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a popular Daily published from W.B. Date-27.02.2014). The formation of the Uttarkhanda Dal, a regional

political party, by a section of Rajbanshi people, a major ethnic group of people of North Bengal of West Bengal and the main theme of our study was not exception to the aforesaid development in post independence India. In fact, the genesis and development of the most of the socio-political movements and regional political parties in the post independence period had their historical roots in the colonial period for variety of reasons. Likewise the Uttarkhanda Dal and its movement for all round development of the region under review which was directed against the then Govt. of West Bengal and later its movement for a separate state of Kamotapur comprising the then five districts of North Bengal had also its historical root in the colonial period. It is historically evident that the political consciousness among various small ethnic groups and communities of India was created by the caste mobility movements organized during the colonial period. This political consciousness based on caste mobility movements, in fact, became almost irrelevant in the post independence period because such political consciousness then was well connected with the national politics.

Keeping the above stated explanation in view it has been explored in the present work that the Uttarkhand Dal was born from the wombs of the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* in the late 60s of the last century. In fact, the Rajbanshi community was started uniting socially to maintain their ethnic identity from the last decade of the Nineteenth Century and the process of this social dynamism took a final shape with the formation of the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* in May 1910 in Rangpur, the heart of Rajbanshi culture in undivided Bengal. It has been shown in chapter-I that the Rajbanshis constituted the most predominant section of the local Hindu population in northern districts of British Bengal. Numerically they were the third largest Hindu caste in Bengal as a whole. The 1921 census report shows that about 89 percent of this caste population lived in the districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar (Cooch Behar, the native state of British India) of undivided North Bengal. However, though the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* was formed as a social organization, but with the passage of time it changed its outlook and activities and decided to involve itself in electoral politics after 1920 onwards when the Bengal Legislative Council was formed by the Montego- Chemsford Reform Act of 1919. Since then the *Samiti* contested the Council elections of 1920 and 1929 and the Assembly elections of 1937 and 1946. Such a shift on the

part of the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* has been described by M.N. Srinibas as “the actual shift in emphasis being from acquiring the symbol of status to the real sources of high status i.e. political power, economic power and education.” The *Kshatriya Samiti* got tremendous electoral success in the Rajbanshi inhabited constituencies of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur till 1937. However, in the post 1937 era especially after the demise of Panchanan Barma, the undisputed leader of the *Kshatriya Samiti*, there was a marked change in the political attitude of the leaders of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. Thus it was seen in the election of 1946 that most of the leaders of the Samiti engaged in confrontation and contention for filing nomination as candidates of the *Kshatriya Samiti*. As a result, some Rajbanshi leaders of the Samiti switched over their allegiance to other national political parties especially to Indian National Congress and were elected. As a sequence of such development only one *Kshatriya Samiti* candidate was elected from Rangpur in the election of 1946. Thus the *Kshatriya Samiti* once a strong and powerful organization of the Rajbanshi community in undivided North Bengal and which challenged the national political parties now started disintegrating in post 1937 era. It is argued that the death of veteran leader Panchanan Barma must have an impact on the disintegration of the *Kshatriya Samiti*.

In the post independence era, the *Kshatriya Samiti* lost its earlier vigour and spirit due to the partition of 1947 both in respect of social and political activities. The obvious reason was that Rangpur, the stronghold and birth place of *Kshatriya Samiti* went to the erstwhile East Pakistan as a result of the partition and that was a severe blow to the socio-political activities of the *Samiti*. In divided North Bengal in post independence period, it was found that the fore front leaders of the *Kshatriya Samiti* like Upendra Nath Barman joined Indian National Congress and became a member of the Constituent Assembly. In fact, the *Kshatriya Samiti* in post independence period leaving aside the political issues and activities it was again transformed into a social organization what it was in the beginning phase. This changed attitude and objectives of the *Kshatriya Samiti* in the post independence period created internal feud among the leaders of the *Samiti*. This internal feud and other numerous adverse socio-economic changes in the post colonial period as a result of the influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan after partition and the abolition of *Zamindari* and *Jotedari* system in 1953 and Land Reform Act of 1955 led a section of educated youth of the *Kshatriya Samiti* to

contemplate over forming a political organization of their own and the same was formed in a meeting of the *Kshatriya Samiti* in July 1969 at Thakurpat of Dhupguri of Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal.

