

CHAPTER - II

BACKGROUNDS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE REGIONAL MOVEMENT : IN THE CONTEXT OF UKD.

Development has been the foremost aspiration of all human societies. Development is intended to raise the socio-economic standard and the life style of the people, particularly of the deprived sections of the society. The ultimate aim of development should be to improve the quality of life of the people and to insure social justice. A healthy process of development in a society calls for constant planning and monitoring of development programmes with a view to harmonising the desired objectives of the society with the available resources.¹

Infact, present era is an era of movement par excellence, for developing the socio-economic condition and life style of the people of North Bengal, "Uttarkhanda Dal " was formed on the 5th July, 1969 with the demand for a separate state, named as 'Kamatapur' or 'Kamatabehari' state within Indian Union carved out of six districts of North Bengal viz, CoochBehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda.² North Bengal is a 'Region of India' which is the home of the Koch - Rajbanshis and inhabited by more than 65 percent Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. After the attainment of independence, it was expected that due - care would be taken to develop the region for the benefit of the indigenous people who are weak and poor, basically farmers. But, it has painfully been noted that Government permitted free influx of people from outside into this regions threatening the social cultural, ethnic identity and economic conditions of the original inhabitants, all

these have affected the very survival of the indigenous people inspite of their past heritage and continuing contributions to India.³ With these few words, the UKD desires to lay down the grounds for its demands for a separate state with in the Indian Union.⁴ The grounds may be grouped under following heads, viz - (i) Historical, (ii) Social, (iii) Cultural, (iv) Economic, (v) Political and (vi) others.

HISTORICAL GROUNDS :

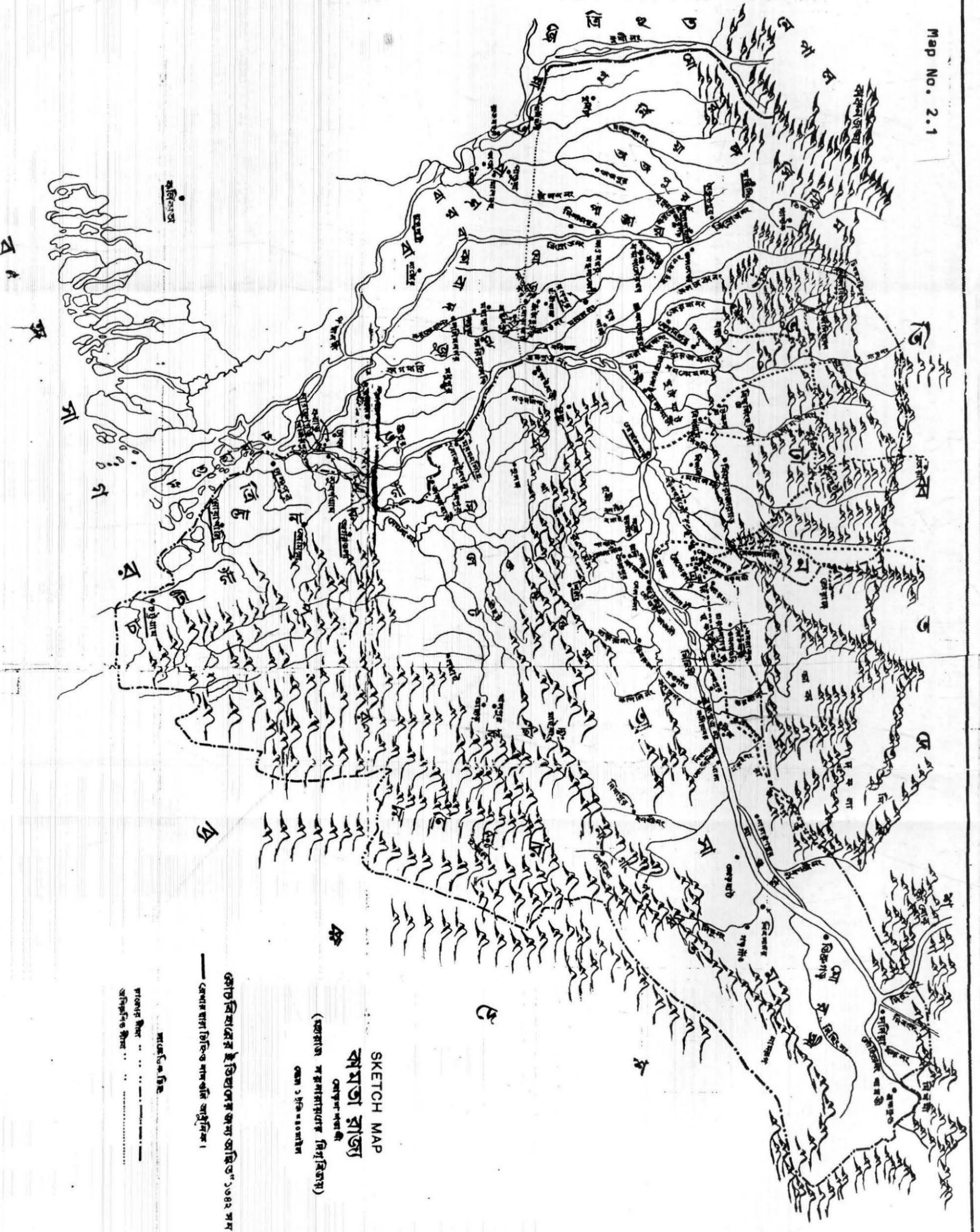
From the historical point of view, this part of country has been wanting to be brought under a separate state viz Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Uttar (North) Dinajpur, Daskshin (South) Dinajpur and Malda districts in North Bengal along with a vast area of land now included in Bangladesh, in the state of Assam and Bihar in India and in Nepal. The demand for a separate state of Uttarkhand is not only of the UKD, but it was also Bihar's demand for Uttar Khanda State. In the second week of May 1955, Dr. Kunzru and Dr. K. M. Pannikar (Towards September 1953 the Government of India decided to appoint a high power ' States Recorgánisation Commission' consist of Justice Fazal Ali as chairman and Dr. Hriday Nath Kunzru and Dr. K.M. Pannikar as members to consider the question of redistribution of provinces) came to Darjeeling to hear West Bengal leaders' views on Behar's claim over the three districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and creation of a new state to be known as Uttarkhand. The absence of a direct link with Malda was given as an additional ground by Bihar for cession of it with Bihar as a counter of West Bengal's demand. Dr. Roy discussed with members of the Commission for 90 minutes and submitted a supplementary memorandum on the question of reconstructing West Bengal's boundaries by adding some parts of Bihar

