LOCATING THE LOCALE: DARJEELING HILLS AND THE STUDY AREAS

1. Historical Background

In order to understand the development scenario in the study areas — its features, limitations, potential and trends it is imperative that we have a brief overview of historical background of the locale of the study.

1.1. The Colonial Era

The name Darjeeling is regarded to be a derivation of ‘Dorje-ling’. The word ‘Dorje’ implies the precious stone or ecclesiastical scepter, which is emblematic of the thunderbolt of Sakhra (Indra) (1) and of ling, a place. It, therefore, signifies the place of the dorje, the mystic thunderbolt of the Lamaist (2) religion, which was the former name of the Buddhist Monastery that once stood on the Observatory Hill.

Darjeeling (See Annexure II-A) is a district in the Indian state of West Bengal and is nestled within higher peaks and the snow covered Himalayan ranges. The Kanchenjunga Mountain, world’s third-highest peak is the most prominent; towering over Darjeeling town. It is located at an average elevation of 2134m, which is approximately 7000ft above the sea level in the Eastern Himalayas. It falls under subtropical per-humid climate with an average rainfall of 3104.5 mm per annum, air temperature maximum of 26C and minimum of 4C. Tea and Tourism are the two most important activities that contribute to Darjeeling’s economy. Income is also generated from cash crops like ginger, potato, squash, cardamom and oranges, cultivated by the rural populace. Tea and Darjeeling is synonymous. It is world famous for its flavour, which is unequaled by other tea producing areas not only of India but also of the world.

The territories of the district of Darjeeling, once known as ‘Dorjé-ling’ formed a part of the dominion of the Raja of Sikkim (3). He was a petty ruler, who had long been engaged in an unsuccessful struggle with the Gorkhas of Nepal (4). In 1780, the Gorkhas entered east into Sikkim and for thirty years, Sikkim suffered in the hands of their enemy. The Gorkhas conquered the terai i.e. the belt of the country lying along
the lower hills, between the rivers Teesta and Mechi which today are the valuable tea
gardens of Darjeeling. Elsewhere, the British East India Company was engaged in a
conflict with the kingdom of Nepal which finally culminated into a war in 1814.

The Gorkha army of Nepal suffered defeat in the hands of the British and the territory
which the Gorkhas had captured from Sikkim, was ceded to the East India Company.
The Raja of Sikkim was reinstated and the Treaty of Titalya (5) was concluded
between East India Company and Sikkim, where by 4000 square miles of territory
was restored to the Raja. Thus, the timely intervention of the British prevented the
Gorkhas from turning the entire Sikkim, the hills west and south of the Teesta into a
province of Nepal and Darjeeling was part of that area.

Ten years after the treaty, disputes on the Sikkim-Nepal frontiers arose. Accordingly
the Governor General sent Captain Llyod and Mr. Grant (6) to make an enquiry. In
February 1829 they recommended the present place of Darjeeling not only as a site
for a sanitarium but also a pass to Nepal, Bhutan and trade route to Tibet (7). The
Governor- General, Lord William Bentick promptly deputed Captain Herbert, the
Deputy Surveyor General to examine the country, along with Mr. Grant. Their reports
proved the feasibility of establishing a sanitarium at Darjeeling and the Court of
Directors approved the project. General Llyod was directed to open negotiations with
the Raja of Sikkim, on the first convenient occasion in return for an equivalent in
money or land.

This opportunity occurred in 1834-35, when some Lepcha (8) refugees from Nepal
entered into the Sikkim terai and General Llyod was given the responsibility to make
an enquiry. Eventually the refugees were returned to Nepal and the negotiation
concluded with the grant of deed on February 01, 1835. In return the Raja of Sikkim
was accorded Rs. 3000/- per annum which was raised to Rs. 6000/- per annum in
1846.

"The Governor- General having expressed his desire for the possession of the Hill of
Darjeeling, on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of
his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the
Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present
Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Runjeet
River, east of the Balasun, Kahail, and Little Runjeet Rivers, and west of the Rungno and Mahanuddi Rivers” (9).

2.1: Darjeeling during the British Rule

2.2: Present Darjeeling

Under the British rule, Darjeeling was reckoned as a ‘Non-Regulation District’ (10). During the Partition of Bengal, 1905, the area came under the jurisdiction of the Rajshahi division (11) and was placed in the then newly-created province of East Bengal and Assam. Although the people of Darjeeling district, refrained from all political activity during the freedom struggle of India, they were, however, not happy being one of the many districts of the Bengal Presidency with the centre of government in Calcutta. They wanted the British government to understand that they were different from the rest of the people of Bengal, geographically, historically, religiously, traditionally and linguistically. India became independent on August 15, 1947 but the legal status of Darjeeling remained undefined and undetermined.
1.1.1. Plea from Local Organizations

The handling of the district of Darjeeling by the British caused the local people to believe that their ultimate security would be a separate administrative system. We can trace the demands as far as 1907 when the then ‘Hill Leaders’ submitted memorials to the British government for a separate administrative unit of Darjeeling district outside Bengal. The Hill men’s Association too (12) submitted a Memorandum to Mr. Montague, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal on November 08, 1917. A few lines has been extracted from the Memorandum, “There is moreover no real affinity between the people of this Himalayan and sub-Himalayan region and those of the plains of Bengal, and our plea is that it may now...of the Home Rule...that this district should be excluded from them and that ...should be towards a distinct local government of our own on such lines as may be approved by the British Government” (13).

Similar petitions were again forwarded on October 25, 1930 by the Hill men’s Association to Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, London and also again to him and Sir John Anderson, Governor of Bengal on August 06, 1934. Their main objective was “…that the district of Darjeeling should be totally excluded from Bengal by creation of an independent administrative unit with an administrator at the head of the area assisted by an executive council...directly under the central government....” (14).

The Association also pleaded for the inclusion of the district within the reforms introduced by the Act of 1919 (15). However their pleas went unheard and finally the British declared Darjeeling a ‘backward tract’ and remained so till 1935, when it finally became a partially excluded area under the Government of India Act 1935(16) and remained in that condition till the independence of India. Thus, we can make an assertion of the policy of the British that never allowed the district to come within the national mainstream and within the purview of the general administration.

The formation of ‘The All India Gorkha League’ (AIGL) in 1943(17), gave a new meaning to their political struggle. Their memorandum summarizes the demands made at different times during the last forty five years, by the various local organizations of the Hill people, including the Hill men’s Association. The AIGL
undertook what it considered to be a more statesman-like view. Some of their
demands were:

- That the district of Darjeeling be a ‘Separate Administrative Unit’ directly
  administered by the centre.
- That a ‘Separate Province’ be set up comprising the district of Darjeeling and
  the neighbouring areas.
- That the district of Darjeeling with a section of Jalpaiguri visa-vi the Doosars
  be included in Assam (18).

This demand was made through memorials submitted to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,
Sardar. B. Patel, the Congress High Command, the Cabinet Mission and the
Constituent Assembly through the sub-committees. Their appeal for regional
autonomy was aided by the Communist Party of India (CPI) (19) and a memorandum
was placed before the Constituent Assembly and the country’s main political
organization through the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee on minorities,
that had been sent for gathering reports on the excluded and partially excluded
areas. Thus, several memorandums were placed representing the Hill people of the
district of Darjeeling in the Province of Bengal, consisting of the Gorkhas, Bhutias
(20) and Lepchas, who formed the majority of the population of the district and were
its original inhabitants.

2. Recent History: The Gorkhaland Agitation

The demand for the exclusion of the district of Darjeeling, from West Bengal (21) and
creation of an independent administrative unit, over the years, has taken various
political turns and twist. However, for the first time, this long struggle was
incorporated as a mass movement, towards the end of the 1970’s when Subash
Ghising (22) addressed the Gorkhas in India. He appealed to every Gorkha to come
under one banner and demand a separate state known as ‘Gorkhaland’.

It all happened on April 22, 1979, from the platform of the famous Geetange Dara of
Chowk Bazar (23) in Darjeeling. The new leader raised the demand for a separate
state for the people of the Darjeeling Hills. Consequently, it gave birth to a political
party, The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), which raised the ever burning
issue of the identity of the Indian Gorkhas at the national level. In the first letter sent
to the, then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi on August 02, 1980 he stated,
“...return our land and territory from West Bengal. Under no circumstances we can remain in West Bengal. We want our own Gorkhaland Government as other citizens of India enjoying the fruits of their toil of independence...” (24).

The Gorkhaland Movement flared up, in the three Hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, igniting the passion and imagination of the people of the Darjeeling Hills. The principal demands of the GNLF were:

- To nullify the Indo-Nepal Treaty.
- Inclusion of Nepalese in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution.
- Demand for a separate state for the Gorkhas to be called ‘Gorkhaland’.

2.1. Violence in the Hills

The GNLF under the leadership of Subash Ghising framed a strategy to accomplish its mission. An intense movement began in Darjeeling, where they also called for the boycott of National Events like the Republic Day. The GNLF men provoked the public to refuse payment of taxes, non-cooperation with the government and socially boycott those who declined to accept the tactics. They also possessed mostly homemade guns known as khadua (pipe gun) and bombs, which was authenticated by the violent course taken by the Agitation.

![Image of people demanding statehood](image_url)

2.3: People demanding statehood

In 1981 the GNLF called for the boycott of the mid term poll of Darjeeling Assembly constituency. In 1982 they declared the boycott of the General Elections demanding a separate state of Gorkhaland. A vast majority of people from all over Darjeeling...
responded to the call which resulted in the return of several empty ballot boxes from places like Sukhia and Pokhriabong valley.

Darjeeling and Kalimpong practically became a battleground of the state government armed policemen, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) (25) and the agitating public. On May 24, 1986, a peaceful protest at Kurseong, comprising women and youths were victim of unwarranted and indiscriminate firing, which left five dead. Similarly to the people of Kalimpong July 27, 1986 will always remain as the blackest day in their memory, when their peaceful demonstration of burning copies of the of Clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950 (26) was cut short, when the CRPF fired at the crowd. It was a brutal massacre in which, thirteen people lost their lives. Thus, the movement claimed several innocent lives, men, women and children. More information of the agitation has been given as a note (27).

Strikes and demonstrations became common. Several of the strikes, organized by the GNLF were for more than twenty four hours. For instance, five persons were killed and several others injured in Darjeeling during a three-day bandh started by the GNLF on May 25, 1986 (28). The state government, added brutality to the violence, through the imposition of the anti-people, anti-terrorist act, that lead to the arrest of hundreds of innocent people. The Bengal police and the CRPF too did not spare the public with their atrocities, which included physical torture, detention without reason with no clue to their whereabouts.
To quote Subash Ghising, “We want to live in India but not within West Bengal...our land must be incorporated...” (29). The GNLF publicly raised this grave national issue and approached the central government of India and National Leaders of different Political Parties to give their political support to incorporate the disputed land of Darjeeling into the Indian Union under Article (3-C) 2, 4 and 368 of the Indian Constitution. Unfortunately, they ignored this burning issue and the party was compelled to file a Writ Petition in the Supreme Court. Here too, the Court was reluctant to give any recognition to ‘Gorkhaland’.

Mention needs to be made of the several meetings held, letters and telegrams placed before the higher authorities. For instance telegrams and letters were sent to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on December 03, 1984, May 05, 1986 and July 09, 1986. Letters were also sent to Jyoti Basu, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal on April 09, 1981, to Buta Singh, the then Union Home Minister on September 15, 1986 (30).

2.1.1. End of the Movement and Memorandum of Settlement
The central government under the initiative of the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi invited Subash Ghising and the Government of West Bengal to enter into a dialogue to redress the genuine grievances of the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling Hills. Meetings between the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal and between the Government of India and the GNLF leadership over a long period culminated into the first tripartite talks on January 25, 1988 followed by another tripartite talk on June 29, 1988 and the final one on July 25, 1988. These discussions finally lead to the complete agreement between all the parties concerned and concluded with the signing of two Memorandum of Settlement.

The first Memorandum was signed on August 22, 1988 at Calcutta (31). This lead to the establishment of an autonomous Hill Council, which would be known as DGHC (32), entrusted with certain Executive Powers (33), which would cover subjects to the provisions of the central and state laws. The creation of DGHC meant that the GNLF would give up the demand for Gorkhaland. The council would work for the upliftment of the Gorkhas and other communities of people living in the Hill areas of Darjeeling district in the social, economic, cultural and education field.

Secondly, it was agreed that GNLF shall withdraw all agitational activities and extend full co-operation to the state administration for the maintenance of peace and the
normalization of the political process in the Darjeeling Hills. On the other hand, the state government shall review all the cases registered during the agitation period and take action to withdraw the same but will not cover cases involving murder. At the same time it also agreed to withdraw all cases of disciplinary action against government employees. The GNLF also agreed to the surrender of all unauthorized arms to the District Administration.

The second Memorandum was signed between Subash Ghising on behalf and President of GNLF and C.G. Somiah, Union Home Secretary on behalf of the central government in the presence of Buta Singh, the then Union Home Minister in New Delhi on August 23, 1988. This Memorandum constituted of the following agreements:

- The question of citizenship of the Gorkhas will be clarified through the issue of a Gazette Notification by the Government of India.

- The issue of a separate Indian Gorkha Regiment was agreed on the condition that it is not obligatory for the Gorkhas settled in India to join only specified Gorkha Regiments but has the freedom to join the regiment of their choice, with special instructions from the Army Headquarters.


