CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND POLITICS IN INDIA: LANGUAGE MOVEMENTS IN THE DARJEELING HIMALAYAS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NEPALI AND LEPCHA LANGUAGES.

Language has assumed an important place in today's political situation. It is one of the most important marks of identification and it is this that marks off one speech community from another. It is not only a means of communication but can also be used as a strong weapon in the achievement of political power. A situation of conflict may take place between two language speaking groups mainly because of the insecurity or fear of losing one's linguistic and cultural identity. "Language is not only a symbol to unite groups, but its effective use or abuse can catapult an ethnic moment." It is both a unifying and divisive force.

Language demands in modern India have been expressed in various levels from demands to replace the colonial language (under the British colonial rule) to replacement of the national language. To make the regional language as media of instruction as well as in administrative, tribunal and judicial proceedings and even the same demand in the law courts.

At the regional level, a very important feature of language demands was the reservation of employment opportunity for the "sons of the soil". This demand was equally important in those areas where immigrants from other regions were employed in the upper sections of the job structure. In the beginning of the 20th Century, various organizations were formed, social, economic and political, to promote the interests of the communities. Language demands in independent India were concerned with various issues like Official Language of the Central Government, the re-organization of the states of the federation along linguistic lines, Official language of the states of the federation and language policies relating to education, public employment and general communication.
POLITICS AND LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Even during the British colonial rule in India, H. H. Risley had laid down that language should be the criteria for territorial redistribution. Curzon had not accepted this but it was during the 19th Century that the importance of regional language grew with the emergence of an educated middle class who were interested in reviving the rich cultural heritage of India. "This was greatly sustained and strengthened by language as powerful unifying force. 2"

The Simon Commission also did not accept language as the only criteria for redrawing the provincial boundaries. In spite of several requests, the Government was not ready to accept this demand of the people. But after independence in the 50's, the demand for linguistic provinces had reached its climax. K. M. Munshi, who was a keen proponent of linguistic provinces coined the term "linguism", by which he meant the elevation of language as a basis for group sentiment seeking expression in terms of power politics. Moreover the Dar Commission, which had been formed with S. K Dar as its Chairman was not in favour of creating provinces only on the linguistic principle.

However later, the JPV Committee appointed by the Congress in 1948, (Consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Sardar Patel) soon realized the importance of linguistic states and delay in this regard would harm the unity and integrity of the country. The Telegu speaking people wanted a separate state, different from the Tamils. After a great deal of violence, the state of Andhra was created in October 1953. It was after this that the State Re-organization Commission was formed in 1956 to create states on the linguistic basis. Soon, the bi-lingual state of Bombay was split into Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1960. Punjab was divided into two, Punjabi speaking state of Punjab and Hindi speaking state of Haryana in 1966. Various other linguistic states have been created from 1956 till today. In Dravidian India, we have Kerala (Malayalam language), Karnataka (Kannada language), and Tamil Nadu (Tamil). There are Madhya Pradesh (Hindi language), Rajasthan (Hindi, Rajasthan language), U.P. (Hindi, language), Bihar (Hindi), West Bengal (Bengali), Assam (Assamee) and Orissa (Oriya).
Three more states, Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were recently formed though not on the linguistic principle.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDIA.

It is in Part XVII of the Constitution entitled “Official Languages” that the issue of language is mentioned. These provisions are found in Articles 343-351. Article 343 lays down that Hindi in the Devanagri script is the Official Language of the Union. Clause 2 of the same Article states that English shall continue to be used for such purposes as might be specified by law up to 1965.

The Constitution has also specified in its VIII th Schedule, the various languages in the country to be used for purposes as specified in Article 345 of the Constitution. Today it has recognized 18 languages namely Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu. Sindhi was added in 1967. Nepali, Konkani and Manipuri were added in 1992. Article 345 states that the State Governments are free to adopt either a regional language or the Official Language of the Union for the official purposes of a state. Article 346 provides for use of the official language for official communication between a state and the Union or between one state and another.

It is the special responsibility of the Centre to safeguard the cultural interests of the minorities and to see that they have adequate facilities for receiving at least Primary Education in their mother tongue (Article 350 A). Not only this, Articles 29 and 30 confer broader rights upon linguistic minorities. To preserve their distinct language, script and culture (Article 29) and to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice (Article 30). Regarding the official language in use at the local level, the Union Government memorandum of 1956 lays down that districts having 70% or more of its population speaking a language other than the official state language should have the status of unilingual areas with that language, superceding the official state language ".3

Today almost all the languages enlisted in the VIII th Schedule, have been recognized as official languages in one or more states except Sindhi
and Sanskrit. However there are no definite criteria for getting included in the VIII th Schedule. In 1959, Nehru had laid that the VIII th Schedule was not an exhaustive list of Indian languages. "One must not think that the non-inclusion of a language in the list means that it is not an Indian Language or is not a language used in India."4

But none the less, inclusion of languages in the VIII th Schedule carries symbolic and material advantages. "A presumptive right to recognition as a minority language in states, where other languages are dominant, including a presumptive right to recognition as a medium of instruction in both primary and secondary school classes in such states".5 Moreover they will get the President's (Central Government's) protection on the advice of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities against discrimination. They will get representation on language development committees appointed by the Central Government. Not only this, the language used in printing on currency notes are from amongst those included in VIII th Schedule. National Book Trust also has an Adan Pradan Scheme for bringing out translations of outstanding literary works, published in any of the VIII th Schedule Languages. According to the Authorized Translation of Central Acts, Ordinances, Orders are to be done in the languages of the VIII th Schedule. These languages are to be considered for adoption as alternative media for all India and Higher Central Service Examinations. Similarly, recognition of an official language of a state enables people to compete for positions in the state services without having to take examinations in other languages.

In each state, there are groups who speak languages other than the dominant regional language and consider themselves as linguistic minorities. For example, the dominant regional language of West Bengal is Bengali and 86% of the population speaks Bengali. The Nepalis residing in Darjeeling District consider themselves as a linguistic minority".6 Today tribal and linguistic minorities make claims upon the states. Some of them also demand statehood. The main objectives of the ethnic groups in India are to strengthen their group identity and to improve their social status and economic well-being which can be achieved through the route of politics.
As was seen in the preceding Chapter, it was mainly with the encouragement of the Britishers that brought about a large influx of Nepalis into the Darjeeling area. The Britishers' main objective was to outnumber the original inhabitants of the place, i.e. the Lepchas and Bhutias by the Nepalis. They thought that the Lepchas and Bhutias with their various cultural and traditional affinities with Tibet would maintain their loyalties with it. Tibet was considered the main enemy of the Englishmen. It was in the Nepali immigrants, who were mostly Hindus, that the British found a group of loyal subjects, who would have their allegiance with them and not the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Moreover, the Britishers had seen the martial characteristics in the Gorkhas. The Gorkhas had fought under the Britishers and also helped to suppress the revolt of 1857 as well.

