

CHAPTER VI

KAMTAPUR MOVEMENT: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Kamtapur Movement is led by Koch Rajbangsi living in and around Dooars and Cooch Behar for a separate state to be carved out of West Bengal namely 'Kamtapur'. Cooch Behar was a princely state prior to its accession to India in 1950. Cooch Behar founded by Viswasingh in 1533 was expanded into the Koch-Kamta Kingdom by King Naranarayan.¹ Under the aegis of the King Naranarayan, a highly centralized administrative structure was prevalent in the Koch-Kamta Kingdom. Goal-oriented development administration was unknown. Later King Harendra Narayan (1783-1840) and Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911) introduced modernism in Cooch Behar with their knowledge of education, literature, music, architecture etc.

Koch-Kamta Kingdom maintained its independent, sovereign status up to 1772. It was turned into a Tributary State under the British India Government in 1773 for its safety from Bhutanese incursions. It however had an autonomous status under the British Rule.² King Jagaddipendra Narayan did not support the Congress movement of India against the British and warned his subjects not to revolt against the British Rule. He introduced free education for women for the purpose of the development of women. His measures for education were helpful to raise the consciousness among the people. Cooch Behar Kingdom re-gained independence and sovereign status in his reign for the period from 1947 to 1949 following the Indian Independence Act, 1947.³

COOCH BEHAR'S MERGER WITH INDEPENDENT INDIA

With India's independence in 1947, Sardar Patel, Home Minister of the newly independent India on the basis of the 'Instrument of Accession' secured the

¹ Parbananda Das, '*The Hitasadhanee Sabha and the Tensions of Cooch Behar's integration with India*', in Sailen Debnath edited **Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2007.

² Dilip Kumar Sarkar, '*Integrated Decentralization: A Case of Cooch Behar District in West Bengal*', **Journal of Indian Anthropology**, Volume XXV No.2 and Volume XXVI No.1 January-December, 1998.

³ Op.cit.no.1

merger of most of the Indian princely states with India. With regard to the accession of the princely state of Cooch Behar there surfaced intricate problems as to its modalities. The idea of its merger either with India or with Pakistan received diverse reactions. The Bengali Hindu immigrants in Cooch Behar with the modernization of the Cooch Behar state under the leadership of Nripendra Narayan had entrenched themselves in power. They expressed interest with the merger of Cooch Behar with India. While the Muslims, who constituted about forty percent of the population, favoured the option of Cooch Behar's merger with Pakistan. The Rajbangsi who had traditional exclusiveness with the immigrant Hindus succinctly expressed their desire to constitute Cooch Behar either as a Union Territory with some special rights or its merger with Assam but not West Bengal. The Muslim leaders in order to secure the support of the Rajbangsi emphasised on linguistic and cultural affinities between the Hindus and Muslims of Cooch Behar. While the immigrant Hindus with the objective of ascertaining the inclusion of Cooch Behar as a district of West Bengal manipulated Bidhan Chandra Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal to influence Sardar Patel in favour of merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. Deliberate measures were thus adopted by the immigrant Hindus to vitiate the other two moves in favour of Pakistan and Assam respectively. Thus with regard to the status of Cooch Behar there appeared four options:-

1. Merger with India as a district of West Bengal.
2. Merger with India as the district of Assam.
3. Merger with India as Union Territory.
4. Merger with Pakistan.⁴

Following the partition of India the power to decide the status of the princely states rests with the Government of Independent India. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of the newly independent India, favoured merger of the native states with the neighbouring big provinces of India. As a result, the unrest among the native states accrued. Cooch Behar King too was thoughtful of its prospective political status. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, first Governor General of Pakistan

⁴ Anirban Biswas, '*Destination Kamtapur*', *Frontier*, Volume 35 No 20, 2002, p.p. 9-10.

expressed the interest of Pakistan to come to treaty—relations with the native states comprising of favourable terms and treatment as independent states. Jinnah assured the native states of their full separate existence in Pakistan.

In 1946 the Kings of the native states formed a 'Confederation of Native States' as a parallel state to India. Some of the native states got inclined to Pakistan in the context of Jinnah's assurance of independent status in Pakistan. However given the fact that most of the Kings of the native states belonged to Hindu community the Confederation gave liberty to the native states to decide their merger with India and Pakistan respectively. The Indian Government wanted to determine the fate of Cooch Behar by plebiscite. Gopinath Bardoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam and Nilmani Phukan, Assamese laureate suggested the Government to merge Cooch Behar with Assam. The Congress Committee of Assam demanded the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam emphasizing the affinity in the language and culture of both the regions. Meanwhile Sarat Chandra Bose of West Bengal established the 'Socialist Republican Party' and tried to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal. Kailash Nath Katju, the then Governor of West Bengal in his report to Sardar Patel alleged, 'there have been all sorts of reports in the newspapers about the developments in Cooch Behar. It was suggested that the Muslims from Pakistan were infiltrating into Cooch Behar and some reports went to the length of suggesting that there would be a definite attempt to make Cooch Behar join Pakistan and this movement would be repugnant to the Ruling House.' He advised Sardar Patel to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal, so that the election-process would be favourable to Congress competing against Socialist Republican Party of Sarat Chandra Bose in West Bengal Assembly elections. Mass signature campaign in West Bengal was organised in favour of the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. The signatories were—Aruna Dasgupta, Sasadhar Kar, Bipul Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Satish Chandra Bhowmik, Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, Abani Saha Neogi, Narendra Nath Mahalanabish etc. Thus both the states of Assam and West Bengal made deliberate attempts to merge Cooch Behar to their respective states. King Jagaddipendra Narayan however tried to maintain Cooch Behar's separate existence in spite of the fact that the native states of small nature merged

with the neighbouring big provinces in India, as Jaipur, Udaypur, Bharatpur, Jodhpur were included in Rajasthan, Punjab was formed of Patiala and merging native states of East Punjab, native states of Shimla area were merged with Himachal Pradesh etc.

