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## **The Crisis of Statehood in India: Demand for Gorkhaland**

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### **Abstract**

*Demand for new states in India have resulted in internal remapping which reflects a tension between a pan Indian national ideal on the one hand and regionalist aspirations of groups seeking more autonomy on the other. However questions can be raised whether the creation of small states can guarantee better prospects? Can real development be brought in these newly formed small states? Can development nullify the feeling of insecurity amongst the minority groups? The present paper is a microscopic case study of the people in the margin namely the Gorkhas and the politics of protest which they have launched, led by Subash Ghising and Bimal Gurung. The Gorkhaland movement is a long standing quest for a separate state of Gorkhaland within India for Nepali speaking Indian citizens. With roots often dating back over a century, Gorkhaland is a classic sub-nationalist movement not unlike those that have produced other states. Beyond all else, Gorkhaland is a desire for the recognition, respect and integration of Gorkhas in the Indian nation-state. This paper focuses on the problems that the Gorkhas have been facing centring round their demand for autonomy, their insecurity and their aspiration for creating a new state of Gorkhaland.*

**Key Words: Gorkhaland, autonomy, ethnicity, sub-nationalism, identity, development.**

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Demand for creation of new states is not a new phenomenon. It has been a recurrent theme from the eve of independence. The State Reorganization Commission suggested that the boundaries of the existing states should be redrawn to create linguistically more homogenous states as early as in 1950's. Since then the number of states doubled. The states of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand were created in the year 2000. In 2013 the Indian government gave in to the long standing demand for the creation of a new state of Telengana. Other demands for more autonomy were accommodated by granting local self-governments through the creation of the Sixth Schedule and other forms of autonomous councils. In spite of this broad linguistic reorganization, there are still about more than thirty demands for creation of new states in various regions of the country. Apart from the demand for the creation of Gorkhaland in West Bengal, other demands are 'Bodoland' in Assam, 'Vidarbha' in Maharashtra and 'Bundelkhand' in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, to name a few. The Gorkhaland demand is a long standing quest for a separate

state of Gorkhaland within India for Nepali speaking Indian citizens (often known as Gorkhas). With roots often dating back over a century, Gorkhaland is a classical sub-nationalist movement not unlike those that have produced other states. Beyond all else, Gorkhaland is a desire for the recognition, respect and integration of the Gorkhas into the Indian nation-state.

Many studies often interpret the processes behind this internal remapping as reflecting tensions between a pan-Indian national ideal on the one hand and regionalist aspirations of groups seeking more autonomy, recognition of their cultures, and better prospects for development or the other. In the western sense, nation is a homogeneous cultural entity with a political boundary. The best manifestation of this concept is found in Western Europe, Switzerland being the only exception. This notion was appealing to the Indian national leaders who were all imbued with western political culture and western political ideas. “The Indian nationalist felt compelled to assert that India was a nation....it seemed quite improper for India to be without a nationality”<sup>1</sup> When the Indian freedom struggle assumed a mass character under M. K. Gandhi’s leadership, an emotional upsurge engulfed the country, it was quiet natural to visualize India as one nation with one political boundary. However in reality there exists varying number of languages, ethnic groups, religious denominations within one boundary. More than 1500 languages are spoken in this country. There are more than 3000 castes, 450 tribal communities. Besides six major religions, many more tribal religions are practised.

Unlike Europe, where a homogenous entity established a state for itself, India became a state after independence; but it is a state with many nationalities. Like India most ex-colonial countries of Asia and Africa adopted the western concept of nation state as their model in the post-colonial period since the leaders of these countries were all influenced by western political thoughts and ideas. However these states have more than one cultural entity within its boundary, and as such they are not nation states. Thus in these countries the western model is proving to be an inadequate framework for containing the aspirations of multiple cultural entities.

