

**COMMUNIST PARTY IN DARJEELING AND  
THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT (1943- 2011)**

**A Dissertation Submitted**

**To**

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the  
**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**By**

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I, **Saurav Chettri**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled “**Communist Party in Darjeeling and the Gorkhaland Movement (1943-2011)**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award degree of **Masters of Philosophy**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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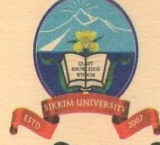
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### COMMUNIST PARTY IN DARJEELING AND THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT (1943- 2011)

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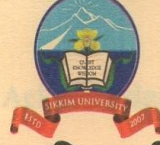
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### Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Communist Party in Darjeeling and the Gorkhaland Movement (1943-2011)**” submitted to Sikkim University for partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of **Masters of Philosophy** in the **Department of History**, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by **Mr. Saurav Chettri** under my guidance and supervisor. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

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- Saurav Chettri

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## **Abbreviations**

AASU – All Assam Student Union

AIGL – All India Gorkha League

AINBS – All India Nepali Bhasa Samity

AITUC – All India Trade Union Congress

AMKSU – All Meghalaya Khasi Students' Union

BNRP – Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad

CITU – Centre of Indian Trade Union

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

CPI – Communist Party of India

CPI (M) – Communist Party of India Marxist

CPI (M-L) – Communist Party of India Marxist Leninist

CPRM – Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist

DGAHC – Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council

DGHC – Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

GDNS – Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan

GJMM – Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha

GNEO – Gorkha National Ex-Servicemen Organisation

GNLF – Gorkha National Liberation Front



GNSF – Gorkha National Students’ Union

GNWO – Gorkha National Women’s Organisation

GNYP – Gorkha National Youth Front

GPF – Gorkhaland Peoples Front

GRA – Gorkhaland Regional Authority

GTA – Gorkha Territorial Administration

GVC – Gorkha Volunteers’ Cell

GWO – Gorkha Welfare Organisation

INTUC – Indian National Trade Union Congress

NSS – Nepali Sahitya Sammelan

SFI – Students Federation of India

SRC – States Reorganisation Commission

SUCI – Socialist Unity Centre of India

TMC – Trinamool Congress

# **Chapter: 1**

## **Introduction**

The year 1835 (1<sup>st</sup> February), was the day when the Sikkim-Patti Raja handed over Darjeeling to the British as a grant and the Darjeeling hills which was part of Sikkim became part of British India. After the grant, Darjeeling became the “Sanatorium” for the British, but at the same time Darjeeling was home for many. The people of Darjeeling, thereafter, were dominated by the British in every walk of life. No one was able to question the British authority due to the fear of “Hatta Bahar System” (a system in which the person and his family were taken out of the tea garden area if he/she questions or talks against the British Authority). In the year 1907, “The Hills Men Association” was formed and soon demanded a separate administrative unit of Darjeeling; from this time onwards, in Darjeeling the people were mobilised against the British Authority by some literate people of this place. The trend of questioning and speaking against the authority slowly started spreading in different parts of Darjeeling hills as well as in the plains.

With the increasing oppression by the British authority, some youths in Darjeeling started to take some armed action against the British and also raised their voice against the injustice, caste system, etc., within their community. The actions taken by the youths became one cause which attracted the Communist Party leaders towards Darjeeling. The main face of this movement was Ratanlal Brahmin. He raised his voice against the caste system in Darjeeling leading to the formation of the Gorkha Dhukha Niwarak Sammelan (GDNS) which worked as a social reform group; later on

Ratanlal became the face of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling and a unit of the party was formed here in the year 1943.

In the year 1943, the effect of the devastating Second World War that was still on, spread in most parts of the world. During the same year, the Bengal Province faced the most severe famine that came to be known as “the Great Bengal famine of 1943”. Its effect was also seen in Darjeeling with the prices of goods going up. Ratanlal Brahmin and his group of activists were involved in ransacking the godowns of the shopkeepers, who were hoarding goods to increase the price, and those goods were distributed to the people by the activists. In Bengal also the Communist Party of India activists were carrying out similar activities. “On hearing the activities of Ratanlal Brahmin, the leader of CPI, Sushil Chatterjee deputed to Darjeeling intended to meet him”.<sup>1</sup> After this, Ratanlal Brahmin and his fellow activists were influenced by the Communist ideology which led to the formation of Communist Party of India, Darjeeling branch, in 1943. With the advent of the communist party of India in Darjeeling the trade unions were formed like the Gariman Union (the union of the Bullock Carts riders which used to ferry between Siliguri and Darjeeling), Rikshaw Pullers Union and the many other Trade Unions in Darjeeling under the red flag including “The Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers Union” which exists till now. This was the most important union then. After the year 1943, the Communist movement started in Darjeeling which had various phases in the history of Darjeeling.

### **1.1: Statement of Problem**

The famous Meerut Conspiracy case of 1929-32 marked the beginning of the growth of communist ideology in India. Many places in India were very much

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<sup>1</sup> Bomjan D.S. (2008), *Darjeeling Doors People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.94.



influenced by this communist idea derived from the teachings of Karl Marx. Bengal was one such place which was highly influenced by this idea and which became one of the hubs of Marxist thinkers. The year 1943 marked the birth of Marxist idea in Darjeeling with the formation of the Communist Party of India's Darjeeling branch. The communists influenced most of the people in Darjeeling, as this party was the party for the workers and in Darjeeling maximum percentage of the population were the workers (mostly in the tea gardens). Just after the end of the Second World War, in the last election of British India held in August 1946, Darjeeling was allotted two Constituencies; one was the Labour Constituency and another was General Constituency in the Bengal Provincial Assembly. The CPI won the Labour Constituency with the candidanship of Ratanlal Brahmin with majority of 85% votes. D.S. Bomjan states "In the election of 1946 the CPI had issued eleven (11) points proposal in favour of workers to be realised from the owners of the tea gardens and won the election with the tumbling majority by 85% of the total polled votes".<sup>2</sup> This victory of the CPI was one of the first election victories for their political position in regional level. From the time of the formation of the Communist Party of India, in Darjeeling and its participation in the last Provincial Election in British India needs to be highlighted.

Meanwhile, Ganeshlal Subba and Ratanlal Brahmin made the call for independent Gorkhasthan on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1947. It was not just a wishfull call by the leaders but on the basis of the Communist principles enunciated by Lenin, his call for "self-determination" and "freedom to secede". This call was supported by the CPI and the proposal was even presented to the leaders of the Provincial Committee of the CPI. The slogans of the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling branch, was supported

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in, Bomjan, Op.cit., p.95.

by the Provincial Committee of CPI in every step, like the tea garden problems and even the call for autonomy in Darjeeling till the time of independence and even for some years after the independence.

This position of the Communist Movement in Darjeeling, however, changed at the time of the working of the States Reorganisation Commission(SRC) in the year 1953. The SRC looked at the census of 1951 and completely distorted it in which the Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling were shown as only 19.96% in which only the Brahmin, Chettri and the Scheduled Caste people were taken as the Nepali speaking people and others were just left out. This time, the CPI of Darjeeling and the All India Gorkha League (AIGL), put forward the demands for a separate state of the Nepali speaking people to the SRC but were ignored. Meanwhile, the Bengal unit of the CPI just kept itself aloof from this matter. The study on this matter hasn't been done deeply so there is a gap of research in this point.

The year 1955 marks the most terrifying period in the history of the tea garden workers movement in Darjeeling. A protest held under the leadership of the communist party affiliated union under the red flag of communist party was met with severe police repression: The protesters were shot dead by the order of the Bengal government, then under the Congress party. This incident was not taken seriously by the Bengal CPI. This was raising the discontentment within the people of Darjeeling. This part of study has to be looked closely in the history of Darjeeling as well as of the communist response to the problem of Darjeeling.

When we look at the history of Darjeeling, the very factor which comes to the forefront is its movement for separate state on the basis of "Ethnic Identity". According to the Marxist thinkers, struggle for self-determination is only the struggle

of the minority to get rid from the majority domination on the basis of their culture, caste, language, religion, etc. The idea of a separate ethnic identity of the people of Darjeeling was always resisted by the state government as well as the central government. After the year 1977, when the communist government came to power in the state of West Bengal, the call for a separate and independent autonomous Darjeeling was lost. The Communists of Bengal were no longer supporting this demand. In one article in the Nepali Daily, Himalaya Darpan, it is stated that, “With the greed of seat and power the Communist Party of India in the state of Bengal, they (leaders of CPI) forgot the ideology of Marxist and Leninist and began to suppress the minority Gorkhas in Darjeeling with their dictatorial rule and turned themselves into majority Bengal-xist from Marxist”.<sup>3</sup> With the growing movement on the basis of ethnicity in Darjeeling the communist leaders like R.B. Rai (M.P Lok Sabha), Dawa Lama (M.P Rajya Sabha), D.S. Bomjan, Taramoni Rai, Gobin Chettri and Sawan Rai from Darjeeling, who were supporters of a separate Gorkhaland, were expelled from the party; ironically, the same communist party which supported the formation of Gorkhasthan before independence were expelling the leaders from the party for raising this very demand. Then after, in the year 1996, the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM) was formed. The study on this matter has been done in very less manner; this study looks into the split of the CPI (M) and the birth of the CPRM in Darjeeling.

## **1.2: Review of literature**

While talking about literary sources there are some works done regarding the history of Darjeeling. Most of the work has been done regarding the Gorkhaland

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in, Himalaya Darpan, “*Jatiya ashimta sangharsa ma bharatiya communist haruko aran ra kramakpa ko bhumika*”, Siliguri, Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 (Nepali Daily)



Movement, in this work only the Communist Movement has been focused, some work focuses broadly and some does this marginally. There are not much works done directly regarding the Communist Movement in Darjeeling. Subodh Roy's<sup>4</sup> collection of party documents deals with the secret and unpublished documents regarding how the communist party in India was formed. It also focuses on CPI's underground works. It also deals with how the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) helped mobilise the people and the students in India under the communist idea. This work also focuses on the works of the communist party in India as to how it mobilised the working class under one umbrella. It also shows the call to students by the communist party. The fight for freedom from the British rule by the communist party has also been focused. Roy has also presented the documents regarding the Governments action to end the communist party in India. All the works has been based on the documents regarding the communist party in India between the years 1935 to 1945.

In Sanjay Biswas and Sameer Roka's<sup>5</sup> work, the history of Darjeeling has been shown, not only in aerial survey, but even going through the grass root level of the society of Darjeeling. The work focuses on the history of Darjeeling in the light of language, literature, history, culture, etc. The socio-political structure of Darjeeling before independence has been brought into account along with the struggle of freedom in Darjeeling against the British. For their work Biswas and Roka, have used the official documents as well as photographs.

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<sup>4</sup>Roy Subodh (ed), (1985),*Communism in India: Unpublished Documents 1935-1945*, National Book Agency, Calcutta.

<sup>5</sup>Biswas Sanjay, Roka Sameer, (2007),*Darjeeling- Truth and Beyond*, Systematic Computerised Offset Printers, Darjeeling.

Amiya K. Samanta<sup>6</sup> throws light on the growth of a sense of ethnic exclusiveness of a community among the Nepali speaking Indians or the Indian Nepali or Gorkhas. This work gives a history of how Darjeeling was handed over to the East India Company by the Raja of Sikkim and the district of Darjeeling was formed in British India. The focus has also been on the movement for autonomy as how it emerged and was taken forward by different regional political parties. This work has been done taking up many primary sources like the documents of the treaties signed, memorandums of different political party and letters by political leaders.

D.S. Bomjan<sup>7</sup> gives an account of the important incidents in the history of Darjeeling. This work shows how the CPI of Bengal were not giving importance in the matter of autonomy in Darjeeling and how they were changing their attitude towards Darjeeling problem, CPI only kept Darjeeling for their vote bank after independence and much rigidly after 1977. Bomjan even gives account of the incident of 1955 killing of the tea garden workers and the CPI of Bengal's response to the incident.

Snehamoy Chaklader<sup>8</sup> deals with the two Sub- Regional movements of India the Gorkhaland Movement in West Bengal and Bodoland Movement in Assam. This book focuses on the both the movements which grew with the Ethnic problem and as being minority in the state on the basis of language, culture, etc. This work throws light on the movement for Constitutional Recognition of Nepali Language and movement for Autonomy in Darjeeling (its process and result).

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<sup>6</sup> Samanta.Amiya.K, (2000), *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study In Ethnic Separatism*, A.P.H Publishing Corporation, Delhi.

<sup>7</sup> Bomjan D.S, (2008), *Darjeeling-Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo Colonial Rule*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra Publication, Darjeeling.

<sup>8</sup> Chaklader Snehamoy, (2004), *Sub-Regional Movement in India*, K.P Bagchi and Company, Kolkata.

Romit Bagchi<sup>9</sup> writes about the issue of Gorkhaland and how the Nepali-speaking community or the Gorkha community of Darjeeling hills has influenced the politics of West Bengal as well as the centre. Bagchi's focus is on the historical stages in the Gorkhaland movement till the advent of GJMM (Gorkha Janmukti Morcha) and its movement and its different settlements with the state government led by Mamta Banerjee. The focus has also been made on the CPI (M) and Gorkhaland Movement. The work also sheds light on the division of the CPI (M) into CPRM in the Darjeeling hills.

Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarty<sup>10</sup> throws light on the history of Darjeeling from the time when it was transferred to the East India Company by the Raja of Sikkim in 1835. It also talks about migration of Nepali's as well as others into Darjeeling because of the tea plantation. His work has also been based on the how the identity call in Darjeeling emerged and how the politics of identity and the demand for autonomy advanced in Darjeeling. The role played by the CPI leaders in Darjeeling has also been focused. The later part of this article brings out how the autonomy worked which was accepted as agreement called DGHC (Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council) by Subash Ghising the leader of GNLF (Gorkha National Liberation Front). One interesting point which has been brought to light is the role of newspapers in the Gorkhaland issue or on the identity issue.

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<sup>9</sup>Bagchi Romit, (2012), *Gorkhaland: Crisis of Statehood*, SAGE Publication, India.

<sup>10</sup>Chakrabarty Subhas Rajan, "*Silence under Freedom: The Strange Story of Democracy in the Darjeeling Hills*", in Ranabir Samaddar edited, "*The politics of Autonomy: Indian Experience*", (2005) Delhi, SAGE Publications.



Debabrata Mitra<sup>11</sup> writes about the history of tea in India. He makes his point on how the tea plantation in India under British was done in India, but his main study area is in West Bengal. In this work the focus has been made on the tea gardens trade union movement in the Dooars region as well as other parts of Bengal (mostly Darjeeling). The different phases of the trade union movement in India from the time of British period and after independence have also been discussed. It has also given brief account on the formation of trade unions in the Darjeeling tea garden areas under the Communist party. This work has also explained about the trends which took place in the tea plantation after the independence, it focuses on how tea plantation was handled by the planters and even what kind of industrial relation existed in tea plantation after ownership was transformed from the foreign owner to the hand of India owner.

Khemraj Sharma<sup>12</sup> writes about the parallel movement of the Trade Union and the Movement of ethnicity in Darjeeling hills. The focus has been made in how the different regional party's of Darjeeling mobilised the people with their party with the call of ethnic movement and even taking on the trade union forward mostly dealing with the problem of tea garden. The importance of the regional party's like CPRM, CPI(M), GJMM, AIGL, GNLF, to maintain trade union as well as to go forward with the movement of ethnicity was that whoever had the upper hand turned to be the power party of Darjeeling.

Mohan P. Dahal<sup>13</sup> in his one of the biography has explained about the life of Ratanlal Brahman the first communist leader from Darjeeling who also became the Member of Legislative Assembly of Bengal and Member of Parliament also from the

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<sup>11</sup>Mitra Debabrata, (2010), *Globalization and Industrial Relations in Tea Plantations*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi.

<sup>12</sup>Sharma Khemraj, (2010), *Plantation Sociology of North-East India*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi.

<sup>13</sup>Dahal Mohan.P, (1993), *Jhukdai Najhukne Pahar ko Chhoro*, Pratima Publication, Darjeeling.

communist party of India. This work not only focuses on the life of Ratanlal Brahman but also puts light on the time before the advent of communist party in Darjeeling as how the people raised the voice against the British rule, mostly in the tea garden areas where the Hatta bahar system was taking place. Dahal also brings the role of the communist party in forming the working class unions in Darjeeling. This work brings in front the relation of the Darjeeling's communist party and the Gorkha National Liberation Front during the 1986 Gorkhaland agitation lead by Subash Ghising. Apart from biography the book also gives an idea about the agitations of the communist party under the Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers Union against the planters during pre- independence as well as post- independent India. More over from this biography one can get an idea about the background of how the CPI of Bengal was attracted towards Darjeeling.

In another biography of one of the first leaders of Communist Party of India Darjeeling Branch by Mohan P. Dahal<sup>14</sup>, likewise in his another biography on Ratanlal Brahmin Dahal writes about the life of Ganeshlal Subba, within this he brings out the role played by Ganeshlal Subba in the history of communist party in Darjeeling. We can get an idea of how the leaders turned into Marxists and even the history after.

Monobina Gupta<sup>15</sup> traces the Left Front's struggle for the power in Bengal. This work focuses from the time of Emergency proclaimed by Indira Gandhi, how the Left Front rises to form the government in Bengal after the election of 1977. Bengal before the Left Front government was facing many problems of lights and other

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<sup>14</sup>Dahal Mohan.P, (2007), *Ganeshlal Subba: Vyaktittwa Ra Kritittiwa*, Muktti Publication, Jalpaiguri.

<sup>15</sup>Gupta Monobina, (2010), *Left Politics in Bengal: Time Travels from Bhadrakol Marxists*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi.

public things which were solved after coming of left front government in Bengal. Another issue of the delaying of college exam and result was there in the colleges and universities that were also solved by the new government. Monobina Gupta has not only expressed the positive side of the left front government but has also made criticism about some of the misdeeds and *goondalism* of the government. Womens issue and taking away of the peasants land were some of the issues on which Monobina gupta has made a criticism. This work also puts focus on how the CPI (M) had tussle with the Maoists in Bengal.

When we study about the history of Darjeeling we mostly see the Gazetteer documented by L.S.S.O' Malley<sup>16</sup> been used as one of the source in that work. This Gazetteer was first published in 1907, the collection of data was kept as an official record by the British and despite this the gazetteer has been a main secondary source for the scholars who do work on Darjeeling. It has detailed information about the physical aspects, history, people, agriculture, tea industries, forest, administration, etc. This work is the first literary work regarding Darjeeling.

Tanka B. Subba,<sup>17</sup> in his work on Darjeeling has done a detailed and accounted work, in his work the focal point has been the Ethnic Identity of the Gorkhas or the Nepali speaking Indians and the movement for the separate state of Gorkhaland of 1986, led by GNLF. Subba, has presented about the evolution of ethnic Gorkha identity of the people of Darjeeling, and even the history of the ethnic movement in Darjeeling for separation from Bengal which later evolved as the movement for separate state of Gorkhaland. He has used the newspaper documents as a source and has given a description of the violence and counter-violence which took

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<sup>16</sup> O'Malley L.L.S, (1999)*Bengal District Gazetteers*, Logos Press, Delhi.

<sup>17</sup> Subba.T.B, (1992), *Ethnicity, State And Development: A Case Study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Har-Anand Publications, Delhi.

place between the GNLF and CPI (M) during the 1986 Gorkhaland agitation. Subba, has also thrown light on the role of media during the two years agitation for separate state.

### **1.3: Objective of study**

- To see the history of the Communist Movement in Darjeeling from the time of its foundation.
- To study the Working Class Movement in Darjeeling under the Communist flag.
- To lookat the response of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling to the Ethnic identity question.
- To explain the reasons for the breakup of the Communist Party in Darjeeling.

### **1.4: Methodology**

The methodology of this study involved looking information from various documents like party documents, government documents, newspapers and manifestoes of the political parties as a primary source. As secondary source, the literary works such as books and articles regarding the communist movement in Darjeeling as well as relative to the research topic has been focused. The study also involvedsome interview with some of the personalities related to the topic. The data obtained from primary and secondary sources has helped to historically reconstruct the history of the above mentioned region in this research work.

## **1.5: Chapterization**

### **Chapter: 1: Introduction**

Introduction of the research topic

1.1: Statement of the Problem

1.2: Review of Literature

1.3: Objectives

1.4: Methodology

### **Chapter: 2: Foundation of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling and its works**

2.1: History: Grant of Darjeeling.

2.2: Factors which led to the Formation of Communist Party in Darjeeling.

2.3: Formation of Different Working Class Union's Under the Communist Flag.

2.4: Provincial election in Bengal of 1946 and After.

2.5: Agitation for the Recognition of Nepali Language Constitutionally:  
Communist Role in it.

### **Chapter: 3: Communist Party and Darjeeling**

3.1: Early Demands for Separation from Bengal before the arrival of the Communist Party of India.

3.2: Demand for "Gorkhasthan" and Autonomy made by the Communist Party.

3.3: The State Reorganisation Commission and Darjeeling.

3.4: The Margaret's Hope Tea Garden Incident of 1955.

#### **Chapter: 4: Gorkhaland movement and the Communist Party**

4.1: The 1986 Gorkhaland Agitation led by GNLF vis~a~vis the Communist Party in Darjeeling.

4.1.1: Violence and Counter Violence Between GNLF and CPI (M) of Darjeeling.

4.2: The Split of The Communist Party in Hills.

4.2.1: Friction between CPRM and GNLF.

4.3: The Gorkhaland Movement of 2007 led by GJMM vis~a~vis CPRM.

#### **Conclusion**



## Chapter: 2

### Foundation of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling and its works

The famous Meerut Conspiracy case of 1929-32 marked the beginning of the growth of communist ideology in India. Many places in India were very much influenced by the communist idea derived from the teachings of Karl Marx. Bengal was one such place which was highly influenced by this idea and which became one of the hubs of Marxist thinkers; many Marxist leaders took birth from Bengal who are even titled as “BhadralokMarxists”.<sup>1</sup> The year 1943 marked the birth of Marxist idea in Darjeeling<sup>2</sup> with the formation of the Communist Party of India’s Darjeeling branch. The communists influenced most of the people in Darjeeling, as this party was the party speaking up for the workers and in Darjeeling the maximum percentage of the population were the workers (mostly tea garden). Formation of the Communist Party in Darjeeling was not like most of the people got the idea of Marxism or got an idea of forming a political party with the Communist name on it, but there is a history behind it. This party in Darjeeling was formed during the period of British India, during which the people in Darjeeling were not allowed even to form a group whether it is social, political or of any kind especially if they raised the voice against British authority. Against all odds, efforts were made by the people of Darjeeling and the Communist Party of India Darjeeling province came into existence.

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<sup>1</sup> Gupta Monobina, (2010) *Left Politics in Bengal: Time Travels among Bhadrakok Marxists*, Orient Blackswan.

<sup>2</sup> Darjeeling: Derived from the Tibetan Words ‘*Dorje*’ meaning thunderbolt and ‘*Ling*’ meaning place, hence known as ‘the land of thunderbolt’.