Amidst this, on 12.06.1949, the Congress Committee of Assam decided to merge Cooch Behar with Assam emphasizing the affinity in language and culture. But the State Congress of Cooch Behar decided that there is connection of Cooch Behar with Bengali language and culture and that Cooch Behar must be merged with West Bengal. K. N. Katju, Governor of West Bengal informed Rajagopalachari, Governor General of Indian Dominion to take step immediately for the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal in apprehension of the pressures by the supporters of Assam Congress Committee for the merger of the native state of Cooch Behar with Assam. On 14/07/1949 Pt. Nehru declared in Calcutta, "The question of the merger of Cooch Behar would be decided according to the wish of the people." The West Bengal State Congress and Prajamandal Dal created pressure for the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal in consideration of affinity with Bengali language and culture. K. N. Katju, Governor of West Bengal informed Sardar Patel that the attempt was being made to join Cooch Behar with Pakistan by causing infiltration of the Muslims.⁵ In such disconcerted situation, King Jagaddipendra Narayan of Coochbehar became anxious to achieve the better of the four options. His profound relations with the intelligentsia of Calcutta and the gradual pressures from within and outside ultimately resulted into the signing of Instrument of Accession by King Jagaddipendra Narayan on 28.9.1949 on condition of some privileges to Cooch Behar by the Government of India. Cooch Behar became a district of West Bengal. Things passed easier with no reports of communal violence, and after the merger King Jagaddipendra Narayan lived more than two decades only to breathe his last in 1970.⁶

⁵ Op.cit.no.1

⁶ Op.cit.no.4

HITASADHANI SABHA

Cooch Behar's administrative machinery was mainly composed of the educated upper caste Hindu leaders. Although the King was a Rajbangsi yet his administrative machinery did not include the *Deshi* people (Rajbangsi Hindus and Muslims). However Jagaddipendra Narayan for the all round development of Cooch Behar attempted to establish democratic system in Cooch Behar through the local representatives of the people.⁷ Accordingly an election was held in the Cooch Behar State. An Organisation named 'Hitasadhani Sabha' was formed on 19th May, 1947 consisting mainly of *Deshi jotedars* (rural landlords) and Rajbangsi elites like Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed, Satish Chandra Singha Sarkar, and Gajendra Narayan Basunia. With the formation of the Hitasadhani Sabha the aspirations of *Deshi* people received a big fillip. 'Hitasadhani Sabha' contested the election primarily on the issue of the rights of the Rajbangsi against the *Bhatias* (the Rajbangsi Bengalis addressed the immigrant Bengalis from the lower plains of eastern Bengal as *Bhatias*)⁸ who because of their education and economic strength were taking upper hands in all socio-economic and administrative matters. The subjects of Cooch Behar were thus divided into *Deshis* and *Bhatias*. *Deshi* people believed that it was because of the *Bhatias* that they were impoverished, and as such there was a call for driving away the *Bhatias* from Cooch Behar. Some upper caste non-*Deshi jotedars* also extended their support to the Hitasadhani Sabha because it served their vested interests. The Movement for awareness and self assertion of the Rajbangsi, as promoted by Panchanan Barma started again under the banner of Hitasadhani Sabha.⁹

'Hitasadhani Sabha' with Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed as the President contested the election and won all the seats. Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed and Satish Chandra Singha Sarkar became Council of Ministers along with some

⁷ Op.cit.no.1

⁸Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay, '*Uttarkhand Movement: A Sociological Analysis*', **Special Lecture VIII**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 27 February, 1987.

⁹ Op.cit.no.4

non- *Deshi* upper caste Hindu leaders nominated by the King. The *Hita* (Good) or welfare of the Rajbangsi was the motto of the 'Hitasadhani Sabha'. It worked for the Rajbangsi people's right to development. They mainly placed the demands to the Jagaddipendra Narayan, King of Cooch Behar by claiming the right of Rajbangsi in all spheres of development in Cooch Behar. It organised a mass meeting on 19th May, 1946 in the field of Rashmela of Cooch Behar which was attended by the *Deshi* people in large number. In the meeting a proposal was raised to keep Cooch Behar under the Central Government of Indian Dominion for the interest of the development of the local people. It thus initiated the process of transforming Cooch Behar into a centrally administered State.

Post independence the Hitasadhani Sabha adopted the name 'Cooch Behar State Praja Congress'. Hitasadhani Sabha created political enthusiasm among the Rajbangsi by drawing their attention to the fact that the *Deshi* people have been able to capture the power of administration at last and that they can achieve the ultimate goal of administering by themselves in course of time.¹⁰ Reacting to the Government of India's policy of merger of the native state with the nearby big provinces, 'Hitasadhani Sabha' issued a proclamation for an independent Cooch Behar State. On the question of merger of the native state Cooch Behar into the Indian Union the 'Hitasadhani Sabha' opined, "We do not want to mix with any Province either with West Bengal or Assam. Our merger with the so-called province means our extinction; again our separate existence will not remain. We shall miss our Kingdom." Consequently Hitasadhani Sabha launched a movement against the merger of the native state of Cooch Behar with India. Public meetings and processions were organised at Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj, Dinahata, Tufanganj. The 'Hitasadhani Sabha' organised propaganda against the activities of the Congress and other political parties favouring the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal.¹¹

'Hitasadhani Sabha' thus was the first to demand for a separate homeland of the Rajbangsi community of Cooch Behar. The merger of Cooch Behar as the district of West Bengal resulted into the fleeting of the influence of the 'Hitasadhani

¹⁰ Op.cit.no.4

¹¹ Op.cit.no.1

Sabha' alias 'Cooch Behar State Praja Congress'. Some of the Muslim members of the 'Hitasadhani Sabha' immigrated to Pakistan. Charges of sedition against India resulted into the expulsion of Amanatullya Khan, Anchhar Uddin Ahmed, Bazle Rahaman, Moqbul Hossain from Cooch Behar. Satish Chandra Roy Singha joined Congress Party and later was elected as an MLA of the West Bengal Assembly as the Minister of the Department of State Transport Corporation. Lack of political consciousness among the Rajbangsi caused no immediate agitation taking the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. The new era of democratic rule started in Cooch Behar along with other parts of India. The people were enthused to experience the people's right in the representative democracy of India.¹²

UTTARAKHAND MOVEMENT

With the incorporation of Cooch Behar in West Bengal the demand of a separate state raised by the Hitasadhani Sabha did not obliterate completely. On 30th October, 1949, the representatives of Cooch Behar State Praja Congress, along with Darjeeling Gorkha League, Sikkim Praja Sammelan and Jalpaiguri Gorkha League organised a meeting at Darjeeling. In the meeting they called for a demand for a separate state named 'Uttarakhand Pardesh Sangha'. Malda and West Dinajpur were not included in the proposed 'Uttarakhand Pradesh Sangha'. 'Uttarkhand' as a nomenclature for a separate state in North Bengal was thus first used in the meeting in Darjeeling in 1949.¹³ The demand for the establishment of 'Uttarkhand Pradesh Sangha' was raised before the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952 during his visit to Darjeeling. However the demand failed to create a political stir and subsided subsequently.

