

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION - THE PROBLEM-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Regionalism is a fairly widespread phenomenon of Indian politics. In spite of the political re-organisation of the country on linguistic basis we take note of this surprising fact that as more and more development programmes are carried out by the Central and State Governments, regional disparities become more and more marked and engender a sense of cumulative deprivation in the minds of the people of certain areas called "regions". Movements going on for the creation of a separate unit by carving a part of the existing state or states draw sustenance from the factor of ethnicity or socio-economic grievances. One may also take note of agitations for substituting existing arrangements (like Regional Committees or Development Boards or Autonomous Council or, Council for Development) by some appropriate agencies for the betterment of the lot of the people living in a particular area described as a 'Region'. Thus, "a region acquires an altogether new dimension in the states spectrum of politics and government.

The term 'region' leads itself to a multiplicity of meanings, the only common thread which runs through them is a basic cultural assumption that it is relatively smaller in size than the area in the context of which it is used.¹ It may mean a part of a state or states looking like a zone or a large tract of a land specially distinguished by special features like climate effect, cultural make up, linguistic pattern etc. A region is marked by maximum homogeneity within drawing sustenance from language, dialects, social

composition, ethnicity, demographic composition, geographical continuity; cultural pattern, economic life, historical antecedents, political background, psychological make up or recognised consciousness of group identity etc. The essential point is that a region is characterized more than anything else by a widely shared sentiment of 'togetherness' in the people, internalised from a wide variety of sources which might even include common prosperity, camaraderie developed in a common struggle etc. and, what is more, a separateness from others. In short, the facts of 'diversity' and 'disparity' feed and sustain regionalism.

Regionalism

Regionalism has wider and narrower connotations. In the former sense, it covers the case of a movement directed against 'centralism'; in the latter sense, it refers to the attachment of the people with the interests of local or tropical significance and in that respect it becomes analogous to localism or sectionalism.² It is true that regionalism is fed or sustained by many factors - social, economic, political, topographical, demographic, cultural, etc. not one but several of them in combination play their part in this direction. The factor of 'diversity' makes the people of a particular area of region distinct from others and the factor of 'disparity' inculcates in their minds a sense of social and economic injustice. The twin effect is that the people feeling bound to certain ties come out to fight for the sake of their 'regional' cause and their behaviour in this regard illustrates constructive as well as destructive dimensions of the case of regionalism. The regional concept has two sets of components :

(a) Objective

and

(b) Subjective.

Objective components include territory along with physical and man-made environments. It may be regarded as a segment of geography content. Subjective components, on the other hand, include historical background, traditions, beliefs, languages and ways of living. It may be regarded as a "Social Trust" content.

DETERMINANTS OF REGIONALISM

The determinants of regionalism may be classified :

- i. Man-made environment complex;
- ii. Historical forces;
- iii. Cultural identity;
- iv. Political pulls;
- v. Linguism; and
- vi. Differential socialization

The groups in regions become disaffected by various factors. They are :

- i. Expanding educational output and limited job opportunities.

- ii. Impact of egalitarianism, activating divisive primordial sentiments.
- iii. Adult franchise freezing and strengthening existing parochialism.

We have a vast sub continent as a geographical entity. It is natural to have different regions integrated by national boundaries, and inhabited by people with long histories, having their own languages and with different ways of living. Further they have different stages of economic development and variegated political ecology. We recognized this factor of diversity very early in our national struggle. The Congress Party had its own linguistic provinces as their basis and had adopted Hindi or Hindustani with Devnagri and Persian scripts as their official language. In the post-independence period, however, under the stress of various political and old historical urges, we resorted to the formation of linguistic states, and yet tried to popularize Hindi in Devnagri script as our national language. In order to satisfy the linguistic 'lib' of our people, we have also a scheduled of other national languages. All our States and Union Territories, which may assume statehood later, are bound together by a unified political system working under a changing constitution infused with a determined will to keep the Centre strong and to keep intact the physical unity and social integrity and at the same time recognizing the States as the basic units on which the edifice of nation-state would stand.

Regionalism militates against nationalism in many ways specially when a country is in the process of transition from the old to the new ways of development. In Indian regionalism did develop more after independence and has led some problems particularly :

- i. Linguism and culture-centredness which strengthened the tendency

to preserve and promote the language and culture of the area;

ii. Increasing assertion of State's rights as opposed to the Union Government powers, resulting sometimes into sub-national groups developing confrontation between the Union and the States and between States and states on political and economic issues;

iii. evolution of regional parties with regional programmes leading to inter-regional rivalries;

iv. Propagation of 'Son of the Soil' theory - a discriminatory type of regional ethno - centrism. The potential dangers of regionalism have been inherent and the partition gave us sufficient warning on this point. We have taken care of the danger of further secessions of regions while framing our constitution and have tried to plug the gaps through the recent constitutional amendments. Nevertheless sub-surface potential dangers are still alive and are raising their heads. We may be able to contain regional parties and reduce regional tensions to an extent, but we cannot eliminate them together, particularly on account of the regional variations and consequent degrees of social mobilization and economic development. It is difficult to say if we can easily confront with the linguistic cultural loyalties, Centre-State disputes and "Sons of the Soil" theory.

