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Reorganisation of States in India: The Case of Gorkhaland

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Abstract

India is a multi ethnic country with a federal polity. There are 29 States which are again multi ethnic in nature. The State of West Bengal is predominantly ethnic 'Bengali' however its famous Darjeeling hill station is populated by ethnic Nepalese. As a result the ethnic Bengalis effectively control the political, economic and social fabric of the State of West Bengal. This has caused lot resentment amongst the ethnic Nepalese, resulting in a very violent agitation in the early eighties, led by the G.N.L.F. The Nepalese demanded a separate State of Gorkhaland consisting of the Darjeeling hills. This would have resulted in bifurcation of the State of West Bengal which was vehemently opposed by the Government and the ethnic Bengali population of the State of West Bengal. After a lot of negotiations involving the Government of India, the Government of the State of West Bengal and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (G.N.L.F.), a tripartite agreement was signed in 1985 and the Gorkha Hill Development Council (G.H.D.C.) was created. The G.H.D.C, an elective body, satisfied the urge of autonomy and self determination amongst the ethnic Nepalese of Darjeeling hills. It also satisfied the stand of the Government of West Bengal of non-bifurcation of their State. Since its inception in 1985 the G.H.D.C. has ensured peace in the Darjeeling hills of the State of West Bengal. Elections for the D.G.H.C. have been held periodically and its powers have increased with time due to repeated negotiations between the G.H.D.C. and the Governments of West Bengal and the Government of India. However, the hopes of development of the area have not become a reality due to non-performance of hill council. And movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland was revived. The government now offered GTA with more autonomy to the Gorkhas but things have not improved on the ground for the common Gorkhas. In a way the DGHC and GTA has been a victim of the same disease that affects the whole of Indian polity and administration i.e. autocratic and corrupt politicians and officials who are more interested in self-aggrandizement than welfare of the masses that they profess to represent and serve.

Keywords: India; Reorganizations; States; Gorkhaland; Gorkha; DGHC; GNLF.

Introduction

Formation of States In India

Prior to 1947 the British Indian Empire, was organised into two types of territories: the provinces of British India, which were governed directly by British officials responsible to the Governor-General of India and princely states under the rule of local

hereditary rulers who recognized British suzerainty in return for local autonomy, in most cases as established by treaty. Most of the British provinces had elected legislatures as well as governors, although some of the smaller provinces were governed by a chief commissioner appointed by the Governor-General. In 1930s, British also recognized the principle of federalism.

On 15 August 1947, British India was granted independence as the separate dominions of India and Pakistan. The British dissolved their treaty relations with more than five hundred princely states, who were encouraged to accede to either India or Pakistan while under no compulsion to do so. Most of the states acceded to India, and a few to Pakistan. Bhutan and Hyderabad opted for independence, although the armed intervention of India conquered Hyderabad and brought it into the Indian Union.

Between 1947 and 1950, the territories of the princely states were politically integrated into the Indian Union. Most were merged into existing provinces; others were organized into new provinces, such as Rajputana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Bharat and Vindhya Pradesh, made up of multiple princely states; a few, including Mysore, Hyderabad, Bhopal, and Bilaspur, became separate provinces. The Government of India Act of 1935 remained the constitutional law of India pending adoption of a new Constitution [1].

The borders of these states, inherited from British India, were not suitable for easy administration. The internal provincial borders of British India were a result of historical events, as well as political, military and strategic planning by the British. The Government agreed that the reorganization of state borders was necessary, but the basis of reorganization was yet to be determined. One of the proposals was to reorganize the state on the basis of languages of India. This would make administration easier, and would help replace the caste and religion-based identities with less controversial linguistic identities. Earlier in 1920, the members of the Indian National Congress had agreed on the linguistic reorganization of the Indian states as one of the party's political goals. The Provincial Committees of the party were set on this basis since 1920. In 1927, the Congress declared that it was committed to the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis, and reaffirmed its stance several times, including the election manifesto of 1945-46. But, soon after independence, the Congress-led Government became concerned that the states formed solely on a linguistic basis might be unsuitable, and might even pose a risk to the national unity. On 17 June 1948, Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly, set up the Linguistic Provinces Commission to recommend whether the states should be reorganized on the linguistic basis or not. The Commission recommended that the formation of provinces on exclusively or even mainly linguistic considerations is not in the larger interests of the Indian nation [2]. The reason that Nehru, Patel and top leaders of Congress feared that the country has