Another important area of our exploration is that the Uttarkhanda Dal had never raised the demand for a separate state of Kamotapur with its very foundation. The prevalent conception of all the scholars, historians and social scientists are that the Uttarkhanda Dal was formed just to raise the demand for separate state of Kamotapur. But the present study has proved this conception wrong in toto. Consulting critically the first party resolution, party programmes, activities and other documents hitherto unearthed and untouched, it has been found that nowhere in those documents was mentioned the demand for a separate state of Kamotapur before May 1980. However, the idea of raising the demand for a separate state of Kmotapur arose in their minds when they began to search for their own political identity in late 70s of the twentieth century after being denied by the Govt. of West Bengal to fulfill their regional and ethnic aspiration and also the contemporary statehood movements of other regional political parties of India especially of Eastern and North Eastern India had also great impact on the statehood demand of the U.K.D.

In order to understand vividly the attitude of the Uttarkhanda Dal, the present study has critically examined and explained the periodical changes of the aims, objectives and activities of the Dal with the changing political scenario of all India regional politics. Accordingly, the activities of the U.K.D. have been discussed into two phases---the first phase from 1969 to 1979 and the second phase from 1980 till its final split and decline. In these two phases two different characteristics of the aims and objectives of the Dal were manifested. In the first phase, the Dal appealed time and again to the State Govt. for the socio-economic development of North Bengal and the Dal also demanded the maximum job reservation for the indigenous people in various official posts of both the State and Central govt. in North Bengal and also in various policy making bodies especially with regards to North Bengal, so that the local people might have participated in the developmental works of North Bengal. The Dal always blamed the Calcutta centric leadership for the backwardness of North Bengal and uneven distribution of wealth and distribution of vested lands to the non-Rajbanshi landless people especially those who were migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan

as refugees. But when all these grievances of the Dal were ignored by both the Central and State Govt. they began to contemplate about the creation of a separate state within the framework of Indian constitution for the indigenous people of North Bengal. Thus the indifferent attitude of the State Govt. towards the development of North Bengal was responsible to a large extent for changing the attitude of the leadership of the U.K.D. and thereby raising the demand for a separate state of Kamotapur. But at the same time we cannot ignore the influence of various statehood movements, organized by other regional political parties of India especially of Eastern and North- Eastern India, for example, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) of Bihar and Gorkha National Liberation Front (G.N.L.F.) of Darjeeling. Thus it has been shown in the present work that the aforesaid immediate factors led the U.K.D. to raise the demand for a separate state of Kamotapur for the all round development of the people of North Bengal in May 1980.

Again it has been shown that with the demand for a separate state of North Bengal, the nature of activities of the Dal had been radically changed. Now the Dal raised the issues like the recognition of Kamotapuri language, the expulsion of the foreigners from the soil of North Bengal who settled here after 1971 along with the previous issues raised by the Dal. In this phase of the movement of the Dal, the socio-political tension had been increased to a great extent in the region of our study. This time we found the response of the govt. but that was not positive one. With regard to the demand of the Kamotapuri language it has been noticed that the Dal decided to use the linguistic provision for the creation of a separate state, recommended by the S.R.C. in its report in Oct. 1953. It has been unearthed that before 1980 the Dal termed the language spoken by the indigenous people as Rajbanshi language but after 1980 it changed the nomenclature of the language and it was termed as Kamotapuri. The leadership of the U.K.D. argued that this language was not only the mother tongue of the people of the Rajbanshi community alone living in North Bengal, but a large number of local muslims (*Nashya-Seikh*), Jugis and the people of some other communities regard it as their mother tongue. Therefore, the nomenclature of the language was to be termed as Kamotapuri and the state on the basis of this linguistic group of people was to be named Kamotapur. Thus the U.K.D. wanted to make a ground that at least linguistically there was a significant ground to demand a separate state for the indigenous people of North Bengal. However, the debate

on the nomenclature of the language is still going on among the leaders of the K.P.P. and the intellectuals of the Rajbanshi community itself.

Another important and very interesting measure, the U.K.D. adopted to keep its supporters loyal to the Dal was the religious pledge which was to be taken by the activists and the supporters of the Dal. It was the oath of unconditional allegiance to the Dal and commitment to the demand of the separate state of Kamotapur. In this oath taking programme it is evident that not only the supporters and activists of the Rajbanshi Hindu but also the muslim supporters though in small number took oath in the name of “Iswar” and “Allah” respectively to dedicate themselves for the cause of acquiring “Kamotapur State”. Thus the leadership of the Dal made desperate effort to keep their activists and supporters under control exploiting their religious sentiment in the teeth of a strong presence of the national parties especially the left parties such as C.P.I.(M.), F.B., C.P.I. etc in the region. It was only after carrying out such oath taking programme that the think tanks of the Dal decided to lead the movement gradually towards violent direction. The obvious intention of the leadership of the Dal was to draw the attention of both the Central and State Govt. to their demands through violent and forceful manner following the example of A.G.P., J.M.M, G.N.L.F. etc. Therefore, the Dal took the decision of *Rail Rokho* programme to intensify its movement in January 1987. The *Rail Rokho* programme at Altagram Railway Station of Dhupguri Block of Jalpaiguri district was so volatile that the police compelled to open firing of fifteen rounds and as a result two agitators were killed on the spot. But it was the last flicker of the lamp before its extinguishment, because after this *Rail Rokho* programme and the death of these two activists created a dissension among the leaders of the party which ultimately led its final split and thereafter drifted towards rapid decline.

