

CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS : IMPERATIVES OF AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Regionalism is a conspicuous phenomenon in the political scenario of the post-Independence India. Indian society is a plural society and the sub-structure on which the modern political super-structure has been built up is characterized by primordial factors. As such the process of integration and modernization during the stage of nation-building could not properly emerge encompassing all the component communities having heterogenous character. The uneven pace of modernization and resultant asymmetrical development of the different units in the plural system have given birth to tensions here and there on the body-politics at a period when the system itself is in the process of attaining maturity. Regional movements in India today, therefore, are essentially manifestations of crises of a transitional state. As such any uni-dimensional interpretation of Indian regionalism is bound to be fallacious. Regionalism in India is a multi-dimensional phenomenon having several components. The components may be various, Bharati Mukherjee says, differing from region to region and from time to time.¹ But, in the context of regional movements in the plains of North Bengal, such components may be classified as ethno-linguistic, socio-economic and political. A brief discussion of these components is given below.

Ethno-linguistic component of Regionalism

India may be called a land nearly infinite ethnic diversity. Ethnicity as a sociological concept is based on the notion that certain ethnic groups are "rooted in space."² There are three ways of defining ethnic groups in terms of objective attributes, with reference to subjective feelings, and in relation to behaviour. An objective definition assumes that though no specific attribute is invariably associated with all ethnic categories, there must be some distinguishing cultural feature that clearly separates one group of people from another, whether that feature or features be language, territory, religion, color, diet, dress, or any of them. The problem with objective definitions is that it is usually extremely difficult to determine the boundaries of ethnic categories in this way. The difficulty with subjective definitions is that they make it impossible to answer the basic question of how a group of people arrives at subjective self-consciousness in the first place. Behavioural definitions are really a form of objective definition since they assume that there are specific, concrete ways in which ethnic groups behave or do not behave, particularly in relation to and in interaction with other groups.

But, the existence of explicit codes of behavior and interaction is rather more characteristic, more all-pervasive, and more evident in simple than in complex societies in which people may establish their separateness with reference to specific attributes without adopting an entirely distinct code of behavior.³

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity, which has been defined by De Vos as consisting of the 'Subjective, symbolic or emblematic use 'by' a group of people of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.'⁴ This definition can be used for the analytic purposes required here by altering the last phrase to read 'in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups.' An ethnic group that uses cultural symbols in this way is a subjectively self-conscious community that establishes criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the group. At this point, matters of descent, birth, and a sense of kinship may become important to ethnic group members, for the methods of inclusion and exclusion into the group often involve the explicit or tacit adoption of rules of endogamy and exogamy.⁵ The identity aspirations and sense of identity have offered a new dimension to the assertiveness of ethnic groups.⁶

Sometimes, the newer themes as nativism, religious purism, tribal consciousness, indigenoussness may be taken up as identity issues. A particular group shifts its identity or asserts its distinctness, otherness as an ethnic, nation in course of age long feelings of being dominated, a sense of insecurity, and aspiration for a larger share in power. It may occur at various stages of development or mal-development. When the concerned ethnic group or community fails to articulate grievances through various levels of political parties or administration, they may resort to ethnicise, communalise the issues of their grievances. This could lead to formation of regional, nativist organisation and fronts so as to mobilise the already fermenting ethno-regional grievances.⁷ We have such examples in Kamtapuris hostility in North Bengal.

During 9 B.C. an ethnic group establishes a reign in North Bengal called as 'Komboech'. The term of 'Koch' is derived, Sunity Kumar Chatterji says, from the word of "Komboech";..... it origins from ethnic group of Bhutanese-Chinese in the one hand, this ethnic group permanently settles

in the North Western region of India....., Punjab region, in the Western region this 'Komboech' used to speak aryan language, by caste they are not Bhutanese-Chinese on the other hand.⁸ There are many examples about Koch-Rajbanshis in the Mahabharat also. It is proved as an old ethnic group of people. Practically, this ethnic group of people lives around the areas from the Western part of Assam to undivided Bengal; from the Western side of Behar to Mithila and from the Western bank of Mechi river of Nepal to the Eastern bank of Kashi river. Some one said that a big group of descendant tribal has entered into Assam first, then the North-Eastern part of India. Koch Rajbanshi is an integrate part of this group, who comes from the East.⁹ It is assumed historically, the Rajbanshi is transformed from ethnic of Koch. This all (unsuccessful invasions of Mohammed B. Bukhtiyar and other Mohammedans) goes to prove that the Koch people were a powerful caste and well versed in the art of war of those times.¹⁰ This has been touched on before, so we begin the history of the great Koch Tribe at the rise of one Shankaldip, a Koch chief, as poet Firdusi, which gave a better semblance of facts than do the legendary ideas of Bisso, whom local tradition asserts to be the founder of this dynasty. Shankaldip rose to power in the middle of the fifth century, and when Huien Tsiang visited Assam, the kingdom of Kamarupa apparently extended from the Karatoya river; near Jalpaiguri, as far as Sadiya along the North bank of the Brahmaputra, where, it seems, the Koch people lived amicably with the Chutiyas, who even then may have been deteriorating from having been once a powerful community.¹¹ This community of people is regarded as Rajbanshi, some historian says, as Mongal-Dravidian-Nigro etc. The Koch or Rajbanshi, J.A.Dass, calls as non-aryans and Mongolean people in 1911. The Koch belongs to Tamulian extraction and lived before the Aryans came, Hodgson says, "Hojos' grandson Visva Sinha became Hindu, renounced the name Koch and adopted

Rajbanshi". Braverly calls it as a Rajbanshi and Polia are the same ethnic group of people. This ethnic group is not aryan but its origins from kin of Dravidian-Bhutanese family, says Dalton. But Odennel says, "another interesting tribe is the Rajbanshi or Koch of North-Eastern Bengal, the localisation of whose racial position has long been a subject of dispute. They are however, only the third wave of Mongols who have advanced through the eastern passes the first being the Chandal, the second the Koch and the last the Aham." It assumes that this ethnic group of peoples' blood is a mixture of Dravidian - Austro - Mangolean impacts to be black or copperian. This group of people is, in nature, small eyes, straight hair, broad jaw. There are yellow and white colour people among the Rajbanshi. About this Dr. Charu Sanyal dealt with in the 'Rajbanshi of North Bengal'. In this region most of the Rajbanshis are Hindu and Sanskritized as a Kshatriya. About the Rajbanshis, A.J.Dass says, 'who are predominant in the Terai and the remnants of the aboriginal race of Koches, it may be said that they have become Hinduised But their adhesion to Hinduism is comparatively recent is shown by their own customs in regard to burial, food and marriage as well as by the existence upto recent times.¹²

Languages, like nations, are from earliest of times closely associated with power. While, a nation is often regarded by its citizens as a repository of political and material power, a language symbolizes for many of its speakers, a real or imagined fortress of intellectual, literary or cultural power. According to some historical linguists of 19th century, languages, like nations, grow to speak of power, prestige and importance, and then begin to decline and die. No language, however, disappears from active use without leaving behind its successors, worthy or not.¹³ The process of nationality-formation is one in which objective differences between ethnic groups acquire

