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## RAJBANSHI PEASANT SOCIETY AND THE RISE OF TEBHAGA MOVEMENT IN DINAJPUR: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

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### ABSTRACT:

*Once the land of Dinajpur was under same territory. Though the land had divided in several historic times. Now, the land of Dinajpur has divided into three parts and located in India and Bangladesh but the name, 'Dinajpur' has remained unchanged till now. There are many historical interpretations of the same name and the resulting increases in the district's geographical area and sometimes has decreased. The British had occupied the territory of the land in 1765 and the old royal dynasty of four hundred years became collapsed. The British Government had subjugated Ghorghat region and settled their head-quarter at Dinajpur. In 1786, Dinajpur became emerged as new district under the British rule in Bengal. At the advent of the East India Company's rule in Ghorghat region, Dinajpur had been flourishing day by day as the commercial place of the region and gradually developed as urban centre in Eastern Bengal. But most of the region of Dinajpur district was remained rural and backward at the same time. After downfall of the Dinajpur Raj, the landed property handed over to the former and newly emerged landlords under the British rule. Unfortunately, former Jotedars were ruined under new land revenue system. As a result, Zamindary's rule (land lords rule) was founded all over the land of Dinajpur under company's rule.*

*Keywords: Rajbanshi community, legend of Dinajpur, Tebhaga Movement, peasant Society, Backward class etc.*

### INTRODUCTION:

In the history of the development of Indian civilization, the community of Rajbanshis are of a distinct features and tradition oriented.<sup>1</sup> The Rajbanshis are not any sector tribe, they completed of distinct race in its own language and culture. The third largest community among the Hindus of North Bengal<sup>2</sup> and biggest community of Dakshin Dinajpur. Note that there are several theories are prevalent about the history of the Rajbanshi communities. Even though nobody could not reach in firm conclusions. Several scholars have expressed a different opinion. Acharya Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in his two books "The origin of the development of Bengali Language" and "Kirat-

Jana-Kriti" with the continuing history of the Bengali language, he tried to negotiate by a remark that the Rajbanshis are the Mongolian ethnic groups. But the cultures of northern people were not discussed in detail in these two books. Naturally, the payable Mongolian theory of Mr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee is not valid. The theories about the Rajbanshis given by him are absolutely wrong. The British researchers like E.T.Dalton,<sup>3</sup> W.W.Hunter<sup>4</sup> and Risley have attempted to prove that the Rajbanshis are the branches of the Dravidian peoples. Although they could not able to prove significantly in this regard. Donnel became determinants about the ethnic of Rajbanshis in the census report of 1991, but the issue was controversial, He later said that the community of Rajbanshis may be regarded as the Mongolian communities, but he did not submit any data or information that can testify. Harvard Risley says, among the Bengalees whose skull wide and extends their nose; obviously, they are descendants of Mongolian strangers, in response to the statement made by Lord Rama Chandra Prasad, if so, why not just Rajbangshi community, wide skull Bengalee Brahmin, Kayastha, Baidyas can be regarded as the Mongoids.<sup>5</sup> By the statement of Ramaprasad, all communities like Bengali Brahmin, Kayastha, Mug of Chitagon, Mal of Bankura and Midnapore and the Rajbanshis of Jalpaiguri and Cooch-behar are assumed as same categories. Again he confesses that blood of Rajbanshis has mixed with Aryan and Mongoloid blood. Needless to say, there is no scientific evidence in favor of this theory to Risley.