## 2.1: History and Grant of Darjeeling

The History of Darjeeling presents a late chapter in the extension of British rule, for it was not until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the East India Company was brought into direct relation with these hilly tracts of the country which now bears the name.<sup>3</sup> Darjeeling was never under the rule of one single kingdom prior to this; it was like a buffer zone between Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The three Sub-divisions Darjeeling, Kurseong<sup>4</sup> and Kalimpong<sup>5</sup> including Siliguri were historically at first part of Sikkim; in the year 1706, Kalimpong was taken from Sikkim by the Bhutanese. Nepal, in the year 1780, invaded Sikkim and took over the three regions of Sikkim namely Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri of present day Darjeeling District under the Treaty of Titalya, 1780. After the treaty, Sikkim suffered for 30 years with the antagonism of Nepal. Nepal then expanded its territory towards east of Sikkim and annexed the Tarai. L.L.S.O'Malley in his gazetteers mentions that:

“After overrunning the hills and valleys of Nepal, they marched east of Sikkim in 1780; and during next 30 years the country suffered repeatedly from their inroads. At the end of this period, they had overrun Sikkim as far eastwards as the Tista River, and had conquered and annexed the Tarai, i.e., the belt of country lying along the lower hills between that river and the Mechi, which is now covered by the valuable tea-gardens of the Darjeeling planters”.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the East India Company being insecure, by Nepal's invasion towards the North-Frontier belt of India, attacked Nepal and war broke out as First Anglo-Nepal War in the year 1814-15 and Second Anglo-Nepal War 1816 and the

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<sup>3</sup> O'Malley L.L.S, (1999)*Bengal District Gazetteers*, Logos Press, Delhi, p.19.

<sup>4</sup> Kurseong: Derived from the Lepcha word '*Kurson-rip*' which means 'Little White Orchid', because of the little white Orchids bloomed in this valley, hence known as 'The Land of White Orchid'.

<sup>5</sup> Kalimpong: This name is said to have been derived from various languages and having different meaning. It is said that it has been derived from the Lepcha word '*Kalempung*' meaning Hillock of Assemblage, it is also said to have been derived from the Tibetan words '*Kalong*' meaning King's Ministers and '*Pong*' meaning Stockade, and the people of the hills calls it as '*Kalempung*' meaning The Black Spurs.

<sup>6</sup> L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit,p.19

Treaty of Sugauli was signed 1816<sup>7</sup>. After the war, all the lost territory of the Raja of Sikkim was handed over by the British government to him and guaranteed his sovereignty. The lost territory of Sikkim was not handed over by the British just as a grant but a Treaty was signed between the Raja and British which came to be known as The Treaty of Titaliya of 1817. The relevant part of the treaty reads as:

“That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any dispute or question that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepal or any other neighbouring state, and to abide by the decision of the British government.”<sup>8</sup>

From the year 1817 Sikkim became the buffer-zone between the state of Nepal and Bhutan.

According to the treaty the Raja of Sikkim had to inform the British of disputes regarding the boundary; it was done in the year 1828 when the dispute with Nepal arose and was referred to the then Governor General of East India Company Lord William Bentinck. The arbitration clause was soon to become operational and would deal another blow to Sikkim during the ‘Kotapa insurrection’ and the subsequent Unthoo dispute. In Sikkim the power feuds between the Lepcha and Bhutia camps saw the murder of the scion of a powerful Lepcha family under the instructions of the Chogyal in 1826. With the murder of Bolod, other Lepcha chiefs, fearing a similar fate, fled Sikkim along with around 800 houses of their tribes-men and took refuge at *Unthoo* beyond the hills of Mirik in present day Nepal. The Chogyal and the Bhutia camp were unable to pursue them since Nepal claimed *Unthoo* to be within its borders and Sikkim referred the matter to the British (Pradhan

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<sup>7</sup> Treaty of Sugauli: By this treaty the Nepalese Soldiers were taken by the British which later were turned into the *Gorkha* Regiment.

<sup>8</sup> Bomjan D.S. (2008), *Darjeeling Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.2.

1991:143-44, Risley 1894:19).<sup>9</sup> Two officer's, namely Captain George Aylmer Lloyd and J.W. Grant were sent to handle the dispute and they penetrated into the hills as far north as Rinchinpong (in the Khulhait valley of Sikkim) and during this journey they were attracted by the geographical location of Darjeeling and its climate which favours the Europeans. L.S.S. O'Malley says: "From a report dated the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1829, in which he claims to have been the only European who ever visited the place", we learn that Lloyd visited the old Goorkha station called Dorjeling for six days in February 1829, and "was immediately struck with its being all adapted for the purpose of a sanitarium."<sup>10</sup> Captain Lloyd and J.W. Grant on their return to Calcutta reported the same and in 1829, a team was dispatched to Darjeeling to survey on the possibility of establishing a sanitarium.<sup>11</sup> After the report given by Mr. J.W. Grantan Captain Lloyd on the various advantages to build a Sanatorium in Darjeeling, the Governor General Lord William Bentinck deputed Captain Herbert the then Survey General with Mr. Grant to do a survey regarding Darjeeling. The report of these two gentlemen conclusively proved the feasibility of establishing a sanitarium at Darjeeling; and the Court of Directors approved the project, on the ground that it might prove a valuable depot for the temporary reception of European recruits; and even a permanent cantonment for a European regiment.<sup>12</sup> Besides looking at Darjeeling as a sanatorium, the British even had some of their hidden agenda which was not revealed during the negotiation with the Raja of Sikkim; even O'Malley, who wrote the first gazetteer of Darjeeling, in the year 1907, did not throw light on it. If Darjeeling was only preferred for a sanatorium, then as soon as it was handed over to

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in, Katwal Aswant, *A History of the Darjeeling Region: Revisited through the Lens of the Gorkhaland Movement*, ISSN 2278-2737 SKWC Journal of Social Sciences Vol. V, Issue-I, Jan-Dec, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit. .p. 20

<sup>11</sup> Roy Barun, (2013) *Gorkhas and Gorkhaland*, , Parbati Roy Research Foundation, Darjeeling,pp- 270-271.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp-20-21

them, the British would not have started plantation work; it is clear, hence, that for trade was another motive. Apart from being setup as a sanatorium, Darjeeling had obvious attractions for the British for both commercial and strategic reasons. Darjeeling could emerge as the entrepot of the trans-Himalayan trade, surrounded as it was by Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet (Sen, 1989: 21-69).<sup>13</sup>

In the mean time the Lepchas<sup>14</sup> from Nepal had made an inroad into the Sikkim Tarai; General Llyod made an enquiry with them in which the Lepchas refused to go back to Nepal where the autocratic rule existed during time under Rana Dynasty and even refused to stay in Sikkim; after this a negotiation was made with the Raja of Sikkim. On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1835 Darjeeling was handed over to the British Government by the Raja with a deed which worded by the Raja as:

“The Governor General, having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, has been introduced, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship for the said Governor General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land South of the Great Rangit river, East of the Balasun, Kahail and Little Ranjit rivers and West of Rungno and Mahanadi rivers.”<sup>15</sup>

After transfer of Darjeeling to the British East India Company the relation between the Raja of Sikkim and the E.I.C started to deteriorate; in the mean time in November 1849 Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were imprisoned by the Sikkim ruler but later both the British Officials were released on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1849. This incident of putting the British Officers in the prison by Sikkim was just a spark that the EIC was waiting to enter Sikkim and then the Tarai region of Sikkim was annexed in 1850 and

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<sup>13</sup> Cited in Chakrabarty Subhas Rajan, *Silence under Freedom: The Strange Story of Democracy in the Darjeeling Hills*, in Ranabir Samaddar edited, *The politics of Autonomy: Indian Experience*, (2005) Delhi, SAGE Publications, p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> Lepchas: The name given to the tribe by Nepalese in a *Parbatiya dilect* of Nepal ‘Lep’ means ‘speech’ and ‘cha’ means ‘unintelligible’ i.e. ‘Unintelligible Speakers’ they belong to Tibeto-Burman origin. Nita Nirash, *The Lepchas of Sikkim*, [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot\\_1982\\_02\\_03.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/bot/pdf/bot_1982_02_03.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Dash Arther Jules (2011), *Bengal District Gazetteers*, National Library Publishers, Siliguri, pp. 37-38 .

it was placed under the Purnia District and later added to the portion of Darjeeling and in the year 1864 after the Anglo-Bhutanese War the Treaty of Sinchula was signed and Kalimpong was brought back to Darjeeling. Thus after all the disputes, war and negotiation, the E.I.C made up the present day Darjeeling District for their own selfish colonial interest. Darjeeling from then for British E.I.C officials became a Sanatorium which was even home for many, with the advent of the E.I.C people of Darjeeling were taken out from the hands of the Monarchical rule but were brought under the Colonial rule, which was next to slavery. The difference was only from outside the face changed but the inner rule stood the same.

### **2.1: Factors which led to the Formation of Communist Party in Darjeeling**

Darjeeling, before being handed over by the Raja of Sikkim to the British East India Company or before it was annexed by the British East India Company from Raja of Sikkim, was a place with only few people. This place was mostly covered by forest, and in the year 1835 when Darjeeling came under the hand of the British E.I.C, only 100 people lived there according to estimates given in different Gazetteers. L.S.S.O'Malley gives the account as:

“When the British first acquired the hill territory in 1835, it was almost entirely under forest, and what small population it had, had been driven out by the oppression of the petty rulers whom they replaced. It was in fact, estimated that the whole of this tract, comprising 138 square miles, contained only 100 souls.”<sup>16</sup>

The company later made a policy to bring more people into the hills of Darjeeling for which they were not opposing the migration rather they wanted the settlement to grow as they were going to use those people for the plantation work. With the advent of Tea plantation<sup>17</sup> in Darjeeling (1840) the population started to grow in a rapid way. Many

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<sup>16</sup> L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit, p.35

<sup>17</sup> Tea plantation in Darjeeling: Started in the year 1840 by Campbell but from 1853 it was done for the business purpose.



false calls were made by the company to increase the number of workers for the plantation work. Sharma in his book states that “The *Marad* and *Aurat* tea estates workers were lured with the local slogan as “*Chiya Ko Bot Ma Paisa Falcha*” meaning thereby that the tea estate bushes fetches easy money for the workers. In this way, the British planters lured the workers stating that they will give employment to husband, wife and their children although the wage rate was lowest among other industrial workers of the country.”<sup>18</sup> With the increasing number of migration of other Tribes and Nepalese, the original inhabitant of Darjeeling, the Lepchas, were rapidly outnumbered.

To describe the factors which played for the formation of the Communist Party of India during the British era in Darjeeling one important factor will be the Socio-Economic condition of the people of Darjeeling. The British Government praised the people of Darjeeling as being ‘Sincere’ and ‘Faithfull’ towards the master from one side and were suppressing and kept them under their evil rule. In one of the books (written in Nepali), it has been said that:

“Darjeeling *chetra ka chiya bagan, cinchona bagan tatha krishi adharit chetra haruka basinda haruko kanoon vanekoi angrej, raja vanekai angrej thea*”<sup>19</sup> (For the people of Darjeeling region Tea-Garden and Cinchona Garden, the British them-self were the Law and the King). (Translated by Author)

The written documents, articles and books are very few regarding the social condition of Darjeeling during the British period. But there are some Nepali novels and Poems which are based on the growing social and economic conditions of the people of Darjeeling during Pre-Independence as well as Post-Independence period. *Tara Kahile*, a Nepali novel written by Prakash Kobit, based on the socio- economic

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<sup>18</sup> Sharma Khemraj, (2010), *Plantation Sociology of North-East India*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi,p17.

<sup>19</sup>Tika ‘Bhai’,(2008) *Hamro Jatiya Mukti Sangharsha Sahi Barsha*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling,p.8.

condition during the British period, reveals the system of *Hatta Bahar* and how the girls and even women whom the British official called to their bungalow and were assaulted sexually and those girls and women were titled as *chokri*; if that girl did not reach the British officials place then the whole family of her's were fined, beaten to death or were done *Hatta Bahar*. No individual or group were allowed to question the British authority or go against them; if they did, they were thrown out of the Tea garden area as well as from the job under the system of *Hatta Bahar*. No one was allowed to wear good dress and shoes, even they had to remove their slippers and had to bow down or had to step aside the road where from where the British officials were heading.

As mentioned above, about the local slogans “The *Marad* and *Aurat* tea estates workers were lured with the local slogan as “*Chiya Ko Bot Ma Paisa Falcha*” meaning thereby the tea estate bushes fetches easy money for the workers” as mentioned by Khemraj Sharma<sup>20</sup> this slogan was not true while talking about the economic condition of the people who worked in the Tea gardens. L.S.S.O'Malley states that in the year 1840 “The average rate of wages for men is Rs.6, for women Rs. 4-8, and for children Rs. 3 and Rs. 2.”<sup>21</sup> But this has been questioned by *Tika 'Bhai'* in his book<sup>22</sup> as in the year 1905 the wage for men was Rs. 6 , women Rs.4 and children Rs.2 and this was after 65 years which from a general point of view is not possible. Due to the low wage paid by the Tea garden owners those labours could only fulfil their daily food requirements and were segregated from enjoying other things in life. They were not able to make their children to go for higher studies (which exists till now in every tea garden of Darjeeling and Dooars region). During

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<sup>20</sup> Sharma, Op.cit.,p.17.

<sup>21</sup> L.S.S. O'Malley, Op.cit.,p.84.

<sup>22</sup> Tika, op.cit.,p.9.

festivals or any occasions like marriage, the workers had to borrow money from the *Sardars* and *Marwaris* at very high rates of interests; this is even mentioned by Malley:

“A cooly earning Rs. 6 a month usually spends about Rs. 50 upon his wedding, and occasionally a similar amount upon a funeral, all borrowed money. The cooly looks for Sardar for an advance, and the sardar to the manager. The latter lends without interest; and if he will not, the cooly and sardar turn to the Marwari, the Shylock of the hills, who commonly charges 75 per cent interest. In that case their financial slavery is assured, and they rarely escape the toils of the money-lender.”<sup>23</sup>

This system where the workers could hardly escape the clutches of money-lenders was common in most parts of Colonial India as well as in Independent India, which has even been shown in the novel ‘*Godaan*’ by Prem Chand. The Sardars were given the power to maintain law and order among the workers. In this way, the Sardars were considered as the overall employers, supervisors, adjudicators and guardians of the workers in the tea estates.<sup>24</sup> The owners of the tea gardens used to indulge in inhuman acts during the festival of *Dassai*. Once in a year, the owners/managers, as king of his tea estate could come to show his participation with the workers during the *Dassai* (*Dashara*) festival in course of organizing a cultural programme. In such occasions, the planters as the king of the tea estate, used to throw golden rings (*Authi*) from the stage upstairs and used to instruct their *Sardars* to order their caste or tribal workers to fight among themselves to win the golden ring.<sup>25</sup> After the fight, the workers used to get severely injured, after then the workers of different Labour *Dhuras* (labour lines) used to think workers of another *Dhuras* as enemy; divide and rule policy was applied in the tea estates.

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<sup>23</sup>L.S.S. O’Malley, op.cit, p.84.

<sup>24</sup> Sharma, op.cit, p.16

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.14

The whole of Darjeeling was not under tea plantation; some places like Kalimpong and some parts of the Terai region were under agricultural. Like in other parts of British India those agricultural lands came under the different Land Settlements introduced by the British Government. In the Terai region, it was the Permanent Revenue Settlement, 1793. Land taxes in the agricultural lands were from Rs.1 to Rs. 2 per acre of land and in those lands where Cardamom was cultivated, the tax was Rs.10 per acre which was really hard for those farmers; failure to pay tax led to confiscation of land and this was sold out to others. According to Tika 'Bhai' only from Kalimpong region in the beginning of the collection of land tax Rs.640 in the year 1892 and Rs. 11,700 in the year 1902-1903 were collected, only from the rural regions Rs. 31,600 were collected.

This kind of socio-economic oppression faced by the people of Darjeeling from the British government was compounded by the socio-economic domination from their own people. The oppressors were the landlords, *sardars*, and people belonging to higher caste. The labourers had to borrow money from the *sardars* and money-lenders from the people belonging to the same community and had to pay very high percentage of interests. Social evil of discriminating caste and not allowing the people from lower caste and tribe to participate in functions of higher caste and restrictions upon entering the temples and even inside the house of the higher castes existed in the society of Darjeeling, which led many tribes and lower caste people to convert themselves to Christianity. Some of the people even stopped believing in the typical structure of the caste system as well as in Hinduism as the heads of the caste system belonged to Hinduism.

In between all the political, social and economic domination by the British as well as from some of their own people, in 1907 the Hills Men Association was formed

by some of the educated people of Darjeeling and for the First time, the call for separate administration was made; but only few people were involved with the Hills Men Association.<sup>26</sup> After this people of Darjeeling became conscious and started to rise against the injustice done by the British Government. In the history of Darjeeling a social group was formed which came to be known as *Gorkha Dhukha Niwarak Sammelan* (GDNS) in the year 1932. This group was led by Ratanlal Brahmin and his friends which worked against the social evils as well as social works.<sup>27</sup>

Another factor or the background for the formation of the Communist Party in Darjeeling is the work done by Ratanlal Brahmin (also known as Maila Baje) concerning the social issues as well as against the British authority. The scenario of Darjeeling and its people made Ratanlal to think about why this is going on in Darjeeling and which made him rise against such oppressions; this has been stated by Badrinarayan Pradhan<sup>28</sup> in his biography of Ratanlal Brahmin:

*“Arakatira uni dekthea, afnu jati, nepali jati nimukha vayera baseko. Chiya baghanma cooli vayeko. Tinle pawne roj dinko dui ana dekhi char ana samma. Aangma luga chaina. Fateko kamej ra hapen lagayera ti kaamma niskanchan. Khanako nimti gharma sadhai aaja khayo voli khana kasari jutaw hune. Jutta lagayera, chata orera, alik sukilo luga lagayera sahib ko chewma jana nahune. Batama sahib sita jamka vet bhayo vane hattar-hattar bato muni pasnuparne.”*<sup>29</sup> (He used to see his own Nepali people living helplessly. Being like coolies in tea-garden. The wage they received being only 2 to 4 *annas*. No clothes in their body. While going to work they wear torn shirts and half-pants. They are always thinking of what to eat next after having one meal. They were not allowed to wear good clothes, shoes and carry an umbrella. They were forced to get off the road if any Sahib was coming through the same road) (Translated by Author).

This condition, which the people of Darjeeling were facing, was not outside their place but in their own land. The open migration prevailed during that period in

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<sup>26</sup> Subba.T.B, (1992), *Ethnicity, State And Development: A Case Study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Har-Anand Publications, Delhi, p.78

<sup>27</sup> Dahal Mohan.P, (1997) *Jhukdai Najhukne Pahar Ko Choro*, Pratima Publication, Siliguri.p.16.

<sup>28</sup> Pradhan was a youth leader from communist party in Darjeeling during the year 1944-45, and even a member of All India Student Federation (AISF). He was also a active member in the communist party and even became MLA in the year 1984 from communist party and founder of CPRM in the year 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Pradhan Badrinarayan,(2009), *Gaff Saff ma Ratanlal Brahmin (Maila Baje)*, Pratima Publication, Siliguri.p.3.

Darjeeling and this was because of the plantation work, many people mostly from Nepal, used to enter Darjeeling. It was not like before that whoever migrated to this place got the job in plantation for the reason that the population had really grown. For the migrants who were not fortunate to get a job, shelter and food their condition were worst as many of them got ill and even died in the open roads and in railway stations because of the cold climate.

The dead bodies were not even touched for days until the municipal staff came and dragged them like dead dogs were done and were cremated without any ceremony. In the year 1932, when the GDNS was formed by Ratanlal and his associates, they began to cremate the dead bodies with certain Nepali ceremony and took ill people to hospitals. These works were opposed by the higher caste people of Darjeeling by putting posters in the *Chowk Bazar* saying that the bodies may be of people belonging to lower caste and Ratanlal being of upper caste is performing their cremation; so he should be thrown out of the upper caste society. Ratanlal being a high tempered person went against the higher caste authority and thus many people belonging to the lower castes and tribe started to follow him. He even mobilised the people to make them stand against the British authority against the existing domination done by them. Ratanlal was not working under any political party which were there during that time, not even with Congress as it had made its entry into Darjeeling by this time. He never saw any such stride in the Congress and its national movement which could address the problems of the plantation (Tea and Cinchona) workers in Darjeeling, and indeed he was right. The Congress did not revolutionize the atmosphere in the plantations in Darjeeling then or now.

Bengal faced the famine in the year 1943 even called as “The Great Bengal Famine” which was an effect of the devastating Second World War. With the



aggression of Japan into the Myanmar, migration started to take place from Myanmar to Bengal and Assam. The scarcity of food, starvation and death had become the order of the day in Bengal. In such hours of shocking catastrophic situation the Political Parties were obliged to carry the freedom struggle on the one hand and on the other reaching the rural mass for organising the movement against the hoarders and black-marketers.<sup>30</sup> In Bengal, the Communist Party of India took the initiative to address the concerns of the people and provide food for them by setting up relief camps and dealing harshly with the hoarders. Darjeeling was also affected by the famine and the scarcity of food was seen here too. Similar work was done by the GDNS in Darjeeling without knowing what the communist party were doing in Bengal; they took the initiative of checking the hoarders and distributed the food snatched from the hoarders to the people. They even put posters in different places stating that:

*“Jaba samma sahu-shet haruko godam ma anna-tel cha taba samma khana napayera na hami marchaw, na janta lai marna dinchaw”.*<sup>31</sup>(Till the time the food is there in the godowns of the shopkeepers, nor we will die neither we will let our people die with hunger). (Translated by Author)

They urged that the shopkeepers sell the food items at reasonable a price; wherever they refused, all the food items were distributed to the people for free. This incident played as an immediate factor for the formation of Communist Party of India in Darjeeling. This was even the time when the communist party were working under the law by helping the people by providing food as well as expanding their party; with the plan to set up party in Darjeeling they sent Sushil Chatterjee to Darjeeling.

Ratanlal Brahmin and Sushil Chatterjee met each other; Ratanlal after hearing from Sushil Chatterjee about the communist party and after long days of talks, after talking with his fellowmen, he decided to accept the communist party and thus The

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<sup>30</sup>Bomjan, op.cit, p.94

<sup>31</sup>Dahal, op.cit, p.22

Communist Party of India was formed in Darjeeling in 1943. The founding members from Darjeeling were Ratanlal Brahmin, Bhadrabhadur Hamal and Ganesh Lal Subba.<sup>32</sup> In the history of the regions from where demand for separate administrative unit within India were raised, Darjeeling was the first region to demand this and this happened under the communist flag among them.

## **2.2. Formation of Different Working Class Unions under the Communist Flag**

After the foundation of the party, Sushil Chatterjee at first gave advice to Ratanlal to introduce ration system and to make people stand in queue to receive the distributed foods during the time of famine so that everyone gets the foods equally.

R.B. Rai writes:

*“Maila Baje ko aghuwai ma saabvanda pahile driver union khara vayo. Tais pachi garimaan union, rikshaw-wala union, din majdoor union, chattra federation, mahila samity, kishan sangathan ekpachi arko banina thaleo”.*<sup>33</sup> (For the first time under the communist party different unions were formed in Darjeeling, Driver Union was the first one to be formed followed by Rikshaw-man Union, Gariman Union, Din Majdoor Union, Chattra Federation, Mahila Samity and Kisan Sabha one after another).(Translated by Author)

Ratanlal and his comrades brought every section of the working class under one party which was never done by any political party in Darjeeling.