and Assam. Regarding Bihar's claim for creation of a few state to be known as Uttarkhanda he pointed out that the total population of three districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar was about 20 lakhs in which the Nepalis numbered only 1.35 lakhs where as Bengali speaking population constituted 61 percent of the total population of the area. On the basis of these statistics he rejected the case of Bihar for the creation of an Uttarkhand state and Malda continued to remain as the gateway of Bengal, by establishing a direct link with North Bengal districts by means of acquiring necessary territories from Kishangunge and establishing the road-cum-rail Farakka Bridge. ⁵

The history of the North Bengal started with Naraksura of the mythological era. His descendant Bhagadutta was borther-in-law of Durjodhana of the Kaurava dynasty of the Mahabharat age. ⁶ It had accepted by the International History Conference held at New Delhi on 16-17th December, 1979, the battle of Kuruskhetra was a historical fact and hence the personalities involved in the battle of Kuruskhetra were historical personalities, Bhagadutta participated in the Battle of Kuruskhetra on the Kaurava side and hence he was a historical personality and was the King of Prag - Jyotishpur the then name of the Kingdom ruling over this area. The dynasty of which Bhaskara Barman was the most renowned king and was contemporary to the emperor Harsa Vardhana. The great Chinese traveller Hiew-en-Tsang visited his kingdom and its Capital and spoke very highly of it. The Barman dynasty ruled till 619 AD. Where after the Kingdom went to the hands of a dynasty known as 'Kamateswara', the founder of the kingdom named as Kamatapura with its capital at Gossanimari now near Dinhat, the Sub-divisional town in Coochbehar district. The ruins of the capital and the great barrier built by the Kamta Kings around the capital are still there to attract travellers. The Kamata Kings ruled

over the area till 1528 AD. When the Kingdom changed hands and the Koch dynasty became the ruler. The Koch dynasty continued to rule the Kingdom in its different sizes, (once its jurisdiction extended upto Nowgong and Darang districts in Assam in the east, upto Sylhet and Bogura district in Bangladesh in the South, upto Purnea district in Bihar in the West and upto Bhutan in the north), Which was shown at Kamtapur Political Map, ^(2.1) till 1864 when the then Koch King accepted the suzerainty of the British crown maintaining its separate identity though in a very small area compared with its past glory. But it maintained its separate identity nonetheless. The small Kingdom of CoochBehar continued to survive till 1949 whereafter it accepted integration with India in keeping with the tides of time. ⁷

At the request of the Government of India, the then Maharaja of CoochBehar handed over the CoochBehar State of Central Administration of India for the happiness and prosperity of the 'Praja - Mandal', i.e. the people of Cooch Behar on the 11th September, 1949 through a special agreement. ⁸ On the basis of the said agreement, Sardar Vallabhahai Patel, the then Home Minister of India, on behalf of the Government of India sent a letter to Chief Commissioner of CoochBehar from Camp-Biraja House, Malabar Hilli, dated Bombay, 11th September 1949 which stated....." on the handing over of CoochBehar to Central administration I sent to its people my best wishes and assurance on behalf of the government of India that so far, their interest and welfare will claim our close and intimate attention, I am fully aware of the many problems, political and economical which affect the state and I am confident that with their cooperation we would have success in solving them in the best interest of the state and the country of their happiness and prosperity. Unity and mutual adjustment between the constituent element, of the population are



SKETCH MAP
କାମତା ରାଜ୍ୟ
 (କୋଟାଠାରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ)
 ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

କୋଟାଠାରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ "୨୦୫୨ ମସିହା"
 କୋଟାଠାରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ

ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ
 ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ
 ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିର୍ମାଣମଧ୍ୟ

essential pre-requisites. Without such resources and personnel as we may be able to spare for them would avail little.