A large section people of the undivided Dinajpur were Rajbangshi Community at the same time. Among them, a major portion of the community was belonged to Jotedaar family. The only source of income of the community was land-based agricultural economy. After the advent of the British East-India Company, they became looser indifferent ways and then turned into landless farmers due to the British land-revenue system. The number of the Rajbanshi Jotedaar became decreased after the second half of the nineteenth century and during the last decades of the century they had lost their land property to the Marwari and Bengalese businessmen and also to the new land lords and money lenders. Though the Rajbanshi Jotedaar families were losing property to the other communities in the sphere of colonial rule in Bengal, yet they did not make any revolting activities towards the land lords and money lenders. Actually, the Rajbanshi Jotedaar families were not able to unite among them in a certain issues. Though, sometime they were Jotedaar, second to the land-lords but most of them were illiterate and unconscious about the contemporary society and culture. Even, they were not well informed with the western education and to the update society.<sup>6</sup> They used to cultivate the lands and earned for their life living by successively in generation to generation. Never, they did not try to be known with the contemporary social order. So, they did not recover their socio-economical status like earlier.

Last phase of the first decades of the twentieth century, the Rajbanshi peoples were associated with Kshatriya movement led by Manishi Panchanan Barma in Rangpur district, which spread out in the entire North-Eastern India. Panchanan Barma founded Kshatriya Samiti at Rangpur Natyamandir in 1910 for several developmental purposes of the Rajbanshi community.[<sup>7</sup>] From 1910, the Rajbanshis of Rangpur as well as the Rajbanshis of Dinajpur were moving towards the contemporary society as their own interest in the light of Panchanan Barma's socio-political activities. Actually, Kshatriya movement among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, helped to organize themselves against the social disorders in the colonial Bengal. Gradually, the Rajbanshi community people were faced with the reality and protested towards the land-lords, money-lenders, so-called upper-class elites, those who were not supported to them and with the colonial British Government. The British authority always avoided to the natives, specially the backward class of the society and they treated to them by the colonial motive. Besides them, the native rulers and western cultured elites were disinterested for the development of the backward class people in the society. Nobody there, who will show to them the right way to go towards the modern society, the nationalist leaders was busy to uplift them on the higher position in the society under the colonial rule. Most of the peasants were belonged to the Rajbanshi community. The Bengal renaissance had involved only in the urban areas of the southern part of greater Bengal. But the northern part of greater Bengal was absent from western renaissance. The local land-lords and money lenders were absorbed to the peasants in different ways, socio-economic and politically. They built a close relation with the farmers only by the economic field, i.e. producer and consumer relations.

#### **SOCIAL STATUS OF RAJBANSHI PEOPLE:**

During the First World War, the Rajbanshi youths of Dinajpur as well as the Rajbanshi youths of North-East India, joined in the war, by the inspiration of Panchanan Barma and they became brave and nationalist. The socio-economic condition of the Rajbanshi families became serious after the First World War. At that time, Manishi Panchanan Barma had given to them socio-political and economical support through different activities. During the period of World economic crisis, the Rajbanshi families were united under the social activities of Kashatriya samiti led by Panchana Barma. Not only that, the women were assaulted and harassed by the anti-socials as well as some persons belongs to Muslim community of the region. Keep in mind that most of the families of the region were belonged to the Rajbanshi community. So, the women, who were raped and assaulted, 80% of them were Rajbanshi women. Above all, they lived in far-off villages and the socio-economic condition of them was too low and they were illiterate. As a result, they used to work in the agricultural field for life living.

Thus, they rapped and assaulted by other anti-social easily at the time. Panchanan Barma planned to protect themselves by them to form 'Nari Raksha Bahini'[<sup>8</sup>] for the women of the Rajbanshi community. Nari Raksha Bahini was formed by the Rajbanshi women in different parts of North Bengal, especially the Rajbanshi villages in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Assam. From that time, the Rajbanshi women became so much ferocious and did not fear to protest against any victims in the region. During the days of Kshatriya movement, the students were plunged themselves to the movement. Sometimes they organized student's forum to eradicate the social inequality among different caste and creeds in entire society. Thus, the unity among the people of the Rajbanshi community had made through several organizations and movements and so on. Different level people like man, woman, youths, students were associated towards the colonial government and the local rulers, i.e. land lords and money lenders, those who had been exploiting them day by day in different ways.