The partition of India into two states on the basis of religion shattered the concept of nation state and opened the flood gates of further disintegration. The Naga’s in the North East, Kashmir in the North and Hyderabad in the South sought independence. As a consequence the pre-partition plan of making India a loose but united federation was put to the back seat, instead a federation with pre-eminence to the Central government, like the Government of India Act, 1935, was adopted. The earlier proposal of redrawing the boundaries of the states on the basis of language was also ignored for the time being. However with the death of Potti Sitaramalu, which led to the creation of Andhra Pradesh, the State Reorganization Commission was set up, to redraw the boundaries of the Indian states on the basis of language. But soon after the creation of new states on the basis of language, new languages or cultural groups have come up with further demands for creating space for themselves in which they hoped their cultural identity will be preserved.

**The Historical Background:** The agitation for securing a separate state of Gorkhaland might be traced back to the movement led by Subash Ghising in the 1980's. Yet the aspiration of the Gorkhas to set up a separate state for themselves within the Indian union, in which their distinct cultural identity could be preserved, has a long history. The present district of Darjeeling, within the state of West Bengal except Kalimpong sub-division was the part of Gorkha Empire founded by military conquest from 1788 to 1816. Before 1788 this area belonged to the 'Sikkimpatti Raja'. After the Anglo- Nepal war in which the Gorkhas suffered a crushing defeat the British returned 4000 sq. miles of territory which Nepal had annexed from Sikkim to the King of Sikkim, in acknowledgement of his assistance during the Company's assault on Nepal. Darjeeling was a part of this area. But soon the East India Company realised that Darjeeling could be build up as a sanatorium, it quickly asked Sikkim to return back the area. This resulted in the Deed of Gift. Kalimpong sub-division was annexed from Bhutan in 1865.

Thus in various times of history the land of Darjeeling was controlled by either Sikkim, Limbuan or Nepal and the Kalimpong area was controlled by Bhutan. Finally in 1835, the British established its suzerainty over the 'Queen of Hills'. Never in history it was a part of Bengal. No Bengali king ever captured the hills or established their control over the Darjeeling tract which included the plain land up to Titalaya near Purneah in the present day Bengal-Bihar border. In fact it can be concluded that this region was never a part of the Indian sub-continent till 1835. It was primarily a Lepcha-Bhutia tract. The British occupation of this region encouraged the Nepalese from Nepal to migrate, which tilted the ethnic balance of Darjeeling and the surrounding area, reducing the original inhabitants to insignificant minority. The migrants maintained their social and cultural links with the people of Nepal.

The East India Company had initially planned to develop the region as a health resort. But it could not afford to use it for this purpose only, as it had huge deposits of natural resources. In 1841 the Company discovered that the area was suitable for tea cultivation. By 1861, 22 tea estates had come into being with a total grant of 21,865 acres of which only 3251 acres was planted with tea employing a workforce of 2534 labourers.<sup>ii</sup> The labour force in the tea plantations comprised of tribals from Chotanagpur and Santhal pargana areas and Nepali migrants from the Lumbian region of Nepal.

Coffee and cinchona plantation had also developed around the region along with tea. Meanwhile the British encouraged the migrant Nepalese to settle in the forest lands for their capacity to do hard work. Another factor contributing to Nepali immigration was the establishment of Gorkha rule over Nepal during the latter half of the century. As their lands were appropriated by the higher castes like the Brahmins and Chettris within Nepal these tribal and lower caste groups migrated to settle in Sikkim or in Darjeeling.<sup>iii</sup>

The first demand for a separate administrative unit in Darjeeling was raised in 1907 in a memorandum presented to the British government. It was a reaction of local entrepreneurs against their separation from the rest of the tea estates and forest lands placed in Eastern

Bengal and Assam.<sup>iv</sup> This coincided with the interests of the planters which were later galvanised by organisations like the Hillmen's Association formed in 1917 under the leadership of Nepali elites. The Gorkhas had by now settled in Darjeeling and adjoining areas in large numbers. HA submitted a memorandum to Mr. Montague, the secretary of state for India when he visited Darjeeling. The memorandum called for the establishment of a separate administrative unit in Darjeeling, including the Dooars and a portion of Jalpaiguri. Similar petitions were submitted in 1929 to the Simon Commission on the eve of passing the Government of India Act, 1935.<sup>v</sup> HA submitted another memorandum to the Secretary of State demanding that the district of Darjeeling should be totally excluded from Bengal and an independent administrative unit be created with an administrator as its head assisted by an executive council.

