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UNDERSTANDING GORKHALAND MOVEMENT IN THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

Statehood ambitions are sometimes couched in terms of linguistic diversity and cultural uniqueness in order to gain regional political support. The second phase of the declaration of political yearnings by diverse groups is the demand for statehood to distinct territories in various states. The first phase of post-independence reorganization of states followed closely along linguistic lines. As a second level of assertion, however, the Gorkhaland region of West Bengal has called for independence on the basis of the 'unique culture' of the hill regions. Thus, calls for a new state emerged with notably more fervour. To analyze the politics of statehood in relation to the Gorkhaland movement, the researcher has attempted to do so in this paper. The book delves into the effects and difficulties of the movement as well.

Key words: Linguistic lines , unique culture, Political support ,Researcher

Introduction:

The Gorkhas of West Bengal's hilly districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Kurseong have sparked calls for a new nation called Gorkhaland. Some factors that contribute to separatism include the lack of development in large swaths of the domain, the dominance of people from other parts of the states, a sense of neglect, unequal economic development, and a sense of deprivation or exploitation, but cultural and linguistic diversity emerge as more fundamental justifications for calling for a Gorkhaland of its own. People in the Gorkha area, who have always been considered to be citizens of Nepal, have recently taken up arms to assert their autonomy. The battle for Gorkhaland has been going on for a century in West Bengal's northern regions. During British India, the first calls were made for an independent state. After gaining independence, however, the movement shifted focus. After India gained independence, the All Indian Gorkha League began advocating for a separate nation called Gorkhaland. With the formation of the GNLF in 1980, led by Subash Ghising, the movement gained momentum and eventually became violent. After a tripartite agreement was signed between the federal government, the state government, and Subash Ghising, who represented the GNLF, the demand for a separate state was dropped, and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was established to oversee development in the region. The demand for Gorkhaland was revived in October 2007 when Bimal Gurung, who had previously created the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, did so. In 2011, the DGHC was replaced by the Gorkha Territorial Administration per an agreement between the state government and the head of the GJM, Bimal Gurung, thereby ending the long quest of the Gorkhaland movement (*Amiya K Samanta, 2000*).

Objectives:

The main objectives of this study are as follows-

- To study the root causes of the Gorkhaland Movement
- To discuss the politics of statehood in regard to the Gorkhaland
- To discuss the impact of the movement.

Significance of the Study:

The Gorkhaland Movement has been a contentious social and political issue in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, India, for well over a century. For many years, members of the ethnic group known as the Gorkhas have fought within the bounds of the Indian constitution for the creation of their own state under the name Gorkhaland. The purpose of this research is to learn how the ethnic and identity components of the Gorkhaland Movement affected the economic, cultural, and historical conditions of the Gorkha people. As a starting point, this study examines the more than a century-long desire for a separate Gorkhaland state. The Gorkhas of the Darjeeling Hills have struggled for separate recognition inside the Indian state for a very long time. Protests, strikes, and agitations are only some of the social and political movements that have followed the Gorkhas' desire to establish their

own state that is representative of their cultural past and aspirations. The second issue is the Gorkha people's ongoing struggle to define themselves. Despite their significant achievements as the country's defenders and their loyalty to India, the Gorkhas sometimes struggle to develop their distinct identity inside the nation. This identity crisis has had lasting negative effects on the Gorkha community's social, cultural, and mental well-being. The core reasons behind the Gorkhaland Movement can only be grasped if the origins and implications of this identity crisis are understood. Gorkhaland's possible future as an economically and culturally autonomous state is the third point of contention. It's important to look at whether or not Gorkhaland can stand on its own economically and make use of its unique cultural heritage. This requires an understanding of the economic possibilities open to a sovereign Gorkhaland, as well as the challenges that may arise from their implementation. The cultural differences of the Gorkhaland Movement must be evaluated in light of the other ethnic communities present in West Bengal. The Gorkhas are distinct because of their own language, culture, and history. The fourth issue is the need for a permanent solution to the Gorkhas' identity dilemma. One possible solution to the Gorkhas' longstanding desire is to create a separate state within the framework of the Indian constitution. This research aims to investigate the potential of such a solution and its potential effects on the region's social, political, and economic dynamics. The Gorkhas all over the globe seeing Gorkhaland as a friend, philosopher, and guide is the fifth and last issue. Gorkhas' emotional investment in and global outlook on the concept of Gorkhaland are key to appreciating the movement's relevance outside the area. The purpose of this study is to investigate the diasporic effects of the Gorkhaland Movement and its international aspects.

