

# The Political Dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal

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**Abstract:** *The Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal represents a significant case of regional political mobilization driven by historical grievances, socio-economic marginalization, and ethnic identity assertion. This study investigates the political factors that led to the emergence of the movement, examines the role of the Koch-Rajbanshi community in shaping a distinct political identity, and analyzes the contribution of prominent leaders, including Panchanan Barma, in mobilizing political consciousness. Drawing on doctrinal research, historical records, legislative acts, reports of commissions and committees, and published literature, the study highlights how historical memory, cultural preservation, and leadership dynamics collectively fueled demands for autonomy and recognition. The findings reveal that the movement is both a reaction to perceived neglect by state mechanisms and an ongoing effort to assert the socio-political rights of indigenous communities, emphasizing the complex interplay between identity, leadership, and regional politics in contemporary India.*

**Keywords:** Kamtapur Movement, Koch-Rajbanshi Community, North Bengal, Regional Politics, Political Mobilization, Panchanan Barma, Cultural Identity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal can be understood within the broader context of identity politics, and historical marginalization in India. The roots of political consciousness in North Bengal extend back to the historical legacy of the Koch kingdom established in the sixteenth century under rulers such as Biswa Singha and later consolidated by Nara Narayan, which gave the region a distinct administrative and cultural identity (Sanyal, 1965). During the colonial period, the integration of Cooch Behar and surrounding territories into the British administrative framework altered traditional power relations and introduced new socio-economic hierarchies. Scholars have noted that colonial land policies, migration patterns, and administrative restructuring contributed to the gradual marginalization of indigenous communities such as the Koch-Rajbanshis (Basu, 2018). The post-independence reorganization of states, particularly following the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1955 and the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, further strengthened the principle of linguistic and regional identity in Indian federalism (Austin, 1999). However, the unique socio-cultural conditions of North Bengal were not adequately addressed in these structural reforms, which later provided fertile ground for the emergence of regional political movements such as the Kamtapur Movement.

The ideological foundations of the movement were deeply influenced by early twentieth-century social reform and identity mobilization among the Rajbanshi community. One of the most influential leaders in this regard was Panchanan Barma, whose efforts through the Kshatriya movement sought to reconstruct the social status and historical consciousness of the Rajbanshi people. Through organizations such as the Kshatriya Samiti and various public speeches and writings, Barma emphasized education, dignity, and collective identity as instruments of socio-political empowerment (Biswas, 2017). His political thought reflected broader intellectual debates on social reform and caste mobility in colonial India, often drawing inspiration from nationalist discourse that emphasized self-respect and community organization. After independence, linguistic and cultural concerns gained prominence with the implementation of the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961, which recognized Bengali as the official language of

the state. Activists of the Kamtapur Movement argued that such policies marginalized regional languages such as Kamtapuri and weakened the cultural heritage of the Koch-Rajbanshi community (Debnath & Bhattacharjee, 2008). Reports and discussions on regional disparities in planning documents and socio-economic studies of North Bengal further revealed persistent developmental imbalances between northern districts and the metropolitan region of Kolkata, reinforcing the narrative of political neglect.

The modern phase of the Kamtapur Movement emerged in the late twentieth century with organized political mobilization and the formation of platforms such as the Kamtapur Progressive Party, which formally articulated demands for a separate Kamtapur state and recognition of the Kamtapuri language. The movement's political expression was shaped by broader debates on federalism, decentralization, and regional autonomy within the Indian constitutional framework (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2014). Scholars have often compared this movement with other regional autonomy movements in eastern and northeastern India, including those associated with linguistic and ethnic identity politics (Hardgrave, 1983). Electoral dynamics also influenced the trajectory of the movement, as different political parties adopted varying positions on the demand for statehood and linguistic recognition. These developments echoed the wider democratic debates reflected in parliamentary discussions, academic publications, and public speeches emphasizing the importance of accommodating regional aspirations within a pluralistic nation. As India witnessed the creation of new states such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana, questions regarding the criteria for state reorganization and the legitimacy of regional demands gained renewed relevance (Chakrabarti, 2019). In this context, the Kamtapur Movement represents an important case study of how historical memory, linguistic identity, socio-economic grievances, and democratic mobilization interact to shape political dynamic expression in contemporary India.