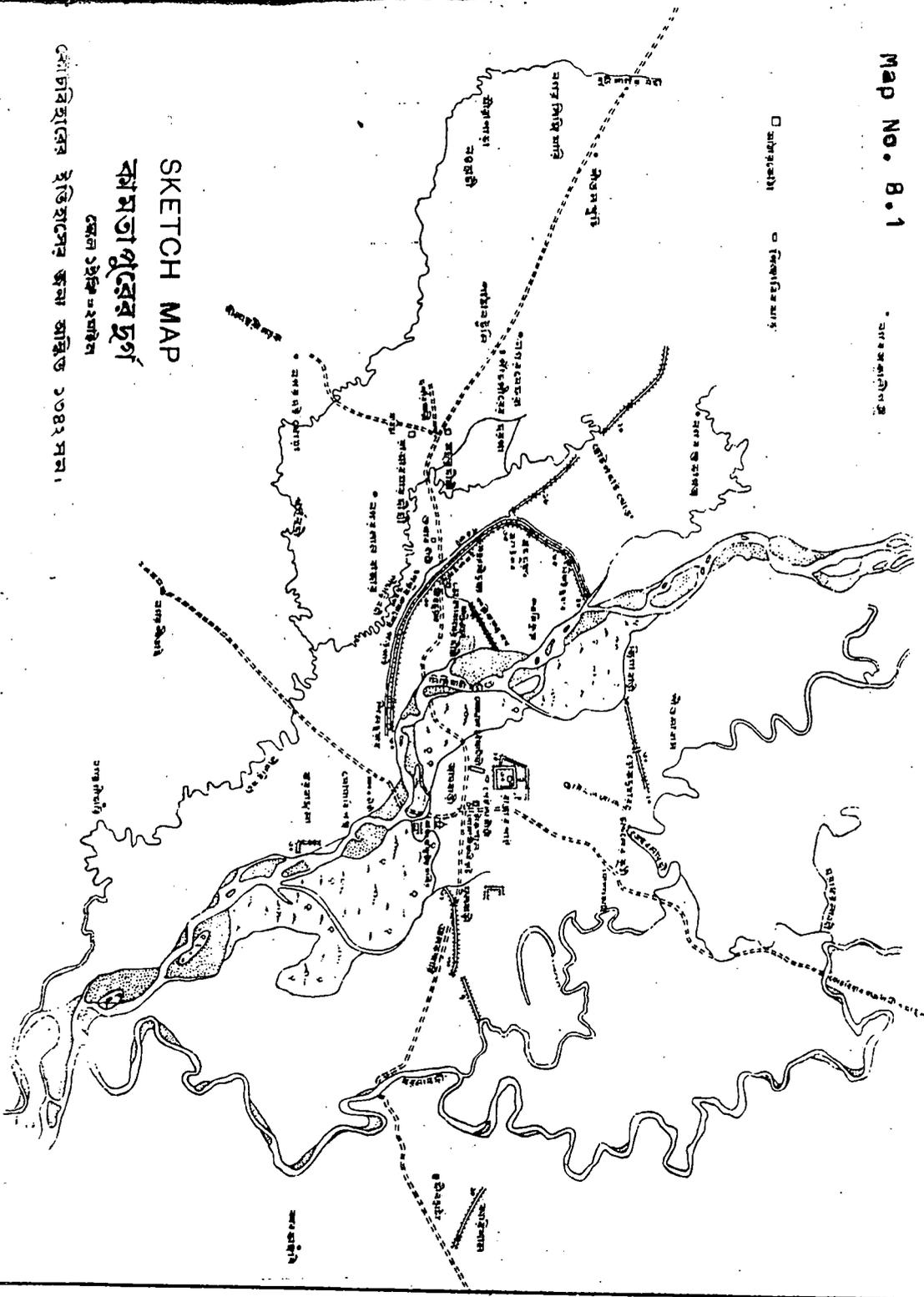
increasingly subjective and symbolic significance, are translated into a consciousness of, and a desire for, group solidarity, and become the basis for successful political demands. There are two stages in the development from ethnic category to community. Depending on the context, this stage may involve such changes as the creation of a self-conscious language community out of a group of related speakers.¹⁴ The leaders of the movement to create a language community may, at the same time, stake a claim to the dominance of that language in a particular territory; the supporters of the demands for a religious community may also seek protection for the language or script in which their religious texts are written and may promote the identification of the language with the religion and encourage its increasing use by all believers.¹⁵ From the perspective of political sociology of language in India, a realistic option for a lingua franca exists, the problem is that there is more than one. In Third World societies like India, again, there is a tendency towards smaller regional or ethnically based communities, and there is a danger of the state disintegrating into smaller fragments.¹⁶

The language issue of Rajbanshi is taken for the mother tongue, or demand for the development of Kamtapuri language. Critics call it as a dialect of Bengal. At that time, there were seven daily newspapers in Bengali and English. These speak of a very sad, neglected position of the Kamatapuri language. But, Dr. T.C. Rastogir opposes it and says, "The writings of the so called Paschim Bangla Bhasa or Asamiya Bhasa should be regarded as the writings of the Kamata language (Kamta Bhasa) in as much it is not dead but still a living language of the Kamta region. The Kamta language is not Rajbanshi dialect or a dialect of a caste or tribe. It is the language of the people for the region described above.

The Kamta language should not be regarded as a mere dialect of Bengali or Assamese language. It is the language in which the first vernacular writings of the region were attempted and may be called the root of the present Bengal and Assamese language."¹⁷ In linguistic Survey of India, Dr. Grierson, the speaking language of the common people of the area of Cooch Behar, Bagura and Dinajpur calls as Rangpuri or Rajbanshi Bhasa.¹⁸ During the fifteenth century, the tract north of Rangpur was in the hands of the Rajas of Kamta, to which country passing allusion was made above. The kingdom is prominently marked as 'Reino de Camtah', or Comoty, on the maps of De Barros and Blaeu (pl.iv) that is shown map no. 8.1. The town of Kamta, or Kamtapore, lay on the eastern (? western) bank of the Dharla river, which flows south-west of the town of Kuch Behar.¹⁹ The speaking language of this big areas has been called by Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury as 'Kamata Behari' arguing that of geographically in the name of old Sen and Modern Koch dynasty broadly instead of Koch or Rajbanshi narrowly in name of ethnic group.²⁰ But, in the old Rajbanshi dialect there was very little difference between the written and the spoken language.²¹

Kamtapuri is a "Language of the heart, a medium of self-expression", a way of displaying their ethnic distinction and cultural richness, their existence as people who deserve to be treated as equals in a modern, democratic society.²² But, why did the editors of the Gazetteer terminate the language as (Bahe) is still questionable and contradictory issue of this ethnic group of people and makes agitation against it, that is, "The Rajbanshis of rural areas in general and also most Hindus and Muslims - who have been living in the district for generation - speak a dialect of the colloquial Bengali which the educated people designated as 'Baha'"²³....." until the recent

□ অপরিসীম □ বিপরীতমুখ



SKETCH MAP

কামতাপুরের চূর্ণ

কোন ১ইঞ্চি = ২মাইল

কোচবিহারের ইতিহাসের জন্য আঁকিত ১০৪১ নং।

happenings, the four major communities in the hills and plains of Darjeeling district - the Nepalis, the Tribals, the Bengalis, and the original inhabitants (Mech, Rajbanshi, Lepcha, Bhutia etc) lived peacefully and amicably.²⁴ In another pamphlet the protagonists of Gorkhaland have gone to the extent of describing Lepcha, Oraos, Santals, Mechs, Bhojpuris, Modesias and Scheduled Caste Bengalees (mostly by Rajbanshi) that is practically every one living in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri excepting upper caste Bengalees as Gorkhas.²⁵ Against the terminology of 'Bahe', 'Tribal', 'Gorkha', in different public documents at different times is used to designate the Rajbanshi, a general meeting is being summoned up at Atharokhai, Shivmandir under the converner of the committee Surendra Nath Barman, that was circulated through Uttar Banga Sambad on 25 December, 1986 at 2 p.m.²⁶ Campaigning against these ill-treatments, several outfits in North Bengal want constitutional recognition for Kamtapuri language and an area for "self-rule". This fresh surge of consciousness has given birth to a dream that involves a separate state, and the Kamtapur Peoples' Party has already drawn up its area of "Self-rule" - North Dinajpur, South dinajpur, Malda, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and portions of Darjeeling - all North Bengal districts.²⁷

Extraneous agencies seem to be working in Tandem with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland to forge an alliance between all the secessionist and separatist ethnic movements by the apparently innocuous mobilization of "indigenous peoples" in the North -East. A common feature is the plea for right to self-determination for all indigenous and tribal peoples.

The inspiration has evidently come from the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People Commission. Two dubious organisations, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples' Organisation (UNPO)

and the Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP) - the NSCN is a member of both - are actively engaged in sustaining the venture. The process began in 1993 during the observance of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in Manipour, Nagaland and Meghalaya.

The UN - defines indigenous people as "descendants of people who inhabited the present territory of a country, wholly or partially, at a time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived from other parts of the world, overcome them by conquest, settlement or other means and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition."²⁸ The UN draft declaration seeks to provide indigenous people the right to all forms of education, including in particular the right of children to have access to education in their own languages and to establish structure, conduct and control their own educational system and institutions.²⁹ The UN Draft declaration also inspired to the ethnic groups of people of North Bengal. The Adivasis like the Oraons, the Mundas, the Kharias, the Turis, the Mahalis speak different languages. So do the Jharus, the Lepchas, the Nepalis, the Totos, the Rabhas and the Meches. The Oraons speak Kurukh which is of the Dravidian family, the Mundas, the Kharias, the Twis, the Mahalis speak Mundari and its dialects. The Mundari belongs to the Austrie or Austro-Asiatic family. In fact, with the exception of the Oraons, all the Adivasi groups in the tea belt use Sadri, a cocktail of Hindi and Tribal dialects. There is agitation in Assam for Bodoland. The fear is it may greatly influence the Meches, the Rabhas in contiguous North Bengal into launching a similar movement, Swapan Kumar Das warns and doubts, it may also encourage the proponents of the Kamtapuri or the Rajbanshi movement.³⁰

While time may be best judge of that KPP leaders maintain they are

ready to run the ultimate test of mental strength. The Left parties, the Marxists included, are on their toes. Ever since the observance of a bandh in these six North Bengal districts in September 1998, the local units of the CPI(M) have been busy assessing the cause and possible effects of the movement. That the bandh did not elicit widespread response is unimportant; West Bengal's ruling party has chosen not to play down such "aberrations". Local CPI(M) units have advised their cadres to toe the grassroots route and establish fresh contact with the people. The party is keen to convey the message that such a movement which is mounted up by the KPP is the result of wicked minds. More recently, two CPI(M) ministers - Dinesh Dakua and Jogesh Barman - and the Jalpaiguri district committee secretary of the party held a number of meetings at Panbari in the Dooars castigating the KPP. They called on the people to stay free of the Kamtapuri activists. And there lies the rub : the left parties must be wary of the growing strength (or public acceptance) of the movement.