The problem of identity crisis arises because,

i. There are no fixed spatial boundaries of language and culture as they inter interperse into each other, after leaving some segments of linguistic minorities into other large units.

ii. One cannot ignore economic inroads into cultural unity, leading

to a wide gap between two sub-nations of the rich and the poor.

iii. There is no ready fit between the area of a State and the identity of a specific community. No one community of language, caste, culture, way of life is fully contained into a well-defined area.

iv. In the process of rapid development, there is always a tendency on the part of the small community to withdraw from the race as it cannot keep pace with the rate of development of more prosperous communities.³

In some cases, regionalism is enmeshed with sub-regionalism and infra-nationalism. There may be a region within a region and when the demands of regionalism are satisfied the demands of sub-regionalism surface themselves. The Telegu-speaking people struggle for a separate state and their own and they could get Andhra Pradesh after cutting a part of the Madras State in 1953. So, the movements for a Gorkhaland and Kamtapur after cutting a part of West Bengal or, of a Bodoland after cutting a part of Assam, or of a Jharkhand after cutting parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal may be termed as sub-regional expressions. The dimensions of the politics of regionalism in our country are informed by these important factors :

First, India is a very big country having marked social and cultural diversity that has its essential impact on the political and economic condition. The fact of regional economic imbalance enables the leaders of a particular region to raise demands for the creation of a separate State. To a very large extent, regionalism is linguistically bound.⁴

Second, imbalanced economic development plays its own part in this direction. The regional leaders exploit this factor and launch a movement

as Kamtapur for the kamtapuris, or that all foreigners' should go out of UTTARBANGA.

Third, the factor of social injustice plays the same part. The social backwardness, coupled with that of economic degradation, inculcates in the minds of the suffering people a sense of struggle for the cause of their own area or region. For this region, scheduled castes (Rajbanshis) and scheduled tribes and Native Muslims of North Bengal, demand Kamtapur, or, the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling area demand Gorkhaland.⁵

ETHNIC SEPARATISM

Ethnic separatism within nation-states has been a sepctacular global phenomenon in the last quarter of the 20th century. The break up of Pakistan, the disintegration of the soviet Union, the ethnic conflict in Russia, and the fragmentation of Yugoslavia are only extreme examples of the manifestation of this centrifugal force in contemporary national and international politics. On a somewhat lower scale, it is present in Iraq and Turkey, Northern Ireland, Canada, several African States including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Zaire, Sudan and Rwanda-Burundi; Indonesia, Philippines, and even among the indigenous populations of the USA and Australlia. Nearer India's borders, separatist ethnic movements exist in Pakistan, China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma and Sri-Lanka and inn some cases overlap with segments of India's domestic polity. An analysis of field data in most cases of ethnic separatism across the world tends to show, however, that mere ethnicity is seldom the only cause of the separatist ethnic movements. In every case, there has

been a deep sense of historical injustice, including political domination, economic exploitation and cultural oppression. Ethnic identity has generally acted only as a cementing force for organized resistance against perceived injustices historically meted out by the nation-state.

Another important lesson of global ethnic separatism is that the appeal to nationalism, or even the use of force, no longer succeeds in permanently suppressing subnational ethnic resistance. Where a sizeable ethnic population has a strong sense of deprivation for a long period of time, the centrifugal push of separatism often proves to be stronger than the centripetal pull of the state. Due to several historical reasons, ethnic separatism cannot be suppressed by brute armed force in today's world as easily as in the past. The first is the decline in the ideological appeal of nationalism, brought about by the technological shrinkage of the global and the growth of political consciousness throughout the world. Another reason is the global revolution in information technology, which makes the international community instantly aware and critical of major human rights violations anywhere in the world. The information revolution also enables the separatist ethnic communities to establish contacts with similar movements in neighbouring countries, as well as with foreign governments and non-governmental organizations. Resistance is also facilitated by the easy availability of sophisticated weapons in the clandestine international arms bazaar, which flourishes under the nearly unconcealed approval and encouragement of the major arms selling states. Finally, the fear of UN sanctions or peace-keeping operations acts as an ultimate deterrent to states using excessive force against its own people.