The Communist Party of India was formed and even some unions under the party were formed in Darjeeling but still they were not allowed to enter the Tea-Garden areas by the planters; the area where the workers were suffering the most, where the union was needed the most and where majority of population of Darjeeling was present. Tea-Gardens were not the place where they planted tea and made them ready but also the place where the workers were victims in every aspect of their life;

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<sup>32</sup> Roy, Op.cit, p.336

<sup>33</sup> Rai.R.B (1991) *Pahari Quiro Vitra Ko Pahilo Lal Tara*, Darjeeling Hill Zonal Committee C.P.I. (M), Darjeeling.p.27.

economic, social, health and the planters were those who enjoyed their very life with the sweat and blood of the workers. Mohan .P. Dahal states:

*“Darjeeling chiya camman haruma nyai thiyena. Majdoor haru narakwashma thiye. Haak, adhikar, suvida nasti! Jiwani-shtar thiyo ninatam. Tuppi samma rin. Khatai anusarko khana thiyena. Nabbea pratisat majdoor haruko chatti ma ‘toor badoor’ (t.b) bokera hidthea. Manis nani haru saalai pachi haija le sothar hunthea.”*<sup>34</sup> (There was no justice in the tea gardens of Darjeeling. Their living standard was very low and they did not enjoy any rights neither comfort in anything, their life was like in hell. They were completely indebted and the food they had was not equivalent with their hard work. 90 per cent of the workers were suffering from tuberculosis (T.B) and yearly with various virus and diseases children used to die). (Translated by Author)

The comrades of the communist party, however, could not be stopped for long from entering the tea gardens to make change in the existing system of tea garden and to make change in the life of workers. The workers were brought together under one flag and the union for tea garden was formed, which came to be known as “Darjeeling District Tea Garden Worker’s Union (registration number 707)” on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1945. Ratanlal Brahmin and Bhadra Bahadur Hamal were its first president and general secretary respectively.<sup>35</sup> As soon as the union was formed, it started mobilising the people in different tea gardens as the last Provincial election in British India was going to be held and the communist party from Darjeeling was also going to contest with the candidature of Ratanlal Brahmin in the Labour Constituency.

### **2.3. Provincial election in Bengal of 1946 and after**

The Second World War was over and England, though being on the winning side of the war, had lost many things within. The freedom movement was in peak and India was likely to get independence; the last Provincial Election in British India was held in 1946. Darjeeling was allotted two Constituencies the Labour Constituency and the General Constituency. Ratanlal and other members of the communist party were

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<sup>34</sup> Dahal, op.cit, p.26

<sup>35</sup> Mitra Debabrata(2010) *Globalization and Industrial Relations In Tea Plantations*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi.p.46.

not allowed to enter the tea gardens by the planters, notice were put up in 12 tea gardens saying not to let Ratanlal and other comrades of the communist party enter the tea gardens; the number of guards were increased in all the tea estates, and even police were posted in different parts of the tea garden. The support of the workers were growing towards the newly formed Communist party and also towards the another political party All India Gorkha League (AIGL) which was also formed in 1943 in Darjeeling, AIGL was also contesting for the General Constituency. The communist party with the help of the workers of the tea estates entered the tea gardens one by one, the first tea garden where Ratanlal and his communist party entered was *Takvar* Tea- Garden, then after Ratanlal gave the speech the red flag or the Communist Party's flag started to flying all over *Takvar*. The Communist Party made its manifesto for the upcoming election, as Ratanlal was contesting from the Labour Constituency mostly focused on the tea-gardens. The 11 points manifesto was made which was as follows:

- 1) To end the existing system of *Hatta Bahar*,
- 2) To increase the daily wage of the workers,
- 3) To grant maternity expenses,
- 4) Educational expenses for children of tea garden workers,
- 5) Make working of children below 10 strictly illegal,
- 6) To provide sports facilities to the workers,
- 7) To bring the tea estates under the government from the hands of foreign company as well as from the Indian company,
- 8) Provide free medical facilities and hospital in every tea-garden,
- 9) The workers after getting old and unable to work they should be provided with pension,

10) Workers should be provided bonus during the festivals,

11) Tax on the small land of workers and their cattle's should be stopped.<sup>36</sup>

Darjeeling had many other political struggles as well like the movement for autonomy, struggle for identity, and another was for the independence. The entire manifesto does not talk about the political problems as the workers of the tea gardens were not concerned with the political problem in such a manner because their life was like in hell with all the existing problems in the tea gardens. To solve the problems of workers, to get rid of the suppressions from the planters and to give them economic viability was the first preference of the Communist Party in Darjeeling district, as "Empty stomach do not call for autonomy neither of the national movement".

The campaigning for the election was not easy for the communist party comrades and also to the workers of the tea gardens who were supporting the party in its campaign. The communist party leaders were put behind bars creating various reasons by the planters and even the workers were put behind bars by levelling charge of robbery and various other charges. Within the Labour Constituency only 12 tea gardens were there those were: 1) Pandham, 2) Harsing, 3) Bannockburn, 4) Phoobsering, 5) Pattabung, 6) Soom, 7) Singtom, 8) Rangit, 9) Happy Valley, 10) Steinthal, 11) Sidrabong, 12) Dali.<sup>37</sup> Others who stood for the Labour Constituency were Gaga Tshering from Indian National Congress and S.K. Tshering from the owner's side. On 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1946 the election was held, last election in British India. From the Labour Constituency Ratanlal Brahmin won the seat, R.B. Rai states:

*"Unle kul vote ko 85 pratisat paye. Maila bajele 1118 vote payeka thea vane unka pratidwandi haru Gaga Tshering ra S.K.Tshering le kramasai 126 ra 76 vote matra*

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<sup>36</sup> Bantawa B.M, (1999) *Maila Baje (Ratanlal Brahmin)-Lai Feri Samjanda*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling.p.8.

<sup>37</sup> Rai R.B,(2000) *Hamro Basbhumima Chiyabari Majdoor Andolanko Pahilo Charan Feri Naya Charan*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling.p.27.

*paye*<sup>38</sup> (Ratanlal got the 85 per cent of votes, he got 1118 votes and his opponents Gaga Tshering and S.K. Tshering got 126 and 76 votes from the total votes polled).(Translated by Author)

Ratanlal became the first representative in the Assembly of Bengal (Undivided Bengal) from the hills. By all, there were three representatives of The Communist Party of India in the Assembly of Undivided Bengal: They were Jyoti Basu representing the Railway Constituency of Calcutta, Rupnarayan Roy elected from the reserved seat of Dinajpur and Ratanlal Brahmin from Labour Constituency of Darjeeling.<sup>39</sup>

After the election of 1946 the number of members in the union kept on increasing and even new committees was formed in the new tea gardens. A report given by Bhadrabahadur Hamal 2 months after the election, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1946, accounts that; the Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers Union had 3,000 members (taking one member from one family) and has extended its committee in 20 more tea gardens, even in the big tea gardens like Munda and Nij or Sidar tea garden in Sonada, Ambootia tea garden in Kurseong and Poobong Dabaipani tea garden in Darjeeling.<sup>40</sup> It was not easy for the union members to take forward the works of the union, as the British officials and the planters had put up notices prohibiting the union members from entering the tea garden and those who entered the tea gardens were arrested, more than 20 members were arrested and many members were thrown out of jobs and some were even made to pay high amount of fines. After all the arrest and fines the members of the unions kept on working and mobilising more tea garden workers. The main problem which the workers were facing was the rise in prices of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.29

<sup>39</sup> Bomjan, op.cit, p.95

<sup>40</sup> Rai, op.cit, p.30

essential foods; rice was the main food item for which the price was really high during those days. R.B. Rai mentions in one of his books that:

*“Tiyo samay aanai madhya camman ka majdoor le samna garnu pareko pramukh samashya mahangi thiyo. Aaja sunda ahama lage pani tiyo bela rupiya seer chamal pugnu vaneko sahinaskne awastha thiyo.”*<sup>41</sup> (During that time the main problem which the workers in the tea gardens faced was the high price. We may feel quite surprised when we hear that rice during those periods was Rs. 5 per seer which was really high price for the workers during those times).(Translated by Author)

The trade union started a movement in tea gardens regarding the high price in rice; they made a call that in every tea garden the workers should get 5 seer of rice for 1 Rupee every week. This was applied in some of the tea gardens but in Soom Tea garden in Darjeeling on 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1946 it took a very different turn the workers were getting mobilised and were demanding reduction of price for rice. Police were sent into the garden and union leader P.D. Mukhia and 16 other members were arrested. The workers of the Soom Tea Estate obstructed the police and even took away the guns and *lathis* from them. The number of the workers went on increasing and then the workers went to the Police station of Darjeeling surrounded the station. Workers went on strike for three days no one went to the factory as well as to the bungalow of the manager.<sup>42</sup> After this incident, agitation by the workers against the suppression by the managers spread like a wildfire. R.B. Rai in his book states:

*“Darjeeling ma pratham sanghathit majdoor andolan yahi hunu parcha. Yo ghatnako kehi samay pachi Ambootia caaman ka malik le 6 janalai Hatta Bahar garda tesko pratiwadma 5/6 shai majdoorko julusle Khursang bazaarma bichop pradarsan gareka thea. Nij (Rambuk-Sidar) camman ma ghatiya ration bisai dhumdham andolan machiyo. Malik le camman lock-out garayo.”*<sup>43</sup> (This must be the first united agitation done by the workers in Darjeeling. After some time after the incident in the Soom T.E, in Ambootia T.E the owner of the garden did Hatta Bahar to 6 workers for this 5 to 6 hundred workers agitated with a rally in Kurseong town. Another incident which followed this was in the Nij (Rambuk-Sidar) T.E against the bad ration the workers started agitating in a big manner in which the owner of the garden did the lock-out of the Tea Estate).(Translated by Author)

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.30

<sup>42</sup> Rai. R.B, (2005), *1955 Saal Ko Aitihasi Chiyabari Andolan*, Aitihasi Chiyabari Andolan Ardha Sathabdi Barsa Samaroha Palan Samiti, Darjeeling, p.11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.31

The above incident took place in tea gardens of Darjeeling after a very long suppression by the British planters. The workers agitated, questioned the system, went against the hard and fast rule and made a change, which is one of the historical incidents in the working class agitation in Darjeeling. The sequence of events, in many ways, followed the pattern that Marx describes in his Communist Manifesto:

“The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operative of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them.”<sup>44</sup>

In the tea gardens of Darjeeling the same kind of incident took place the proletariat/workers after forming a union started to agitate which even took a different turn in the history of the workers agitation in Darjeeling. For a very long time they were suppressed, tortured and faced inequality; the time came when the proletariats of the tea gardens as well as from towns of Darjeeling went against the bourgeois planters (both British as well as Indians). On 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January 1947 a tripartite meeting was done in which the Interim Government of India, the Provincial Bengal Government and Sushil Chatterjee as a representative of Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers Union were present. In the meeting the increase in wage of the workers was accepted. The union, under the communist party, kept on expanding the union in different tea gardens in Darjeeling, from the time of its formation in 1943 and even after independence it went on working for the workers. But on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1948, the Communist Party in Bengal was banned and the leaders were arrested even in Darjeeling many communist party members and union leaders were arrested; during this time the pace of mobilising the workers under one union and the works for the tea garden workers lost its pace. But still the Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers

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<sup>44</sup> Marx Karl, (1969) *Manifesto of The Communist Party*, Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One, Progress Publishers, Moscow,.p.18.



Union was doing its work under the leadership of such persons as Anand Pathak, Truck Maila, B.M. Rai, Pangmali Chettri.<sup>45</sup> Taking the side of the planters, the Congress government in 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1948, the registration of Darjeeling District Tea Garden Workers Union (registration no- 707) was cancelled till 27<sup>th</sup> February 1950 when the Kolkata High Court quashed the order banning the Communist Party of India.

#### **2.4. Agitation for the Recognition of Nepali Language Constitutionally: Communist Role in it**

Like all other ethnic movements in India the movement of the Nepalese in Darjeeling for autonomy was also preceded by a cultural movement. The cultural movement is deep-rooted and it has an emotional value. It can easily unite the sub-groups under a common symbol and make them conscious of their distinct identity.<sup>46</sup> The language and culture always brings the group, tribe or caste of that certain community as one, it even plays a very important role in the consolidation of the ethnic identity. The issue of language movement in case of Darjeeling hills deserves special mention. Historically there has existed a very intimate relationship between Nepali language and the Gorkha ethnicity in the Darjeeling hills. On many occasions, Gorkha ethnic conflict did project the recognition of Nepali language as the bone of contention. History suggests that Nepali language in Darjeeling hills has appeared as a marker of ethnic identity, a vehicle for expressing cultural distinctiveness, a source of national cohesion, and most importantly an instrument for building up a political

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<sup>45</sup> Rai, op.cit.,p.37

<sup>46</sup> Chaklader Snehmoy,(2004) *Sub-Regional Movement in India*, K P Bagchi and Company, Kolkata.p.80.

community.<sup>47</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1918, during the closure of the First World War the approval of Nepali language for teaching up to graduation level in Calcutta University by the then British Government was an important marker in this context. Nepali language is the lingua franca of the Indian Nepalese residing in different parts of India, majority being in Darjeeling hills, terai and dooars and Sikkim.

In Darjeeling, regarding the matter of the language and its literature, people were getting concerned right from the British era. They found the place for expression in the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan founded by Parasmani Pradhan in 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 1924. The Nepali Sahitya Sammelan started a movement for the use of the Nepali language in administration and as medium of instruction in Darjeeling. This Sammelan started its work from pre-independence time for the upliftment of the Nepali language by carrying out the task of publishing books and other writings. With the effect of the Sammelan, many Nepali dailies came to be published in Darjeeling as well as in other parts of India where the Nepali speaking people were there. In the year 1943 by AIGL, and in the year 1947 by the undivided Communist Party of India Darjeeling branch, submitted a memorial in the language issue, but only little was heard by the State Government and the Central Government. India adopted its constitution in 1949; the Eight Schedule in the Constitution, which talks about the languages of India, which have a constitutional place in the country. In 1950's the language demands intensified and in 1955 B.G. Kher was appointed as the Chairman of Official Language Commission. The editor of a magazine JAGRAT GORKHA, Anandsingh Thapa from Deharadun, wrote to the President of India on 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1956, stating that Nepali language should be included in the Eight Schedule of the Indian

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<sup>47</sup> Sarkar Swatahsiddha, (2013) *Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, p.52.

Constitution. The President referred the matter to the then Chairman of Language Commission B.G. Kher. Who replied to Anandshing Thapa:

“That since Nepal was a Sovereign Country; its language could not be included in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution”.<sup>48</sup>

The Chairman made a very irrational statement which presented the Nepali speaking Indians as foreigners; later even in the Assam Movement they called Nepalis of India as *Bahiragatas* or the foreigners. The statements made by the Chairman of Official Language Commission made the Nepalis of India think that they will be regarded as Indians only if their language will get a Constitutional recognition. The situation was made worst in 1958 when the State Government of West Bengal, led by Congress under the Chief Minister Bidan Chandra Roy, moved a resolution with the help of Article 245<sup>49</sup> of the Indian Constitution. The resolution stated that, “This Assembly is of the opinion that in pursuance of Article 245 of the Constitution of India, Legislation should immediately be undertaken for adopting BENGALI as the language to be used with immediate effect for all official and administrative purpose in the state of West Bengal.”<sup>50</sup> The Bengal Government under B.C. Roy did not stop with this; it went further and removed Nepali language from the Calcutta University syllabus from the degree level which was recognised till the graduation level as early as in 1918. In the year 1961, a bill was moved by B.C. Roy’s Government, named as West Bengal Language Act of 1961, and even stated that inclusion of Nepali language as the official language is impractical for which he used the wrongly interpreted census of 1951 which only shows 19.96 per cent of Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling.

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<sup>48</sup> Bomjan, op.cit.,p.55

<sup>49</sup> Article 245-Extent of laws made by Parliament and by the Legislatures of States.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India, and the Legislature of a State may make laws for the whole or any part of the State.

<sup>50</sup> Bomjan, op.cit.,p.56

In the movement for the recognition of the Nepali language in the Constitution of India by including it in the Eight Schedule, the people of Darjeeling as well as Nepalis all over India took steps from the pre-independence time in different forms. The role of the Communist party in the Nepali language Agitation even known as *Nepali Bhasa Anandolan*, started from 1947 onwards but the major steps by it can be regarded from the year 1971. After the Fifth General Election in 1971, Ratanlal Brahmin from the Darjeeling Parliamentary Constituency became the Member of Parliament. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1971, in the oath taking ceremony, Ratanlal started to take oath in Nepali language, which made everyone stunned inside the Parliament; even the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This was opposed by most of the members inside the Parliament as they heard Nepali language for the first time inside the House. The then Lok Sabha Speaker, Dr. G.S. Dhillon, interfered and stopped Ratanlal from speaking in Nepali language, but he again started to take oath in Nepali, again Dhillon stopped him by saying this language do not exist in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution. As stated in the then Nepali Weekly “*Agraduth*” Ratanlal made a counter statement to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha saying:

*“Jaba malai annya bhasa ma sapath grahan garna badya garayincha, ma tyaslai manyata dina sakdina ra satya thandina. Maile janma dekhi yo bhasa bolera ayeko hu. Yahi bhasama mo je vanchu wa garchu tiyo satya huncha ani mo tyais lai uchit thanchu, yaish karan yahi bhasa ma bolna chanchu”*<sup>51</sup> (When I am being forced to take oath in any other language, to which I cannot give importance to that language and even I cannot feel truth while speaking in that language. From the time of birth I have been talking in Nepali language so I feel truth in this, I can give importance to it thus I want to express myself in my own language). (Translated by Author)

But Ratanlal in front of majority opposition to the language could not make a success; he had to take oath in Hindi. A Nepali magazine named *DIYALO* which was published by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, from time to time, states that Ratanlal announced the agitation of Nepali language to be constitutionally recognised with

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<sup>51</sup>*Agraduth*, Year 16, Vol. 6, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1971.

inclusion in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution, Ratanlal before taking oath in Hindi he expressed:

“*Aja pachas lakh vanda jyada chariyeka Nepali haruko aawaj yash bhawan ma bolna payina. Yo haak charo diyajawosh.*”<sup>52</sup> (Today I could not speak the voice of 50 lakhs Nepalis of India inside this House. This right should be given soon). (Translated by Author)

In the same year, 1971 on 29<sup>th</sup> of June, the Budget session was going on and Ratanlal stood up and started to speak in Nepali; the Congress members started to oppose it but the opposition went to support Ratanlal that he should be allowed to speak in his own mother tongue. Congress members called the Nepali language as foreign language and even compared it with French and Portuguese languages. A debate between the Congress and the opposition took place, the opposition were able to make a strong point and Congress had to keep quite. Ratanlal was allowed to talk in Nepali inside the House under Article 120<sup>53</sup> of the Indian Constitution. For the first time in the history of Lok Sabha a Speech was delivered in Nepali Language; even in the history of Nepali language and its agitation for Constitutional recognition Nepali Language was heard in a long speech. This incident went as a wildfire in media as in many newspapers, magazines, and other weekly and monthly papers it was published and even in some of the foreign newspapers it was published. A Nepali daily from Kalimpong, on 1<sup>st</sup> July gave an detailed information about the incident in Lok Sabha of Ratanlal speaking in Nepali, the reporter from Delhi of this daily *Himalayan Observer* titled the news as *Maila Baje Lai Fulko Mala, Lok Sabha ma Tinle Nepali*

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<sup>52</sup> Tulsibahadur Chettri (ed.), *Diyalo*, 11/41, April 1971, Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> Article 120- Language to be used in Parliament.—(1) Notwithstanding anything in Part XVII, but subject to the provisions of article 348, business in Parliament shall be transacted in Hindi or in English:

Provided that the Chairman of the Council of States or Speaker of the House of the People, or person acting as such, as the case may be, may permit any member who cannot adequately express himself in Hindi or in English to address the House in his mother-tongue.

*Bhasa Prayog Gare*<sup>54</sup> (*Garland Maila Baje* as He has used the Nepali language in Lok Sabha) (Translated by Author). On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1971, for the Nepali Language agitation a memorandum was forwarded to Prime Minister with a collection of 74 signatures from the Members of Parliament for recognition of the Nepali language in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution by Ratanlal Brahmin.

The Communist Party of India, Darjeeling branch and all other political parties and even other social organisations came together forming All India Nepali Bhasa Samity (AINBS) on 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1972 for the Agitation for the Nepali Bhasa to be recognised in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India. The works of the AINBS continued by publishing book, booklets, articles, magazines, etc, in Nepali as well as in English to make the agitation strong. Many memorandums, booklets were sent to the Prime Minister and to different officials of Government of India, but only assurances were given to AINBS and to the Nepali speaking people. The agitation again in the 90's took a strong shape, the then Chief Minister of Sikkim Narbahadur Bhandari constituted a body named as Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad (BNRP) in 1990 which worked for the inclusion of Nepali language in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India. Many Seminars and meetings took place between the Communist party of India Darjeeling branch, All India Nepali Bhasa Samity and Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad as they were together in this agitation and they were going to put forward the bill again in the Monsoon Session of Parliament in the year 1992. Many strikes were observed in Darjeeling as an agitation and even posters with a threat appeared in Chowk Bazar, Darjeeling on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1992. The poster read as, "No Gorkha will be held responsible if a decapitated head of people is

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<sup>54</sup> *Himalayan Observer*, Kalimpong, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971, p.1

hanged at Chowk Bazar for making the demand of recognition of Nepali language-Janta (Public)”.<sup>55</sup>

The agitation for the recognition of Nepali language in the Constitution by including it to the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution took various stages and advancement. Like the movement of separate state in Darjeeling the language movement were also getting only assurance and not more than that. Jawaharlal Nehru during the time of Independent was asked by the British authority to give them the Gorkha Army, but he refused to give later with some settlement only some of the regiments of Gorkha Army were given to British. The Indians knew about strength and bravery of the Gorkha Army (consisting of the Nepali Speaking); they need the security from that army who all speaks Nepali as their mother tongue, but they don't need the language they speak and terms it as foreign language. After a long fought battle by all the Nepalis of Darjeeling (no matter from which political party or other) and Nepalis from different parts of India achieved their goal on 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1992, by the Seventy First Amendment Act, incorporated Nepali along with Konkani and Manipuri in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Op.tic, Bomjan.p.62

<sup>56</sup> Op.cit, Chaklader.p.83

## **Chapter: 3**

### **Communist Party and Darjeeling**

The year 1943 marked the birth of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling. After that, formation the communist party started its work in the various fields, most importantly, in the tea gardens for the welfare of the workers in the tea garden. Prior to the communist party is formation, there were different associations in Darjeeling which had voiced the idea of a separate administrative unit to be introduced in Darjeeling region within British India. The communist party too later on, started to make demands for a separate administrative unit within India and also made a demand for an independent administrative unit for Darjeeling. The point was that Darjeeling needed a separate administrative unit since there was a crisis of identity which is the Gorkha identity or the Indian Nepalis. The demand for the separate administrative unit of Darjeeling started because of the wrong arrangement made by the British by merging Darjeeling with Bengal. The Communist Party in Darjeeling faced many criticisms as the image of the party for the people of Darjeeling was questioned since this party is a part of the party formed in Bengal and formed by the Bengalis. Despite all the criticism, the communist's in Darjeeling continued their work.