The KPP, meanwhile, has found friends in several outfits, like the Uttarakhand Dal, the Kamtapur Gana Parishad, the All Kamtapur Students' Union, and the Kamtapur Vasha Sahitya Parishad. Of them, the AKSU, which was the main sponsor of the bandh, seems the most potent force. In fact, ever since it came into existence in 1985, the AKSU has been able to portray itself as a threat to the CPI(M), which has been enjoying a formidable power base in this area.

The AKSU demands caught the fancy of the Kamtapuris. Among the 13 demands, the realisation of which the bandh was purportedly observed, are :

*Inclusion of Kamtapuri programmes on All India Radio and Doordarshan;

* Inclusion of Kamtapuri in the University Syllabus;

and

*The setting up of a University in CoochBehar.

This, of course, involves a perceptible change in the AKSU's activities over the years. Initially, it was rather content with its non-political profile. But then this students' organisation shed its inhibitions and forged a working relationship with the Uttarakhanda Dal. The detente, however, was short lived. At present, the KPP is its closest ally.

Meeting the authorities in Delhi, including President K R Narayanan, Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani, is high on the AKSU agenda. Last December, they had similar plans but the lack of funds forced them to put things on hold. But the financial constraints aside, the indifference from the Prime Minister's Office is what seems to have upset them most. There was absolutely no acknowledgement of their massive address to Mr. Vajpayee.

Some other organisations like the Vasha Sahitya Parishad are said to have rallied to the cause. Besides keeping close contact with AKSU and KPP leaders, the VSP has organised seminars and meetings at various places. At one such seminar held recently, the speakers included a couple

of IAS Officers. Political references were carefully avoided. The speakers dwelt exclusively upon the evolution and development of the Kamtapuri language. A research foundation was set up under the Chairmanship of Girendra Nath Roy, head of the English department, North Bengal University.

Apparently such intellectual activities should not constitute cause for concern, but the Left parties do see ominous signs. In fact, wiser from its Gorkhaland experience, the Left leadership fears that the AKSU, KPP and other Rajbanshi organisations may just make inroads into their electoral bases in North Bengal districts.³¹ If constitutional recognition of their language is the immediate goal of the Kamtapuri activists, political opponents hold that their agitation will serve as a convenient "route" to a "dangerous destination".

Socio-economic component of Regionalism

Although there is a considerable scholarly consensus on this general description of the origins and course of the Kamtapuri crisis, it is sometimes supplemented by accounts which introduce economic factors into it more centrally or reduce the political struggles to merely 'contributory' status. In the first category are interpretations which urge us to pay more attention to economic and social factors, which are often bracketed at the same time with other root factors such as the 'communal ethos' or attacks on civil liberties. The stronger, usually Marxist, arguments go further and insist that economic and class forces are primary and the political - communal factors merely reflections of the underlying class forces, whose leading segments operate to manipulate the political-communal situation.³²

Before one can assess the relative weights to be assigned to political, cultural and economic factors in the Kamtapur situation, one must be clear about what aspect of the crisis is to be explained. The focus here will be primarily on the extent to which social and economic factors must be included in a complete explanation of the degeneration of the Kamtapur/Uttarkhanda crisis as follows.

Social

Caste perse as a social institution may not lead to regionalism. But when caste turns into caste-craziness, it serves as an important factor of regionalism. Caste turns into caste-craziness when it is combined with dominance. In an open-class system, it depends almost exclusively on the individual's achievement, while in a closed, that is, traditional society, status, to a great extent, is determined by birth. Thereby, the closed society is fragmented into several fixed status-groups. These groups are 'castes' which are 'hereditary, endogamous, usually localized groups, having traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy.'³³ The Rajbanshi society is basically traditional, embracing plural identities and segmental divisions in surname viz. Roykot, Karjee, Thakuria, Saikiya, Hazarika, Omra, Nawab, Gohai, Bhauiya, Barua, Dauri, Sardar, Patra, Kayanthe, Kotoyal, Adhikary, Das, Bhandar, Thakur, Majumder, Sawa, Mantri, Sanapati, Mostafi, Chaklader, Daptraria, Madhi, Boksi, Chatra, Nagir, Borokanta, Kushnabish, Dakua, Dawan, Vitar Katak Dawan, Hisabia, Jamdaria, Darbarkha, Sardar, Paik, Kotal, Anwar, Iswar, Ukkil, Sikder, Patwary, Basunia, Pujari, Kitania, Chowdhury, Muhuree, Gomosta, Dalai, Talapatra, etc. are entitled according to posts of services under the His Highness Cooch Behar Maharaja. Roughly speaking, the commission is

concerned with permanent appointments to all new posts and vacancies, excluding ordinary departmental promotions, and appointments to superior posts and those in His Highness' Private and Household Departments. The commission registered approved candidates, and any person desirous of having his name registered for the state service can apply to the chairman through local officer where he resides.³⁴

Ethnological identification of the group was started from the first decade of 19th century is not possible to conclude the distinct decision due to disagreement among the social scientists and ethnologists. It is fact that this group of people is being to aware about their actual identification which is arisen from the disagreement of social scientists and ethnologists and started their contradiction against the assertion of Buchanan Hamilton, Borkanan, Hodgson, Risely etc. In course of time, they tried to derive away the social superstition. From this stage, a the social and religious reformation are started, let us discuss it.

The first and foremost aims of reformations was to drive away the social superstition and narrow-mindedness from the society for attaining contradiction against it, but not either the process of acceptance or rejection of westernization of these ethnic groups, because, the English ethnologists tried to identify the Rajbanshi as Koch completely baseless. Indeed, in 1838 Buchanan Hamilton in his 'Eastern Indian', designed the Rajbanshi as a "Tribe" and denoted Rajbanshi and Koch are same group of people is followed by English researchers, W.W.Hunter, Hodgson etc. In 1872 census report, this group of people is designated as a mixture of Koch-Rajbanshi-Polia. Needless to say, justification of ethnicity of Rajbanshi is not basic

end of work, yet the decisions and proposals of English researchers about it are doubtful is being to realise that they need a campaign against its reality. It is said that on the 10th February, 1891, a general meeting was held where Rajbanshi group of people assembled where they took decision unanimously against the census strategies and proceedings of government. Horman roy, President of the meeting, sent a representation to enlist the Rajbanshi to F.A.Serain, Rangpur District Collector in the process of census to design them as "Bhango-Kshatriya". To solve the ambiguity, whether Rajbanshis are 'Bhanga Kshatriya', F.A.Scrain sent a prayer to learned people of Rangpor Dharma Sabha for appropriate consent on it. Receiving it, they sent a prayer of reply to enlist them as 'Braitya Kshatriya' instead of 'Bhanga Kshatriya'. But, this type of solution was not acceptable. On the 15th March 1891, another meeting was held under the presidentship of Landlord Prosannya Chowdhury, an unanimously decision was taken in this manner, if it wishes to write sub caste 'Rajbanshi' should be drawn as 'Braitya Kshatriya'.

Again, sensation issue was started regarding sub-caste of Rajbanshi in the first part of 20th century. In 1901, Nagendra Nath Basu, in his Encyclopaedia wrote the meaning of the word, Rajbanshi as a barbarian that was glanced and started the agitation against it by the Rajbanshi people in the area of North Bengal: In 1901 census report is written conspiracely that the Rajbanshi and the Koch are the same group of people and sub-caste is same. As a result the Rajbanshis started an agitation not only against it but fight social ill-treatment and backwardness of people also. During this stages of agitation Takur Panchanan Barman, a pleader of Rangpur launched a socio-religious movement. He took a legal opinion about identification of

caste consulting with learned men of Kanjhee, Nabardeep, Methila, that was circulated among the Rajbanshi people regarded as 'Kshatriya Ethnic Group'. On the 1st May 1910, at time of census work, for developing socio-ethnic condition of Rajbanshi-Kshatriya people he formed a 'Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti' unanimously at a general meeting which was held at Rangpur Natya Mandir where 400 dignitaries attend from different parts of North Bengal, Goalpara of Assam. The meeting was presided by learned advocate of Jalpaiguri, Mr. Madhusudan roy. It was the first assemblage of Samiti arrived a unanimous decision that the Rajbanshi and the Koch are the two separate ethnic group of people whose socio-cultural behaviour is not same ... the Rajbanshi is not the Koch but the Kshatriya group of people. It is asserted that O.Mally edited the census report of 1913 following their decision of caste.