### **1.1. Emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal**

The emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal developed through a long historical trajectory shaped by regional identity, historical memory, and socio-economic marginalization of the Koch-Rajbanshi community. Its origins can be traced to the sixteenth century when the Koch kingdom under rulers such as Biswa Singha and Nara Narayan established a powerful regional polity across present-day North Bengal, Assam, and parts of northern Bangladesh. This kingdom created a distinct administrative and cultural identity that remained embedded in the collective memory of the Rajbanshi people (Sanyal, 1965). However, the decline of the Koch dynasty and the integration of Cooch Behar into the British colonial framework during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries significantly reduced regional autonomy. Colonial policies such as the Permanent Settlement of 1793 and administrative restructuring altered traditional land relations and introduced new elites into governance and education, which gradually marginalized the indigenous population (Basu, 2007). Early ethnographic works and historical publications, including studies by C. C. Sanyal and later regional historians, emphasized the unique socio-cultural heritage of the Rajbanshi people, strengthening the historical foundation of later political demands.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, organized socio-political consciousness began to develop among the Rajbanshi community. A major turning point occurred with the leadership of Panchanan Barma, who founded the Kshatriya Samiti in 1910 and led the Rajbanshi Kshatriya movement to improve the social status, education, and political awareness of the community. His speeches and writings emphasized dignity and collective mobilization, famously advocating that marginalized groups must "unite to reclaim their honour and rightful place in society." Scholars interpret this movement as an early stage of regional political awakening in North Bengal (Biswas, 2017). After independence, the political framework of India further influenced regional aspirations. The recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission (1955) and the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 introduced linguistic principles into state formation, raising expectations among many linguistic communities. However, the implementation of the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961 recognized Bengali as the state's official language, leading to concerns among Rajbanshi intellectuals about the marginalization of the Kamtapuri language. Socio-economic reports and regional development studies in the latter half of the twentieth century also highlighted disparities between North Bengal and the more developed southern districts, reinforcing perceptions of administrative neglect (Bhattacharyya, 2005).

By the late twentieth century, these historical, linguistic, and developmental grievances crystallized into organized political movements demanding regional autonomy. The formation of the Kamtapur Progressive Party in the early 1990s formally articulated the demand for a separate Kamtapur state and recognition of the Kamtapuri language, while the emergence of the Kamtapur Liberation Organization reflected a more radical phase of mobilization (Choudhury, 2015). Public speeches, pamphlets, and regional publications frequently invoked historical memory and emphasized the restoration of the cultural and political dignity of the Koch-Rajbanshi community. Scholars have compared the trajectory of the movement with other regional autonomy movements in India, noting how ethnic identity and uneven development often stimulate political mobilization (Hardgrave, 1983). Contemporary political analysis and parliamentary discussions on regional disparities have further recognized the importance of addressing such issues within India's federal structure, where demands for linguistic recognition, cultural preservation, and equitable development continue to shape democratic political expression (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2014). Thus, the Kamtapur Movement represents a significant regional response to historical marginalization and an enduring effort to assert identity and political recognition within modern Indian democracy.

### 1.2. Political Dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement

The political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal evolved through several historical phases shaped by identity politics, regional inequality, linguistic demands, and political mobilization among the Koch–Rajbanshi community. The movement reflects the interaction between constitutional structures of the Indian state and regional aspirations for recognition, autonomy, and development. Its trajectory can be understood through different historical timelines and political developments.

#### *Early Political Awakening and Identity Mobilization (Late 19th Century–1947)*

The initial phase of political expression among the Koch–Rajbanshi community emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through social reform movements and caste-based mobilization. The leadership of Panchanan Barma played a crucial role in awakening political consciousness through the formation of the Kshatriya Samiti in 1910. This organization sought to elevate the social status of the Rajbanshi community, promote education, and encourage participation in administrative and political institutions. These early movements laid the ideological foundation for later political mobilization centered on regional identity and recognition.