On 5th July, 1969, Uttarkhand Dal was formed at the Jalpesh temple of Mainaguri of Jalpaiguri District. Panchanan Mallick was the key ideologue to mobilize the Uttarkhand movement. Kalindranath Barman and Sitanath Roy were the front-rank leaders of the Uttarkhand Dal. After the death of Panchanan Mallick, Jugal Kishor organised the activities of the Uttarkhand Dal during its gradual dismemberment. The primary aim of the Uttarkhand Dal was to set apart North

¹² Op.cit.no.1

¹³Op.cit.no.8

Bengal from South Bengal and create a state called 'Kamtapur' within India in order to protect the Rajbangsi from the exploitation of "Calcutta-centric capitalist leaders". They took cue from a large number of examples of union territories which had been created within Indian federal structure depending on language and culture. Among them Maharashtra and Gujarat were eventually developed as separate states in 1960 by partitioning the Bombay Province. In 1962 Nagaland came out as a separate state from Assam. In 1966 Haryana state was formed out of Punjab. Meghalaya was given the status of a separate state in 1971.¹⁴

The nomenclature 'Uttarkhand' was mainly adopted by the Uttarkhand Dal in view of the fact that a large number of labourers, working in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri Dooars, Malda and West Dinajpur were sympathetic towards the Jharkhand Movement. To acquire the support of the tea garden labourers, the Uttarkhand Dal preferred to take the term '*Khand*' from Jharkhand and thereby named their party 'Uttarkhand'. However for the proposed state for the Rajbangsi the Uttarkhand Dal preferred the nomenclature 'Kamtapur'. In support of the nomenclature 'Kamtapur' they referred to the long historical tradition of North Bengal. In ancient period North Bengal was christened by the name 'Kamtapur'. The five districts of North Bengal—Malda, Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar except the hill regions of Darjeeling comprised the territorial region of the proposed state of 'Kamtapur'. It consisted of a wide area of 8384 square kilometre, which was much greater than many union territories of India from the point of view of area, population and natural resources. Therefore the Uttarkhand Dal viewed their demand of a separate 'Kamtapur' State as legitimate from all respects.¹⁵

Uttarkhand Dal was the first marked expression of an alternative politics for the Rajbangsi in Cooch Behar. In its inchoate way it moved out of the caste frame and organised itself as a party representing the region in terms of its culture, language

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Op.cit.no.8

and economy that bound the communities together.¹⁶ The Uttarkhand movement was mainly the outcome of the feeling of deprivation of the sons of the soil based on the socio-economic political issues.¹⁷ It emerged out of deliberate and organized efforts on the part of a class of Rajbangsi belonging to the territorial aristocracy and gentry. The Uttarkhand agitation termed the immigrant Bengalis as *Bhatias* and viewed them as their chief competitors in economic, social and political spheres in North Bengal region. Moreover, there existed a belief that even though the Rajbangsi were members of the indigenous community, they were subjected to the domination of an alien population, i.e., the Bengalis. Thus, a kind of intense social distrust against the dominant communities aroused out of a socio-psychological attitude of the Uttarkhand leaders.¹⁸

The roots of the socio- psychological sense of deprivation among the Uttarkhand leaders can be traced to the colonial settlement policies of land revenue system. It resulted in the transfer of considerable land from the indigenous Rajbangsi *Jotedar* families to the newly emerging elite class of educated immigrants with knowledge of colonial administration. Changes in the land holding led to the withering away of the position of the traditional landed gentry (the Rajbangsi *Jotedars*) who exercised authority as a dominant caste over the rural population in Cooch Behar. The Rajbangsi *Jotedars* viewed the unabated influx of immigrants as the principal cause for the loss of their politico-economic power in Cooch Behar. In the sphere of new economic opportunities, i.e., non-agricultural sector the Rajbangsi *Jotedars* failed to compete with the Bengali immigrants due to lack of education and resources. As a result, a sense of insecurity and discomfort developed among the Rajbangsi *Jotedars* against the migrant communities enjoying a privileged socio-economic and political position in Cooch Behar.

¹⁶ Girindra Narayan Ray, '*The Rajbanshi Identity Politics: The Post Colonia Passages*', in Sailen Debnath, ed **Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2007.

¹⁷ Sukhbilas Barma, '*Social and Political Tension in North Bengal since—1947*', in Sailen Debnath, ed **Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2007.

¹⁸ Op.cit.no.8

The Uttarkhand movement thus emerged principally out of a common resentment against the already established and politically powerful immigrant population and a common interest of bringing about socio-political development of the Rajbangsi community. The leaders of Uttarkhand movement wanted to channelize their agitation by exploiting the ethnic sentiments of deprivation of the Rajbangsi community.¹⁹ It was more apparent in the case of Uttarkhand movement because its key leaders belonged to the class of territorial aristocracy and gentry in Cooch Behar. Many of them were the members of traditional *Jotedar* families and still depended on landed property for their subsistence. Uttarkhand leaders claimed that *Bargadars* (share-croppers) are totally neglected in the economic sphere of West Bengal. They alleged that the Rajbangsi community is looked down upon by the Bengalis which they should resist. They thus attempted to exploit the Rajbangsi sense of deprivation to the advantage of the Uttarkhand Movement.