Root causes of the Movement:

ECONOMY :

The economic factor highlights the theme of under-development, indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources of the region, the absence of benefits for the hill people from the resources of the region and the lack of any collaborative effort to the development of the region. It is also felt that Darjeeling with its global brand name would do better if it were separate from West Bengal (Katwal, 2015).

IDENTITY CRISES:

Before the violent war that erupted in the 1980s, the subject of development and economics was the primary worry of the area. Indian Nepalese are frequently labelled as "migrants" or "foreigners," and they are unable to satisfactorily respond to queries about their heritage because of Nepal's independence (Katwal, 2015). Subhas Ghising, head of the GNLF, initially raised the issue of a "lost or threatened identity" during the 1980s era of violence. The Gorkha people readily recognised his 'lost and endangered identity' problem due to their shared experience of being targeted by antiforeigner activities in Nepal and prejudice on the part of the country's majority population during ethnic conflicts in the North East (Katwal, 2015). At this time, the fight is mostly about asserting their place within the larger Indian national identity. Fear of Bengal and its people had also grown through the years, as seen by this. Therefore, the right to govern themselves as an autonomous and self-aware society that contributes to the development of the area and the country as a whole provides the ultimate foundation for separation from Bengal.

ADMINISTRATION :

Darjeeling's government is made up of two branches: the civil and the police. The New Kutchery Building, commissioned by the British in 1897, now serves as the administrative centre for the area. Darjeeling's governance was firmly in the hands of foreigners throughout the independence era of India. Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Kalimpong are distinct from the rest of Bengal in terms of their history, language, politics, and geography. The ability to read and write in Bengali is a prerequisite for taking the West Bengal Civil Service test. Non-Bengali speakers who do not meet these requirements will not be accepted into West Bengal's civil service. However, officials who are not native Nepalis and who are moving from the plains to the hills are not need to take the test in order to obtain functional proficiency in Nepali. The British also established the town's health and hospital departments in 1883 through the Eden Sanitarium, which is today the district hospital and the sole government hospital in the area. Private options for long-term care include the Mariam Nursing House, Planters Club, Yuma Nursing Home, etc. However, the people simply cannot afford the high cost of care at such facilities. Some government-run hospitals, such as the medical university in Siliguri (the plain sub-division), have superior facilities than the district hospitals in the highlands. But for the hill people to come down to the plains and take advantage of the cheap service from them, they have to pay a lot on everything from meals to lodging (*Swatahsiddha Sarkar, 2013*).

Politics of Statehood

The demand is now being expressed via ongoing strikes, rallies, etc. Along the lines of an ethno-linguistic-cultural feeling of Nepali-speaking Indians who want to be recognised as Indian Gorkhas, the campaign for Gorkhaland has gained traction and increased in recent years. It's easy to dismiss the Gorkhaland demand in light of the current political climate. There has been agitation for this for a long time, with the peak coming in the 1980s with the Gorkha National Liberation Front's violent campaign. As a result of the protests, the state government delegated part of its administrative responsibilities to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, a local governing body. Later on, the Gorkhaland Janmukti Morcha (GJM) emerged as a new political party and has been at the forefront of the movement since 2007. As a direct result of GJM's efforts, the Hill Council was replaced with the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, which has far more authority than its predecessor. The West Bengal government is becoming more hesitant to give up control of Darjeeling due to the increased cash from the region's thriving tea and tourist industries. The state administration used to get out of responsibility by saying the Union government had the ultimate say on whether or not to form a new state. The small size of Darjeeling's population

means that no government in Delhi would want to upset the balance of power in Kolkata. Therefore, Darjeeling's political backing is insufficient to establish a separate state (Gupta, Tomal Sen, 2013).