I hope, therefore, that the people of CoochBehar will work single mindedness and devotion to duty as a united team for their own betterment and to achieve their due place in the political and administrative setup of India.

To accept transfer of territory from a ruler is no small responsibility which we feel on this occasion. To give up sovereignty over territory is no mean sacrifice. I am grateful to him for the spirit of accommodation and understanding which he has displayed and the prompt manner in which he accepted our advice.

May he and his people be happy and prosperous under the new dispensation which is being inaugurated today." ⁹

The people of CoochBehar were sure that the government of India would be able to solve the various problems of the people of Cooch Behar if Cooch Behar would be administered as a ' Union Territory.' ¹⁰ On the basis of the wishes of the Maharaja and the people of Cooch Behar, Government of India decided to keep Cooch Behar under Central Administration. But, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal requested the Government of India to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal. But, on the basis of the request of Dr. Roy, Sardar Patel deputed Mr. Akbar Hyder Ali, the than Governor of Assam to Cooch Behar to verify the public opinion of the people of Cooch Behar on this merger issue. Mr. Ali discussed the issue with the people of Cooch Behar and submitted a report to Sardar Patel on 29th June, 1948.

from Guest House, Sillong.¹¹ On the basis of the report as well as the wishes of the people, Sardar Patel sent a letter to the Government of West Bengal. Considering all evidences and reports the Cooch Behar people's association stated that the merger with West Bengal is locally 'unpopular'.¹² Even, on the basis of the agreement, since 1949, assurance of Government of India as well as the report of A.K. Hydar, dated 29th June, 1948, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India declared in a public meeting in Calcutta that the question of Merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal would be decided according to the wishes of the people"¹³ On the basis of the declaration of Pandit Nehru, it is clear that he wanted to take Plebiscite in Cooch Behar to solve the merger issue. But, under such circumstances, Dr. Ray wrote some letters to the Government of India to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal immediately.¹⁴

On the day of merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal (1.1.1950), Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy on behalf of the Government of West Bengal, assured the people of Cooch Behar that the Government of West Bengal will take all necessary action to eradicate all ill conditions of the people and to bring about such improvement as are found necessary ..¹⁵ (it has discussed in details in the next chapter). But, the Government of West Bengal did not take any proper plans and schemes to ameliorate condition of the people of Cooch Behar. The Cooch Behar People's Association states that the Government of West Bengal is duty bound to set up necessary industry and to develop agricultural production.¹⁶

SOCIAL FACETS OF MOVEMENT

The sociological factors include the social structure of a community including various institutions such as the family, caste or class structure religion, traditions, attitudes, belief, political structure, etc. In fact, it is difficult to compartmentalize human factors into economic and non-economic, since development is the result of interplay of these factors. A comprehensive understanding of the problems of under - developments calls for a multi-disciplinary analysis of the process of economic development, including sociological analysis.¹⁷ As determinants of economic change, the social factors can have either salutary or inhibitory effects. Many development economists including Sirman Kuznets explains slower economic growth in under developed countries in terms of the lack of a stable but flexible political and social framework, capable of initiating and accommodating a rapid structural change and resolving the conflicts that it generates while encouraging the growth promoting groups in the society.¹⁸

In case of North Bengal social factors as promoters of economic development, social customs and traditions are issues to establish the identity of a people. The people inhabiting this area have customs and traditions distinctly of their own. There the social ceremonies observed during birth, marriage and death are different so much so that only priests from Assam can perform the rites as observed by the people of the area. These customs have their origin in the sami - tribal way of life used to by the people and got very much to do with their physical and mental formation. Evidences, overwhelmingly go to show that they are of a different stock; the Aryans may be an admixture of Aryans with the aboriginals of the area. The mode of wearing cloths, of displaying jewellerys, of gathering at social functions and of eating and drinking there have no semblance of similarity with other people of North Bengal,

Gods and Goddesses they worship, the idols and images they create, the bands and pipes played at the pujas have no similarity with any other else where.¹⁹

These dis-similarities do not always bring favourable social change. Instead of diminishing social strife, it may on the contrary, have the effect of disturbing relatively stable social relationships of stimulating desire and envy and of precipitating class, racial or religious conflicts in the area of North Bengal. Development of North Bengal, UKD says, is also deplored on the ground that it is dependent upon and perpetuates, inequality in the distribution of income and wealth. Because, it becomes lopsided when it fails to percolate into the whole labyrinth of the society, leaving quite a few sections of the society outside the gamut of development. Such a lopsided development of a few sections of the people of North Bengal leads to increasing social tensions and polarisation of classes. For example, inspite of considerable economic growth in North Bengal during the last five decades of planning, inequality in the distribution of income is still glaring.²⁰