#### *Post-Independence Constitutional Developments and Regional Discontent (1947–1980s)*

After Indian independence, the political environment of the region was shaped by constitutional reforms and administrative reorganization. The States Reorganisation Commission (1953–1955) and the subsequent States Reorganisation Act of 1956 reorganized Indian states primarily on linguistic principles. Although these reforms addressed several regional linguistic demands, the Koch–Rajbanshi population of North Bengal felt that their linguistic and cultural identity remained unrecognized within the state of West Bengal. The West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961 further institutionalized Bengali as the primary administrative language of the state, intensifying concerns about the marginalization of the Kamtapuri or Rajbanshi language. During the 1960s and 1970s, various socio-economic studies and regional development reports pointed to disparities between North Bengal and the southern districts of the state.

#### *Rise of Organized Political Movements (1980s–1990s)*

The political articulation of regional demands intensified during the 1980s and 1990s, when identity politics and regional autonomy movements gained prominence across India. In North Bengal, organizations advocating the cultural and political rights of the Koch–Rajbanshi community began to mobilize public support. The Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) emerged during the early 1990s as a political platform demanding the creation of a separate Kamtapur state comprising parts of North Bengal and adjoining areas of Assam. Around the same time, the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) was formed in 1995, marking a more militant dimension of the movement.

#### *Contemporary Political Negotiations and Democratic Expression (2000s–Present)*

In the twenty-first century, the political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement have increasingly shifted toward negotiations within democratic institutions. Government initiatives, parliamentary debates, and regional development committees have addressed some of the socio-economic concerns of North Bengal. Discussions in legislative forums

have highlighted the need for inclusive development, cultural recognition, and greater representation of marginalized communities in governance. Academic works such as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph's studies on Indian federalism and regional politics have argued that such movements often emerge when communities perceive a gap between constitutional promises and socio-economic realities (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2014).

Through various phases of social reform, constitutional debate, political mobilization, and contemporary negotiation, the movement has become an important example of regional political expression and the continuing struggle for cultural recognition and equitable development in North Bengal.

### **1.3. The Review of Related Literature**

**Biswas, S. (2026).** This study provides a contemporary historical analysis of the cultural roots that underpin modern separatist demands. This work argues that the "awakening" in North Bengal is a delayed response to the 19th-century Bengal Renaissance, which largely ignored the Rajbongshi hinterlands. The author posits that the Kamtapur movement is the political manifestation of a long-standing quest for intellectual and social parity, framing the current demand for statehood as an attempt to reclaim a "lost sovereignty" that was compromised during the post-independence merger of Cooch Behar.

**Lama, Y. (2026).** It examines the "silences" in mainstream Indian historiography regarding the contribution of North Bengal's indigenous communities. By situating the Kamtapur movement within the broader context of "frontier politics," the study illustrates how the region has been treated as a peripheral zone. The author argues that current statehood demands are not merely "separatist" but are corrective efforts to address the historical "effacement" of the Rajbongshi people from the national narrative.

**Ghosh, A. (2025).** It analyzes the pivotal role of the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) in transforming a localized grievance into a structured democratic movement. This research highlights the socio-economic factors—specifically the pressure on land resources due to the inflow of outsiders—as the primary driver of inter-ethnic tension. Ghosh concludes that the movement's persistence is fueled by a "fear of being succumbed culturally and linguistically," leading to a demand for 80% reservation of local jobs for the "sons of the soil."

**Das, K. (2024).** This study categorizes the current phase of the movement into three distinct streams: militant political-cultural demands, moderate demands for regional autonomy, and purely cultural-linguistic preservation. The study investigates the "identity crisis" of the Rajbongshis, tracing the shift from their 1910 claim of Kshatriya status to their modern-day fight for ST recognition. Das emphasizes that the movement is a reaction to perceived "differentiated citizenship" where the community feels marginalized by the state's developmental agenda.