The situation took a different turn with the formation of the All India Gorkha League in 1943. During the 1930s the Nepali speaking people became conscious of their language as a symbol of identity. The newly emergent petty bourgeois elements - small shopkeepers, businessmen, contractors, clerks, teachers, intellectuals - took the lead in organizing a forum for articulating their interests. The outcome was the birth of the All India Gorkha League. A section of intelligentsia had developed a chauvinistic and national exclusivist outlook. The sword of chauvinism was aimed not only at the exploiters from among the people in the plains but also at the Bengalis in particular. Significantly, the movement did not take an anti-feudal stance. On the eve of independence AIGL demanded regional autonomy for Darjeeling as its being joined with Assam other than with Bengal.<sup>vi</sup> The demand for regional autonomy was supported by the Communist Party of India. During the reorganization of states in 1955. There was a hue and cry for a separate administrative set-up for Darjeeling.

**Cause of the Movement:** The growing agitational activity in Darjeeling demanding the creation of what was called Gorkhaland was organized by the Gorkha National Liberation Front led by Subash Ghising. It concentrated its activity on the three hill sub divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. It put up posters in Darjeeling which stated, "We are stateless. We are constitutionally tortured all over India. We want our administration, return of our land from Bengal. Our future is in great danger. It is better to die than to live as slaves. All are therefore required to fight for a Gorkhaland."<sup>vii</sup>

To understand the growing agitational mood in the hills we need to go to the genesis of the problem. The district of Darjeeling in West Bengal comprised of three hill sub divisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, dominated by Nepali speaking people and a plain sub division of Siliguri predominately inhabited by people speaking the Bengali language. The Dooars area has a mixed population, which is presently part of the Jalpaiguri district. The demographic profile of the hills and the plains is just exact counterpart. Out of the total population in the hills 90% are Nepali speaking, while in Siliguri, out of about 8,00,000 people 3,00,000 speak the Nepali language.<sup>viii</sup> Till the 1940's the Gurkhas were predominate in this region including the Terai region. However the rapid refugee inflow from East Pakistan, which was augmented by illegal immigration from Bangladesh tilted

the balance. Thus the Gorkhas became minority in the plains. This added to the fear psychosis of the Gorkhas, since population flow is intricately connected with perception of ethnic dominance. This led to the demand of inclusion of Siliguri and Dooars in the proposed Gorkhaland state to win back the lost territory and prestige.

Mr. Ghising believed that the fight for their homeland is basically a demand to assert their identity and establish justice. For he said, “You have Bengalis, Biharis, Punjabis, Tamils, Marathis, etc. But who are we- Nepali speaking people who have been living in Darjeeling, and surrounding areas since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We are only ‘reciprocal Nepalis’, thanks to the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, I want it to be abrogated”.<sup>ix</sup> Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty have obscured the distinction between Indian born and Nepali born Nepali speakers. The citizens of the signatory states has the right to reside and trade in both countries. Practically speaking the citizens enjoys everything in the consecutive countries, except the right to vote. Thus the Gorkhas have been considered foreigners, and the fear of eviction from the hill district haunts them even today.

The language which the Gorkhas speak in Darjeeling is known as Khas Kura, Gorkhali or Parbatiya and has a certain distinctiveness in its formation. The different castes and tribes of Nepal have separate dialects like Sherpakura, Limbukura, Raikura etc. and grew out of royal imposition of the court language.<sup>x</sup> In the hill district however the lingua franca developed due to interaction between different communities in public places, market places and tea gardens. Thus it grew out of grass root interaction in everyday life and eventually even the Lepchas, Bhutiyas and Tibetians adopted Gorkhali bhasa for communication. This promiscuous development of the language led to the consolidation of the Gorkha identity. The Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was formed in 1924, which became a forum for Nepali intelligentsia and demanded that Gorkhali language should be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution after 1947. The West Bengal Official Language Act of 1961 declared Nepali as the official language of the hill sub division. The Gorkhas demanded that Nepali should be the medium of instruction in the schools. Thus in 1977 the West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a resolution requesting the Indian Parliament to include Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule. This resolution was placed by Ananda Pathak, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) member of the parliament from Darjeeling. The Nepali language was finally included in the Eighth Schedule in 1992, 15 years after it was tabled.