The decision of the Samiti was followed under two heads:

Firstly, the Rajbanshis of the area of CoochBehar, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Goalpara, Purnea designed themselves as Kshatriya and used the surnames as 'singha', 'Barman', 'Roy' etc. sent a representation to the respective district Collector to grant it, and

Secondly, on January 1912 the third general convention of Samiti was held. With more than thousand deliberative representatives took decision and it was also followed by Methila's learned Brahmins supervisions and recommendations that being self-forgetfulness, degraded and omitted to go through the purificatory rites, the Rajbanshi lost his Kshatriyaship and might be revived or sanskritized itself by UPBITA/sacred thread worn by the males of the twice born after a fire oblation according to edicts. On the 10th February

1912, at the 'Mahamillon Khatya' was held at bank of the Korotoa river where 1,82,154 Rajbanshis were sanstritized by UPBITA after a oblution of fire. In the year more than the 292 million khatyas were held at different parts of North Bengal.³⁵

Agitation was strengthened with social reformation along with UPABITA of the Samiti. The branches of Kshatriya Samiti were established at different villages of North Bengal Mandal Samiti was formed under the leading of rural kshatriya Samiti with an aim of circulating the ends and principles to the people on the process of decentralization, says Upen Barman. It is said that a branch of Kshatriya Samiti was established at Chow village, district of Dinajpur in 1920. The process of modernization - Sanskritization - social reformation was started in the grassroot level under the samiti as well. It was ruddered by the Headmaster of Normal School, Mr. Gobinda Roy of Dinajpur broadly. On 20 Aswin 1325 BS he published a Kshatriya Sang, "ATHYADAYA" at Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti which played the vital role to the Rajbanshis.³⁶

After sanskritization or 'UPBITA,' the trend of social reformation was being continued the area of Rajbanshis by Kshatriya Samiti. It inaugurated an era of social reform, concentrating chiefly on the amelioration of the condition of woman and formation of Kshatriya army. Besides Samiti had an all-embracing programme including, among other things, education of women and their gradual emanicipation from all restraints, mass education through Kshatriya Patrika and NARI-UTDHARNARI MANGAL SAMITI, adult education by night school and formation of new schools, financial development through kshatriya Bank, Loan Office, removal of caste distinctions, prohibition of drinking and abolution of cruel rites and practices.

The members of mandal Samiti engaged to express the social reforms through HARISABHA, religious discussions, and moral education at rural level who wore bromochari cloths. The protection of life was envisaged in the hands of president and secretary of samiti at rural level. The social reforms were mainly directed towards removing the sufferings and disabilities of woman through committee. The greatest evil from which the women suffered was the denial of education, partly to early marriage and partly to a superstition. Even an educated woman was bound to become a widow following such practices.³⁷ In research work on 'UTTARBANGAR DHARMA O SAMAJ SANSKAR ANDOLON'; Dhananjoy Roy asserts in 1925 about four hundred Kshatriyas participated for the 1st World War from Dinajpur and different parts of North Bengal, as an army. In the last part of 1928 "Chatrisha Andolon (26 charter of demands) was started at rural areas of Dinajpur by Rajbanshis including land revenue."³⁸

After 1930, the violation of the modesty of a woman was being commenced in Rangpur, Maymenshing, Dinajpur widely, Mrs. Vendi Barman, a daughter of Mr. Khola Barman under the Khansama police station, district of Dinajpur was taken away by some militants behaved outrageously and assaulted her unutterably in 1933. A sensational situation was created arounding such issues among the Rajbanshis which was informed to central organisation of society. Being aggrieved Mr. Panchanan Barman managed to get some education and ventilated their grievances through a poem, "DUNGDHORI MAO" (holding a staff mother) for women education and . Reference may be made in this connection to a poem, "DUNGDHORI MAO" was published in the newspaper like PATHIK, BASUMATI, KSHATRIYA PATRIKA, PROBASI etc. from Midnapore.³⁹

The most important social reformation concerning the Rajbanshi religion was the promotion of their perceptions from being converted Christian, almost immediately after the restrictions against the missionary work in the area of North Bengal were removed by animation. Inspired by the zeal of spreading gospel among the natives they naturally thought that it was first of all necessary to eradicate the superstition, use of coarse among rural women, a short garment covering the privities only the chiefly used by werestless, Dowry system.

Dr. Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay dealt with his Special lectures on Uttarkhand movement, "The recent Uttarkhand phenomenon is an ultimate outcome of struggle for power and associated privileges between the indegenous communities (particularly the Rajbanshis) and the immigrant the dynamics of the Rajbanshi society clearly show that since early 20th century the Rajbanshi Jotedars gradually lost their economic dominance over others in the region because of considerable alteration in the old land ownerships structure. Changes in the old land holding pattern led to the emergence of a class of new landed states elites who were mostly immigrants to this region. In such a situation, when the Rajbanshis were gradually loosing their economic power, they turned their attention to achieve a kind of social authority over others by means of Kshatriyaization. But, this Kshatriya mobility movement later appeared as a less successful device to raise their overall social status (corporate) and authority in the society.

Now the only and ultimate avenue remaining open to the Rajbanshis for achieving a kind of authority over alien population is the avenue of power and politics. To win the struggle for power the Rajbanshi leaders have finally brought the Kamtapur issue into the forefront. These leaders are fully aware

of the fact that although numerical strength is an important basis of power, by itself it does not count much because of class and political (party) cleavages within the community. In such a condition what is required, is the formation of a new political organisation The emergence of Uttarkhand party (Uttarkhand Dal) and their present stir for a separate Kamtapur state reveal the desire on the part of a class of Rajbanshi leaders to grab the power and to exert their absolute political authority over everyone."⁴⁰

ECONOMIC

The economic component of regionalism in India is the much talked-of regional economic imbalance. Plural societies contain sub-systems that are distinct from each other in terms of their levels of development. Among them, some may acquire an advantage over others due to locational, demographic or political factors. This advantage makes them more powerful economically and therefore, politically. This power (political and/or economic) is again used to maintain and elevate the position acquired. Along with these existing inequalities operates the process of unequal distribution of available resources. The size of the country, its stupendous problems after Independence and most important of all, the erratic policies of decision-makers often lead to an uneven distribution of resources in different regions. Inequitable distribution of the economic resources amongst the different socio-cultural sub-regions proliferates their asymmetrical development. Regional demands in most cases are concerned with removing the disparity between the more developed and less developed regions.⁴¹ This gives an added momentum to regional movements as the response of suffering units in the plural society. This awareness of the people of many parts of India, particularly in the more backward parts, like North Bengal that they are

being neglected by both the centre and the state in the distribution of available resources in the country, is gradually increasing. The development issues or economic deprivation, as projected by the Gorkhaland leaders were mere rabble-rousing against the state government, e.g. since Independence Darjeeling district got nothing except 'eye-wash by offering petty things and minor repair works.' The figures given by the state government appear to be convincing in comparison with backward districts as Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum and other North Bengal districts (CoochBehar, Jalpaiguri, South and North Dinajpur, Malda) with regard to per capita plan expenditure, aggregate amount of capital expenditure, rate of unemployment, etc. Even strong critics of the State governments' negligence to Darjeeling's sad economic plight (closure of 25 tea gardens causing 30,000 people out of employment, relative growth of Sikkim), had to admit that huge investment has been made through Hill Development Council which literally turns to be a playground of CPI(M) Cadres.⁴² There are many rivers in North Bengal, yet agriculture have been suffering from lack of irrigation. The rate of production has increased as in the area of Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapur, Purulia but not as such as in North Bengal. In 1965-80 the rate of production has increased at three times at Bankura, but decreased at the same rate of production in the plains of North Bengal specially in Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and CoochBehar respectively. From 1981-82 to 1990-91 the rate of production in agriculture of Bankura was 9.5 percent whereas in Jalpaiguri it was only 2 percent. The status of four districts of North Bengal (West Dinajpur, CoochBehar, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri) is lower level of the League table of production. At the rate of agricultural production of Malda was 5th

position in 1965-80 but at present reduced and stands 10th position is shown below .⁴³

Chart No. 8.1

League table for districts agricultural developments

1965-80 years	1981-90 years
1. Hooglee	1. Bankura
2. Howrah	2. Birbhum
3. Nadia	3. Midnapore
4. Burdwan	4. Purulia
5. Malda	5. Nadia
6. Murshidabad	6. Howrah
7. Midnapore	7. Burdwan
8. Bankura	8. 24 Parganas
9. 24 Paraganas	9. Hooglee
10. Birbhum	10. Malda
11. Jalpaiguri	11. Murshidabad
12. Darjeeling	12. West Dinajpur
13. West dinajpur	13. CoochBehar
14. CoochBehar	14. Darjeeling
15. Purulia	15. Jalpaiguri

Source : * Dr. Manas Dasgupta, RAJYAR KRISHIR UNNATIR JOUR
UTTARBANGA ANAPUSTIT, Uttarbanga Sambad, 27 October, 1994.

