CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that today there has been a rapid expansion of mass media and mass communication but at the same time, ethnic boundaries have been greatly sharpened. Science and technology are globalizing industrial production, trade and communication but the cultural factors are strengthening communalization, regionalization and ethnocentrism. It must also be emphasized that there has been a rising pre-eminence of ethnic dimensions in politics. Ethnicity today no longer means only a category of people bound together by racial features. It is now used to mean self consciousness of a group who are brought together by shared experiences such as language, religion, common heritage or political institutions. Defining ethnicity also has become a political act. Whether we should call an ethnic group an ethnic group itself or a nation, a nationality, a minority, a tribe, a culture, a people, has become more of a political issue than a simple procedure of scientific enquiry.

Assertion of ethnic identities has become a common feature not only in developing countries but also in well developed countries too. America, United Kingdom, former Soviet Union, Iran, former Yugoslavia and India have all witnessed such ethnic movements. Modernizers claim that modernization has brought rule of law, democracy, peace and justice for all. But at the same time, it cannot be ignored that modernization has also brought ethnic identity and conflict as the major forces. It has also transformed the dynamics of multiculturalism making it the focus of inter-group tensions.

Modernization also brings economic and political competition. In the case of India, the conflict between the Centre and States or within various groups in a state can be examined in economic and political terms rather than in cultural or ethnic terms. The intensification of competition among groups is brought by the ethnic differentiations. Thus making the ascriptive basis of ethnicity a functional and effective vehicle for advancing group interests.

Centralising on the main hypothesis i.e. ethnicity by itself does not exercise a determining influence on politics and focusing on the instrumentalist view of ethnicity as expressed by writers like Paul Brass, Nathan Glazer and Moynihan, Ted Gurr and Barbara Harff, this work has
made an effort to study how ethnicity has been used instrumentally by political agents. There has been a resurgence of ethnic movements since the sixties mainly because of ethnic competition especially job competition and this increased competition is viewed as the result of the modernization process, especially urbanization, the expansion of secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. Moreover, elites manipulate beliefs and values and select only those which are politically useful. Elites seeking to mobilize the ethnic group against the centralizing state, strive to promote a congruence of multiplicity of the groups' symbol. It is thus said that ethnic identities are consciously created. Group identities are ascriptive identities and keep on changing with the emergence of new patterns of inter-group relations. Ethnic identities are thus consciously created and they are reversible.

Looking into the case of the Darjeeling Hills, it was seen that it is a polyglot of people belonging to different racial groups, having their own languages, religions, cultures and traditions. Darjeeling was originally a part of Sikkim but ceded to British India in 1835. The region was initially inhabited by the original inhabitants, the Lepchas. The 13th Century saw the coming in of the Bhutias. Darjeeling became a summer resort and with the growth of tea gardens and tea business becoming commercial from 1856 onwards, there was the huge inflow of Nepali migrants. Majority of them worked as tea garden workers and agricultural labourers. The Biharis and Marwaris soon took control of the business activities with their strong business acumen. On the other hand, the Bengalis occupied the upper strata in administration, as officers, clerks and teachers. With such conditions, it was only natural for the Hillmen i.e. the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis to feel a sense of deprivation, viz a viz the plainsmen or the Madhesias.

Darjeeling District had been made a part of Bengal even before India achieved independence in 1947. But from the very beginning, the people here knew that they were different from the people in the plains, culturally, traditionally, linguistically and in physiognomy. The hill people knew that they had to separate from the domination of Bengal. Even though there was earlier resentment of the Lepchas and Bhutias against the Nepali migrants, they knew they had to stay together now as one unit of 'hillmen' against the growth of plainsmen. Moreover, the Nepalis who came from Nepal belonged to
various sub-communities i.e. Newars, Rais, Tamangs, Gurungs, Magars, Sunwars, Sherpas, Yakhas and others. They had their own customs and traditions and many of these groups spoke their own Tibeto-Burman languages. In Nepal, it would have been possible for these groups to maintain their own language and culture because of living in close proximity with their homogenous linguistic and cultural traditions. But in Darjeeling as well as in Sikkim, each of these groups was comparatively small in size and spatially dispersed. Many of them were bi-lingual speaking the Indo-Aryan Nepali language and also their own dialects. But very soon the Nepali language became the lingua franca, bridging the gap between the various communities. In Nepal, the Nepali language was the Rashtriya or National language but in India as well as in Darjeeling and Sikkim, it became a symbol of Nepali jatiya consciousness. It became the key symbolic and practical unifier for the emergent Darjeeling Nepali community and subsequently wider Nepali society in India and Nepal too. The Lepchas and Bhutias had their own distinct language and script, but though retaining their own mother tongues, they too adopted the Nepali language.