India's problem of ethnic separatism has deep historical roots in the

oppression and exploitation of all non-Aryan peoples, including the Mlechchhas in the North West, the Nishadas and Shavaras in the forests, and the Kiratas in the hills, by the Brahminical civilization of ancient India. In some ways the present ethnic tension in India is a continuation of this historical tension between the centre and the periphery throughout the ancient, medieval and British periods. In other words, there is a large historical legacy of oppression, exploitation, and alienation of peripheral ethnic minorities in India. Be that as it may, ethnic separatism in India today cannot be considered in isolation from the general global trends. Some of the separatist movements may contain secessionist trends within themselves, as among sections of people in Kashmir, Punjab and the North East. Some others may be centred around the more moderate demands for statehood within the Indian Union, such as the movements for Gorkhaland, Uttarkhand/Kamtapur, Jharkhand etc.⁶

Traditional identities of communities were a multilayered. No single definition would exhaust the complex self description of a community organised on caste, region and sectarian lines. This sense of tradition or what Sudipta Kaviraj describes a fuzzy identities would not simply permit the communities to inhabit a conceptual world from where they would contemplate action on the basis of the numerical strength of its members, 'Enumerated identities' which emerged for example with the introduction of the census was to change this idea of multilayered identified decisively. Neologism which followed the redescription of caste identities shows how colonial policies were able to single-mindedly direct the energies of the communities to reassess their position within the social hierarchy in terms of the numerical strength of its members and the economic advantage which would accrue from it.

The question of identity formation is a matter of great political importance since 'redefinitions of the collective self involve drawing of lines of enmity and alliance in politics on very different points of the social world.' The text raises an important point that it ought to have been a major concern of political scientists to ask why people in Telengana believe "that they were primarily poor peasants in the late fifties and primarily residents of Telengana twenty years later", because depending on who they choose to be people decisively change the course of political movement and the density of nation particularly in the Third World.⁷ Dipankar Gupta's essay on "Ethnicity and Politics" show how different mode of identification communal regional, linguistic and nativist have significantly given rise to the separatist movements along these lines in different parts of India. In the mid-fifties Congress had sought to demarcate India administratively on linguistic lines. Before the sixties was over "the sons of the soil' began to demand" they be given the major right to work on the soil of their linguistic state and reap economic benefits their in without interference from people belonging to other linguistic communities." The Shiv Sena of the sixties and seventies, Assam movements of 1985 and Kamtapuri/Uttarkhand movements of 1980 belong to this genre of nativist movement.⁸ KPP's campaign for a separate state for the Rajbanshis for the constitutional recognition of the Kamtapuri language has found many sympathisers.⁹ The nativist movements demanded that the so called "sons of the soil" of a particular province should be given overwhelming preferences in jobs and other economic opportunities over those who had migrated to that province (or State) from another part of India.

On the issue of the nature of the Indian State, indeed on the nature of nation states as such, there have been contributions by many. Noteworthy

among them are Achin Vanaik (1990), Gupta (1990), Oomen (1990), Bhatt (1989) and Madan (1987). Achin Vanaik has probably paid the greatest attentions to this subject, through his views, as well shall see, an close to Gupta's which appeared around the same line.¹⁰ Vanaik begins by quoting Benedict Anderson who argues that nationalism is a "Collective State of mind", and it would be unwise to link it, as Stalin did, to a gross objective factor like language. But in India, Vanaik points out, the "Linguistic community as a linguistic community" did not so much precede the rise of nationalist consciousness and nationalist struggle as develop along with and through it. In other words, according to Vanaik, the political awareness of belonging to a linguistic community came into its own under the aegis of the national movement. On the other hand, language has not spurred such demand for separatism or, for the establishment of sovereign nationhood, as for most Indians, linguistic consciousness co-exist non-antagonistically with national consciousness.¹¹ Therefore to call a linguistic community a nationality gives a "principled character to the general conflict between centre and the states. It also makes it appear that the nation states should collapse along the lines that demarcate linguistic regions.

Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities* has recently given a fillip to this line of thinking. The imagining of India as a national community, Vanaik believes, is also a state of mind. Sub-national identities too exist but these subsequent identities," like casteism, regionalism, linguistic identity, etc., are "often of as recent vintage as the national identities they are supposed to oppose. Instead of seeing the conflict between the centre and the state in cultural and ethnic terms, it should rather be examined as an economic and political problem. Dipankar Gupta argues similarly, focussing on the fact that in the linguistic movements and in the sons of the soil agitations, the

centre was never really threatened. Indeed, for Gupta the recent round of regional movements should not be seen in solely cultural terms though the centre would perhaps like it to be viewed thus.¹²

As a matter of fact Paul Brass made a strong and pointed critique of the position as opposed to the primordialist one.¹³ The distinction in Brass between the primordialist and the instrumentalist point of view is very important. Brass had earlier criticized Francis Robinson when the latter states that the two nation theory out of which Pakistan emerged was in fact embedded in Islamic religion. In other words, the outcome had to be so - there was just no other alternative. Brass, on the contrary believes, that religion by itself does not exercise such a determining influence over politics. Quite on the contrary, one should instead study the manner in which religion is used very instrumentally by political agents. This criticism by Brass of Robinson could apply to Juergensmeyer as well.¹⁴