#### **SCENARIO OF THE RAJBANSHI PEASANTS:**

The socio-economic condition of the Rajbanshi families became serious after the First World War. At that time, Manishi Panchanan Barma had given to them socio-political and economical support through different activities. The Rajbanshis of Dinajpur were united against the land lords and money lenders in different issues after three decades of the twentieth century. The wave of the partition of Bengal in 1905 had not reached towards the northern portion of greater Bengal. So, the inhabitants of North Bengal were not involved in the Bengal partition in 1905. But they expressed anger against the land lords in different parts of this region in sporadically. During the Panchanan Age, [<sup>9</sup>] the Rajbanshis were protested against all inequalities of the contemporary society. After the premature death of Panchanan Barma, the people of the Rajbanshis community were lost their aims to reach towards the goal.[<sup>10</sup>] In the meantime the Communist Party of India, were applied their emotions, energy, endeavor, action, anger towards the native feudal rulers. Thus, on the eve of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, the communist party had flourished in different parts in North Bengal as well as the greater Bengal. The Adhiyars (share cropper) were protested against multi-taxes of the land lords in several parts of Dinajpur. But the land lords were suppressed to the Adhiyars through the policeman or arms. Gradually, the peasants were demanded to the land lords for Tebhaga (three quarter) of landed crops. But the land lords did not conceded to the opinion of the Tebhaga peasants. Thus, Tebhaga peasants were revolted against the land lords after the end of Second World War in 1946, which was called Tebhaga Movement in the history of peasant movement.



## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEBHAGA MOVEMENT:

The historical background of the Tebhaga peasant movement was too long. Not only the Borgadar peasants and landless farmers, but also the people of all sections of the society had accumulated grievances against discriminating affairs of the landlords. They charged purchase-sale to the sellers by emphasis, besides 'lekhai' taxes would be paid for animal sale, unable to pay the rent in time, the harvests were cut, and the homes of the borgadars were burned by the securities of the landlords. Girls and women would come to rural markets for sale their vegetables, pumpkins, bananas, Radish, eggs, milk etc. employees of landlords, were forced to pay illegal 'Aboyara' as writings taxes. Those illiterate women became angry to the land lords and also to their employees. The movement of landless farmers and poor women was versatile. The embeddable opposition movement, the movement towards 'lekhai', excess 'aboyara' opposition movement, rent, etc. Landless peasants, the workers were taken using force without pay. Labor and product prices were not correct. However, these evil things all the time, it was on the orders of the landlords, it is not. Local officials were responsible for the wrong doing of the landlords. The anger of the Rajbangshi rural women towards the land lords in various parts of the region was somehow not. They were protesting against the landlords, and also to their employees that is why the Rajbangshi women were joined the peasant movement in spontaneously.<sup>[11]</sup> It was around this time of economic depression was continuing, which called in Bengali famine of forty-three-four. Three millions of people lost their lives. This event was responsible for the policy of the British government and activities of the landlords, hoarders and their desire to increase economic profits from peasants. <sup>[12]</sup> Self-financing structure of the villages were destroyed. <sup>[13]</sup> On behalf of all times was called abolition the Zamindari system. Farmers were forced to sell their son, daughter etc. Volunteer force formed by farmers run by kitchen, collecting rice, pulses, rice soup during the day a handful of poor and food-naked people would feed and in the night, they took arms like bows, arrows, spear in hand to stop smuggling and the black market led by the land lords. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, three soup kitchens (Nangarkhana) were opened for the poor in the face of food at Fulbari in undivided Dinajpur. <sup>[14]</sup> Medieval barbarism was still continued on, like forcing suppress to the landless poor's by the land lords in this region. Western education did not enter in this region to across the landlords and police brutality at the same time. During the hard time, the Communist Party of India did not join to the freedom movement but they stood by helpless farmer's family. As a result, the peasant movement had placed to the communist Party in the map of Bengal as well as in India. From that time, the Communist Party of India had flourished not only in Dinajpur, but also in entire northern Bengal. It is remarkable that the Rajbangshi people were played an important role in every peasant movements in North-Eastern India at the same time. The National