#### **3:1: Early Demands for Separation from Bengal before the Arrival of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling**

The tea gardens, the army, trade and commerce, and sundry employment opportunities attracted settlers to the district, not only from Nepal but also from the Terai region and the plains of Bengal and Bihar. Clearing of forests and reclamation



of land for agriculture provided additional scope for settlement.<sup>1</sup> The people settled out here and slowly turned into a community; and then they all gradually started to talk about the need for a separate administrative set up in Darjeeling. Another important aspect, because of the migration of Nepalis and their increasing population, was that they over whelmed the tribal language;<sup>2</sup> gradually Nepali became the lingua franca of the people of Darjeeling. In Darjeeling the demand for autonomy started slowly, the first voice was raised by some of the retired Army officials and some landed aristocrats and some literate people from Darjeeling. They submitted a memorandum in 1907, to the British Government, pleading for a creation of separate administrative entity for Darjeeling outside Bengal but within the British Indian Empire.<sup>3</sup> By hill people, they meant the Nepalis, Bhutias and the Lepchas, who all were the residents of Darjeeling during that time. This demand for a separate administrative unit can also be seen as the effect of the Division of Bengal done by the British Government in the year 1905; by this, Darjeeling was merged with the Bhagalpur district of Bihar. On this, Snehamony Chaklader states;

“The policy of segregation pursued by the British Government created a social cleavage between the Nepalese and the Bengalese which was further widened by the separatist movement of the section of the Nepalese.”<sup>4</sup>

This memorandum was submitted to the British Government in the year 1907 before the Morley- Minto Reform was introduced in India in 1909; this has been specially mentioned by Tika ‘Bhai’ as:

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Chakrabarty Subhas Rajan, *Silence under Freedom: The Strange Story of Democracy in the Darjeeling Hills*, in Ranabir Samaddar edited,(2005), *The politics of Autonomy: Indian Experience*, Delhi, SAGE Publications, p.175.

<sup>2</sup> Tribal Languages included Lepcha, Limboo, Bhutia.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in, Dasgupta Atish, *Ethnic Problems and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling*, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 11/12 (Nov. - Dec., 1999), pp. 47-68, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518047>.

<sup>4</sup>Chaklader Snehamoy,(2004) *Sub-Regional Movement in India*, K P Bagchi and Company, Kolkata.p.84.

*“San 1907 ma Morley Minto Sudhar (San 1909) laghu hunupurva Darjeeling ka neta harule chuttai prashasanik beawastha (Separate Administrative Setup) ko maag uthawndai ek yaadast patra (Memorandum) tatkalin bharat ko Sachew John Morley aawom Governor General Minto samakcha bhujaye.”*<sup>5</sup> (In 1907 the leaders from Darjeeling submitted a Memorandum for the Separate Administrative Setup to the then Secretary of State for India John Morley and Governor General Minto, much before the Morley-Minto Reform was introduced in the year 1909). (Translated by Author)

The raising of the demand in the year 1907 was mentioned in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during his visit to Kalimpong on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1952 by the President of All India Gorkha League, Sri Narbahadur Gurung. While tracing the political aspiration of the people of Darjeeling, Narbahadur Gurung is found to have stated that “as long ago as 1907 before the Morley-Minto Reform, the leaders of the Hill people of Darjeeling submitted a memorial to the British Government demanding a separate administrative setup for the District of Darjeeling”.<sup>6</sup> In 1909 Morley-Minto Reform was introduced in India to give the Indians little power in the Legislative Affairs; but nothing was done for the people of Darjeeling as demanded in the memorandum; it went unheard by the Government in ensuing the Reform Act.

With the greed of power, the imperialist nations Germany, Italy, England and others came to war; which started the First World War. Darjeeling directly had no link with this war but had an indirect involvement which was the participation of the Gorkha soldiers in this war; this made the Gorkha army famous all over the world. The same Gorkhas who all had an identity in the war as the Gorkha Regiment were in search for their identity and separate administration in British India and in Independent India later. On this Lord Montague on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1917 made a historic declaration in the House of Commons that henceforth British policy in India would

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<sup>5</sup>Tika 'Bhai', (2008) *Hamro Jatiya Mukti Sangharsha Sahi Barsha*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.18.

<sup>6</sup>Bomjan D.S. (2008), *Darjeeling Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.79.

have an overall objective of “gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of British empire”.<sup>7</sup> After knowing about this declaration some of the people (especially those who were educated people in Darjeeling during those times) had formed an Association named The Hill Men’s Association; they forwarded petition for Separate Administrative Unit on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1917 to the Secretary of the of the State to the Government of Bengal Edwin Montague.<sup>8</sup> The one point agenda of the Separate Administrative Unit made a demand for creation of separate unit comprising of the present Darjeeling District with the portion of Jalpaiguri District, which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865 by the British. The memorandum was made by bringing out the points like the people of Darjeeling region had no similarities with the people of Bengal regarding many things such as language, way of living , etc; which has been put as follows:

1. Darjeeling’s inclusion into Bengal was incidental. The district being a part of the Presidency of the Bengal was ‘comparatively recent’ and had become so only because the British were the common rulers of both the places.
2. There was no affinity between the people of the two areas.
3. Geographically, no greater contrast was possible than between the mountains of Darjeeling and the plains of Bengal.
4. Racially, the physiognomy of the majority of the hill people was Mongolian and different from that of the plains.
5. The two areas did not have a shared history.

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<sup>7</sup> Bandyopadhyay Sekhar, (2009), *From Plassey to Partition: A History Of Modern India*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi, p.283.

<sup>8</sup> Roy Barun, (2012), *Gorkhas and Gorkhaland*, Parbati Roy Foundation, Darjeeling, p.301

6. Religiously, a large part of the population was the Buddhist and even the Nepalis who were classified as Hindus had different religious customs from those of the plains.
7. Linguistically, there was no alliance between the two places. Even the lingua franca of the courts and schools in the district was Hindi in contrast to Bengali in the plains.
8. Health wise, the hill people disliked the hot climate of the plains and
9. Educationally, despite primary education being more general in the hills than any other district of Bengal higher education was still backward because colleges and other institutions of professional training were all in the plains. That despite the desire to have such facilities in the hills their presence in the plains acted as a barrier.<sup>9</sup>

The demand for this separate administrative unit was submitted after the statement given by Montague; the people of Darjeeling, with a hope of getting their demand fulfilled when the Montague-Chelmsford Reform was announced, put forward the memorandum for a separate administrative unit. The historic political demand was signed by leaders of different hill communities including S.W. Ladenla, Kharga Bahadur Chettri, Dr Yensing Sitling, Meghbir Singh, Lachman Singh, Nar Prasad Kumai and Deonidhu Upadhaya.<sup>10</sup> The Montague-Chelmsford Reform was introduced in 1919; and then Darjeeling was included under 'Backward Tracts'; the memorandum which was submitted for separate administrative unit was misunderstood.

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in, Pempahishey Karma.T, (2013), *Roadmap on the Trail to Gorkhaland (Partially Excluded Area-The Constitutional Guarantee)*, Darpan Publications, Siliguri, pp.6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.7

After knowing about the Backward Tract given to Darjeeling by the Montague-Chelmsford Reform; the Hill Men's Association again forwarded a petition to Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India, London on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1920 as to explain that how the memorandum was misinterpreted and why Darjeeling cannot be called as a Backward Tract. The petition stated that:

“It appears to us that our case has been somewhat obscured by including it in the Despatch under ‘Backward Tracts’, and our prayers for separation from Bengal has been misunderstood as regards exclusion from general Reform Scheme. We had merely prayed for the creation of a New Hill Province of our own with fullest possible measure of Reform Scheme as granted elsewhere in India. As regards the inclusion of our District among ‘Backward Tracts’, we disclaim the description altogether. In some respects ours is an advanced Tract and is in no way inferior to any other community, our people are as vigorous as any under the Government of India, the percentage of the literate population is well above the average for the Presidency. We would, therefore, emphasise our desire for the fullest possible measure of the Reform Scheme to enable us to contribute most effectively to the welfare of India and the British Empire”.<sup>11</sup>

During this period, in Darjeeling on one side movement to have a Separate Administrative Unit and to get separated from Bengal was going on and on the other hand the national movement for Independence was taking place. Under the leadership of Dal Bahadur Giri a unit of the Indian National Congress was formed in 1918. The leaders and the members of Congress Party were actively taking part in the freedom movement.

When the growing nationalist movement forced the British to concede another dose of constitutional reforms in 1935, the Hillmen's Association and their patrons were once again active to keep Darjeeling away from the operation of the new reforms, on the plea of “protecting the identity and the way of life of the Gorkhas”.<sup>12</sup> The Government of India Act 1919 did not fulfilled the aspiration of the Hill Men's Association; this 1919 Act gave Darjeeling the status of Excluded Area; again in the

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<sup>11</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, pp.80-81

<sup>12</sup> Samanta.Amiya.K, (2000), *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study In Ethnic Separatism*, A.P.H Publishing Corporation, Delhi, p.81

year 1930 the Hill Men's Association put forward a new memorandum to the British official's but this time the memorandum was not only made by the thinking of the leaders of the Association but even by collaborating with the locals by doing meetings with them. On this, T.B. Subba writes: On October 25, 1930 this Association, in collaboration with other local associations, sent a memorandum to Sir Samuel Hoare. This memorandum was jointly signed by the following: (1) H.P. Pradhan, President, Hillmens Association, Kalimpong, (2) Lt. Gobardhan Gurung, President, Gorkha Officer's Association, (3) P.M. Sundar, Secretary Kurseong Gorkha Library, (4) N.B. Gurung, Secretary, Hillmen's Association, Kalimpong, and, (5) P.P. Pradhan, Secretary, Hillmen's Association, Darjeeling.<sup>13</sup> Again on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1934, a memorandum was submitted by the Hill Men's Association and was submitted to Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Anderson, the then Governor of Bengal and the signatories were: Sonam Wangel Laden La, Gobardhan Gurung and Madan Thapa.<sup>14</sup> This memorandum was submitted on behalf of the Nepalis, Lepchas and Bhutias of Darjeeling and the matter regarding Dooars and Jalpaiguri was not mentioned in that.

The Government of India Act, 1935, when announced, under Section 92 of the Act, the district of Darjeeling was given the status of "Partially Excluded Area" and again the demand of Separate Administrative Unit was not granted to Darjeeling. The Government of India Act, 1935, made Darjeeling a "Partially Excluded Area", which gave Darjeeling an opportunity to send a representative to the Bengal Provincial Assembly. The opportunity of representation for the people of Darjeeling did not give them happiness rather much more fear and insecurity; as stated by Tika 'Bhai':

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<sup>13</sup> Subba. T.B, (1992), *Ethnicity, State And Development: A Case Study Of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, p.79.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.80

“Saan 1935 saal ko ‘Ashik Bahibhutha Chetra’ (Partially Excluded Area)- ko prawadhan tatha bangal ko dhara sabha ma ek pratinidhi pathawne adhikar le Bharatiya Gorkha janmanaslai khusi tulewnako satho ajha asurakchit ra asantus tulyaye ko kura saan 1938 saal ma ‘Hill men’s Association’- ka sabhapati Hariprashad Pradhan le diyeka yaadast patra ma ullekh gareka chan.”<sup>15</sup> (1935 Act gave Darjeeling the status of Partially Excluded Area and even a representation in the Bengal Provincial Assembly after the Provincial election, but this did not give happiness to the Indian Gorkhas rather created fear, insecurity and made unsatisfied; this can be seen in the Memorandum of 1938 submitted by the President of Hill Men’s Association, Mr Hariprashad Pradhan). (Translated by Author)

Meanwhile, the election was held in 1937. Thus in the history of Darjeeling District, the first as per the provision of the Government of India Act, 1935 was held in the year 1937.<sup>16</sup> Damber Singh Gurung won the election and became the representative from Darjeeling in the Bengal Assembly; there was no such political party in Darjeeling; the election was fought independently, after Damber Singh Gurung became victorious he came to be known as “Vote Babu”.<sup>17</sup>

There were three communities in Darjeeling who all were coming as one in the Hill Men’s Association; they were Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas. However the unity of these three communities was affected by the demand for Nepali Language to be as a medium of instruction in schools; before this problem could arise in a bigger way, Laden La (one of the active members of The Hill men’s Association) called for a public discussion on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1934, between the people of three communities Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha. According to Subba and Samanta about 600 people gathered for the meeting from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Sukiapokhari and many other places of the district of Darjeeling. After the meeting an Executive Committee was formed with members from all the three communities which were known as Hill People’s Social Union which was even known as NEBULA which was

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<sup>15</sup> Tika ‘Bhai’, Op.cit, p.23.

<sup>16</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.85.

<sup>17</sup> Bomjan.D.S, (1999), *Gorkhaland Anandolan: Ek Post-mortem Report*, Bikash Jaan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.5 (Nepali Book)

meant as ‘NE’ for Nepali, ‘BU’ for Bhutia and ‘La’ Lapchea or Lepcha.<sup>18</sup> The work of Hill Men’s Association slowed down after the certain death of S.W. Laden La in 1936. T.B. Subba states:

“The Hillmen’s Association lost its soul after the death of Laden La in late 1936. But it lingered on under the presidentship of a veteran lawyer and a litterateur, Rupnarayan Sinha, till the end of the Second World War.”<sup>19</sup>

In 1941, the Hill Men’s Association for the last time submitted a memorandum under the presidentship of Rupnarayan Sinha, to Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India demanding Autonomy for Darjeeling and separation from the Bengal Province. After this demand, no such demands were made by any political party or any association till 1947; in 1947 the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling branch which was formed in 1943, came with the demand of “Gorkhasthan”.

### **3:1:2: Demand for “Gorkhasthan” and Autonomy by the Communist Party**

The people of Darjeeling began to demand for an autonomous administrative structure from 1907, as they always felt the insecurity of being a minority in the Bengal Province; this structure introduced by the British created a problem of identity, and a perception of discrimination led them feel that way. The fear of insecurity and domination by the Bengalis struck the minds of the people of Darjeeling and this had to do with their shared experience with the Bengali Doctors, Officers, who all were brought to Darjeeling by the British, showing off their superiority. The Gorkha identity was always there within the minds of the people of Darjeeling and which exists till now. The problem of the Gorkha identity arises from everyday experiences and the necessity to carve out a political space for its cultural

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<sup>18</sup> Samanta, Op.cit, p.83.

<sup>19</sup> Subba, Op.cit, p.81.



identity in India. The identity often claims its legitimacy by citing the contribution of the Gorkhas in the anti-colonial struggles.<sup>20</sup>

From 1907 to 1941 many memorandums were presented to the British Government by the people of Darjeeling with the help of Hill Men's Association; till then there was no involvement of the Communist Party of India on forwarding those demands. The Provincial Communist party was showing its interest on Darjeeling only from 1940. The year 1943 was marked by the birth of Communist Party in Darjeeling with its first leaders Ratanlal Brahmin and Ganeshlal Subba. The Communist Party in Darjeeling formed mostly focusing on the tea garden areas and its problems. However Ratanlal Brahmin and Ganeshlal Subba, were very concerned about the regional autonomy in Darjeeling; of the two leaders, the former knew how to deal with the tea garden problems, how to mobilise the workers and handle the owners and the later was very good in all the intellectual needs for the party to function. They joined their hands with the All India Gorkha League (AIGL)<sup>21</sup>, on the regional autonomy issue and a memorandum was written to Gandhi and Jinnah. Some of the important subjects of the memorandum a cited in one of the Nepali book need read as follows:

1. *Darjeeling Jilla, Sikkim aw Nepal ma bash garne ewtai bhasa, sanskriti, riti-tithi, aw manobriti vaveka Gorkhali ko swadhin bharat ma ek swatantra jati ko hishab le bikash garna pawne purna swadhinta.* (Gorkhalis residing in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Nepal sharing similar language, culture and similar thinking should be given freedom to develop themselves in Independent India).

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<sup>20</sup> Cited in, Golay Bidhan, *Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony and History*, in T.B. Subba, A.C. Sinha, G.S. Nepal and D.R. Nepal edited (2009), *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, p.86.

<sup>21</sup> AIGL- All India Gorkha League, a political party of Darjeeling which was formed in Darjeeling on 1943.

2. *Vawishya ma hune Aaisthai Rastriya Sarkar ma Gorkhali haruko pratinidhi.* (In future when the Interim Government is formed there should be representation of the Gorkhalis).
3. *Bharat barsa ma naya sashan pranali kayam bhayepachi Assam, Sayukta Pranta, Punjab ma chariyera baseka Gorkhali haruka bhasa, sanskriti ra sikhsha ko bandobast ra bikash ko mang.* (In India whenever the new governing body is been introduced, all the Gorkhalis who are been staying in Assam, United Province and Punjab, they should have the right to express and develop their Language, Culture and Education).<sup>22</sup>(Translated by Author)

The undivided Communist Party was in favour of the idea of Self-determination and Right to Secession as put forward by Lenin; on the basis of the same idea, the Communist leaders of Darjeeling put forth an idea of formation of “Gorkhasthan”. The main leaders who were vocal with the idea of Gorkhasthan were Ganeshlal Subba and Ratanlal Brahman or Maila Baje, but this cannot be taken as their own wishful or selfish thinking which brought this idea, as R.B. Rai states:

*“Gorkhasthan ko dawī Communist Party wa Ratanlal Brahman ra Ganeshlal Subba ko maanchinte parikalpana thiyena. Darjeelinge Rajniti, tatkalin rastriya ra antarastriya paristithi ra yashbare tatkalin Communist Party ko nitikai falswaroop yo dawī thiyo.”*<sup>23</sup> (The demand of the Gorkhasthan in Independent India was not the wishful thinking of Ganeshlal Subba, the then Secretary of CPI Darjeeling District Committee and Ratanlal Brahmin, the CPI MLA from Darjeeling. But keeping in mind the erstwhile national and international situation and the ideological and theoretical line of party, in the context of the politics of Darjeeling the demand is found to have been made) (Translated by D.S. Bomjan in *Darjeeling Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule*).

The two hill parties-- the AIGL and CPI -- who were joining hands with each other on the regional autonomy issue were becoming parallel organisations on matter of Gorkhasthan; the former held the idea of merging the district of Darjeeling with Assam and the later with the independent Gorkhasthan. The “Gorkhaland” slogan generated popular support and sufficient political mobilisation for CPI to ensure a

<sup>22</sup>*Document of the History of the Communist Party of India-Vol VII*, P-85, M.B. Rao, cited in, Pradhan Badrinarayan, (1999), *Nava Chetnaka Chir Mashal: Ganeshlal*, Bikalpa Publication, Darjeeling.

<sup>23</sup> Rai.R.B (1991) *Pahari Quiro Vitra Ko Pahilo Lal Tara*, Darjeeling Hill Zonal Committee C.P.I. (M), Darjeeling.pp.47-48.

victory for Ratanlal Brahman in the election to the Provincial council in 1946.<sup>24</sup> A memorandum was submitted with the title of “Memorial of the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India”, on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1947 to the Constituent Assembly and copies were forwarded to Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Finance Minister of Interim Government. Indrabadhur Rai, an eminent writer from Darjeeling, while writing the introduction for the biography in Nepali upon Ganeshlal Subba by Badrinarayan Pradhan states that; Ganeshlal Subba was influenced by three writing which he read and which helped him to bring the idea of Gorkhasthan. Firstly, from the Right to Self-Determination and Right to Secede by Lenin, on the basis of this theory by Lenin the undivided Communist Party of India supported the demand of Pakistan. Secondly, he (Ganeshlal Subba) was even influenced by the Leninist Socialistic writer Jawaharlal Nehru’s “Discovery of India” (March 1946 edition); he was mainly influenced by one line by Nehru which states: “Thus it may be desirable to fix a period, say ten years after the establishment of the free Indian State, at the end of which the right to secede may be exercised through proper constitutional and in accordance with the clearly expressed will of the inhabitants of the area concerned”, Lastly, he was influenced by the writing of Charles Bell’s “Tibet- Past and Present”, in which it has been shown how China had an idea of all the nearby region like China, Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal to be united as one against the British exploitation.<sup>25</sup>

In the memorial itself, in the first line, it states that:

In the opinion of the Communist party of India, the District of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and it is their homeland. Further it is the considered opinion of the Communist Party of India that the Gorkhas living in Darjeeling District, the adjoining state of Sikkim and so-called independent state of Nepal where their number is 3lakhs, 1lakhs, and

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<sup>24</sup> Samanta, Op.cit, p.99

<sup>25</sup> Cited in, Introduction part written by Indrabahadur Rai, in, Pradhan Badrinarayan, (1999) *Nava Chetnaka Chir Mashal: Ganeshlal*, Bikalpa Publication, Darjeeling.

60lakhs respectively; constitute a distinct nationality having a common language, a common culture and common historical tradition that date back to the days of Buddha and Ashoka. These three areas are contiguous to each other and here the Gorkhas on the whole, constitute the overwhelming majority community; nearly 85% of the total.<sup>26</sup>

In the memorandum, the Communist Party focused on various other factors which were similar within all three proposed regions and between the people of these regions like geographical, cultural, linguistics, political, historical and even ethnic features. The memorandum for Gorkhasthan also included the principle of Adult Suffrage, as in the elections held in British India in Darjeeling not all the people were allowed to vote; even in the last provincial election in August 1946, only 7% from the total population was allowed to vote. It also focuses on the representation of the Gorkhas in the Provincial Legislature should be increased. The special representation and grouping of constituencies from tea garden, rural area, and railway labour with even a provision to stand for the election was demanded. The focus was also made by the Communist Party of India by demanding more schools and college for the Gorkhas which must be opened in Darjeeling; even the grants of scholarship was demanded for most of the backward Gorkha students who were facing financial crisis. The use of Nepali Language and other local vernacular as a medium of instruction should be introduced by replacing English in schools and colleges; even in the government offices and in courts the demand for replacing English with local vernacular was made. The right to introduce daily, weekly and other magazines which should be in Nepali was put forward in the memorial. The problems existing in Darjeeling and also problems faced by all the Gorkhas staying all over India was expressed in the memorial. The only way to tackle all the problems and to fulfil the demands as presented was, in their view the formation of “Gorkhasthan”.

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<sup>26</sup> Cited in, *Memorial of the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India*, in, Samanta, Amiya, K. (2000), *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study In Ethnic Separatism*, A.P.H Publishing Corporation, Delhi, p.255

Like all the other demands for autonomy, which had been submitted to concerned offices and some of the officers of the British government from 1907, the demand of Gorkhasthan went unheard. The Gorkhas and their problems and their demands were neglected before and even now. The provincial Communist Party of India did support this in the beginning in other regions of India on the basis of Lenin's idea of Right to Self- Determination and Right to Secede; but the party's views changed soon and they became staunch supporters of the states as existed. The same Communist Party which was supporting Darjeeling for the Sovereign Gorkhasthan, after independence did not bother to talk about it, rather it joined the Congress and All India Gorkha League, in 1957, with a demand of "Regional Autonomy". In 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru announced forming of State Reorganisation Commission which was appointed to survey all the regions of India which has the possibility of forming a new Indian state; it came to Darjeeling in 1955, in place of the demand for a state, the Communist Party of India Darjeeling District Committee demanded for Autonomy; this will be discussed in detail in the next section. There were demands for different kinds of autonomy like regional autonomy, hill autonomy, etc. After the Communist Party of India got divided into Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964, it was no longer one Communist Party of India. A majority of the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party went with the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In 1973, the CPI (M) and the AIGL circulated a document titled Programme and Demand for Autonomy, 1973.<sup>27</sup> The two parties expressed that this demand for autonomy was not like the previous demands for autonomy; in this document they stated about the need for an amendment of the constitution (VI Schedule) for the required autonomy in Darjeeling. They even said that the non-

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<sup>27</sup> Chakrabarty, op.cit, p.183

Hillmen people rules the majority of offices in the administration section in Darjeeling and this will be overcome by the hillmen's only with the help of Autonomy. In some points which were to be done in Darjeeling through this autonomy was stated as,

“So long our demand was for the Regional Autonomy within the State of West Bengal-with

Statutory powers- to make Law on different Issues by -Elected Council.

