CHAPTER IV

CHANGING ETHNO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS: MOVEMENTS FOR SEPARATION FROM BENGAL.

The task of nation building is an uphill task for the elites of modern nations. With the increase in modernization in India, there has been the growth of market, industry and commerce. Capital, technology, industry, commerce and labour have moved from one region to another, cutting across ethnic diversity. Simultaneously, there has been politicization of ethnicity and ethnic groups. The ethnic minorities within particular states have become more aware of their rights and privileges. One of the major reasons for politicization of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts is the relative and perceived sense of economic deprivation by a given ethnic group.

India is a federation, but the federation was not formed because of voluntary agreement amongst the states. Therefore, no state has the right to secede from it nor can they ask for right of self determination. India offers the perfect example of unity in diversity where various groups in spite of differing in language, culture, tradition, customs and religions live together and belong to the "Indian identity." There are cultural and religious minority groups but the state gives them equal rights to protect and promote their educational and cultural interests (Article 26-30). There is a provision for protective discrimination for the weaker sections of the society, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Part X Articles 30, 46,244,244A and 335). This was mainly provided to help them do away with social and economic backwardness.

As it was mentioned in the previous Chapter, the Constituent Assembly was initially against formation of states on linguistic identity. But the movement in 1953 in Andhra demanding separate state on basis of separate language brought about the linguistic re-organization of states. The States Re-organization Commission was made supporting this principle in 1956. It was this that encouraged various groups of specific cultural markers and ethnic identities to seek political expression and legitimacy. Each state began to be identified with a particular group with a specific ethnic identity but within
such linguistic states there can be other minority groups who do not fall under this purview. They feel they are dominated by others and the result is a feeling of alienation. It is then that these groups, usually the minority groups, find it difficult to assimilate, further increasing their feelings of marginalization. It is then that they put forth their demands.

As long as the demands are within the Constitutional framework, such demands by minorities are legitimate in a liberal democratic state. Only when such demands escalate into armed conflict or when such groups ask for separation or secession, does it attain a matter of concern, as far as the national integrity of the state is concerned.

Darjeeling, one of the tiniest districts of West Bengal, consists of the majority Nepali community. But in comparison to West Bengal, the state to which it belongs and the ethnic identity of the state being Bengali, the Nepalis are in minority. Out of the nearly 50 million population in West Bengal, only one million live in Darjeeling District. The Nepalis are the unassimilated minority group in West Bengal. The people have always looked upon themselves different from Bengal and Bengalis physically, culturally, traditionally and linguistically. This coupled with the relative sense of political and economic deprivation, the Nepalis in Darjeeling craved for their own state and a separate identity i.e. the Indian Gorkhas. Their ethnic demand is for separation from Bengal but very much for their inclusion within India.

From the time Darjeeling was ceded to the British as a gift in 1835, it has changed its status several times. The District was first included in the Rajshahi Division. In October 1905, it was made a part of the Bhagalpur division of Bihar because the language and script of the majority of the people in this area was similar to that of Bihar rather than Bengal. In March 1912, it was again transferred to the Rajshahi Division. It became a Non-Regulatory District soon after that from 1870 and the Acts and Regulations applicable elsewhere would not apply to the district unless specifically extended. From 1874, it became a Scheduled area. Under the GOI Act 1919, it became a backward tract. The district was not required to send a representative to the Legislative Council. Under the GOI Act 1935 it became a partially excluded area until Indian independence in 1947. All these details of the treatment of
Darjeeling require special importance because the demand for special status, together with the demand for autonomous administrative unit were the focal points before Indian independence in 1947. From 1947, it became a general district of Bengal.

Darjeeling occupies a strategic position, with its borders touching Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. The Britishers knew that it was the main gateway for trade to the whole of Central Asia. Besides that, they wanted to make it as their main recruiting centre. They had found amongst the Nepalis, lacking strong nationalist feelings that were found amongst the people of the plains. It also became the main recruiting centre for the Gorkha Battalions. Moreover with the growth of Tea gardens and tea business becoming commercial from 1856 onwards, there was a huge inflow of Nepali migrants, majority of whom worked as tea garden workers or agricultural labourers. The commercial activities of the area also attracted a large number of people from the plains. The Biharis and Marwaris soon took control of the business activities with their strong business acumen. The retail and wholesale shops came under them. The Bengalis with their legendary intelligence and superior culture, soon occupied the upper echelons in administration as officers, clerks, teachers and other important professions. With such conditions and with the Nepalis occupying the lower rungs of work, it was only natural for the hillmen to feel a sense of deprivation when compared to the plainsmen or the "madhesias."

The hill people comprising the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis knew that they had to separate from the domination of Bengal. Even though there was earlier resentment of the Lepchas and Bhutias against the Nepalis, they knew they had to stay together in peace and harmony. As early as 1641, a Tripartite Agreement of Lo-Men-Tsongsum had been signed wherein the Lhopas (Bhutias), Monpas (Lepchas) and Tsongs (Limbos) were considered as one ethnic conglomerate. "The King (Lhopas) should be considered the father, the Lepchas (Monpas) the mother and the Limbus (Tsongs) the sons of the same family, forming a council called Lhomontsong." 1. This had been formed mainly to counteract the growth of Nepalis. But now, they knew they had to stay as one unit of "hillmen" against the growth of "plainsmen."
has already been mentioned in the preceding Chapter, it was the Nepali language which bound all the hill communities together.

Even though the Britishers wanted to maintain the relative isolation of the Darjeeling area and wanted to keep the people of the hills immune from the political agitation of Indian nationalism in the plains, there was a gradual growth of ethno-centrism amongst them. The spread of education had given rise to a number of elites, who tried to bring a feeling of political and social consciousness amongst the people of the hills. In the beginning of the 20th Century, various organisations had been formed like the Gorkha Samiti in 1906. Though this was a socio-cultural organization with library and theatre facilities, it had helped to arouse social and political consciousness amongst the people. Along with the growth of literary movement for Nepali cultural identity, ethnic exclusiveness was expressed through demands for autonomy in Darjeeling.

**POLITICS OF INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE DARJEELING HILLS AND DEMANDS FOR AUTONOMY BEFORE INDEPENDENCE**

Even though the Britishers had wanted to keep the people of the Darjeeling Hills away from politics, political awareness was slowly growing amongst them. This was evident from the beginning of the 20th Century. In 1907 itself, the hillsmen placed a memorandum before the Morley-Minto Reforms asking for a separate administrative status. Right from this time, the demand that was most prominent was the separation from Bengal.