States and regions feel exploited in another way.:

Some states and regions are rich in natural resources like minerals, water, fertility of the soil, forests and the like. But, because, of discriminating central policies, they remain or are forced to remain at a backward position while their natural and agricultural products are taken away to other states which make the latter economically well off.⁴⁴ North Bengal, for example, is very rich in Tea, Timber, Tobacco and other resources. Sal, Shisu, Segoon and Mehagoni grow here are valuable trees. UKD assumes, the forests in North Bengal consist of 8 lakhs acres of land.⁴⁵ The government of West Bengal earned more than Rs. 40 crores from forest resources in the financial year of 1996-97.⁴⁶ Jogesh Chandra Barman, Minister of Forest says that North Bengal forest consists of 3 thousand sq.km. alongwith 40 percent of its planted area and remaining part is reserved for wild animals. More than Rs. 25 crores has been earned by state government annually.⁴⁷ The forestry of North Bengal is enriched with the plantations of 'Sinkona' and various production of a kachcha materials viz. bamboo, cane, woods, which would be help to solve the unemployment problem if industries and factories should produce. The production of tea of North Bengal is famous in the world. There are 275 tea gardens in about 6 lakh acres of lands.⁴⁸ It is estimated that all India tea crop production for the season 1996 would be 780 million kgs which would be almost 26 million kg higher than the previous season. The production has been a record for the industry as may be evident from Table A (See Table No. 8.1). There has been substantial growth in almost all the north Indian estates, in Assam, Dooars and Darjeeling. Dooars is estimated to achieve 128 million kgs (season 1995- - 124 million kg) while Darjeeling would be 11 million kg (season 1995-10 million kg) and Terai would be 26 million kg (season 1995 - 25 million kg). The overall

north Indian crop is estimated to be around 600 million kg which is nearly 32 million kg higher than the previous year. The orthodox crop which stood at 90.6 million kg for season 1995 moved up to 101 million kg a record growth of nearly 11 million kgs while CTC production stood at 679 million kgs which was an all time high, nearly 6 million kgs, ahead of the previous year.⁴⁹

Table-8.1

ALL INDIA TEA CROP (in million kgs)

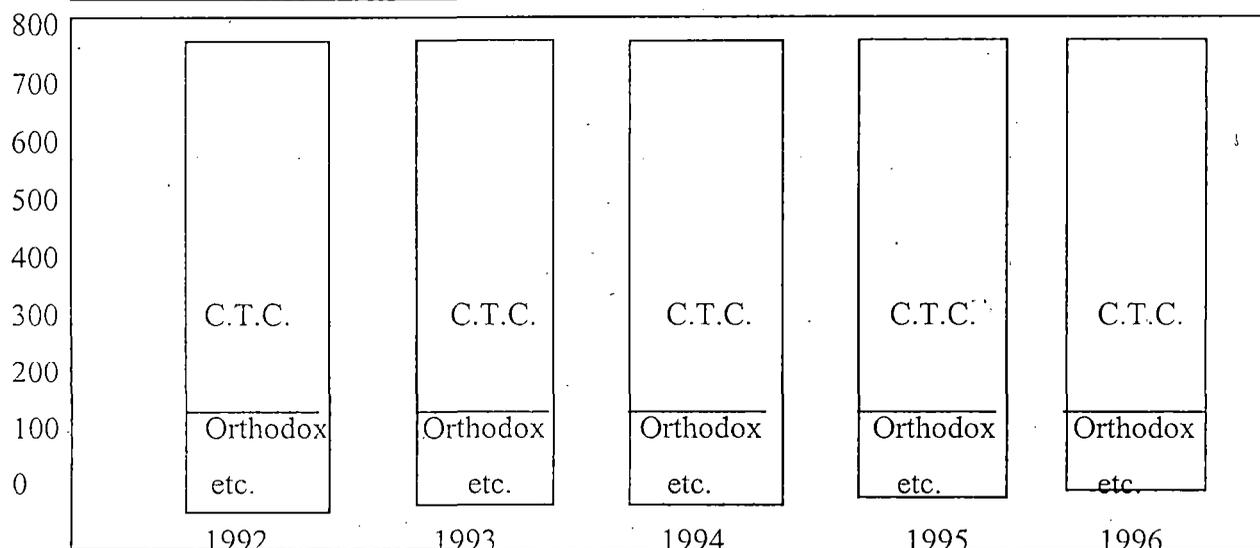


Table-8.2: ESTIMATED CROP DURING AND UPTO DECEMBER 1996

(figures in thousand kgs.)

District/State	During December		Upto December		Inc(+) or Dec.(-) In	
	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996 over 1995	
					During	upto
Assam Vally	10744	14968	370569	356204	-4224	20365
Cachar	6958	8057	48295	42929	-1099	5366
Total Assam	17702	23025	424864	399135	-5323	25731
Darjeeling	824	743	11288	10403	81	885
Dooars	9194	10588	127993	124308	-1394	3685
Terai	478	391	26094	25594	87	500
Total W.Bengal	10496	11722	165375	160305	-1226	5070
Others	468	487	9387	8535	-19	852
Total N. India	28666	35234	599626	567973	-6568	31653
Tamil Nadu	8993	8421	113755	116486	572	-2731
Kerala	4754	4346	61962	64971	408	-3009
Karnataka	365	349	4691	4492	16	199
Total S. India	14112	13116	180408	185949	996	-5541
All India	42278	48350	780034	753922	-5572	26112

An analysis of Indian of Indian tea exports (details as per Table A) during the past three and a half decades shows important trends. India's dominant share in the world tea market during the early sixties have declined and export volumes have stagnated, due to Indian tea faced competition from Kenya and Sri Lanka since the mid-eighties. It was Kenyan tea, in particular, which replaced most of Indian tea in world markets. Kenya's exports increased from 10 million kg in 1960 to reach 217 million kg. 1995 in and to a large extent catered to UK market. UK buyers normally pay high premiums for good liquoring, naturally graded Indian CTC teas with bloom and bright full cups, and also for Darjeeling teas. This is borne out by the higher unit realization in the UK markets as may be observed from Table B (See p. ²³⁷ - A).

Regional parties in North Bengal, like UKD asserts that the government of India earns huge foreign money from not only tea but jute a large quantity of which grows in north Bengal. Tobacco grows more than one lack acres lands, maize more than 1.5 lakhs acres land, dal, sugar cane, varieties oil seeds, spiars, raw silk, cotton and muga grow here in large scale. Oranges in Darjeeling, mango, pine-apple, Jack-fruit, apple Banana, Nut and coconut grow in large scale in all most all the districts of North Bengal. Besides these, different minerals resources are available in North Bengal.⁵⁰ The North Bengal hill areas enriched with dolomite resources.⁵¹ Zink, Mica, Copper lead, coal, lime stone and Tungstane are available here.⁵² All these have made North Bengal, a land of growing popular resentment naturally and tensions, UKD articulates that the income of North Bengal is 2/3 of the total income of South Bengal. Per head expenditure overal of south bengal people is Rs. 16 but in North Bengal is only Rs. 1 . The government of West Bengal got Rs. 687 crores in first, second, and third five year plan, only Rs. 15 crores have been spent for North Bengal. More than Rs. 2500 crores had been spent previously during fifth five year plan for West Bengal but only Rs. 31 crores had been spent for North Bengal.⁵³

Table-8.3

p.257a

INDIAN TEA EXPORTS IN MILLION KG.

Countries	1960	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1994
U.K.	121(33%)	93(47%)	63(28%)	46(21%)	25(12%)	22(11%)	28(19%)
Germany	2(1%)	4(2%)	5(2%)	6(1%)	3(1%)	4(2%)	6(4%)
Poland	-	2(1%)	12(5%)	12(5%)	7(3%)	7(3%)	20(13%)
C.I.S.	1C(5%)	28(14%)	157(29%)	64(29%)	97(45%)	129(62%)	37(25%)
West Asian							
Countries-	9(5%)	8(4%)	22(10%)	32(14%)	38(18%)	22(11%)	23(15%)
Others	51(26%)	62(32%)	65(30%)	64(28%)	44(21%)	25(11%)	36(24%)

Table A 193(100%) 197(100%) 224(100%) 224(100%) 214(100%) 209(100%) 151(100%)

Countries	1980		1985		1992		1994	
	value	unit	value	unit	value	unit	value	unit
	Rs./lakhs	Rs/kg.	Rs./lakhs	Rs./kg	Rs./lakh	Rs./kg	Rs./lakh	Rs/kg
U.K.	8715.04	(19.13)	6520.55	(25.80)	16337.01	(56.47)	13102.31	(51.12)
Germany	1696.28	(26.75)	1367.54	(44.68)	6349.47	(117.80)	7170.79	(117.09)
Poland	2087.78	(17.71)	2433.74	(32.85)	6061.20	(39.56)	9601.20	(40.47)
C.I.S.	12493.83	(19.57)	30570.86	(31.65)	24118.49	(51.86)	26894.28	(63.07)
West Asian								
Countries	6926.92	(21.67)	14603.23	(38.43)	22065.11	(66.86)	15756.54	(68.50)
Others	209082.92	(18.40)	28637.27	(33.36)	24601.79	(55.55)	26388.88	(59.85)
Table B	42902.77	(19.15)	69529.96	(32.49)	99533.07	(56.89)	98914.00	(65.64)

The number of games in the politics of North Bengal bear examples in which significance of economic factors have been put not to a secondary position. Standing at the top and lower position in the ladder of development, the Kamtapuri movement gaddled for enforcing ethno-linguistic majority. Indeed, economic factors as the outsiders, Sajal Basu says in his 'regioinal movements', domination in service and industry, the lack of employment opportunities for the educated natives etc. were responsible for the 'Sons of the Soil' sentiment in North Bengal. But, instead of fighting for economic demands. Bengali and the Bengalees (Brahmin, Kastha and Baidya) as a whole were taken as symbols of domination and exploitation. In North Bengal, the sentimental wound (of neglect/non-recognition of Kamtapuri language, ethnic identity) was the effective input for mobilising the popular emotion. The divided, uncertain linguistic composition of Kamtapuris could by no means assure them of their identity security. In such cases of endangered self-image, shifting of identity symbols hardly come to be of any help. The perceived identity crisis and apprehension of a probable swarmed away may sway over the collective mind. The only way to relative them is to envelop into process of governance and rules of the game.