Initially, if we see the ethnic composition of the Nepalis in Darjeeling, it could be seen that groups like Rais, Gurungs, Tamangs and other Tibeto-Burman groups were found in large numbers. As pointed out earlier, with the ascendancy of Prithivi Narayan Shah of Gorkha as the ruler of Nepal, in the second half of the 18th Century, various repressive measures were carried out to bring about the domination of the high caste Hindu Nepalis over the Buddhist and non-Hindu Nepali tribes and communities. All lands came under the royal possession including the "Kipat" landholdings, which was a kind of community ownership of lands of the Kirat region in Eastern Nepal, thus making the community landless. The only option left to them was to migrate to neighbouring Sikkim and Darjeeling areas, where land was plentiful. The Britishers were also encouraging the settlement of Nepalis into these areas with the growth of Tea and Cinchona plantations, and also as miners, sappers and agriculturists. Later there was also the migration of the Newars (the traders amongst the Nepalis, who were thought to be educationally and culturally more advanced) and also some Bahuns and Chettris.
The migrant community, the Nepalis, had to live side by side with the indigenous Lepchas and Bhutias. There are very little similarities among them in terms of socio-cultural ideas and values. The Nepalis were efficient agriculturists and it was they who introduced the terraced cultivation in the Darjeeling hills. The Lepchas practiced Jhum or slash and burn cultivation, fishing and hunting. The Bhutias were mostly traders and herders. Regarding religion, majority of the Nepalis were Hindus. Although, amongst them are the likes of Rais and Limbus, who practiced shamanism, akin to Bon religion, which was a pre-lamaist religion in Tibet, there are also Buddhists among the Nepalis like the Sherpas, the Tamangs and also some Newars (who are divided into Buddhamargis and the Shivamargis). The Bhutias are followers of Lamaist Buddhism. Lepchas were initially animists but later on, many of them converted to Lamaist Buddhism, under the influence of the Bhutias. Again later on, a vast majority of them converted to the Christian faith under the influence of the Christian missionaries.

The percentage of Buddhist Lepchas in 1961 and 1971 Census reports were 65.49 % and 63.63 %. In 1961 Christian Lepchas numbered 20.14 %, in 1971 - 34.59 % and 1991 - 37.74 %. There is an increase in the number of Christian Lepchas today in the area under study. There is a low percentage of Hindus amongst them in spite of living with the Nepalis for a long time.

Regarding the social institution, the Nepalis are polygamous whereas Bhutias are polyandrous. This also helped the Nepali community to multiply at a faster pace when compared to the Bhutias. Amongst the Lepchas, the growth was at a lower pace mainly because of the practice of “Levirate” and sorrorate. Men marrying women, past the child bearing age greatly affected their population.

But in spite of their differences in culture, traditions, economy and values, all the three hill communities comprising the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis started living together in harmony and co-operation. The “we feeling” of belongingness amongst the various Nepali communities was not initially born. This was gradually developed when they came to settle in Darjeeling after facing various hardships and difficulties together. In Nepal, different communities had their respective places of residence. The areas being compact, they had to converse in their own mother tongues. But in Darjeeling
they soon became bilingual, speaking their own mother tongue as well as Nepali, which became the link language. However today, many know only the Indo-Aryan language, i.e. the Nepali language.

Amongst the Lepchas living in the urban areas, a large number of them are fluent in the Nepali language. Though few of them know their Lepcha language, the rest of them know just a few words. Amongst the Tibetans, even though they know Nepali, they are encouraged to speak in the Tibetan language. The majority from the older generation knows their Tibetan language but the younger generations are soon forgetting it. It can be said that amongst them, preservation of their language and culture is very important. In order to retain their language, “children are punished if they do not speak in the Tibetan language by various tactics like not giving them their monthly pocket money.”

Thus it can be said that all groups speak in the Nepali language. There are “social and economic factors behind the rise of a feeling of identity among the Indian Nepalis and the language serves as a bond of unity among them.”

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEPALI LANGUAGE

There are various theories regarding the origin and history of the Nepali language. Initially, Nepali language was known by various names like Khas Kura, Gorkhali and Parbatye. It was the language of the Khasas, living in the North-Western parts of India. The fear of suppression and exploitation by the Mughals led this group to move westward towards Nepal. Various scholars believe “a tribe known as “Khas” migrated eastward along the Himalayas, entered southwest Tibet and northwest Nepal and established an empire there”11. The Khasas had established themselves as a strong political force in the Karnali zone of Nepal. The various kings in the Kathmandu Valley would ask for their aid and many soldiers would be sent to help them in their various wars. Various soldiers would eventually settle there. Thus, even before the conquest by Prithivi Narayan Shah, the Khasa language had spread far and wide.
The Khasas were later defeated by the Gorkhas, whose founder was Drabya Shah, whose ancestor, Jagdeo Khan, had been given the title ‘Shah’ by the Mughals. Prithivi Narayan Shah, the descendant of the 7th generation proved to be the most successful amongst them and it was he who conquered the whole territories and united them under the Nepal kingdom. In 1828, there were about thirteen languages spoken in Nepal namely, Khas, Magar, Gurung, Sunwar, Kachari, Hayu, Chepang, Murmi, Newari, Kirati, Limbu, Lepcha and others. Amongst them, excepting Khas Kura and Newari, none could be called proper languages. The Newari language with a rich culture and vocabulary was spoken widely in the Kathmandu Valley. But it was the Khas language being clear, simple and easy to understand, which soon gained prominence.

After the conquest of the Khasas by the Gorkhas, the process of assimilation and acculuration helped in the adoption of the Khas language by the Gorkhas. It not only became the lingua franca of the region but was soon adopted as the court language as well. Under the ruling dynasty of the Gorkhas, the Khas Kura soon assumed the name, “Gorkhali”. Other Tibeto – Burman speaking groups too adopted the Gorkhali language. The Tibeto – Burman dialects were unintelligible and could not be understood by all. Not only this, amongst the various communities and sub-communities, there were various dialects. For example amongst the Magars, there were three dialects and amongst the Rais, there were ten different dialects. So it was only natural for all the groups to adopt the language that could be understood by all, the Nepali language.