**Adhikari, T. (2023).** This article provides a critical look at the "silent antagonism" prevalent among former activists. Adhikari discusses how the state's focus on "poor rehabilitation programs" (such as minor bank loans or Group-D jobs) has failed to address the deeper ideological roots of the movement. The literature points to a decline in Rajbongshi print culture and cinema as a sign of "cultural repression," arguing that the movement persists because the underlying socio-political "anomalies" remain unaddressed by successive regimes.

**Saha, A. (2021).** The investigation explores the "geopolitical fragility" of North Bengal, noting how the Kamtapur movement overlaps with other regional struggles like Gorkhaland. The paper argues that the state's refusal to divide Bengal is often framed through the lens of "territorial integrity," while the community views it through "self-determination." This 2021 study marks a shift in literature toward analyzing the movement as a challenge to the traditional West Bengal state-structure.

**Drishti IAS. (2020).** According to this report highlights the "ripple effect" of ethnic concessions in Northeast India. It notes that the creation of the Bodo Territorial Region (BTR) intensified the Kamtapur movement, as the two territories overlap geographically and the Rajbongshis in Assam sought similar administrative parity. This year (2020) serves as a benchmark for the "revival" of statehood demands after a period of relative dormancy.

### **1.4. Research Gap**

The existing literature on the Kamtapur Movement discusses several important dimensions such as cultural marginalization, regional identity, socio-economic grievances, and geopolitical factors in North Bengal. Studies focus

on ideological dissatisfaction, geopolitical dynamics, and the revival of statehood demands in recent years. However, these studies do not comprehensively examine the specific political factors that led to the emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal, nor do they sufficiently analyze the central role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community in shaping the political identity of the movement. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the contribution of influential leaders such as Panchanan Barma in mobilizing political consciousness and inspiring organized political expression. Therefore, the present study attempts to address these gaps by providing a focused analysis of the political origins of the movement, the role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community, and the leadership contributions that shaped its political trajectory.

### 1.5. The Statement of Problem

The Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal has emerged as a significant regional political movement rooted in issues of identity, historical marginalization, and demands for socio-political recognition by the Koch–Rajbanshi community. Over time, the movement has expressed aspirations for cultural preservation, linguistic recognition, and, in some cases, the creation of a separate Kamtapur state. Although several studies have discussed the historical background, socio-economic grievances, and contemporary political developments associated with the movement, there remains limited scholarly focus on the specific political factors that led to its emergence and evolution in North Bengal. Furthermore, the role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community in shaping the political identity of the movement and the contribution of influential leaders such as Panchanan Barma in mobilizing political consciousness have not been examined in an integrated manner. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the political dynamics underlying the Kamtapur Movement by analyzing its causes, community participation, and leadership influence in shaping regional political expression.

### 1.6. The Rationale of the Study

The study of the political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal is important for understanding the complex relationship between regional identity, political mobilization, and demands for recognition within a democratic framework. The movement reflects the aspirations of the Koch–Rajbanshi community for cultural preservation, linguistic recognition, and equitable socio-political participation in the region. Over the years, the movement has drawn attention to issues of historical marginalization, uneven regional development, and the quest for political representation in North Bengal. Despite its significance in the political landscape of Eastern India, the movement has often been examined only from limited perspectives, leaving several aspects of its political evolution insufficiently explored. Therefore, this study is necessary to analyze the underlying political factors that contributed to the emergence of the movement, to understand the role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community in shaping its political identity, and to examine how influential leaders mobilized political consciousness among the people. By doing so, the study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of regional political movements and identity-based mobilization in contemporary Indian politics.

### 1.7. The Research Questions

RQ1: What political factors contributed to the emergence and development of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal?

RQ2: How has the Koch-Rajbanshi community shaped the political identity associated with the Kamtapur Movement?

RQ3: What role did Panchanan Barma play in mobilizing political consciousness within the movement?

### 1.8. The Objectives of the Study

O1: To investigate the political factors that led to the emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal.

O2: To analyze the role of the Koch-Rajbanshi community in shaping the political identity associated with the movement.

O3: To study the contribution of prominent leaders such as Panchanan Barma in mobilizing political consciousness.