Consequently, DGHC was born, endowed with executive powers that included, “The Council shall exercise general powers of supervision over Panchayat Samities, Gram Panchayat and Municipalities falling within the area of the jurisdiction” (35). An extract from *Himalaya Today*, New Delhi, September 1988: “He (36) has to mould it, nurture it, guide it and blossom it, to such a stature, where the identity of Gorkhas is kept intact and the much required economic development of the Hills is carried out optimally and at a faster rate”.

The historical background of Darjeeling and the phases of its political career have been written to throw light on the evolution of this tiny district of West Bengal. However, my interest is primarily focused on the political-development context, and not solely on the political setting in a narrow sense.
2.2. Role of DGHC

2.2.1. Structure

DGHC was born in 1988. It would have a General Council and an Executive Council. The General Council comprised of forty two members headed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman out of which twenty eight would be elected and the rest nominated by the state government. The elected Councillors elect from amongst themselves one Councillor to be the Chairman of the General Council (DGHC) who would also be the Chief Executive Councillor. The Executive Council incorporated the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the General Council as its ex-officio members, and the Chairman functioning as its Chief Executive Councillor.

The Chief Executive Councillor will nominate five members to the Executive Council; from amongst the elected members of the General Council and the State Government, will nominate two members to the Executive Council from amongst the non-official nominated members of the General Council. The manner of transaction of business of the Executive Council is determined by the Executive Council itself by regulations and with the approval of the state government. The Executive Council is responsible to the General Council.

The administrative affairs of DGHC is also run with the help of the Principal Secretary to the General Council, Departmental Secretaries and other deputed officers and experts as per the terms and conditions determined by the government.

The Chairman of the General Council cum Chief Executive Councillor was granted the ex-officio status and privileges of a Minister in the Council of Ministers in the state.

2.2.2. Powers and Functions

Executive powers were also conferred to the DGHC that covered subjects, pertaining to the provisions of the central and state laws:-

- Small scale and cottage industries.
- Agriculture.
- The use of any canal or watercourse for the purpose of agriculture.
- Public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries.
- Tourism.
- Vocational Training.
- Public works-development and planning.
- Construction and maintenance of all roads except National highways and State Highways.
- Transport and development of transport.
- Management of burial and cremation grounds.
- Preservation, protection and improvement of livestock’s and the prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice.
- Fisheries.
- Education- primary, secondary and higher secondary.
- Works, lands and buildings vested in or in the lawful possession of the Council.
- Management of markets and fairs not being already managed by Municipal authorities, Panchayat Samiti or Gram Panchayat.
- Water, that is to say, water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankment, water storage.
- The allotment, occupation or use, or setting apart, of land other than any land which is a reserved forest, for the purpose of agriculture or grazing, or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes, or for any other purpose likely to promote the interest of the inhabitants of any village, locality or town.

The General Council was given the upper hand with respect to the formulation of development plans for the Hill areas. It was also given the power to implement schemes and programmes for development of Darjeeling. The executive functions of the General Council are vested in the Executive Council. Thus, DGHC now had a very important role to play not only in the development of the socio-economic condition of the Hills but also to build back the ravaged little town nestled in the arms of the Himalayas.

It is important to mention here that the state government also has a role to play in the functioning of the DGHC. Though it has been given independent power to develop the Hills, it does so with the concurrence of the state government.
3. Rural Development in Indian Context

3.1. The Opening Phase in Rural Development

In order to understand the context of PRDC in the specific case of Darjeeling Hill areas we need to refer briefly to the Indian context as a background. Rural development is supposed to be a process in which the beneficiaries come together for planning and action, identify their needs, problems and plan their solutions.

From the time immemorial the Indian villages have practised various ‘traditions’ of self-government. It was known as Panchayat where a group comprising of five to seven were either nominated or elected by the people of a particular rural area, whose main function was to manage the affairs of the village. We can call it the backbone of Indian villages.

However, it was only after India secured its independence in 1947, that the Panchayat was recognized, with the framing of the Constitution. It was inculcated in the Directive Principles of State Policy in Article 40 of Part IV of the Indian Constitution. India was committed to bring rapid and sustainable development, with focus on the socio-economic transformation of the rural areas. It sought to bring about an integrated approach with an objective to improve the quality of life of the rural poor and ensure equity and effective people’s participation. Thus, keeping this in view the ‘Community Development Programme’ (CDP) was launched in October, 1952(37). The major highlights were nation-building, economic prosperity, facilitating development and encouraging people’s participation. Unfortunately the programme could not live up to its expectation as it was endowed only with administrative and economic decentralization and lacked political decentralization, so needed for its success. There was over-bureaucratization and it missed popular involvement. Similarly the National Extension Service was started in 1953(38).

3.1.1. Birth of Local Self Government

Within a span of time the CDP was superseded by the ‘Panchayati Raj System’, recommended by the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957(39).

This system’s thrust was based on democratic decentralization. It was so designed for the rural population to participate in the activities and problems of the rural areas with an administrative apparatus for implementation of the programmes of rural
development. Accordingly they suggested a three-tier structure with the GP at the base followed by the Panchayat Samiti and the Zilla Parishad at the apex. In 1978, another committee under Ashok Mehta (40) was constituted to investigate the working of the Panchayat system. The objective was to propose steps to make the system more effective. They advocated that the Panchayats be regarded as political institutions, rather than as ‘instrumentalities’ for assuring people’s participation in development as suggested by the previous committee.

The turning point in the history of Panchayati Raj system came in December 1992, when the Indian Parliament passed the 73rd constitutional amendment and on April 24, 1993 the system was accorded constitutional status. Thus the “Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 has been cherished as a watershed event for achieving rural development through democratic decentralisation” (41).

The Panchayati Raj System, the only and most important ‘grass-roots units of self-government’ is today the backbone of the Indian villages. Mahatma Gandhi too advocated for a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs and he termed this vision as Gram Swaraj (Village Self-Governance). Gandhiji’s dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to engage people’s participation in rural reconstruction. It has direct relationship with the people at the grassroots level and thereby becomes an important medium of rural transformation in India. Thus, this institution has been assigned a crucial role for programme implementation that manifests the wants and aspiration of the local rural people. It is a system of decentralization where attempts are being made to strengthen local governance, and empowering people and their participation.

3.1.2. Panchayati Raj and ICT

ICT has come forth as a catalyst that is capable of producing the intended results. It has been a buzzword amongst the policy makers and development planners. Steps have been taken to implement ICT at the grassroots level. For example, Rural Bazar (http://ruralbazar.nic.in) is an e-commerce concept formulated to address the marketing needs of the rural producers. It has been implemented in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Goa and Tripura. Another important step has been the introduction of e-Panchayat, which mainly caters to the management problems at the village level.
Yet another feather in the cap has been the development of eNRICH (http://enrich.nic.in). Its major objective is to build the bridge between the government and the citizens, particularly the under-privileged and down-trodden (42). Despite the initiatives, taking ICT at the rural level stands as a great challenge. Factors like illiteracy, poverty, social problems, and inadequate infrastructure act as added impediments. It is also necessary to localize such initiatives into the local language and local context. Thus, it has been rightly stated in Grameen Bharat, “The best way to strengthen development informatics at grassroots level is by promoting community participation through Panchayati Raj Institutions, the ultimate instruments of local self-governance” (43).

The Panchayat Raj System has a three-tier structure

- The GP or the Village Panchayat which functions at the village level.
- The Panchayat Samiti is the main executive body which operates at the Block level.
- The Zilla Parishad functions at the district level and is responsible for making, executing and coordinating the programmes of rural development for entire district.

The Panchayat Raj institution can therefore be reckoned as ‘the most crucial and significant’ local body of self governance at the village level. The institution boosts and promotes rural people’s participation in development programmes and projects and acts as a bridge to bring the people closer to the government. This is the general pattern and system followed in the rural regions of India.

However, Darjeeling represents a different scenario, the structure of local self-government has some what deviated from the normal practice, which has been further elaborated in the subsections to follow. But before that it is also important to understand what India’s Planning Commission has advocated and planned for the rural poor particularly in the context of PRDC.

3.2. Rural Development and the Five Year Plans

The need for communication in support of development was realized and articulated very early in India and institutionalized by the Planning Commission. It was set up in March 1950 by a resolution framed by the Government of India. In a democracy the
Planning process can develop into a greater force when the people not only become a part of planning for their development but also in the execution of the plan. The successive Five Year Plans have stressed on the necessity for encouraging people’s organisations to fulfill this goal. In fact the plans stated that the very existence of the Panchayati Raj was “to ensure people’s participation in local planning and implementation” (44). Besides, alleviation of rural poverty has always been one of the principal objectives of the plans.

Steps and strategies have also been formulated in the successive Five Year Plans for the recognition of communication in the form of Information and Broadcasting. The main objective of this programme has been to reach the rural, remote, backward and tribal regions of the country through suitable media of mass communication.

The First Five Year Plan (45), proposed the development of all available methods of communication for implementation of various projects and programmes. This plan can be regarded as a remarkable document for its perception and recognition of the need for decentralization and localization of information, and for feedback. It had given importance to the local programmes, languages and symbols of the people, and had faith in the capacity of the common man to find out and accept what is good for him. Thus, the First Plan very well understood the importance and necessity of communication in development. In the Second Five Year Plan (46), the importance of village planning was increasingly realized. The objective was to take into account the needs of the entire community. It also focused on facilities for rural listening so as to enable the rural population to benefit from the broadcast coverage though a major focus was on the public sector and heavy industry.

The Third Five Year Plan (47) also gave importance to expansion of facilities for community listening in the programme of AIR in the villages. The Plan also focused on the mobilization of the efforts of the people at the village level with a large scope for securing community action. The Fourth Five Year Plan (48) has only stressed on achieving rural development through people’s participation and initiative. The Fifth Five Year Plan (49) only placed emphasis on programmes to control crop diseases, dry farming, post harvesting technology etc for the rural areas. The Sixth Five Year Plan (50), emphasized, that the success of the developmental programmes depend upon the extent and intensity of people’s participation. The plan stated “awareness
and conscious participation of the people is critical for success" (51) and emphasized on participatory activities like disaster preparedness and management, social welfare programmes for the weaker sections, water management and soil conservation, Health for All programmes etc.

One cannot overlook the strategies of the Seventh Plan (52) that clearly recognized that the economic upliftment of the improvised and the marginalized section cannot be achieved without growth in awareness. The Plan was based on certain objectives:

- Involvement of local communities and their representatives, particularly of the weaker sections, in the development process.
- Making development responsive to felt needs at the grassroots.
- Strengthening democracy at the grassroots.

The main thrust during the Seventh Plan has been “Extensive dissemination of information relating to government policies and programmes and motivating people to participate in the national endeavour for integrated development of the country” (53). Emphasis has been given in the utilization of traditional, folk, inter-personal and modern audio-visual media to accomplish communication objectives in rural, remote, hilly and backwards areas of the country.

The Eight Plan (54) also said that the “People’s initiative and participation should be made key elements in the process of development, instead of people being passive observers” (55). Therefore, the Plan emphasized on the creation of a decentralized system with Panchayati Raj Institution as the centre for organizing and implementing rural development programmes. Accordingly the plan, provided that socio-economic activities like education and literacy, health, and family planning, land improvement, minor irrigation, recovery and development of waste-land and afforestation will be treated as core activities in which people’s participation could be maximum and more fruitful. This in turn will lower the financial burden on the government.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (56) focused on Information Technology (IT). It said that the impact of IT will be especially predominant in sectors like rural development. The Tenth Five Year Plan (57) represents but another step in the evolution of Development Planning in India. The Plan not only includes the expansion of production of goods and services and the consequent growth of per capita income, but also plans the enhancement of human well being. It pursues a development strategy
that builds on a policy focus for exploiting synergies between economic growth, desirable social attainments and growing opportunities for all. This kind of strategy must have at its heart, a commitment to widen and deepen the participation of people in all decisions governing economic and social development. Thus, this Plan gives priority to people’s participation where stress has been laid on the success of schemes and programmes with greater involvement of the people.

It needs to be mentioned here that the Tenth Five Year Plan gave special importance on the problems faced by Darjeeling which included Drinking Water, Rural Electrification, Road Communication, Health, Education and Tourism.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (58), which has special stress on eradication of social exclusion, attempts to considerably empower and use Panchayati Raj Institutions as the principal means of delivery of the necessary services that are vital to growth. The highlight is on E-Governance for improved service deliverance and programme design, implementation and monitoring. It focuses on the use of ICT in major programmes like NREGS and Pradhan Mantri Gram Swarozgar Yozana (PMGSY).

The Plan also aims at rural people’s participation through poverty reduction programmes like TSC, NREGS, and SHGs etc.

India has therefore designed plans, with an objective to arouse people’s consciousness that yields aspiration and support for development activities. But the vital question is whether the development programmes, the channels of communication are compatible with the local setting. It so happens that the planners, sitting at the centre (central government), away from the actual scene of action, works out plans and devises projects for rural development without an intimate knowledge of local conditions, without understanding from the local rural people themselves, which are the problems and the solutions for handling them. It leads to a wide gap between what is perceived and what is practiced.