Following 'Sahitya Sabha', the principal propagator of the Assam movement, the leaders of Uttarkhand Movement attempted to institutionalise the Movement by appealing to the cultural identity of the Rajbangsi. They appealed to the Rajbangsi to reject the Bengali language as their mother tongue. The inclination towards the revival of Rajbangsi dialect as a distinct language (Kamtapuri) of the region was attempted to establish a distinct identity for the Rajbangsi from the Bengalis of West Bengal. The leaders of Uttarkhand brought the language issue to the fore not only to strengthen the feelings of ethnicity among the Rajbangsi but also to prevent them from being assimilated into the Bengali fold. They alleged the linguistic reorganisation of states resulted into making the Rajbangsi 'minorities' in ethno-linguistic terms in their own territory in spite of having a mother tongue other than the state's language. Accordingly they asserted that at least linguistically there is a sufficient ground to create a separate Kamtapur state. The Uttarkhand Movement was mainly an outcome of the struggle for power and associated privileges between the indigenous communities (Rajbangsi) and the immigrant Bengalis. Extensive politicisation on class line made considerable dent in the domain of power traditionally enjoyed by the Rajbangsi. Classes rather than castes acted as strong pressure groups in political sphere. In the new political

¹⁹ Op.cit.no.8

process the leaders moulded in an older milieu lost their age-old supremacy over local power structure. In addition to this, a class of Rajbangsi *Jotedars* were not willing to accept the greater involvement of the immigrant population in the competition for power and authority. They feared that through politicking, the immigrant population will ultimately oust them from the domain of their age-old power and authority in the region. So the claim of a separate Kamtapur state implied that they wanted a favourable condition where the crucial role of other communities (particularly immigrant) in the competitive political process would be minimised and the entire power and authority would come to the grips of the Rajbangsi.

The Uttarkhand Movement thus not only lay in the 'discontent' arising out of 'relative deprivation' but also in the desire to dominate over the immigrant population in socio-economic and political spheres. Changes in the old landholding pattern led to the emergence of a class of new landed elites composed of immigrants to this region. In view of such a situation, when the Rajbangsi were gradually losing their economic power, they attempted to achieve social authority over others by means of Kshatriyaization. But the failure of the Kshatriyaization Movement to raise their overall social status and authority in the society made the Rajbangsi claim avenues of power and politics. Accordingly to win the struggle for power the Uttarkhand leaders brought the Kamtapur issue into the forefront. To seek the support of their community they exploited the resentments against the immigrants among the Rajbangsi. The emergence of Uttarkhand Dal and their stir for a separate Kamtapur state thus reflected the desire on the part of a class of Rajbangsi leaders to grab the power and to exert their absolute political authority over everyone.²⁰ In 1972 the Uttarkhand Dal participated in the Legislative Assembly election in West Bengal. But their candidates were defeated. Their basic issues lost sight in the glare of the dominant progressive ideology of the Left. People got swayed by the Left ideologies, and the Uttarkhand Movement lost ground which was viewed as being guided by the interest of the Rajbangsi *Jotedars* and the elites.²¹

²⁰ Op.cit.no.8

²¹ Op.cit.no.17

UTTARBANGA TAPSILI JATI/UPJATI SANGATHAN

In the intermediary period between the decline of the Uttarkhand Dal and the emergence of the Kamtapur Peoples Party, an auxiliary organization named “Uttarbanga Tapsili Jati/Upajati Sangathan” (UTJUS) comprising of Rajbangsi, became the torch-bearer for the redress of their socio-economic and political grievances. Its primary demand was against the citizenship of the Bengali refugees and immigrants from Bangladesh who migrated after 1971. But the organisation lost its influence after the central conference held at Alipurduar Parade Ground in 1986. The conference which was meant to be a peaceful gathering turned volatile with the outbreak of open hostility. The leaders of the conference claimed that the *Bhatiya* hoodlums, members of different clubs and the activists of different political parties employed force on participants of the processions injuring hundreds of people, and that the police took no cognizance of the crime. However it was also reported that the leaders of the UTJUS delivered provocative speeches asking the Rajbangsi to reclaim the lands which was occupied by the immigrants from Bangladesh. The outbreak of violence alienated the Rajbangsi from political activities of the UTJUS and discouraged them from holding processions at Alipurduar in the subsequent times. Eventually the existence of UTJUS consigned to oblivion.²²

KAMTAPUR PEOPLES PARTY

Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP) was constituted in 1992. It was an offshoot of the Kamtapur Gana Parishad formed on the lines of the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).²³ It was formed with the primary objective of a separate state of Kamtapur for the Rajbangsi within the Indian Union. It was thus a carry-over of the demand and activities by the Uttarkhand Dal in 1970s.

²² Sailen Debnath, ed **Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2007, p.p. 49-50.

²³ Op.cit.no.8

AIMS OF THE KPP

According to the Constitution of the KPP its aims are as follows:-

- 1) To revive the vanished tradition, culture, language, literature, folk-ways, folklore of Kamtapur State and to make the Rajbangsi conscious about their own culture and tradition.
- 2) To drive away the stigma of sub-language or dialect and to revive the status of the 'Kamtapuri' language as a distinct language.
- 3) To struggle for the development and recognition of Kamtapuri language for the purpose of achieving the organizational goals. The leaders of the KPP formed another sub-organisation known as Kamtapur Bhasa- O-Sahitya Parishad (KBSP) on 1998 in a conference in Kumargram Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri where the KPP raised the following demands-
 - a) Inclusion of Kamtapuri language in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India.
 - b) Improvement of the Kamtapuri literature, by publishing dictionary, grammar books etc. in Kamtapuri language.
 - c) Publications of books, novels etc. in Kamtapuri Language.
 - d) Correspondence, letters, invitation cards to be written in Kamtapuri Language;
- 4) The Government of West Bengal failed to develop socio-economic conditions of Kamtapuri people and therefore the task of the KPP is establishment of Kamtapur State for the protection of ethnic identity, culture, language and economic interest of the people
- 5) To intensify its drive for collecting new members from among the ethnic Rajbangsi.

ELEVEN POINT DEMAND OF KPP

The KPP in view of the above mentioned aims has enumerated eleven demands stated below:-

- 1) In order to enable the Kamtapuri people to govern their own lives by reason of ethnical, lingual, historical and socio-cultural distinction from the rest of the people of West Bengal a separate state namely 'Kamtapur' be created within the framework of Indian Union comprising of whole of

North Bengal and adjoining Kamtapuri populated areas of India, in accordance to Article 3 of the Constitution of India.