-This requires amendment to the Constitution Article 244<sup>28</sup> and Sixth Schedule<sup>29</sup> to it.

-State Govt. May simply recommended to the Central Govt. – but it can't confer such power.”<sup>30</sup>

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) Darjeeling District Committee and the All India Gorkha League, after all the previous demand for autonomy were not fulfilled; still came with this new autonomy; the reason has been stated as,

“As stated above, a review of the various political demands made by the representatives of hill people of this district will show that they were never satisfied with the present political and administrative set-up of the district and extremely callous attitude of the Govt. of India and West Bengal towards the advancements and developments of the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling. Separation of this district was not a new demand but it goes back prior to the days of Morley-Minto Reforms. Here we do not wish to recapitulate those demands in a parochial spirit or with a view to encouraging separatist tendencies but we do so only to emphasise the urgency of the problem of the district and necessity for its speediest solution.”<sup>31</sup>

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1985, on the threshold of the demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland was going to get started by Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) under the leadership of Subash Ghising, a Private Members Bill was introduced in the

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<sup>28</sup>244. Administration of Scheduled Areas and tribal areas.—(1) The provisions of the Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

<sup>29</sup>Autonomous districts and autonomous regions.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, the tribal areas in each item of Parts I, II and IIA and in Part III of the table appended to paragraph 20 of this Schedule shall be an autonomous district.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and All India Gorkha League, signed, *SOME OF THE POINTS TO BE DISCUSSED FOR AUTONOMY FOR THE PEOPLE OF DARJEELING WITHIN THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL*, made for the “Programme and Demand Of Autonomy” 1973.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and All India Gorkha League, signed, *SOME OF THE POINTS TO BE DISCUSSED FOR AUTONOMY FOR THE PEOPLE OF DARJEELING WITHIN THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL*, made for the “Programme and Demand Of Autonomy” 1973.

Lok Sabha seeking for the Regional Autonomy for Darjeeling District by Ananda Pathak, the M.P from Darjeeling Parliamentary Constituency from the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The bill was for the Constitutional amendment; the bill was introduced as “The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1985 by Shri. Ananda Pathak, M.P. a bill further to amend the Constitution of India.” Ananda Pathak, in his bill, desired the insertion of new Part XA in the Constitution of India. Part XA was titled as “SPECIAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO HILL AREAS OF THE DISTRICT OF DARJEELING”, within the Part XA even new articles were to be added. The articles read as follows;

**244B- Definition:** In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires,-

- a) “District Council” means Council constituted under article 244C;
- b) “Official Gazette” means the Gazette published by the Government of the State of West Bengal;
- c) “State Government” means the Government of the State of West Bengal;
- d) “Fund” means the district fund constituted under article 244G;
- e) “Member” means member of the District Council;
- f) “Autonomous region” means the territory comprising the area, specified in article 244C.

**244C- Creation of Autonomous Region:** Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may, by law, form within the State of West Bengal, an autonomous region comprising such areas, as may be specified, of the district of Darjeeling and neighbouring districts where the Nepali speaking people are in majority and create for the administration of such region a District Council to be constituted in the manner specified under article 244D, with powers and functions as may be specified by law made under article 244E.

**244D- Constitution of District Council:** (1) The District Council shall be a body corporate by the name of Autonomous District Council (Darjeeling) and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property and shall by the said name sue and be sued.

**244E- Power of District Council to make laws:** (1) Subject to any laws made or to be made by Parliament or by the Legislature of the State of West Bengal applicable to the autonomous region, the District Council shall have powers to make laws with respect to-

**244F- Administration of justice in autonomous regions:** (1) The State Government may, by notified order, constitute a court or courts within the autonomous region to the exclusion of any court having jurisdiction over such area and may appoint, in consultation with the Chairman or in his absence the Vice- Chairman of the District Council, suitable person or persons to be members or presiding officers of such courts as may be necessary for the purpose of administration of justice in the autonomous region.

**244G- District Funds:** (1) There shall be constituted for the autonomous region, a District Fund to which shall be credited all money received by the District Council in course of administration of such autonomous region.

**244H- Vesting of Property to District Council:** Subject to such restrictions or conditions as the State Government may think fit and proper; all properties of the nature specified below and situated in the autonomous region shall vest in and belong to the District Council with all other properties which may become vested in the District Council and shall be under the direction, management and control of the District Council and shall be held and applied for the purpose of this Act-<sup>32</sup>

The bill introduced by the M.P. of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) from the Darjeeling Parliamentary Constituency, Ananda Pathak was defeated in the Lok Sabha. Despite of having 33 Members of Parliament belonging to the Left Front in the Lok Sabha; CPI (M) 22 MP, CPI 6 MP, RSP 3 MP and Forward Block 2 MP the defeat was by 47 votes against 17 votes.<sup>33</sup> The bill introduced by Ananda Pathak M.P was not only opposed by the other parties but was not even supported by the comrades of his own party. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) after coming to power of Bengal in the year 1977, changed its view on dealing with the problems of Darjeeling; the same party was in favour of Autonomy for Darjeeling from 1943, from the time of the formation of the Darjeeling District Committee of Communist Party of India. The party which stayed with its ideology, after coming to the power kept aside the ideology and kept its political greed and need in front. In one article in the Nepali daily it has been stated that,

*“Satta ko pralovan ahankar ma fasera Marxwadi, Leninwadi siddhant haru vuldai alpasankhyak, pachawte Gorkhaharu mathi ekadhikar ko sashan chalawne makpa sarkar ekprakar le bahusankhyak bangalwadi vaisakeko thiyo.”*<sup>34</sup> (With the greed of seat and power the Communist Party of India in the state of Bengal, they (leaders of CPI) forgot the ideology of Marxist and Leninist and began to suppress the minority Gorkhas in Darjeeling with their dictatorial rule and turned themselves into majority Bengal-xist from Marxist). (Tranlated by Author)

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<sup>32</sup> The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1985, Ananda Pathak, M.P, Introduced to Lok Sabha. Bill no. 122 of 1985.

<sup>33</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p. 97

<sup>34</sup> Cited in, Himalaya Darpan, “*Jatiya ashimta sangharsa ma bharatiya communist haruko aran ra kramakpa ko bhumika*”, Siliguri, Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 (Nepali Daily)



### **3:2: The State Reorganisation Commission and Darjeeling**

After independence, it was not an easy task for the officials of the governing body. Nehru and his Indian National Congress being in power in independent India was not like sleeping on a bed of roses; many of the regions were demanding for creating separate state on the basis of language, and the problem to convince the Princely states to be part of independent India was there. From 1950, the demand was made by the Communist Party of India for creation of States on the basis of language. In most parts of India, this demand began to spread like a wildfire and Nehru was caught in a dilemma of creation of states on the basis of language. Trying to solve the problem Nehru in 1953 appointed the "State Reorganisation Commission", with Justice Fazil Ali, K.M. Panikkar and Hriday Nath Kunzru as its members. On 22nd December, 1953, the Prime Minister made a statement in Parliament to the effect that a Commission would be appointed to examine "objectively and dispassionately" the question of the Reorganization of the States of the Indian Union "so that the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as a whole is promoted". This was followed by the appointment of this Commission under the Resolution of the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, No. 53/69/53-Public, dated 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1953 (Appendix A).<sup>35</sup> After the formation of State Reorganisation Commission was announced the Commission started to visit every region of India.

As a result of the visit the State Reorganisation Commission came to Darjeeling, and according to D.S. Bomjan:

The SRC and its notification for representation was the God sent opportunity for the People of Darjeeling for realising the long cherished desire of getting separation from Bengal and to have its own Administration as other Communities of India. But the God sent opportunity got intercepted by the redoubtable political ghost. The political ghost had

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<sup>35</sup>REPORT OF THE STATES REORGANISATION COMMISSION, 1955

inherited the responsibility of keeping Darjeeling under West Bengal by all means that was under their command and disposal.<sup>36</sup>

The State Reorganisation Commission did not help as expected by the people of Darjeeling, with a hope of a State for the people of Darjeeling. Before the SRC visited West Bengal and Darjeeling, in the West Bengal Assembly Biren Banerjee talked about providing regional autonomy within West Bengal State for the Nepali speaking people. This was opposed by the Chief Minister of West Bengal B.C. Roy; as Roy and his Government were not in favour of giving autonomy to any region within Bengal; rather they were trying to merge most of the adjoining regions with West Bengal. Swatahsiddha Sarkar writes:

“Immediately after the first Assembly election Bidhan Chandra Roy, the first Chief Minister of West Bengal, and his Ministry had to face two crucial issues of immense political significance. One was the burning question of how to sort out the refugee problem and the second one was the issue of merger of the Northern part of West Bengal consisting of the three districts, namely Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar with the mainland of West Bengal.”<sup>37</sup>

The Congress Government of West Bengal, under B.C. Roy, looked in an unfriendly manner to the people of Darjeeling and the problems of Darjeeling. The B.C. Roy Government in order to stop Darjeeling from getting a separate, state provided the State Reorganisation Commission in correct information and documents regarding Darjeeling. The B.C Roy Government depriving the cherished aspiration of the people of Darjeeling submitted the Distorted Census of 1951, as the SRC relied on the Census figure’s especially of 1951, Commission in its report said;

“In our examination of the various proposals for reorganisation we have mainly relied on statistical figures as given in the Censuses of various years. The Census figures for 1951 have been compiled according to what are known as "Census tracts". It has, therefore, been difficult to estimate the mother-tongue figures on a taluk or tehsil-wise basis. We were given to understand that it might be possible to make estimates of taluk or tehsil-wise figures on the basis of certain statistical assumptions. Having regard, however, to the

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<sup>36</sup> Op.cit, Bomjan, p.102

<sup>37</sup> Sarkar Swatahsiddha, (2013), *Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, p.51.

controversies which surround such assumptions, we took into consideration only the figures as printed in different Census reports in reaching our conclusions.”<sup>38</sup>

The distorted census of 1951 showed the total number of the Nepali in Darjeeling was only 88,958 and the Nepali speaking people population was only 19.96 %; this was because only Brahmin, Chettri and Scheduled Caste was shown as Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling. On this matter, it has been stated that, in 1955, N.B. Gurung, an independent MLA from the district submitted in the Assembly, that the government of West Bengal and the Congress Party had adopted an unfriendly attitude towards the people of Darjeeling. He noted that the Congress in a supplementary memorandum to the State Reorganisation Committee, when it visited Darjeeling, stated that “Nepali-speaking population was 20%, Bengali-speaking 14.3%, Hindi-speaking 6.8%, Lepchas and Bhutias being 4%, and total comes to 45.1%. It is not understood who constituted the rest of the population, viz., 54.9%. I hope they are not Chinese.”<sup>39</sup> This statement was made against the state government of West Bengal headed by the Congress, who gave the wrong information to the State Reorganisation Commission, which affected the people then and till now the effect has been felt.

The Communist Party of India, Darjeeling Committee, and the All India Gorkha League submitted representation in the State Reorganisation Commission; but in the final report of the commission there has been no mention of the submission made by two parties. The Communist Party of India had submitted a memorandum to the commission on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1955 making a demand for autonomy by amending the Constitution of India. The AIGL also placed a demand in the lines of the

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<sup>38</sup>STATE REORGANISATION COMMISSION, op.cit.

<sup>39</sup>Cited in Chakrabarty Subhas Rajan, *Silence under Freedom: The Strange Story of Democracy in the Darjeeling Hills*, in Ranabir Samaddar edited, (2005), *The politics of Autonomy: Indian Experience*, Delhi, SAGE Publications, p.181.

Communists.<sup>40</sup> The interesting thing about the demand by the Communist Party was, the same Communist Party of India Darjeeling District Committee who made a very strong demand of Gorkhasthan in the Constituent Assembly, which was a demand of separate country; rather than going for much more strong demand they were making the demand of Autonomy to State Reorganisation Commission, which came to enquire about all the different criteria's which gives the possibility to make the certain region as one of the new Indian state. The people of Darjeeling as well as the leaders of the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling District Committee, wanted not to become a part of Bengal before independence; and from 1907 when the demand of Autonomy remained unheard the Communist Party from Darjeeling came with the idea to remain Sovereign but not in Gorkhasthan, but the story after eight years was different.

D.S. Bomjan argues as to why the Communist Party of India Darjeeling District Committee came with the demand of Autonomy rather than coming with the demand of state within India, by saying that,

Thus the Demand of Autonomy made by the Darjeeling District Committee of CPI to the SRC seemed to be a Tutored Demand in the Interest of West Bengal. As during the time Satyendra Narayan Majumdar, a member of Rajya Sabha, was in-charge of the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party of India, from the provincial committee of West Bengal. The man of the status of Satyendra Narayan Majumdar knowing well the terms of reference of the SRC would not have made the demand of regional autonomy if he were really concerned for the socio-political interest and safeguard of the people of Darjeeling.<sup>41</sup>

The Bengal government played every possible game by not letting Darjeeling to raise such a demand in front of State Reorganisation Commission, so that it may allow them to form a state; the Communist Party of India, Provincial Committee, was also affected or manipulated by the Congress party Government headed by another

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<sup>40</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.104

<sup>41</sup> Ibid,p.104

Bengali. From this point of view, the above argument made by D.S. Bomjan may have some truth, but what about the leaders from the Darjeeling District Committee of the Communist Party? They could have protested and raised the demand for a separate state and even produced better requirements for creation of state of this region of Darjeeling District. Darjeeling was place from where the representation from teagarden working class seat was made in the Provincial Assembly and won by the Communist Party. The Provincial unit of the Communist Party of India may also not have supported Darjeeling for State, as this region was one of the good vote banks for them in the future elections and in the tea gardens only the Communist Party had made a strong hold as compared with others. Coming back to the State Reorganisation Commission, as 'If' cannot be used much in this discipline of history, it will be like, "If Cleopatra's nose was flat and not beautiful, and then the History of Rome would have been different". The State Reorganisation Commission left Darjeeling empty handed, it did not take any information from Darjeeling which may have been discussed and could have made Darjeeling one of the Indian states; but only information they took was the wrong data and information which was provided to them by the B.C. Roy led Congress government of West Bengal. The Government of Bihar claimed that the region of Darjeeling should be merged with Bihar but was rejected by the State Reorganisation Commission in its report as,

"The Bihar Government's claims to Darjeeling and some other districts of West Bengal and to three districts of Orissa which are contiguous to Bihar, to which reference has been made in the opening paragraphs of this Chapter, are not justified on the ground of linguistic or cultural affinity, administrative necessity, or any other special reason. It is not, therefore, necessary for us to examine them in any detail."<sup>42</sup>

The State Reorganisation Commission rejected the demand made by the Bihar Government on the basis of language, culture, history, etc, but there is always one question that, how could Darjeeling be merged with West Bengal? When there is no

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<sup>42</sup>State Reorganisation Commission Report, Op.cit, p.171

similarity of culture, language, history, and so on. There were many points with the political parties of Darjeeling which could have been used and loosened the grip of West Bengal on to Darjeeling and presented to the State Reorganisation Commission. The All India Gorkha League, whose representation was there in the West Bengal Assembly, could not make its presence in front of the State Reorganisation Committee and the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling District Committee, which could not come out of the clutches of the Provincial Communist Party even for the betterment of own homeland. The quietness of the two political parties of Darjeeling eased the work of West Bengal Government for not letting Darjeeling to get separated and become Indian State in 1955.

### **3:3: The Margaret's Hope Tea Garden Incident of 1955**

The protest by the labourers in India can be traced from 1875 in Bombay. The first labour agitation, under the guidance and leadership of S.S. Bengalee, a social reformer and philanthropist, started in Bombay in 1875 to protect against the appalling conditions of workers in factories, especially those of women and children and appealed to the authorities to introduce legislation for the amelioration of their working conditions.<sup>43</sup> Later, in 1890 Bombay Mill Hands Association as the first labour formed in India, which was followed by many different trade unions; even trade unions under political parties came up in India like All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) under the Communist Party, Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) under Congress Party. The trade unions in the Tea Gardens was formed in 15<sup>th</sup> September 1946, after the coming of the Communist Party of India in Darjeeling; the union came to be known as, "Darjeeling District Tea Garden Worker's

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<sup>43</sup> Mitra Debabrata, (2010), *Globalization And Industrial Relations In The Tea Plantations*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi, pp. 32-33.

Union” (Later known as Mazdoor Union), under the leadership of Ratanlal Brahmin, B.B. Hamal, Ganeshlal Subba and Sushil Chatterjee.

Despite the fact that the tea gardens in Darjeeling existed from 1840’s, the trade unions came up only by the time of independence; it may be because of the absence of the proper ground to form a trade union. The Darjeeling District Tea Garden Worker’s Union, after its formation was submitting many demands to the British government for the benefits of the tea garden workers and even protesting against the evil system of Hatta Bahar. As the movement of the tea garden workers was in process, R.B. Rai states:

*26<sup>th</sup> March, 1948 dekhi pachim bangal communist party gair-kannoni ghorit vaye pachi party ra union netaharu wyapak roopma gharpakar suru vayo<sup>44</sup>* (On 26 March 1948 the Communist Party was declared illegal and the trade union leaders were put under house arrest) (Translated by Author).

The movement of the tea garden workers slowed down in the process. But after 1950, after the Kolkata High Court removed the ban on the Communist Party of India and its trade unions, again the tea garden movement took pace.

In Darjeeling the movement in tea gardens was getting its momentum under the two unions of the Communist Party of India Darjeeling District Committee and the All India Gorkha League’s union Shramik Sangh. The Plantation Labour Act was approved in 1951 and was implemented in 1954, the benefits of which were to be given to the planters according to this act were not provided to the tea garden planters of Darjeeling. The planters were not giving any attention to the demands of the labours; even the government who had to solve the problem of the labours were under the influence of the bourgeois planters. The negotiation between the planters,

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<sup>44</sup> Rai. R.B, (2000), *Hamro Vashbhumima Chiyabari Mazdoor Aandolanko Pahilo Charan: Pheri Naya Charan*, Bikash Jaan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.38.

Government and the trade union were taking place and even between the two trade unions. According to R.B. Rai:

*“Yahi prista bhumi ma Shramik Sangh ra Mazdoor Union ko pakcha ma 8 May 1955 ko din malik barga ra sarkar samakcha 14 sutra maang patra pace gariyo jasma mukhya hatta bahar pratha banda garne, mazdoor- karmachari haru lai 3 mahina ko roji ra barabar bonus, Darjeeling ka chiya kamaan ka mazdoor ko roji Dooars kai barabar Irupaiya 11 anna hunuparne, standing order ko sansodhan, karmachari haru ko talab bridhi ra 1952-53 saal ma bandha vayeka kamman ka mazdoor- karmachari lai harjana dina parcha vannea thiyo.”*<sup>45</sup> (The Shramik Sangh and the Mazdoor Union on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1955 did a meeting with the Planters and the Government and submitted 14 points demand, some of the important points were regarding the removal of *Hatta Bahar* system, the labours should be given 3 months wage and bonus, the wage of the tea garden labours of Darjeeling should be equal to the wage of the labours of Dooars i.e. 1 Rupees 11 Anna, the Standing Order should be amended, the office workers of the tea garden should be increased and those tea garden workers whose tea gardens were closed in 1952-53 should be provided some grants). (Translated by Author)

A 14 points charter of demands was submitted to the Owners of the tea gardens and the Government was silent on them and was kept unsolved. The All India Gorkha League and the Communist Party, again on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1955, in a joint meeting at Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan hall, decided to go for a general strike from 22<sup>nd</sup> June; the Assistant Labour Commissioner called for a meeting after hearing about the announcement, but the meeting again did not solve the problems and the demands of the tea garden workers. Before the general strike started, arrest warrant of the leaders of the tea garden union was out on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1955. The leaders Monoranjan Roy, the District Secretary of Mazdoor Union; Ananda Pathak and the Vice-President of Shramik Sangh, L.B. Lama were arrested. Ratanlal Brahmin (CPI) and Deoprakash Rai (AIGL) had gone underground along with other leaders.<sup>46</sup> The main leaders of the movement were in jail and some were underground, but the workers did not give up the movement and from the scheduled date of the General Strike and protest movement 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1955, the movement started with power and courage. On 50<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Rai. R.B, (2005), *1955 Saal Ko Aitihāsik Chiyabari Andolan*, Aitihāsik Chiyabari Andolan Ardha Sathabdi Barsa Samaroha Palan Samiti, Darjeeling, p.24.

<sup>46</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.107



Anniversary of the 1955 Margaret's Hope Tea Garden incident, Badrinarayan

Pradhan writes:

*“Malik harule yo mang ko terpuchar layenan matra hoinan, tara police ko sahayata le aakraman pani suru gare, mazdoor haru ka bir senani Ratanlal Brahman ra Gorkha League ka krantikari neta Deoprakash Rai bhumigat hunupareo, aru katipay chiya kamman ka comrade haru lai kasai lai pakrea, katijana bhumigat vaye, tara hartal chalirayo, chalirayo”*.<sup>47</sup>(The owners of the tea garden did not listen to the demand made by the two unions of the tea garden and in addition to it they used the police force to attack them and to stop them. The leaders like Ratanlal Brahman and revolutionary leader of Gorkha League Deoprakash Rai were forced to be underground. Many of the comrades from different tea gardens were arrested but still the workers made the General Strike kept on going). (Translated by Author)

The owners, sitting in some five star hotels may have thought that the workers will just do the General Strike for sometimes and they will get settled after some days, and even the police with the help of their allied the State Government of West Bengal was with them so they don't have to worry about. But this was wrong this time as the workers were really dedicated to the movement, the wages which was fixed many years before was still the same and the cost of living was getting high. The workers could hardly manage their daily food and had nothing much left to educate their children and to enjoy some other things for entertainment. In the mean time, the rise in price of the ration which was given in the tea gardens increased which added fuel to the agitation.