One point, however, is to be remembered. The grievances of Kamtapuris against economic injustice and a demand for distributive justice have produced regional tensions no doubt, but such movement, except in very few cases like the Khalistani movement or recent ULFA agitations, have not challenged the very existence of state power. In case of Kamtapur, they understand that their ultimate purpose will be fulfilled if they remain within the fold of the Union with an equitable share in the planned economy developmental programme of the country.

Political Component of Regionalism

The religious symbols improvised and utilised by Indian leaders in mobilising nationality sentiments, could rarely touch the emotion of the minority communities and the indigenous groups. Most of the distant regions and the peripheral groups remained outside the fringe of the mainstream nationalist movement. These regions and groups subsequently opted for separate statehood demand and/or demand for autonomy with special status, e.g. Punjab, Madras, Assam, North Eastern hill region, Jharkhand, Uttarkhand, hill district and plain areas of North Bengal. In the case of plain areas of North Bengal, a regional or sub-regional consciousness lying latent in the group is gradually transformed into regional or sub-regional ideology which ultimately shapes regional or sub-regional movements.⁵⁴ Mr. Atul Roy, for example and his group have actually exploited the latent emotions of the simple plain areas' people (Rajbanshis) that they are systematically ignored by the government of West Bengal and deprived of their legitimate share in the country's resources. The demand for Kamtapur as at present championed by Mr. Atul Roy and his K.P.P. was raised in order to enable them to gain politically that is to acquire political eminence and political support base in the plain areas of North Bengal.

In the same way, Uttarkhand Dal (UKD) - a regional political organisation of North Bengal - is trying to resurface after a prolong lay off by raising the demand for a Kamtapur state. The UKD, which had initially proposed carving out a Kamtapur state comprising six North Bengal districts, was upstaged by the KPP which instead, demands that the region between lower Assam and Bihar Purnea district made a separate state. The UKD does not support Gorkhaland activists' demand to include a part of North Bengal plains in the proposed Gorkhaland hill state.⁵⁵ has shown in map. no. 8.2. But at a time when the hill people are cutting across party affiliations to demand a separate

Gorkhaland state in Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri's Dooars area. Some organisations are demanding autonomy for the Dooars area. The question of including the Dooars area within the proposed Gorkhaland state may create disharmony in the area. The groups supporting the statehood demand include the Congress, the left parties, North Bengal Jharkhandi groups, the Santosh Rana and Kanu Sanyal CPI(ML) factions and the Uttarkhand Dal. The Tapasili Jati Adibasi Sangstha of the Dooars belt and tea workers affiliated with CITU, NPPW and RSP's Dooars Cha Bagan Workers are also in favour of the demand. They are mobilizing public opinion and holding closed door meetings in three zones - the Eastern Dooars, Central Dooars and Western Dooars. The parties have elected convenors for the three zones - Mr. J.B. Chetri has been elected for the Eastern Dooars, Mr. Tek Bahadur Chetri, the President of the Uttarkhand Dal for the Central Dooars and Mr. Indra Bahadur Gurung and Mr. Netra Bharka jointly for the western dooars. The convenors are holding meetings with their frontal organisation leaders to determine future polity. They are also preparing a draft plan, to be implemented to achieve their statehood goal. The CPI(M) and other left leaders are worried and determined not to fragment West Bengal. The leaders want to face the situation politically.⁵⁶

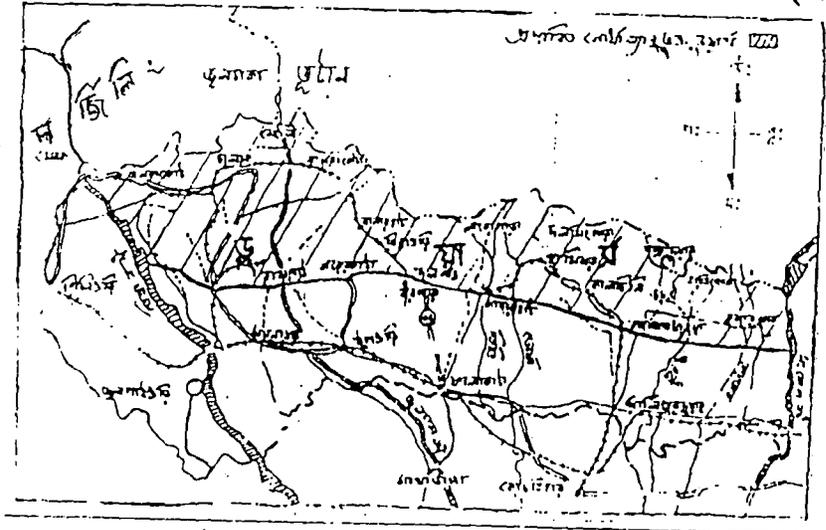
The political issues persistently asserted by the leadership during the anti foreigner movement included, among others, the following :

First, the immigrant Bengalis (Hindus and Muslims), because of their insecure position, are used as 'vote banks' by the opportunist North Bengalis' politicians belonging mostly to the Congress and to the other left national parties. This 'vote bank' system has corrupted North Bengalis' politics and ruined the economic prospect of the qualified North Bengal's youth.⁵⁷

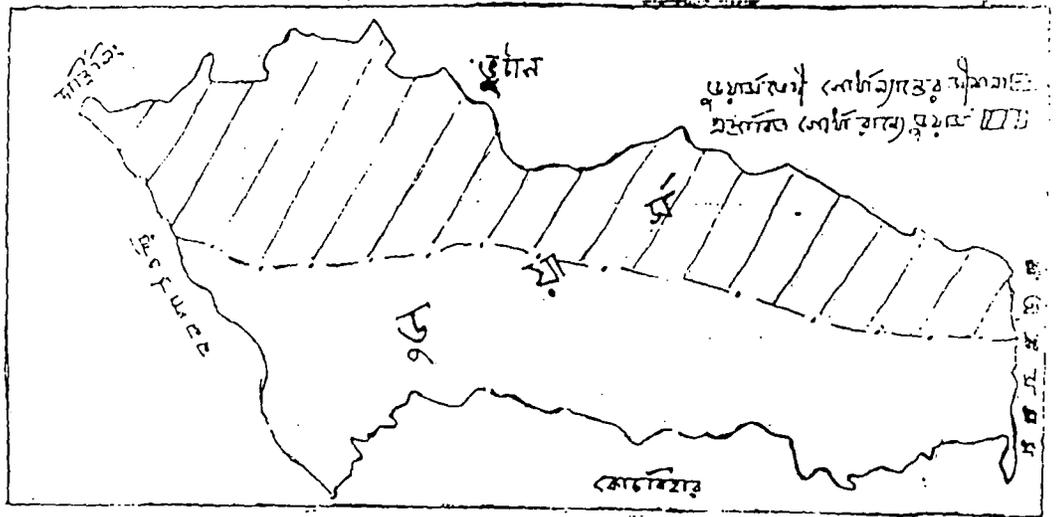
Second, the politics of population and attempts in enforcing ethno-lin-

ডুয়ার্স নিয়ে 'গোখাল্যাণ্ডে'র মানচিত্র করছে জি পি এফ

Map No. B.2



পঃ ডুয়ার্সকে আধাআধি ভাগ করে নিতে চাইছে জি পি এফ



gual majority may lead the populace to the extreme limit of apprehending a swarmed away of the local community. The imaginary figures for a outweighed the official figures of refugees, the increase of percentage of voters and growth rate of different religious groups in North Bengal. In West Bengal, no official estimate of number of Muslim infiltrators is available. The newspaper reviews and estimates based on various sources held that during 1981-85, the total number of Muslim infiltrators might stand at 47,45,000.⁵⁸ A review of crime in the border area said, according to State Home Department Sources, about 5.5 lakhs Bangladeshi infiltrators enter West Bengal every year and do not return..... during the last decade 4.41 million people have come to West Bengal.⁵⁹ Besides, such migration takes place in India and where is shown:

Table No. 8.4

How much migration takes place in India ? And where ?

Year	Rural to rural	Urban to urban	Rural to rural	Urban to urban
	(as percentage of total migrant population)			
1971	69.1	10.4	14.6	5.9
1981	65.3	11.3	16.7	6.1
1991	64.5	11.8	17.7	6.0
Total no. of migrants :	158.7 million in 1971			
	201.1 million in 1981			
	224.9 million in 1991			

Source : Manpower profile India 1997, A Statesman infographic

The Statesman 19 November, 1997.