- 2) Inclusion of Kamtapuri Language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- 3) The Indira- Mujib Accord for the expulsion of illegal foreigners from Kamtapuri dominated areas of North Bengal be implemented shortly. In order to curb illegal influx of immigrants in North Bengal and adjacent Kamtapuri dominated areas the 'Inner Line Permit' must also be immediately imposed on the areas.
- 4) With a view to restrain the intrusion of illegal foreigners in North Bengal 'Barbed wire' should be erected on the borderline of both India and Bangladesh without further delay.
- 5) Cultural programmes of Kamtapuris should be telecast on the television by opening Fulbari Doordarshan sub-Station Centre soon.
- 6) 'Teesta-Irrigation Project' should be declared as National Project immediately for the all-round development of North Bengal.
- 7) Cultural programmes of Kamtapuris to be broadcast through 'All India Radio', Siliguri.
- 8) A Central University namely 'Roy Saheb Thakur Panchanan Barma University' should be set-up in the district of Cooch Behar for the access of higher education by the aboriginal people of North Bengal.
- 9) Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and Bangladesh enclaves in India are exchanged without further delay.
- 10) A 'white paper' regarding economic status, culture, population and ethnical identity of the aboriginal people of North Bengal is published immediately with regard to the pre and post history of North Bengal since Independence of India.²⁴

²⁴ Kamal Chandra Barman, *Ethnic Movements in North Bengal: A Review of Kamtapur and Greater Cooch Behar State Demand in Cooch Behar*, unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of North Bengal, 2007.

POINTS OF JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DEMANDS OF KPP

It is to be noted that the KPP put forward the points of justification of the demands of Uttarkhand for that of Kamtapur which are follows:

- 1) The major area of North Bengal belongs to Kamtapur, and this area never constituted a part of Bengal; rather, before the advent of the British rule in India, there had been no existence of Bengal as a political entity. Bengal was a province of the Mughal Empire of which Kamtapur was never a part. To stop Bhutanese intrusion and incursion, the kingdom of Koch-Kamtapur signed a treaty with the British government in 1773. For the reason of not being a part of Bengal, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, and Darjeeling did not become part of British India along with the occupation of Bengal by the British. Kamtapur thus is a political legacy of Rajbangsi, and for the development and prosperity of this zone a new state with the name of Kamtapur is to be established.
- 2) The Kamtapuri language is neglected. It is not a dialect of Bengali; rather, Kamtapuri language historically preceded the Bengali language which originally was a dialect of '*Rad-Bangla*'. The constitutional recognition of Kamtapuri language is unavoidably necessary. It will be the official language of the proposed Kamtapur state. Kamtapuri language therefore should immediately be incorporated as a medium of instruction at school, college and university level.
- 3) The natural resources of North Bengal are not used for the progress and prosperity of the inhabitants of this area. The owners of the tea estates are outsiders, and wealth of the forests is reaped by the Government which is South Bengal bound, specifically Calcutta centric. The Government has earned billions of rupees from North Bengal but has made no investment here; money is drained away for investment in a select few southern districts. The Rajbangsi virtually have no share in the huge wealth incurred from their soil. The nature of administration seems to be colonial. As North Bengal is being robbed of her resources, the establishment of a separate state is inevitable for the future of the Rajbangsi.

- 4) The people of North Bengal, specifically the indigenous Kamtapuris, have no share in the power structure of the state of West Bengal for its cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, capitalists, doctors, engineers, artists and intellectuals are from Calcutta and its adjoining districts, and they consider North Bengal as a sporting ground for exploitation, and the only way of liberation out of it is the struggle for a separate state.
- 5) North Bengal has become a den of refugees from all directions and this has to be stopped.
- 6) As to public health and electricity supply, irrigation, education, communication network in North Bengal, nothing has been done for the purpose of meeting the minimal requirement of the people here.²⁵

As a political party, KPP was mainly based in the rural areas with the support of the local Rajbangsi in Cooch Behar. It is not caste and religion determining the communitarian politics of the Rajbangsi. It is now culture and language that shape the politics of difference from the dominant Bengali community as a whole in the region. They reject the term Rajbangsi that connotes the old Hindu Kshatriya caste association. They rather prefer the term 'Kamata' having historical and cultural connotations. It indicates the area that Kamata and later kings reined for centuries and where the indigenous people spoke the same language and shared the same culture. The language was called 'Kamatabehari' and the culture 'Kamata'. This denomination emphasizes the determination of cultural identity, not caste identity, in terms of a region, language and culture. It is on this ground that they claim Rajbangsi to have formed a 'nationality', and in terms of the principles of linguistic reorganization of state claim a different state. The name suggested for the state is 'Kamtapur' and the language, 'Kamtapuri'. KPP has stated that the prospective area of Kamtapur is to correspond with the limits of King Jagdipendra Naranarayan's empire; it may thus extend from Kamrup Kamakshya temple to Purnia including Kishanganj of Bihar. It further asserted that the KPP will vehemently resist any plan of the West Bengal Government to include Siliguri

²⁵ Op.cit.no.22, pp. 50-52

sub-division and northern part of the Dooars within the jurisdiction of the hill council while conceding to the demand of the GNLF.

The crux of the claim of KPP is contingent upon challenging the dominant discourse that subsumes the Kamtapuri language into Bengali as one of its dialects and the Kamtapuri people to be Bengali by acculturation and assimilation. The Rajbangsi leaders through Kshatriyaisation Movement had aspired to merge into the Varna Hindu hierarchy as Bengali; although that meant abolition of the ethnic identity of the community. The upper caste Bengali Hindu society however did not accept them as Kshatriya 'caste' at all, although the official voice of times called them Bengali for political expediency. This led to vigorous attempt on the part of the KPP leaders as well as the intellectuals of the community to establish their identity in terms of a politics of cultural difference involving attempts to prove that their language, culture, food habit, dress and religious rituals was different from Bengali.²⁶

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND LEADERSHIP OF KPP

According to the Article VII of the Constitution of the KPP, the organizational structure of the KPP is composed of a Central Committee which is the highest body of the party. It is headed by the party President. Mr. Atul Roy is the present President of the party. The other members of the Central Committee are Lalit Barman, Paresh Roy, Jagodananda Ray, Nasir Ali Pramanik, and Benimadhab Singh etc. Under the Central Committee there shall be District Committee, Block and Town Committees and *Anchal* or Regional Committee. At the bottom of the party organization, there are village committees. In each of the six districts of North Bengal the District Committees have been formed. The tenure of all these Committees is five years. According to the Article VIII of the Constitution of KPP, 'all the Committees shall have minimum 21 members out of whom sixteen members should be elected and five members would be nominated by the President of the Party'. The KPP also has certain Frontal Organisations such as Kamtapur Youth Association, Kamtapur Labour Organisation, Kamtapur Employees Association, Kamtapur Women's Organisation, etc. Another mentionable Frontal Organisation is Kamtapur Bhash-O-Sahitya Parishad which is

²⁶ Op.cit.no.16

in search of the distinctiveness of Kamtapuri Language from other languages viz. the Bengali and Assamese.