The Seminar on Rural Development and Communication Policies in New Delhi in 1980 organized by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (59) came to the conclusion that there are not only quantitative drawbacks, in respect to the formulation, transmission and perception of information but also qualitative drawback with regard to the content of information and messages.
There is lack of a policy needed for the effective utilization of communication media for fulfillment of rural development goals. In the present situation, conscious planning has to be done to narrow down the disparities. Communication network has to be designed for enhancing development. At the same time, it is important to understand the development needs and requirements and hopes of the rural people before adopting communication tactics and schemes, which stand to back development effectively.

The government has to be aware of the fact that unless the setting and precedence of rural development is determined, it is not possible to formulate a feasible and practicable communication policy. There can never be true development unless the pulse of the rural people is felt. It is important for the government to understand the importance and necessity of a two-way communication process. Its practice would enable the people particularly the rural naïve, poverty-stricken and the illiterate to come to the participating arena, resolve their problems and share their knowledge. Therefore, “as far as the beneficiaries of development are concerned they are to be mobilized, trained and organized so that they may participate effectively with the experts and governmental authorities” (60).

5. Rural Development Scenario in Darjeeling

5.1. GP Setting

The state government has also been, endowed with the responsibility for implementation of the rural development programmes. The district of Darjeeling falls under the state of West Bengal and the state has adopted the three-tier Panchayat System (West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973) of rural local governance for development of its rural areas. The government has taken steps to make the Panchayat more people-oriented. Mention can be made of the West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act 1994 which stated “Gram Sansad shall guide and advise the GP in regard to the schemes for economic development and social justice undertaken or proposed to be undertaken in its area” (61). The objective is to mobilize the people at the grassroots to actively participate in the planning and implementation of programmes.

The GP works at the village level, thus securing a direct relation with the people. They undertake the duty and responsibility to implement the programmes and schemes designed for the local rural people. At the same time, they also play a major
role in identifying the individuals who are to benefit from the schemes. It is the channel that enhances better communication with rural poor in all its activity.

Above the GP stands the Panchayat Samiti (62), with the Zilla Parishad (63) heading the tier. They are not only responsible for adopting the development policies but also have to abide to the orders sent from the state government and act as a coordinator to disburse the same to their respective districts. They are solely involved in rural development.

5.1.1. Status of GP under DGHC

The GNLF had always played off the Panchayat system ever since the Hill Council was established in 1988. Subash Ghising often accounted the co-existence of DGHC and Panchayat as ‘putting two feet into one shoe’. It was never in favour of a Panchayati Raj System. It was obvious that DGHC wanted to reign supreme over the rural belt also. However the state government managed to hold the first Panchayat poll (after the formation of the council) in 1995. This was only possible after the passing of two constitutional amendments which was based on Ghising’s condition.

This lead to the creation of a single-tier Panchayat system for the Hills. Theoretically a special provision was made for a two-tier Panchayat system. Despite the provision the GNLF only wanted the GPs to function. This was largely because the GNLF feared that the powers of the Panchayat Samiti might overlap with those enjoyed by the DGHC. Secondly it reduced the number of GP seats in return for the GNLF’s withdrawal from two Assembly by-elections which were finally won by the state government. Thus, there are 112 GPs under DGHC, 41 in Kalimpong, 30 in Kurseong and 41 in Darjeeling.

The organization would be without a Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti. Therefore, under the single-tier Panchayat system the GP only has its existence. The DGHC exercises all the powers of the Zilla Parishad under the various sections (64) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973. Consequently the GP works directly with DGHC for all its administrative, schemes and financial matter.

Elections to DGHC as well as to the Panchayat were to be held in 2005. However, before the Hill Council elections could be held Darjeeling Hills witnessed some major political developments where Subash Ghising Chairman of DGHC announced to end
his political hibernation on January 10, 2005. On this day he addressed his first public meeting after four years where he demanded an alternative to the DGHC and hinted at Sixth Schedule status (65) for the new body. He was hinting at the fact that DGHC should be given greater autonomy. The priority he said was to get a better alternative to the council and a detailed review of its power and functions. Thus, began the political battle with the state government. As GNLF continued with its pre-poll tantrums for autonomy, the state government was bent on holding the general elections in the Hills before the council's term ended on March 25, 2005.

The Sixth Schedule has also been looked upon as Ghising’s stratagem to further prolong the overdue DGHC election in the region. Ultimately, the state government in discussion with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Union Home Minister Shivraj Patel introduced a bill (March 14, 2005) to amend the DGHC Act to set up an interim government and create the post of a caretaker-administrator till the next polls (within six months). According to the Chief Minister of the state government Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee the step was taken for the “sake of peace” and the fourth elections to the DGHC, which has already outlived its term, be held within six months. He also said “Elections are the only democratic solution to the stalemate in Darjeeling” (66). On December 06, 2005 a tripartite agreement between Ghising, the central and state government was signed to include DGHC in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

5.1.2. Dissolution of GP

On March 26, 2005 Subash Ghising was appointed as caretaker administrator of DGHC (67). The tenure of the 112 GPs in the three Hill subdivisions expired on June 18, 2005. The unfolding of such events also culminated in the withholding of the third GP elections. Thus, the GP body was dissolved with no further expectation of elections. This was purely a political crisis.

The GPs stagnated and elections were likely to depend following the central and state government’s ability to work out an alternative to DGHC as well as after the elections to the council were conducted. Even during normal times the flow of fund was never enough and observation shows that the fund was a mere trickle down after the dissolution of the GP.
This kind of political upheaval compelled the state government to appoint a new administrator to look after the GP’s in the interim period before the elections (68). But the elected representatives of the GP (majority belonging to the GNLF) were not in favour of this appointment. They demanded extension of the present term of the Panchayats till the rural polls were conducted. However till date a legal notification saying that the GP has been dissolved and the body no longer exists is yet to come. At the same time the government has not given in writing that the Panchayat Pradhan is the legal administrator of the GP and neither a new administrator from the state could be appointed.

Extension to function was given to the GP body for one month in July 2005 with nothing in writing for further steps. Pradhan, Upa-Pradhan and the members are no longer in power, they are regarded as former yet his or her signature as ex-Pradhan could still be seen in documents for about two years after 2005. For instance, the birth and death certificates still bore his signature (After 2008, such responsibilities has been given to the GP staff with the countersignature of the Block Development Officer (BDO) of the Block. A likelihood of a political disturbance may have compelled the authorities to look the other side.

The situation has become perplex, with neither the DGHC nor the state government taking a stand for holding the GP elections. Under such circumstances rural development has been badly hit, has receded to a snail’s pace with the people at the grassroots level as the sufferers. For instance, the staff of Upper Ecchey GP was compelled to dole out monetary relief to its landslide victims from the tax collected, in July 2007(69). Thus, the trickling down of development programmes hinders people’s participation causing blockage of communication channels that impedes development efforts.

5.1.3. Betrayal by DGHC

Thus, the ‘unconstitutional’ and ‘undemocratic’ demeanor of the GNLF chief and his selfish interest has affected development in the Hills. The stagnation in the movement of the rural development activities is also one of its results. What could be worse when the people were not able to exercise their democratic rights for sixteen years?

Despite the fact that DGHC had been vested with powers to bring development to the Hills, specifically the rural belt, only a scant attention has been paid to this most
important aspect. It has failed to envisage active participation of the people in
determining their own priorities according to their felt-needs and initiating projects to
fulfill these needs. Thus, this facet of development has been sorely ignored and the
rural people have been reduced to being mere recipients. Moreover, it has unheeded
and brushed aside the fact that communication is instrumental in enhancing
development. It has failed to open up channels of communication with the people,
even if they had reasonably good scope of doing so.

Under DGHC the GP always sat on a precarious situation. The absence of a legal
body to execute various schemes for the upliftment of the rural poor has lead to the
paucity of funds which in turn has paralysed the true nature of village level self-
governance. At the same time there are emerging channels of communication that has
come forth as a light in the dark, which would be discussed in detail in the following
chapters.

5.2. New Trends in the Darjeeling Hills
The demand of DGHC for the Sixth Schedule status is an indicator of the grassroots
level governance in the Darjeeling Hills facing its end. This is because DGHC will be
excluded from the Panchayat Raj system as the 73rd Amendment Act does not apply
to the Sixth Scheduled areas. This apart, several other loopholes (70) brought DGHC
to a point where it faced challenges from the newly emerged political outfit, GJMM.
Thus, a new era dawned in the local politics of Darjeeling Hills.

This party is a breakaway from the GNLF, since it has been launched by the former
GNLF leader Bimal Gurung (71). Thus the party was born on October 07, 2007 where
upon he called on all people across political lines to join the party with the sole aim to
attain Gorkhaland with one voice. He addressed a huge public rally where he renewed
the call for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The response was immediate as it reflected
the dissatisfaction with two decades of Ghising’s autocratic rule during which the
democratic and development processes were waylaid.

By October 2007 the people were lending a more heedful ear to Bimal Gurung’s
incitements to revive the statehood movement. The new leader now openly criticized
the inclusion of Darjeeling Hills into the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution
and also challenged the sincerity of Subash Ghising towards the welfare of the people
living in Darjeeling Hills. To quote Gurung, he called Ghising’s demand “A betrayal
of the promise made to the Hill people by him in 1986 for a separate state of Gorkhaland" (72).

As the movement made a gradual move its popularity also arose which propelled the GNLF to hold public meetings to educate the people about the good of the Sixth Schedule. What followed in the following months was a trial of strength by way of gathering populace support, which obviously swept in favour of GJMM. The sporadic violence between GNLF and GJMM, the bandhs and counter-bandhs brought the Hills to a standstill.

The state government with the intention to take control of the unrest insisted the central government for an immediate enactment of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill. Consequently the Bill was presented in the Lok Sabha on November 03, 2007 but was deferred as the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) put up an objection on a procedural ground (73). Such was the opposition that the government was compelled to refer the Bill to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. The Committee on February 28 recommended that the centre make a fresh appraisal before it began the legislation for conferring Sixth Schedule status on Darjeeling Hills (74).

5.2.1. Subash Ghising Resigns

While the Committee prepared its report, Subash Ghising had gone to New Delhi to plead with the centre for the Amendment. His return on February 18 was perhaps the greatest humiliation in his political career. The supporters of GJMM blocked all the entry points to the Hills, forcing him to stop at the foothills in North Bengal. Meanwhile GJMM stepped up its movement calling for an indefinite bandh from February 20. The new party also demanded the immediate removal of Subash Ghising as caretaker administrator of DGHC.

The economic blockade, the indefinite hunger strike by twenty nine GJMM supporters, the threat of self-immolation by the women’s wing of GJMM for the ouster of Ghising and scrapping of Sixth Schedule took the situation out of control. Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee now had a crucial role to play which lead to the invitation of Bimal Gurung and other leaders of the party to Kolkata on February 27 for a dialogue. This was followed by Ghising’s acceptance of the state government’s condition that he should tender his resignation by March 10.
Thus, Darjeeling Hills and the entire country witnessed the end of an era of the man who had to let go of the reins of power after staying unchallenged in the DGHC since its formation two decades ago. On March 10, 2008, GNLF Supremo Subash Ghising forwarded his resignation from the post of caretaker administrator to the District Magistrate and the Chief Minister. As he stepped down, the people celebrated their freedom across the Hills. The agitation that had started four months ago returned to normalcy but it would be imprudent to think that the crisis is over.

The battle continues even after the resignation and the new leader Bimal Gurung has made it clear that he will not accept anything but Gorkhaland. As of now the new party continues with its movement based on the principle of non-violence and ahimsa. The state government too wants peace in the Darjeeling Hills and the process of dialogue continues.

The total disorientation of development under DGHC, the betrayal of the innocent people by one of their own and the recent political crisis has affected the development activities, particularly the rural. GJMM states that under DGHC “The village-level Panchayat system was allowed to languish in total doldrums” (75).

As we continue with the study it becomes necessary to give a brief introduction of the two Blocks and the eight selected GPs.

6. Study Areas

6.1. Selection of the GP Units

In order to explore and understand PRDC in the rural belt of Darjeeling Hills, the researcher has selected four GPs each from the concerned Kalimpong I and DP Block Development Office. The selected GPs are Relling, Jephi, Nayanore and Chongtong from DP Block and Samtar, Upper Ecchey, Seokbir and Lower Ecchey GPs from Kalimpong I Block.

Under DP Block, Relling GP comprises of a tribal belt and is politically a GNLF dominated area. Jhepi GP is the stronghold of Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) (76). Nayanore is the most remote and backward GP that lacks motorable road. In other words, one has to simply walk to reach the village. Chongtong GP is surrounded by two tea gardens that provide a major means of livelihood to the people.
and with the majority belonging to the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPR-M) (77).

Seokbir GP which is 20km from Kalimpong I Block is also remote but recent road connectivity has made things somewhat better. Lower Ecchey is largely dominated by people belonging to the Brahmin class comprising of castes like Sharma, Adhikari, Upadhya, Pouydal, Ghimerey etc. They are traditionally more alert and active when it comes to the development process. Upper Ecchey GP is nearest to Kalimpong town. Samtar is the most furthest and remote GP with weak road, and very little electricity coverage.

The GPs selected for study comprise of people belonging to different castes, tribes with their own dialects (78). Generally Nepali is the common language spoken by all irrespective of their ethnic affiliations. However, amongst the tribes it has been observed that they mostly prefer to converse in their own dialect.

Two major criteria for selection of GPs stand as-

- In some GPs people show greater participation in development activities and indulges in greater degree of communication despite being poor; in some areas, there is lack of such participation and communication.
- Different political parties controlling different GPs. It is to ascertain the party factor in participatory development.