The contribution of the Christian missionaries especially in the field of education cannot be overlooked, though their main objective was to bring about conversion. Soon, English speaking elites emerged and they began to make the people aware of their ethnic linguistic identity as Nepalis. In the early 20's itself there was the demand for the introduction of Nepali as the medium of instruction. Along with the growth of Nepali cultural identity, ethnic exclusiveness was expressed through demand for autonomy in Darjeeling.

During the time of British rule in India, the ethnic consciousness for identity had remained dormant and primordial in its manifestations. But after the national liberation movements, there was consciousness for self rule and this percolated to the ethnic communities in the post colonial states. The ethnic elites of these deprived communities soon began to mobilize their groups nostalgically reviving their memories. In Darjeeling, it was seen that a little before 1917, the Hill men Association had been formed which specially asked for a separate administrative status to be comprised of present Darjeeling District and Jalpaiguri District. In 1934 the Hill People's Social Union had been formed mainly to bring unity between the Nepalis, Bhutias
and Lepchas. In the early 40's the All India Gorkha League was formed. It was here that all the hill men were put under the umbrella term 'Gorkha'. The idea of Gorkha had become a homogenous entity and everyone linked through the Nepali language. Earlier the leadership was entirely in the hands of the Nepalis and the Lepchas and Bhutias who had become minority groups were reluctant to join any movement for separation. Various parties including the Congress, the Marxist parties and even the Gorkha League had been making various promises to the people in the hills but it seemed they lacked genuine sympathy and sacrifice. The AIGL, though one of the most prominent parties in the hills often formed a coalition with the ruling party in Calcutta but in the long run, could not speak for their own. It was these several factors which greatly enlarged the appeal of the GNLF in the 80’s. Earlier the Nepali leadership was always a multiple leadership and a definite leadership pattern had not been built in the hills. It was Subhash Ghising who succeeded in getting mass support from the people in the hills through powerful use of emotions and sentiments. He also dexterously blended the issue of citizenship and the Nepali identity issue with the demand of statehood.

The Gorkhaland movement was both an ethno-linguistic and regional movement but the former soon overshadowed the latter. The GNLF, like other political parties of the past, demanded separation from West Bengal. It was felt that neither the Centre nor the State Government had done much for the region. The feeling of economic deprivation was also heightened because of cultural backwardness stemming from what the Gorkhas perceived as neglect of their language. Though the cry for economic emancipation was voiced in the movement, the cry for political identity and due status of the Gorkha community was manifest. Moreover, a growing educated middle class, the Gorkha elite had been looking for opportunities and recognition, which it was able to find in the demand being made by Ghisingh. Thus the Gorkhaland agitation was the ultimate cause of the feeling of relative deprivation, transferred anger, language threat to the identity of Nepalis, a movement led by the elite group and a feeling of internal colonialism under Bengal.

The Gorkhaland Agitation (1986-88) has been one of the bloodiest periods in the history of Darjeeling. It brought destruction of lives, property and brought great loss to the region's three T's (Tea, Timber and Tourism). It
was only on 22nd July, 1988 that a tripartite agreement took place between the GNLF, Centre and the State which resulted in the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. However, the DGHC had come into existence only through the State Act and not by any amendment in the Constitution. But at that time it was felt that since the people in Darjeeling had been given the Hill Council, it would give the Nepali community a greater sense of identity. The Nepalis would be recognized as a distinct group in India or as the Gorkhas having an Indian identity and very different from the Nepalese of Nepal who have cultural and linguistic similarities.