The ethnic demand of the Nepali speaking population of the Darjeeling region for a separate administrative set up goes back to 1917. It was a little before 1917, that the Hillmen's Association had been formed consisting of the three ethnic groups, the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. They had led a delegation under Sardar Bahadur Ladenla, K.B.Chetri, Dr.Yensingh Siting and others. They had placed a memorandum before Montague, the Secretary of the State of India and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India on 8th November, 1917. The very first lines of the memorandum, "We, the undersigned Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis, representing the opinion of the Darjeeling District gratefully respond..." The placement of these communities
becomes important. Lepchas are placed first; the Bhutias are the second category and the Nepalis in the rear.2.

They pointed out that in all aspects they differ from the plains of Bengal. Geographically they laid down that Darjeeling district is mountainous and separate from the Bengal plains. Racially, they are of Mongoloid origin and are more akin to people beyond the Himalayas than those of India. Historically too they differed from those from the plains' area and said that the Darjeeling district except the Kalimpong sub-division was gifted by or annexed from the kingdom of Sikkim in the 19th Century. Kalimpong sub-division and the Dooars were part of Bhutan and became a part of Darjeeling district in 1865. Religiously too, they regarded themselves different from the plains. Even though a number of Nepali castes are classified as Hindus, they are quite distinct from the people of the plains.

They asked for separate administrative status but compared to the demands of 1907, the area demand was larger. "Our humble petition therefore, is that in laying down plans for the future, the government should aim at the creation of a separate unit comprising the present Darjeeling District with the portion of Jalpaiguri District which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865."3.

They further added it would be better to form NEFP and include Assam Dooars and territories east of Bhutan to the district because of their affinities to each other. They also said that they have abstained from all types of political agitation and "have treated the movement of Home Rule with neglect and even disfavour".4. They said this mainly to get a favourable response from the British Government. The Hillmen's Association was an elitist organisation. It consisted of elite classes of both Nepalis and Bhutias.5 Its members were extremely loyal to the Britishers, who also encouraged these upper strata of Darjeeling hillmen to voice their demands for separation from Bengal "in order to insulate Nepalis from the militant anti-British nationalist movement.".6.

The Hillmen's Association was formed mainly to safeguard and promote the legitimate interests of the hill people in the sphere of politics. It was under the able leadership of Hari Prasad and Ladenla. But it was the
Nepalis who dominated the association and minority communities like the Lepchas and Bhutias felt concerned at a number of occasions.

In March 1920, the Hillmen's Association joined two other British associations namely, the European Association and the Darjeeling Planters Association. They also laid down that Darjeeling District including Jalpaiguri District should be excluded from Bengal. However, there were people who had other views. The Kalimpong Samiti under Paras Mani Pradhan, Gorkhas under Sardar Bhimlal Dewan and People's Association, Darjeeling were against the exclusion of Darjeeling from Bengal province. They felt that there would be continuous backwardness in the Darjeeling District, if it was excluded from the rest of Bengal.

In 1930, the Hillmen's Association of Kalimpong, Darjeeling Officer's Association and Kurseong Gorkha Library, the three native associations laid a memorandum to Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of the State of India, to treat Darjeeling as an independent administrative unit. It was laid down that even if the Gorkhas are a minority in the province of British India, they are not a negligible element. They suggested that the District of Darjeeling where the Gorkhas dominate should be excluded from Bengal and be treated as an independent administrative unit, with the Deputy Commissioner as an administrator. This administrative unit of Darjeeling should be placed directly under the Government of India. The Governor of Bengal, acting as the agent of the Governor General as in the case of excluded areas recommended by the Simon Commission. The Government however did not oblige to their demand and the District was made into a partially excluded area instead in 1935. The likely objective of declaring Darjeeling as an excluded area was to insulate the Nepalis from extraneous influence from Bengal and safeguard the huge capital invested in the Tea industry in Darjeeling. Moreover, cracks had already appeared amongst them also because of the Government's decision to introduce Nepali as a medium of instruction in the hills. The repeated demands of the hillmen for separation from Bengal furthered the cleavage between the Nepalis and Bengalis in the plains.
Since it had become a partially excluded area, it could send a representative to the Bengal Provincial Legislature. In the hills the election was contested between S.W.Ladenla, G.T.Sitting, D.S.Gurung, Rai Saheb Hari Prasad Pradhan.10

The elections were won by D.S.Gurung. Earlier, Ladenla after retirement from Government service wanted to get elected in the Provincial Legislature. For this, he knew that he needed the support of Nepalis. A union also had been formed in 1934 called the Hill People's Social Union. The main slogan was "Ne-bu-la" for bringing unity between Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas. A bilingual monthly journal, "Nebula" was also brought out under the editorship of K.D.Pradhan, from Mani Printing Press, Kalimpong.

D. S. Gurung was the lone representative from the hills in the Bengal Legislature. It was said that, "the hill people as a minority in the province under the new Constitution have not failed to realise the drawbacks and disadvantages of the present arrangement. They are now apprehensive that their social solidarity and their existence as a community is being threatened with serious disruptions owing to various factors coming to play, chiefly the realization by many of them that their (hill people) welfare is now dependent on the exigencies to party politics in the Bengal Assembly and their utter helplessness to make their voice heard."11

Later the All India Nepali-Bhutia-Lepcha Association had also been formed. But the Bhutias had not liked the term "All India" and wanted something that was Darjeeling oriented. It was mainly because of this, that the Bhutias had walked away. It was to bring the security of the Gorkhas in India, that the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) was formed on May 15th, 1943 with Dambar Singh Gurung as the undisputed leader of the Gorkhas.12 The resilience of the AIGL became a permanent expression of independent India. "It became a constant reminder of the fact that ethnic contradiction continued to persist in Indian society."13

The AIGL had various aims and objectives, namely, amongst others to organise and consolidate all the Gorkhas spread throughout India and elsewhere as an organic whole, to further the Nepali language and to establish the political rights of the Gorkhas in India. Initially, the various ethnic
groups in Darjeeling like the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis were known as the hillmen but later they were bracketed under the umbrella term, 'Gorkhas.' The Lepchas and Bhutias all spoke the Nepali language apart from their mother tongues. "The demand for protection for Hill people had become after 1934 the demand for preservation of Gorkhas as a nation."14

THE SCENARIO IN DARJEELING IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

During the II nd World War, there was economic crisis all over. Its effect was felt in Darjeeling too. The problem of famine was widespread in the Darjeeling Hills. It was during this time that the Communist Party of India (CPI) representative was sent to Darjeeling. Ratanlal Brahmin was a social worker and quite a prominent figure among the tea garden workers. It was he who later formed the Communist Party in Darjeeling in 1943, with the help of Sushil Chatterjee. Later other prominent persons like Ganeshlal Subba and Bhadrabahadur Hamal also joined the CPI. Brahmin cleverly spread the communist ideas amongst the tea garden workers by exploiting the latent dissatisfaction of the Nepalis against the Bengalis. It was under the Communist Party that the tea garden movement started. It was mainly because of his huge popularity and the Communist Party’s continuous demands for regional autonomy of Darjeeling District, that he could win the elections for Legislative Assembly in 1946.