On the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1955, a peaceful procession took place in Margaret's Hope Tea Garden and the police opened fire on the unarmed people; the police firing killed 6 people of the tea garden. Amrita Kamini 18 years, Moulisova Rai 23 years who was pregnant, Kancha Sunuwar 22 years, Padambahadur Kami 25 years, Kalay Limbo 14 years, Jitman Tamang alias Majhi became martyrs in the

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<sup>47</sup> Cited in, Pradhan Badrinarayan, *1955 Saal Ko Anandolan Shramik Bijay-Yatra Thiyo*, Pakhrin.R.P edited, (2006), *1955 Saal Ko Aitihashik Chiyabari Anandolan Ko Ardasatabdi Smarika*, 1955 Saal Ko Aitihashik Chiyabari Anandolan Ko Ardasatabdi Samity, Darjeeling, p.3.

historic movement of the Tea Gardens of Darjeeling.<sup>48</sup> Many other workers were injured and many of them were put behind the bar, one worker named Birje Rai was also shot and injured, he was admitted to hospital for 2 months and directly imprisoned for 9 months. The news of the firing by the police who were called by Okhelen, the then British Manager of Margaret's Hope Tea Garden, and that the police force was sent by the order of the Congress Government under B.C. Roy of West Bengal spread like wildfire. The brutal killing of the workers on 25<sup>th</sup> June was protested by all the people of Darjeeling; the shops of the towns were closed and students from colleges started protesting. On the day of cremation, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1955, the Government again played another dirty game by announcing Section 144<sup>49</sup>, by which assembly of people were restricted in the Darjeeling area; despite of the I.P.C Section 144, people in large number assembled in the cremation ceremony. R.B. Rai mentions in his book that Thirty Thousand people from all over the place from Darjeeling District participated to give the final respect to the martyrs of the historical tea garden agitation of Darjeeling.<sup>50</sup>

The tea garden workers of Darjeeling faced much torture, exploitation during the British rule and the same torture and exploitation was faced by them even in the Independent India; for the nation they gave many lives during the freedom movement, the Gorkhas gave their blood for the land, but the land was not theirs. The family of those Gorkhas asked for little more wage and what they received was bullet in their chest and head. The forefathers of the workers gave their blood and sweat to clear the

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<sup>48</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.107.

<sup>49</sup> Indian Penal Code Section 144- Joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapons. Whoever, being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

<sup>50</sup> Rai. R.B. Op.cit, p.45.

large forest (explained by L.S.S. O'Malley in his Gazetteer<sup>51</sup>) and planting tea bushes, and their great grand children had to give their blood while asking for higher wages.

After the incident of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1955, as a price of blood of the 6 martyrs; the wage of the tea garden workers were increased to 1 Rupees 11 Ana, the *Hatta Bahar* practice was abolished, the arrest warrant on the leaders of both the union of the Communist Party and All India Gorkha League was removed. Jyoti Basu, the then leader of Communist Party of India, blamed B.C. Roy for the incident in Margaret's Hope tea garden, the Provincial Communist Party showed their condolence toward the martyrs as the agitation by workers took place under the Red Flag bearing the Communist Party of India on it. When all the people of Darjeeling as well as from other places were against the police firing on the peaceful procession of the tea garden workers agitation, some of the leaders from All India Gorkha League were supporting the police firing, they were D.B.S. Ghatraj, Shiva Kumar Rai and George Mabert; they were expelled from the party for supporting the brutal police firing and by going against the party discipline.

After the 25<sup>th</sup> June 1955 incident, the Government of West Bengal set up a Committee of Enquiry; the enquiry was made to examine the problems existing in the hills. The notification read, "Government of West Bengal, Home Department, Political Resolution, No. 3000-P, Calcutta, the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1961. It was constituted on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1955, Resolution No. 8417-P, to examine the various problems affecting the hill areas of the Darjeeling District."<sup>52</sup> The Committee has given reports on various problems of Darjeeling mostly the problems of the schools, roads, water, etc,

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<sup>51</sup> O'Malley .L.S.S, (1907), Bengal District Gazetteers Darjeeling, Logos Press, Delhi, pp. 87-100

<sup>52</sup> Report ,(1961), *Government of West Bengal, Recommendations of the Darjeeling Enquiry Committee and Action taken and other Comments thereon*, Superintendent, Government Printing West Bengal Government Press, Alipore, West Bengal.

even the actions necessary has been mentioned in the reports but not all of the problems were focused properly and were taken actions. The tea garden problem, after the enquiry committee, also remained the same, only by the time slowly the wage after long period and protest by the workers the wages were raised a little but not sufficient and equivalent with the high prices of commodities in the market. This problem exists till now in all the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Dooars, the tea with the having highest price in the world market has the lowest wages of its workers.

## Chapter: 4

### Gorkhaland Movement and Communist Party in Darjeeling

The separatist movement for separate state from West Bengal got the name as “Gorkhaland Movement” in the 1980’s; but it is not that the movement which started only in the 1980’s. It can be regarded as an evolution of the demand made by the people of Darjeeling from 1907, which after getting rejected several times evolved from a demand for autonomy to the demand of separate state of “Gorkhaland”. The word Gorkha, which has been attached with the movement, has always been a point of debate and discussion among scholars. Regarding the origin of the word Gorkha, many views have been given by scholars. Gorkhas were the dominant race in Nepal, who all belonged to the place named “Gorkha” and came to be known as Gorkha or Gorkhali; this place is situated towards the west side from Kathmandu, and which was the capital of the Kingdom before. There is another version saying, “The word Gorkha is perhaps derived from the Sanskrit word go-raksha; its English meaning is protection of cow, or the word emanates from the temple of Goraknath, established by the famous Indian Siddha.<sup>1</sup> The temple is of the Hindu warrior saint Goraknath. But in Nepal, not all the people of Nepal were referred as Gorkha, only few of the clans were included in Gorkha title, T.B. Subba cites that, “There is no doubt about the fact that till the end of the eighteen century the “Gorkhas” referred only to the Aryan or Khas Nepalis though Tamangs and Sunuwars had cooperated with the Gorkha king in his conquest of eastern Nepal during 1772-73.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chaklander Snehomoy, (2004), *Sub-Regional Movement In India*, K.P. Bagchi and Company, Kolkata, p.74.

<sup>2</sup> Stiller (1973; 136) Cited in, Subba.T.B, (1992), *Ethnicity, State And Development: A Case Study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Har-Anand Publications, Delhi, p.54

In Darjeeling, the word Gorkha signifies differently nowadays. The earliest identity of Gorkha in India was introduced in the army, by the British officials; from that time till now the only signifier of the word Gorkha is only as a Regiment in the Indian Army. In India there was no such selection of clans who came to be known as Gorkhas as in Nepal's history. The use of the word Gorkha in the separate statehood movement in Darjeeling as Gorkhaland, created many controversies; one was it connoted that this movement is trying to merge Darjeeling with Nepal and hence it is an anti-National. The people of Nepal call themselves Nepali and even the people of Darjeeling are Nepali, but call themselves as Gorkhali or the Nepali speaking Indians. As the movement for the demand of autonomy and the demand for statehood started in Darjeeling; this is despite all the history of the participation of the Gorkhali people from Darjeeling in the freedom movement, the tag of being foreigners has been given to them. The similarity of language and some cultural aspects between the people of Nepal and Darjeeling has been made an issue to tag the people of Darjeeling as foreigners. If the similarity in language and culture has to be made an issue, then even the people of West Bengal and Bangladesh share similar language and even some people of Tamil Nadu and people of Sri Lanka speak Tamil. On this basis, even they can be termed as foreigners. C.K. Shrestha states that:

“The Gorkha community spread all over India has been facing multifarious problems long before independence but one common vexing problem which all of them have to face regularly, particularly post independence, is the problem of their misconceived national Identity. From Himachal to Karnataka and Sikkim to Mizoram, members of Gorkha community are constantly put under the scanner and face uncomfortable questions regarding their nationality, origin and loyalty”.<sup>3</sup>

The demand for separate statehood for the Gorkhas in India has been raised from the time of Independence, among the different statehood demands like Bodoland, Telangana, etc, in different parts of India and has included the identity, economy and

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<sup>3</sup> Shrestha C.K, (2013), *Gorkha's Quest for Indian Identity*, Gorkha Bharati Vichar Manch, India, p.3.

other benefits. Similarly, the Gorkhaland movement is not only the demand but need for the people of Darjeeling and Dooars region and even for all the Nepali speaking Indians elsewhere in India, for their political Identity, economic welfare and other benefits. The Gorkhaland Movement being one of the oldest movements from the time it began as a demand for autonomy, has remained unsolved till now. Is it because of the State Government being against another division of Bengal or is it because of the Central Government which is not looking at the matter of Gorkhaland seriously or is it because of the failure of the political parties and its leaders who have repeatedly accepted different Administrative Settlements? The movement is still unsuccessful, and this will be accepted in this chapter.

#### **4:1. The 1986 Gorkhaland Agitation led by GNLF vis-a-vis the Communist Party in Darjeeling**

The demand for a separate administration or self rule by the people of Darjeeling from 1907 onwards from Bengal, was carried out by the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) and began with the submitting of a memorandum for autonomy and the one in the 1980's to the Union Home Minister Zail Singh, demanding the constitution of separate state outside West Bengal. In the history of the Gorkhaland movement, the first party to demand a separate state was the Pranta Parishad in 1980, but it received a premature death when its leaders were killed. D.S Bomjan states:

“The Government seemed unmindful of the formation of cauldron, as the movement launched by Pranta Parishad for formation of separate state was crushed with the use of police force by killing Krishna Subba and Deoraj Sharma on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1981 at Chowk Bazar, Darjeeling. It was the erstwhile Pranta Parishad which highlighted the demand for separate state in an organised way for the first time since the origin of the demand.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bomjan D.S. (2008), *Darjeeling Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.118.

The Pranta Parishad is said to have based its demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland with various data from history, socio-economic, cultural and political aspects. But it could not stand strong for long against the Left Front Government of West Bengal under Jyoti Basu.

In 1980, along with the Pranta Parishad, another party was formed in Darjeeling under the leadership of Subash Ghising which was the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF). Subash Ghising, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1980, forwarded a letter<sup>5</sup> to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, stating that the Indian Government did a great mistake in 1956 by merging the Darjeeling region into West Bengal, which murdered the future of the people of Darjeeling region; and the Indian Government can correct the mistake by returning the territory of Darjeeling. He also stated that we want a Gorkhaland Government like the other citizens of India who all enjoy their own state as the fruit of independent India, as promised by the First Independence Resolution of Congress Party on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1930. Again, on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1981, Ghising sent a telegram<sup>6</sup> to the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, to take back the prison-administration of the West Bengal Government and even uses the term Gorkhaland State for Darjeeling. Subash Ghising went further with his work for Gorkhaland, trying to mobilise people through meetings and even by boycotting the election. When all the local political parties were becoming weak and only the CPI(M) was becoming strong, rather than focusing on this issue, Ghising took a different step by forwarding the memorandum of Gorkhaland to different leaders, heads of various countries; this has been stated by D.S. Bomjan:

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<sup>5</sup> Letter Cited in, Samanta Amiya.K, (2000), *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study In Ethnic Separation*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, p.120.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.121



“ *Shri Subash Ghising 15 December 1984 ko din 23 jana toil liyera Kathmandu, Nepal pugera griha mantralai marfat ewta smarak patra Nepal nares lai takrayera Darjeeling farkea*”.<sup>7</sup>(Shri Subash Ghising on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1984 went to Kathmandu, Nepal with his 23 delegates and after through the Home Minister of Nepal forwarded a memorandum to the King of Nepal and returned to Darjeeling) (Translated by Author)

After forwarding the memorandum to the king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shadav, the copy of the memorandum was forwarded to the various heads of the states of USA, USSR, UK, Pakistan, etc and even to the Secretary General of UNO. Regarding such a step by the GNLF leader, the West Bengal Government called it as a secessionist character; the GNLF responded that the movement was not to get separated from India but to have a state of Gorkhaland within the territory of India. After forwarding the letter and telegram to the Prime Minister of India and to the Chief Minister of West Bengal and even sending memorandum to various states heads, no single notification came regarding the demand of Gorkhaland Movement.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1985, Subash Ghising gave a speech in Kurseong where he talked about Article VII<sup>8</sup> of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship, 1950, as it was an agreement to grant residence, ownership of property rights and commerce, if the grant is taken back by Indian Government then the Nepalese in Darjeeling can anytime be driven out of the country; this created a fear in the minds of the people of Darjeeling and as a result of which Ghising gained support; this speech was recorded and circulated all over Darjeeling in cassettes. The movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland was gaining momentum under the leadership of Subash Ghising in somewhat democratic way by using pamphlets, songs, plays, etc. The incident involving Nepali speaking people in Meghalaya and Assam played as a catalyst. In

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<sup>7</sup> Bomjan D.S. (1999), *Gorkhaland Andolan Ek Postmortem Report*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.12.

<sup>8</sup>Article VII of Indo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship 1950: The Government of India and Nepal agree to grant, on reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership or property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and privileges of a similar nature.

Meghalaya, the Nepali workers of the Jowai Hills coalmine, were loaded in trucks and were dumped in the Indo-Nepal border, on the issue of not possessing necessary permit and in addition to it All Meghalaya Khasi Student's Union (AMKSU) took a measure sending away foreigners in which the Nepalese became the target. Similarly, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) started a movement on restricting entry of Nepalese into Assam. It was alleged that the West Bengal Government did not give shelter but pushed them towards Nepal and Sikkim.<sup>9</sup> Even Sikkim and Nepal were also not concerned about those people; only the people of Darjeeling protested against this and observed one day strike on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1986.<sup>10</sup> The protest against the inhuman acts by the AMKSU and AASU were not only resented by GNLF but even by the Pranta Parishad led by Madan Tamang. After the incident, the people of Darjeeling became much vocal about identity and separate homeland of the Nepalese of Darjeeling. According to D.S. Bomjan<sup>11</sup>, on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1986 in Ghoom-Sukhia road, at the hall of Bharat Dong, a meeting was held in which a resolution was passed to make a demand of Gorkhaland Constitutionally and for that 11 point programme was made. The 11 points of programme was as follows:

1. To observe a 'Black Flag Day' on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1986 in protest against atrocities and discrimination perpetuated on the Indian Nepalese.
2. A 72 hours bandh in May to highlight the just demand of Gorkhaland.
3. To burn copies of the Report of the State Reorganisation Commission because it proposed the merger of Darjeeling with West Bengal, ignoring the linguistic and cultural distinction of Darjeeling.
4. To burn Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950.

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<sup>9</sup> Chaklander, Op.cit.p.87.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid,p.88

<sup>11</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.13.

5. To protest against the indiscriminate felling of trees of the hill areas by the Forest Corporation for sending them to the plains.
6. To continue the vote boycott movement.
7. To boycott all MLA's, Ministers and political parties who opposed the demand for Gorkhaland.
8. To stop all vehicles carrying the valuable boulders of Dudhia towards the plains.
9. To launch a "Do or Die" movement in protest against the alleged treatment of the Gorkhas as domiciles.
10. The Gorkhas of Darjeeling not to participate in any National Celebration including 15 August, 26 January, etc.
11. To organise a movement for non-payment of taxes and loans.<sup>12</sup>

This 11 point programme and other political activities of the party was circulated through pamphlets, magazines, local newspapers (daily and weekly) like *Swatantra Manchko Bulletin*, *Aba*, *Radio Gorkhaland*, *Gorkha Sandesh*, *Ganthi Kura*, *Voice of Gorkhaland*, and others wrote in favour of the Gorkhaland movement.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1986, as per the 11 points programme people gathered in large numbers, despite the imposition of Section 144; the GNLF leader Subash Ghising gave a speech, by which the people of Darjeeling were more motivated towards the movement and people from every section, i.e. students, youths, and others roused in passion to adopt any means to gain Gorkhaland. Thus, from this day, the violent agitation started for Gorkhaland. Swatahsiddha Sarkar states:

“Desire for the self-rule in the form of demands for the creation of separate *Uttarakhand Pradesh*, inclusion of Darjeeling in the State of Assam, or a separate State of Darjeeling

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<sup>12</sup> Cited in Chaklader, Op.cit, pp.88-89.

kept on rolling until the 1970s. During the early 1980s the stagnated political undercurrents of the hills were transformed into a vibrant and volatile bloody struggle for attaining a separate state for the Indian Gorkhas to be carved out from the State of West Bengal. Subash Ghising and his newly formed political platform, Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), took the lead and spearheaded the Gorkhaland movement in the region.<sup>13</sup>

Rallies and public meetings were held in different parts of Darjeeling and its subdivisions; Ghising established six frontal organisations, namely Gorkha National Women's Organisation (GNWO), Gorkha National Youth Front (GNYF), Gorkha National Student's Front (GNSF), Gorkha Volunteer's Cell (GVC), Gorkhaland Welfare Organisation (GWO), and Gorkha National Ex-Servicemen Organisation (GNEO).<sup>14</sup> All those organisations were looking after the political programme and even conducting it for GNLF. Among the six organisations, GVC was the armed or military body of the GNLF; which later became anti GNLF under leadership of Chhatre Subba. As the movement progressed further, it was becoming more violent. More fuel was added to this by the provocative slogans used by Subash Ghising during meetings and while giving public speech. Some of which are:

*“Saplai kshama dinu sakincha tar Gorkhaland birodhilai kshama dinu sakindaina”* (one can be merciful with snake but not with those who opposes Gorkhaland) and *“Afnō Mato bhanda Siddharta Sankar Roy thulo hoina, Afnō Mato bhanda Ananda Pathak thulo hoina, Afnō Mato bhanda Dawa Narbula thulo hoina, Bangalbato hamro Mato pharkawnu parcha”* (Niether Siddharta Shankar Roy, nor Ananda Pathak, nor even Dawa Narbula- no one is having a greater cause than our own motherland/homeland!! Our native soil/motherland needs to be separated from Bengal) (Translated by Swatahsiddha Sarkar)<sup>15</sup>

The provocative slogans and speeches given by Subash Ghising started to create hatred within the hearts and minds of the cadres of GNLF, most importantly within the youths and the military wing of GNLF, the Gorkha Volunteer's Cell, against the Communist Party and its leaders and who all opposed the demand of Gorkhaland. Programmes charted as per the 11 points programme were taking place

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<sup>13</sup> Sarkar Swatahsiddha, (2013), *Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, p.69.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>15</sup> Sarkar, Op.cit., pp.73-74.

in Darjeeling and the Dooars region, and to check and control the situation in hills, Police force was increased and was kept in different parts of Darjeeling. On 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1986, people were mobilised to burn copies of Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, in many villages and towns the programme took place; but in Kalimpong there was a clash between the GNLFF and the West Bengal Police in which police opened fire which killed the GNLFF supporters. Police took resort to *lathi* charge and ultimately fired indiscriminately at the agitating mob that claimed fifteen lives among whom women and children were in majority.<sup>16</sup> As the police force was brought by the agreement between the Central Government and Left Front Government of West Bengal and who were opposing the Gorkhaland movement, the GNLFF from now onwards were not only demanding for separate state but started targeting the Communist Party leaders of hills as revenge to the 15 lives of the GNLFF supporters. The agitation for Gorkhaland which was for the separation from Bengal turned out to be anti- Bengal and anti Communist Party of India (Marxist) and most sadly led to the annihilation of the Communist Leaders from the hills. Thus, began the GNLFF versus CPI (M) clashes in Darjeeling and its subdivisions vis-a-vis Gorkhaland Movement.

#### **4:1:1: Violence and Counter Violence Between GNLFF and CPI (M) of Darjeeling**

After the Kalimpong incident of 27<sup>th</sup> July 1986, the movement of Gorkhaland led by Subash Ghising and his GNLFF party became much more violent. The violence was focused mostly against the CPI (M) than against the Central Government and State Government for their demand for a separate state. The goriest of the violence in the Darjeeling hills and the Dooars area of Jalpaiguri district was between the supporters of the GNLFF and the CPI (M), both of whose members ethnically belonged

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<sup>16</sup> Telegraph, July 28, 1986, Cited in Sarkar, p.71.

to the same group- Nepalis.<sup>17</sup> The Communist Party also started the counter violence against the GNLF party, and murders became common place, kidnap, and burning of houses of opposition party were happening every day. All the other political parties in the hills gave up their ideology, flag and their work and supported GNLF and Subash Ghising with a dream of achieving Gorkhaland. But the Communist Party and its leaders from the hills did not give up their ideology, flag and kept on working as an active party; it may be because of their party being of the State Government or their dislike towards the GNLF and its leader. Tika 'Bhai' states,

*“27 July ko ghatna pachi andolan aniyantrit ra hinsha purna jwar ma parinat huna thaleo. Andolankari haru aghiltira ganatantrik upai haru murjhawdai gaye. Kaman busty chetra tira goramumo ra makpa samarthan maaj vyamstha ko khuni parkhal khara vayo.”*<sup>18</sup> (After the incident of 27<sup>th</sup> July, the revolution turned into violent and uncontrollable position. In front of the revolutionist, Democracy was vanishing. In the tea gardens and in villages clashes between the supporters of GNLF and the Communist built a bloody wall of differentiation) (Translated by Author)

The clashes between the two parties and news of killings were there almost every day. People from the same region sharing the same ethnicity, culture, language, history and same problem of identity within India were differentiated by the flag and ideology of the political party. On 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1986, in Takvar tea garden, the communist leaders were attacked and they were injured and even killed, as a revenge of the attack the Communist party attacked the GNLF member in the Happy Valley tea garden and killed one member of GNLF. The clash between the CPI (M) and the GNLF were recorded before 27<sup>th</sup> July also, when the CPI(M) organised a rally in Darjeeling on 11<sup>th</sup> May, in protest of the strike planned as part of the in 11 points programme of GNLF from 12 to 14<sup>th</sup> May. During the strike clashes were recorded in different places of Darjeeling but there was no such killing.

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<sup>17</sup> Subba, Op.cit., .p.124.

<sup>18</sup> Tika 'Bhai', (2008), *Hamro Jatiya Mukti Sangharshako Sahi Barsha*, Bikash Jan Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.59.

The violent movement of Gorkhaland of 1986 led to a response by the CPI (M) had to see much more when the Provincial Communist party leaders, sitting somewhere in Kolkata, were giving orders to its cadres in Darjeeling for further attacks to counter the movement of GNLF; even arms were supplied to the hills from the plains in the name of self defence for the Communist supporters in hills. In August, the trade union of communist party of the hills were given order to observe 24 hours of *bandh* in Darjeeling and even organise a programme in the hill on Independence Day as a counter to the GNLF programme of not celebrating any national days. Tanka B. Subba writes:

“On August 6, the CPI(M)’s State Committee in Calcutta was reported to have asked the CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Union) in Darjeeling to observe a 24- hour’s *bandh* to expose the GNLF’s ‘secessionist’ activities (*ABP* 7/8). It had also planned to organise programmes on the Independence Day (which they never did before) because the GNLF and the Pranta Parishad had planned to hoist black flags on that day. One Indrajit Pradhan of Ambootia Tea Estate in Kurseong and a local leader of the CPI(M) were killed for the first time on August 10, 1986 allegedly by the GNLF, for his anti-GNLF activities (*TI* 11/8).<sup>19</sup>

The bloody clash between the GNLF and CPI (M) supporters started to take place mostly in the Tea Gardens and after this there were two tea garden unions of both the parties; Himalayan Plantation Workers Union of GNLF and Darjeeling District Chia Kaman Mazdoor Union of CPI (M). The supporters of CPI (M) were attacked and several supporters became injured and one was killed by the supporters of GNLF at Som Tea Estate in Darjeeling.<sup>20</sup> D.S. Bomjan in one of his book<sup>21</sup> in Nepali mentions that on 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1986, the house of Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Ananda Pathak was completely gutted in fire by the GNLF supporters in Sonada, and as a counter to this, on 20<sup>th</sup> September the CPI (M) supporters completely burned down the houses of the GNLF supporters in Pachyang a place below Sonada. This

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<sup>19</sup> Subba, Op.cit, p.128.