### **1.9. The Delimitations of the Study**

The present study is confined to examining the political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement within the geographical region of North Bengal. The study primarily focuses on the role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community and their political aspirations related to identity, representation, and regional recognition. It is limited to analyzing the political factors that contributed to the emergence and development of the movement and does not attempt to cover all socio-economic or cultural aspects in detail. The research also concentrates on the contributions of selected prominent leaders, particularly Panchanan Barma, in mobilizing political consciousness among the people. Furthermore, the study is based on available historical records, published literature, and selected qualitative data sources; therefore, it does not include an exhaustive analysis of all organizations, events, or perspectives related to the Kamtapur Movement. These delimitations help maintain a focused and systematic analysis of the political dimensions of the movement in North Bengal.

## **II. THE METHODOLOGY OF STUDY**

The present study is based on the doctrinal method of research, which primarily relies on the analysis and interpretation of existing written sources. Under this method, the research is conducted through a detailed examination of secondary sources such as books, research articles, historical documents, government reports, committee and commission reports, constitutional provisions, and other relevant publications related to the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal. The doctrinal approach helps in understanding the historical background, political developments, and ideological foundations of the movement by critically analyzing documented evidence and scholarly interpretations. Through this method, the study systematically evaluates the political factors responsible for the emergence of the movement, the role of the Koch–Rajbanshi community in shaping political identity, and the contribution of prominent leaders such as Panchanan Barma in mobilizing political consciousness. Thus, the doctrinal research method provides a comprehensive and analytical framework for examining the political dynamics of the Kamtapur Movement.

## **III. THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **I. Political Factors that led to the Emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal**

The emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal was significantly influenced by a combination of political factors including historical administrative changes, constitutional provisions, linguistic policies, regional development debates, and the mobilization of political organizations. These factors gradually transformed regional dissatisfaction into an organized political movement advocating autonomy, cultural recognition, and equitable development for the Koch–Rajbanshi community.

#### *Historical Political Legacy and Administrative Transformation*

One of the earliest political foundations of the movement can be traced to the historical legacy of the Koch kingdom, which flourished in the sixteenth century under rulers such as Biswa Singha and Nara Narayan. The kingdom governed a large territory covering present-day North Bengal and parts of Assam, creating a distinct regional administrative identity. However, the gradual decline of the kingdom and the later incorporation of the princely state of Cooch Behar into the colonial administrative framework significantly reduced the political autonomy of the region. British administrative policies and land revenue reforms altered traditional governance structures and facilitated the rise of new administrative elites. These changes contributed to the political marginalization of indigenous communities. Historical publications such as C. C. Sanyal's *The Rajbanshis of North Bengal* (1965) and other regional studies highlighted the distinct historical identity of the Rajbanshi people and became intellectual references for later political mobilization.

#### *Constitutional Developments and Linguistic Policy*

The political environment of post-independence India also played a crucial role in shaping the aspirations of the Rajbanshi community. The States Reorganisation Commission (1953–1955) and the subsequent States Reorganisation Act, 1956 reorganized Indian states primarily on linguistic principles. While these reforms addressed the demands of several linguistic communities, the Rajbanshi population in North Bengal believed that their linguistic identity remained unrecognized within the administrative framework of West Bengal. The West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961 further institutionalized Bengali as the official language of the state administration, which intensified concerns

regarding the marginalization of the Kamtapuri or Rajbanshi language. Political activists and scholars often argued that linguistic recognition was essential for cultural preservation and political representation.

*Regional Development Policies and Government Reports*

Another major political factor behind the emergence of the movement was the perception of regional neglect and uneven development. Several planning documents and socio-economic studies highlighted disparities between the northern districts of West Bengal and the more developed southern regions. Reports related to regional planning and development emphasized issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited industrialization, and insufficient educational opportunities in North Bengal. These findings strengthened the political argument that the region had been historically neglected by successive state governments. Scholars and policy analysts interpreted these disparities as evidence of structural imbalance within the state's development framework, which contributed to the demand for greater administrative autonomy.