LITERATURE AND CULTURE

North Bengal is a distinct region. The people inhabiting this area have a distinct culture based on distinct language which are not in any way inferior to any other culture in India. The language spoken by the people residing in this vast area with slight variations from place to place does not bear any distinct name of its own though it has got a vast treasure of literature dating back from the mineteenth century. It is not a local dialict of the Bengali language from which it has got wide difference in the use of words. vowels and

verbs. The negative in this language as in Hindi is used before the verb as distinct from Bengali. Thus, "I shall not go", when translated in the kamta Behari language gets "MUIN NA JA'IM", "HAM NAHI JAYEGE" IN Hindi and "AMI JABA NA" in Bengali. The Bengalis, learned and illiterate, derisively call language of the local people, 'the bahebhasa', by which they display their own ignorance and show of haughtiness and an expression of hate complex to the local people as "Bahe" is only a word to address an esteemed person on an unknown personality.²¹ UKD asserts that no language in the world is or can be named after only one of its words used as address to one another. If some of the language as Bengali or Oriya is named after the names of their states, then the language may appropriately be called Pragiyotishi, or Kamrupi, or Kamtapuri, or Kamata Behari' language. By whatever name it may be called there can be no denying the fact that this language with slight local variations are used by not less than 25 millions of people residing in the six districts of North Bengal, in the districts of Goal para and Western part of Kamrup in Assam, Rangpur, East Dinajpur and parts of Bogura and Mymansingh districts in Bangladesh and Purnea district in Behar. Some of the old literatures in this language as 'Gopiganer Gan', 'Jogir Gan', 'Manasha Gan', 'Charjugar Gan' and Bhasan Geets have already been published and saw light and some are being published. The greatest man of literature in this language is Shrimat Sankara Deva, the great exponent of Suddha Vaishnavism, who was one of the jewells in the court of the great king Naranaryan of Kuch Behar.²² Shri Deva was famous in the history; he wrote many books from the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, the Bhagabat and the Puranas in Cooch Behari language. These books and its manuscripts are valuable assets of Cooch Behari literature as well as Assamises and Bengali literature. But, due to negligence of the government of West Bengal, the Cooch Behar peoples association claims,

these books and manuscripts so far have been kept in Cooch Behar palace library were already removed while some of them were destroyed by some persons with a view to destroying the glorious history, culture and literature of Cooch Behar. ²³

In the field of music and songs, this culture had developed a school of music known as 'Bhawaiya Sangeet' of which the most successful exponent at present is Mrs. Pratima Pande (Nee Barua), the niece of the great cinema artist and director, the late Pramthesh Barua. Her songs are regularly broadcast by the All India Radio centre at Gawahati. Likewise this Bhawaiya geets by a galaxy of North Bengal artists are regularly broadcast by the A.I.R. centre at Siliguri. Like its music, its musical instruments are peculiar to its own and will be no where found in other parts of the Country. In short, if Bhatiali is a speciality of East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) Kirtan and Baul of West Bengal, Bougeet of Assam, Bhojpuri Kawali in Bihar, it must be admitted that Bhawaiya is the special preserve of the kamtapuries. ²⁴

ECONOMIC GROUND

Agriculture being the backbone of the economy of this area, all economic activities naturally centre around agriculture. At the apex of the agricultural organisations was king himself under whom there were several jotedars who have their Counter parts in Jagirdars and Jamindars in other parts of the country. The Jotedars let their land to tenants who again let them to sub-tenants who actually cultivated the land either by themselves or by their share croppers i.e. Adhiars. ²⁵ Unlike, however, in other parts of the country, the actual tillers of the soil or the adhiars had never been very much poverty rid-

den nor were they looked down upon. This was due to two facts :

One, the actual tillers were by birth of the same caste with their high ups including the all powerful monarchs, and, two, they supplied the man power needed to defend the kingdom from aggression.

Infact, the second factor made the inhabitants of this area, one of the martial races of India, and many of their children still now make themselves fine men in different branches of the armed forces in India. Their fighting spirit has produced a great General, Sukladwaj Narayan, nick named, Chila Rai because of his chila like speed(incidentally Chila is bird of prey known for its speed and cunningness in snatching away its prey) who can be compared only with Sivaji.

In addition to agriculture, the area abounds in forest products of different varieties and have potential deposits of mines and minerals awaiting exploitation after proper survey. It produces a few cash crop and contributes largely to the National Exchequer by way of excise and other duties. it produces one of the finer varieties of tobacco, flavoured tea, coffee and fine fabrics of Jute.²⁶

POLITICAL ATTRIBUTES

Kingship is the only political institution known in this area from time immemorial till the advent of independence. They did not know or have any form of government other than kingship, UKD says it. Their feelings for the king and their loyalties to him were so much deep rooted that even after they ceased to be the subjects of the Kuch King, they showed respect to him and

did not tolerate slightest show of disrespect of the Kuch King. Because, of their deep rooted sympathy towards the King, most of the benevolent despots with whom the people were bounded by the same thread of ethnical origin, caste and culture, the people could not easily take up the thread of democracy and as a consequence have now to suffer as will be evident from the subsequent details.²⁷