D. S. Gurung (AIGL) won from Darjeeling General Constituency and R. L. Brahmin from Darjeeling Sardar. In September 1945, a separate Darjeeling Tea Garden Workers Union was also formed.15

The Darjeeling District Committee of the CPI, led by Ratan Lal Brahmin put forth a memorandum on the 6th of April, 1947. It laid down that the three contiguous areas of Darjeeling District, the feudal states of South Sikkim and Nepal be formed into one single zone as a sovereign state called Gorkhasthan, to safeguard the interests of the Gorkhas, who were considered an oppressed minority. They further said that "the principle of proportional representation must be introduced, so that the smallest minorities like the Gorkhas do not go unrepresented."16.
In the post-independence period, there were more demands for autonomy for Darjeeling. Earlier, the president of the AIGL, D.S. Gurung had said that the Gorkhas had helped the British to conquer India and Burma. During all the years of political disturbances beginning from the incident of Jallainwala Bagh in 1919 to disturbances of 1942, they have been named butchers, "but they have remained steadfastly loyal to the British cause and have done their duty and obeyed orders." 17.

Various Gorkhas were awarded the Victoria Cross for their bravery shown during the IInd World War. Others were awarded Indian Distinguished Service Medals, others, the Indian Order of Merit. Many Gorkhas had also joined the Azad Hind Fauj. Durga Malla, Captain Dal Bahadur Thapa had both faced the guillotine for their motherland India. Dal Bahadur Giri was one of the bravest Gorkhas and for whom, the father of the Nation, Gandhiji himself had paid homage. Ram Singh Thakuri had composed the music for Rabindranath Tagore's national anthem "Jana gana."

Ganeshtal Subba, a prominent political activist had assured that the Gorkhas had been made pawns by the British Government to keep down the freedom movement. But under the changed circumstances, the Gorkhas would be the best defenders of India's sovereignty. It was during this time, when the Communist parties and the AIGL were making various demands, that the Hillmen's Association became active again under the leadership of Rup Narayan Sinha. He proposed the formation of the district into a Chief Commissioner's Province. However the Congress party, AIGL and CPI were averse to the proposal.

Later in 1949, R.N. Sinha and Randhir Subba (AIGL) demanded the formation of Uttarakhand Pradesh, consisting of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Sikkim. The Gorkha League had always harped on the theme of a separate political status for the hill people, starting with the demand that the Indian domiciled Gorkhas should be recognised as a community of Indian Gorkhas. Randhir Subba had said that 600,000 Gorkhas would have no future in a state having 20-25 million Bengalis.

In the 1952 Vidhan Sabha elections in Bengal, from Darjeeling, three members from AIGL, one from Communist party and one from Congress
party became victorious. Two MLAs, Shiv Kumar Rai (AIGL) and Tenzing Wangdi (Congress) even became Ministers in the B.C.Roy Ministry.

In 1954, the CPI demanded the creation of Regional Autonomy for the hill areas. Earlier they had stood for the formation of Gorkhasthan. In 1955, the Trade Union movement in Darjeeling was historic in the sense that demands made by workers for bonus and maternity leave were met.18. The AIGL wanted to maintain its middle class base and tried to reach out to trade unions because of the competition with the Communists.19. In 1962 (Indo-China War), there were two groups, pro and anti-China. In 1964, CPM was divided into CPI and CPI (M). In 1966-67, the United Front Government was formed in Bengal and the Congress lost. R.L. Brahmin remained with the CPM. It was emphasised that both the Bengalis and the Nepalis were to fight together against the centre.

The District Congress Committee (it included persons like N.B.Gurung, Theodore Manaen, I.B.Rai, K.B.Chettri and others) demanded for Hill Autonomy. The AIGL was demanding for District Autonomy and the CPI (M) for Regional Autonomy. With the declaration of Emergency in 1975 and the formation of the Left Front Ministry, AIGL was still demanding segregation mainly for security, development and justice for the Nepalis, a linguistic minority in West Bengal. Moreover, another important twist which further made the people in this area clamour for separation was the inclusion of Sikkim as the 22nd state of India on 16th May, 1975, having linguistic and cultural affinities with the people of Darjeeling.

The CPI (M) introduced a resolution in 1978 and then in September 1981 in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly for regional autonomy of the three hill sub-divisions but the centre rejected both proposals. Ananda Pathak, CPI (M) MP presented the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1985 on 7th March, 1986 to the Lok Sabha asking for autonomous region under Article 244C. "Parliament may by law form within the state of West Bengal, an autonomous region comprising of such areas, as may be specified of the district of Darjeeling and neighbouring district, where the Nepali speaking people are in majority and create for such administration of such region a
District Council to be constituted in the manner specified under Article 244D with powers and functions as may be specified by law under Article 244E.”

The proposal was however rejected. It was said that Article 244A states autonomy only for Scheduled and tribal areas. It was emphasised that Darjeeling is not a scheduled area nor are the Nepalis, tribals.

The Nepalis had been concerned about their cultural identity a number of times. Even persons like Sardar Patel had laid down that people living in the Northern and North-Eastern parts of India, had no loyalty or devotion to India. In fact it has been said that Darjeeling and Kalimpong have pro-Mongoloid prejudices. Morarji Desai had even called the Nepalis foreigners and Nepali, a foreign language.

Another political party had also been formed in the Darjeeling hills, the Pranta Parishad. It had been formed at a convention in Sukhiaopokhri on 8th August, 1980. It was formed by former Gorkha League and Congress leaders and included I.B.Rai, Madan Thapa, Madan Tamang, Gajendra Gurung, Kumar Bhatia, Prem Thapa and others. It demanded the formation of a separate state Gorkhaland "comprising of the Nepali speaking areas of the Dooars in Jalpaiguri district and the whole of Darjeeling district in accordance with Article 3(C) of the Constitution.”

They believed in the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland but operating within the framework of the Indian Constitution. However the party soon declined mainly because of weak organisation. By the early 80’s, the Congress was shrinking in the hills. The AIGL also lost its former giant status it once enjoyed in the hills with the death of one of its most prominent leaders, Deo Prakash Rai on January 5th, 1981. The party had split into two under two leaders namely, Dhimal Gurung and P.T.Lama.

