



Linguistic and Ethnic Identity in North Bengal: The Rise of the Kamtapur Movement

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ABSTRACT :

The Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal is a significant regional assertion driven by the interlinked forces of linguistic and ethnic identity among the Rajbanshi community. This study explores the historical evolution of the movement, emphasizing how socio-political marginalization, cultural erasure, and the non-recognition of the Kamtapuri language have contributed to a strong sense of ethnic consciousness and the demand for a separate Kamtapur state. Through content analysis of historical developments, linguistic struggles, and identity-based mobilization, the study seeks to understand the underlying motivations and aspirations of the Rajbanshi people. The findings reveal that the Kamtapur Movement is not merely a quest for administrative separation, but a deeper struggle for cultural dignity, linguistic preservation, and political representation. This research highlights the broader implications of identity politics in shaping regional movements within a multicultural nation like India.

Keywords: Kamtapur Movement, Rajbanshi community, Linguistic Identity, Ethnic Consciousness, North Bengal, Regionalism, Kamtapuri Language, Identity Politics.

Introduction

Regionalism in India has been shaped by linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities, leading to various movements for autonomy and recognition (Chakrabarty, 2018). One such significant movement is the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal, which seeks the creation of a separate Kamtapur state for the Rajbanshi community. This movement is rooted in the historical, linguistic, and socio-political marginalization of the Rajbanshis, an ethnic group that has long been struggling for identity and autonomy in the region (Basu, 2019). The demand for Kamtapur is not merely political but also a cultural assertion against linguistic assimilation and economic neglect by the state (Dutta, 2020).

The Rajbanshis, historically associated with the ancient Koch kingdom, have faced gradual marginalization due to shifting political boundaries and demographic changes in Bengal (Ghosh, 2017). The linguistic identity of the community is a crucial element in the movement, as the Kamtapuri language (also called Rajbanshi) is distinct from standard Bengali but has often been overlooked in mainstream linguistic policies (Sen, 2021). The Kamtapur Movement emerged as a response to this exclusion, advocating for linguistic recognition, cultural preservation, and economic development (Roy, 2018). Supporters of the movement argue that the lack of official recognition for Kamtapuri has hindered educational and employment opportunities for the Rajbanshi people, further fuelling the demand for autonomy (Choudhury, 2022).

In addition to linguistic concerns, ethnic identity plays a pivotal role in the movement. The Rajbanshis perceive themselves as distinct from the dominant Bengali identity and believe their unique cultural heritage is being assimilated into the broader Bengali culture (Barman, 2016). This has led to tensions between the Rajbanshis and other ethnic groups in North Bengal, particularly regarding land rights, economic resources, and political representation (Das, 2020). The demand for Kamtapur also intersects with issues of development, as the region has historically lagged behind other parts of Bengal in terms of infrastructure and economic growth (Bhattacharya, 2019). The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) and other regional organizations have been at the forefront of the movement, advocating for greater political and economic autonomy (Mukherjee, 2023).

This paper aims to explore the linguistic and ethnic foundations of the Kamtapur Movement, examining its historical background, political demands, and socio-cultural implications. By analyzing the movement through the lens of regionalism and identity politics, the study seeks to understand the broader dynamics of sub-nationalism in India. Furthermore, it will investigate how linguistic marginalization and ethnic assertion contribute to the persistence of the Kamtapur Movement in contemporary Bengal.

The Statement of the Problem

The Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal is rooted in the linguistic and ethnic identity struggles of the Rajbanshi community, who have long faced socio-political and cultural marginalization. Despite their significant population and historical presence, the Rajbanshis have struggled for recognition of the Kamtapuri language, as well as political autonomy and socio-economic upliftment. The movement demands a separate Kamtapur state, citing historical injustices, cultural neglect, and economic deprivation.

However, existing research primarily focuses on comprehensive analysis of how linguistic and ethnic identity shape regional aspirations. The lack of governmental recognition of Kamtapuri as a distinct language further exacerbates identity-based grievances, reinforcing the demand for self-determination. This study aims to fill this research gap by critically analyzing the historical evolution, linguistic struggles, and ethnic consciousness that fuel the Kamtapur Movement. By doing so, it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the movement's motivations, implications, and relevance in contemporary Indian regionalism and identity politics.