*Political Mobilization and Formation of Organizations*

The transformation of regional grievances into organized political expression became more evident during the late twentieth century. The formation of the Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) in the early 1990s represented a significant political step in articulating the demand for a separate Kamtapur state and recognition of the Kamtapuri language. The party's political campaigns frequently referred to the historical legacy of the Koch kingdom and emphasized the need to restore the political dignity of the Koch-Rajbanshi community. Around the same time, the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) emerged in 1995, reflecting a more radical dimension of the movement and demonstrating the growing frustration among sections of the population who felt that peaceful political negotiations had not achieved meaningful results.

*Role of Speeches, Quotations, and Intellectual Discourse*

Political expression within the movement was also shaped by speeches, writings, and scholarly publications. Early social reformers such as Panchanan Barma emphasized unity and self-respect in his public speeches while advocating social upliftment and education for the Rajbanshi community. His often-cited idea that marginalized communities must "organize and assert their dignity in order to secure justice" became a guiding principle for later activists. Academic publications, regional histories, and political writings further strengthened the ideological foundation of the movement. Studies on regional identity and Indian federalism have argued that such movements emerge when communities perceive a gap between constitutional promises of equality and their socio-economic realities (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2014).

The political factors that led to the emergence of the Kamtapur Movement were deeply rooted in historical administrative transformations, constitutional and linguistic policies, uneven regional development, and the mobilization of political organizations advocating autonomy and recognition. Government reports, legislative amendments, political speeches, and scholarly publications all contributed to shaping the discourse surrounding the movement. Together, these elements transformed historical grievances into organized political expression, making the Kamtapur Movement a significant example of regional political mobilization within India's democratic and federal framework.

## **II. Role of the Koch-Rajbanshi Community in Shaping the Political Identity**

The Koch-Rajbanshi community played a central role in shaping the political identity associated with the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal. Through historical memory, social reform initiatives, political mobilization, and intellectual discourse, the community transformed cultural identity into a political demand for recognition, autonomy, and development. Their political participation evolved through different phases, supported by public movements, constitutional debates, and scholarly interpretations that highlighted the distinct identity of the Rajbanshi people.

*Historical Foundations of Political Identity*

The political identity of the Koch-Rajbanshi community is deeply connected with the historical legacy of the Koch kingdom that flourished in the sixteenth century under rulers such as Biswa Singha and Nara Narayan. The kingdom established a strong regional political structure that governed parts of present-day North Bengal and Assam. Even after the decline of the kingdom and the integration of Cooch Behar into the colonial administration during the nineteenth

century, the memory of this political heritage remained an important symbol of identity among the Rajbanshi population. Historical writings such as C. C. Sanyal's *The Rajbanshis of North Bengal* (1965) and later socio-historical studies documented the cultural and political heritage of the community, strengthening arguments that the Rajbanshis possessed a distinct regional identity deserving recognition. These publications played a significant role in shaping intellectual discourse around the movement.

#### *Social Reform and Early Political Mobilization*

A major example of political awakening within the community emerged during the early twentieth century through the leadership of Panchanan Barma. He founded the Kshatriya Samiti in 1910, which aimed to elevate the social status of the Rajbanshi community and promote education, political awareness, and collective organization. Through public meetings and speeches, Barma emphasized unity, dignity, and the need for marginalized communities to assert their historical identity. His widely cited view that communities must "organize themselves to claim their rightful place in society" reflected an early form of political consciousness that later influenced regional movements. Scholars have described this movement as a foundational step in the development of Rajbanshi political identity, which gradually shifted from social reform to demands for political recognition.

#### *Constitutional Context and Linguistic Demands*

The Koch–Rajbanshi community's political expression also developed within the framework of constitutional changes in post-independence India. The recommendations of the **States** Reorganisation Commission (1955) and the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 reorganized Indian states primarily on linguistic principles. These reforms raised expectations among many communities that their languages and cultural identities would be officially recognized. However, the Rajbanshi population in North Bengal felt that the Kamtapuri or Rajbanshi language did not receive adequate recognition within the administrative framework of West Bengal. The enactment of the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961, which recognized Bengali as the official language of the state, intensified concerns among community leaders regarding linguistic marginalization. Political organizations and intellectual groups within the Rajbanshi community frequently cited these legislative developments in speeches and writings to justify the demand for recognition of their language and cultural heritage.