As there was a political vacuum, the Darjeeling Hills were waiting for the emergence of another leader and another party. The atmosphere was thus conducive for the advent of Subhash Ghisingh. He had a brief stint in the army and was moved by the plight of the workers in the tea gardens of Darjeeling. He had written various novels including "Kopila, "Nilo Choli," Anjali," "Aalo Chihan,", "Parishiti," "Jawani Ko Hatya," "Kalo Mukura," "Uu Mari Are," "Phool Maya," "Khaha Chot," "Akhiri Raat," "Mane," "Lungkhum
Camp," "Khokro Manche," and others. He had launched a new organization called Neelo Jhanda in 1968. He had formed Prantiya Morcha in 1979 and on April 5th, 1980 formed the Gorkha National Liberation Front or the GNLF. This would fight for the identity of the Gorkhas and a separate land, Gorkhaland. He had published twenty-one books but later he believed that the "Khukuri" is mightier than the pen. The flag adopted for it would be green in colour, having the emblem of the Khukuri (the Gorkha's traditional weapon). The three golden stars on it depicting goals, the four golden horizontal stripes standing for equality, freedom, brotherhood and opportunity.

THE GNLF AND THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT: AN ETHNO-LINGUISTIC MOVEMENT

For six years after its formation in 1980, the GNLF carried on its activities peacefully. It laid before it various objectives like (a) Creation of a separate homeland for the Nepalis in India, (b) Recognition of the Nepali language in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution, (c) Abrogation of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950 to remove uncertainty in the Nepali minds, (d) Employment to the sons of the soil, (e) To set up an Indian Gorkha Regiment Troops. Ghisingh wanted to save the whole settled Gorkhas from the unnecessary stigma of being branded as reciprocal people and subjects of Nepal.

The GNLF desired boundary of Gorkhaland (proposed map of Gorkhaland given at the back) would comprise Darjeeling District which would include Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, consisting of a majority of Nepali speakers. It would extend from the North-Eastern edge of the strategic chicken's neck on the outskirts of Siliguri to Kumargang in the east on the West Bengal-Assam border. Nearly 2/3rd of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar would form part of the proposed Gorkhaland, which together with a predominantly Nepali Sikkim would surround Bhutan from the south and the west. Therefore a large part of Jalpaiguri including Dooars and Coochbehar were also included.
The Demographic composition according to language in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Siliguri is given below:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Nepali Speaking</th>
<th>% of Bengali Speaking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
<td>58.40%</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>09.69%</td>
<td>61.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siliguri Sub-Div.</td>
<td>07.74%</td>
<td>51.88%</td>
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</tbody>
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The Indo-Nepal Treaty 1950 laid down that only those of Nepali nationals settled in India prior to the date of signature on the treaty would be granted Indian citizenship. But there has been a flow of migrants and it is difficult to distinguish between Indian Gorkhas and the Nepalese i.e. citizens of Nepal. Ghisingh thus put the blame on Article VII, which laid that the Government of India and Nepal grants to the nationals of the other country, on reciprocal basis, the same privileges in matters of residence, ownership of property, participation of trade and commerce and movement. Ghisingh had therefore called for its abrogation.

The Gorkhaland movement was an outcome of economic deprivation and negligence. It was laid down that the three sub-divisions of Kalimpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling occupy an area of 2417 sq. km. However the cultivable land was only 14% of the total area when compared to 65% of the total area of West Bengal.

The area was known for its three T's namely Tea, Timber and Tourism but had remained neglected. Tourism brought about 25 crores of revenue but failed to emerge as an efficient employment generating industry because of poor infrastructural management. About 7.2% of the total area is under Tea cultivation and produces 12 million kgs of tea, earning around 32 crores of foreign exchange for the country. But it was laid down that 40-50 million kgs of mixed spurious tea are sold under the charm of the legend of Darjeeling Tea. The number of profitable gardens, accounting to 50,000 regular and 30,000 irregular workers had come down to 70 from 102, rendering many
jobless. It was alleged that the West Bengal Tea Development Corporation, "by sheer mismanagement is allowing five of the best tea gardens in the hills to go to seed." It was further said that the profit of the tea industry is re-invested somewhere else, thus creating economic crisis. It was laid down that the tea gardens in the public sector were mismanaged and the main objective in the private sector was to make profits only. Moreover, all activities were in the hands of the plainsmen, who always had the fear of being made to quit the hills and therefore did not plough the profits in the region.

Forests comprise a major component of the Hill environment. It was alleged that the West Bengal Forest Development was doing everything to finish the forest resources in Darjeeling. Considering the hydro-power potentiality of the Darjeeling Hills, it is estimated to be around 2000MW. But the potential generating capacity is only around 45MW. This is ironical because the first hydro-power station of Asia was built at Sidrepong in 1896.

Moreover, Darjeeling always suffered because of water shortage. It was during the rule of the Britishers that two lakes, the Senchal lakes were built having a total capacity of 33 million gallons in 1910 and 1930, when the population was only 10,000. The same lakes supplied water to the population of Darjeeling, which had increased about ten folds.

It was further alleged that amongst the Nepalis, there are no IAS, IPS or IFS Officers. No quotas are kept for them either in the Medical, Engineering and Technological institutions. The University, Medical College, milk co-operatives, industries and information services were all set up in the Siliguri plains, employing people from there. In order to get employment in the plains, it was imperative for the Nepali speakers from the hills to know the language of the majority community in Bengal i.e Bengali. But it was not compulsory for the Bengalis to know the Nepali language when they got employment in the hills.

Numerically too, the Nepalis numbered only one million compared to the 50 million in Bengal. Politically too, in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly of 294 members, the Darjeeling Hills sent only 4 MLAs and 1 MP which is shared with the plains of Siliguri. Moreover, the political wave in Darjeeling has always blown in the opposite direction when compared to the
National Government. For example in 1952, the first general elections in Darjeeling, in all the constituencies, the seats were won by AIGL, but it was the Congress which formed the state government. In 1967 4th general elections in Darjeeling, in two constituencies, the Congress and Communist were victorious and 2 were won by AIGL.

In Bengal, a United Front Ministry was formed which was a coalition of 14 different parties mostly of the left headed by Ajoy Mukherji. Even Deo Prakash Rai of AIGL was made Cabinet Minister. The Congress formed the Government at the Centre. In 1971-72, 5th general elections, the Parliamentary seat was won by R.L. Brahmin of the Communist party from Darjeeling, the Congress Government was formed in Bengal by S.S. Ray and Congress was there in the centre. In 1977 general elections, the Darjeeling seat was won by K.B. Chettri of Congress, whereas the CPI (M) government was there in the state and the Janata party in the Centre. In 1980, 1982 and 1985 elections, the Darjeeling seat was won by Ananda Pathak, Tamang Dawa Lama and Ananda Pathak again of CPM respectively. The CPM government was there in the State and Congress in the Centre.