Even after fifty years of reign under Prithivi Narayan Shah nothing significant could be written in the Nepali language. But in spite of that, Gorkhali language began to be used widely in letters, documents and degrees. Moreover, with the expansion of his kingdom, east till the Teesta River, the Nepali language had influence on the Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Sherpas as well. Another reason for the spread of Nepali was because of the military recruitment and military service both in and out of Nepal. The British officers were conversant only in the Nepali language. In Nepal, the language was still known as Bhasa or Gorkhali. Various journals and associations show
the use of the word "Gorkha" like Gorkha Patra, Gorkha Khabar Kagat, Gorkhali Bhasa Literany Association, Gorkha Translation Cell and others.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN ADVANCES, ITS ROLE IN EDUCATION

As has already been mentioned, the Nepali language became the lingua franca in the region. Together with the other communities of Nepalis, there was the coming of the high caste Nepali Hindus like the Bahuns, Chhetris and the trading community of the Newars. They soon assumed a dominant role in the society, much to the resentment of the native Lepchas and Bhutias. In Nepal, the process of rapid Hinduisation and Sanskritisation of the Nepali society was taking place but the same could not happen in the eastern Himalayas, mainly because of the Lamaist Buddhist politico-religious power structure in Sikkim and Bhutan. In Darjeeling, there was a vacuum structure with neither a strong hold of the Hindus or the Lamaist Buddhism. This void was filled in by the Christian Missionaries.

The Baptist Mission had been established at Serampore in 1800 by William Carey, William Ward and Joshua Marshman. Their main objective was to spread the Christian religion. They also set up a Printing Press in the same year. The Holy Bible had been translated in Nepali and published by Dr. Rev. William Carey in 1821 itself. The Christian missionaries also wanted to spread education amongst the people in the Darjeeling Hills. It was in 1841 that the first attempt to spread Christianity was made by William Start. He wanted to reach the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. He opened a school for the natives and the headquarters were located at Tukvar. CG.Niebel, another missionary wrote Lepcha primers and he died in Darjeeling itself in 1865. The missionaries knew that the only way to reach the people was by learning the Nepali language. Translation of the Bible was done in both Nepali and Lepcha. In the Lepcha language, Genesis, Exodus, Matthew, Mark and John were published. In Nepali language, Chapters of Luke and of Acts were translated. However the real education in the Hills started in 1870, with the arrival of William Macfarlane of the Church of Scotland Mission. He was initially in Gaya and soon found that it was difficult to reach the people there. Instead, he had been deeply impressed when some native boys had been...
sent to him from Ging in Darjeeling. They had been quick to learn and were ready to accept the Christian teachings. The church would work among the Lepchas and Nepalis. The Scandinavian Alliance Mission, which had come to Darjeeling in 1892, would work among the Tibetans and Bhutanese Bhutias. They operated in Ghoom and Bhutia Busti.

Even before the coming of Macfarlane, Campbell had already opened a primary school for the native children. Many were being educated and together with this, the spread of consciousness amongst the Lepchas, Bhutais and Nepalis. Macfarlane set out before him the task of learning the Nepali language, “direct preaching of the word to the tribals, literature work to be built on the efforts of Start and Niebel and establish schools”. He also knew that it was important to set up training schools for teachers first. The Bible and the Christian scriptures were to become part of their course work. The scriptures were taught informally in schools. The schools were meant not only for the spread of education, but also to spread Christianity.

The Darjeeling Mission was divided into two: Kalimpong sub-division was under W.S. Sutherland and Darjeeling under Archibald Turnbull. Kalimpong was dominated from the 1890’s by Dr. Graham and from 1902, Rev. H.C. Duncan became the patriarch of Darjeeling District. Compared to Darjeeling and Kurseong, there were more converts to Christianity in Kalimpong. Moreover, since the caste system was prevalent amongst the Nepalis, their community sneered upon the Christian converts. Amongst the Nepalis, it was mainly the Matwals and the people belonging to the “service castes,” who converted to Christianity the most. The high castes like the Bahuns and Chhetris were more rigidly resistant to the advances of Christianity. Moreover, there were various benefits in education and employment to Christians. The Lepchas, the docile community in the hills were the favourites of the Scottish Missionaries and they were encouraged in every field, socially, economically, educationally, and in the church. It was mainly because of this, that a large number of Lepchas especially in Kalimpong are Christians, occupying important posts in government services, schools, churches and medical services.

Macfarlane had also shifted his base from Darjeeling to Kalimpong, seeing more favourable conditions for the spread of Christianity. Both
Darjeeling and Kurseong were surrounded by tea gardens and employed immigrant labourers. Even though the planters were impressed with the Scottish Mission, they were quite reluctant to give away the labourers in the fields. On the contrary, in Kalimpong, “the population was independent agriculturlists, masters of their own time and therefore missionaries could concentrate more on local people.”

In Darjeeling education was an end in itself and it was for the improvement of the people. Whereas in Kalimpong, compared to the preaching and church work, school work was secondary. In Darjeeling, services in the church were conducted in Nepali, Lepcha, Bengali, Hindi and English. In Kalimpong, only Nepali and Lepcha languages were used for service. By 1915, therefore, there were more Christians in Kalimpong. “2376 baptized Christians in Kalimpong, 722 in Darjeeling, 444 in Kurseong. In 1950, there were 1081 Christians in Darjeeling, 1,217 in Kurseong and 2,465 in Kalimpong.”

Moreover, with the coming of Macfarlane and him finding Nepali similar to Hindi, it was decided to make Hindi, the medium of instruction. It remained so till 1920. By 1873, “there were not less than 25 primary schools in the district in which 615 boys and girls received education.” By 1944, there were 6 High schools, 12 middle English schools for boys. For girls, there were 4 High schools and 4 Middle English schools. The twelve Middle English schools included Darjeeling School, Darjeeling Hindi Himachal Bhavan, Sukhiaopokhri (under Scottish Mission), Mirik (under Scottish Mission), Pedong (under Roman Catholic), Ghoom, Kurseong, Phansidewa, Kharibari, Naxalbari and two in Kalimpong.