The Rationale of the Study

The Kamtapur Movement is a significant regional assertion in North Bengal, deeply rooted in the linguistic and ethnic identity struggles of the Rajbanshi community. Despite their historical presence and cultural distinctiveness, the Rajbanshis have experienced political marginalization, economic deprivation, and linguistic suppression. The lack of recognition of the Kamtapuri language and the community's demands for a separate Kamtapur state highlight broader issues of identity politics and regional autonomy in India.

This study is essential because it seeks to bridge the gap in existing research by offering a comprehensive analysis of how language and ethnicity intersect to drive socio-political movements. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the movement's motivations, challenges, and implications for national integration and policy-making. Furthermore, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on linguistic diversity, cultural rights, and regional identity politics, making it relevant in the context of India's multicultural framework and federal structure.

The Research Questions

- RQ₁: What are the historical origins of the Kamtapur Movement?
- RQ₂: How does linguistic identity shape the demands of the Kamtapur Movement?
- RQ₃: How do the Rajbanshi people perceive their ethnic identity in relation to mainstream Bengali society?

The Research Objectives

- O₁: To examine the historical evolution of the Kamtapur Movement.
- O₂: To analyze the role of linguistic identity in the Kamtapur movement.
- O₃: To investigate the ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshi community.

The Review of Related Literature

- **Chakrabarty (2023)** explores the role of linguistic identity in ethnic movements across India, including the Kamtapuri language struggle. The study discusses how state policies have failed to recognize Kamtapuri as an independent language, leading to linguistic suppression and cultural erosion. The author argues that language plays a central role in regionalism and serves as a powerful tool for mobilization in the Kamtapur Movement.
- **Choudhury (2022)** provides an in-depth study of ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshis and its role in shaping identity-based movements. The article explores the interplay between caste, language, and ethnic identity, arguing that the Rajbanshi movement is both a linguistic and socio-political struggle. The study also discusses how historical misconceptions and political narratives have shaped the movement's trajectory.
- **Dutta (2021)** examines government responses to linguistic and ethnic movements, with a particular focus on the West Bengal and Assam governments' approach to the Kamtapur Movement. The study analyzes policy measures, political negotiations, and conflicts between the Rajbanshi leaders and state authorities. The author concludes that state suppression, lack of recognition, and political marginalization have intensified ethnic grievances, rather than resolving them.
- **Bhattacharya (2019)** examines how economic deprivation has fueled regional movements in North Bengal, with a particular focus on the Rajbanshi community's socio-economic struggles. The article discusses how limited land ownership, poor educational infrastructure, and lack of employment opportunities have led to widespread discontent. The research establishes a strong link between economic backwardness and the demand for separate statehood in North Bengal.
- **Barman (2016)** provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the Kamtapur Movement, emphasizing the socio-political transformations of the Rajbanshi community over centuries. The study highlights how colonial policies, post-independence governance, and socio-economic marginalization contributed to the emergence of ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshis. This book serves as an essential source for understanding the historical roots and political aspirations of the movement.

The Research Gap

Despite extensive research on regionalism and ethnic movements in India, limited scholarly attention given specifically to the Kamtapur Movement within the framework of both linguistic and ethnic identity. Most existing studies focus on its either political aspirations or socio-economic conditions, but fail to explore the intertwined roles of language and ethnicity in depth. Additionally, the linguistic identity of the Kamtapuri dialect remains under-researched in academic discourse. There is also a lack of empirical studies capturing the lived experiences of the Rajbanshi community. This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive, multidimensional analysis of the movement.

The Methodology of the Study

This study adopts **content analysis** as its primary research methodology to critically examine the linguistic and ethnic dimensions of the Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal. Through a systematic review and interpretation of secondary data sources—including government reports, academic journals, historical documents, political speeches, newspapers, and online archives—this method enables an in-depth understanding of the socio-political context and identity assertions of the Rajbanshi community. By categorizing themes such as linguistic suppression, ethnic mobilization, cultural narratives, and political demands, content analysis helps uncover the underlying patterns and discourses that shape the movement. The qualitative nature of this methodology ensures a comprehensive and contextualized exploration of the rise and evolution of the Kamtapur Movement within the broader framework of regional identity politics in India.

The Analysis and Interpretation

O₁: To examine the historical evolution of the Kamtapur Movement.