In view of the fact that the 'Kamtapuri' people with a past heritage of valour, victory, glory and prestige, with a developed language, literature and renowned culture, which help them to stand out as a people of special ethnic identity, have been socially, economically and politically exploited and reduced to lower than second class of citizens in poverty, illiteracy and decades of neglect of those who rule them. They find that nothing less than their freedom from the Calcutta based politicians and exploiters can save them. By the constitution of the separate 'kamatapur state' within the provisions of the constitution of India, they think, can save them as a people linguistically and culturally developed and ethnically preserved.²⁸

OTHER LEVELS OF VIOLENCE

Prior to independence, the people living in this area had homogeneity tied by a common bondage of history, language, culture, social and political institutions and economic activities so much so that the Goal para Tenancy Act had to be enacted to bring the people of Goal Para district in Assam in conformity with their own brethren living in the then North Bengal when feudalism and permanent settlement prevailed.²⁹ This homogeneity received a rude shock after independence. The political partition of Bengal divided the people

overnight into two nations : India and Pakistan. The vast number of people in Rangpur, East Dinajpur, Bagura and Mymensingh had to be separated. This was, so to speak, a death to their homogeneity. After the partition came the integration of Cooch Behar which had to throw its lot with West Bengal, because of political pulls and pressures prevailing them. These two events of partition of the country and integration of Cooch Behar with West Bengal, brought effects of far reaching impacts, widely shattering the homogeneity of its people and its culture.

The immediate effect of the partition, is now known was the huge influx of refugees from the then East Pakistan other states in India adjoining East Pakistan namely Bihar, Orissa and Assam had their reservation in the matter of acceptance of number of refugees and their rehabilitation. But, West Bengal had to throw its border open and its arms of welcome wide received the West Pakistan refugees as they were known as one nation, viz. the Bengalees, during the prepartition days. West Bengal could not protest or shirk its responsibility. Hence North Bengal which happened, because of a chance of historical circumstances, to be part of West Bengal could not also raise its voice of objection and had been forced by the command of history to fall in line with West Bengal in its endeavour to accommodate the refugees. As a result North Bengal had to live with a chunk of alien people to its customs, language and culture.³⁰

The hidden factor of a close examination of demographic statistics proves conclusively that it is not the refugees from Bangladesh but the influx of migrants from neighbouring Indian states that has not only caused of West Bengal population problem but also of North Bengal. As a result, the magnitude of

such migration to West Bengal is a subject for speculation, its impact on the past, present and future demographic, socio-economic condition of the state can not be denied.

There are many major reasons advanced for the illegal, clandestine movement are the lack of security in their place of origin and better economic opportunities in the place of destination. According to one estimate about 13 lakh illegal migrants had crossed the Indo-Bangladesh international border during 1981 - 91, the decade under review. As far as a more distant past an International Labour Organization estimate suggests that about 70 lakh Hindus left East Pakistan immediately after partition (1947-51) and well over 20 lakh moved into West Bengal during 1951-56. The 1980 decade which witnessed resurgence of Bangladeshi migration is an important phenomenon from the demographer's point of view principally because of its quantitative palpability when pitted against the low rate of natural population increase in West Bengal during the period. Needless to say the proximity of the sending and receiving countries, the linguistic and cultural similarities of the people have contributed to such movements. Interestingly, the Bangladesh migration has generally become progressively independent of the political factors that had originally caused it.³¹

In the event of such flows, once they have started, the Government faces enormous difficulties in controlling them and the indiscriminate entry of non-nationals has led to economic insecurity, a mounting wave of crime, various health and social problems despite periodic raids and forced repatriation of illegal aliens. During the recent years, the most notable change in the policy objective of the Government is to gain control over the illegal flow of migrants

across the international boundaries. It adopted a wide range of measures to deal with them: repatriation of persons viewed as being economically motivated migrants rather than political refugees, and even obstruction of entry, the barriers that have been erected to keep foreigners out create a lucrative economic niche for those determined in promoting illegal movement for profit and black market in migration has evolved. Against a premium of the operators of this underground market provide a range of services to the infiltrators. These included clandestine transport to desired destinations, counterfeit documents and visas, labour contracts between employers and migrants, and even arranged marriages between migrants and legal residents.

According to the Sample Registration of Vital Statistics of the Registrar General of India the annual average increase of population in West Bengal during 1981 - 91, in the absence of migration, would have been between 2.0 to 2.2 percent. But the recorded growth rate is 2.5 percent, which is clearly in excess of the natural growth. The additional growth can only be attributed to the gross of both internal and international migrations to the tune of 16 to 17 lakh that have taken place. The estimates of such a large size of migrants are suspected not represent true long term movements of population; a considerable number of them is likely to have moved several times between places of origin and destination. Such covert and fluid movements have in all probability escaped the notice of the officials adding uncertainty to the estimate of growth rate or even inflating it.

As it is well known, the colossal influx of refugees from East Pakistan caused a phenomenal rise in the annual growth rate from a meagre 1.3 percent to 3.3 percent through the 1941 - 51 decade and the 1951 - 61 decade. In

the next few decades the rate reduced and stabilized mainly because of relatively less migration from across the Indo - Bangladesh border. The other contributory factor to the growth process has always been labour migration from neighbouring states. Be that as it may, the higher rate of population growth during 1981 - 91, compared to 1971 - 81, cannot be explained away by the state's natural rate of increase alone. It implies a renewed spurt of migrants, legal or other wise, in this decade. Among other things, family reunification, refugee resettlement etc., must have played a part.