The total number of hills boys and girls in the various high and middle schools can be seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys High School</th>
<th>Total No</th>
<th>Hill Boys</th>
<th>Hills Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2122</td>
<td>1297</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Middle School</td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>1123</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls High School</td>
<td>1266</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Middle School</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were also various schools established for the Anglo Indians and Europeans. Loreto Convent established in 1846 (under Catholic Nuns), St. Paul’s (1864), St. Joseph’s (started in 1888 by Catholic Jesuit priests and transferred to North Point in 1892), Queen Hills Girls School, (started on March 10th, 1895, now known as Mount Hermon opened by American Missionaries), Maharani Girls High School (1908). [The above are in Darjeeling] . In Kurseong, Goethal’s Memorial School (1906), St. Helen’s Convent (1890), St. Mary’s Training College (1889) now known as St. Alphonsus School. In Kalimpong, schools like Dr. Graham’s Homes established in 1900 and St. Joseph’s Convent (1922).

Even though in the various Sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Nepali language was not taught and education was given in Hindi and English, it was the Nepali language that soon gained importance. Moreover, especially amongst the Christian converts, religion started acquiring a more prominent place than ethnicity. “In this way, particularly amongst the Christians of these Himalayan hill areas, both the Nepal origin ethnic tribals and the Lepchas gradually lost their distinctive language and were gradually amalgamated with the huge group now known as Nepali.”

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEPALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: THE DEMAND TO MAKE NEPALI AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Even though education was not initially given in the Nepali language, the people had already developed social consciousness. This was especially because of the impact of the Nepali language, which had developed into a “Jatiya Bhasa.” Each Nepali community retained its own characteristic culture and tradition, its folk songs and dances. The Tamangs still danced their Tamang Selo dance to the tune of their folk instrument, the “Damphu.” The Limbus still performed the Chyabrong dance or Dhaan Naach, the Khukuri dance was retained to show the traditional valour of the Gorkhas, and the Marooni dance was and still is a very popular traditional dance. Nonetheless, the Nepali culture was made rich by its long tradition of oral folklores, in which were depicted the various feelings of man, their hopes, aspirations and
disillusionment. But the growth of nationalist sentiments amongst them was first manifested to loyalty to the Nepali language. This in turn produced a whole lot of Nepali writers. They wanted to improve the quality of their language, to produce a body of literature and to give it a status with other literary languages of India.

Many people of Nepali origin came under the influence of the Christian missionaries, converted to Christianity and received a fair deal of education. Names of Ganga Prasad Pradhan, Bhimdal Dewan and Sukhman Limbu can be mentioned. Amongst many who have contributed to the growth of language and literature, G P.Pradhan's name comes first in this regard. He had started printing books for the local populace. For Primary schools he published the first and second books and other short story books. He was the first Nepali preacher and he worked ardently with Macfarlane in 1875, with Turnbull from 1879-98 and R.Kilgour from 1905 – 1914, in translating the Bible into Nepali. He also started his own press mainly for the publication of Christian literature. He also started his journal Gorkha Khabar Khagat, 1901 – 1932.19. G P.Pradhan’s efforts are "laudable as he put the Bible and other Christian literature into their own hands in their own language, by linking the many small congregations through the Gorkha newspaper and magazines, by strengthening their identity as a community."


Paras Mani Pradhan (1898 – 1986), who was a great Nepali scholar, was the first among the Nepalis to write about Nepali Grammar. His “Nepali Vyakaran" was for the first time taught in schools in 1920. He had started “Chandrika (Magazine) from Kurseong (1917-1918). He has worked devoutly for the cause of the Nepali language. He has written textbooks for school

Suryabikram Gyawali and Dharnidhar Koirala were other literary activists who both wanted to arouse nationalist consciousness amongst the Nepalis in India. It was mainly because of the efforts of the trio namely Suryabikram Gyawali, Dharnidhar Koirala and Paras Mani Pradhan or "Su–Dha–Pa” as they were known, that resulted in the formation of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan on May 25th, 1924. Its sole aim was to promote the Nepali language and Literature. In 1932, the intellectuals began publishing the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika (monthly), which functions till today under the name "Diyalo." "The Sammelan has since then published forty five books on a variety of subjects including history, textbooks for schools, colleges and universities, anthology of short stories, poems and monographs on makers of Nepali literature."22.

Apart from these, there were other magazines and journals, "Gorkha Sathi" (1907) from Calcutta, from Kurseong there was “Chandrika” (1917–1918) “Chandra” (1914), “Gorkhali” (1916–1917) from Benaras. From Kalimpong there were “Adarsha” (1930), “Nebula” (1935–36) mainly to foster unity among Nepalis Bhutias and Lepchas and “Gorkha”(1945–55). From Darjeeling, Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika (1932–37),"Khoji “(1940),"Sathi” (1949), “Bharati” (1949–1958), were there. In Dehradun, Thakur Chandan Singh had established the Gorkha League in 1921."Gorkha Samsar” (1926) and “Tarun Gorkha” were published from here which mainly sought to bring social reforms.

The All India Gorkha League (AIGL) had also been established in 1943. It emphasized on the fact that the Nepalis are an ethnic community of India, having Nepali as their mother tongue, having its own culture and tradition. The publication of "Gorkha" (1945), the mouthpiece of AIGL added a
definite political flavour to Nepali literature. Dr. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, a colossal figure in linguistics and President of Sahitya Academy had always supported the cause of the Nepali language. He had recognized Nepali as one of the fifteen major literary languages in India.

Nepali Language had indeed come a long way. A great deal of social and political consciousness had already arisen amongst the Nepalis in Darjeeling. It was only natural, that they wanted Nepali to be the medium of instruction in the hill schools. Moreover it was already accepted by the Calcutta University, that Nepali could be used in Matric, IA and BA examinations on 24th July 1918. Since Matric exam could be written in Nepali, it was necessary that Primary education be taught in Nepali. However, there were two groups for and against this demand. Government-in-Council was formed with 13 members. Its first meeting was held on 31st May, 1927 and the second on 5th July, 1927. A text book Committee was also formed to examine the text books written in Nepali for primary schools. The various members of this committee were Father J.Dunnell, President Percival J.Griffith, Babu Motichand Pradhan, Dharnidhar Koirala and Suryabikram Jyawali. Father Duncan had said that out of 72 Primary schools, 62 were under Scottish Mission and here too, Nepali was used. Amongst 19 Upper Primary schools, 15 were under the Scottish Mission and here too, Nepali was taught. Amongst the 6 Middle schools in Darjeeling District, except in Turnbull, Nepali was taught. Dr J Graham had said that whenever Nepali textbooks are available, Nepali was to be taught without abandoning Hindi altogether.