The Kamtapur Movement traces its origins to the socio-political and cultural history of the Rajbanshi community, a distinct ethnic group predominantly residing in North Bengal, Assam, and parts of Bangladesh. The movement seeks to establish a separate Kamtapur state, driven by concerns over linguistic and cultural marginalization, economic deprivation, and political underrepresentation (Barman, 2016). The roots of this demand can be found in the historical legacy of the **Koch Kingdom**, which once ruled over present-day North Bengal and Assam before being annexed into the colonial and later post-colonial Indian state (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Pre-Colonial and Colonial Foundations

The Koch Kingdom, under the rule of Maharaja Naranarayan (1554–1587), was a powerful regional entity that resisted Mughal expansion and maintained a distinct cultural and linguistic identity (Ghosh, 2017). However, with the decline of the Koch dynasty and the eventual integration of the region into British India, the Rajbanshi community experienced a gradual loss of political and economic power. During British rule, the introduction of **zamindari systems** and land revenue policies led to the dispossession of indigenous Rajbanshi landowners, pushing them into agrarian distress (Chakraborty, 2020). The British also categorized Rajbanshis as a “backward caste” rather than recognizing them as a distinct ethnic group, leading to tensions over identity and social status (Das, 2018).

Post-Independence Marginalization and Early Stirrings of the Movement

After India’s independence in 1947, the Rajbanshis faced further marginalization as the reorganization of states based on linguistic lines in the 1950s did not take their demands into account (Sen, 2021). The influx of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) altered the demographic composition of North Bengal, further deepening Rajbanshi concerns about cultural assimilation and economic displacement (Basu, 2019). The 1960s and 1970s witnessed sporadic demands for recognition of the Kamtapuri language and socio-economic development of the Rajbanshi community, but these appeals largely remained unaddressed by the state and central governments (Roy, 2020).

The early 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a more organized movement under the banner of the Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP), founded in 1996. The KPP articulated demands for a separate Kamtapur state, emphasizing historical claims, linguistic identity, and economic grievances (Choudhury, 2022). This period also saw increasing mobilization in North Bengal, with Rajbanshi leaders advocating for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to counter the perception of Rajbanshis as a backward caste rather than an indigenous ethnic group (Mukherjee, 2023).

Militancy, Political Mobilization, and State Response (1990s–2000s)

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Kamtapur Movement took a more assertive turn with the rise of Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO), a militant group that sought armed resistance against the Indian state (Barman, 2016). The KLO was linked to insurgent groups in Northeast India, such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and engaged in sporadic violent activities, including attacks on security forces (Das, 2020). However, heavy state repression and counterinsurgency operations weakened the KLO’s influence, leading to a decline in armed militancy by the mid-2000s (Dutta, 2021).

During this period, mainstream political parties, including the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), began courting Rajbanshi voters by promising economic development and cultural recognition, but without committing to statehood demands (Sen, 2021). Despite these political engagements, the core grievances of the Rajbanshi community—linguistic recognition, economic opportunities, and autonomy—remained largely unaddressed (Roy, 2018).

Contemporary Developments and Future Prospects

In the 2010s and 2020s, the Kamtapur Movement has evolved into a regional identity-based movement rather than a purely secessionist struggle. The demand for Kamtapuri language recognition has gained prominence, with efforts to include it in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Chakraborty, 2023). Additionally, regional organizations such as the Greater Cooch Behar Peoples' Association (GCPA) have focused on socio-political negotiations rather than militant resistance (Bhattacharya, 2019).

The movement remains a significant force in North Bengal’s politics, influencing electoral outcomes and regional policy debates. While outright statehood remains a distant goal, the Rajbanshi community continues to push for greater political representation, linguistic preservation, and economic development (Ghosh, 2017). The future of the Kamtapur Movement will likely depend on the extent to which the Indian government accommodates regional autonomy demands and recognizes the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the Rajbanshi people (Mukherjee, 2023).

The historical evolution of the Kamtapur Movement reflects the complex interplay of ethnic identity, linguistic struggles, and regional aspirations in North Bengal. From its origins in the pre-colonial Koch Kingdom to its present form as a socio-political and cultural movement, the demand for Kamtapur has been shaped by historical grievances, demographic shifts, and political dynamics. While militant phases of the movement have subsided, the quest for cultural recognition and economic justice continues to drive regional mobilization. The study of this movement provides valuable insights into how sub-nationalism and ethnic consciousness influence contemporary politics in India.