Subhash Ghising fanned the chauvinistic sentiments of the Nepalese since some of them were driven out from Meghalaya. The manner in which the Nepali-speaking people of Meghalaya were indiscriminately branded as foreigners and driven out hurt the Nepali sentiment. Encouraged by the success of the Assam agitation, the All India Meghalaya Students Union spearheaded an AASU-type agitation in Meghalaya. They threw out the Nepali-speaking inhabitants from the state, most of whom happened to be poor workers from Nepal on the ground that they did not possess the restricted area entry passes. More than 5000 Nepali speaking workers were thrown out of jobs.<sup>xi</sup> The Meghalaya students refused to respect Article 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty. Possession of the restricted area entry passes was made compulsory by an amendment of the treaty in 1976. The Nepali-speaking

poor workers were required to obtain the passes from Delhi. It was quite impossible for them to go to Delhi to do so.

The behaviour of the Meghalaya students shocked the Nepali-speaking inhabitants, and put them to great hardships. They lost their habitat as well as jobs. Ghising capitalised on the situation. The GNLF started a campaign, alleging that the Gorkha interests were no longer safe in the hands of the West Bengal government as it had sent away to Nepal the Nepali citizens living in its border. He roused the sentiments of the hills people saying, "If Meghalaya can do this why not West Bengal which is exploiting you?"<sup>xii</sup> An added factor was the deteriorating communal situation in the country and the rise of separatist forces in certain parts of the country including Mizoram, Tripura and some other areas of the North East. The creation of a separate Nepali-speaking state in Sikkim enthused the agitations. All this gave GNLF the impression that they would be able to get their demands conceded by the central government if pressure could be mounted. It is true that there were other problems too. Tea estates in Darjeeling had been crisis ridden for the last two decade. There were problems of labour unrest, low productivity, financial bankruptcy, etc. Out of the total 84 tea estates 12 had remained closed for long. The job opportunities in the tea gardens declined sharply because of mismanagement in the public sector tea gardens. Massive deforestation during the last few decades depleted the timber resources. Many Nepalese were employed in this industry. Only 13% of the land was under cultivation. Education was spreading amongst the hill people but the economy had failed to absorb them.<sup>xiii</sup>

**Demands made by the GNLF:** GNLF formulated its action plan in cultural nationalist terms to secure the widest possible participation. GNLF's major demands were: a) abrogation of the Indo-Nepal Treaty, b) inclusion of Nepali language in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution and c) a separate state for the Gorkhas to be called Gorkhaland.

The territory of Gorkhaland, as conveyed to the Central and State governments by GNLF, would comprise of the Darjeeling district and extend from the north-eastern edge of the strategic chicken's neck on the outskirts of Siliguri to Kumargang in the east and on the west, to the Bengal-Assam border with an area of nearly 2256 square miles. Nearly two-thirds of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar would form part of the proposed Gorkhaland. Except for the Darjeeling hills the rest of the territory demanded for Gorkhaland is not strictly a Nepali speaking area. GNLF's proposed boundary of Gorkhaland generated a fear that it could disrupt the most vulnerable link with the north east. If this boundary ever comes into being there could arise a threat to India's security. This area is not Assam or Mizoram. There is a concentration of over a lakh of highly trained ex-servicemen in it and adjoining Nepal.

The GNLF leaders demanded that the scrapping of Clause VII of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between the government of India and Nepal on July 1950. The central issue in the GNLF's struggle was the grant of Indian citizenship to pre-1950 migrants from Nepal. The issue assumed greater significance following the expulsion of Nepalese from Meghalaya. There are people both in India and Nepal who came to India as a result of

Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty and are called reciprocal citizens. Ghising insisted on their Indian citizenship as the reciprocal citizens were liable to expulsion any time, as had happened in Assam and Meghalaya.

Inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Nepali is a distinctive language. It uses the Devanagari script. It is spoken by a distinctive group of Indian citizens who, though scattered, constitute a majority in Darjeeling. Ghising had demanded recognition of the Nepali language as far back in 1973.

GNLFF in a letter to the Prime Minister demanded the establishment of a new and separate Indian Gorkha Regiment, thereby making a distinction between the Indian Gorkha troops and Gorkha troops. This, by agreement, was required to save the Gorkhas who had been living in India prior to the Indo-Nepal Treaty from the permit stigma and allegations of being foreigners.<sup>xiv</sup>

**Movement led by GNLFF:** The growing agitational mood in Darjeeling gained impetus with the establishment of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLFF) led by Subash Ghising in the 1980's. According to Amiya K. Samanta, "...separatism had been the main theme of political movements in the hills for about four decades, but it never assumed the proportion as it did in 1980's. Ghising's credit lies in projecting the demand in the context of the citizenship and identity issues, in such a manner that it could play upon the fear of uncertainty in the minds of the migrant Nepalis".<sup>xv</sup> The GNLFF movement was formally launched with an '11- point programme of action' which was adopted in a meeting at Ghoom on March 13, 1986. Starting off with a placid 'black flag' demonstration on April 13, moving on to 'vote boycott', 'non- payment of taxes' and eventually to a 'do or die' struggle, the movement plan had a distinct undertone of violence.

Finally with the state government and the GNLFF seeking early solution and the centre wishing peace in North Bengal, decided to sign an agreement to set up the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. The memorandum was signed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1988. The memorandum of settlement says, "...in the overall national interest and in response to the Prime Minister's call, GNLFF agreed to drop the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland".<sup>xvi</sup> However disillusionment emerged with the working of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and its authority was undermined over two decades. Failure of governance, malfunctioning and rampant corruption charges brought against the chairman of DGHC, Mr. Subash Ghising completely isolated him from the hill people. Moreover the assigning of tribal status under the Sixth Schedule was very humiliating for the Gorkhas and they resented it to its core. For the caste Hindus disliked the homogenisation with the scheduled tribes, who were mostly Buddhists.

**Movement led by GJMM:** The total dis-satisfaction with the functioning of the DGHC led to the re- emergence of Gorkhaland movement under Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha and its leader Bimal Gurung. It was the short message service campaign for Prasant Tamang in 2007, who was a promising young Gorkha singer and a competitor for Indian Idol crown, a TV reality-show that brought Bimal Gurung to prominence. Bimal Gurung was once a very

close compatriot of Subash Ghising. While Mr. Ghising was scornful of the young singer's effort, Bimal Gurung actively campaigned for him. Prasant Tamang eventually won. The Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha was formed in October 2007 and renewed the movement, demanding to form a separate state of Gorkhaland. The GJMM's first move was to scuttle the initiative to include the Hill Council under the Sixth Schedule. Moreover it also tried to unite the veteran Gorkha army personnel to express their solidarity for the demand of Gorkhaland.

The demand for Gorkhaland took a new turn with the assassination of Madan Tamang, leader of Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League. He was stabbed to death allegedly by GJM on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010 in Darjeeling, which led to spontaneous shutdown in the three Darjeeling sub divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. The West Bengal government threatened action against GJM, whose senior leaders are named in the FIR, hinting discontinuation of ongoing talks over interim arrangement with the Gorkhaland party, saying it had "lost support following the assassination."<sup>xvii</sup>

On 8 Feb 2011, three GJM activists were shot dead (one of whom succumbed to her injuries later) by the police as they tried to enter Jalpaiguri district on a 'padyatra' led by Bimal Gurung from Gorubathan to Jaigaon. This led to violence in the Darjeeling hills and an indefinite strike was called by GJM that lasted 9 days.