A brief profile of the two respective Blocks with their selected GPs has been given below:

6.2. DP Block Development Office

This Block is 34 km from Darjeeling town, with the Block Office situated at Bijanbari. The Block spreads over 416.304 Sqkm and is the largest Block in the district. It is primarily inhabited by an ever increasing population of 1, 16,377 (as per Census of India, 2001). It sits on the extreme north-west frontier of West Bengal in the Sub- Himalayan Darjeeling district, touching the international border of Nepal in the west and Sikkim in the north surrounded by Sukhiapokhari and Tarkhat Block Development Office in the south and east respectively.

It has the Little Rangeet River, flowing on the eastern side and is surrounded by tea gardens like Lingia, Chongtong, Singtam, Takver and Som. The western side is dotted
with khasmal villages (79). Twenty three GPs (80) have constituted the Block with Rangit II (81) as the biggest and Dabai Pani (82) as the smallest. Some of the important staff of the Block has been mentioned in the notes and reference (83). Besides them, it includes the clerical and group-D staff (84). Study also reveals that some posts like Food and Supply Inspector have been lying vacant for a long time, despite several repeated petitions to the DM Office. This can be regarded as a kind of administrative apathy on the part of the higher authority concern. It also reflects a kind of ignorance on the part of DGHC to press the state government to fill the posts.

A profile has also been made of the four selected GPs of DP Block Development Office.

6.2.1. Jhepi GP

Jhepi GP is at a distance of 14 km from the Block Office. It constitutes a total of nine wards with thirteen members (85).

As per the Census Report of 2001 (86)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5001</td>
<td>2553</td>
<td>2448</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2162</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>2502</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>975</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Household</th>
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<tr>
<td>765</td>
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</table>
The occupational pattern in all the eight selected GPs shows that the entire population of each GP is highly dependent on agriculture for a livelihood. Although agriculture constitutes a major means of sustenance for all about 4% to 5% from each GP is also engaged in government and private service, army and other armed forces and business.

In Jhepi the income generated cash crops are ginger, potato, maize, cardamom, orange and squash. Paddy is also cultivated in the lower belt of this area. Sheipas are dominant in the area (40%) followed by the Subbas (20%) both of which belong to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category. The rest of 40% belong to the general community. People belonging to the Rai community have now been given Other Backward Class (OBC) status.

The GP has eight primary schools, one private nursery school, and one missionary school. Jhepi being a CPI-M stronghold the elected body of GP also belongs to the same with a major chunk of the population also supporting it. But it also has a few GNLF and Congress supporters. There is also a presence of a Christian missionary institution, known as Sisters of Notre Dam that was established in 1987. They run an English medium primary school, a dispensary and facilitate the formation of SHGs and impart vocational training to the women members.
forming SHGs since the time they were known under the scheme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) (89). A more detailed study has been made in Chapter IV. However, there is no NGO functioning in the GP.

2.6: A villager taking back ration

There is only one main road passing through this GP, which is in a dilapidated and deplorable condition. Only around 5kms constitutes motorable road. All the villages in the area are accessible only on foot and ponies are employed to carry their goods and essential commodities (90). However, under the central government funded NREGS the GP has started construction of roads to Thapa Goan and Batasia. They are the most remote and the farthermost villages which take around two to three hours on foot. Rural electrification covers only 70%, with the rest still in the dark. There is a Library, dispensary but there is no sub veterinary center (91). A community hall (92) has also been constructed for the benefit of the local people. There are nine Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centers and seven Sishu Shiksha Kendras (SSKs) (93). There is also a milk collection center for Himul (94). The GP has two Youth Clubs (95) and three Samaj Ghars (96). There role in PRDC has been discussed in chapter IV.

The administrative staff of Jephi GP has been provided in the notes (97).
6.2.2. Nayanore GP

Nayanore GP is the most remote and backward amongst the GPs selected for study in DP Block, with no motorable road connectivity. It consists of thirteen wards (98) and sixteen members. The GP is located at a distance of 8kms from the Block Office and covers an area of 3383.33 sq km.

According to Census Report 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Total Population of Nayanore GP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>5667</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Total Literacy Rate of Nayanore GP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Literacy Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2818</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Total Number of Household of Nayanore GP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Household</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1230</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.7: Local villagers of Nayanore GP interacting with the researcher
The occupational pattern of the people has already been mentioned above. The major cash crops that are cultivated are ginger, orange, cardamom, potato and broomstick with paddy, maize and millet cultivated in the lower belt of the GP. The villagers usually sell their produce to the baepary (local business man) (99) or they personally take their produce to the nearest market i.e. Bijunbari particularly on haat days (weekly market) (100). Recently a road has been constructed to enter the village (Sakhpara Basty) but it is kuccha road (unmetaled road, rough), which turns worse during the rainy season. Sometimes heavy vehicles can be seen plying but only to carry the goods. As one walks to the upper reaches of the village their seems to be no connectivity.

Thus, one can see the villagers carrying the load themselves or those who can afford use the pony to ferry the goods. The scenario is such that the local people are compelled to live under such hardships which are made worse by the poor condition of electricity. 60% of the areas are electrified (101) and the rest is in the dark. Drinking water is also a problem but they have managed to bring water to their houses buying their own pipes (102).

The villagers cannot boast of a community hall as there is none, and the authority too cannot explain why. However, they have a library and dispensary but again without a sub vetenary center (103). A branch post office is also present that operates from the GP office itself. There is neither a NGO nor a missionary organization working in the area. NREGS had also started in the area with two projects but had to be stopped as in the rest of the GPs (104). The TSC has only been recently launched (November 2008) (105).

There are seven ICDS centers and two SSKs. The GP also has three Youth Clubs (106) and four Samaj Ghars (107). The area is also basically tribal dominated with the Subbas (70%) forming the majority in the total population followed by the Tamangs (5%) and the rest of 25% belong to the general class (108).

The GP has eight primary schools, one junior high school and a degree college. The latter two has been mentioned only because it lies within the geographical boundaries of the GP. They are in fact very far away from the actual village inhabitants. Likewise within the boundary also falls the piggery farm, agriculture and sericulture department (109). Except for the sericulture the piggery farm has closed down and the agriculture
office is without any activities. The areas political affiliation belongs to GNLF. The area is totally neglected, remote and completely cut off, primarily because there is no proper motorable road. The governing body of Nayanore GP has been provided in the notes (110).

6.2.3. Relling GP

The Relling GP is situated at a distance of 7kms from the Block Office. Eleven wards (111) and fifteen members have formed the GP and cover a total area of 2317.07 sq km.

According to Census Report 2001:

Table 7: Total Population of Relling GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5570</td>
<td>2664</td>
<td>2906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Total Literacy Rate of Relling GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3394</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>1367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Total Number of Household of Relling GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Household</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1150</td>
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</table>

2.8: School children of Sherpa Goan Primary School Relling GP
Agriculture and livestock form the major occupation of the people. Oranges, squash, ginger, potato, and broomstick are the major cash crops. Paddy is also cultivated but not on a large scale. Seasonal vegetables also form the source of their income. They either sell their produce to the baepary or take their goods to the Bijanbari market.

Relling GP comprises of people belonging to the general community (50%) and 5% of Scheduled Caste (SC). However, it does have a tribal belt inhabited by Sherpas (30%) followed by the Subbas and Tamangs (15%) (112).

There are seven primary schools, one secondary school and four private nursery schools. They do not have a senior secondary school and the children have to walk all the way to Bijanbari (around 4kms) to pursue further studies. They have seven ICDS centers and five SSKs. The GP also has a library and two dispensaries (113). A sub-veterinary center once existed just next to the GP office but during the Gorkhaland agitation it was ravaged. Today it is just a skeleton waiting to be rebuilt.

They also have a Himul milk collection centre. They have five Samaj Ghars (114) and three Youth Clubs (115). The GP also boasts of two community halls. There is a branch post office which caters to the postal needs of the villagers. It is a winding up-hill journey to Relling GP and the road is in a deplorable condition. Only 40% is motorable road and the rest are kuccha road. Like Nayanore GP the lack of proper roads have been evened out by the use of pony. But again not everybody can afford to own one so ultimately it is manual labour. However, the NREGS programme started two projects (116) but this too remains incomplete. The survey for TSC was completed long time back in 2005 but work is yet to start in the villages.

Electricity coverage is not satisfying as it has not reached 45% of the area whereas the rest of 55% has electricity. There is no NGO functioning in the area but there is a Christian organization (117). GNLF is dominant in the area. The Relling GP staff has been provided in the notes (118).

6.2.4. Chongtong GP

Chongtong GP is 5km from the Block Office and covers a total area of 749.08 Sqkm. It consists of fourteen wards (119) and twenty members. The area falls on the main road leading to the Block Office with a few villages lying just next to the road but most of them like Dara goan, Lalmandhura 86 Divisions and Dilbir Dhura are remote
without proper road connectivity. The main road is also in a miserable condition, making it difficult for the vehicles to ply.

The land here belongs to the tea gardens and not to the villagers. In other words the land is not registered in their names.

According to Census Report of 2001:

Table 10: Total Population of Chongtong GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7159</td>
<td>3598</td>
<td>3561</td>
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<table>
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<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>326</td>
<td>2227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Total Literacy Rate of Chongtong GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4734</td>
<td>2788</td>
<td>1946</td>
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</table>

Table 12: Total Number of Household of Chongtong GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Household</th>
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<tr>
<td>1620</td>
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2.9: Chongtong GP Staff
This is the only GP which has two tea gardens situated within its domain. They are Lizahill tea garden and Chongtong tea garden. It is the backbone of this GP, an important source of livelihood for the people. The local people earn their bread and butter, working in the tea gardens. Like other GPs here too around 4% are engaged in government service, army and business. Since they do not own land they cannot think of producing for profit. The little space in their surrounding is enough for home consumption and whatever little they can spare is sold. This includes mostly seasonal vegetables.

The local people who work in the tea gardens also work as casual labours at construction sites commonly roads and houses. They also domesticate animals like cow, pig, and goat as well as rear chicken. The people depended on Chongtong tea garden have been facing problem as the garden has closed for twenty three times in the past twenty years. It is basically a sick industry. Compared to this garden, Lizahill has been functioning well.

The areas comprise mostly of people belonging to the Tamang (40%) community followed by the Rais (25%) who are OBC, SC (10%) and the rest of 25% belong to different castes (120).

There are five primary schools, one senior secondary school and one junior high school. Besides, there are five private nursery schools. Eleven ICDS centers and five SSKs are functioning within the GP. There is also a library and a dispensary for the people (121). There is neither a NGO nor a missionary organization working here for the people.

The survey for TSC was done way back in 2006 however work for the construction of the toilet started only from November 2008. The GP too had undertaken two projects (122) under NREGS but remains incomplete. There are a total of four Samaj Ghars (123) and three Youth Clubs (124). The GP also has a branch post office. 90% of the area has been electrified which has been possible for the existence of the gardens. The area has six community halls which have been constructed during the time of Dawa Lama (125). This GP is a CPR-M stronghold. The staff of Chongtong GP has been provided in the notes (126).

One can see important posts lying vacant, that shows the kind of administrative apathy. Despite repeated prayer to the higher authorities, the posts continue to remain
empty. As a result, the local government suffers a set back that impedes smooth administration. For example, in Upper Ecchey GP Shyam Sundas who holds the post of the executive assistant, also has to perform the duty of the secretary, the post for which has been lying vacant. The local rural people too fall prey to this kind of situation because their demands, grievances, pleas and petitions are neglected, due to the shortage of staff. Consequently communication takes a back seat as the few staff cannot interact with the villagers and in the milieu development too suffers a setback.

2.10: Map of DP Block showing the selected GPs
6.3. Kalimpong I Block Development Office

Kalimpong is the headquarter of the Kalimpong subdivision of the Darjeeling district. It is located on a ridge overlooking the River Teesta on an average elevation of 1,250 metres (4,101 ft). The rural area in the subdivision covers three Development Blocks - Kalimpong I, Kalimpong II and Gorubathan consisting of forty two GPs.

Kalimpong I Block Development Office is situated in the heart of Kalimpong town. It covers a geographical area of 321.16 sq.km and comprise of 18 GPs. As per information based on the 2001 census, the total population stands at 67,672. The agricultural land under this Block stands at 25486 acres and non-agricultural land at 2708.75 acres.

Some of the important staff of the Block has been provided in the notes (127). Besides them, it includes the clerical and group-D staff.

6.3.1. Upper Ecchey GP

Upper Ecchey GP is around 10km from the Block Office. The area is comprised of five wards (128) and five members and covers a total area of 280 acres. According to the Census Report of 2001 (129).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13: Total Population of Upper Ecchey GP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14: Total Literacy Rate of Upper Ecchey GP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Literacy Rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15: Total Number of Household of Upper Ecchey GP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Household</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agriculture constitutes a major economic activity of the people with maize, millet, squash, potato and broomstick cultivated on a large scale. About 15% of the people have also taken up Floriculture (130) as an alternative economic activity. Sherpas dominate the area, followed by the Bhutia, Rai and Brahmin Community. Motorable road runs through the GP for about 2kms. Like other GPs here too the villages have to be reached on foot. NREGS programme has also undertaken the construction of a road leading to Dara goan which is the most furthest and remote village of this GP (131). 90% of the area has electricity coverage and the rest of 10% is still in the dark.