Brass draws our attention to the fact that ethnic identities are variable, and hence his larger anti-primordialist point: there is nothing inevitable about an ethnic conflagration. Traditions are invented by elites, who, to use Lasswell's understanding, are "those who get the most of what there is to get." In Brass's view, the military officers, professionals, the landed and urban middle classes, are all members of the elite category. When ethnic identities are created and released by these manipulating elites, the identities are not pristine in character but are significantly distorted for combative purposes. The elites manipulate beliefs and values and distort them in order "to select only those which are politically useful rather than central to the belief system of the people in question." A little earlier he made the telling comment: "Elites seeking to mobilize the ethnic group against its rivals or against the

centralizing state, strive to promote a congruence of multiplicity of the group's symbol. Ethnic identities are thus consciously created and therefore they are also reversible.¹⁵

Communalism has been regarded by some as a force of tradition while others have attributed it to modernity. The text reproduces T.N.Madan's well known and controversial essay, "Secularism in Place", which had triggered off the debate about the viability of a secular state in a predominantly religious society. If one accepts Brass's position, even in its barest outlines, then the consequences of this view are considerable. It is not only goes against Madan's argument the religion determines politics, but states rather forcefully that the religious or ethnic markers of identifications that are politically relevant are outcomes of elite manipulation. In a curious way, we have, with Brass, Politics subsuming and encompassing religious and culture. Brass also shakes the earlier anthropological notion on the durability of cultural traditions. There are however, some problems with Brass's views. To begin with Brass does not have anything to say of the manner in which the state ethnicizes issues. This perhaps an unkind out for elsewhere Brass does attention how centralization and "unprincipled intervention", have made the Punjab issue so much worse. But this matter is not theoretically integrated into his analysis. Secondly, his understanding of the elite is far too commodious and wide - almost everybody is an elite. The focus should perhaps have been on how some people become political elites through successful manipulation of ethnic symbols.¹⁶

The text is an attempt to cover up the insufficiencies that arise when the deterministic models of political theories are applied in understanding large and complex problems like the crisis of Indian state. Reliance on multi-

causal explanation is offered as the only answer for an adequate understanding of Indian politics. There has never been an unanimity about what constitutes the crisis of Indian state; while Marxists have viewed the crisis as a failure of capitalism and democracy, scholars like Rajni Kothari have thought about the rise of violence and "criminalisation of Politics" as weakness of Indian State.¹⁷ Atul Kohli's work written from the perspective of political economy emphasizes on the "growing incapacity of political institutions to meet political demands from various assertive groups."¹⁸ Authors like Francine Frankel view the frequent challenges to Indian state in the form of separatist movements and armed uprising as the sign of the crisis of Indian state.¹⁹ But, a question that is left out is about the instrumentality of Indian state itself particularly in relation to civil society. While in Europe civil society emerged because the social groups demanded the lessening of state control over society, in India social groups came together to demand more attention from the state thereby demanding a strong state. Some of the demands for regional autonomy has been virtually a complaint against the state-neglect rather than against excessive state control. Atul Kohli's ideas on the nature of Third World State as interventionist in character in however a good attempt to capture this paradoxical character of the weakness of an excessively strong state.²⁰

In extreme cases, there the deprivation of ethnic communities has a long history and verges on domestic colonialism, even total independence cannot be completely ruled out in theory. Whether secession and independence are justified in a given case would depend on empirical field data rather than any supposedly sacrosanct theory and practice of nationalism, or an emotional commitment to "national unity and integrity". The size of the given ethnic population need not necessarily be large, if

geographically conditions are satisfied. For about 35 sovereign members of the UN are microstates with a population of less than one million each. But a deeper political problem lies elsewhere. Although separatist ethnic movements do struggle for their collective independence or autonomy, few of them have any radical programmes for the egalitarian restructuring of their societies. Most of these movements are led by professional politicians and elite groups motivated more by the prospect of a large share of the national cake for themselves than by the urge to create an egalitarian and just human society. The central power of the state often finds it convenient to co-opt the professional politicians and elite groups in a newly formed state, or an old state with special constitutional status, into the existing political system, thus leaving intra-ethnic conflict as well as economic distress at the grassroots level largely untouched. This appears to be the main reason for the residual ethnic separatism in Kashmir, the North-eastern states and North Bengal.²¹

Hence, neither autonomy nor independence by itself can be regarded as the ultimate solution to the existential distress and desolation of the ethnic minorities. But the issue of intra-ethnic justice is related to the broader question of justice in human society as a whole, and should not be used as an argument for denial of autonomy or independence to oppressed, exploited and alienated ethnic communities in India and other nation-states of the world.