Hari Pradhan laid down the decision taken in the Imperial Education Conference, London on 21st June 1927. ‘Primary education should be given in one’s mother tongue.’ The District lingua franca is Nepali and thus education also should be in Nepali.

One group of people was against Nepali being used as a medium of instruction. Amongst them were Father Truan, a Catholic, Father George Oog, the Bhutias represented by S W Ladenla and the Lepchas represented By Dr. Yen Singh Sitling. The Hindi people represented by Mathura Prasad Babu, was also against the use of Nepali.

The various other ethnic groups like the Lepchas and Bhutias had become the minority groups because of the Nepalis. They were feeling
insecure because of the numerical superiority of the Nepalis and felt that the Nepalis had already taken from them their lands and now wanted to impose on them their language too. The Nepali group felt that since everyone spoke Nepali, there was no need to introduce either Bhutia or Lepcha as the medium of instruction in schools. Still G T. Sitling continued his demand for the recognition of the Lepcha language.23

It was mainly to bring unity amongst the Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalis that the Hillmen’s Association had been formed in 1919. However, the three hill communities parted ways as the association had become Nepali dominated. Later a union known as the Hill People’s Social Union was formed, to foster unity between the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis, It also launched a monthly magazine "Nebula". But it was finally decided to make Nepali as the medium of instruction in Darjeeling District primary schools. It can also be mentioned here that till 1927, the Bengal Government called the language as Nepalese Pahariya or Khaskura. It was the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan which resolved to move the government for changing the name simply to Nepali. It was accepted by issuing a Government Notification Number 499 on 30th April 1932 meeting. It was resolved that Nepali is the only right term to denote the language. The University accepted it.

DEMAND FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF NEPALI

The next stage in the language movement was the demand to make Nepali as the Official Language in the Darjeeling Hills. The Nepalis had become more politically conscious by then. Culturally, physically, geographically and linguistically, they saw themselves different from the majority linguistic group in Bengal, the Bengalis. Strongly emphasizing what the SRC had recommended that "if 70 % or more of the total population of a district is constituted by a group, which is a minority group, their language and not the state language should be the official language in the district."24. Thus the Nepalis made their demand. Much to their disappointment, when the SRC visited Darjeeling, the West Bengal Provincial Congress Committee had laid down the Nepali speaking was 98% in the hills while in the District of Darjeeling, it was spoken by only 25.92% of the people. Contradicting this
statement, Mr. N.B. Gurung, then Minister from the hills in the Bengal Government said that, according to the District Handbook, Darjeeling Census 1951, Nepalis numbered 2,90,000 out of a total of 4,45,260 in the district.”25.  
The Communist Party of West Bengal had also supported the cause of the Nepali language then. “Power should be given to them to administer their own affairs in their own language, so that their education expands, to see that their economy not only expands but in order that the Nepali people who are inhabitants there, may advance.”26.  

On 13th September, 1961, the West Bengal Official Language Bill was passed, recognizing only Bengali to be used for official purposes in the state. Only later, it was laid that Nepali with Bengali, will be the official languages for the three Hill Sub-divisions of the Darjeeling District. “The delay by the West Bengal Government to implement this Act until 12 years later caused a lot of animosity between the Bengali and Nepali communities.”27.  

MOVEMENT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF NEPALI  
The movement for recognition of Nepali in the VIII th Schedule began as early as 1952, when delegates called upon Jawaharlal Nehru. On January18th. 1956, Anand Singh Thapa, Editor of Jagrat Gurkha from Dehradun raised this issue in a letter to the then President of India. In 1967, an organization called Nepali Bhasa Sangarsha Samiti was established under the leadership of Mr Guman Singh Chamling. It worked to give an even higher place to the Nepali language in Universities. In 1969, Nepali Bhasa Prayog Gara Abhiyan Samiti (Use Nepali Language Study Organization) was formed under the Presidentship of Mr Prem Sherpa with Mr Haren Allay as secretary.  
The All Indian Gorkha League formed in 1943 repeatedly demanded the inclusion of Nepali in the VIII th Schedule. The All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti (AINBS) formed on 31st January 1972, spearheaded the language movement. Initially, it was under Mr. Khadga Bahadur Singh and Secretary was Mr Haren Allay. It also started its journal called Hamro Bhasa. Nepali language was also recognised by the Sahitya Academy in 1975. The AINBS delegates met the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi several times. The emergency in India due to internal disturbances called for a period of eighteen
months from 1975 to 1977 put the language issue of the Nepalis in the backburner. But again on September 29th, 1977, members of different branches of AI NBS put forth a delegation to the Prime Minister in New Delhi.

They laid down that "the inclusion of Nepali represents the long cherished aspirations of over 5 million Indians with Nepali as their mother tongue and the non-inclusion of Nepali in the VIIIth Schedule has created a sense of deprivation in the minds of a large section of people in the country. It is natural for them to suffer from a sense of insecurity. Many privileges accruing from the Constitutional recognition of Nepali will help the development of a linguistic minority and will go a long way to bring about a deep emotional integration in our Nation." 28.

Moreover, Sikkim which had been integrated as a part of India in 1975 and which had a majority of Nepali speakers, further lent support to the cause. On 2nd July 1977, the West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a resolution recommending the Constitutional recognition of Nepali. On September 23rd 1977, Sikkim Vidhan Samiti passed a resolution to the same effect and so did the Legislature of Tripura on June 28th 1978 and Himachal Pradesh on September 13th 1991. The meeting with Prime Minister Morarji Desai on 29th May, 1979 was an unhappy one as he had branded Nepali as a foreign language and that he did not want to open the door for a score of tribal languages. As early as 1956, Mr. B G Kher, the then Chairman of the Language Commission, had also branded Nepali as a tribal language. All parties in Darjeeling including Congress, Janta, CPM and CPI had forgotten their respective affiliations and supported the language movement.

Paul Brass writing about the language and politics in North India had laid down that demands "must stop short of secession, demands based on language and culture will be accommodated, but the demands which are explicitly based on religious differences will not be accepted." 29. The Nepali Language movement fulfilled these criteria. Meanwhile in Darjeeling, other political parties had been formed. On 5th April, 1980 and 8th August, 1980 the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and Pranta Parishad had been formed respectively. The people under the leadership of Mr. Subhas Ghising of GNLF knew that the only way to get security of the Nepali people's identity was by the creation of separate state of Gorkhaland. Thus the ethnic and the
language movement in Darjeeling were deeply inter-connected with each other. "It was the long felt deprivation of the Indian Nepalis, especially the chauvinism of the majority community together with short sighted policy of the state Government in all fields that created the growth of GNLF and Subhas Ghirsing." 30. The Nepalis of Darjeeling had sought assimilative efforts to integrate with the rest of India. This movement having failed soon turned into resilience against the majority community, the Bengalis in Bengal. The deprivation experienced by the Nepalis in Bengal economically, politically and culturally had initially taken the shape of a language movement. This demand finally took the shape for movement for a separate state. (Details of the movement are given in the next chapter).