ACTIVITIES OF THE KPP

The activities of the KPP mainly involve attempts to mobilize people for their demand for a separate state of Kamtapur. Accordingly, several small conferences, meetings and local level demonstrations are held at the grass-root level. Through these meetings and conferences the members of the KPP share their problems, alienation, history of their geographical location, temples etc. making emotional appeals to the masses and creating awareness about the tradition and culture of Kamtapur. A Seminar was thus held in Siliguri on language, culture, and socio-economic condition of the North Bengal region in 1998 attended by Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, former Chief Minister of West Bengal. Several Conferences were held in different places of North Bengal such as at Kalin Haat, Dhubguri, Jalpaiguri on 3rd May 1998, Champasari, Siliguri, Darjeeling on 21-22 December 1996 and Kumargram, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri on 23rd September 1977, etc. The intellectuals of the Rajbangsi community came forward to write the history and establish a link between the present and past of the Rajbangsi community. Sanskrit scriptures were widely quoted, legends interpreted, folk songs and ballads rewritten with the objective to build a concrete history of Rajbangsi and raise consciousness about the tradition of Rajbangsi community.²⁷ The KPP also issues threat to the West Bengal Government of economic blockade declaring that they would prevent transportation of the traditional produce of North Bengal Districts such as tea, oranges, timber, jute-goods, etc., from North Bengal to South Bengal.²⁸ Besides these the KPP call several strikes or *bandhs* in different places of North Bengal. The KPP also organises several cycle rallies in different parts of North Bengal. For example, on 28th September 1997 the KPP submitted its eleven point demand charter to the Prime Minister of India, in Delhi and the Divisional Commissioner of North Bengal through a cycle rally.²⁹

²⁷Op.cit.no.25

²⁸ Jaydeep Mitra, 'Lack of Development gives rise to Separatist Sentiments', http://www.cpiml.org/liberation/year_2001/February/06%20special%20report.Html

²⁹ Op.cit.no.25

SPLIT OF KAMTAPUR

In the year 2006 Kamtapur People's Party owing to differences among its leaders split into two factions: Kamtapur People's Party led by Atul Roy and Greater Cooch Behar Movement led by Nikhil Roy. Atul Roy alleged that the Kamtapur Movement and the Greater Cooch Behar Movement are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin; and the split of the Kamtapur People's Party into two factions has not been owing to any ideological and political difference but on account of some unacceptable style of functioning of Nikhil Roy, the leader of the other faction.³⁰ In spite of the split, the KPP was successful in riveting Government attention to the alienation of the indigenous people from the general projects of development and thereby proved the *raison d'être* of their agitation in a democratic polity. It was successful to rouse the ethnic emotions of the Rajbangsi community in spite of opposition from the Left progressive Government in West Bengal. It was particularly successful to evolve the discourse of the 'Kamtapuri nationality' on the basis of a common culture, language and region.³¹

KAMTAPUR LIBERATION ORGANISATION

Kamtapur statehood movement has not only been guided by the Kamtapur People's Party but also by the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), a terrorist outfit, which allegedly came into being with the help of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).³² It came into existence on December 28, 1995. At its inception, the KLO was an over-ground organisation and was formed to address problems such as large-scale unemployment, land alienation, perceived neglect of the Kamtapuri language and identity, and grievances of economic deprivation of the Rajbanshis. But subsequently, its strategy transformed when certain members of the KLO belonging to the All Kamtapur Students' Union (AKSU) organised an armed struggle for a separate Kamtapur State. The objective of the KLO is to carve out a separate Kamtapur State comprising six districts— Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur and

³⁰ Op.cit.no.22, pp. 55-56.

³¹ Op.cit.no.16

³²Op.cit.no.4

Malda—of West Bengal and four contiguous districts of Assam—Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and Goalpara.³³ However, most of the KLO's activities have been concentrated in Alipurduar in Jalpaiguri and the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling.³⁴ The KLO tries to garner support from the Rajbangsi of Lower Assam (Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and Goalpara districts), West Garo Hills of Meghalaya and six districts of North Bengal.³⁵

KLO-ULFA NEXUS

It is alleged by the West Bengal government that there is a close nexus between the KLO and ULFA. The role of ULFA in transforming the character of KLO is considered to be significant. The ULFA, facing an uphill task in terms of maintaining its cadre strength and influence in view of repeated army operations, sought to use the relatively unmanned area of North Bengal for variety of purposes with the help of KLO. **First**, the area of North Bengal provided ULFA a transit point to commute from Bhutan to Bangladesh and vice versa, while some insurgents crossed over to Nepal through this area. **Second**, the area was used by ULFA to tranship weapons to their camps in Bhutan. **Third**, KLO maintained some hideouts for ULFA in this area. **Fourth**, this area provided a safe haven for injured and battle-weary ULFA cadre.³⁶ The KLO in turn receives training and support from the ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland in camps located in the jungles of Southern Bhutan and the Assam-Bengal border.³⁷

The Govt of West Bengal suggested as reported by the media that KLO operates in tandem with the ULFA. The KLO taking cue from the ULFA resorted to abductions and extortions of tea planters and businessmen in the North Bengal region. The KLO activists also attacked and killed Communist Party of India-

³³ Barun Roy, 'Datashet: Kamtapur Liberation Organisation', November 12, 2008, <http://beacononline.wordpress.com/2008/11/12/datashet-kamtapur-liberation-organisation-klo/>

³⁴ Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, 'A Ruthless Hit Squad', **Frontline**, Volume 21 No 1, January 03-16, 2004.