Earlier, organisations like Pranta Parishad and All India Nepali Bhasha Samiti had aroused the political consciousness of the people. The All India Nepali Bhasha Samiti mainly worked for the Constitutional recognition of the Nepali language and had given economic issues an ethnic connotation. The Pranta Parishad concentrated on seeking statehood for Darjeeling but had a fragile political base. It consisted of a few intellectuals and former political stalwarts. The ordinary people had stayed away from it. Thus the earlier political forces lacked a leader who could command the respect of all. Subhash Ghisingh emerged at this appropriate time.

It was also during this same time that around 7000-10,000 Nepalis were evicted out from Meghalaya in February-March 1986. Even before this, in 1982-1985, 6683 Nepalis were detected as foreigners and 6,481 were expelled from Meghalaya. In fact it was in Assam, that the All Assam Students' Union and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) who were the "first to raise the bogey of a large scale influx of Bengalis from Bangladesh and Nepalis from Nepal to Assam."25. The Khasi Students Union
(1979-1981) had earlier evicted the Bengalis from the Khasi Hills. Now they targeted the Nepalis who worked in the coal mines in Meghalaya. The evicted Nepalis were brought in trucks and deposited in the Assam-Bengal border, from where they were sent to Nepal. No political party took up their cause. Ghisingh said that the Nepalis in Darjeeling would face the same threat to their security, if their identity is not clearly marked as the Indian Gorkhas. The implication being that they would never have true security until and unless they have their own state.

The turmoil in Darjeeling hills had been caused because of accumulation of political and economic grievances but at this juncture, the ethnic factor was used for other causes. The Gorkhaland movement was both a regional and ethnic movement, where the two aspects reinforced each other and influenced balance of power in the hills of Darjeeling District. Calling for the abrogation of Article VII of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship was one of the tactics of Ghisingh to mobilize the followers in Darjeeling. For he knew that, "blowing up only the economic issues would limit his influence in the Darjeeling hills only and not attract the Centre's intervention."26

He said that according to the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, Indian Gorkhas have not been made bonafide citizens of India but just hired tenants. Being a glib speaker and gifted orator, he went from place to place, telling people of their lost identity. There had been a growing belief in the Darjeeling District that neither the Central nor the West Bengal Government has done much for the region. Actual developmental efforts had not been commensurate with the needs of the people and large areas remained backward. The feeling of economic discrimination was heightened also by cultural backwardness stemming from what the Gorkhas perceived as neglect of their language. Ghisingh had to work hard especially amongst the tea gardens, which was the main bastion of the CPI (M). The Left Front Government of Bengal had failed to realize that the weak, docile and peace loving Nepali speaking people of Darjeeling could no longer remain contented under "colonial Bengal" as they suffered a sense of loss and "internal colonialism" under it. Ghisingh went from village to village telling people that
they were Gorkhas first and CPI (M) or Congress supporters second. "Land first, bread and water later" became the war cry of the Gorkhas. The issue of ethnicity and identity were used to mobilize the simple minded Nepalis and this emotional issue drew people in lots to the Gorkhaland movement." It was the fear of losing their identity as an ethnic group that compelled the Nepalis to fight for a home within home."27.

Similar movements on the basis of narrow ethnic or communal interests had led to the domination of an elite group among those communities. Ghisingh represented this growing elite power. Moreover, a growing educated middle class Gorkha elite had been looking for opportunities and recognition, which it was able to find in the demand being made by Ghisingh. Thus it can be said at this juncture, that the middle class can mobilize the masses on ethnic lines for their own advantage. Frustration and deprivation moved the people to ask for a separate state of Gorkhaland, which would no longer be under Bengal. Like the Punjab agitation, the Gorkhaland movement, even though the cry for economic emancipation was very much there, the cry for "political identity" and due status of the Gorkha community was manifested."The GNLF harped on the evil and perfidious Bengali giant that was gradually devouring the Gorkha's identity. The time had come to protect the Gorkhas and fulfill their political aspirations in a land where Bengalis would cease to be their masters."28. Thus the primordial ties had become the binding force of the mass base of the movement against structural contradictions.

INTER-ETHNIC POLITICS: GNLF AND ITS ACTIVITIES

The Gorkhaland Agitation was the ultimate cause of feeling of relative deprivation, language threat to identity of the Nepalis, transferred anger and the feeling of "internal colonialism" under Bengal. In the field study conducted, respondents gave their various views for the emergence of the movement.15% of the respondents felt that the movement was mainly because of the insecurity amongst the hill people. 5% felt that it was for better job opportunities, none felt it was because of law and order problems.
A large number of them i.e. 48% laid down that the main issue of the movement was because of identity crisis, whereas 39.1% agreed that all the above factors were responsible for bringing the movement.

But the expulsion of thousands of Nepalis, following the anti-outsiders agitation in Meghalaya in April, 1986 was the final straw. Many Nepalis were evicted because they did not possess the Restricted Areas Permit. They had failed to see the importance of the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty, which gives all rights to people of both sides i.e. Nepal and India, except the right to vote. In Darjeeling before this on March 13th, 1986, a joint meeting of GNLF with its youth, women and students had been held. In this meeting, a 11 point programme had been drawn which included, observing black flag day on April 13th, 1986 to protest against the crimes committed by the Centre and the West Bengal Government, to conduct 72 hours Gorkhaland bandh on the 12th, 13th and 14th May, 1986, to select important places where copies of Article VII of Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 should be burnt, to burn the copies of the reports of States Reorganization Commission as a protest against Central Government, to conduct no state-no vote campaign and boycott the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, to launch "Do or Die" movement if Central Government does not raise status of Indian Gorkhas from domiciled citizenship.

April 13th, 1986, was observed as Black Flag day. May 1986, became the watershed in the growth of the Gorkha movement. It was the beginning of the struggle for the Gorkhas for a homeland of their own, where they could establish their clear ethnic identity as the citizens of India. A 72 hours bandh was called. Everyone was called to lay down their lives for the creation of Gorkhaland. Some youths even drew blood from their thumbs with their Khukuris and wrote a poster in blood in demand of Gorkhaland. The GNLF had emerged like a slap from nowhere. It also had the right ingredients: an ambitious leader, a grieved minority and the area being on a sensitive border.

July 27th, 1986 was the chosen date for consigning Article VII of Indo-Nepal Treaty, 1950 to flames in various places in the Darjeeling District. A peaceful mob had gathered in Mela Ground in Kalimpong sub-division to do the same, but they were attacked by the police unarmed. Many men, women
and children were killed and injured. This incident was considered to be the "Jallianwala Bagh" of the GNLF. After this incident, the rift in the Bengali-Nepali psyche got wider and the demand for Gorkhaland remained the only formula for their survival in India.