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LEGACY AND FORMS OF REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

To make the case of Kamtapur agitation theoretically understandable, we may design a typology of regional movements with the content, form and background factors leading to such movements following with Dr. Sajal Basu's 'legacy and forms of regional movements.' We have already designated some common traits of ethno-lingual, nativist movements. Let us now frame these in a comparative way with reference to other regional movements that is shown in chart No. 1.1.

Chart No. 1.1

Legacy/Factor	Movement	Form/objectives
1. Pro-British background	Dravisthan Azad Punjab Khasi-Jaintia Federation. Kshtriya Andolon	Casteist/Secessionist Communal/Secessionist Communal nativist Casteist/Nativist
2. Weak Nationalist Link	Dravidaland Azad Punjab Punjabi Sabha Jharkhand Bangla Kheda Free Nagaland Mizo Union	Casteist/Secessionist Ethnic Ethnic Communal Secular/Nativist Communal/Nativist Tribal / Secessionist Ethnic Tribal Autonomy
3. Economic Issues	Jharkhand Telengana Mulki Kamtapuri Uttarkhand Shiv Sena	Parochial/Ethnic Development. Communal/Nativist Ethnic/Nativist Secular/Ethnic Existence Ethnic/Nativist

4. Identity	Punjabi Khalistan Bangla Kheda Anti-foreigners Jharkhand	Ethnic/Communal Domination Nativist/Ethnic Domination Ethnic/Cultural Resurgence.
	Gorkhaland	Nativist/Ethnic Recognisatioin.
	Kamtapuri	Nativist/Ethno-Cultural
5. Anti-outsider sentiment	Jharkhand	Economic/Ethno- Development.
	Gorkhaland	Ethnic/Nativist
	Mizoram	Nativist/Economic
	Kamtapuri	Economic/Nativist Cultural/Domination
	Assam Movement	Economic/Ethnic Domination.
6. Area Boundary Disputes	Linguistic State Demands Accession of Areas Resistance to recognition Border.	Cultural/Ethnic Solidarity Economic/Ethnic Linguistic Ethno-lingual/Communal
7. Politics and Cultural viz., weak trade Union movements, Weak exposures, Lack of reform.	All the regioinal sub- regioinal movements.	Ethno-lingual/Communal.

The legacy/factors as pro-British background and weak nationalist link of some movements have already been specified. The identity aspirations, or symbols of identity taken up in a movement may often be used with economic issues and factors of deprivation. Similarly, anti-outsider nativist sentiments may be mobilised in the context of economic demands. Such mixed use of symbols and identity with economic factors also taken place of different stages of the movement. Hence, treated separately having various forms and objectives. There has been interchange and overlapping in the form-objective of the movement and its factors. We may note that the same movement while categorised in different frame, e.g. identity and economic issues, has been given different content in its objective and nature. This could be possible since the concerned movements at different levels improvise symbols and issues that cut across the lines of ethno-religious, economic factors. And thereby overlapping becomes a common-phenomenon.²² the Kamtapuri movement may be cited for classification. The movement involves economic, identity, nativist, ethno-linguistic as the components.

Nativist movements, whether in Bombay, Assam, North Bengal exhibit some common features. Weiner and Katzenstein survey this field and point out the importance that demographic imbalance and migration play in stoking nativist fires.²³ The So called "nativist" whether they be Maharashtrian in Bombay, or Assamese in all of Assam, or Kamtapuris in all of Kamtapur/ North Bengal, feel threatened by the sheer magnitude of migration which make them into numerical minorities in what they consider to be their own home. The most agitated of the natives are those who belong to the middle

domination class and they take the lead in these nativist movements. This certainly true in the first phase of a nativist uprising, but gradually other socio-economic appeals, though in the initial articulation of the respective nativisms, there was little in them to motivate either the proletariat of Bombay or the rural populace of North Bengal.

While the modalities of the Kamtapur movement spread to rural areas in less clear, the fact that the Kamtapur agitationists turned much of their venom from the Bengali middle class to the Bengali Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, certainly played a decisive role in taking the movement to the villages in North Bengal, states of West Bengal. The migrants from Bangladesh were agriculturists and this, in all likelihood, threatened the native Kamtapur peasants, who saw large tracts of land going over to the hands of "outsiders."²⁴

It is important to take into account the socio-economic factors at each state in the career of such nativist movements, and in deed, of all ethnic movements, for they demonstrate all too clearly the mutability and transitory nature of the so-called ethnic phenomena.

GENERALISATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Effective administration has never extended to the areas of North Bengal. The Rajbanshis, the Koches, the Native Muslims maintained the existing levels of isolation and have largely refrained from interfering with the traditional factors and forces operating in the community environment in the region. It is a matter of convenience and administrative expediency

that they successively adopted a flexible policy. Communication facilities and contacts with other regions were intentionally kept at a minimum. It was only at the time of British India consolidation of the area, particularly during the 1940's, that the significance of the region was appreciated. Early attempts after independence - towards effective integration was thwarted by the absence of favourable transportational and communication networks and linkages, general economic backwardness and greater awareness. Initial efforts were resisted which gradually transformed into situations of socio-political instability. Continuation of the tension has had the potential to spread spatially across the region with substantial mobilisation (which it did). Elements in the social and political establishment provided adequate justification for the inherent conflicts in the society of the region.

This has compelled the central establishment to strive for systemisation and re-orientation of administration and development which constantly kept the specific nature of the problems of North Bengal. Initially, these moves were hesitantly received and were viewed as a step towards domination. Emergent responses enabled the sectional elements to accelerate the demands for separation; those are suggestive of the resistance for alternative centres of authority and decision-making. These indicate periodic fusion and fission between alternatives centres of authority, control and decision-making. Inroads made by administrative a development measures have revealed the inadequacies in the form of adequate and necessary resources in a major part of the region. It is at this point that the balance between the centre(s) and the periphery(ies) is struck. This is a favourable platform on which integrative factors operate through political and economic measures. One can clearly discern function and operation of centrifugal tendencies which constantly polarised the inhabitants and territories. As a result, region frequently convulsed and succumbed to the

designs of forces of extreme sub-nationalism.

This situation as it developed indicated the role of destabilisation processes in eroding the administrative, politico-economic and territorial fabric. Administrative/reorganisation not only accentuated the existing disparities and inequalities in distribution but also highlighted the complexities and inadequacies of the territories. This encouraged inter and intra-formation differences and led for the cycle of mobilisation, confrontation and resolution vis-a-vis within, between and outside. This suggested that the policies and the associated process/fell short of imperatives. Statistic considerations transformed local and regional dimensions. This calls for a re-appraisal of the perspective on which the notion of regionalism is based and as applicable to the region of North Bengal.

In this context, quote R. Gopalakrishnan have successfully argued the need for reviewing the existing territorial arrangements from the point of view of size, social cohesion, effective administration, efficient centre-state relations leading to better development possibilities and so on. These aspects were reinforced by the fact that power was a great modifier of positions particularly in regard to regional accommodations. The threat of assertion of identities at the local level, came from population groups though distinct were assumed to have been assimilated in the dominant regional strains. Today, with the pattern of implementation of policies and the processes of political competition and participation alongwith penetration of the centre have opened up possibilities of assimilation through politicians. But, those have led to building up a separate identities that have led to rising expectations. Under the present set up, these demands cannot be accommodated for fear of greater fragmentation. Instead, these have given

way to fractionalisation and fragmentation of the society.

These demands have found frequent expression in the respective political force, organisations and related activities, who put forth claims for region-based territorial group identity at the cost of other variables and conditions. Thus, today, the scenerio in the North Bengal clearly indicated the revival of primordial factors rather than one of class politics that results from development. The resultant ideological positions adapted by the different groups proved to have inadequate support base to cope up with the pressure exerted by their respective territorial locations and resource endowments. This had compelled quite a few groups to adopt a rigid stand and extreme positions. What was in fact required by these groups was autonomy that sought resolution to the economic problems with wider politico-territorial and social ramifications.

This then suggested that the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious characteristics were superimposed on the complex geographical setting of North Bengal. These exhibited several layers of identity and expressions. Each of these contained potentials to encourage fissiparous tendencies as well as scope for effective consolidation and accommodation. These aspects revolved around how, whether, and to what extent metamorphosis from social and geographical plains to political expressions had taken place in North Bengal. It is then obvious that :

(a) ideologies and organisations exerted continuous influence on the polity'. As a result, their reactions and perceptions were radically transformed. This introduced competition in political and economic spheres and had impact on the individual sub-groups perception about itself and

those surrounding it;

(b) this intensified demands and expectations for man power and other resources. The pressure to extend and expand welfare, educational governmental jobs and other developmental activities along with increased assistance to non-productive sections had consistently enlarged its scope. The marginal increase in infra-structural facilities had corresponding influence on development ; and

(c) there has been multiplication of efforts to mobilise the localities, regions and the peripheries against natural centres of power.

The aforesaid aspects and their explanation to account for the differences across the region and provide a broader perspective on which the federal accommodations and aspects of integration at different scales can be arrived at.²⁵ The following concluding section is an effort towards this.

The post independence situation in the North Bengal of State of West Bengal has been dominated by ethnic resurgence, strengthening of accessibility conditions, developmental activities and administrative reorganisation, among others failed to check this tendency. It then becomes obvious to seek answers for questions like : why has there been a resurgence of ethnic identity ? In normal circumstances, the answers were usually bound with the explanations of political and economic situations and of inequalities and sub-regional disparities. In addition to this, for the complex geographic mosaic of North Bengal, explanations included the impact of the historical patterns, integrative processes and the politicisation of ethnic elements. This

has been compounded by the emergence of a distinct middle identity as a factor in political, social and economic relations in North Bengal.

GEOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE OF NORTH BENGAL

Located between 27°13' N to 24°40'20" N latitudes and between 89°54'35" E to 88°47'40" longitudes, North Bengal region (the study area) comprises the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Malda, South dinajpur and North Dinajpur. It has an area of 22316 sq.km. and a population about 120,36,292, male population is 62,36,108 and female population is 58,00,118. The density of population in North Bengal is 560/sq.km. The density of population is the highest in Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal is 560. The density of population is the highest in Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal (Census 1991) and lowest in Darjeeling district. The most number of population is Rajbanshis in CoochBehar and lowest in Darjeeling. 86% of population locates at rural and only 14% at urban area. the most of the population living stands on rural base. Only 31.19 percent population is scheduled castes and 10.47 percent population is scheduled tribe of total population of North Bengal. There are 59 sub-castes list of scheduled castes and 38 sub-castes list of scheduled tribes. The highest number of population is Rajbanshi of the scheduled caste stands 17,43,646 (census report 1981). The highest number of population is the Oraon is followed by the munda of the total scheduled tribes.²⁶ The distribution of population, sex ratio, growth rate, density and percentage of SC/ST in State has shown in Table No. 1.1 and 1.2.

Table No. 1.1

Distribution of population, sex ratio, growth rate and density of population of districts

SL.No. State/Dist.	Population			Sex ratio female per 1000 males		Density of population per km ²		Decimal growth rate of population.		Literacy of total population		
	Persons	Males	Females	1981	1991	1981	1991	1971-81	1981-91	Persons	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
West Bengal	67982732	35461898	32520834	911	917	615	766	+23.11	+24.55	32719340	20053418	12665922
Koch Behar	2158169	1115169	1042172	935	934	523	637	+25.28	+21.28	811456	522619	288837
Jalpaiguri	2789827	1447106	1342721	910	928	356	448	+26.55	+25.96	1046127	675407	370720
Darjeeling	1335618	694687	640931	888	923	325	424	+31.02	+30.40	683,360	392,224	291,136
W.Dinajpur (North and South at present)	3132374	1622679	1509695	937	930	449	585	+29.31	+30.25	1006380	653,534	352,846
Malda	2633942	1358989	1274953	949	938	544	706	+26.00	+29.63	751115	495829	255286

Source : Census of India 1991 : West Bengal provisional population totals; Paper I. of 1991 H. Chak Nastry, Directory of Census Operations, West Bengal.

Table No. 1.2

Percentage distribution of total population of the members of SC/ST in State/District in 1981

State/District	% of SC/ST to total population	% of SC to total population	% of ST to total population	Total SC Population			Total ST Population		
				Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
West Bengal	27.62	21.99	5.63	12000768	6231795	5768973	3070672	1559288	1511384
Koch Bihar	50.46	49.85	0.57	883084	455877	427207	10105	5310	4795
Jalpaiguri	56.81	34.61	22.20	766498	398945	367553	491791	252842	238949
Darjeeling	29.00	14.25	14.75	145942	76653	69289	151073	77889	73184
W.Dinajpur (North & South at present)	33.39	28.57	10.82	687094	335006	332088	260160	132915	127245
Malda	24.43	16.89	7.54	343089	176019	167070	153300	74956	78344

Source : Census of India 1981: Series 23, W.B. Part II B, Primary Census Abstract: S.N.Ghosh of Indian Administration Service, Director of Census operation, West Bengal.

ECOLOGICAL SETTINGS AND INTERACTION

Location, accessibility and geographical setting played a significant role in shaping the pattern of interaction in North Bengal. Diversity in human geography displayed two important traits in the interaction processes - one that applied to the inhabitants of the region and other that applied to the elements from the outside of the region. This moulded the perception of the inhabitants over space and time. Traditional characters alongwith forms of religious practices reinforced political and social orders in terms of organisations, institutions and ideology. These developed in isolation. Salient features of the inhabitants can be summarised as to represent.