Today there is wide scale dissatisfaction with the running of the Council. It has been criticized of rampant corruption, favouritism and misappropriation of funds. Even after 18 years after its formation, the hills suffer from acute water shortage, bad roads and unemployment. Moreover, the identity of the 'Nepali' or Gorkha has been put under greater doubt and confusion. The Gorkhaland movement was brought about to establish a clearer identity of the Gorkhas in India, but at the same time, it has brought a type of demonstration effect to other ethnic groups and communities living in the area. In Darjeeling, a great deal of assimilation has taken place between the various ethnic groups. All communities have similar clothing and food habits and speak the Nepali language. But today, each ethnic group, be it a Lepcha or Bhutia want to maintain their distinct ethnic identity. Each community wants to prove that they are the original inhabitants or indigenous people of the region. With increase in population, scarcity of land and limited resources and the state taking the initiative to identify and help the indigenous groups financially or otherwise, there has been an increasing urgency to be recognized as a group, having a particular identity.

The Nepali community is a super-structure of various communities having respective traditions and culture. No particular culture can be pinpointed as the Nepali culture. Birth, marriage and death rituals are different, they have own languages, some are Hindus, others are Buddhists or animists. Initially the various Nepali ethnics like the Tamangs, Newars, Sunwars, Limbus, Mangars and others in order to be recognized as a part of the greater pan Nepali identity or the Bahun or Chettri culture had disregarded their ethnic customs, traditions and languages in favour of one
common Nepali language and were identified as Nepalis. But today the Nepalis want to reassert their tribal identity instead of being considered a Nepali. Various Nepali ethnic organizations are seen mushrooming in the Darjeeling hills as well as in Sikkim and their main objective is to bring revivalism of their ethnic culture, traditions and language. They are all struggling to get recognized as a group having a distinct tribal identity. The Darjeeling people of Nepali ancestry have been greatly disillusioned with the failure of the Gorkhaland movement, which has failed to give any special status for the Nepali language speakers. The race has now begun. Many of the Nepali sub-communities have been recognized as Other Backward Classes in the period of the 90's with the revamping of the Mondal Commision Report. Being a member of the Scheduled Caste or Tribe can actually alter one's educational and professional chances for the better.

Recently a new group has been formed in Darjeeling called the Bharatiya Gorkha Janajati Manyata Samiti which not only has revived the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland but also argues that the entire Nepali community be recognized by the Central Government as a Scheduled Tribe en masse. The Tamangs and the Limbus, both sub - groups of the Nepali community and who apparently form a considerable majority in the hills were already recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in West Bengal and Sikkim in January 2003. This has further accentuated the competition amongst various groups of Nepali ancestry to get a tribal status.

Notwithstanding the facilities and privileges they will get as tribals, another issue that has gained prominence in the hills is the demand to include the DGHC area together with Siliguri and Dooars under the Vlth Schedule of the Constitution. However such a provision requires amendment in the Constitution because the Schedule is only meant for administration in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura under the overall supervision of Governors. Schedules V and VI are provisions relating to administration of predominantly tribal areas and scheduled areas under Article 244. The Vlth Schedule can only be enforced in areas having a tribal population of at least 60%. But the DGHC governed areas have only 35% tribal presence. The question that can be asked is, if the Nepalis in Darjeeling are recognized as tribals, what about the Nepalis in other parts of India?
Would the tribals, for example the Bodos in Assam or the Nagas or Mizos be ready to accept this and allow the Nepalis in their areas to enjoy their special privileges and benefits?

Moreover if the VIth Schedule is granted to the hills and if all the communities of Nepali origin are granted tribal status, it can be foreseen that there will be competition among all groups, to grab the quotas in education and employment, for which all will be eligible. Another question that can also be raised is will the Darjeeling society be able to withstand the ethnic politics of the VI th Schedule? Beginning to be conscious of one's ethnic identity and trying to learn about one's language and culture is a good sign. But it is also feared that assertion of one's identity over the collective one is bound to bring in bitter ramifications as seen in the case of the North- East. Moreover till now all the Nepali communities, irrespective of their differences have always stood united as one group. It is feared that if any of them choose to maintain a different stand, the Nepali community will collapse like a pack of cards. Bengal has always been reluctant to have any division of Bengal, leave alone the granting of a separate state of Gorkhaland. It is only when all of them unite, will they succeed to fight against the dominant Bengalis, who have always sought to bring in the divide and rule policy.