Interestingly, the 1981 census population size of Bangladesh fell short of what it should have been according to the estimates made by the Bangladesh Government and the United Nations. Since censuses almost always suffer from under counts, the shortfall in the reported population size should not be considered as only due to migrating from that country and in the context of controversies regarding ethnic composition of illegal migrants to West Bengal and other bordering states. A set of valuable data provided by Professor Surya Sankar Roy and the Bangladesh census reports of 1974 and 1981 may throw some light. According to these reports the minority Hindu population in Bangladesh increased in the chittagang hill tracts, Srihatta, Mymensingh and Bogura districts, on the other hand it decreased during the same periods by less than one percent in the chittagong Division and the districts of Noakhali, Kusthia and Rangpur. However, a study on the infiltration problem prepared by the centre of South Asian Studies reported a decline of the minority population in Bangladesh in 1991. It further reported that in sharp contrast to a steep rise in Muslim population the Hindus experienced negative growth rates in several districts of Bangladesh. The corresponding growth patterns of the ethnic population of West Bengal are not immediately available from the 1991

Indian census. An estimation of volume of influx and a full understanding of Contemporary migratory processes can not be achieved without comparing the growth rate and their components in the two regions.³²

The spurt in the refugee movement from Bangladesh in the wake of the 1971 war of liberation, when some 75 lakh took shelter in West Bengal, was temporary. About 60 lakh of these refugees are reported to have been repatriated to the newly formed State of Bangladesh within a year. It is however suspected that a large number of them than is reported somehow overstayed and got mixed with the mainstream population. These people have actually been staying in West Bengal illegally since 1971. Again it is not unlike that some earlier refugees and immigrants returned home after liberation, perhaps compensating for the influx to a degree. As a matter of fact, 1971 is a cut - off point since the situation before was different as the massive immigrant population, mostly Hindus, from what was then East Pakistan were treated as refugees and later given Indian citizenship.

Since natural increase registered a decline, illegal migration is obviously held responsible for the relatively higher decennial growth rate (24.6 percent) in 1981 - 91 as compared to the previous decade (23.2 percent); it is thus though by many that the districts in West Bengal bordering Bangladesh have experienced higher growth rates than other districts. Going by the Indian census reports this is not true for most of such districts. Out of 18 districts 7 have an international border with Bangladesh. Two such districts - Cooch - Behar and Jalpaiguri - show uniformly a declining rate of growth over the period 1961 - 91. Nadia and Murshidabad, the two other border districts, also show lower growth rates in 1981 - 91 than in 1971 - 81. In the case of North 24

- Paraganas and West Dinajpur the rates of growth have significantly decreased from the high 4 plus level of 1961 - 71. Among the border districts of Malda registered a slight increase; even this rise may not be due to any Bangladeshi migration and can be accounted for by the differential levels of enumerations in the consecutive censuses. So, the political interpretation that infiltrations in the border districts have contributed to "silent demographic invasion" of the state is untenable.

A close scrutiny reveals that the estimates of illegal migration are, perhaps, motivated by exaggeration. This becomes clear when placed against internal migration i.e. migration from the other States. As mentioned earlier, the estimates are based on the differences in the overall growth rates and the rates of natural increase. The fact that West Bengal is under considerable migratory pressure is obvious and according to the place of birth statistics from census reports, 65 percent of the total population of the State were born within the State itself, 14 percent in the other states of India, while the remaining were foreign - born. In the last category only less than one per-cent were born in Nepal and the rest in Bangladesh.

Sizeable migration flows from the different states to West Bengal, a factor often cunningly overlooked, should be recognised as an important component in the overall migration to the State which has been attracting industrial labour migrants from Indian States, particularly the neighbouring ones, over a long period of time. Although the general belief is that such migrants have been on the wane in recent decades, supposedly for industrial stagnation. The real picture is different.

A break up of the estimated total immigrants of 16 lakh or so during 1981 - 91 reveals that the share of the Bangladeshi migration to West Bengal was 9.1 lakh. The rest i.e. 7 lakh constitute inter state movements. In other words an annual average at 91 thousand Bangladeshi nationals might have crossed the international border during the decade, but how many of them were identified and pushed back is not known. It is possible that a portion of these immigrants returned on their own to their place of origin.³³

On an average 1,000 Bangladeshi cross over to India illegally every day a recent home ministry survey reveals. A senior official of the ministry said, the survey found that on an average three lakh Bangladeshi infiltrators enter India annually and according to a rough estimate, the total number of illegal Bangladeshi in India is between 1.2 crore to 1.5 crore.