(i) different terrain conditions, lack of accessibility and limited resources potentials and actual ;

(ii) primitive and low level technology applications indicated by large scale shifting cultivation, suggested its impact on the development of political, social and economic organisations of the native population groups and sub-groups. This exerted significance influence on structural and hierarchican content of the respective systems and sub-systems ;

(iii) isolation and inaccessibility led to limited level of contacts and interaction with elements outside their respective environs;

and

(iv) distinct nature of dependence and constant struggle to maintain a constant source of replenishments.²⁷

In today's India regional political identities are clearly manifested. A coalition of regional parties in the present government at the centre, demands for separate states, acceptance of Uttarkhand by the Prime Minister, armed confrontations in the North eastern region are glaring examples.²⁸

Such a sectarian attitude of intolerance has percolated even to the sphere of languages. The principles of formation of linguistic states was adopted by almost all the parties. However, several languages and dialects, used from generation to generation within the states, were not given recognition and necessary support for natural development.²⁹ The languages and dialects of the dominant sections were imposed on the others against their will. Similarly several ethnic and religious groups did not get recognition and support from the state authorities for their economic prosperity, cultural development and security.³⁰

Research Questions :

The demand for creation of a "Kamtapur" state is concerned with identical economic factors and inputs giving rise to deprivation sentiment which are conventionally said to be responsible for raising the nativist, anti-outsider movement do not always behave in a parochial way. The study seeks to answer the following questions :

i) Why do demands of the Uttarkhanda Dal on the one hand and the Uttar Banga Tapashellee Jati O Adivasi Sangathan on the other differ when projecting regional grievances ?

ii) What are the causes behind the emergence of demands for creation

of a "Kamatapur"?

iii) What was position of Hita Sadhani Sabha's movement on issue 'MERGERING' of Cooch Behar ?

iv) What was the nature of political support base ?

v) What have been the Historical compulsions behind the 'Kshatra' movement?

vi) To what extent have social issues been sources of this movement?

vii) What are the economic considerations that have led to the emergence and subsequent consolidation of the movement ?

viii) How far have the opposition parties been able to direct this movement towards their own advantage?

ix) What is the nature of leadership problems within this movement ?

(x) How far has the movement been successful in implementing its demands ?

Objective of the proposed study :

The proposed study attempts to analyse the reasons behind the movement and relate them to the historical and developmental context of India, specifically, it attempts to investigate :

- i) Historical as well as ethno-linguistic and caste factors ;
- ii) The socio-economic background of the movement ;
- iii) The ethnic, linguistic and identity factors have given rise to the emergence of this movement;
- iv) The role of the government policies and the impact of political leadership;
- v) The overall impact of these movements on the governance of the country.

The scheme is therefore a multi-factor instead of a single-factor analysis. It seeks to examine the following issues in the context of "Kamtapur" or "Uttarkhand" movement;

- i) Constellation of forces that are operating behind such movements.
- † ii) Growth of regional movements coincides with uneven development that generates a feeling of deprivation.
- iii) The relevance of the theories of Colonial economic order and development, alienation from basic sources, institutional structure and conflict managing role of the political parties.

Overview of the Existing Literature

Generally speaking, there are some important works on ethnic and regional movements in India by some foreign and Indian scholars. But there is no specific micro-level study on this specific subject. Hence, the present study seeks to bridge a long standing research gap in this very vital aspect which affects the socio-political process at this region.

Of all the studies, the following works deserve special mentioning : The politics of Developing Areas by G.A. Almond and James Coleman, Region and Nation in India by Paul Wallace (ed), Sons of the Soil : Migration of Ethnic Conflict in India by Myron Weiner, Modernization and Development, The Search for Alternative Paradigms by S.C.Dube, Ethnicity and Political Development by Enise (ed), Political Order in Changing Societies by S. Huntington, Rethinking Development : State Against Democracy by Rajni Rothari, Strong Societies, weak states, state-society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World by J. Migdal, Social Movements and Social Transformation by M.S.A. Rao, The State and poverty in India by Atul Kohli, Class, Caste and Politics: An Empirical Profile of Social stratification in Modern India by Atul Bhatt, Reactions to Reservations for other Backward Classes: Mandal Commission Report by R.K.Hebsur.

It should be mentioned that most of these works deal with the problem from a general macro level perspective. A general kind of theorization has been sought to be made. But the present study seeks to analyse the issues from a micro-level position. Hence, there will dearth of secondary source materials on this issue. Not only that, a the present problem has to be analysed in a proper historical and contextual setting. It hasw a number of peculiarities which cannot be found elsewhere. Quite obviously, greater emphasis has

been placed on the primary source materials and the works done by the local leaders, essentially those who have observed the problem from a close quarter. Information and data for the present study have, therefore, been collected from the published and unpublished documents, party resolutions and other related documents.

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4. An American writer remarks that regionalism of India is linguistically bound. If one flies from the city of Bombay to Delhi and on to Calcutta and Madras, one will hear at the airports at least four different languages : Marathi in Bombay, Hindi (or Urdu) in Delhi, Bengali in Calcutta and Tamil in Madras.

If the traveller had linguistic ears, he probably would overhear a dozen or more other languages or major dialects spoken by persons who were residents near each of these cities." India's Political System, p. 41 S See Bhjaratan Kumarappa (ed); Linguistic Provinces by M.K.Gandhi, pp. 14-15.

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