Moreover, the possibility of the recognition of all the Gorkha or Nepali communities as tribals has brought about insecurity and apprehension amongst the various minority groups and who have been enjoying tribal status from the time of enforcement of the Constitution, namely the Lepchas and Bhutias. Both these communities are keen on reasserting their tribal identities. The Bhutias are also clamouring to be differentiated from the Tibetan refugees who came in hordes to India especially in the post 1959 period. The Lepchas in Sikkim were recognized as the Most Primitive Tribe in early 2005 which has thus drawn the same demand by the Lepchas in West Bengal who are found in majority in the Darjeeling District. The question is will the Lepchas and Bhutias be able to compete with the other groups who will be recognized as tribals since they have already had the experience of competing with the other advanced communities? Moreover, will the attainment of the status of Schedule Tribe only be a stepping stone to attain the Most Primitive Group status as seen amongst the Lepchas? The process
seems unending what with the increase in population and dwindling of land and resources.

The supremo of the GNLF, Mr. Subhas Ghisingh's demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland still remains strong like that of other parties including the AIGL, GNLF(C) and the CPRM. The Indian federation has always been eager to accommodate the demands of its administrative units as long as its demands fall within the Constitutional framework.

Back in the 80's, when the cries of the Gorkhas for a separate homeland were not heard through appeals and memorandas, the movement turned violent. Only after eighteen months of violence and agitation were they granted an autonomous administrative unit, the DGHC. The claim is now to include Siliguri and Dooars in the DGHC administered area. However even though their claims seem justified, it is apprehended that it might bring problems of administrative management, migration and ethnic conflicts. Moreover it seems that this demand together with the VIth Schedule was to be the GNLF's main electoral plank.

In December 2005 it was agreed in a tripartite meeting that the DGHC was to be re-christened as Gorkha Hill Council, Darjeeling and would be included under the VIth Schedule in the ensuing months. The elections to the DGHC were to be held in September 2004 but even in 2006, it seemed that it would be deferred by yet another year. In the Bengal State Assembly elections held in May, 2006, the Opposition, the PDF anticipated its victory but surprisingly from the three hill Constituencies, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, the GNLF was victorious once again.

In spite of criticism against Ghisingh and his party, it seems he is still the best bet for Indian interests in a volatile region. He has always followed the Constitutional path of negotiations and discussions. Being an ethnic leader himself, he has not followed the path of terrorism in spite of living in a strategically located area. The Marxist Government at the State has been accommodative of his various demands because he always threatens to bring violence if his demands are not heard. The UPA Government has come to power in the Centre and the Congress it seems comes to life in the hills only when some issue is raised here and also since they can use Ghisingh and his party against the Marxists.
Several months have already passed since it was agreed to include Darjeeling hills under the Vth Schedule but they might have to wait till the next Parliamentary session for the bill to be tabled in Parliament. There are still some minor disagreements between Ghisingh and the State Government regarding the powers of the new body. Moreover there must be a consensus among the various national parties and the Cabinet has to approve the draft of the Vth Schedule before it is put before the Parliament.

To conclude, we make the following points:
Like in the rest of India, in Darjeeling too, we see the assertion of identity not only amongst the minority groups, the Lepchas and Bhutias, but also amongst the Nepali community at large.

Assertion of cultural identity reflects the demands especially of the middle class and which specially uses the cultural symbols for political purposes.

The response to such assertion has to be democratic, that is, devolution of power that goes a long way in assuaging the social needs and political aspirations of the people and their elites respectively. No doubt, the DGHC had been granted to the people in the hills but the same leadership came to power. The leadership now faces a new set of demands, not only the creation of Gorkhaland but also to include hills under the Vth Schedule. It has been agreed to rechristen the Council as Gorkha Hill Council, Darjeeling, but it seems it is just old wine in new bottle. The benefits of the Vth Schedule are still not clear to the people in the hills but it is apprehended that it will divide the community along tribal lines. Only time will tell what will happen to all these demands and fears and also to the cordial inter-ethnic relationship which has always existed amongst the various ethnic groups residing here. There is an increasing trend amongst all communities towards rediscovering ethnicity for personal identification, communal anchorage and political goals.