The present study has also measured the support base of the U.K.D. from the beginning of its formation to its final split as an ethnic based regional political party explaining critically the election results of both Parliamentary and State Assembly election so far as the Dal fielded its candidates from 1971 to 1984. If the election results are taken as a barometer for gauging the support base of a political party, it is a fact that the U.K.D. had no any solid support base in any level during the whole period of its electoral politics. If we take the example of the election result of Jalpaiguri parliamentary seat, the strong hold of the

U.K.D. to some extent, it is found that in the Lok Sabha election of 1971 the U.K.D. candidate secured only 3.84 percent, in 1977 secured 1.67 percent, in 1980 secured 0.80 percent and in 1984 secured 1.48 percent. Thus, it is clearly revealed from the percentage of mentioned votes so far as the Dal secured in the above elections in the place of its birth that the appeal of the Dal to the indigenous people of North Bengal against Calcutta centric rule in the first phase of its movement and later its clarion call for creating separate state in North Bengal in the second phase of its movement and also the clamouring for the recognition of the Kamotapuri language were not heard of by the major section of the indigenous people even of the Rajbanshi community itself. Thus, it is vividly led us to believe that the movements initiated and organized by the U.K.D. whether through peaceful or violent manner failed to make any headway or political tension to the true sense of the term in the region under study or in West Bengal which was apparently viewed by the scholars, social scientists and also the policy makers of the Govt. of West Bengal.

Another important finding of the present work is that most of the educated youths and the rising neo-middle class from among the members of the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* who played an important part to the formation of the U.K.D. began to distance themselves for their self interest of availing of the job reservation facilities in govt. offices and in other public sectors and for getting the favour of ruling party at the cost of any kind of ethnic bond and it had no doubt weakened the supply line of leadership in the Dal.

It has also become as clear as day light that though the U.K.D. saw its decline in post 1987 era but it left surely a visible mark of separatist tendency in the mind of a section of Rajbanshi community and a glaring example of it, is the formation of a new regional political party in 1996 with the same aim of achieving a separate state of Kamotapur as that of the U.K.D. by a section of people of Rajbanshi community namely the Kamotapur Peoples' Party (KPP). Therefore, there is no doubt that the K.P.P was the true legacy of the U.K.D.

The overall study of the present theme tells us the fact that as the U.K.D. was born from the womb of *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* so the K.P.P. took the birth from the ashes of the decline of the U.K.D. Therefore, it is historically proved that the socio-political movement which was started by the *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti* under the competent

leadership of Roy Saheb Panchanan Barma in the pre independence period and later carried on by the leadership of the U.K.D. in post independence period even today it is alive and is being carried on by the K.P.P. In fact, it is a continuous historical development of the socio-political movement of an indigenous community of undivided and divided North Bengal. The said movement has only been changing its character, nature and direction from time to time in course of its developments. It would not be wrong to conclude that even today the movement is still going on and awaiting for a large scale mass response from among the people of Rajbanshi community and other autochthons of North Bengal vis-à-vis the pro-people policies and programmes as well as political measures initiated by the Govt. of West Bengal. But the fact remains that the election result in the State Assembly seats so far as the K.P.P. fielded its candidates till the Assembly election of 2011 are almost the same as it was in 1971 at the time of the U.K.D. Thus, it can be said without any reservation that the movement for a separate state of Kamotapur for the indigenous people of North Bengal organized first by the U.K.D. and then by the K.P.P. is now facing some practical difficulties to earn mass support and the same is not possible, it seems to, without the occurrence of a kind of political earthquake in the region under review.

Finally, the humble submission of the present researcher is that as the present work is a pioneering one, it has some limitations. It is the earnest hope on the part of the researcher that it would definitely help the future researchers and scholars to make further research on the subject making comparative study between the U.K.D. and other ethnic based regional political parties of India. The present study will also positively help the policy makers to adopt constructive and positive measures with regard to the socio-political movements and developments of the people of North Bengal especially to those of its northern part which are prevailing at present or may prevail in future.