The demand for the Constitutional recognition of Nepali was also carried on unabated by Sikkim under the leadership of Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari. The Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Parishad had been formed in Gangtok in June 1990, with Mr. N B Bhandari as Chairman. He claimed the organization to be an organization of Nepalis from all over the country. There were organisations not only in Darjeeling and Sikkim but elsewhere too like Assam Nepali Students' Union, Guwahati, Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasa Samiti, Dehradun, Meghalaya Nepali Students' Union, Nepali Parishad, Dehradun and others who supported the same cause. Various political parties also gave support to it like the Congress, CPI (M), BJP, Janta Party, DMK, Telugu Desam and others. A total of 19 Private Bills were passed for Constitutional recognition of Nepali. One of the most elaborate was the one placed by Mrs. D K Bhandari of Sikkim Sangram Parishad on 28th February 1992, which finally led to the Constitutional recognition of the Nepali language on August 31st 1992 together with Manipuri and Konkani.

However, the controversy over the issue of Nepali language did not end here. Subhas Ghising was in favour of the Gorkha language, not Nepali. His argument was that if the Nepalis of Darjeeling want an identity of their own, separate from Nepalese of Nepal it would be possible only with the recognition of the Gorkha language. He further said that "those who were demanding the inclusion of Nepali language were activists of Greater Nepal." 31. But there were others who supported the Nepali language and not Gorkha. "As a modern literary language of India, we know only Nepali. We
also know that Mr. Ghising was a very strong advocate of the Nepali language and not the so-called Gorkha bhasha till a few years back.32.

It was laid that Ghisingh wanted to project himself as the champion of the cause of the Nepali language and of the Nepali community in the whole of India. It was only a political gimmick on the part of Ghisingh, to make him the leader of the Gorkhas. However, the long demand for Constitutional recognition of Nepali had got its due. This has boosted up the confidence of the Nepalis in India as being a part of India's pluralistic society. In 1999, in order to give concrete shape to recognition of the Nepali language, it was laid down that sign boards, hoardings and car number plates, boasting English letters and numbers were to be pulled down in the Darjeeling hills and Nepali language was to be used instead. Even though the main objective of the linguistic movement was to integrate the Nepalis with the rest of India, we cannot rule out the economic connotation behind it. Nepali today has been accepted as a subject in various examinations for jobs both in the Centre and the States (e.g. UPSC, WBCS), and has opened up vast employment opportunities. Moreover, before this, various schools and colleges in Sikkim, Darjeeling District and Dooars and schools in North-East India have Nepali as a medium of instruction. About ten Universities in India like North Bengal University, (set up in 1962), Benaras Hindu University (BHU), North Eastern Hill University, Guwahati University, Tripura, Patna University have recognized Nepali for under Graduate and Post Graduate courses. (The Department of Nepali for Post Graduate Studies opened in North Bengal University in 1978). Recently in 2002, Darjeeling Government College opened up a Nepali Post Graduate Department. NBU and BHU offer Ph.D. Degree in Nepali. The West Bengal Board of Education, CBSE, ICSE and ISCE Boards of Education teach Nepali as a vernacular subject.

THE LEPCHA LANGUAGE AND THEIR DEMAND TO MAKE IT A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The language movement by the Nepalis could not remain a monolithic one for long. The Lepchas had already established the Lepcha Association in
1921 under Mr. Sando Tshering Tamsang and Mr. G.T. Sitling as General Secretary. But it was registered only in 1925 under the Presidentship of G.T. Sitling. It was recognized under the Certificate of Registration of Societies Act XXI, 1860 vide No S/18713/909 dated 27th March 1950. It was affiliated with the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivasi Parishad vide Registration No 49/1967-68 w.e.f. from 27th March 1997. It has been renamed as the Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association (ILTA) from 8th March 2004. 33.

The socio-economic and cultural life of the Lepchas, the indigenous group in the Darjeeling area has undergone various changes. With the influx of the Nepali migration and especially after the appointment of Dr. Campbell in 1839, the proportion of Lepchas and Bhutias to the Nepalis turned out in favour of the Nepalis. The homeland of the Lepchas, known as Mayel Lyang, "extended from Himalayas down to Titaliya in the vast plains of India, (now in Bangladesh after partition) and to the east, it extended up to Gopmochi Mountain, the tri-junction of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, it was extended as far as the Aroon river, now in Nepal." 34.

The Lepchas are considered to be the most ancient of all communities, having a rich and varied culture and tradition. They are probably the only "indigenous race east of Israel who claim themselves to be the children of God." 35. In the various villages and hamlets visited, especially where they live in compact areas, the Lepchas know their language. 36. In Ngnassey basti or Village, having a total of 82 households, 50 houses are Lepcha households and a vast majority of them know their Lepcha language. 37 Lower Tanek, Nongsong, Upper Tashiding, Lower Tashiding constituencies of Tashiding and Tanek Samasti, showed Lepchas as the largest amongst the scheduled Tribes numbering 238, 48, 100, 165 out of total of 762, 229, 704 and 756, but numbering only 31.2%, 20.9%, 14.2% and 21.8%. Nonetheless, a vast majority know the Lepcha language but converse in Nepali with the other hill communities. It was however observed, that the linguistic consciousness has gripped them and they are eager to keep their language and culture intact. 38

The Lepchas have a rich and highly developed script. It is believed to have been invented by Thekong Mensalong, a legendary figure, who lived towards the beginning of the 17th Century. Others say it was given by the
Mother Creator, Itbu Moo herself with the mountains, rivers and lakes. Another version is that it was invented by Chador Namgyal, the third consecrated ruler of Sikkim.