It was following this incident that various intellectuals and other Gorkha moderates actually joined in the demand for a separate state. Even the Nepali Bhasa Samiti asked for quick Central Government intervention as the people in the hills had lost faith in the West Bengal Government. The Pranta Parishad in the midst took out a white paper entitled "Why Gorkhaland", containing various memorandams and documents of various political parties and organisations, asking for a separate administrative set up, including the Congress and Communist parties. The intellectuals also formed the Study Forum and brought out documents to show the deteriorated economic and political apathy of the Darjeeling hills and her people.

Ghisingh had pointed out that both India and Nepal were responsible for the conditions of the Indian Gorkhas and sent memorandams to both to clarify the position of the Indian Gorkhas. When they failed to respond, he sent copies of the memoranda to the United Nations Secretary General, the International Court of Justice and some to the heads of foreign governments. But these actions on the part of Ghisingh had invited remarks from Jyoti Basu, Left Front Chief Minister of Bengal. He called Ghisingh and the GNLF movement anti-national and secessionist.

Not only had Section 144 of the IPC (Criminal Procedure Court) been implemented (which declares all assemblies of more than four illegal) but on June 23rd, 1987, the TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance) was also invoked to deal with the insurgency in the hill areas. West Bengal was the second state after Punjab where this act was introduced.

The GNLF had revolutionized as a mass movement in the hills. It was supported by the Nepali middle class, unemployed youth and the peasants. Even the Lepchas and the Bhutias joined the movement. "Bhotey, Lapche, Nepali, ham sabai Gorkhali."(all communities including Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis, all of us are Gorkhal) became the slogan of the Gorkhaland movement. The party was well organised with very good structural links, that
its various calls and decisions reached even the remotest of villages. Before the movement, CP I (M) had complete dominance over the tea gardens. With the Gorkhaland movement, the ascendancy of the ethnic contradictions became unquestioned. The Tea garden workers became supporters of the GNLF and turned against their erstwhile Bengali comrades, whom they now regarded as playing a Bengali chauvinist role.

The leaders of the CPI (M) party soon realized that the GNLF was a stronger force and "the slogan of ethnic exclusiveness was much more potent and appealing than their slogan of working class solidarity." Even the CPI (M) Nepali supporters were not spared. Many of them had to leave Darjeeling because of the atrocities on them by the GNLF supporters.

It was decided that a 42 member GNLF delegation would go for talks to New Delhi. However by this time around Rs .15 crores of government property had already been destroyed. The GNLF prepared a hit list which included prominent CPI (M) leaders, police and administrative officials, who the agitators thought carried out the unconstitutional Bengal Government's orders. The Left Front Government could have prevented an ethnic conflict between the Nepalis and Bengalis if they had not confronted with the GNLF. There was a feeling of social alienation amongst the Nepalis coupled with economic backwardness. Therefore it was easy to spread anti-plains feelings among the people.

The Congress and the CP I(M) had always been political rivals in the hills. The Marxists had always spread anti-establishment feelings amongst the Gorkhas and told the people of the Congress's unfulfilled promises. With the installation of the Left Front Government in 1977 with CPI (M) as the dominant partner, the Gorkhas had shown renewed enthusiasm in their movement because of the CPI (M) commitment to champion their cause. But the communists had nothing to offer to the Gorkhas. Moreover, giving them larger concessions would have alienated the majority community in the state, the Bengalis.

Now with the agitation in the hilly areas of North Bengal, the Congress found an opportune time to weaken the CPM. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had said that there was nothing wrong in demanding a separate state. Though he was
against the formation of smaller states, he did not join the CPI (M) in calling the movement anti-national and secessionist. In fact some in the Centre had animosity against the communists and regarded Bengali chauvinism as the root cause of the Gorkha upsurge.

The Left Front felt that the Central Government under the Congress had never heeded to the demands of the Gorkhas. They said that in the 1969 elections, the United Front of the Left Parties accepted both their demands of regional autonomy and inclusion of Nepali in the VIII th Schedule but the Congress had rejected the resolution on regional autonomy passed in state legislature in 1981. Now the Centre was not calling the movement anti-national. The Centre was reluctant to send enough paramilitary forces to bring down the agitation. The state government thus became suspicious of the Centre and thus itself rolled in forces in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. The ethnic conflict then had acquired a dangerous form. To prevent further clashes, a non-Bengali Deputy Inspector General of Police, R.K.Handa had been sent to Darjeeling to deal with the agitation. The movement had become violent. The development activities had come to a standstill. The two major industries - Tea and Tourism were badly crippled. They contribute Rs 30 million annually to the hill economy and sustained about 80% of the population. "Tourists declined from 1, 30,000 from 1985-86 to 18,000 in 1987-88. Revenue went down from Rs. 6 million to Rs. 1 million." 32 In the tea industry between 1986-88, income fell from Rs 10 million to only Rs 3.3 million in 1987-88.33

It was mostly the Tea gardens that were severely hit. Kerosene, gas, food, ration did not reach the gardens on time. The transportation of Ginger and Orange, the two important cash crops of the hills to the plains were badly affected. Education was severely hindered and many left Darjeeling to study elsewhere. Various students and unemployed youth joined the movement out of sheer frustration. The Young Turks of the militant wing of the GNLF, the Gorkha Volunteer Cell (GVC) led by extremists like Chattre Subba, C.K.Pradhan, R.P.Waiba and others did not want to settle for anything less than full fledged statehood. There were intra-party conflicts and frequent clashes between the GNLF activists themselves and the CRPF personnel.
Homes and shops were raided, innocent children killed and young women raped. The men folk were hunted by the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) and therefore fled and hid in jungles and forests for fear of being caught.

The movement had been blown out of proportion. One line of thinking among the Congress was that the Gorkhaland movement should not be encouraged, lest it would become another ethnic strife in the country. But on the other hand, the difficulty the GNLF agitation would pose for the CPM "must have been too tempting a political opportunity for the Congress to resist."34.

Thus the Congress was at once encouraging the movement and at the same time discouraging it. The State Government on the other hand felt that the only solution lay in forming an autonomous district council, to ensure within the framework of given states, the safeguards for the language and culture of the minorities.

India, a multi-cultural country with a federal polity was once again facing another ethno-linguistic regional movement. The ethnic movement in a state can be manipulated by the Centre mainly for partisan ends especially if there are different parties in the Centre and the State. Darjeeling offered the perfect example and Ghisingh was playing his cards well to create contradictions between the Congress in the Centre and the Left Front Government in West Bengal.