The GP has one secondary school, one junior high school and five primary schools and two private nursery schools. There is one dispensary, a library and a sub veterinary center. The library was reduced to ashes during the Gorkhaland movement but it still functions as the library known as Sherpa Goan Library was revived by its staff, Pemba Sherpa who runs the same in his own house. The veterinary too seems to be passive in its functioning and the local people blame it as an administrative failure. The GP too had a community hall but the structure too was razed to the ground during the Gorkhaland movement and in its place the dispensary was built. Thus, they use the monastery hall for all the programmes.
There is an absence of a full-fledged NGO and a missionary organization working with the local rural people. However, they do come sometimes on a one day programme, spreading information on diseases like HIV AIDS or Women and Child Health. In the year 2009 CMD an NGO started to implement the TSC programme at Upper Ecchyep GP and around sixty toilets has already been constructed in Dara goan and three toilets at Ramlal Dahal primary school. There are four ICDS centers and two SSKs and three Samaj Ghars (132) and two Youth Clubs (133). The area has its affiliation to the GNLF political party.

The administrative body of Upper Ecchey GP has been given in the notes (134).

6.3.2. Samtar GP

This GP is around 45 km from the Block Office. An unexpected landslide in 2007 blocked the road which was in a slow progress of repair and renovation. Though the road was opened during the end of 2008 it is still a bumpy ride. However, an alternative route to reach Samtar is via Lava Lolegoan which takes an extra 40km. This was the route used by the local people at the time of repair. This GP is the most remote and backward amongst the GPs selected. The GP covers an area of 280 acres and consists of eight wards (135) and ten members.

According to the Census Report of 2001:

Table 16: Total Population of Samtar GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4048</td>
<td>2073</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Total Literacy Rate of Samtar GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Total Number of Household of Samtar GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lepcha and Bhujel communities (70%) form a majority in the total population and most of the villages are inhabited by them (136). 30% belong to the other castes (137). There are two junior high school, seven primary schools but no secondary school. Besides the government aided schools, there are two English primary schools run by a missionary organization as well as a private nursery school. The GP also has a dispensary, library but they don’t have a sub veterinary center (138).

A branch post office in the GP caters to the local people’s postal communication. Electricity is yet to come with only 10% of the entire area possessing the same but a few people (ten to fifteen households) have adopted an alternative means in the form of solar energy (139). As one enters the area the road about 2 kms is smooth. However, the roads leading to the villages are kuccha, in a deplorable condition and the situation turns worse during the monsoon as vehicles cannot ply. However one has to simply walk to the interiors of the GP.

With the launch of the NREGS programme in 2007 they have started two projects of road construction (140). Infact some of the villages take around four to five hours to reach, like Lower Dong and Najok Forest Village. Interestingly these villages have an alternative route to reach the nearest market, which means they have to cross the Teesta River to buy the most essential commodities and other household items (141). Like most of the GPs, Samtar GP also lacks proper channeling of water resource and
water tanks are absent. Despite its remoteness they have two community halls as well as a school hall (142).

A missionary organization known as St Joseph Convent has been working in the village areas since 1963. Their working has been explained in chapter IV. There is also a need to mention the social activities undertaken by Anugalaya, an NGO in the villages which too has been further discussed in chapter IV. There are six ICDS centers and two SSKs functioning in the entire GP area. The GP also has three Samaj Ghars (143) and three Youth Clubs (144).

Agriculture constitutes the major source of income with ginger, broomstick, orange as the major cash crops with paddy and maize as the major crops cultivated. The inhabitants of these areas own large tracts of lands and according to government norm they will come under the Above Poverty Line (APL) (145) list but if we see the reality, there is more land but less cultivation. This is because of lack of proper irrigation facility and frequent occurrence of natural calamity like landslide. Hence most of it is wasted land.

The administrative body of Samtar GP has been given in the notes (146).

6.3.3. Seokbir GP

Seokbir GP is 17km from the Block Office. It covers a total area of 5592 acres and consists of five wards (147) and six members.

According to Census Report of 2001:

Table 19: Total Population of Seokbir GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Total Literacy Rate of Seokbir GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1111</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Total Number of Household of Seokbir GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One has to cross the Relli River to reach Seokbir and it is a winding up-hill road. Earlier it was a rough *kuccha* road to Seokbir but it has been two years that a new road has been constructed which has increased the frequency of vehicles. The GP is located on top of the hill that overlooks the entire area. It’s a twenty minutes up-hill walk to the office although there is a *kuccha* road but difficult for vehicles to move.

The commercialized major cash crops are ginger, *dalle khorsani* (local chilly) and broomstick and the cultivated are paddy, millet and maize. Seokbir GP has Lepcha and Tamang dominance (70%), followed by the Brahmin and Pradhan community (30%) (148). Sulabh Pradhan Gram Sahayak says, “In Seokbir GP the fertile and irrigated lands are all owned by the Brahmin community, since they are shrewd and clever by nature” (149).

A few minutes walk from the GP leads to the library and there is also a dispensary for the local people (150). There is an absence of a proper veterinary centre, so a room in the GP office has been allotted from where the staff Sunil Tamang operates (151). A small community hall was constructed by the GP but they have given it to Jyoti junior high school, which was facing space crunch. There are three primary schools and one junior high school. The GP does not have a secondary school and the senior secondary school is a distant away. As a result, the children face difficulty in pursing further studies but those who can afford move to Kalimpong or Pedong and for those
beyond their capacity, simply have to drop out. There are five ICDS centers and three SSKs within the GP area and four Samaj Ghars (152) and three Youth Clubs (153).

The entire GP has only 25% electricity coverage and besides the newly constructed main road, there are only village roads. One has to walk to reach every village but under the NREGS programme they have started road construction to Yolk and Khani villages. Water scarcity is a major problem faced by the people of this GP, though there is a perennial source for channelization. The people look at it as an administrative negligence and ignorance. A branch post office also functions from Rangbull ward, the facility of which is utilized by the people of Seokbir as well as by the people of its neighbouring Kaefer GP. Anugalaya, a NGO also works with the people. The Seokbir GP body has been given in the notes (154).

6.3.4. Lower Ecchey GP

Lower Ecchey GP is 8km from the Block Office. It consists of nine wards (155) and six members and covers a total area of 339.58 acres.

According to Census Report of 2001:

Table 22: Total Population of Lower Ecchey GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2146</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Total Literacy Rate of Lower Ecchey GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1180</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Total Number of Household of Lower Ecchey GP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paddy, millet and maize as the major crops cultivated and ginger, broomstick and orange are the cash crops. They also have *Nari Dudh Udhpadhan Kendra* (156) which is a milk collection centre. 5% of the people are also in the floriculture business. Lower Ecchey GP is dominated by the Brahmin community (80%) followed by a mixed community (20%) (157).

The area has only two primary schools, one private nursery school and there is an absence of senior secondary and junior high school (158). The GP also lacks a dispensary, veterinary centre, and library (159). There are four Samaj Ghar (160) and two Youth Clubs (161). They have a branch post office that is also shared by its neighbouring GPs like Upper Ecchey and Sindebung. Only 80% of the total area has electricity coverage. The GP has constructed a community hall that is used by the local people. 2km of the entire road is motorable, while the rest are *kuccha* road. Most of the villagers have to walk on an average of 1 to 2km to reach the main road. However under the NREGS programme they have started construction for two roads (162).

At the moment they do not have any NGO or missionary organization working in the area. But CMD has started the TSC programme and till date they have already constructed eighty household toilets and two toilets each in the two primary schools.

Lower Ecchey GP body has been given in the notes (163).
7. **Concluding Remarks**

As we come to the end of a brief profile of the eight selected GPs, it becomes necessary to clarify and explain certain things in the above context which the researcher considers important.

- The number of people belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) (164) and APL list has not been mentioned as the state government-formulated survey.
parameters went terribly wrong as they were based according to the plains. A new survey has again been conducted but the report is yet to take a final shape. The ongoing political disturbance and the frequent strikes have further delayed the proceedings.

- The post of the Job Assistant has been removed from the GP and the state government has created a new post known as Nirman Sahayak. Under the present situation the staff employed as Job Assistant has neither been transferred nor has any new recruitment made for the new post. However, in the plains the recruitment has already begun for Nirman Sahayak.

- Himul does not have their milk collection centre in every GP, particularly in GPs like Samtar, Seokbir and Upper Ecchey. The usual trend is that the milk is collected by the local businessman of the village, who in turn sells the same in the market at a more price than he gave to the people. Places like Samtar and Seokbir are far and transport becomes expensive so the milk is used to make other dairy products like guie (ghee) and churpi (cheese) which is collected by the local businessmen for sale in Kalimpong market.

- The people also grow vegetables, besides the major cash crops and cultivated crops mentioned above. The vegetables are grown depending on the season and climate suitability and the common ones include beans, peas, variety of green sag (lettuce) radish, carrot, cauliflower, cabbage, tomato and green chilly. Thus, vegetables are also their source of income. Everybody does not own large cultivable lands, those with average land holdings grow these vegetables for home consumption but they do try to sell whatever they can spare.

- Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the local rural people but our survey shows that the people at the same time cannot do without their livestock. Cow is commonly domesticated by the people mainly for its milk and other dairy products like guie, churpi, curd and yogurt and the cow dung is also used as a fertilizer. The bull is also domesticated for ploughing the fields. Goat and pig are also reared mainly for its meat. Chickens mostly are
also raised for egg and meat. However, the pig is not reared by all the communities (165).

- The rural areas have plenty of natural sources of water but the sad reality is that the areas still face difficulties as the community water tanks are hardly seen in the areas and the constructed ones do not provide regular flow. The people most of whom are poor have to walk to the dhara (natural spring) (166) to fetch water for all domestic use. The rich in the villages have constructed their own water tanks and people also use plastic pipes to bring water to their houses.

The scenario in the rural areas of Darjeeling Hills is bleak. Development has made only a snail pace progress. In the process it is very important to understand and analyze the role of the official channels that are supposedly responsible for enhancing the life of the rural people and developing the rural communities. Thus, the chapter to follow overwhelming concentrates on the structure and functioning of these government agencies, with the forming the backdrop.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Sakhra* or Indra is the chief deity in the sacred Hindu text of Rig Veda and is regarded as the God of War and King of Gods. Indra is bestowed with a heroic and almost brash amorous character. *Sakhra* means 'the mighty one'.

2. The word Lamaist comes from the word lama which is a title for a Tibetan teacher of Dharma (Spiritual Leader). They come from the Tibetan Buddhism religion, a body of religious Buddhist doctrine and institutions characteristics of Tibet.

3. They were the monarchs of the former kingdom of Sikkim. The Raja was known as the ‘chogyal’ or the divine ruler who was the absolute potentate of the nation from 1642 to 1975. Chogyal Phuntsog Namgyal was crowned as Sikkim’s first ruler. Sikkim is a landlocked Indian State nestled in the Himalayas. It is the least populous State in India. The thumb-shaped state borders Nepal in the west, Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north and Bhutan in the south east. The Indian State of West Bengal borders Sikkim to its south.

4. The Gorkhas claim descent from the Hindu Rajputs of Northern India. They take this name from the eighth century Hindu warrior- Saint Guru Goraknath. This warrior had a Rajput Prince-disciple, the legendary Bappa Rawal. In the early 16th century some of Bappa Rawal's descendants went further east, and conquered a small state in present-day Nepal, which they named Gorkha in honour of their patron saint. By 1769, the Gorkha dynasty had taken over the area of modern Nepal. Gurkhas are best known for their history of bravery and strength in the Indian Army's Gorkha regiments and the British Army's Brigade of Gurkhas.

5. The Treaty of Titalaya was signed between Captain Barre Latter, agent on the part of the East India Company and Nazir Chaina Tenzin, Macha Teinbah and Lama Duchin Longdoo, Deputies on the part of the Raja of Sikkim on February 10, 1817. Accordingly, the Raja of Sikkim was given
full sovereignty and land was transferred once occupied by the Raja of Nepal.

6. Captain Lloyd was in-charge of relations with the Raja of Sikkim, also in charge of the establishment of the sanitarium of Darjeeling and responsible for the construction of the Darjeeling road and Mr. Grant was the Commercial Resident at Malda, he penetrated the Hills, which were still a terra incognita to the British and during his journey was attracted by the position of Darjeeling.

7. The kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked nation in the Himalaya Mountains, sandwiched between India and China in South Asia. Buddhism is the state religion with a predominantly Buddhist population and Tibet is a Plateau region in Central Asia and the indigenous home to the Tibetan people. It is at an average elevation of 4900 meters and therefore known as the ‘Roof of the World’. Trade linkage between British India and Tibet through the passes of Sikkim dates back to the late 18th century. The British had understood that establishment of trade links with Tibet through Sikkim would be ideal as a transit route.

8. The Lepchas are the aboriginal inhabitants of present day Sikkim. Some anthropologists suggest that they emigrated from Tibet to the north, and others say that they came from the southeast Tibet, passed through southern Bhutan before reaching their final destination near Kanchenjunga. They have their own language that belongs to the Tibeto-Kanauri group and most Lepcha are Tibetan Buddhist by religion, which was brought by the Bhutias from the North, although a few have also adopted Christianity. The Lepchas also have their own dress, culture, tradition. They belong to the scheduled tribe category.