Such figures and occasional reports on the issue do not have any impact on state politics. And all the political parties leaders have been held responsible for legalising infiltration through recommending ration cards for the infiltrators, the numbers of which surpassed the total population of West Bengal. Infiltration

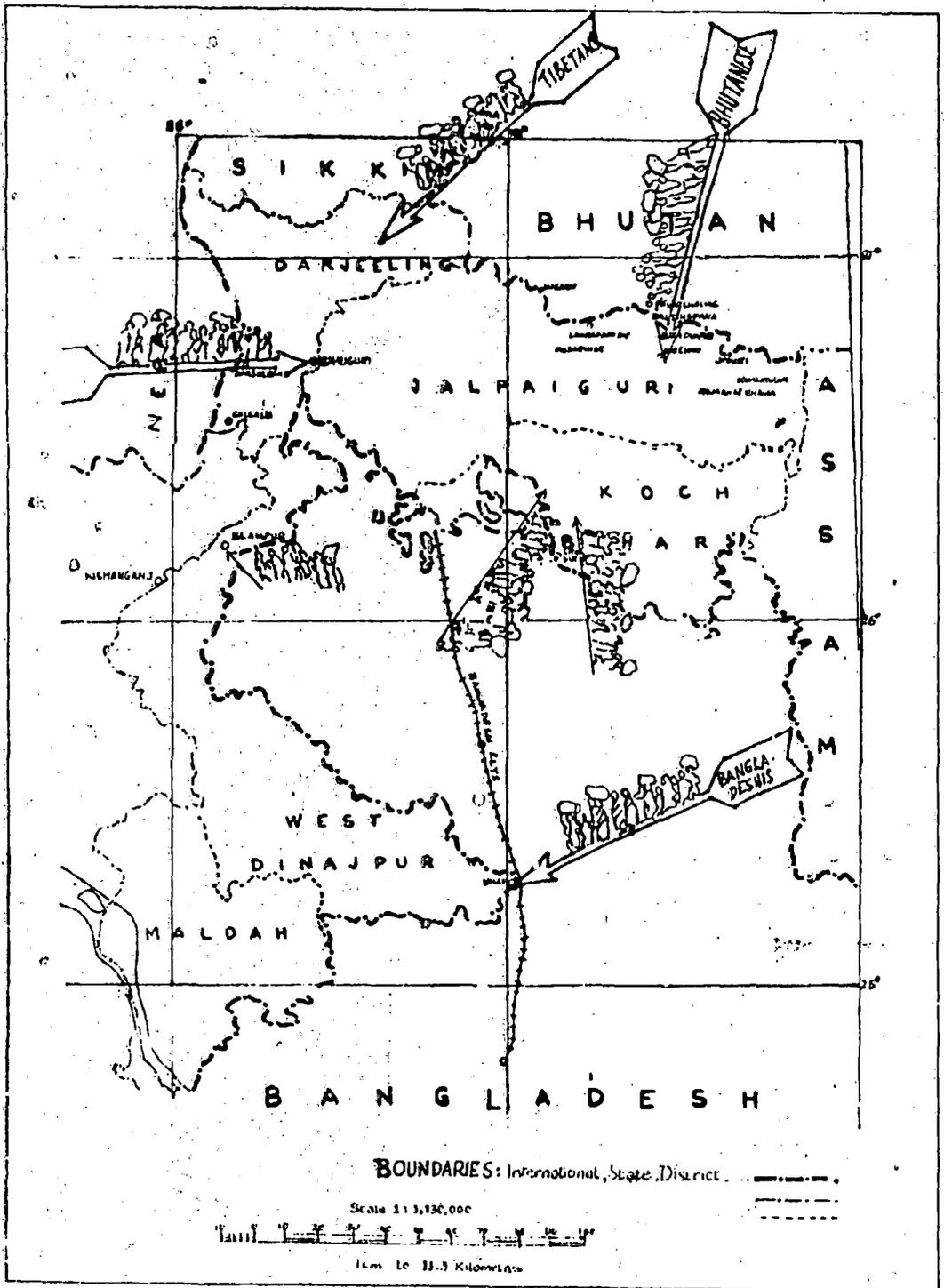
has remained a chronic phenomenon in West Bengal since the Bangladesh war in districts of North Bengal, viz., Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, the rise of Muslim population during 1971-81 had been alarming.⁶⁰ Social scientists have also expressed views concerning the push-pull factors "Push and Pull Factors" also greatly influence people's migration from one place to another. Better employment opportunities, education, recreational and housing facilities are known as "pull factors" while poverty, indebtedness, social persecution, unemployment, natural calamities fall under the "push' category. K. Devis in his book , 'Human Society' said the causes of human migration had "never been systematically understood." This phenomenon has become very significant in recent years due to industrialisation and urbanisation. Political factors are also crucial. Sometimes politicals play important roles in persuading people to migrate. International wars and treaties also force people to move from one place to another in the form population transfer or political asylum. During the nine-month long liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, about 3 million refugees took shelter in West Bengal and more than 200,000 people did not return. For cultural and historical reasons the border separating Bangladesh and India is often violable. the economic conditions prevalent in Bangladesh have have resulted in unbridled influx. The 1981 census revealed that in eight border district of West Bengal the population grew at over 30% between 1971 and 1981 whereas in the remaining districts the growth rate is relatively low that is shown in North Bengal Map No. 8.3 on reverse page. The Islampur sub-division in West Dinajpur, a narrow corridor strip of less than 10 km wide at some places separating Bangladesh and the Purnea district of Bihar is one of the main routes used by Bangladeshi infiltrators who are still heavily concentrated at Saidpur and other neighbouring North Bangladesh towns. The route is preferred because its shortest and safest way to Bihar. The increasing presence of infiltrators and the domination of outsiders from south Bengal might have induced the

Rajbanshis of North Bengal to organise a convention in North Bengal (1986). Formerly known as Koches, the Rajbanshis had a kingdom called Kamtapur until 1494 when it was taken over by Hossain Shah. the convention called for a revival of Kamtapuri state comprising Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Dhubri district which are inhabited by the Rajbanshis. It also decided to raise funds internationally to advance the cultural heritage of the Rajbanshis.⁶¹ They also organised a sit in demonstration in Calcutta 1988 without any significance fall out. Neither of the above issues, viz. infiltration and Kamtapuri, could rouse the popular emotion or reaction in West Bengal. At present ethno-religious idioms, and threat to the cultural and linguistic identity have been present in the State politics.

Third, owing to their Bengali origin, the immigrants consider themselves to be of a superior culture, look down upon the Rajbanshi people.

However, we should keep in view the qualitative differences between the aspirations of an oppressed community, backward ethnics, and the regional parochialism based on religion and language. The perceptual deprivation of religious, linguistic communities often take the form of intolerant 'sons of the soil' or 'drive out the outsiders' movements. This is not to suggest that ethnicity and movement of ethnic aspirations do not take such anti-outsider stance. Basically, the Jharkhand movement was initially based on such a slogan, but it gradually transformed into a multi community supported movement. The Mulki movement in Telengana fizzled out due to its limited base, so also the kamtapuri demand in North Bengal.⁶² The move is aimed at countering the state government's claim that the party is 'separatist', said Mr. Sudhir Singha, a member of the KPP central committee. The party draws its inspiration from the mass movement for the formation of Gorkhaland in the late eighties and is

Map No. 8.3



banking heavily on its student wing, the AKSU. Mr. Singha admitted that the KPP stands a slim chance in making an impact on electoral politics. But, he pointed out, the party participated for the first time in the Panchayat elections for the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad in April 1999. It has representatives in some gram panchayat - particularly in areas where the Rajbanshis are the majority community. Mr. Singha alleged the state government was apathetic to the KPP's "genuine demands of separate state." The demand for giving constitutional recognition to the Kamtapuri language has also fallen on deaf ears. The KPP believes that the Rajbanshis do not belong to the Bengali community, Mr. Atul Roy, party Secretary, said. The Rajbanshis have nothing in common with Bengalis either in terms of language or culture. Though the KPP agitation was launched about 26 years ago in protest against the exploitation of Rajbanshis by other communities, the movement has gathered in momentum only in the past year or so. The Rajbanshis claim that their lands were usurped by Bengalis after the 1947 partition.⁶³

With the 13th Lok Sabha polls round the corner, a stand off between the KPP and the ruling Left Front - a staunch critic of the movement - seems imminent as both would be eyeing the Rajbanshis vote bank.