In July 2011, the GJMM signed a tripartite agreement with the newly elected state government formed by All India Trinamool Congress under the leadership of Ms. Mamata Banerjee and the UPA led Central government to form another autonomous council which would replace the previous Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. This new council was named Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. Other political parties in the hills like the CPRM, GNLF and Gorkha Task Force strongly criticised this move accusing Bimal Gurung of selling out their demand for the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland, while the GJMM claimed that the formation of GTA was the first stepping stone for creating a new state. A bill for creation of GTA was passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2011. The West Bengal government issued a gazette notification for the GTA Act on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012, signalling the preparation of election for the GTA, which was held in July 2012. The GJM won in 17 constituencies and in rest 28 seats unopposed.<sup>xviii</sup> Bimal Gurung became the Chief Executive of the GTA.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2013 the Congress Working Committee unanimously passed a resolution to recommend the formation of a separate Telengana state from Andhra Pradesh to the Indian National Congress led Central government. This resulted in flaring up of demands throughout India, prominent among them were the demand for statehood for Gorkhaland and Bodoland. Following a three days bandh, GJM announced an indefinite bandh from 3<sup>rd</sup> August. The West Bengal government armed with the High Court order, declaring bandh as illegal, the government toughened its stand by sending 10 companies of paramilitary forces to quell violent protest and arresting prominent GJM leaders and workers. In response the GJM announced a unique form of protest, known as 'Janta Bandh', in which no force or



picketing was administered from above, but people were asked voluntarily to stay inside their house on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> August.<sup>xix</sup> This proved to be major success and an embarrassment for the government.

The Darjeeling hills were in crisis again. A resurgent Gorkhaland movement and subsequent state crack down had infused life with violent uncertainty. The issue was born of a perfect storm. The West Bengal government announced Bengali as a compulsory language in schools across the state, which triggered protests and claims of 'linguistic imperialism' in Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts (where the lingua franca is Nepali). Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee then decided to hold a cabinet meeting in Darjeeling for the first time in 40 years on 8<sup>th</sup> June. Little effort was made to include representatives of the GTA or the three hill MLA's, eliciting protests. The ensuing clash with police left government property destroyed and many protesters injured. The army was brought in to staunch unrest, but it escalated instead. Subsequent protests and crackdown had led to further destruction and deaths.

With 'Jai Gorkha Jai Gorkhaland' the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha called for an indefinite shut down of the Hills from June 15. At this uproar, came the events of 17 June, a black day for Darjeeling. Three to four unarmed protesters died after being shot at with line bullets at a rally march. Internet and cable television was suspended from June 18. Strikes and security threats had devastated the local economy at the peak of tourist season. All party meeting was held in 29<sup>th</sup> June at Kalimpong in which The Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee was set up comprising of 13 political parties to spearhead the statehood agitation. The Supreme Court appealed to the people of Darjeeling to restore peace in the hills on 14<sup>th</sup> July. The CM of West Bengal also asked the hill people to withdraw strike, referring to the hardship faced by the tourists, traders, tea planters and students.

The pro Gorkhaland leaders met Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Aug 13. The Minister urged Mamata Banerjee to initiate talks. The CM called for a meeting on Aug 29 in which she appealed to the agitators to end the strike and give peace a chance. The Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee chairperson, Vinay Tamang gave a call to end the strike, however he was expelled from the GJM by Bimal Gurung and removed from the Chief Coordinators post.<sup>xx</sup>

The confusion within the GJM plunged the entire hills into uncertainty again. Led by Vinay Tamang, a seven member team met the CM of West Bengal in Siliguri (in Uttarkanya) for the second round of talks on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept, in which the state government agreed to a number of demands made by the team but the statehood demand was not on the table. The state government agreed to:<sup>xxi</sup>

- Pay-outs to those killed/injured during strike.
- High-level probe into alleged police firings.
- State employees who joined work before Sept 15 won't face service break: to get a month's pay as festival bonus.

- Fresh window for hill students for seeking College University admission in Bengal.
- Home Secretary to examine if criminal cases against agitators can be withdrawn.
- Legalities for calling tripartite meeting may be examined. Government to spell out its stand in 3rd round of bilateral talks at Nabannya on Oct 16.