O₂: To analyze the role of linguistic identity in the Kamtapur movement.

Linguistic identity has been a central element in the Kamtapur Movement, shaping the Rajbanshi community's demand for political and cultural recognition. Language plays a crucial role in ethnic movements, particularly in multi-linguistic societies like India, where linguistic identity is often linked to regional autonomy and self-determination (Chakrabarty, 2023). The Kamtapur Movement, led by the Rajbanshi community, asserts that their language, Kamtapuri (or Rajbanshi), is distinct from Bengali and deserves recognition as an independent linguistic entity. The struggle for linguistic recognition is deeply tied to the broader political aspirations for a separate Kamtapur state, making language a powerful symbol of cultural identity and resistance (Barman, 2016).

Historical Background of Kamtapuri Language and Identity

The Rajbanshi community, historically associated with the Koch Kingdom (15th–18th century), has long maintained a distinct linguistic and cultural identity. The Kamtapuri language, also referred to as Rajbanshi, has been spoken for centuries in North Bengal, Assam, Bihar, and parts of Bangladesh (Ghosh, 2017). However, with the reorganization of Indian states along linguistic lines in the 1950s, the region was administratively merged with West Bengal, where Bengali was the dominant language (Chakraborty, 2020). This administrative shift led to the marginalization of Kamtapuri speakers, as the language was classified as a dialect of Bengali rather than an independent language (Roy, 2021).

The decline of Kamtapuri as a recognized language resulted in the erosion of Rajbanshi cultural heritage. State policies, educational curricula, and media representation promoted Bengali as the dominant language in North Bengal, leading to gradual linguistic assimilation (Das, 2018). This linguistic suppression became a major grievance among the Rajbanshi community, fueling demands for official recognition of Kamtapuri as a separate language with constitutional status (Sen, 2021).

Language as a Tool for Political Mobilization

The demand for linguistic recognition has been a key mobilizing factor in the Kamtapur Movement. The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP), formed in 1996, made linguistic identity a major aspect of its political agenda, arguing that the exclusion of Kamtapuri from educational institutions and government records was an act of cultural erasure (Basu, 2019). KPP leaders have repeatedly emphasized that linguistic marginalization is directly linked to socio-economic and political marginalization, as the lack of linguistic recognition prevents the Rajbanshi community from securing official benefits, such as language-based job reservations and education opportunities (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Several linguistic and cultural organizations, such as the Kamtapur Bhasa Academy and the Rajbanshi Bhasa Unnayan Samiti, have worked to preserve and promote Kamtapuri literature and oral traditions (Choudhury, 2022). These organizations have pushed for the inclusion of Kamtapuri in school curricula, local administration, and media broadcasts, but their efforts have met resistance from the West Bengal government, which continues to classify Kamtapuri as a dialect rather than a distinct language (Chakrabarty, 2023).

Recognition and Linguistic Resistance

One of the most critical demands of the Kamtapur Movement is the inclusion of Kamtapuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which grants official status to recognized languages (Mukherjee, 2023). Inclusion in this list would allow the language to be used in official government proceedings, education, and media, ensuring greater cultural and linguistic preservation. However, opposition from Bengali linguistic nationalists and state authorities has led to continued marginalization of Kamtapuri speakers (Dutta, 2021).

Despite this, the linguistic resistance of the Rajbanshi people remains strong. Over the past two decades, Kamtapuri-language newspapers, radio broadcasts, and literary works have flourished, reinforcing linguistic identity and providing a cultural foundation for political activism (Ghosh, 2017). Several Rajbanshi intellectuals and writers have played a crucial role in promoting Kamtapuri as an independent language through academic research, folk traditions, and historical studies (Roy, 2021).

Linguistic Discrimination and Economic Marginalization

The denial of linguistic recognition has also had economic consequences for the Rajbanshi community. Many government jobs and educational opportunities in West Bengal require proficiency in Bengali, placing Kamtapuri speakers at a disadvantage in terms of employment and social mobility (Das, 2018). The lack of government support for Kamtapuri-language education means that children from Rajbanshi-speaking households often face difficulties in mainstream schooling, leading to higher dropout rates and limited professional opportunities (Sen, 2021).

