

Abstract

The present dissertation theme has explained very critically the various aspects of the Uttarkhanda Dal from its very formation in 1969 to its final split in 1987. The Uttarkhanda Dal was a first regional political party, organized by a section of Rajbanshi community, a major ethnic group of people of the northern plains of West Bengal popularly known as North Bengal or *Uttarbanga*. The formation of this regional political party in post independence period and its activities especially in post 1980s because of various reasons created a socio-political tension in the region under review.

As the present theme is related with Rajbanshi ethnic group of people and their place of habitation i.e. the major portion of undivided and divided North Bengal, so the historical background of North Bengal and the ethnic identity of the people of that geographical area have been explained first very elaborately.

Next the socio-economic and political background of the origin of the Uttarkhanda Dal has been discussed. In the social background it has been shown that the foundation canvas of the U.K.D. was provided by the *Kshatriya Samiti* Movement which for the first time exposed the cause of the *Kshatriya identity* of the Rajbanshis at the end of the 19th century. In fact, the U.K.D. took its birth from the womb of the *Kshatriya Samiti*.

In the economic profile, it has been shown that the Rajbanshi people were mostly agriculturists. Therefore, the Zamindari and Jotedari Abolition Act of 1953 and the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1955, the influx of the *Namasudra* agriculturists from erstwhile East Pakistan and later from Bangladesh made adverse effects on the economy of the Rajbanshis.

In the political background, the origin of the U.K.D. has been traced back from the changing character of the socio-political activities of the *Kshatriya Samiti* especially in the post 1937 era. Apart from this, the role of the *Cooch Behar Hitasadhani Sova* has been discussed which indirectly prepared the psychological background of the leaders of the U.K.D.

With regard to the immediate circumstances which led the formation of the U.K.D. it

has been shown that a section of the educated youths of the *Kshatriya Samiti* for the first time raised the demand of a political party of their own. The veteran leaders of the *Samiti* conceded to the demand and finally the U.K.D. was formed in July 1969.

The political programmes and activities of the Dal during the entire period of our study have been discussed into two phases. In the first phase (1969-1980), the activities of the Dal were limited to the effort of bringing the socio-economic and cultural problems and backwardness of the people of North Bengal to the notice of the State Govt. However, in the second phase (1980-1987) there was a marked change in its primary goal and thereby in the nature of its activities. It raised the demand for a separate state of *Kamotapur* in the geographical area under review. It added a new dimension to the political scenario of West Bengal.

However, the result of the electoral politics of the U.K.D. shows that its all kinds of appeal to the indigenous people especially to the Rajbanshis were not heard of and it failed to make any support base at any level during the whole period of its activities.

Finally, the Uttarkhanda Dal witnessed its split in 1987 and divided into two factions due to the intra-group conflict within the party as well as for other contributory factors.

Findings are as follows.

That the U.K.D. was born in the womb of the *Kshatriya Samiti* and it had never raised the demand for a separate state of Kamotapur with its very formation.

That the indifferent attitude of both the Central and the Govt. of West Bengal towards the demand for the all round development of North Bengal, raised by the U.K.D. mainly led the latter to raise the statehood demand.

That the support base of the Dal was not solid at any level of the society of North Bengal.

That the most of the educated youths and the rising neo-middle class from among the members of the Rajbanshis did not respond well to the appeal of the U.K.D. which showed the holocaust of the ethnic bond of the Rajbanshi community itself and also stopped the

supply line of the leadership. That the U.K.D. left a separatist tendency in the mind of a section of Rajbanshi people and the Kamatapur Peoples' Party is its true legacy.

That it was a continuous historical development of the socio-political movement of an indigenous community of undivided and divided North Bengal.

That the movement for a separate state under the leadership of the K.P.P. is still going on at the low ebb and awaiting for a large scale mass response from among the indigenous people but that seems, at the present situation, to be not possible without the occurrence of a kind of political earthquake in the region under study.

Finally, our findings will help the policy makers to adopt constructive and positive measures regarding the socio-political movements and the socio-economic developments of the people of North Bengal especially to those of its northern part and thereby will help to solve not only the present problems but the problems to come in the socio-economic and political arenas of the region under study.