10. Non-Regulation District was a scheme of administration under the British rule applicable to economically less advanced districts.
11. It is a city in Rajshahi district, in North Western Bangladesh. Rajshahi is the head quarter of Rajshahi division, one of the six administrative divisions in Bangladesh.

12. The Hill Men’s Association was formed by the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese of Darjeeling to represent the opinion of the people to the British Government regarding Darjeeling’s separation from West Bengal.


15. The Act of 1919 was passed by the British Parliament to expand participation of the natives in the Government of India. It provided for a dual form of government.

16. The Government of India Act, 1935, was the last pre-independence Constitution of the British Raj. It granted Indian provinces autonomy and ended the diarchy introduced by the Act of 1919. Direct elections were introduced for the first time.

17. Damber Singh Gurung, Member of Legislative Assembly (Bengal) raised the voice on behalf of Gorkhas living in India. In view of the fact that the condition of the Gorkhas spread throughout India was very deplorable and the political status of the Gorkhas was uncertain and the future of the Gorkhas was at stake, a political party of Gorkhas comprising of Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha- The All India Gorkha League was born on May 15, 1943. The League brought to the notice of the Legislative Assembly that there were three million Gorkhas residing in India who were educationally and economically backward. The part took care of the interest of Gorkhas in all respect, especially to establish the political rights of Gorkhas in India. Gorkhas of the than British India understood that at this time it was their first duty to fight all they can. In their various meetings they adopted resolutions demanding representation in the Provincial Legislative
Assembly, land settlement in Assam, annexation of Darjeeling to Assam and seats in the Constituent Assembly.


19. The CPI stated that the District of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and it is their homeland. They stated that the Gorkhas are an important minority whose legitimate interests must be safe guarded in the new Constitution of India and any decision that is taken in regard to the future of the District of Darjeeling must be done in consultation with the trusted representatives of the Gorkha people to whom the district legitimately belongs. The appeal for regional autonomy was placed by Ratanlal Brahmin and G.L. Subba, Darjeeling District Committee, Communist Party of India, Darjeeling on April 06, 1947. (Source of Information: Bipin Syangden and Ashok Moktan eds., *Gorkhas Speak*, Darjeeling: B.B.Tamang, 1986, p. 1 and p. 10).

20. The Bhutias are the people of Tibetan origin, who migrated to Sikkim, other parts of India and Bhutan some time after the 15th century. They have their own dialect, customs, traditions, culture and dress.

21. West Bengal is a state in Eastern India. With Bangladesh, which lies on its eastern border, the State forms the ethno-linguistic region, Bengal (stretching from the Himalayas in the North to the Bay of Bengal in the South).

22. Subash Ghising was a new Gorkha leader who raised the demand for a separate state for the people of the Darjeeling Hills on April 22, 1979. He joined the Gorkha Rifles of Indian Army as a soldier in 1954. He later quit the army. In 1968, Ghising raised issues concerning the Hills and formed a political outfit, *Nilo Jhanda*, to further the cause. It was the beginning of a long political career.

23. *Geetange Dara* is located in *Chowk Bazar* which is the heart of Darjeeling town and is a busy and central market place. It is a small space attached to an old building at an elevation, where political parties have been delivering speeches since the 1970’s.

25. CRPF is a paramilitary security agency functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. It assists in police operations to maintain law and order and contain insurgency.

26. Clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty: The Government of India and the Government of Nepal signed a Treaty on July 31, 1950. The Treaty was signed with the objective to strengthen and develop ties of peace and friendship. Clause 7 of the Treaty read as “agree to grant, on reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and privileges of a similar nature”.

27. The GNLF started Gorkhaland agitation saw the death of several innocent lives. It was “violence versus violence” between the GNLF activists and the central and state government police forces. Arrest of innocent people, torture, rape, looting, ransacking and burning of houses and random firing at people became the trademark of the process. The people even survived the forty day bandh called by the party in February 1988.


29. A few lines from the speech delivered by Subash Ghising (English translation) on June 02, 1985, at Kurseong.

30. Several other letters and telegrams have been sent on different dates besides the mentioned above. The telegram sent to Jyoti Basu the then Chief Minister of West Bengal specifically hints on GNLF’s ‘belief in democracy’ and withdrawal of prison-administration of Bengal. Another letter sent to Buta Singh the then Home Minister of India seeks to address the genuine grievances of the Gorkhas of India within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Letters and telegrams sent to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi specify the atrocities of the state government and the need for a separate state of Gorkhaland.

31. The Tripartite meeting was held between Subash Ghising, R.N. Sengupta, the then Chief Secretary, on behalf of the Government of West Bengal and
C.G. Somiah, the then Union Home Secretary, on behalf of the central government in the presence of Buta Singh, the then Union Home Minister and Jyoti Basu, the then Chief Minister Government of West Bengal.

32. DGHC is an autonomous body that looks after the administration of the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal, India. The DGHC, with Subash Ghising as its Chairman, was created after the withdrawal of the party's demand for a separate state. The council covers the three Hill subdivisions of Darjeeling district namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong.

33. Executive Powers: When DGHC was formed in 1988, the central government and the state government also entrusted the Council with certain important Executive Powers necessary for the development and administration of Darjeeling. The subjects covered have been given in detail in pages 74 and 75 of this chapter.


35. According to this executive function DGHC was given the power to supervise, rather oversee, the working of the Panchayat Samities and the GPs which are rural based local governments. It also included monitoring the work of the Municipalities which are urban-based administration.

36. He refers to Subash Ghising - President and Leader of GNLF.

37. After India got its independence, the central government introduced the CDP in October, 1952, with an objective to bring about rural reconstruction through people's participation in framing and implementing development programmes. However, this programme was replaced by the Panchayati Raj System in 1957 on the recommendation of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee.

38. National Extension Service was introduced in 1953 by the central government to achieve rural transformation with the aim of associating the
people. In fact CDP has been described as the method and rural extension as the methodology through which the Five Year Plan attempted to establish the process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages.

39. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was constituted by the central government in 1957 on community development and plan projects, recommended decentralization of administration and democratization of power. It was a study team that recommended the introduction of a democratic body i.e. a three-tier integrated structure of local self government at the rural level. The GP at the base, Zilla Panchayat at the apex and Panchayat Samities in-between. It came to be known as the Panchayati Raj System.

40. The Ashok Mehta Committee was also appointed by the Indian government. Besides its enquiry into the working of the Panchayat system, they also had the duty to suggest steps to make the decentralized system of planning and development more effective. This committee felt that the system needed greater co-ordination which would be unwise to attempt at the state level. It also proposed inclusion of technical expertise for the planning and implementation of rural development programmes.


42. The government of India, Ministry of Rural Development has taken initiative for the usage of ICT, as accelerator for development of rural India. Rural Bazar is software focused on presenting the products, off-line payments as well as on-line payment of the rural producers. eNRICH in the beginning was developed for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with the objective to bring intra-community communications. Later on it was intensified to work as a model capable of networking communities and building linkage between government and citizens. The focus is mostly on the disadvantaged and down-trodden rural people.

43. Ibid, p.2.


45. The first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru presented the First Five-Year Plan to the Parliament of India on December 8, 1951. The first plan sought to get the country's economy out of the cycle of poverty. The First Five Year plan had been made by the Planning Commission- Its objective was to improve the standard of living of the people by effective use of the country's resources. The First Five Year plan's total outlay was estimated to been worth Rs. 2,069 crore. This amount was allocated to various areas.

They are:

- Community and agriculture development
- Energy and irrigation
- Communications and transport
- Industry
- Land rehabilitation
- Social services

46. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) functioned on the basis of Mahalanobis model. This was an economic development model developed by the Indian statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in the year 1953. This plan focused on industry, especially heavy industry with encouragement in domestic production of industrial products. The plan assumed a closed economy in which the main trading activity would be centered on importing capital goods.

47. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) stressed on agriculture. However the brief Sino-Indian War of 1962 opened up the weaknesses in the economy and shifted the focus towards the Defence industry. In 1965-1966, India fought a war with Pakistan. The war led to inflation and the priority switched to price stabilisation. Several primary schools were started in rural areas. Panchayat elections were started with an aim to bring democracy to
the grassroots level and the states were given more development responsibilities.

48. During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974) Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. Green Revolution in India advanced agriculture. The Plan aimed at increased production with the prevention of concentration of wealth and economic power.

49. The presentation of the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979) unfortunately clashed with a major turmoil on the international economic scene, with rising inflation and critical balance of payment position. The Plan focused on the growth of three leading sectors- agriculture, energy, intermediate goods are the creation of additional employment opportunities.

50. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985) was formulated taking into account the achievements and failures of the past three decades of planning. Removal of poverty has been the foremost objective of this Plan.


52. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) marked the comeback of the Indian National Congress Party into power. Stress was laid on the growth in the economy, agricultural development and increase in the productivity level of industries by up gradation of technology.


54. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) highlighted the modernization of industries. The gradual opening of the Indian economy was undertaken to correct the burgeoning deficit and foreign debt.


56. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) was launched in the 50th year of India's independence. This Plan granted importance to agriculture and rural development with an aim to generate productive employment and removal
of poverty. It also aimed at speeding the growth rate of the economy for providing food and nutritional security for all.

57. The main objective of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) was reduction of poverty ratio by 5 percentage points by 2007. Right to Information, decentralisation, people’s participation and reforms of the revenue system are some of the aspects that have been given priority.

58. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) has been divided into three volumes – Inclusive Growth, Social Sector and Agriculture, Rural Development, Industry Services and Physical Infrastructure. One of its major aims has been to connect every village by telephone by November 2007 and provide broadband connectivity to all villages by 2012.

59. Indian Institute of Mass Communication, a National Institute, started in 1965 at Delhi and fully funded by the Government of India through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It has developed as a centre of excellence in the field of communication teaching, training and research.


62. Panchayat Samiti: It is a local government body at the second tier of the Panchayati Raj System in India. It works for the villages and is the link between the GP and the district administration. It is elected for five years and is headed by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman.

63. Zilla Parishad: It is also known as the District Council and is the top level of the Panchayati Raj System (the 1st tier). Its jurisdiction includes all village level and block councils within a district.

64. Special provisions for the district of Darjeeling have been provided in chapter XVIIA of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973. These provisions come under section 185A. A few has been mentioned below:
(1) With effect from the date of coming into office of the Council, the Zilla Parishad for the district of Darjeeling constituted under this Act shall stand dissolved and the members of the Zilla Parishad shall be deemed to have vacated their offices forthwith.

(2) Upon such dissolution of the Zilla Parishad, the Council shall exercise all the powers, discharge all the duties and perform all the functions of the Zilla Parishad under this Act.

(6) (b) The state government shall not assign any power, function or duty in relation to any matter, referred to in section 207B or in any other provision of this Act, to any GP or Panchayat Samiti in the Hill areas without prior consultation with the Council and, on transfer of such power, function or duty, the Council shall have power and authority to issue any direction, and adopt any measure, for supervision and monitoring with respect to the exercise of such power, performance of such function and discharge of such duty by the GP or the Panchayat Samiti, as the case maybe.

65. The Sixth Schedule has been included in Article 244 (2) and 275 (1) of the Indian Constitution. It includes provisions for administration in the tribal areas of the state of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. It was an effort to give small tribal communities, disadvantaged by lack of opportunities, extensive powers through the system of autonomous district councils and protect their traditions as well as their land.


67. The state government appointed the chairman of DGHC, Subash Ghising as caretaker-administrator solely responsible for running an interim arrangement in the region till the council elections are held (within the next six months). Accordingly, he will not be able to exercise his powers as he used to do during his tenure as chairman. He will no longer be the deciding authority on policies and funds. He will only be able to monitor on-going development projects and run the daily administration.

68. There is no provision in the Indian Constitution that allows a GP member to continue in office once his term expires. If elections cannot be held on the
expiry of the term, the government is supposed to appoint a new administrator. In the case of Darjeeling the term of office of the GP dissolved in June 2005. Unfortunately normal elections could not be held. In place an administrator on behalf of the state government was to be appointed during the period. The function of this administrator would be to take charge in the working of the GP in the absence of the elected representatives.

69. What could be worse when a GP has no fund to fall back on at a time of a disaster. Left with no choice the staff of Upper Ecchey GP were compelled to distribute money to the landslide victims from the tax fund. Around twelve affected families were given immediate monetary relief depending on the extent of the damage. The amount ranged from Rs. 1500/- to Rs.4000/-. 

70. The demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland has to be seen in terms of the social, political, cultural and economic aspirations of the people. This, however, was never taken forward by DGHC on which the people had great expectation. There was a growing disenchantment among the people of the region, both with the Council and Ghising. Twenty years under the Hill Council but Darjeeling is still without proper infrastructure, medical facilities, and institutions of higher education. There is an absence of the basic facilities including drinking water. The job opportunities for the youths have saturated and there is no economic development. Besides, the people were disillusioned by Ghising’s despotic rule. Interaction with the public was rare and it was obvious that he was running the Council single-handedly.

71. Bimal Gurung was once considered a close associate of GNLF Front supremo Subash Ghising. He was once the party Councilor of Singamari-Tukvar Samasty (constituency) known for his charismatic leadership. However, he having seen enough of GNLF leadership and their empty promises broke away from the party (the party claims that he was expelled for anti-party activities). He formed a new party under the banner of GJMM on October 07, 2007. He renewed the call for a separate state stating that Ghising had betrayed the Gorkhaland cause by settling for Sixth Schedule
status. Gurung has been able to get overwhelming support from all corners of the Darjeeling Hills.