Furthermore, linguistic marginalization has contributed to a broader sense of exclusion from governance and public policy. Many Rajbanshi people feel that their voices are ignored in political decision-making processes due to the dominance of Bengali elites in regional administration (Bhattacharya, 2019). The struggle for linguistic recognition is thus closely linked to the broader movement for social and political empowerment, reinforcing the demand for a separate Kamtapur state (Barman, 2016).

The Role of Language in Identity Politics and Future Prospects

Linguistic identity remains one of the most powerful forces driving the Kamtapur Movement. The assertion of Kamtapuri as a distinct language serves as both a cultural affirmation and a political demand, reinforcing the Rajbanshi community's sense of belonging and resistance against linguistic hegemony (Choudhury, 2022). While the movement has faced challenges in achieving full linguistic recognition, grassroots activism, literary movements, and regional political mobilization continue to keep the issue alive in public discourse (Mukherjee, 2023).

The future of the linguistic struggle within the Kamtapur Movement will likely depend on the Indian government's stance on linguistic diversity and regional autonomy. If the demand for constitutional recognition of Kamtapuri is met, it could lead to greater educational access, economic opportunities, and cultural preservation for the Rajbanshi people (Dutta, 2021). On the other hand, continued denial of linguistic rights may intensify the demand for political autonomy, further strengthening the call for separate statehood (Chakrabarty, 2023).

Linguistic identity plays a crucial role in shaping the Kamtapur Movement, as the Rajbanshi community perceives language as a symbol of their distinct cultural heritage and historical autonomy. The movement's demand for recognition of Kamtapuri is not merely about language but also about resisting cultural assimilation, securing economic rights, and gaining political representation. While the struggle for linguistic recognition continues, the resilience of the Rajbanshi people in preserving their language reflects the broader fight for ethnic and regional identity in India's diverse socio-political landscape.

O₃: To investigate the ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshi community.

Ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshi community has played a crucial role in shaping their socio-political aspirations, particularly in the context of the Kamtapur Movement. As an indigenous group residing primarily in North Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya, and parts of Nepal and Bangladesh, the Rajbanshis have historically maintained a distinct identity rooted in their language, customs, and historical lineage (Barman, 2016). Over the years, the community has developed a strong sense of ethnic consciousness, driven by concerns over cultural marginalization, economic deprivation, and political underrepresentation (Choudhury, 2022). This consciousness has not only fuelled movements for linguistic and political autonomy but has also reinforced a collective demand for the recognition of Rajbanshi heritage within the broader Indian social structure (Dutta, 2021).

Historical Roots of Ethnic Consciousness

The Rajbanshi identity can be traced back to the Koch Kingdom (15th–18th century), which once ruled over a vast territory spanning present-day North Bengal, Assam, and parts of Bangladesh (Das, 2018). The Koch rulers, believed to be of Rajbanshi origin, played a significant role in shaping the region's culture, administration, and social order. However, with the decline of the Koch dynasty and the subsequent annexation of their territories by British colonial forces, the Rajbanshi people gradually lost their political and economic power, leading to historical grievances and a sense of marginalization (Chakraborty, 2020).

During British rule, the Rajbanshis were often classified under various caste categories, such as Scheduled Castes (SC) or Other Backward Classes (OBC), depending on regional policies. This classification led to confusion regarding their social status, further complicating their sense of identity (Bhattacharya, 2019). The post-independence period saw continued socio-political challenges, as dominant ethnic groups such as Bengalis and Assamese overshadowed Rajbanshi representation in governance, education, and employment (Roy, 2021). These historical factors contributed to the emergence of ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshi people, prompting demands for autonomy, cultural preservation, and socio-economic upliftment.

Cultural Identity and Linguistic Awareness

A significant aspect of Rajbanshi ethnic consciousness revolves around language and cultural identity. The community speaks Kamtapuri (Rajbanshi) language, which they claim is distinct from Bengali and Assamese (Chakraborty, 2023). However, due to state policies that failed to recognize Kamtapuri as an independent language, Rajbanshis have faced linguistic assimilation pressures, leading to a gradual erosion of their language in education, administration, and media (Sen, 2021).