STEPS TOWARDS CONCILIATION AND THE FORMATION OF DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL

As violence spread in the hills and as there seemed no end to it, people wanted to arrive at some conclusion. Both the Centre and the State appeared to arrive at some negotiated settlement in the beginning of 1987 to deal with the Gorkhaland movement. Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister said he would not talk with the GNLF under Ghisingh due to his anti-Bengal activities. Ghisingh had taken out another demand regarding the settlement of citizen's rights of Indian Nepalis on the basis of incorporation of territory clause in Citizenship Act of 1955. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had agreed to make
1950 as the cut off year, saying that people of Nepali origin settled in India before 1950 are Indian citizens.35

It was in February 1987 that a dialogue was started between the Centre and GNLF but with the knowledge of the Government of West Bengal. But since the GNLF leaders were not satisfied with the talks, a thirteen days strike was called on June 20th 1987 after the movement had been suspended for a period of three months from February 1987. It was however called off on the ninth day. The Centre agreed to hold talks with the GNLF on June 26th,1987. The talks in the first week of September 1987, laid down that the Centre was against the creation of an Autonomous District because that would involve amendment of the Constitution. Instead it proposed the formation of a Regional Autonomous Council but the nature and powers were to be discussed between the State Government and the GNLF. On September 18th, 1987, in the all party meeting held, it was proposed that Darjeeling Hill Council would be created consisting of 42 members. It would exercise jurisdiction in the three sub-divisions of Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Kurseong in all matters except electricity, tea gardens, law and order, justice and management of reserved forests. Even though it seemed that the proposals were being considered by the GNLF leaders, the militant wing of the GNLF did not want to accept anything short of full statehood. Moreover in the proposed Hill Council, one third of the members were to be nominated whereas the GNLF wanted it to be fully elected. It wanted to do away with the political dominance of the CPI (M) in the hills.

The GNLF wanted the proposed council to be called the Gorkha Hill Council. The name Darjeeling Hill Council seemed vague and they felt that it did not carry the identity of the Indian Gorkhas in India. They said that the "ethnic name of Gorkhaland is quite necessary in the most complicated case history of the whole settled Gorkhas in India for the sake of their clear and distinct identity."36 The West Bengal Government was strongly opposed to the idea since "it would open a Pandora box and ethnic minority groups all over the country would start claiming for such an identity."37

In October 1987, Ghisingh suggested that the Darjeeling Hill Council was to be established under Article 244(I) of the Constitution, which provides
for application of the Vth Schedule for the administration and control of scheduled areas and Scheduled Tribes in any state other than the North-Eastern states. Ghisingh also laid down that the Council should be given the right to collect revenue and the right to control the Tea Gardens. He also wanted the inclusion of Dooars and other adjacent areas of Siliguri, where there is dominant Nepali population, to be included in the proposed council. The demands were however opposed by the Centre and the State Government.

Since the proposals offered by the Central Government could not satisfy the economic, ethnic and political aspirations of the hills people, they decided to burn the draft plans of DHC on November 22nd, 1987. Violence continued to engulf the hills. Since May 1986 to January 1988, the agitation had claimed 100 lives, including 12 security men, 2 DIGs suffered injuries, 30 Government Offices, 17 bridges and 5 banks were set on fire.

Inderjit Khuller, a prominent journalist of the Indian News and Feature Alliance, played an important role of mediator between the Centre and Ghisingh. He made the Centre know and respond to Ghisingh's plan of Gorkhaland. Even though it was known that both the Centre and the State would oppose the formation of a state for the Gorkhas and "there would be no dismemberment of West Bengal, just to please one ethnic community." Ghisingh was eager to talk with the Centre and not the state.

The first Tripartite meeting between the GNLF, Centre and the West Bengal Government was held on January 25th, 1988. But when the negotiations were going on, Ghisingh called a 40 days strike from February 10th, 1988. It affected the hills badly. On June 29th, 1988, another tripartite meeting was held in New Delhi. Here it was agreed to add "Gorkha" to the proposed Hill Council. Some areas, where the Nepalies were in majority in areas adjacent to the three hill Sub-divisions, were also to be included in the council. In another tripartite meeting held on July 25th, 1988, it was agreed to name the council, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. However, the name "Gorkha" was objected by the Left Parties and also by ethnic groups like the Lepchas and Bhutias. The Gorkhas were in majority no doubt, but even the Lepchas and Bhutias have their own cultural heritage and claims over their
homeland. The question was, would the minorities like the Lepchas, Bhutias and also the various other plains tribals such as the Oraons and Mech in Jalpaiguri be able to live with self respect and dignity in a place where the GNLF would wield power?

It was also decided that 12 Mouzas of Siliguri sub-division between Sukna and Lohagarh were to be included in the DGHC, where there was a predominant Nepali population. The demand by the GNLF to include any part of Siliguri sub-division was fiercely objected by the Siliguri Nagorik Samiti. Therefore, the Chief Minister laid down that Siliguri Makuma Parishad would be created and funds were to be divided between them and the Hill Council.

On August 22nd, 1988, a Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the GNLF Chief, Mr Subhash Ghisingh, Mr Rathin Sengupta, Chief Secretary of West Bengal and Union Home Secretary Mr. C.G. Somaih, in the presence of Mr Buta Singh, Home Minister and Mr Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister of West Bengal. It was agreed that the GNLF would drop its demand for a separate state. It was also agreed to have an Autonomous Hill Council which was to be set up under the State Act and the name of the council will be DGHC. (This was the first autonomous district council established outside of North-Eastern region of India (Assam and further east) where autonomous councils had been used since the 1950's to guarantee certain tribal minorities a modicum of self government). The council would cover the three hill Sub-divisions of the Darjeeling District namely, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, plus 13 Mouzas including majority of Nepali speaking people within the Siliguri sub-division. (See Appendix A).

The Gorkhaland agitation carried on for two years, in the process killing many lives and bringing about deterioration of economy. The people had battled for statehood, but eventually had to settle for a semi autonomous Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. In spite of resistance by the militant faction of the GNLF for accepting the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and who still clamoured for full statehood, Ghisingh expressed satisfaction with it. He said that the word "Gorkha" had been inserted in the Hill Council and this solved the identity crisis of the Indian Gorkhas. "Now we have our own hill Council, a land of our own which will give the community a greater sense of identity."42.
On August 23rd, 1988, a Gazette notification was also issued regarding the citizenship of Nepalis in Darjeeling (refer Appendix B). It was mainly issued to remove the misconception about the citizenship of the Gorkhas. It laid down that Citizenship Act of 1955, its rules and orders would apply to Gorkhas settled in India after January 26th, 1950.