73. By procedural ground it meant that an amendment to a Bill has to be passed by a two-thirds majority of Lok Sabha members present and voting and not less than half the total strength of the House. The BJP raised an objection stating that this rule had not been followed when the Bill was placed in the Lok Sabha on November 03, 2007.

74. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs stated that had the Bill been passed soon after the Union Cabinet approved the creation of an autonomous Gorkha Hill Council; the situation would have been different as Subash Ghising was then the unchallenged leader of the Hills. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the central government should take the existing situation seriously as now the Hill people were divided over the Sixth Schedule issue, and the majority of them were against it.


76. Jhepi GP has always been a CPI-M backed area. In other words they are not with the regional and ruling party (GNLF) but have affiliation with the CPI-M led state government. The party also controls the GP as the elected representatives are from the party.

77. The CPRM is a breakaway faction of the CPI-M. Chongtong area belongs to this party. The GP is also controlled by the elected members belonging to the same party. Despite their differences with GNLF they are very much in favour of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

78. The GPs selected for study comprise of people belonging to different castes and tribes with their own dialects. They include the Hindu- Nepali community of Chettri, Pradhan, Gurung, Rai, Brahmin, Bhujel, Mangar etc along with the scheduled castes followed by the Lepcha, Sherpa, Tamang
and Limboo tribes. It is to be noted that scheduled tribe status was granted to the Tamang and Limboo only in 2002.

79. *Khasmal* Village: The Government has divided land into three categories—Tea Garden, Forest and *Khasmal*. By *Khasmal* we mean purely village area which is highly dependent on agriculture and diary for income generation.


81. Rangeet II: This is the biggest GP under DP Block. It covers three tea gardens and two large villages. The tea gardens are Takver, Burnsbeck and Singla and the villages are Lepcha Basty and Limbu Basty.

82. Dabaipani is the smallest GP of DP Block and is totally a *khasmal* area. It falls in the border area with Kalimpong on the left side and Bijanbari Block on the right side.

83. Some of the important staff of the Block has been mentioned below (with incumbents as on February, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
<td>Rajdeep Datta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Block Development Officer</td>
<td>Mohammad Zakaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension officers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Relief Officer:</td>
<td>Uday Kr. Pariyar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Development Officer:</td>
<td>Rubina Namchu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Extension Officer:</td>
<td>Sarda Saha. (Under DGHC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial development officer:</td>
<td>Aminesh Naskar (Under DGHC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Accounts and Audit Officer:</td>
<td>Tshering Donka Bhutia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Development Officer:</td>
<td>Latika Tamang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Welfare Officer:</td>
<td>Laden Dawa Bhutia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub- Assistant Engineers:</td>
<td>L.N. Pradhan and Sashi Dewan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
84. Clerical staff of the Block Development Office includes the employees who work under the officers. They do paper and file work. Some of the group-D staff includes the mali (gardener), chowkidar (watchman) and peon who again work under the clerks.

85. Ward means constituency, which is based on population and member is elected by the voters who are the ordinary rural people. For every 250-350 voters, there will be one member. His or her responsibility is to look after the developmental work of his ward and take the grievances, problems and demands of his ward to the GP and place it before the Pradhan. Jhepi GP comprise of nine wards. They are (1) Kankibong I (2) Kankibong II (3) Gurdung (4) Rai Goan/Sanman Goan (5) Upper Sumbuck (6) Lower Sumbuck (7) Jhepi/Ramitae (8) Rawali Goan (9) Bujel Goan

86. The Census Report of 2001 for the four selected GPs of DP Block was provided by the Block Relief Officer, Uday Kumar Pariyar. Age: 40, Gender: Male, Education level: BA.

87. The government service holders mostly include teachers of the primary and junior high schools. A few also work in the senior secondary schools, some are GP staff but not all belong to the rural areas and a few (1to2) in the electricity, sericulture, agriculture departments. The people are also employed in the army and other armed forces like the Border Security Force and the CRPF and some are engaged in local business where they run grocery shops selling all essential items or a small eatery that sell country liquor too or they collect vegetables, ginger, potato, dairy products to name a few from the local rural people for sell in the main market of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. It has been observed that the youths have also left for cities like Kolkata, Bangalore and Delhi in search of jobs as employment has already reached a saturation point in the Hills. Masons, carpenters, painters and labourers at construction sites also form part of the occupation. See Chapter IV for more details.

88. Sherpas are dominant in the area followed by the Subbas. They both fall in the ST category. The ST are particular section of India’s population recognized by the Constitution of India. They are certain communities of the
country who are suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness. Primitive agricultural practices, dearth of infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation, communities in need for accelerated socio-economic development can be regarded as the factors responsible for this kind of communities. In the Hills Sherpa, Lepcha, Tamang, Subba and Bhutia belong to the tribal category. The government has provided them with many benefits like seat reservation for admission in schools, colleges and universities, employment, scholarship etc.

The people belonging to OBC are entitled to 27% reservations in government employment and higher education. In the Indian Constitution, they are described as 'socially and educationally backward classes', and government is enjoined to ensure their social and educational development. In the Hills the people belonging to the Rai, Thami, and Bujel community have been included in this list.

The rest of 40% comprise of people belonging to communities like Rai, Scheduled Caste, Pradhan, Chettri and Brahmans.

89. DWCRA was launched in 1982, as part of the Integrated Rural Development Program. Its objective was to empower rural women living below the poverty line by way of preparing them to create sustainable income generating activities through self-employment. It was the first program of its kind that specifically focused on improving the quality of life of rural women. A distinctive feature of this programme was that along with the improvement in income, it also focused on health, education, safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition, etc. Thus, it aimed not only at economic development, but also promotion of social development. Another unique feature of the program was that it emphasized group activity.

90. The villages lack motorable road. Ponies are used for carrying rations, milk, constructions materials like cement and sand etc. Every family does not own a pony. It does at the most have five to six owners. Usually Rs.80/- per load is charged by the owners for others though the frequency in the use is less. The pony is also used to carry their products to the local market and bring rations on the way back.
91. Jhepi GP has a library known as Sumbuck Gramin Pustakalaya. It is located at Sumbuck besides the GP office. The GP also has two dispensaries, one at Sumbuck and the other at Jhepi. They usually open thrice a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Child immunizations, distribution of medicine, first aid, treating minor ailments, maternity treatment are some of the services provided by the dispensaries. The GP lacks a sub veterinary center. It is to be noted that the dispensaries and veterinary center that are present in the GPs have been providing poor service.

92. Community halls constructed for the welfare of the people are used for social occasions like marriage, cultural programmes, community meetings, government-aided functions etc.

93. ICDS aims at providing services to pre-school children in an integrated manner so as to ensure proper growth and development of children in rural, tribal and slum areas. It is a centrally sponsored scheme. The package of services comprise of supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-up, referral services, pre-school non-formal education and nutrition & health education.

SSK is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education. It aims at making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group. The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants.

94. Himalayan Co-operative Milk Producer's Union (Himul) was started in 1973. The head office is in Matigara in the Siliguri subdivision. This organization has its milk collection centers in the GPs, where the local rural people take the milk and are paid per litre, per month and they have opened up a Chilling Plant at Bijanbari, where the milk, coming from the villages are refrigerated before its journey to the head quarters for processing and packaging. On an average Rs.12/- per litre is paid depending on the fat.
There are two Youth Clubs in Jhepi: (1) Baaz United Club at Jephi (2) Lali Guras Yuva Sanga at Sumbuck.

There are three Samaj Ghars in Jhepi (1) Jhepi Ramitae Dhuka Newaran Samiti (2) Jiwan Jyoti Samaj Ghar (3) Batasia Dara Samaj Ghar.

The administrative staff of Jephi GP is as follows (with names of incumbents as on February, 2008).

- **Pradhan:** Meena Subba (ex)
- **Upa-Pradhan:** Puspa Lama (ex)
- **Executive Assistant:** Basant Kr. Pradhan
- **Secretary:** Sanjeev Pradhan
- **Job-Assistant:** The post is lying vacant
- **Gram Sahayk:** Mahesh Ghosh
- **Karmi:** Pramila Dewan
  - Bhagiraj Subba
  - Hari Prasad Biswakarma


**Baepary** is the local term for a business person. They are usually locals from the villages itself who collect the produce from the villagers and take to the main markets like Darjeeling and Kalimpong for sale. It has always been observed that the profit earned by the baepary who is also the middleman is always more as compared to the profit of the farmers who slog hard in their fields. Rising transport cost, time factor, long distance, quantity factor are some of the reasons sighted by the farmers whereby they sell their produce to the baepary. Besides the locals, baeparies also come from the town nearest being Darjeeling and Kalimpong to buy the produce.
100. The villagers also take their produce to the local markets particularly on *haat* days. *Haat* is a local term for a weekly market in the rural areas. A certain day is kept for the hant and this is the day when a lot of people gather for different works. The villagers too prefer to visit the market on these days. They not only come to sell but also to take back essential commodities like rice, wheat, oil, salt, sugar etc. They also buy other items like garments, utensils etc. The frequency of visits to the offices is also more on this day.

101. 60% electricity does not mean that the government has provided all the 60%. It is not only Nayanore GP but in all the other GPs where people have been compelled to set up poles to take electricity to their houses on their own expense. This is done legally where they pay bills. Electricity is also taken illegally where hooking method is adopted. In some cases it is known as *gol meter* in GPs like Upper Ecchey where five to six families borrow electricity from a person holding a legal line. Money is paid to the person who usually charges more than what is in the bill.

102. DGHC has not been able to provide even safe drinking water to the rural people. There is a scarcity of water tanks though natural springs locally known as *dhara* are in plenty. Those who can afford and tired of waiting for the authorities to solve their problems usually construct their own tanks or connect water from the *dhara* with pipes brought in their own expense. Left with no choice most of the people being poor carry water from the *dhara*.

103. The library for the people of Nayanore is located at Upper Nayanore and is called Upper Nore Rural Library. It looks like a namesake library where books are few as well as the readers. Two dispensaries at Naya Basty and Tumbayok have been set up which only tends to render immunization service. The GP is without a sub veterinary center.

104. Under NREGS the GP started construction of roads from Labrae Khola to Bibarae and from Sirubari to Bibarae. However, the projects remain incomplete due to the political situation as well as lack of fund.

105. TSC is a central government funded scheme where toilets at a minimum cost are constructed for the rural poor. This scheme also applies to the schools. The Hill Council has given the projects to NGOs. Panchavati Green Tech
Society has taken up the task for GPs under DP Block and CMD for Kalimpong. The latter has started work in the lower belt of Nayanore from November 2008.

106. Nayanore GP has three Youth Clubs: (1) Naulo Tara Youth Club (2) New Boys Youth Club (3) Suntalae Youth Club.

107. Nayanore GP has four Samaj Ghars: (1) Yumasam Sewa Samiti (for the Subba community) (2) Nava Jyoti Samaj Ghar (3) Srijana Samaj Ghar (4) Pragati Samaj Ghar.

108. Subbas are dominant in the area, followed by the Tamangs. People belonging to the general category like Brahmins, Chettris, Gurungs, Mangars form the rest of the population.

109. The closure of the piggery farm and the deserted look of the agriculture office shows ignorance and negligence on the part of DGHC. The agriculture office which is so necessary to function for the rural people is yet to show any sign of revival.

110. The governing body of Nayanore GP constitutes as follows (with incumbents as on February, 2008).

**Pradhan:** Chandramaya Tamang (ex)

**Upa-Pradhan:** Suren Gurung (ex)

**Executive Assistant:** The post is lying vacant since 2005

**Secretary:** Suman Darnal

**Job Assistant:** expired recently

**Gram Sahayk:** Chandan Jairu

**Karmi:**
- Prem Chettri
- Basant Sharma
- Lila Sewa

111. Relling GP has been divided into eleven wards: (1) Upper Samsu(2) Lower Samsu(3) Upper Lama Goan(4) Lower Lama Goan(5) Middle Relling(6) Lower Relling(7)Bibaraz(8) Hom Dara (9) Pakha Goan/ Thapa Goan(10) Upper Relling Botaley Goan(11) Upper Relling Gumba Tar
The general community mainly comprise of Chettris, Brahmins, Gurungs, Pradhans and Mangars. SCs are people belonging to the low caste. Like the STs they are also particular section of India’s population recognized by the Constitution of India. They are certain communities of the country who are suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness. Primitive agricultural practices, dearth of infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation, communities in need for accelerated socio-economic development can be regarded as the factors responsible for this kind of communities. Das, Darjee, Sundas, Kamee, Shankar, Biswakarma are some of the castes. The government has provided them with many benefits like seat reservation for admission in schools, colleges and universities, employment, scholarship etc. The area also has tribals like Sherpas in majority followed by the Subbas and Tamangs.

The library of Relling known as *Relling Gramin Pustakalaya* is also located at Relling Bazaar. The library works from a small rented house. Two dispensaries at Lower Lama Goan and the other at Lower Relling provide service to the local people.