The Kamtapur Movement, which emerged in the late 20th century, has been one of the strongest expressions of Rajbanshi ethnic consciousness. A key demand of this movement is the official recognition of Kamtapuri as a separate language, which is seen as a crucial marker of their unique cultural identity (Basu, 2019). Language serves as an ethnic boundary that differentiates the Rajbanshi community from Bengali, Assamese, and other linguistic groups in the region. This has reinforced a sense of historical and cultural uniqueness, strengthening their demand for an independent Kamtapur state (Ghosh, 2017).

Economic and Political Marginalization

Beyond cultural factors, economic and political marginalization has been a key driver of Rajbanshi ethnic consciousness. The majority of Rajbanshis belong to rural, agrarian communities, relying on farming and manual labor for their livelihood. However, land alienation, limited industrial development, and exclusion from government schemes have led to persistent economic hardships (Das, 2018). Many Rajbanshis work as tea garden labourers in North Bengal, often under exploitative conditions, further exacerbating their socio-economic struggles (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Politically, the Rajbanshi community has long felt underrepresented in state governance. Despite being a numerically significant group in North Bengal and parts of Assam, they have not had proportional political power in state assemblies or local administrations (Dutta, 2021). The dominance of Bengali political elites in West Bengal and Assamese political groups in Assam has created a perception of exclusion from policy-making and resource allocation (Sen, 2021). This marginalization has reinforced their demand for a separate Kamtapur state, where Rajbanshis believe they can have better control over their own political and economic future (Mukherjee, 2023).

Ethnic Consciousness and the Demand for Kamtapur State

The demand for Kamtapur statehood is perhaps the most visible manifestation of Rajbanshi ethnic consciousness. The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP), formed in the 1990s, has consistently advocated for the creation of a separate state comprising Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and parts of Assam (Barman, 2016). The party argues that the Rajbanshis have a unique ethnic and historical identity, distinct from the dominant Bengali and Assamese populations, and that they require self-governance to protect their cultural and economic interests (Choudhury, 2022).

While the demand for statehood has not yet been met, Rajbanshi activists continue to press for greater autonomy, political representation, and official recognition of their language and traditions. Movements such as the Greater Cooch Behar Movement and other Rajbanshi cultural organizations have sought to revive historical narratives, folk traditions, and linguistic heritage, reinforcing a sense of ethnic pride among younger generations (Ghosh, 2017).

Resistance and Challenges

Despite their strong ethnic consciousness, the Rajbanshis face several challenges in achieving their goals. One of the biggest obstacles is the state's reluctance to recognize Kamtapuri as an independent language and the denial of separate statehood demands (Chakraborty, 2023). The West Bengal and Assam governments have historically opposed the division of their territories, arguing that statehood demands could trigger further regional instability and inter-ethnic conflicts (Mukherjee, 2023).

Moreover, internal divisions within the Rajbanshi community have also hindered the movement. While some Rajbanshis strongly advocate for a separate Kamtapur state, others support greater autonomy within West Bengal and Assam without complete separation (Das, 2018). Additionally, the community faces economic struggles, lack of educational opportunities, and political co-option by larger political parties, making sustained mobilization challenging (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Ethnic consciousness among the Rajbanshi community has been shaped by historical, linguistic, economic, and political factors. The loss of political autonomy, linguistic suppression, economic marginalization, and limited representation have fueled demands for greater recognition and self-governance.

The Kamtapur Movement remains the most visible expression of this consciousness, aiming to assert Rajbanshi identity and rights. While challenges remain, the Rajbanshi people continue to fight for linguistic recognition, cultural preservation, and political empowerment, making their struggle a significant part of India's broader discourse on regional and ethnic identities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kamtapur Movement represents a significant instance of how linguistic and ethnic identities intertwine to shape regional political aspirations in North Bengal. Rooted in historical marginalization, the movement reflects the Rajbanshi community's enduring struggle for cultural recognition, linguistic autonomy, and socio-political empowerment. The assertion of the Kamtapuri language as a marker of distinct identity underscores the role of language in mobilizing collective consciousness. Ethnic pride, reinforced by shared history and cultural traditions, has further galvanized demands for a separate state. Thus, the Kamtapur Movement stands as a powerful example of identity-driven regionalism, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive policies and recognition of diverse cultural identities in India's pluralistic society.

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