The DGHC Bill was passed in the West Bengal State Assembly on September 5th, 1988 and the DGHC Act was passed in November, 1988 for 28 seats. 12 Crores were earmarked for the development of the hill areas but Ghisingh demanded an annual plan of 260 Crores. Time had come to rebuild the economy after violence had ripped up the hills for more than two years. The GNLF, a regional party had managed to form the Autonomous Hill Council but they always apprehended the presence of the CPI (M). The elections in December, 1988 had drawn once again the "erstwhile enemies, the CPI (M) and the GNLF as political adversaries in competitive democratic politics.43.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic identity systems generally incorporate political aspirations of a group and are effective in mobilizing members for political goals. The Nepalis of Darjeeling Hills have always been more politically conscious than their brethren elsewhere. From the beginning of the 20th Century, they have been demanding separation from Bengal and for a separate administrative set up. This could be seen in the demands of the Hillsmen's Association, All India Gorkha League, the Congress, the Communist Party, the Pranta Parishad and eventually the GNLF.

The Gorkhaland movement can be pointed as a particular case where the Nepali ethnic identity was used for personal identification, communal anchorage and political goals. Ghisingh and the GNLF's demand for Indian citizenship was their main objective for inclusion within the Indian framework. Their demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland outside the purview of West Bengal but within the federal system of India was also legitimate. It was because of this that the Centre did not consider the movement anti-national unlike the Bengal government. Ultimately, it was mainly to appease the
agitators that the DGHC was granted with limited powers in social, cultural, development and educational fields. The ethnic minority community in Darjeeling, the Nepalis had voiced their demands for a separate state and the state had also accommodated their demand in the form of the Autonomous Council.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. During this time, it can be said that the Nepalis were growing in number but their presence had still not become very predominant. Moreover, the Lepchas were the original inhabitants of the Darjeeling Hills. The Hillmen wanted to project the people of the hills as having Mongoloid origin and therefore distinct from the people of the plains. The Lepchas and the Bhutias suited with this idea perfectly.


4. ibid., pp. 90.

5. Some of the members were Sardar Bahadur S W. Ladenla (a Bhutia). He was Additional Superintendent of Police and Aide-de Camp of the British Governor in Bengal. He was a man of great intelligence. It was because of his outstanding merit that he was awarded the King’s Police medal and Sardar Bahadur title in 1907. Rai Saheb Hari Prasad Pradhan was the first Nepali Lawyer in the Darjeeling Hills. He had served as a Commissioner in the Darjeeling Municipality. He had got the title of Rai Saheb from the Britishers in 1924. Another important person in the association was Khadga Bahadur Chettri. He was a First Class Contractor and had played an important role in setting up the Darjeeling Municipality, which was established in 1850, the first in Bengal.

7. The President of the Hillmen's Association, Kalimpong, was Rai Saheb Hari Prasad Pradhan, President of Gorkha Officer's Association was Lt. Gobardhan Gurung. P M. Sundar was Secretary, Hillmen's Association, Kalimpong, P P. Pradhan, Secretary, Hillmen's Association, Darjeeling.


10. D S. Gurung was a well-known lawyer from Kalimpong. Details of the other gentlemen have already been mentioned earlier.


12. D S. Gurung became the AIGL's President. Randhir Subba was the Vice-President of the League. He was also the editor of "Gorkha" the mouthpiece of Gorkhas. Later he left for Nepal and became a Nepalese citizen and also later became the Foreign Minister of Nepal.


15. It was a strong party and in 1946, R L. Brahmin, Jyoti Basu and R N. Roy were the three MLA's from CPI in Bengal.


18. In 1955, garden workers from the hills had started an agitation under the leadership of R L. Brahmin and Deo Prakash Rai. They demanded an increase in wages and other statutory benefits for themselves. A rally had been taken out on June 25th, 1955 from Margaret's Hope Tea Garden near Sonada. Congress led police had fired at them. 13 labourers were wounded and 6 succumbed to injuries. But later, the daily wages had been increased from six to eight annas. The CPRM (Communist Party Revolutionary Marxist) in order to boost trade union movement in the hills commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the Labour uprising on June 25th 2005. Families of those who gave up their lives were also felicitated.

19. The Communists had blamed the Congress led Govt. for the ills in the industry, but today, the Communists are at the helm of affairs in the state and offers little solace to workers. Tea gardens in North Bengal suffered an approximate loss of Rs 20 crores and around 5 lakh workers were involved directly or indirectly in eighteen hundred organized and unorganized estates in Dooars, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and North Dinajpur. An indefinite strike over wage revisions started from July 11th 2005. The Defence Committee for Plantation Worker's Rights (DCPWR), an umbrella organization of 18 trade unions spearheaded the agitation workers demanding a revision of wage scale since it was not revised after the last agreement expired in March, 2003, but planters wanted to implement productivity linked wages.


22. Mostly Nepali speaking people consider the recognition of their language a fundamental pre-requisite for the establishment of their Indian Identity.

23. Dooars was demanded in spite of a few Nepali speakers there to be included in the GNLF area because it is an important tea producing belt and would be a good source of revenue for the proposed state.


29. The GNLF had a very efficient organization. The various Gorkhas serving in the Indian Army had been asked to lay down arms and join the battle for the emancipation of their brethren. The lieutenants in the GNLF were ex-army men. The Women's Wing in its organization was one of its strongest points. Even the unemployed and the apolitical youth had joined the party.

30. Interview with various tea garden workers in Chungthung tea garden said that once they were staunch supporters of CPI (M) but later they turned supporters of GNLF. Interview with the head clerk of the Chungthung tea estate in October 2004,said that the tea gardens in Darjeeling can be compared to a cow where the fodder (labour and sweat) has to be given by the Nepalis, whereas the dung (profits) are taken by the Bengal Govt. Only with the creation of Gorkhaland, the profits can be invested and taken by the Gorkhas.


33. ibid., pp.72


35. This was however resented by the Nepalis in Assam and Sikkim. The Nepalis in Assam contend that their future has been decided by the Assam Accord which has made 1971 as the cut off year for all foreign nationals in the state. The stateless Nepalis in Sikkim lay down that 1975 should be made the cut off year, the year when Sikkim was merged with India.


38. This was demanded as Dooars had a substantial number of Tea gardens, an important foreign exchange earner for the country. Siliguri is a very important commercial centre, the main gateway to the North-East.

39. Sunday Mail, Delhi, 3rd -9th January, 1988. (The reports showed thus but the lives lost were certainly more that that).

40. Buta Singh, Home Minister of India had said this. Hindu, Madras, 22nd March, 1988

41. The Lepchas who were the autochones of this area and who considered the area to be theirs opposed the name "Gorkha" to the Council. The same views were expressed by the Bhutias too.


43. Dilip Kumar Sarkar and Dhrubojoyti Bhawmick, Empowering Darjeeling Hills: An Experience with Darjeeling Hill Council, Indian Publishers Distributors, Delhi, 2000, pp.43.