LEFT ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE MOVEMENT

The Left forces contend that there has not been any phenomenal immigration of Bengalis, Nepalis and Biharis to Assam and North Bengal, as the movement claims. Second, educated unemployment is a problem not merely of the Rajbanshis, but of all other linguistic communities of the state, among whom the incidence of unemployment, educated or not is much greater than that among the Rajbanshis people. Third, the citizenship certificates used by any

authority of the union government, whether in Assam or outside, cannot be disputed. Moreover, according to the national leaders' assurances at partition (1947), all people of Indian origin, but later belonging to the newly carved Pakistan or still later (1971 onwards) Bangladesh, are to be treated on a par with the rest of Indians in case, for any reason, they are forced to migrate to India. Hence, the Bengali refugees cannot be discriminated against on legalistic issues like citizenship. If they have no citizenship certificates, the onus lies on the government at the central and state levels to regularise the matter through the issue of necessary certificates. Fourth, the real problems of North Bengal are of under-development and under utilisation of its economic potentials.⁶⁴ New avenues of employment could be opened through increased investment in industries, agriculture, railways and other fields. Thus, the energies of the unemployed youth, now being exploited by anti-democratic forces of Indian or imperialist origin could be fruitfully channelised for their own purposes.⁶⁵ Finally, behind the Kamtapuri movement in North Bengal could be detected the secret hands of ISI, after bomb blast at the railways platform of New Jalpaiguri, claims it.⁶⁶ But, the KPP leadership has denied it has links with a militant outfit that calls itself the Kamtapur Liberation Army which is believed to have been involved in last month's bomb explosion at the New Jalpaiguri railway station.⁶⁷

VARIOUS RESPONSES

To rationalise the economic basis of ethnic harangue against outsiders/immigrants is not exceptional articulation of Kamtapuris, became a rhetoric with middle class or newly literate Rajbanshis due to prolonged exploitation, aggregation of grievances, humiliation etc. Regional imbalance and developmental disparities exist both at the state and sub-regional levels. Due to imbalance in developmental growth, if a sense of relative deprivation and aggression

complex out of it lead to the formation of politicized ethnicity and or communalisation of groups; then it, should have occurred more in the developing regions than in less developed or more developed part of it. The Indian Marxists have been victims of self-contradiction in interpreting the regional movements. The capitalist path of development with its inherent result the centralisation of power, consolidation of classes and contradiction in ruling classes or the effects of the working classes - remain the age old formula. The state autonomy movement may be traced back to either the contradictions among the ruling classes or efforts of the working classes, peasantry to fight for a democratic economy etc. The same author, however, attributes a special quality to state autonomy movement in West Bengal like Kamtapuri, which is supported to be different from other autonomy movements. Another Marxist theoretician interpreted language politics and fight for linguistic states as essentially a step in combatting the feudal aspects of the society. Subsequent developments in language situation in the states and sub-regions, and the rise of ethnic regionalism as a reaction to marginalisation, despeasantisation, and pauperisation caused by development (termed as ethnocide), have exposed the irrelevance of conventional Marxist approach towards the ethno-regional problems.

The age-long Leninist concept of right to self-determination of the exploited nations has also been upheld by the Marxists. The CPI adopted this theory to demand the creation of provinces on the basis of natural homelands to form linguistically and culturally homogenous national units with the right of secession. The Muslims, Sikhs, Gorkhas, Rajbanshis were considered as exploited nations. Thus, the demands for Pakistan, Sikhistan, Gorkhastan, Rajbanshistan, Kamtapuristan were supported by CPI(ML) and CPI. The sovient model of federation viz. setting up a supra-natural state on

the basis of this theory was supposed to be the solution for multi-ethnic, multi-lingual states. The four-tier federal system of USSR is composed of 185 communities having 145 languages federated in the Union of Russian Republic, the independent Republics and autonomous Regions. In theory, the republic possess the right to secede, and nationalities' right to their own language and culture is secured. But due to the monolithic character of the ruling communist party and supreme power of the party's politbureau and central committee over all other institutions, the Soviet federation became a mere paper document. Not only Stalin, even Khrushchev also accelerated the drive for Russification in the non-Russian republics and aggravated the ethnic problems. Stalin considered nationality as a historical category and the tribal group as ethno-graphical category. The recent ethnic upsurges in non-Russian republics and the emergence of independent there Baltic republics have invalidated his categorisation. In course of discussing the ethnic identity movements in the sub-regions, we should show how this ethno-graphical category has taken a historical dimension and nation-nationality has been reduced to a category of ruling ethnos.⁶⁸

Today's Kāmtapuri agitation related with ethnic issues, is an important to emphasis dialectical analysis where Mr. Asit Roy accepted many socio-political scientists opinions to enlarge ethnic elaboration as so for viz, Mr. Souran Basu, Santosh Rana, Leader of CPI(ML), Prof. Partha Chatterjee, Calcutta Centre for Social Science and a prominent Research Scholar, Mr. Ranjit Sen. Regarding question of ethnicity, "It is not question arises to give right of self-determination to Indian as a separate union, because there is no exploiter group, like Jurist Russian group. Demand for autonomous administration of Kashmir, North-East region is a democratic elements

ethically. To recognise the self determination of Tribe helps to improve socio-economic and ethno-cultural condition". Mr. Santosh Rana clearly stated that since 1947, who captured the power were higher Hindus caste Hindi dominated people exploited on these scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classesx which is a great hindarance to form a new nation with in Union. The vital obligation of labour class is to support ethnic articulations without condition which are asserted within democratic set up; says Bholanath Bandhapadhyaya, exploited ethnic groups of people will gain the common political support. ⁶⁹

On the other hand, the Indian National Congress, as a party, had that multiple factional composition which used to accommodate and articulate various castes, ethnic groups' interest demands. But that composite structure has been disrupted due to various pressures and developments since 1971. The organisational network for various group interest articulation has been replaced by a vote bank based on charisma, money power and force. For this reason, as far instance, the State Congress in West Bengal had no role but to remain an observer to regional movements viz. Gorkhaland, Kamtapuri etc.⁷⁰

So, the whole gamut of nation-nationality, ethnicity complex has been set by interpretations, decisions of the authorities. The Kamtapuri agitation, movement for ethnic demands often start in a low key. The state reprisals and domineering attitude of the majority community induce the agitators to take recourse to more militant on their demands. This situation of confrontation actually gives rise to assertion of regional, sub-regional distinctness often proximating to nationalism. The Kamtapuri cases would illustrate this. The interaction of various indentities - ethnic, linguistic,

regional, religious often in mixed forms may lead to emotional, violent outburst in sub-regional demands, Dr. Sajal Basu considered to be contrary to unity and integrity of the country. The Rajbanshi and the Kamtapur, inspite of so many nativist separatist outburst, have expressed their commitment to unity and integrity of the country. As we have experienced, the localised outburst could be accommodated when sincere attempts were made. Even the staunchest expressions have been absorbed in the process. There is no reason, why the authorities should not adopt a consensual approach instead of a confrontational one, to accommodate and provide autonomy to institution and social identities of Rajbanshis.

Kamtapur movement is not fundamentally a problem of law and order, but one of collective existential alienation. Hence it would also be a grave error to try to suppress the movement with the help of the armed forces, or to marginalize them through the bestowal of minimal local autonomy and pseudo-philanthropic economic "packages."⁷¹

The first correct step for solving the problem of Kamtapuri agitation in North Bengal is to recognise the truth that the movements derive their strength for historically accumulated collective grievances which are often rooted in genuine deprivation and injustice, economic, political and cultural. The logical corollary of this recognition of reality would be to end such dominance and deprivation through a radical and equalitarian restructuring of the developmental and distributive strategies of the government, with special reference to the ethnic minorities.

The second necessary step is to adopt a pluralist instead of an integrationist approach to the Kamtapuris ethnic problem. This group of

people does have historically shared common social and cultural bonds which they try jealously to preserve and defend. "It is wholly undemocratic as well as unaesthetic to pulverise these bonds in the name of national integration", says Joyantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, "..... the ethnic minorities have to be accepted as equal units in a federal, preferably confederal, state structure rather than unwanted and peripheral adjuncts of a centralised state system".⁷²

Finally, the demand for statehood of Kamtapuri within the Indian Union should be placed in a proper historical and political perspective considering the historical and structural injustice as well as the administrative financial viability. In this context, the traditional theory of decentralization of power, have to be modified in order to accommodate the objective social reality of ethnic identities and formations. What is urgently needed is an objective assessment of the whole situation by all concerned, keeping in mind the greater interest of the nation as a whole. National policies should be properly evolved and directed towards this end.

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DUNGHORI MAO'

THAKUR PANCHANAN BARMAN

"CHAMKI UUTHILA DUKRON SUNI DUNGDHORI MAO.

DISA DUAR NAI, KHALI KULLAHAR, DHAKHA SANGSARARVAD.

BAP-BHAIAR GHAR, SOYAMIR KOLA, AAR-YAITASA NARI

THAKA

JOR KARIA NURIA GUNDA NIEYA YAITASA TAKA.

BARA VANGIYA, SOYAMIK MARIA, BON JUIK DHAKKA THUIA.

PAI DHARA NARI, TAKA BHANGI NIGAI, MUKAT KAPAR DIA

HIYA FATA TAR, ATRAN OTHA, SAONA KAKAR CHADI

DUKRON TAR TAO SUNA YAY, AKAS-BATAS VADI

BATA JAOYA GULA JARO HAYA, KALI FAL FAL KARI CAI

DUNG DORI MAO KORDHAY HAKIA GYNE DHARIA YAY."

(Started, Dungdhor, My mother, harking scream. Looked the go of the day.

The gangstar, a the hoodlums looting a spouse

From her hut, lawful and social.

The hut of her husband, father and brother,

killing husband, breaking fence, pushing

sister and daughter,

And destroying the pole the spouse clinging to, Month shut up with cloth.

Yet, her cry, heart rending, bursting out through the cloth.

Is heard in air and sky.

Dull males thronged staring meekling.

But, Dungdhor, my mother, rushed in wrath,

chargling with a mighty gyne in her hand.)

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