<sup>20</sup> Report in *The Statesmen*, September 1, 1986, Cited in, *Ibid.*, p.128

<sup>21</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.26.

trend of burning down of houses and political killing went on till 1995 in a small manner in Darjeeling. With the growing attack by the GNLFF supporters, with the fear of getting killed and houses burnt, many of the Communist leaders left the party, shifted to the plains, became inactive in party and even joined the GNLFF. The Communist's were even losing support in the tea garden areas, where they had a strong hold from the time of the formation of Communist party in Darjeeling in 1943.

Further clashes between the two parties were reported by different newspapers, some of the newspaper-reports which have been referred from Tanka B. Subba<sup>22</sup>, are: *The Times of India* reported on 12.9.1986 that in Samsing Tea Estate of Dooars, the workers of CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Union) was attacked which led to two death and 10 houses of that area were looted and burned. In Kurseong on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1986 several houses of leaders of SFI (Students Federation of India) were destroyed by the GNLFF supporters, as reported by *The Statesmen* 10/9. *The Times of India* on 15<sup>th</sup> September reports of the GNLFF rendering the houses of about 200 CPI (M) supporters and made them homeless in Kalimpong on 14<sup>th</sup> September. On the same day *The Telegraph* 15/9 reported the clash between the two parties at Nepania in Naxalbari, in which 2 GNLFF supporters were killed and several injured. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 21<sup>st</sup> September, reported the major clash which occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1986, in Pacheng Bazar below Sonada (was Communist majority place) where 60 to 65 houses of the GNLFF members was set ablaze, rendering about 350 people homeless, and even on the same evening, around 56 houses of the CPI (M) were set on fire by the GNLFF. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1986, house of the CPI (M) MLA H.B. Rai was set on fire as reported by *Telegraph* on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1986. As a counter to this attack around 500 CPI (M) people gather and started to set fire in the

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<sup>22</sup> Subba, Op.cit, pp. 128-131.



GNLF houses on which the police fired on the CPI (M) member, as reported by *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1987 there was a clash between the two parties in Sepaidhura Tea Estate where 3 CPI (M) supporters were kidnapped and others were seriously injured as reported by *Ananda Bazar Patrika* 15/6. On July 8, 3 CPI (M) leaders were killed in Darjeeling 2 in an encounter with GNLf and 1 was beheaded in an open street in Darjeeling. The violence and clash between the two parties did not stop after the accord was signed by Subash Ghising in 1988. On 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1989, a violent clash took between the two parties, in which, 1 GNLf supporter was killed, about 1,000 people became homeless and around 180 houses were set on fire within 24 hours of violence, as reported by *Telegraph* on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1989.

The incidents of attack and counter-attack between the two regional parties occurred several times in Darjeeling in the Gorkhaland movement from 1986 to 1988. Many of the CPI (M) leaders even had to leave Darjeeling and had to take shelter in Tilak *Maidan* or the Kanchenjunga Stadium of Siliguri. Romit Bagchi writes;

In the phase of the movement, the CPI (M) loyalists among the community were targeted. They were persecuted even to the extent of being forced to leave the Darjeeling hills. They were later rehabilitated in different places in Siliguri. Even leaders like Ananda Pathak, the former MP, counted amongst the most accomplished political personalities representing the community at the state and national levels, were force out of the hills. The same fate befell the present Darjeeling district CPI (M) secretary, S.P. Lepcha and scores of other leaders, their only guilt being their loyalty to the party are associated with, in preference to the Gorkhaland cause.<sup>23</sup>

Both the parties lost many of its cadres, people in the same neighbourhood became enemies of each other during the movement, the movement came to an end with signing of accord by the GNLf leader Subash Ghising in 1988; but still the clashes took place sometimes even till 1995. People of Darjeeling, during the Gorkhaland agitation led by GNLf, did not only die in the clashes between the two Political

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<sup>23</sup> Bagchi Romit, (2012), *Gorkhaland: Crisis of Statehood*, Sage Publication, Delhi, pp.140-141

parties but also with the bullets and beatings from CRPF which was deployed in the hills consequent to an agreement between the Central Government led by the Congress Party under Rajiv Gandhi and the State Government led by CPI (M) under Jyoti Basu. Many people died in this violent agitation for Gorkhaland, the agitation which should have focused on separation from Bengal turned into anti communist in the hills; this can be one drawback of the GNLF and Subash Ghising and as reason for not attaining Gorkhaland after such bloodshed of their own people. The Provincial Communist party, under leadership of Jyoti Basu, did not leave any means to render the movement fail and to prove it as secessionist and anti national. Jyoti Basu used the Gorkhaland movement of 1986 as a tool for the 1987 Assembly Election; during his election campaign he used various slogans against the Gorkhaland movement and not letting Bengal to be divided again Slogans like:

*“Gorkhaland vaneko sonar Bangla ko mukut Darjeeling biched garnu ho”* (To give Gorkhaland means to take away Darjeeling the crown of West Bengal) (Translated by Author) and *“Rokta debo, pran debo, Gorkhaland hote debona”*<sup>24</sup> (Will give blood and life but won't give Gorkhaland) (Translated by Author)

These kinds of slogans were provoking the Bengali people of West Bengal against the Gorkhaland as well as the Nepalese. It made the movement for separate state as anti-Bengali and anti-Nepali. The Provincial Communist party even provoked the communist leaders of the hills against the GNLF supporters, as a result of which many common people lost their lives and belongings; but the Communist leaders of Bengal as well as the leaders of GNLF did not lose their life or their property.

After two years of bloody violence in the name of Gorkhaland, on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1988, Subash Ghising signed a Memorandum of Settlement in presence of The Union Home Minister Buta Singh and Jyoti Basu the Chief Minister of West Bengal. After

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<sup>24</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.34.

signing of the Settlement, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was accepted by Subash Ghising. This was opposed by many members within GNLF and other Political Parties in Darjeeling, as this settlement was signed by dropping the demand of Gorkhaland, which has been written in the Memorandum of Settlement as;

“In the overall national interest and in response to Prime Minister’s call, the GNLF agree to drop the demand for a separate State of Gorkhaland. For the social, economic, educational, and cultural advancement of the people residing in the Hill areas of Darjeeling district, it was agreed to have an autonomous Hill Council to be set up under a State Act.”<sup>25</sup>

Subash Ghising, by signing the Memorandum and accepting the Council, broke the dreams of all the people of Darjeeling; people were not happy but they could not raise the voice also due to fear of being beheaded which was known locally as “*6inch ghatne*” or “6inch Minus”. The distaste of the people of Darjeeling towards the signing of the council by GNLF has even been shown in one Nepali novel “*Chinhari ko Khoj*” (In Search of Identity) by Ashit Rai. In his novel, one character expresses his distaste towards the memorandum signed by Ghising as:

“*Gorkhaland ko arko bikalpa chaina, hami lai Gorkhaland चाहिन्छ। Hamile uthayeko sastra ra khukuri ko dhar ko kasam hami ‘Gorkhaland’ liyerai chadchaw. Darjeeling Gorkha Parwatiya Parisad Bangal ko daswata ko mukti hoina, jatiya astitwa ko adhar hoina*”.<sup>26</sup> (There is no another alternative to Gorkhaland, and we want Gorkhaland only. We raised *Khukuri* and even took promise keeping hand on its edge to bring Gorkhaland. The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council is not an option to get rid from slavery of Bengal, and not even basis of Gorkha identity)(Translated by Author)

The GNLF, after its violent movement, had to surrender its arms and ammunition, which were in their possession. After two years of confrontation (1986-88), they surrendered the following items: 6910 pipe guns, 101 SBBL, 66 DBBL, 5 rifles (.303), 12 revolvers (.22), 3 revolvers (.38), 5 stenguns, 54 SBML, 2 DBML, 554 imported pistols, 8 R/Sp pistols, 3 revolvers (.45), 58 hand grenades, 22 imported airguns, 63 imported canon, 1 rifle (.79), 1 rifle (7.62), 1 air pistol, 1 tear gas gun, 12 bore rifles,

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in, Samanta, Op.cit., p.293.

<sup>26</sup> Rai Ashit, (1997), *Chihari ko Khoj*, Sajha Pustak Prakashan, Darjeeling, p.27.

38 special pistols and 38MM grenade (7.16). They also surrendered the following items ofammunition: 45 artillery shells, 11,000 bombs and mines, 1000detonators, 300 gelatine sticks and thousands of ammunition forvarious types of fire arms.<sup>27</sup>The records of the death in the two years of violent movement of the GNLFF supporters, CPI(M), Police personal and other common people has been recorded, which has been given in Table 4.1, this is numbers are only in official record, but in reality it was quite more than it has been recorded.

Table 4.1

Year	Total		CPM		GNLF		Police		Others	
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
1986	48	181	10	31	37	118	2	26	6	
1987	73	159	17	20	31	52	14	56	14	31
1988 (Jan to Sept.)	162	275	20	25	72	61	13	78	56	111
Total	283	615	47	76	140	231	29	150	70	148

Source: Compiled from official sources as quoted in Samanta.<sup>28</sup>

After DGHC was accepted by Subash Ghising in 1988, he never raised the demand for Gorkhaland. He then acted as the sole head of DGHC as well as of Darjeeling. In the mean time, the agitation for the constitutional recognition of the Nepali language was going on and he shifte,d focus of all the people towards it by

<sup>27</sup> Cited in, Dasgupta Atish, Ethnic Problems and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling, Social Scientist, Vol. 27, No. 11/12 (Nov. - Dec., 1999), p.64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518047>, accessed on 16-11-2016.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in, Samanta, Op.cit,p.149

supporting it. After the Memorandum was signed the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) remained as an ally. Neither did the former make any demand for the division of Bengal (only in 1996 when the formation of Uttarakhand State was announced by Indian Government it raised the issue of Gorkhaland), nor did the latter opposed the GNLF; only in the eyes of the people of Darjeeling they acted as an enemy by abusing them in some public meetings. The Communist Party of India, which supported the demand of Gorkhasthan in independent India, and by the votes of the people of Darjeeling, only became able to win seats in Provincial and Assembly elections since 1946 were not bothered for the people of Darjeeling and their problem of identity; they even called the Gorkhaland demand as secessionist and anti-national. The party that talked about Gorkhasthan on the grounds of the Right to Self-determination and Right to secede turned around to call the people of Darjeeling as being foreigners. The Communist Party leaders from hills were not satisfied with the working of the DGHC and the self-centred behaviour of the Provincial Communist Party of India (Marxist) and hence the leaders from the hills started to raise question and even protested against the party regarding hills from inside the party. And the Communist Party of India, in 1996, split with the formation of the Communist Party Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM).

#### **4:2. The Split of The Communist Party in Hills**

Whenever some conflict arises or contradiction takes place within the Political Party or any Organisation, it may be the effect of some uprising within that particular society or that region. A similar condition was prevailing in the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Darjeeling. After the two years of mayhem in Darjeeling from 1986 to 1988, the DGHC was brought in Darjeeling, which was not just a Memorandum of Settlement signed between the GNLF chief and the State

Government and the Central Government, but an indirect control by the State Government of West Bengal through Subash Ghising in Darjeeling. The GNLF chief acted as a sole head of Darjeeling, especially after the Amendment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1994, it was mainly done to fix the resignation, termination etc, of the office bearers of the nominated people of the council; and even included different departments like family welfare, mass education , etc. But the West Bengal government even extended the term of the Chairmanship of Subash Ghising in the DGHC. The amended provision read as:

Provided that pending the election of a Chairman, the Government may appoint by name one of the Councillors to be the Chairman who shall hold the office as Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, and shall exercise all the powers and discharge all the functions of the Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, until a Chairman, elected according to the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under, enters upon his office.<sup>29</sup>

The communist leaders from Darjeeling were already not satisfied with the DGHC as given to Darjeeling by the State Government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and by such an amendment of the Council it poured much fuel on the fire. But they remained silent respecting the party decision and not violating the party discipline. Subash Ghising in 1994 came up with a new thesis on Darjeeling, ‘The No Man’s Land Thesis’, he on the basis of Article VIII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950, which read as;

“So far as matters dealt with herein are concerned, this Treaty cancels all previous treaties, agreements, and engagements entered into on behalf of India between the British Government and the Government of Nepal.”<sup>30</sup>

Subash Ghising campaigning on the theory of No Man’s land, boycotted the *Panchayat Samiti* Election and even told the GNLF MLA’s to resign from the West Bengal Assembly on ground that they did not belong to Bengal and hence do not need to participate in any of the affairs of West Bengal; whereas he was still holding the

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<sup>29</sup> Cited in, Sarkar, Op.cit, p.83

<sup>30</sup> Cited in, Roy Barun, (2012), *Gorkhas and Gorkhaland*, Parbati Roy Foundation, Darjeeling, p.370

post of Chairman of DGHC, which was under the West Bengal Government. This was creating more political unrest amongst the other political parties of the hills. The demand for Gorkhaland was again raised by GNLF in Darjeeling in 1996. Soon after the declaration of the near possibilities of a separate State of Uttarakhand by the then Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda in his Independence Day speech in 1996, political activism in Darjeeling hills once again geared up with the renewed claim of Gorkhaland.<sup>31</sup> This time, not only the GNLF, but even all the parties of the hills came as one for demand of Gorkhaland, forming an alliance named Gorkhaland People's Front; but GNLF did not join the alliance. The demand did not become powerful to shake the Central and State Government, the new states of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Chhatisgarh were created in 2000, but the age old demand of Gorkhaland remained as it was.

The Communist Party of India, after its 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of 1961, started to deviate from its Communist ideology of Right to Self Determination and Right to Secede, which by then focused to become the ruling party in the state, rather than being concerned with the problems of the proletariat. This changing attitude of the Communist Party led to the breakup of the party and communist in the hills forming the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969 under the leadership of Kanu Sanyal. The CPI (M) also came up with its same attitude and even by its stiff-neck stance towards the ethnic identity of the Indian Nepalese of Darjeeling and separate state of Gorkhaland. After the announcement of the formation of Uttarakhand by PM, Deve Gowda, the people in hills and even all the local parties started to talk about Gorkhaland. During this time, the Communist leaders from Darjeeling also started to talk about the ethnic problems and for its solution, the separate state of

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<sup>31</sup> Datta (1995); 116-141, Cited in, Sakar, Op.ict, p.86

Gorkhaland must be formed. This began the debate between the Provincial Communist Party and the Darjeeling District Committee of CPI (M). In Darjeeling, the leaders of Bijanbari and Darjeeling Zonal Committees of CPI (M) had plunged into a serious debate and discussion on the question of the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland with relevance to Uttarakhand.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, there were two Members of Parliament of the CPI (M) who were from Darjeeling; Dawa Lama as the Rajya Sabha MP and R.B. Rai as the Lok Sabha MP, even both the MP's supported the issue of Gorkhaland which was to be kept within the party line. The first meeting of the communist leaders of the hills regarding the formation of Gorkhaland within the party line took place on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1996; at the meeting, the core leaders of the Communist party from the hills H.B. Rai, Sawan Rai, Padam Lama, K.B. Subba, Tirthaman Rai, Puran Lorong, D.S. Bomjan and R.B. Rai (MP) were present.<sup>33</sup> While the issue of separate Gorkhaland was being raised by the Communist leaders of the hills, a convention of the CPI (M) was held in Sukuna, a place situated in the foothills of Darjeeling, where the communist leaders from hills as well as from plains and Provincial Communist Party participated. As D.S. Bomjan was present in this convention, he records about the incident of the convention in his work; the convention was started by the speech of Buddhadev Bhattacharjee,<sup>34</sup> who talked regarding the outcome of the Lok Sabha and West Bengal Assembly election held in May 1996. While concluding the speech he said all the speakers to stick within the topic which he placed; he told in a commanding manner. Padam Lama, a communist leader from hills started his speech stating the political scenario of

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<sup>32</sup> Bomjan D.S. (2013), *Devils' Diary from the Birth Place of CPRM to the Struggle for Gorkhaland*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, pp.23-24

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.24

<sup>34</sup> Buddhadev Bhattacharjee- Became Chief Minister from 2000 to 2011 from Communist Party of India (Marxist).



Darjeeling after the announcement of Deve Gowda about formation of Uttarakhand State and even placed the problem of Darjeeling vis-a-vis Gorkhaland; Buddhadev Bhattacharjee intervened and took the microphone in the podium and commanded to speak only on matters regarding the point which he placed. At the very moment, the communist leaders from hills, namely Gobin Chettri, Bindhya Dukpa, Jethimaya Rai, Sawan Rai and D.S. Bomjan opposed Buddhadev and argued that Padam Lama must be allowed to speak; after this all the speakers from hills kept their speech regarding the formation of Gorkhaland as a solution of Darjeeling problems. This day embodied the first protest by the communist leaders from the hills against the rigid attitude of the provincial Communist Party of India towards Gorkhaland and the policy of the CPI (M) through DGHC to keep its upper hand on Darjeeling. D.S. Bomjan states,

“After fifty years of its existence, the communist party in Darjeeling ensured at Sukuna on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1996 that Kolkata’s unrealistic farfetched fanciful hegemony over the region hegemony over the region was crumbled like the house of cards.”<sup>35</sup>

The communist leaders and their supporters from the hills believed the communist party was there to help the people of Darjeeling; like before, they will work for the welfare of the people of Darjeeling; but they were in blind faith and they were under an illusion regarding this thinking. As the Communist Party have changed from what they used to be with the greed of power. The founding members of Communist Party in Darjeeling, Ratanlal Brahman and Ganeshlal Subba, thinking the Communist Party, was for the downtrodden and this party will only solve the problem of Darjeeling. Mohan P Dahal, mentions in his biography, on Ratanlal Brahmin in which Ratanlal Brahmin says,

*“Ma Communist party ma lageko pani mero jati ko heet huncha ki vanera ho. Afnu jati ko bikash ra unnati mero udesya ho. Mero daju bhairaru anai, atyachar ra soshan bata mukta vayeko, sukha sanga khaye ko kheleko dekhna pawnu nai mero laksha ho.”*<sup>36</sup> (I

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<sup>35</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.30.

<sup>36</sup> Dahal Mohan.P, (1997) *Jhukdai Najhukne Pahar Ko Choro*, Pratima Publication, Siliguri.p.42.

joined the Communist Party for the benefit of my people, for the up-liftmen and development of my place, I want to see my people to get rid of suppression, and live their life happily) (Translated by Author)

But, with the change of time, the Communist Party too changed its attitude and the thinking of the founding members from hills went in vain. The national minorities of Darjeeling, in the name of Marxism and its ideals, stood with the Communist party for years. The Darjeeling District Communist party did not oppose the Communist Party of India just because it did not support the Gorkhaland movement nor any demand of separate state. But when we look back the history of the Communist Party, it has been supporting the formation of new states like when the Bombay Reorganisation Bill was placed in the Lok Sabha and by which Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed on the basis of language, it also supported the Punjab Reorganisation Bill of 1960, after which the separate state of Punjab and Haryana was formed and even it supported the formation of the North- Eastern states of Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram in the year 1971; but the same party changed its approach regarding the formation of Gorkhaland, and called this demand as anti-national and secessionist one. In one of the Nepali booklet written by Kalyan Goswami, he states:

*“Yo kura bujincha ki jaba uniharu le chuttai rajya ko mang garchan taba timiharu le afailai pragatishil vanchan, jaba tyahi kuro aruharu le uthawchan taba tini haru pratikriyashil maninchan.”*<sup>37</sup> (It can be understood that, when they (Communist Party of India) demand for the separate state they call it as a progressive one, and when other demands for such separate state they refer it as a reactionary one)

During this time, a political organisation was formed in Darjeeling with coalition of different hill parties, which came to be known as Gorkhaland Peoples' Front (GPF), and started to raise the issue of Gorkhaland and from another side, the CPIM too were raising the Gorkhaland demand, on this juncture the GNLF from 3<sup>rd</sup> of October put a

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<sup>37</sup> Goswami Kalyan, *Chuttai Rajya Gathan ko Prashna ma Makpa ko Rajnaitik Adan Pahile ra Ahile (On the Question of Separate State the Political Stand of the CPM Then and Now)*, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra, Darjeeling, p.10

ban on the Nepali Daily 'ABA', which were giving reports about the Gorkhaland issues raised by the GPF and Communist from hills; next was the ban on 5<sup>th</sup> October, Nepali Daily 'Sagarmatha' which was a Government funded daily, and like the former daily, it was also reporting all the issues raised by the CPI (M) of Darjeeling district and the GPF, it was banned on the pretext of huge loss. Such steps by the GNLFF and CPI (M), the pillar of Democracy was under attack, the peoples' freedom of speech, and right to free expression were grabbed by them.

The task for Darjeeling District Communist Party of India (Marxist) to convince the people of Darjeeling and get their support was not easy, as it was the same Communist Party who stood with the Provincial Communist Party of India (Marxist) who opposed the formation of Gorkhaland in 1986-88 movement. The people were not able to trust the Communists, in order to gain the support and trust of the people the Communist leaders from hills were making continuous statement stating that the ethnic identity and separate state is even important for the communist from the hills as it is for the people of Darjeeling. To assure the people that the Communist leaders have come up seriously regarding the separate state of Gorkhaland, they named themselves as "Hill CPI-M" in October 1996. Romit Bagchi states regarding the statement and counter statement between the Communist Party of hills and Bengal CPI (M) as:

The then CPI (M) member of the Parliament, R.B. Rai, said in Darjeeling in September 1996 that his party was not ideologically averse to the demand of Gorkhaland and it was under its consideration. The statement having created ripples all over the state and particularly in the hills, the party's senior leader, Ananda Pathak stated that the view of Rai was his personal one and by no means in sync with the party's stand on the sensitive issue.<sup>38</sup>

With the growing contradiction between the Communist Party from hills who supported the Gorkhaland and the non supporters of Gorkhaland issue of the

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<sup>38</sup> Bagchi, Op.cit, p.69.

Communist Party, on the basis of violation of party discipline, the communist leaders from Darjeeling were expelled from the party; the leaders who were expelled were R.B. Rai (Lok Sabha MP), Dawa Lama (Rajya Sabha MP), D.S. Bomjan, Taramoni Rai, Gobin Chettri and Sawan Rai. The same Communist Party who were supported by the people of Darjeeling for making its political progress by making them win in the elections, and ironically, the same party who supported the demand of Gorkhaland were now expelling its cadres when they demanded separate state of Gorkhaland on the basis of marxist ideology of 'right to self-determination' of the national minorities. After the leaders of the Hill Communist party were expelled on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1996, on the very next day, majority of the CPI-M leaders from Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars held a meeting in Darjeeling on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1996, and after long discussion all the members came up with a conclusion to form a party on the basis Marxist-Leninist ideology, thus the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM) was formed, with a central Ad-hoc committee of 31 members, 12 members as its secretariat body and D.R. Lama as its convenor.<sup>39</sup> From the very next day of formation of CPRM, rallies and public meetings started to take place in different parts of Darjeeling, and it started to gather support.