He said the survey was being carried out considering the ground reports from all parts and indepth analysis of the Bangladeshi census report and their demographic profile. The official said after 1971, about 15 to 20 lakh Bangladeshi had entered illegally in Assam. The cut off year as per the Assam Accord was 1971, although was far greater before the Bangladesh war. Bangladeshis in Assam are in a position to influence the out come of an election forcing all political parties to maintain a Bangladeshi appeasement policy in the state.³⁴

One thing stands clearly from this examination of the phenomena of migration to West Bengal, especially in the area of North Bengal, even if there were full - proof restriction on international movements, the population of the State would continue to grow more than the natural increase for sometime to

come. The reason lies in the sustained flow of population, not necessarily all labour migration, from other States. We must also distinguish between two circuits of international mobility - the movement of the Bangladeshi nationals to West Bengal and the reverse flow of these infiltrators to Bangladesh. The former flow, however, still outnumbers the latter movement, accelerating in part the population growth.

In this connection mention must be made of two historical injustices perpetrated on the people by the then power that would be at Delhi at the instance and advice of those at Calcutta :

i) Which consent of the people were obtained in the matter of decisions if sylhet should go either to Pakistan or remain in India because the population there were almost equally divided into two major religions, (a) the Hindus, and (b) the Muslims - no need for such consensus was thought necessary in the case of Rangpur district though as at that time 60% of its population were Hindus. This superficial treatment gave a shattering blow to the homogeneity of the people living in this vast area.

ii) While our Government professes democracy, no attempt was made to obtain the consent of the people of Cooch Behar prior to its integration with West Bengal. The will of king, obtained through various political pulls and pressures, was thought to be fate accomplished for the people of Cooch Behar. This has put the last straw on the back of the proverbial camel.

These two political decisions taken *ex parte* without any kind of consultations with the people UKD claims whatsoever had produced effects which are going to demolish and destroy a culture and heritage, break the backbone,

economic and political, of a people which had been enjoying the fruits of independence and saw many ups and downs of its chequered history of 3500 years. The people have now found out its past and want to shape its future as it deem fit and proper in keeping with its rich past.

Leaving apart the fact of partition which can not be undone let the people of North Bengal detail out the impacts of the huge influx of refugees. Whatever might have the refugees said while they crossed the border, the fact remained that many of them came here not wholly destitute but with wealth left by their fore - fathers, earned by themselves during their life times and procured by them selling their properties at whatever prices they could. All the refugees never came penniless. On coming here, they received the hospitality of the Government of India generosity by way of the refugee loans very little of which were repaid later. Thus, the refugees were doubly benefitted. They had coppers in their hands taken away from East Pakistan and substantial sum of money given by the Government of India by way of loans. With these money in their hands they began to search out for suitable properties and professions. The impact of refugees was the scarcity of goods because of fall in production resulted in rising prices. As one may remember for about a decade after independence food grains were items very scarce in the market. The illiterate local people who were used to lead easy lives were puzzled at this sudden change of situation and found no other alternative for survival to the selling of their landed properties. Taking advantage of their helpless position the sharks among the refugees began to purchase landed properties from the simple minded and hospitality laden local people in some cases even taking recourse to deception and fraud.

With the passage of time the refugees driven by the dire necessity of survival began to corner every possible means of earning money and in the process pushing the local inhabitants to backward places. These activities of the refugees were supported and backed by the government and the business community at Calcutta who felt it obligatory to render all possible helps to the refugees partly because of their own feeling of kinship with the refugees and partly because of hulla-ballus raised by the Calcutta based news papers. This process of business activities had acted as catalytic agents in economic fields which had rooted out most of the indigenous people from all towns and had taken away all business from them. This so happened because the Calcutta centred business community stood at the back of the refugees at the cost of and with sheer neglect of the local people. As a result during 52 years of independence the indigenous population of the area irrespective of their caste, creed and religion, have become hewers of wood and drawers of water to the refugees who are now lording it over the original people so to speak.

The refugees brought with them an air of culture and linguistic superiority though majority of them was illiterates. This superiority complex which was totally false and baseless produced in the refugees an attitude of haughtiness and arrogance which the local people, because of their simplicity and indifference had to suffer silently as any kind of protest was expected to bring about rude behaviour from the refugees resulting in some cases in bitter quarelling and rowdyism. The indigenous people have now to pass their days in a state of constant fear and terrorism which has increased many fold during the mis-rule of the united Front Government, UKD alleged it.

In keeping with the them trend in political and economic thinking the

institutions of Jaminders and Jotedars had been abolished and a ceiling of land holdings had been prescribed. This was very good in principle, but it left many loopholes in its practical execution. As a result the cohesive village economy was destroyed on the one hand and vast area of land was cornered by the benamdars on the other much to our consternations the number of landless people and pauperism increased many fold.

In view of the above the people had become displeased and rest less because of their genuine fear of extinction socially, politically, economically and culturally and feel in their hearts of hearts that the only way to come out of this sorry state of affairs is to organise themselves in a separate state under the name and style of "Kamotapur" or "Kamata Behari" state within the Union of India, UKD demands it.

It is, therefore, demanded to the government of India that a separate state comprising of the six districts of North Bengal, namely, Cooch-Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda be set up with in the Union of India without any further loss of time and any further delay, UKD demands, may cause irreparable loss and damage and extinction of valuable cultural heritage.