Congress and the Muslim League were fiercely opposed to the Tebhaga Peasant Movement. The Congress and the Muslim League opposed to the Tebhaga movement in jointly during that period and near about four hundred Muslim men and women were arrested by the policeman. Then, some League leaders were attempted to separate the Muslim farmers from the Tebhaga by raising a slogan of 'Islam in Danger'. As a result, Muslim farmers, who joined the Tebhaga were isolated from the Tebhaga movement. But only the farmers of the Rajbanshi and Santal community together were continued to fight against the land lords. The Tebhaga peasant movement had spread in 22 police stations areas out of 30 police stations in Dinajpur.

After that, a pathetic incident had happened at Khanpur village during Tebhaga movement, which was outperformed in the history of peasant movement all over the world. On that day, pathetic bleating farmers happened at Khanpur village in Dinajpur, which outperformed all over the world struggle of the peasants. The peasant movement had been continuing during the year of 1946 in different parts of Dinajpur district. At that moment, the Tebhaga Movement of Dinajpur reached at the highest stage in several 'Anchals', like Patiram, Khanpur, Thakurgaon, Hili, Fulbari etc. Asit Mohan Singha Roy was a notorious Zamindar who was the leader and supporter of hoarders and smugglers of the area.

So many landless farmers and hungry people in the area were angry to him. Volunteer force of farmers to always keep an eye on the smuggling. But nothing could stop the trafficker anyone. Finally, the servant of the landlord's month salary for cheerleader Asit Mohan Singh's rice-laden car in cooperation with Chiyar Sai Sk. The general public caught him and organized a protest against local Zamindar. Thus, landless peasants were fought against landlords, which spread in different parts of Dinajpur and Bengal.

## CONCLUSION:

The Rajbanshi peasants were the fore front of Tebhaga movement in Dinajpur. Once most of the Landlords of Dinajpur were belongs to Rajbanshi Community. From the time of the Islamization of Dinajpur, the conversion process among the Rajbanshis communities of Dinajpur begun and it had reached in higher position after the advent of the British power in this land. The British administrative policy had exploited to the peasants of Dinajpur through the new economic policy as well as land revenue system of Bengal province. It is interesting that most of the peasants of Bengal were exploited by the British economic policy more or less but only Rajbanshi peasants were dared to show their agitation against the British Authority. Actually, Rajbanshi peasants were inspired by the speeches of Panchnan Parma, the father of the Rajbanshi Community in Rangpur and Dinajpur



area. [15] He organized Kshatriya movement and organized the Rajbanshi communities of Rangpur and Dinajpur. He inspired to the backwards communities to be alerts towards the illegal land-lords or local Zamindars as well as the Feudal of this land. He struggled for the peasants of Bengal in the Legislative Assembly and ultimately passed the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act of 1928.

In the circumstances, peasants of Bengal became hopeful to him and achievements. Later period, in the way to show by Panchanan Barman, all peasants of Rangpur-Dinajpur and Bengal as well were reorganized than earlier among them to fight against the British Administration and the loyal feudal bodies who always tried to exploit them in different ways. After his death, Rajbanshi peasants as well as the peasants of other communities became helpless and they sheltered under the shadow of the Communist Party of India. After the end of the Second World War the ratio of the exploitation upon the peasants had increased by the British. The Congress and the Muslim League members were involved towards the partition of India. On the other hand only the Communist Party of India led to the peasants against the British and under the feudal or Zamindars in Bengal. Thus the Tebhaga movement had organized by the landless peasants in 1946. First in Dinajpur District at Khanpur Village near Patiram area. In the peasant struggle the Rajbanshi peasants were played an important role and sacrifice their life for the Tebhaga peasants against the Local Zamindars as well as the British Power in India.

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