#### **4:2:1. Friction between CPRM and GNLF**

After the formation of the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist, it continued its work for the separate state of Gorkhaland which they were performing as the Hill CPI-M before. The CPRM was supported by all the other political parties of Darjeeling, who all failed to keep their firm grip on the politics of Darjeeling after the advent of the autocratic rule of GNLF under the leadership of Subash Ghising. CPRM called upon all the parties to come as one to take forward the movement for

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<sup>39</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.96.

the separate state of Gorkhaland; parties like All India Gorkha League, Gorkha Janasakti, Bharatiya Janata Party, Trinamul Congress, local Congress Party, and others came together under one; they all got united under one organisation Gorkhaland People's Front. GNLF, who wanted to become the sole custodian of the people of Darjeeling, refused to join them. The newly formed CPRM made it clear that it will contest the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election which was going to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1998. Keeping the demand of separate state for Gorkhaland, the CPRM was gaining the support in Hills, Dooars, Terai as all the local parties became an ally with CPRM. The CPRM even gained support from some Left-Front parties and other parties from the plains, like Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), New Democracy and Liberation, Communist Party of India (M-L) Janashakti, Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), Sanjukta Krishak Manch, Samajbadi Jana Parishad, Uttar Bengal Jan Jati Adivasi Sangh, Terai United Forum, Ambedkar Vichar Manch.<sup>40</sup> The CPRM, in a rally at Siliguri, on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1998, announced its election manifesto with four points:

- I. Protection of the rights of the minorities and backward classes and formation of the separate State of Gorkhaland.
- II. Safeguard the rights of toiling masses.
- III. Formation of a stable Government at the Centre.
- IV. Effective and clean administration.<sup>41</sup>

The political situation in Darjeeling was taking a different turn after the birth of CPRM with its demand for Gorkhaland; the CPI-M began to lose its political hold in Darjeeling. On 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1998, the GNLF leader in a public meeting in Kurseong

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<sup>40</sup> Roy, Op.cit, p. 420.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp.419-420.

made an announcement of not participating in the election and also calling for a 72 hours strike from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1998, the day on which the election was going to be held. Subash Ghising stated:

*“Nepal ka katipai nagarik le antarasriya adalat ma Darjeeling, Terai, Dooars ka anchal haru Nepal ko jamin ho vani dawi gareka chan. Tyasai le tyas mamla nametingel sambandit ilaka ma chunaw garawne adhikar chunaw commission sanga chaina.”<sup>42</sup>*  
(Some citizens of Nepal in the International Court of Justice, has appealed by saying that the region of Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars as the land belonging to Nepal. On this case the Election Commission cannot hold an election in this kind of region till the matter gets solved) (Translated by Author)

As announced by Subash Ghising, on the day of election, the strike took place in Darjeeling with the help of some of his radical leaders; doing this, he was helping the CPI-M to win the election. The CPRM contestant from Darjeeling R.B. Rai though had the maximum chance of winning, because of the strike done by GNLFF, his opponent from CPI-M Ananda Pathak Won the election only by the votes from Siliguri region, the GNLFF President and the DGHC Chairman Subash Ghising played Mir Jaffar during this election in the history of Darjeeling. After this incident, the friction between the CPRM and GNLFF took place in Darjeeling politics, which remains the same till date. CPRM from this time onwards, turned itself as anti-CPI (M) and anti-GNLFF, and even emerged as one of the opposition of the GNLFF and raised many question and opposing the works regarding of Subash Ghising and DGHC. The CPRM kept its demand for Gorkhaland as one of its main agenda; it remains till now. But the CPRM was not able to come to power in Darjeeling District. On the basis of keeping the dream of Gorkhaland as its main agenda, when the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) 2007, emerged in Darjeeling giving new hope to the people of Darjeeling on the demand of Gorkhaland, when all the hopes of the

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<sup>42</sup> Gowsami, Op.cit, p.12.

people for the separate state were shattered by the GNLFF, the people supported the GJMM movement for Gorkhaland.

#### **4:3. The Gorkhaland Movement of 2007 led by GJMM vis-a-vis CPRM**

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the tenor of hill politics clearly indicated that Ghising's leadership has failed to qualify the test of time and that the experience of DGHC as a politico-administrative arrangement could be anything but not pro-people as such.<sup>43</sup> Subash Ghising, by holding the election of DGHC, was not only making the local party to talk against it but even the people were raising the questions on it, as the GNLFF party on the matter of Gorkhaland was not saying anything, rather came up with its new demand of Sixth Schedule in hills. Ghising, trying to make the all the community of the hills as tribal, he was not able to influence the people of hills but on contrary was creating Anti-Ghising scenario in Darjeeling. In the mean time, taking advantage of the situation prevailing in the hills by the Sixth Schedule issue and another by the Prashant Tamang phenomena, in October 2007, a new party, the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha was established. Led by Bimal Gurung, previously Ghising's right-hand man, the GJMM started a new agitation for Gorkhaland, entailing various *bandhs* (general strikes), demonstrations, *pada-yatras* (foot marches) across the region, hunger strikes, and tax boycotts.<sup>44</sup>

With the matter of Sixth Schedule, when the situation of Darjeeling was in turmoil, a singing competition programme on the Sony Entertainment Television Channel in 2007, a Darjeeling lad Prashant Tamang was one of the participants. As for the first time a local boy was coming into a national competition, the people of

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<sup>43</sup> Sarkar, Op.cit, p.94.

<sup>44</sup> Wenner Meriam, *Challenging the State by Reproducing its Principles: The Demand for "Gorkhaland" between Regional Autonomy and the National Belonging*, Asian Ethnology, Vol. 72, No. 2, Performing Identity Politics and Culture in Northeast India and Beyond (2013), pp. 199-220, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23595476>, Nanzan University.

Darjeeling came as one to support him by voting. With a huge support from Darjeeling as well as from other states and even Nepal, Prashant became one of the top three contestants with Amit Paul from Meghalaya and Emon Chatterjee from Kolkata, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007, he became the Indian Idol. His victory was taken as a victory of the Nepali speaking Indians and of Darjeeling and was celebrated in Darjeeling in very big fashion. In the mean time a radio jockey of 93.5 Red FM Nitin, made a very sarcastic comment saying:

*“Nepaliko Indian Idol bana diya ab hamara Ghar, Mahalla ka Chowkidari Kaun Karega”*<sup>45</sup> (Nepali has been made an Indian Idol now who will guard our house and establishment) (Translated by D.S. Bomjan)

Even in *Telegraph*, some letters were written to the editor saying that Prashant Tamang was a wrong choice of Indian Idol 2007. The sarcastic statement by Nitin, the Radio Jockey, and the letters of protest on a hill boy becoming Indian Idol, touched the sentiment of all the Gorkha Community of India and in Darjeeling protests were organised through various protest rallies and even followed by one day strike in Darjeeling on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Bimal Gurung, who was expelled from the GNLFP party, on conducting silent rally in Darjeeling against the sixth schedule issue taken up by Subash Ghising, on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2007 conducted a public meeting in Darjeeling *Chowk Bazar*, and declared formation of his new party.

The atmosphere was changed with Prashant Tamang being Indian Idol, and its opposition and with the sarcastic comment; the people of Darjeeling were concerned with the need of Gorkha identity of the people of Darjeeling and other regions too. With the coming of Bimal Gurung and his GJMM party, the demand of Gorkhaland and nothing else; gave a hope to them and with a short time GJMM was able to gather massive supporters from Darjeeling. Information on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007, that the

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<sup>45</sup> Bomjan, Op.cit, p.172.



sixth schedule bill was going to be placed in the Lok Sabha in the winter session of the Parliament by the CPI-M leaders led the GJMM leader to announce the burning of the Sixth Schedule Agreement signed between the Caretaker of DGHC and West Bengal Government, on 15<sup>th</sup> November itself which was even supported by the CPRM. The Gorkhaland Movement started by GJMM at first inclined towards being anti-Ghising and anti-Sixth Schedule. Regarding the Sixth Schedule Bill, many protests against it was been organised in Darjeeling; the Parliamentary Standing Committee, Home affairs called, Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), All India Gorkha League (AIGL), Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM), Gorkha National Liberation Front C, Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha and Gorkha Rastriya Congress to place their points before the Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 in Delhi.<sup>46</sup> All the parties presented their points before the Parliamentary Standing Committee except GNLF. The GJMM organised various rallies in which the promise of achieving Gorkhaland were made, even the CPRM in one of its rally in Darjeeling announced its support to GJMM on the demand of Gorkhaland. The Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha came up with its Non-Violent movement on the basis of Gandhism, as following the track of Gandhi; GJMM started its non-cooperation movement by closing offices, *gherao* of Magistrate offices, etc. On 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008, the Government of India called both the State Government and GJMM for the first tripartite meeting in Delhi, which was followed by many such tripartite meetings. The Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist of Darjeeling withdrew its support to GJMM from the day when it supported Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Parliamentary election of 2009; Jaswant Singh was elected as the MP candidate from Darjeeling. Jaswant Singh won the election with a huge margin, but he did not remain

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., .p.137.

in Parliament as a MP from Darjeeling as he was expelled from the BJP on the issue of the controversial book written by him titled “*Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence*”. The CPRM’s hammers and tongs went against the GJMM, saying that the votes of the common people had gone down the dustbin with the expulsion of Singh from the BJP.<sup>47</sup>

After many tripartite meetings, GJMM on September 2010, agreed to accept the new arrangement or interim setup named as Gorkhaland Regional Authority (GRA) despite the opposition from the other hill parties. The GJMM, in 2011, supported Trinamool-Congress in the State Legislative Assembly Election; after her victory, Mamta Banerjee the Chief Minister of West Bengal, as a token of appreciation for supporting her in the election, presented an offer of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) to the GJMM in place of Gorkhaland. The GJMM accepted the GTA in 2011, like Subash Ghising accepted the DGHC in 1988, in place of Gorkhaland. While the new arrangement of the GTA is considered both by the GJMM and the TrinamoolCongress (TMC), the ruling party of West Bengal, as a great achievement, the CommunistParty of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM) and All India GorkhaLeague (AIGL), the othertwo major political platforms from the hills, have treated it as a ‘betrayal’.<sup>48</sup>

The long awaited dream of separate state of Gorkhaland for the people of Darjeeling and after its formation the dream of all the Nepali speaking Indians of attainment of their identity after the formation of Gorkhaland was shattered after Subash Ghising accepted the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988 after two years of violent agitation where many people from Darjeeling lost their lives; similarly after

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<sup>47</sup> Bagchi, Op.cit, p.113.

<sup>48</sup> Sarkar Swatahsidha, *Gorkhaland Territorial Administration: An Overview, Mainstream*, VOL I, No 22, May 19, 2012.

long time the same dreams the people of Darjeeling supported the Gorkhaland Movement led by Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha, and similarly after GJMM accepted the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 2011, the hope of people has died regarding Gorkhaland. Both the parties have one thing similar which is, starting the movement in the name of separate state and settling with some council and administration which is similar to autonomy which the CPI-M was trying to force upon Darjeeling and against which the movement for separate state started. The DGHC was dissolved in Darjeeling with the replacement by GTA. It will be important in the politics of Darjeeling to see what will replace GTA? Will it be Gorkhaland or some another new settlement by some new party? While we look both the Gorkhaland Movement of 1986 by GNLF and 2007 by GJMM, it is the same book with some of its content being added and changed inside but with new and changed outer cover.

## Conclusion

The history of Darjeeling may be considered as beginning from 1835, after it was given as a grant of deed by the Raja of Sikkim to the British; or it can be said that the year when the Raja of Sikkim, was trapped by the diplomatic policy of the British. Darjeeling, during the time of annexation, had very low population which has been accounted by L.S.S. O'Malley in his gazetteer;<sup>1</sup> that only 100 people lived in an area comprising of 138 square miles. With the introduction of the Tea plantations in Darjeeling, the British officials started to bring the labour from nearby regions of Darjeeling which increased the population of this region. With the growth of the tea gardens in Darjeeling, as well as a good market with the taste of tea from Darjeeling, more and more labourers started to immigrate into Darjeeling and settled here; they were kept under the domination by the British in every field with a very low wage. The labourers can be termed as proletariats in place of slave, which Karl Marx mentions in his Communist Manifesto; they all migrated from the regions like Sikkim and Nepal who were under the monarchical rule, and now came under the system of capitalism; and this turned into proletariats. The Communist Manifesto mentions:

“The slave is sold once and for all, the proletarian has to sell him-self by the day and by the hour. The slave is the property of one master and for that very reason has a guaranteed subsistence, however wretched it may be. The proletarian is, so to speak, the slave of the entire bourgeois *class*, not of one master, and therefore has no guaranteed subsistence, since nobody buys his labour if he does not need it.”<sup>2</sup>

The labours were made to work for hours on the basis of per day wage in the tea gardens, and this miserable condition even exists till now. The owners of the tea estates kept on changing but the workers had to work under the same system as nothing was changing in their life; even they had the skill only to work in tea gardens

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<sup>1</sup> O'Malley L.S.S, (1999) *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Logos Press, Delhi, p.35.

<sup>2</sup> Marx Karl, (1969) *Manifesto of The Communist Party*, Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p.38.

by which they could not perform other works. They were not even allowed to raise their voice against the system in which they were with the fear of being ‘Hatta Bahar’; the growing oppression played as a factor for the formation of Communist party and hence they embraced the Communist Party when it was formed in Darjeeling in 1943. In Darjeeling, there was the Indian National Congress, but it failed to take up the problems of the tea garden workers who constituted the highest population in Darjeeling. That is why Congress, even while being a national political party, has no strong base in the Darjeeling region till date. But the Communist Party being the party which was concerned with the working class and their problems, it paved the way for it to get support in the hills and was able to form a branch in Darjeeling as early as in 1943.

The time when the Communist party was formed in Darjeeling, the national movement for independence was at its peak and India was likely get independence; people were active in the freedom movement elsewhere in the country. Even though there were some active members from Darjeeling in the freedom movement like Helen Lepcha,<sup>3</sup> Dal Bahdur Giri,<sup>4</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mukhia,<sup>5</sup> Ram Singh Thakuri,<sup>6</sup> etc, the scenario in Darjeeling, mainly in the tea garden areas, was little different; rather than getting involved in the freedom movement, the workers were agitation to get rid of the existing oppression of the colonial planters and oppression from the Government Officials who were from plains, by setting up own administrative unit within West Bengal or a separate state, attached by the ethnic feeling. Hence the two

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<sup>3</sup> Helen Lepcha- was in Indian National Congress, who was named by Gandhiji as Savitri Devi; she later joined Subash Chandra Bose in INA.

<sup>4</sup> Dal Bahadur Giri-was an active member from Indian National Congress, even termed as Gandhi of Hills.

<sup>5</sup> Krishna Bahadur Mukhia-was the member of INA, who was with Subash Chandra Bose in his warring days in the jungle of Burma.

<sup>6</sup> Ram Singh Thakuri-was the member of INA of Subash Chandra Bose, who even composed the tone of National Anthem of India.

movements were active in Darjeeling. This situation even prevailed in some other plantation regions of India before independence, which has also been mentioned by Granthana Mukherjee in her thesis as, “When the educated intelligentsia was responding to the colonial rule with anti-colonial movements inspired by nationalism, the Assam plantation workers were out bursting to attain freedom from the clutches of the colonial planters rather than colonial rulers from India and the Darjeeling plantation workers were moving forward with their own struggle which was bonded by ethnic and community feeling.”<sup>7</sup> After the formation of the Communist Party in Darjeeling, many working class unions were formed in Darjeeling under the red flag which was not done in such a manner by any of the political party in Darjeeling and started its work for the benefits of the workers by protesting against the oppressions of the colonial planters. The situation in Darjeeling during the Provincial election of 1946 was one where the British were not allowing the Communist leaders to enter the tea gardens and campaign for the election, because those leaders and the workers were not participating in the election to form the Provincial Assembly but to represent the working class of Darjeeling and to raise voice for the benefit of the workers which was not given by the planters. This can be seen in the 11 points manifesto of the Communist Party Darjeeling, in which talked about eradicating the existing system of *Hatta Bahar*, increase the wage of the tea garden workers, to bring the tea estates under government from the hands of the foreign companies as well as from Indian companies and various other facilities.<sup>8</sup> There was no mention of any point related to the freedom from the colonial rule; the manifesto rather focused on the benefit of workers and to attain freedom from the clutches of the colonial planters. The changing

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<sup>7</sup> Mukherjee Granthana, (2016), *Plantation Economy in Colonial India: A Study of Bengal and Assam Frontier*, Unpublished MPhil thesis, Sikkim University, p.61.

<sup>8</sup> For details of the 11 points see chapter 2.

scenario in the tea gardens after the election, when the workers actively started agitation against the colonial planter through the tea garden unions in different parts of Darjeeling. Despite the tea garden union leaders were arrested by the planters, the workers kept on taking forward the protest movement in all the tea gardens. This sequence of events, in many ways, followed the pattern that Marx described in his Communist Manifesto:

“The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operative of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them.”

In the history of Darjeeling this was the first event of the protest by the tea garden workers under the union of the Communist Party, which has to be mentioned as important for a the statehood movement in Darjeeling. The statehood demand has always been a foremost factor in Darjeeling and another movement which was moving parallel to it, till 1992, was the *Bhasha Andolan* or the language movement which has been presented in detail in the last part of chapter I. Every movement for a separate state especially led by the minorities of that certain region on the basis of ethnicity is touched upon by the culture and language, which has an emotional aspect. The same condition existed in Darjeeling; the language movement was started by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in 1924, with a demand for making it an official language in Darjeeling primarily in the administration. The movement was further upgraded after independence by making a demand for Nepali language to be added to the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution; this was after the Chairman of Official Language Commission, B.G. Kher, called Nepali language as a foreign language. The Communist Party from the hills took the demand further when Ratanlal Brahmin was not allowed to speak in Nepali in Parliament when he became M.P. by the Lok Sabha speaker G.S. Dhillon; he too called it a foreign language by comparing it with some

other foreign languages. Till this time the Congress Party being in Power at the Centre, did not talk a single word on the movement. B.C. Roy, a Congress Chief Minister, even ensured a resolution making Bengali the Official Language all over West Bengal. The Nepali language got its recognition in year 1992, but the study here attempts to show the long process taken for the recognition in the history of Darjeeling, the role of the Communist Party with some other organisations for the language movement and again the failure of the Congress party in looking after the problems and aspirations of the people of the hills.

Darjeeling witnessed the oldest demand for autonomy which later turned into a statehood demand in India. The demand started from 1907; though it began from the British regime in India it was never solved nor any alternative was given to it by the British. This has to be understood in the history of the demand made for autonomy in Darjeeling and the interplay of Ethnic identity with that of the suppression and oppression by the British in the tea garden area. What we see here is that the people of Darjeeling had to face similar repression against their demand for autonomy by which they wanted to be free from being under the control of Bengals administration. The demand earlier was not made by any political party; rather by an association named Hill Men's Association, who in every reform act, which were introduced by the British in India, placed their demand for Darjeeling but remained unheard from 1907 to 1941. On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1947, the Communist Party of India, Darjeeling District, for the first time made a demand of separation from Bengal, by making a demand of Gorkhasthan, which included the parts of Sikkim, Nepal and the Darjeeling region. The idea of Gorkhasthan came from Lenin's formulation on the Right to Self-Determination and Right to Secede; the demand was supported by the Bengal Provincial Communist party of India who were even supporting the formation of



states as well as formation of Pakistan during the time of independence. The memorandum of demand was forwarded to many officials, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who was an admirer of Lenin's idea of Socialism but still did not support the formation of Gorkhasthan. The study out here highlights the process of the making of the demand of Gorkhasthan and even how the Provincial Communist Party who supported the demand changed their attitude towards Darjeeling, more precisely after 1977 when it came to power; the communist government only came up with the demand for autonomy in the hills which were also not implemented. Even the Communist Party leaders from the hills failed to raise the demand for separate state; previously the same leaders who raised the demand for Gorkhasthan, rather they also came up with the demand for separate autonomy.

The study also shows the injustice done to the people of Darjeeling by B.C. Roy's Congress Government of Bengal during the time when the State Reorganisation Commission, appointed by Nehru in 1953 visited Darjeeling and injustice done to the Workers of Tea Garden of Margaret's Hope when they agitated for justice. On this matter, it was the B.C. Roy Government of Congress, being in power in state, that gave the Census report of 1951 which was totally a misinterpreted census and by which the criteria to make Darjeeling a state was not fulfilled. Even the Communist Party from the hills failed to keep the demand for a state in front of SRC; AIGL too failed on this matter being a part of West Bengal Assembly during this period. The study also mentions about the working class movement in Darjeeling which has been unobserved in the history of Darjeeling. The workers agitated against the planters in 1946, but the same system prevailed after independence in Darjeeling; so the workers

of the Margaret's Hope Tea Garden protested against the planters in 1955<sup>9</sup> on similar issues on which the protest was organised in 1946, but this time the workers were shot dead by the West Bengal Police; the Congress government of West Bengal did not take any measure towards the incident and rather blamed the workers for turning violent even though who were totally unarmed. The Communist party did support the workers agitation and blamed the B.C. Roy Government in the West Bengal Assembly as the agitation took place under the Communist flag but this was done only to gain their political support.

The growing problem of the ethnic identity of the Gorkhas from Darjeeling rose into a historic agitation for separate state of Gorkhaland in 1986, under the leadership of Subash Ghising. The Gorkha community, spread all over India, has been facing multifarious problems long before independence but one common vexing problem which all of them have had to face regularly, particularly post independence, is the problem of their misconceived national Identity.<sup>10</sup> The study deals with the long movement for autonomy which turned in statehood demand in Darjeeling; Subash Ghising the President of GNLF took different steps on making the demand, but later it took a violent turn. Rather than being a separatist movement from Bengal, it turned into an anti Communist Party of the Darjeeling and Dooars regions, and violence and counter violence occurred frequently which resulted in people killing each other even while they shared the same ethnicity, culture, language, etc. and having the different ideology and belonging to different political parties. The details of the 1986 Gorkhaland agitation vis-a-vis the tussle between the GNLF and CPI (M) in Darjeeling District has to be seen in context.

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<sup>9</sup> For detail of the incident see chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> Shrestha C.K, (2013), *Gorkhas' Quest for Indian Identity*, Gorkha Bharati Vichar Manch, India, p.3.

After the 1986 Gorkhaland agitation, the ethnic identity question struck the communist leaders from the Hills and the Dooars area of Darjeeling too. The political situation in Darjeeling after 1988, after the DGHC was introduced in Darjeeling and Subash Ghising acting as a sole head and even disseminating funds to GNLFF partisans in the name of development of DGHC by the Provincial Communist Party of India, was creating dissatisfaction among the communist leaders from the Hills. Later, the communist party from the hills too raised the demand of Gorkhaland which created a rift between the leaders from hills and the Provincial Communist Party. As a result of which the split of the Communist Party in the Hills took place in 1996. The new Communist Party formed in Darjeeling known as CPRM in Darjeeling started its further party works in Darjeeling, but in 1998, friction took place in between the two hill parties GNLFF and CPRM on the issue of 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election. The latest phase of the, Gorkhaland Movement led by Bimal Gurung (President of GJMM) received a huge support from people of Darjeeling as well as from other local political parties including the CPRM. The study focuses on why the CPRM and other parties when the GJMM accepted GTA in 2011, as a settlement which was also done by the GNLFF in 1988. Thus then is the history of Darjeeling which has been overlooked and not been given importance as it needed.

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