³⁵ Bibhu Prasad Routray, Kamatapur Liberation Organisation, <http://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/FormTemplate/frmTempSimpleWithFourPara.aspx?MnId=X5osxuOq1Y0=&ParentID=KDe+m3KVGiw>

³⁶ Op.cit.no.35

³⁷ Op.cit.no.34

Marxist CPI (M) local leaders and workers.³⁸ The first KLO-ULFA armed operation as reported by the media was the abduction of a tea garden owner Roshan Lal Garg from Latabari tea estate in Central Dooars in July 1999. Garg was released by KLO after the payment of the ransom in February 2000. In November 1999, KLO and ULFA insurgents looted a railway cash counter near Siliguri. In 2000, a joint operation of KLO and ULFA resulted in the deaths of two prominent CPI (M) activists. In June 2000 senior CPI (M) leaders, Sunil Dutta and Dilip Roy were killed at Duramari in Jalpaiguri. In July 2000 CPI (M) supporters, also school teachers, were killed at Mainaguri and Dhupguri. In October 2000 senior lawyer and CPI (M) leader Dipankar Ghosh was killed. In 2001 CPI (M) leader Sudhir Burman and three Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) leaders were gunned down. On 7 August 2000, a CPM activist Nitai Das was killed at Jalpaiguri. In October 2000, a tea garden owner Om Prakash Agarwal was abducted by a joint team of KLO and ULFA insurgents. KLO, along with ULFA, called for a boycott of the Republic Day celebrations on 26 January, 2001 from 1 a.m. till 6p.m. with the proclaimed objective of overthrowing the Indian colonial rule.³⁹ The KLO in collaboration with the ULFA encamped in the jungles of southern Bhutan and began to use the forest paths of North Bengal as invisible corridors before and after every operation. From Teesta to Kumargram, the entire Dooars became unsafe for the Leftists mainly for the CPI (M) activists and supporters. The police did not have noticeable success against the terrorists for they had no training in counter-insurgency tactics and in the use of automatic weaponry frequently used by the terrorists.⁴⁰

OPERATION FLUSH OUT

KLO suffered a major setback with the 'Operation Flush Out' of Royal Bhutanese Army (RBA). RBA destroyed its camps in the India-Bhutan border and captured five of its most senior leaders. The RBA handed over to the Indian authority the founder-members of KLO Joydeb Roy alias Tom Adhikari and

³⁸ Op.cit.no.35

³⁹Op.cit.no.35

⁴⁰Op.cit.no.4

Milton Burman alias Mihir Das, and other important leaders such as Sanjoy Adhikari alias Vicky, Bhim Dakua alias Jayanta Das and Pabitra Singha alias Biplab Singha. While Tom Adhikari was the action squad head of the organisation, Milton Burman, the second-in-command after Tamir Das alias Jiban Singha was the tactician. Tom Adhikari masterminded the attack on the local office of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Dhupguri town in Jalpaiguri district on August 17, 2003, in which five CPI (M) workers were killed and 14 others injured. Also involved in the attack were Jiban Singha and ULFA activist Biju Chakraborti. Tom Adhikari and Chakraborti were also responsible for the murder of Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) leader Charan Thakur on October 11, 2003, in Banchukamari Haat, Jalpaiguri. 'Operation Flush Out' put out of action seven of the 10 members of the KLO core committee.⁴¹

Interrogation of the five captured leaders of KLO uncovered new information about the banned outfit's activities. Contrary to the widely held notion that the KLO was financed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), interrogations revealed that the outfit's arms and ammunition were purchased from Bangladeshi arms dealers and supplied by ULFA. Although the ULFA trained KLO militants, it hardly ever involved itself directly in the latter's 'operations'. The KLO, in turn, would pay for the training and the arms and help arrange rations and other supplies to ULFA. Interrogations further confirmed KPP's link with KLO. The captured militants confessed financing the KPP. However it was revealed that the two organisations, although close to each other, had different political agendas. While the KPP demanded only a separate State of Kamtapur, the KLO wanted a separate country carved out of parts of North Bengal and Assam.⁴²

However the recourse to violence has alienated a large number of Rajbangsi intellectuals from the Movement of KLO. The KPP too distanced itself from the KLO since January 2001 when KLO along with all militant groups operating from the region gave a call to boycott the Republic Day celebrations.⁴³ The

⁴¹Op.cit.no.34

⁴² Op.cit.no.35

⁴³ Alok Kumar Gupta & Chanda Saswati, '*Kamtapur Liberation Organization*', **Third Concept**, Volume 16 No 191, January, 2003

support base of KLO also suffered a setback due to the presence of other Kamtapuri political organisations such as the KPP, All Kamtapur Students Union (KSU), the Kamtapur Women's Right Front (KWRF) in West Bengal fighting for the cause of Rajbangsi.⁴⁴The KLO now operates independently of the KPP.

GREATER COOCH BEHAR PEOPLES ASSOCIATION

The movement for the separate state of Rajbangsi is also being spearheaded by the 'Greater Cooch Behar People's Association' (GCPA) formed on 9th September 1998 at Kakbari school under the leadership of Bangshi Badan Barman. GCPA, however, gained momentum in the second half of 2005 as the KPP weakened due to a split in the party. The GCPA claimed to be a development-oriented organisation and started mobilising the Rajbangsi ethnic community and other ethnic minorities in the region on the issue of a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar. Like KPP it is also demanding a separate state called 'Greater Cooch Behar' with the areas of present Cooch Behar and parts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Assam. The language of this new state according to GCPA will be Kamtapuri or the Cooch Behari language. They are doing so in reference to the history, cultures and tradition of ancient Cooch Behar.⁴⁵ They derived its legacy from the 'Hita Sadhani Sabha'; and the former Cooch Behar state in its pristine form is its *esprit de corps*.

The GCPA argument is that King Jagaddipendra Narayan signed the document for merger of Cooch Behar with India only and not specifically with West Bengal. They claim that after the King signed the instrument of accession, Cooch Behar enjoyed the status of a province; therefore, the option of returning Cooch Behar to the status of a province or union territory by revoking its merger with West Bengal still remains, and that Cooch Behar be declared a separate state.⁴⁶ GCPA pointed out that Cooch Behar was regarded as a C-category state during the period of merger with India. Accordingly as per the Indian Constitution, Cooch Behar was to be centrally administered. But the Central Government did

⁴⁴ Op.cit.no.35

⁴⁵See Arun K. Jana, 'Backwardness and Political Articulation of Backwardness in the North Bengal Region of West Bengal', in Ashutosh Kumar's edited **Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions Within Regions**, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011.