The Tibetans translated the remaining books of the Lepchas in Tibetan. The Tashay Namthar or Namthar Tsung containing the biography of Padmasambhava, the one responsible for taking Buddhism into Tibet "acted as one piece of literature that carried the torch of the written language of the Lepchas undermined for centuries together."39. After the Bhutanese attack of Mayel Lyang in 1700's, the Lepchas came under the Gorkha threat under Prithivi Narayan Shah. In fact when Darjeeling was granted as a gift to British East India Company, the deed of grant was written in English, Hindustani and Lepcha. The British initially tried to bring about the progress of the Lepchas even though like the Tibetans they wanted to bring about the conversion of the Lepchas to Christianity. It was mainly for this purpose that Genesis, a part of Exodus, Gospels of Mark and John were translated into Lepcha and Hymnbooks were printed in 1911. Christian prayers and hymns were done in Lepcha. The Baptist Mission in Calcutta had also taken out a fount for Lepcha. Colonel G B Mainwaring of the Bengal Staff Corps was so impressed with the Lepchas, that he married a Lepcha woman, learnt their language and also wrote the Grammar of the Rong (Lepcha) Language in 1876. The Lepcha language was also the language of the courts, administration and justice. Everyone inhabiting the region knew the language.

However, as Nepali was fast gaining pre-dominance in the hills, more attention was given to it rather than to the Lepcha language. Both A, Turnbull and WS Sutherland "had lamented the need for Lepcha literature but the pressure of other work and lack of educated translators left this need unfulfilled."40. In the 1920's itself, the Lepchas demanded that their language be introduced in the various schools like Nepali. Unfortunately, the British Government turned down their demand. On top of that, the Nepali Text Book Committee in 1929 gave the following arguments: (i) As there was no Lepcha text books, there is no point in teaching a boy Lepcha language, (ii) Unless the language is actually dying out, the majority of the Lepcha boys will learn to speak it in their homes,(iii) The written language of Lepchas is of no practical use in after life , (iv) The Lepcha boy already has to study both Nepali
and Hindi at some stage or other, why add to his difficulty by teaching him to read a third language in which there is practically no literature.41

Even after the Britishers left India, it seems that the West Bengal Government has not given the Lepchas their due. Hindi, Tibetan, Urdu, Nepali, Bengali and Dzonka languages are accepted in the various schools and colleges in Darjeeling District. The Lepcha Language has been virtually ignored in their own homeland. Nepali, Tibetan and Lepcha are called the three fraternal languages of the Darjeeling District. Bhutia and Nepali are taught from the primary stage up to the University level but the Lepcha language, the oldest, richest and the most developed language has been debarred from being recognized as a language also.42. The Bengal Government too has shown a step motherly treatment to the Lepchas. It was mainly because of the various efforts of the Nepali Academy and the dominant Nepali population's assertive behaviour that they succeeded in introducing Nepali as one of the subjects in the various schools right up to the graduation and post graduation levels. It was also introduced as one of the Official Languages in the three sub-divisions of Darjeeling District. The Lepcha language failed to be introduced even in the primary level of education, let alone being the official language of the District.

The Indian Constitution has laid down various rights and privileges for linguistic and religious minorities. In the Chapter of Fundamental Rights, Article 29 says, "Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. Article 30 states (i) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, (ii) The State shall not in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority whether based on religion or language. "43 Article 350 A lays down that "It shall be the endeavour of every State and every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups." 44 Though these provisions were clearly spelt out, the minority language of the Lepchas was grossly neglected. It was mainly because of this that the Lepcha children were
forced to study in an alien language. But in spite of indignation on the part of the Lepchas, there is no protest or revolt amongst them. However today, under the aegis of the Lepcha Association, with its Headquarters at Kalimpong, the language and cultural consciousness amongst the Lepchas is fast growing ground. The Association has various objectives, namely “(1) Recognition and introduction of the Lepcha language in the schools and colleges for Lepcha children in Darjeeling District. (2) Recognition of indigenous tribal Lepchas under the list of Primitive Tribal Group. (3) The Correction of Census Data and Publication of genuine and authentic figures for the Lepcha population.”45.

A protest rally was organised by the Lepchas under the Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association on 11th October, 2004 in Kalimpong. Its main demand was for the introduction of Lepcha language in the schools and colleges. Moreover it was mainly to bring cultural revivalism among the Lepchas, that the Lepcha Cultural Centre or Longtek Chok Lee was established in Kalimpong in 1967. Some Lepcha songs, music, folk tales, dramas (like “Teesta-Rangeet” - dance drama written by noted Lepcha scholar, author and Linguist, K P Tamsang in 1960’s), “Nalmit” (1970) were written and enacted centred around the Lepcha language, literature and culture. The Mani Printing Press in Kalimpong owned by a Nepali (Newar) added Lepcha to the already existing sections of English, Nepali and Tibetan. It helped to bring out a bi-monthly journal called Aachuley. The Annual Bilingual magazine, King Gyaebbo Achyok is also there in English and Lepcha, first published on 20th December 1995.

They have various books to their credit including a huge Lepcha English Encyclopedia Dictionary written by K P Tamsang.46 It is no wonder that the Lepchas in Darjeeling District, the indigenous community of the area, are demanding that Primary education should at least be given in their own mother tongue to the Lepcha children, in lieu with Article 350A of the Constitution.

The Lepchas of Darjeeling District compare themselves to their brethren in Sikkim. Lepcha was already taught in the various primary schools before Sikkim was integrated as a part of India on 19th April 1975. It is also
recognized as one of the ten official languages of Sikkim. (Sikkim Official Language Act 1977 (5 of 1977) Amendment, 1995)

It was laid down by the Pawan Chamling Government that Lepcha, will be taught up to the degree level in colleges of Tadong and Namchi in Sikkim from the year 2000 onwards. "Even though the colleges in Sikkim come under North Bengal University, Lepcha language has been recognized out there, but not in Darjeeling District. It is discrimination against us, Lepchas of Darjeeling district by N B U." The ILTA on its own efforts has been successful in establishing Lepcha schools all over the district.

The survival of a community depends on its language. The Lepchas have a rich language but the problem lies in the usage of the language. The Lepchas today are encouraged to know, preserve and promote their rich language and culture. The K P Tamsang Language and Literary Award is given to persons or associations for maintenance and promotion of the Lepcha language and culture. Compared to the majority group in Darjeeling, the Nepalis, the Lepchas are numerically inferior. The only way to preserve their ethnic identity it seems would be the proper preservation, maintenance and use of their rich and varied language, culture and literature. The Government should take steps to look into their demand quickly otherwise the peace loving community may turn violent. The language issue of the Lepchas is inseparably associated with their socio-economic development and also with their existence as an ethnic identity.