In this respect, mention must be made of the fact that though it is the sacred duty of any civilized Government to preserve its past relics with all earnestness and sincerity, the so called superior civilized government based at Calcutta had embarked on a gradual process of bringing the old relic of the vast area to utter ruins. This process of gradual annihilation of old relics had been undertaken by the West Bengal with the hidden objects of doing away

with a rich heritage of culture and great tradition so that the successors to the present ruling camp may shout from their house tops that this area had been under completed darkness and in a primitive stage of development and it was only through the generosity of their forefathers that they had seen the light of civilizations.³⁵ This would be very sad day for the aboriginal people of this area indeed !

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. My interviews with leading UKD prominent leader, Mr. Probhash Chandra Singha Shastri on the 15th March 1992 confirms this finding.
3. Minute of the proceedings of the second conference of the Bharatiya Koch-Rajbanshi Kshatriya Mahasabha held at Panchanan Peeth, Burir hat, Cooch-Bihar, on 23 and 24 February, 1986, under the president of Dr. Purna Narayan Singh, President of Mahasabha in Chair.
4. Under authority from the executive committee of the UKD as envisaged in its Resolution dated 17-8-81; UKD, Head Office, Kantivita, Darjeeling.
5. Saroj Chakraborty, The Upheaval Years in North-East India (A documentary in depth study of Assam Holocausts) 1960-1983, Nehru-Roy-Pant-Jyoti Basu correspondence released, Sree Saraswaty Press Limited, Calcutta 1984, p.p. 24-26.
6. Mahabharat, Sabha Parba - 30
7. A representation, which is address to Sreemati Indira Gandhi, the hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi sent by Mr. Panchaman Mallick, Chairman of the Presidium, UKD. Bhangarhat, Jalpaiguri on 24 August, 1981, p.p. 2-3.
8. Another a representation, which is addressed to Srimati Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister, New Delhi sent by Mr. Probhash Chandra Singha Shastri, the Cooch-Bihar people association on 28th April, 1984 states with "AGREE-

MENT MADE THIS Central Government of India and Maharaja of the Cooch-Bihar on 11th September 1949.”

9. Durga Das, Patel's correspondences 1945-55 (Compiled) Navajiban Publishing House, Ahmedabad, Vol. 7 p. 553.
10. A representation, which is addressed to Prime Minister of India sent by Mr. Prahbhash Chandra Singha Shastri on 28th April, 1984 p.1.
11. Durga Das, "Patel's correspondences 1945-55."
12. A representation to Prime Minister was sent by Mr. P.C.S.S. on 28-4-1984.
13. Durga Das, "Patel's correspondences 1945-55", Vol. 8. p. 413.
14. IBID. Vol. 7. p. 547.
15. A representation, which was addressed to Smt. Indira Gandhi hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi sent by President of Cooch-Bihar People's Association on 28-4-1984 stated with the prayer for consideration "Nonfulfilment of the assurance of the Govt. of West Bengal."
16. IBID.
17. M.V. Srinivasa Gowda, Social Facts of Economic development, Employment News, (weekly) New Delhi, 28 March - 3 April, 1992, Vol. XVI No. - 52, p. 52.
18. IBID

19. A representation, which is addressed to Smt. Indira Gandhi sent by Panchanan Mallick on 24-8-1981, p. 3.
20. IBID.
21. IBID, p. 4
22. A representation, which is addressed to Smt. Indira Gandhi sent by Panchanan Mallick on 24-8-1981, p. 4.
23. A representation - prayer for constitutional demand for status of Union Territory for Cooch-Bihar by P.C. Sastry is addressed to the Prime Minister of India.
24. A representation, is addressed to the Prime Minister of India sent by UKD on 24-8-1981; p. 4
25. IBID, p. 5
26. IBID
27. IBID
28. Moynaguri Declaration of Bharatiya Kamate Rajya Parishad, on behalf of Dal, Mr. K.K. Barua, President of BKRP sent a representation to the President of India and other dignitaries of India on 8-8-1986, p. 2.
29. A representation, is addressed to the Prime Minister of India sent by UKD, 24-8-1981. p. 6.
30. IBID

31. Samir Guha Roy is with the Indian statistical Institute, Calcutta; the true story behind "Bangladeshi" Immigration; A close examination of demographic statistics proves conclusively that it is not the refugees from Bangladesh but the influx of migrants from neighbouring Indian States that has caused West Bengal's population problem". See his paper "The Hidden Factor" in the Statesman (Miscellany), Calcutta, 11 September, 1994; p. 4.
32. IBID. "The estimates of illegal Bangladeshi migration are, perhaps, motivatedly exaggerated.
33. IBID. "A break-up of the estimated total immigrants of 16 lakh or so during 1981-91 reveals that the share of the Bangladeshi migration of West Bengal was 9.1 lakh. The remaining 7 lakh constitute inter-state movements.
34. 1,000 Bangladeshis enter India every day : Survey (United news of India), The Statesman, 23 August, 1999.
35. A representation, is addressed to the Prime Minister of India, sent by Panchanan Mallick, UKD, 24th August, 1980, p.p. 6-9.