#### *Political Organizations and Regional Movements*

During the late twentieth century, the Koch–Rajbanshi community played a decisive role in organizing political movements that articulated regional demands. The formation of the Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) in the early 1990s represented an important stage in transforming cultural identity into political action. The party demanded the creation of a separate Kamtapur state and recognition of the Kamtapuri language. Political speeches, pamphlets, and regional publications associated with the movement often invoked historical narratives of the Koch kingdom and emphasized the restoration of the political dignity of the Rajbanshi community. In 1995, the emergence of the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) reflected a more militant dimension of the movement, highlighting the frustration of sections of the community who believed that peaceful political negotiations had failed to address their concerns. These organizations demonstrated how the Koch–Rajbanshi community actively shaped the political discourse surrounding regional autonomy.

#### *Role of Government Reports and Intellectual Discourse*

Government reports and academic studies also influenced the political identity of the movement by highlighting regional disparities and socio-economic challenges in North Bengal. Development reports and planning studies repeatedly pointed to issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited industrialization, and lower educational opportunities in the northern districts of West Bengal. These findings strengthened the political argument that the region had been historically neglected by state authorities. Scholars studying Indian federalism and regional politics have argued that such movements often arise when communities perceive a gap between constitutional ideals and their socio-economic realities. Publications examining regional identity, political representation, and ethnic mobilization further contributed to shaping the intellectual framework of the Kamtapur Movement.

#### *Political Expression and Cultural Assertion*

Speeches, cultural events, and regional publications became important tools through which the Koch–Rajbanshi community expressed their political aspirations. Community leaders frequently referred to historical heritage, linguistic

identity, and socio-economic inequality in their public addresses. Quotations emphasizing dignity, self-respect, and unity were widely used in political meetings and publications related to the movement. Through these forms of expression, the community articulated its demand for cultural recognition, equitable development, and greater political representation within the democratic framework of India.

Koch–Rajbanshi community played a decisive role in shaping the political identity associated with the Kamtapur Movement. Through historical memory, social reform initiatives, constitutional debates, political organizations, and intellectual discourse, the community transformed cultural identity into a powerful political expression. The interaction between constitutional developments, government reports on regional disparities, and community-led mobilization illustrates how marginalized groups can use democratic platforms, historical narratives, and political institutions to assert their identity and pursue recognition within the broader structure of Indian federal democracy.

### **III. Contribution of Prominent Leaders in Mobilizing Political Consciousness**

The growth of political consciousness surrounding the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal was not the result of a single leader but rather the collective efforts of several social reformers, intellectuals, and political organizers who gradually transformed community awareness into a broader political movement. These leaders mobilized the Koch–Rajbanshi population by emphasizing historical identity, linguistic rights, socio-economic development, and democratic participation. Their influence can be observed through political campaigns, public speeches, memoranda submitted to commissions, and intellectual publications that highlighted the distinct socio-political identity of the region.

#### **Atul Chandra Roy and Early Community Leadership**

One of the influential figures in the political awakening of the Koch–Rajbanshi community was Atul Chandra Roy, who worked extensively in North Bengal to promote educational and political awareness among marginalized groups. Roy emphasized the importance of political participation and community organization in public meetings and regional gatherings. His speeches frequently addressed the lack of representation of indigenous communities in administrative institutions and encouraged people to demand their rights through democratic means. Roy also participated in social organizations that prepared memoranda and petitions to government authorities regarding regional development and representation. His activism contributed to the gradual emergence of political discourse related to regional autonomy and identity.

#### **Upendra Nath Barman and Parliamentary Advocacy**

Another prominent leader who significantly contributed to mobilizing political consciousness was Upendra Nath Barman, a well-known political figure from the Koch–Rajbanshi community who served in legislative and parliamentary institutions. Through his participation in parliamentary debates and public forums, Barman highlighted issues concerning the economic and social conditions of North Bengal. He advocated policies aimed at improving education, employment opportunities, and infrastructure in the region. His speeches in political assemblies often emphasized that development policies must reflect the needs of peripheral regions and marginalized communities. By raising these issues within legislative institutions, Barman brought regional concerns into mainstream political discussions and strengthened the legitimacy of the community's demands.