⁴⁶ Op.cit.no.4

not do so. Rather it was unconstitutionally turned into a district of West Bengal. So the GCPA demands the status quo of the state of Cooch Behar as a separate state.⁴⁷

DEMANDS OF THE GREATER COOCH BEHAR MOVEMENT

The demands of the GCPA as per the Memorandum submitted to Union Home Minister on 18.6.2005 and their leaflet “*Danga Kuchbihar Basir Koyta Katha*” (A few submissions of Greater Cooch Behar people) are as follows:-

- 1) The Maharaja of Cooch Behar had not, of his own, agreed to the accession of the State to the Dominion of India.
- 2) In terms of the Instrument of Accession signed on 28.8.1949 and 30.8.1949 Cooch Behar State can never be merged with West Bengal. Vide D.O.No. 15 (19)-P/49 DT.30.8.49 V.P. Menon, the Indian Government representative communicated its intention to administer the State centrally by a Chief Commissioner.
- 3) In terms of Section 7 (1) of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the British Government abolished all the agreements entered into during the period 1773 to 1902 by which the British Empire occupied the areas of present Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur and Goalpara district of Assam which constituted the territories of Greater Cooch Behar.
- 4) In terms of the Instrument of Accession, Cooch Behar has been a C-category State which cannot be merged with West Bengal, an A-category State by a notification under section 290A of the Government of India Act, 1935.
- 5) In the agreement, the Government of India has communicated that it can take no important decision without Cooch Behar People’s mandate. In terms of the agreement, Government of India is promise-bound to meet the problems of Cooch Behar people.

In the perspective of the above submissions, the GCPA demanded implementation of the conditions of Instrument of Accession by virtue of which Cooch Behar State has remained a C-category State. According to GCPA, the

⁴⁷ Op.cit no.47

agreement contains the history, tradition, language and culture of the people of Cooch Behar and the commitments about the communal harmony and rights to food, shelter, health and education of the people. As such their slogan is – “*Kuchbiharer Bharat Bhukti Chukti Kuchbihar basir Mukti*” (Instrument of Accession is the salvation of Cooch Behar people). Hence their immediate demand is not to force upon the people of Cooch Behar the unconstitutional election of West Bengal Assembly and implement the Instrument of Accession at the earliest. ⁴⁸

ACTIVITIES OF GREATER COOCH BEHAR PEOPLES ASSOCIATION

The GCPA in order to reiterate their demand for a separate state have involved in submission of memorandum, picketing and demonstration. They have submitted memorandums to political leaders like A B Vajpayee, former Prime Minister of India and Sonia Gandhi, President of All India Congress Committee. It was during West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections, 2006 that GCPA demanded the formation of an interim caretaker government in Cooch Behar by the Union Government. However in view of no response from the government of West Bengal, the GCPA boycotted the West Bengal Assembly elections in 2006 asserting that the political status of the Cooch Behar is still not clear. In its memorandum to Sonia Gandhi dated 27th August, 2008 GCPA expressed that the people of Cooch Behar have lost their prosperity and future in their own land.

They have also adopted the method of non- cooperation to assert their demand. Accordingly farmers in Cooch Behar refused to pay the land taxes to the West Bengal government on the insistence of GCPA in July, 2005. They organised demonstration in Jantar Mantar, New Delhi on 11th and 12th December, 2014 to draw attention to their demand to restore the earlier status of Category ‘C’ statehood or grant Union Territory status to Greater Cooch Behar.⁴⁹ The GCPA although did not articulate the economic content of their demands but was successful in mobilising the poor rural population of the Cooch Behar consisting mainly of Rajbangsi ethnic community. It has also been successful in enlisting the support of Atul Roy’s Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP) who quoted in The

⁴⁸ Op.cit.no.17

⁴⁹ See Annexure No. V

Statesman dated 22 April, 2007 that KPP was not averse to the proposed state being named as Cooch Behar.⁵⁰

GREATER COOCH BEHAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The GCPA formed a political party named 'The Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party' (GCDP) on 24th June, 2006 at Dinhata Nripendra Narayan Smriti Sadan.⁵¹ According to the members of the GCDP, the mother organization i.e. The Greater Cooch Behar Peoples Association was not involved in the electoral process. But later, members of the GCPA felt that participation in the democratic electoral process is necessary to press for their demand for a separate state. Thus, the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party was formed out of its mother organization the Greater Cooch Behar Peoples Association. But for all practical purpose both these organization, actually represent the same group of people and their demands.⁵² Accordingly a memorandum to declare the Cooch Behar as a state under the Union of India was put forward by GCDP to the President of India dated 7th January, 2009.⁵³ The GCDP contested the Lok Sabha elections of 2009; its candidate, Bangshi Badan Barman, contested as an independent candidate and secured 37,226 votes.⁵⁴

GREATER KAMTA UNITED FORUM

Atul Roy the leader of the Kamtapur Progressive Party set up an organizational connection with the GCDP and both the parties in alliance have formed the 'Greater Kamta United Forum' in order to exert greater pressure on the Government for their common demand of a separate state for the Rajbangsi. Atul Roy considers the Greater Cooch Behar Movement as an alternative mobilization force with the reflection of most of the demands of the KPP. Thus the demands of the GCPA, GCDP and that of the KPP, in course of time, may coalesce together to the effect of organising a more organized Kamtapur Movement.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Op.cit.no.45

⁵¹ Op.cit no.47

⁵² Op.cit.no.25

⁵³ See Annexure No. IV

⁵⁴ Op.cit.no.49

⁵⁵ Op.cit.no.45

To conclude, the demand of separate state for the Rajbangsi started by the Hitasadhani Sabha is gathering momentum day by day. The Hitasadhani Sabha was limited only to the Hindu and Muslim *Jotedars* of the period and the area of its proposed state were concentrated to Cooch Behar only. But in later years the Movement acquired a strong mass support and expanded to different areas of North Bengal demanding a separate state comprising the five districts of North Bengal. The Movement also changed its name from time to time in tune with circumstances. Language issue was not raised by the Uttarkhand Movement. But the language issue has been the single biggest factor behind the growth of the KPP and the subsequent Movements for a separate state of Kamtapur. They demanded introduction of Kamtapuri language as well as inclusion of their history in the history syllabus of the North Bengal University. However the prime goal of the Hitasadhani Sabha, the Uttarkhand Party, Kamtapur Gana Parishad, Kamtapur People's Party and Greater Cooch Behar Movement was the same—to set up a separate state of Kamtapur.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Op.cit.no.8