ISSUE OF LANGUAGE WITH THE BHUTIAS

Compared to the Lepchas and Nepalis, the other group, the Bhutias are not much concerned with the economic implications of the Constitutional recognition of their language. This is mainly because comparatively, they are better off, having own shops and doing business, like the hotel industry. Even though there has been an all pervasive influence of the Nepali culture and language on them, they too are keen on preserving their own language, culture and tradition. Even though Darjeeling and Kalimpong were acclaimed as very important centres of Tibetan art, language and culture for a long time, there was no provision to study Tibetan in the Darjeeling District. It was only in
the Government High School in Darjeeling and a few private schools in Kalimpong, which had provisions for teaching the Tibetan language. Even the Government was moved for the introduction of Tibetan language in all secondary schools of Darjeeling from Class five onwards. One of the chief contributions of the Bhutia Welfare Association which was established in 1968 is the introduction of Bhutia language teaching in Municipal schools of Darjeeling, restoring Bhutia in the Higher Secondary and Graduate level syllabi. Students taking Bhutia were also eligible for medical and engineering entrance examinations.

With the Constitutional recognition of the Nepali language, the minority ethnic groups especially the Lepchas are apprehensive that they will suffer disadvantages in comparison to Nepali speakers in getting jobs. The Bhutias are also mostly interested in keeping up social and cultural status, through the recognition of their cultural entity, symbolized by their language. The Bhutia Association no longer exists. In its place is another organization, the Kyidhu-Chu, which is a union of ten mini associations. It not only represents the local Bhutias on all important issues affecting the community but also plays an important role to maintain and preserve Tibetan culture, language and tradition.

CONCLUSION

Each and every community in Darjeeling has its own characteristics. Each ethnic group has its own set of problems and demands. It is mainly because of the growth of population and scarcity of resources, that the respective leaders are trying to bring ethnic consciousness amongst their own groups, to get a share of the economic produce. In this aspect, the ethnic symbol, “Language” is invariably used to show the distinctiveness of their cultural identity and also to mark them off from other ethnic groups. Language may be a cultural element but by making it a fundamental issue, the various ethnic groups make it the main factor for raising consciousness and identity amongst their own members.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


6. Nepali was the mother-tongue of 1.3 million people in 1971, most of them living in Darjeeling District. In 1981 the total number of Nepali speakers were 7,50,000.

7. It is a stark reality that even today, Bahuns and Chettris, who are the two high caste Nepalis, continue to capture high positions in politics, bureaucracy, police and military in Nepal.

8. If we see the classification of Nepali society today, it can be categorized into three main orders namely, 1st order – (i) Bahuns (ii) Thakuris (iii) Chettris. (they are categorized as Tagadhari or wearing the sacred thread. 2nd order – Newars, Magars, Gurung, Tamangs Limbus (Matwali or drinking caste). 3rd order – Sarki (cobbler), Kami (blacksmith) and Darji (tailor) - the serving caste. The 1st and 3rd groups belong to the Indo-Aryan group whereas the 2nd order is Tibeto-Mongloid groups.


13. Rev. Namthak Rongong (Lepcha) was one of the first Pastors in Kalimpong. Rev. Gyan Tshering Sitling (Lepcha) was Pastor of Macfarlane Memorial Church, Kalimpong. Rev. P S Targain (Lepcha) was ordained on 7th May 1933 and succeeded Rev. G T Sitling as Pastor of the same church. Dr. Ongden Rongong completed his medical course in 1905 and joined the Charteris Hospital, Kalimpong, which was established in 1894. He was also the first native doctor in Kalimpong. Dr. Yen Singh Sitling was another doctor in the Darjeeling hills. Sister Dawa Ongmit Karthak (Lepcha) was the first Non-European lady to be inducted as Matron of the Charteris Hospital. The above mentioned are all Lepchas and Christians.


15. *Ibid*, pp. 47


19. This was second only to Motiram Bhatta’s Journal, Gorkha Bharat Jiwan (1886), the first Nepali journal. This was published from Varanasi and its object was to enrich the Nepali language and to homogenize the Nepali society.


21. J.A. Ayton was an English Professor, who used the word “Nepali” for the first time.


23. It was revealed during an interview with Mr. Lyangsong Tamsang, General Secretary of the Lepcha Association, Kalimpong, that it was mainly because Dr. J A Graham had given more importance to Nepali than the
Lepcha language, which resulted in Mr. G T Siting leaving the Protestant faith and embracing the Roman Catholic religion.

28. Memoranda put forth by AINBS, signed by Prem Kumar Allay, General Secretary, AINBS, and 29th September, 1977.
33. Presently the President of the association is Mr. D T Tamsang and General Secretary is Mr. Lyangsong Tamsang.
36. Villages visited – Chegra, Mani Gumba, Bong Basti, Tashiding, Tanek, Ngassey.
37. Fieldwork Report.
38. Fieldwork Report.
41. Report of the Nepali Text Book Committee. 1926, pp 14
42. Today Tibetan is taught as a first language in the Tibetan Refugee Schools in Kalimpong, Sonada and Darjeeling. It can be taken as a subject from kindergarten to class 12 in various schools in Darjeeling. It is also taught as an elective subject in Degree Course. Ph.D in Tibetan is given in Benaras Hindu University and Vishwa Bharati University, Bolpur.


44. Ibid., pp. 108

45. Aachuley, April, 2002.

46. Some publications in 2004 include P T Lepcha's "Mayel Pandaor" (Treasure of the Lepcha World - an award winning book), "Rong Sung Gyaom" (A Collection of Lepcha Folk Tales) and others. He was awarded the Bhasha Samman Award in the year 2000.

47. Interview with General Secretary, Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association (ILTA), Mr. Lyangsong Tamsang, 14th April, 2005.

48. At present, there are 30 night schools in Kalimpong Sub-division, 2 in Darjeeling, 3 in Sittong (Kurseong), 1 in Mirik and also one each in Delhi and Kolkata. In Gnassey village, Lepcha school was established in 1957 itself and it is still running till today. Interview with Mr. Gaeboo Lepcha, President of Gnassey Lepcha Shezum on 22nd May, 2006 and who is also a teacher in the Lepcha school there, laid down that presently there are 22 students in the age group 16-35. Classes are held on weekends in the evenings for one hour. The same is true of the other villages as well.

49. In 2004, The Lepcha Night School, Samthar, Kalimpong, was given this award for contributing excellently towards the maintenance and development of Lepcha language and literature.