Relling has five Samaj Ghars: (1) Christian Sewa Samiti(2) Hamro Samaj(3) Samsu Lama Goan Samaj Ghar(4) Allay Dara Samaj Ghar(5) Kalyan Samaj Ghar

Relling has four Youth Clubs: (1) Relling Boys Youth Club(2) Rising Star Youth Club(3) Ujjwal Youth Club(4) United Boys Youth Club

Under NREGS the GP had started two projects, but again like other GPs political disturbance and paucity of funds has brought the work to a halt. The projects undertaken were road from Lower Relling to Allay Dara and from Bibarae to Sherpa goan.

A Christian organization, Assembly of God Church, is located within the Relling GP area specifically at Allay Dara. They run a residential primary school for the locals. A church has also been built for the people to pray and attend masses.
118. The Relling GP staff constitutes as follows (with incumbents as on February, 2008)

**Pradhan:** Pento Sherpa (ex)
**Upa-Pradhan:** Devi Prasad Rai (ex)
**Secretary:** Jagatman Rai
**Gram Sahayk:** Anjeev Pradhan
**Executive Assistant:** Gokul Dewan

(The post was lying vacant since 2004 but in November 2008 the post was filled)

**Job Assistant:** The post is lying vacant since 2004
**Karmee:** San-Bahadur Subba
**Puran Chetri**


120. Tamangs are in majority in Chongtong followed by the Rais who belong to the OBC and the SC. The rest fall in the general category comprising mostly of Gurungs, Pradhans, Mangars, Brahmins and Chettris.

121. There is a library for the people of Chongtong which is just besides the GP office known as Chorus library. There is a dispensary run by the tea garden but lacks even the basic amenities. There is no veterinary centre.

122. Under NREGS the GP had started construction of two roads- Liza Hill to Balwas Khola and Chongtong to Upper Dara Goan. It remains incomplete due to scarcity of fund and for the political disturbance.

123. Chongtong has four Samaj Ghars: (1) Chongtong Sewa Samiti (2) Dibya Jyoti Samaj Ghar (3) Kokomendo Samaj Ghar (4) Goan Bikash Samiti.

124. There are three Youth Clubs in Chongtong: (1) Chorus Club (2) Tarun Club (3) Pariwartan Youth Club.
125. Chongtong has six community halls which have been constructed in the different areas of the GP. This is the highest number of halls among the selected GPs. The halls were constructed at the time when Dawa Lama was the Member of Parliament of the Rajya Sabha. He is a CPRM leader and locally belongs to the area.

126. Chongtong comprise of the following staff (with incumbents as on February 2008)

- **Pradhan:** L.M. Lama (ex)
- **Upa-Pradhan:** Manjila Gurung (ex)
- **Executive Assistant:** Navin Chettri
- **Secretary:** Palden Lama
- **Job Assistant:** Kiran Lama
- **Gram Sahayk:** Daulat Dewan
- **Karmi:** Nirmal Khati
  - Amber Tamang
  - Pradeep Biswakarma

127. Some of the important staff of Kalimpong I Block Development Office has been mentioned below (with incumbents as on February, 2008)

- **Block Development Officer:** D.D. Bhutia
- **Joint Block Development Officer:** Dilip Roy
- **Extension officers:**
  - **Block Relief Officer:** David Lepcha
  - **Panchayat Development Officer:** Tshering Bhutia
  - **Fisheries Extension Officer:** Binod Subba
  - **Industrial development officer:** Rakesh Rai
- **Panchayat Accounts and Audit Officer:** Sonam Tamang
- **Women Development Officer:** Uden Lepcha
- **Block Welfare Officer:** Palden Lama
- **Sub- Assistant Engineers:** Trilok Pradhan and Bikash Sharma
128. Upper Ecchey GP comprise of five wards: (1) 14th Mile Goan (2) 13th Mile Mandal Goa (3) Purba Sherpa Goa (4) Paschim Sherpa Goan (5) Dara Goan.

129. The Census Report of 2001 has been provided by Block Welfare Officer of Kalimpong I Block Development Office, Palden Lama. Age: 42, Gender: Male, Education level: BA

130. Kalimpong has always been famous for its variety of flowers and the weather too seems to be suitable. Floriculture has been taken up by the local people as an economic activity in Upper Ecchey. Gerbera, lilies of different variety, orchid, gladiolus are some of the few flowers grown. Though it seems to be lucrative it is yet to find a proper marketing channel. Besides the local Kalimpong market, to some extent it has reached to Darjeeling and Sikkim.

131. NREGS had started construction of road leading to Dara Goan but it stands incomplete with the sudden political upheaval and the shortage of fund.

132. Upper Ecchey comprise of three Samaj Ghars: (1) Dukha Niwarak Samiti (2) Sherpa Samaj Ghar (3) Angalo Samaj Ghar

133. There are two Youth Clubs in Upper Ecchey: (1) Youth Committee (2) 14th Mile Youth Club.

134. The administrative body of Upper Ecchey is as follows (with incumbents as on February 2008)

- **Pradhan:** Pasang Sherpa (ex)
- **Upa Pradhan:** Late Danraj Century (ex)
- **Executive Assistant:** Shyam Sundas. He also functions as the Secretary
- **Secretary:** The post is lying vacant since 2004
- **Job Assistant:** Balbir Yonzon
- **Gram Sahayak:** Alex Subba
- **Karmi:** Amar Singh Rai
  Meera Sharma
135. Samtar GP is divided into eight wards: (1) Gairi Goan (2) Karbi Goan (3) Lower Dara Goa (4) Upper Dara Goa (5) Upper Dong (6) Lower Dong and Najok Forest Village (7) Chotta Suruk (8) Bara Suruk.

136. The majority of population in Samtar comprise of the Lepchas who are tribals and the Bhujels who fall in the OBC category. A description of the Lepcha community has been made in Note # 8. The Bhujels belong to the Hindu-Nepali community. In the olden days the Bhujels were known to be the carriers of the doli (carriers of the palanquin). They are not scheduled caste but above them.

Lepchas are mostly found in the Upper and Lower Dong villages. Najok Forest Village has a majority of Bujel population. Chotta and Bara Suruk have both the Lepchas and Bhujels. The Lepchas mostly living around Suruk are Christians.

137. Besides the Lepcha and the Bhujel community, the rest of the population belongs to the general list of Mangars and Chettris and Scheduled Caste Hindu-Nepali community.

138. The Library for the people of Samtar is situated at Suruk and is known as Suruk Gramin Library. There is no sub veterinary center but there is a dispensary at Upper Dara goan. Another dispensary is also run by the sisters of St Joseph Convent.

139. The dearth of electricity compelled some of the people at Samtar to use solar energy to light up their houses. Around ten to fifteen families use this system. The majority being poor cannot afford as it involves expenditure. The rays of the sun heat the solar plate which is placed on the roof which in turn charges the battery which gives light. At the most the people can enjoy two to three hours of solar light. However during the rainy season, they face difficulties.

140. Samtar has started two road projects under NREGS- Lower Suruk to Dong and Gairi Goan to Zero Point. They stand incomplete due to the same problems as faced by the other GPs.

141. The local people particularly of Najok Forest Village, Dong, Chotta Suruk and Bara Suruk are dependent on the trolley system as their means of transport. They prefer this system though risky due to the bad conditions of
the road as well as the extra money and extra one hour ride to Kalimpong. The people use a wooden box attached to a hook which in turn is attached to a thick wire suspended from one end of the Teesta River to the other end. A rope has been connected to the box that has to be pulled manually for the box to go from one end to the other. It holds a capacity of four persons and Rs.10/- is charged per ride. After a two minutes walk they reach the highway from where they can avail vehicles for Kalimpong and other places.

142. A small community hall lies next to Samtar GP office but badly in need of repair. Another but bigger hall has been constructed next to Najok Forest Village. There is also a school hall at Suruk which is used for all social programmes.

143. Samtar has three Samaj Ghars: (1) Saejum Samaj Ghar (2) Nirmal Hirday Samaj Ghar (3) Prerna Sewa Samiti

144. Samtar has three Youth Clubs: (1) Agni Club (2) Chotta Suruk Youth Club (3) Young Christians Club

145. People with a steady source of income are included in the APL category. Parameters like employment both private and government, land-owners, income from business etc are taken into consideration while preparing the list. An individual must have a minimum level of income necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living.

146. The administrative body of Samtar GP is as follows (with incumbents as on February, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pradhan</td>
<td>Prakash Dahal (ex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upa-Pradhan</td>
<td>Philomena Lepcha (ex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
<td>Lying vacant since 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Dinesh Sharma. He also functions as the Executive Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Assistant</td>
<td>Gopal Kumar Sarki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sahayk</td>
<td>Pranay Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karmi</td>
<td>Prem Singh Dahal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chomit Lepcha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
147. Seokbir has been divided into five wards: (1) Primtam (2) Yolk (3) Rangbull (4) Khani (5) Chiukhim

148. The Lepchas and Tamangs who belong to the tribal category are dominant in the area. The Brahmin community also resides in the area particularly in the lower areas where land is fertile and irrigation is easy from Relli River. Pradhans also reside in Seokbir and belong to the Hindu-Nepali community. Their descendents are originally from the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. Migration and marriage has brought them to this hilly region including Sikkim.

149. Sulabh Pradhan is Gram Sahayak of Seokbir GP. The statement was noted during interactions with him at the Seokbir GP on September 02, 2008. Age: 36, Gender: Male, Education level: BA.

150. The library of Seokbir is known as Seokbir Khani Library. They also have a dispensary that opens twice a week.

151. A sub veterinary center for Seokbir seems to operate from the GP office itself. Sunil Tamang who is an adhoc employee comes from Kalimpong to distribute medicines for the animals. The visits does not exceed thrice a month.

152. Seokbir has four Samaj Ghars: (1) Khamri Samaj Ghar (2) Fabulo Sewa Samiti (3) Sai Nath Samaj Ghar (4) Seokbir Samaj Ghar.

153. Seokbir has three Youth Clubs: (1) Primtam Youth Club (2) Relli Youth Club (3) Yuva Club

154. The Seokbir GP body is as follows (with incumbents as on February, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pradhan</td>
<td>Harimaya Pradhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upa-Pradhan</td>
<td>Til Bahadur Rana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
<td>Ranjit Rai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Dhan Kumar Chettri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Assistant</td>
<td>The post has been lying vacant since 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sahayak</td>
<td>Sulabh Pradhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karmi</td>
<td>Tara BaralBal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Krishna Pradhan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
155. Lower Ecchey has nine wards: (1) Thapa Goan (2) Lower Walling Goan (3) Upper Walling Goan 4) Lower Kaflae (5) Upper Kaflae (6) Rai Goan (7) Shiva Mandir Goan (8) Lower Ecchey (9) Sanman goan

156. *Nari Dudh Udhpadhan Kendra* is a society formed by the villagers themselves. It is based on membership comprising of women members. They bring the milk to this center which in turn goes to the Himul Center at Kalimpong. A certain amount is fixed per litre for every litre collected.

157. The Brahmin community largely dominates the area. The rest are mostly people from the general list like the Chettris and Mangars. Rais are also present who belong to the OBC list.

158. There is an absence of a junior high school and a secondary school at Lower Ecchey. Most of the students walk up-hill for 1 ½ km to Gairi Bash senior secondary school that is located at its neighbouring Pudung GP. Some go to Kalimpong which is around 6km. Students also walk for 2km to attain Chandra Maya junior high school.

159. The GP lacks a dispensary so the people use the dispensary of Pudung and Upper Ecchey GP. The lack of a sub veterinary center has compelled the people to go Kalimpong where too service is poor. They have to buy medicine for their animals when it is supposed to be free. There was a Library for the people but for some unknown reason it closed in 2007.

160. Lower Ecchey has four Samaj Ghars: (1) Sibsagar Samaj (2) Gram Seva Sangh (3) Hit Kari Samaj (4) Sai Samaj

161. Lower Ecchey has two Youth Clubs: (1) Middle Ecchey Youth Club (2) Mandir Area Youth Club

162. NREGS started with two schemes. One project was undertaken for the road to reach Lower Walling Goan the most remote village. The other project was from Shiv Mandir to Thapa Goan. It too stands incomplete due to the same problems but the payments of the people for the work done are complete.
163. Lower Ecchey GP constitutes as follows (with incumbents as on February, 2008)

**Pradhan:** Nanda Kumar Kumai  
**Upa-Pradhan:** Fadma Parajuli  
**Executive Assistant:** Bimal Bahadur Rasaily  
**Secretary:** Deepak Kumar Kharga  
**Job Assistant:** The post has been lying vacant since 2005  
**Gram Sahayk:** Kiran Archarya  
**Karmee:** Bhim Kumar Sunwar  
**Ogaan Lepcha.**

164. BPL is an economic benchmark used by the government of India to identify the economically disadvantaged individuals and households who are in need of government assistance and aid. It is determined using various parameters which vary from state to state and within states. People with less land, absence of steady source of income, landless labourers etc are some of the factor taken to segregate the people in this list.

165. Pig is a common animal domesticated by the people in the Hills. It is eaten mostly by the tribal communities like the Subbas, Lepcha, Bhutia and Tamangs. The Brahmin community does not include the pig in their livestock. Since they are the priestly class in the Hindu-Nepali community they consider the pig unclean. It is against their religion. Thus, they do not rear the pig and neither do they eat.

166. *Dhara* is the local term for a natural spring. The water usually is clean and is used for all domestic purpose that includes drinking. Dhars are mostly seen in the villages. Most of the time the water from these dhara become the lifeline for the local rural people.