#### **Charan Narayan Roy and Cultural Mobilization**

Charan Narayan Roy played an important role in linking cultural identity with political awareness. Through cultural conferences, literary gatherings, and regional associations, he encouraged the preservation and promotion of the Kamtapuri language and Rajbanshi heritage. Roy frequently argued in his writings and speeches that cultural identity forms the foundation of political rights and self-respect. His efforts included organizing seminars and cultural programs where scholars and activists discussed the historical significance of the Koch kingdom and the contributions of the Rajbanshi community to regional history. Such initiatives strengthened the cultural dimension of the political movement and inspired community members to take pride in their heritage.

#### **Political Mobilization through Regional Organizations**

The late twentieth century witnessed the emergence of organized political platforms that further mobilized political consciousness among the Koch–Rajbanshi population. Leaders associated with the Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) advocated the creation of a separate Kamtapur state and recognition of the Kamtapuri language. They organized public rallies, political conferences, and awareness campaigns across North Bengal. Their speeches frequently referred to

constitutional provisions such as the **States Reorganisation Act of 1956**, which reorganized states on linguistic lines, arguing that similar recognition should be given to the linguistic identity of the Kamtapuri-speaking population. Political leaders also submitted memoranda and representations to government bodies and committees concerned with regional development and minority rights.

#### **Use of Government Reports and Development Committees**

Prominent leaders often relied on findings from government planning documents and development studies to strengthen their political arguments. Reports associated with regional development planning highlighted disparities between North Bengal and the southern districts of West Bengal in terms of infrastructure, industrialization, and employment opportunities. Leaders cited these reports during public meetings and political discussions to demonstrate that the region required special attention and targeted development policies. These references helped frame the movement not only as a cultural struggle but also as a legitimate political demand for equitable development and administrative attention.

#### **Intellectual Contributions and Influential Publications**

Scholarly works and historical publications played a crucial role in shaping political awareness among the community. Studies such as *The Rajbanshis of North Bengal* by C. C. Sanyal and other regional histories provided documented evidence of the unique cultural and historical identity of the Rajbanshi people. Leaders frequently referred to such works in speeches and political writings to support their arguments for cultural recognition and linguistic rights. Regional magazines, pamphlets, and journals also served as platforms for discussing political ideas and spreading awareness among the community. These publications encouraged intellectual debate and strengthened the ideological basis of the movement.

#### **Speeches and Political Expression**

Public speeches delivered by community leaders during conferences, cultural festivals, and political rallies played an important role in mobilizing political consciousness. Leaders often emphasized themes of unity, dignity, and self-determination in their addresses. Quotations highlighting the importance of collective action and cultural pride were widely circulated in pamphlets and regional newspapers. These speeches not only strengthened solidarity within the Koch-Rajbanshi community but also attracted wider attention to the political demands of the region.

The mobilization of political consciousness in the Kamtapur Movement was therefore shaped by the combined contributions of different leaders who worked through legislative advocacy, cultural initiatives, intellectual publications, and grassroots political organizations. By linking historical identity with constitutional debates, development reports, and democratic participation, these leaders created a strong foundation for regional political expression. Their efforts transformed social awareness into organized political action and played a crucial role in shaping the identity-based movement that continues to influence the political landscape of North Bengal.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the emergence of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal was shaped by a combination of political marginalization, socio-economic disparities, and historical grievances, which collectively fueled the community's demand for recognition and autonomy. The Koch-Rajbanshi community played a central role in shaping the political identity associated with the movement, asserting its cultural, linguistic, and historical distinctiveness as a foundation for collective mobilization. Furthermore, prominent leaders, notably Panchanan Barma, significantly contributed to raising political consciousness by advocating for social upliftment, education, and community organization, laying the groundwork for contemporary political activism. Together, these factors illustrate how historical experiences, community agency, and leadership intersected to sustain a persistent regional movement aimed at achieving political representation and cultural preservation.

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