On Sept 21<sup>st</sup> Mamata Banerjee formed an eight member board of administrators to run the then defunct GTA and asked rebel GJM leader Vinay Tamang to lead it. Vinay Tamang took charge as the Chairperson of GTA on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept and the Mamata Banerjee government responded quickly by withdrawing the internet ban in the hills. On 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 2017, the strike and agitation officially ended after a total of 104 days.

However Gorkhas believed that only with the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland that their feeling of insecurity will come to rest. For them the creation of a separate state would guarantee Indian citizenship to them. This feeling of insecurity was not built upon a hollow castle. The Nepali psyche was bitterly hurt when in 1979, Morarji Desai being the Prime Minister of India made a public statement that he would not recommend the inclusion of Nepali language in the Sixth Schedule because he considered Nepali as a foreign language.<sup>xxii</sup> Almost a similar kind of derogatory statement was made by B. G. Kar in 1956, the then Chairman of the Official Language Commission.<sup>xxiii</sup> The Gorkhas also became very apprehensive about the perception of the Government of India when they recollected with pungency that Vallabh Patel had written to Jawaharlal Nehru in Nov, 1950: “The people inhabiting this portion have to establish loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from Mongoloid prejudices”.<sup>xxiv</sup> Such insensitive and irresponsible statements made by Indian leaders alienated the Gorkhas and doubled their fear psychosis.

In an interview given to Miriam Wenner, a tea garden worker emphatically concluded that, “as soon we leave Darjeeling people treat us like foreigners. They do not know where Darjeeling is and that it is a part of India. Instead we are stigmatized as people coming from Nepal. But we have been living here for generations- we are not Nepali citizens. We could be evicted at any time. There is no security for us here. Only a separate state will give us security. If people ask where we are from, we can say we are from Gorkhaland. Then everybody will know that we are Indian’s”.<sup>xxv</sup> Likewise Subash Ghising suggested that the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland would drive away all kinds of insecurity from the minds of the ethnic Gorkhas. On August 16, 1986 Ghising stated that the GNLF did not “have any economic grievances other than those which are common everywhere in the country. Indeed, we are better off than many of the districts in West Bengal. It is by being known as West Bengal that....its people affirms their Indian identity which is different from the identity of the people of Bangladesh who also are Bengalis. We Indian Nepalis who have nothing to do with Nepal are constantly confused with “Nepalis”, that is, citizens of Nepal, a foreign country. But if there is Gorkhaland than our identity as Indians belonging to an Indian state.....will be clear. If there is no Gorkhaland, we will continue to be identified as Nepalis, under the stigma of being citizens of a foreign country residing here

out of courtesy”.<sup>xvii</sup> This view sums up the entire Gorkha argument, which projects their insecurity and which compelled them to demand a separate state of Gorkhaland.

**Conclusion:** However it can be concluded that the general living condition of the people of the hills have not improved after the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council nor the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. Thus there is no guarantee that the sufferings of the hill people will come to an end with the creation of a new state. It can only provide a temporary recognition to their ethnic identity. For there is a glaring example of a newly formed resource- rich state of Jharkhand, which after being separated from Bihar could not solve its problems from which it suffered earlier, being a portion of the latter. The state still suffers from political instability, gross unemployment and illiteracy and economic misappropriations of state funded resources by influential government and civilian members of the state. Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh too suffers from the same fate. Thus even if a separate state is created for the hill people, it might face similar problems. Moreover, except tourism, teak and tea, the sources of income for the proposed state of Gorkhaland seems to be minimal.

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<sup>ii</sup> Datta, Prabhat. (1994): ‘The Gorkhaland Movement in West Bengal’ in *Regionalism in Indian Politics*, edited by Majumdar, K. A. and Singh Bhanwar, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, pp 145-163.

<sup>iii</sup> Samanta, K. Amiya. (2000): *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study in Ethnic Separatism*, New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing Corporation, p 20.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid*, p 80.

<sup>v</sup> Lama, Basant. (2009): *The Story of Darjeeling*, Kurseong: Nilima Yonzon Publications, p 200

<sup>vi</sup> *ibid*, p 205.

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