Proponents of Gorkhaland emphasised the shared Gorkha identity of the Nepali-speaking minority in the Darjeeling hills and utilized complaints from the Gorkhas about a sense of indifference, dominance by the Bengalis, and mobilization. Most of the businesses in the major cities of the hills are owned by Bengalis, it has been reported. While the Bengalis are considered natives of the highlands, the Nepali-speaking inhabitants are sometimes resentful of their success. All Gorkhas support Bimal Gurung and his Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) party because they share his view that their lack of progress is the fault of the state government of West Bengal. A free and sovereign Gorkhaland inside India is their ultimate goal. Subash Ghisingh, a former radical who advocated for more autonomy for the hill tribes, later abandoned this option in favour of one that is more practical (Nilamber Chhetri, 2014).

In Darjeeling, language has always been a divisive topic. The state has used the census as a tool to falsely portray Nepali speakers as a minority in certain areas, despite the reality that they make up a sizable majority. This sociological trend may be seen in the emergence of the Nepali dialect on the hillsides throughout the 1960s. The West Bengal administration and the national government used the politics of census enumeration to classify Nepali as a minority language, with the hope of avoiding having to use Nepali as the medium of instruction in Darjeeling's public schools.

Impact of the Gorkhaland Movement

The economy of Darjeeling suffered as a result of the Gorkhaland Movement. Strikes, road and rail blockades, and other forms of mass protest have been commonplace throughout the last 40 years. Large sums of money were lost since businesses including stores, restaurants, hotels, banks, and hospitals had to shut for the duration of the uprising (Baskota 2017). Daily wage plantation workers experienced a temporary loss of income when tea gardens ceased operating for unknown amounts of time. Shopkeepers, taxi drivers, porters, hotel owners, and restaurant staff have all seen their businesses suffer as a result of the persistent violence. Several national roads were closed during demonstrations, disrupting commerce and industry (ibid) and cutting off access to major population hubs, halting the flow of goods and services (Chattopadhyay, 2008). It comes as no surprise that the non-Nepalese and Bengali citizens of Nepal are opposed to the initiative. However, those Gorkha who saw the Gorkhaland Movement as their only hope of establishing an independent state cannot be held completely responsible for these deaths. Anecdotal evidence from conversations with a small number of local Gorkha residents suggests that they are prepared to endure financial hardships in the midst of upheaval.

CHALLENGES:

Both north Bengal and Sikkim have been affected by the Gorkhaland movement. During the three-month strike that began in June 2017 and was led by Bimal Gurung, the movement had a significant impact on tourism. Sixty schools were closed, fifty-four cars were destroyed, seventy-three government buildings were reduced to ashes, and ninety-three tea estates in Darjeeling and Kalimpong were forced to close. In an effort to defuse the tense situation, internet access has been cut off for the next 28 days. The worldwide market for Darjeeling tea was impacted by the GJM-called strike. The employees on the tea plantations had suffered significant personal losses and were forced to appeal to the central government for aid.

Conclusion:

Since its inception, the Gorkhaland Movement has undergone many changes. The founding of the Darjeeling Hill Council (DGH) and the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) are the movement's two most notable accomplishments to date. Gorkhaland Movement leaders and supporters want to establish an independent Gorkha state inside India. However, the Kamtapur Movement, which is based on the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Rajbanshi Community, has also been calling for a separate state out of West Bengal inside Indian Territory. Tamangs, on the other hand, are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nepal and a devout Buddhist culture. They have also ramped up their efforts in recent years to safeguard their unique heritage.

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