just been divided on the basis on language and reorganizing it on linguistic lines will encourage the breakup of the Union. The creation of linguistic provinces must be deferred to a time when India was strong and sure of herself. The JVP committee argued that language was not only a binding force but also a separating one [3]. By 1952, the demand for creation of a Telugu-majority state in the parts of the Madras State had become powerful. Potti Sreeramulu, one of the activists demanding the formation of a Telugu-majority state, died on 16 December 1952 after undertaking a fast-unto-death. Subsequently, the Telugu-majority Andhra State was formed in 1953. Other small changes were made to state boundaries during the 1950-1956 period. The small state of Bilaspur was merged with Himachal Pradesh on 1 July 1954, and Chandernagore, a former enclave of French India, was incorporated into West Bengal in 1955. This sparked off agitations all over the country, with linguistic groups demanding separate statehoods.

The new Constitution of India, which came into force on 26 January 1950, made India a sovereign democratic republic. The new republic was also declared to be a "Union of States". The constitution of 1950 distinguished between three main types of states. Part A states, which were the former governors' provinces of British India, were ruled by an elected governor and state legislature. The nine Part A states were Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh (formerly Central Provinces and Berar), Madras, Orissa (subsequently renamed *Odisha* in 2011), Punjab (formerly East Punjab), Uttar Pradesh (formerly the United Provinces), and West Bengal. The eight Part B states were former princely states or groups of princely states, governed by a *Rajpramukh*, who was usually the ruler of a constituent state, and an elected legislature. The *Rajpramukh* was appointed by the President of India. The Part B states were Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Bharat, Mysore, Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), Rajasthan, Saurashtra, and Travancore-Cochin. The ten Part C states included both the former chief commissioners' provinces and some princely states, and each was governed by a chief commissioner appointed by the President of India. The Part C states were Ajmer, Bhopal, Bilaspur, Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, Manipur, Tripura and Vindhya Pradesh. The sole Part D state was the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which were administered by a lieutenant governor appointed by the central government.

In December 1953, Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru appointed the States Reorganization Commission to prepare for the creation of states on

linguistic lines, known as the Fazal Ali Commission. The Commission recommended the reorganization of India's states. The States Reorganization Act was passed on 31 August 1956. Before it came into effect on 1 November, an important amendment to the Constitution was also made; this amendment (the Seventh) was timed to come into force on the same day. Under the Seventh Amendment, the existing distinction among Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D states was abolished. The distinction between Part A and Part B states was removed, becoming known simply as "states". A new type of entity, the union territory, replaced the classification as a Part C or Part D state. The six union territories were Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands, Manipur, and Tripura [4].

The former French and Portuguese colonies in India were incorporated into the Republic as the union territories of Puducherry, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Goa, Daman and Diu in 1962. Several new states and union territories have been created out of existing states since 1956. Bombay state was split into the linguistic states of Gujarat and Maharashtra on 1 May 1960 by the Bombay Reorganization Act. Nagaland was made a state on 1 December 1963. The Punjab Reorganization Act of 1966 divided the Punjab along linguistic lines, creating a new Hindi-speaking state of Haryana on 1 November, transferring the northern districts of Punjab to Himachal Pradesh, and designating Chandigarh, the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana, a union territory. Statehood was conferred upon Himachal Pradesh on 25 January 1971, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura on 21 January 1972 the Kingdom of Sikkim joined the Indian Union as a state on 26 April 1975. In 1987, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became states on 20 February, followed by Goa on 30 May, while Goa's northern exclaves of Daman and Diu became a separate union territory. In 2000 three new states were created: Chhattisgarh (1 November 2000) out of eastern Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal (9 November 2000), renamed Uttarakhand in 2007, out of the Hilly regions of northwest Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand (15 November 2000) out of the southern districts of Bihar [5]. On 2 June 2014, Telangana was separated from Andhra Pradesh as a new 29th state of India, with Hyderabad as its capital. As historian Ramachandra Guta stated, the creation of linguistic states was a victory of popular will.

India today is a multi-ethnic and diverse country with a federal democratic polity. There are 29 states that are again diverse in nature. The State of West Bengal is predominantly ethnic Bengali however its

famous hill station of Darjeeling is populated by ethnic Gorkhas. Due to sheer numbers, the ethnic Bengalis effectively control the political, economic and social fabric of the state of West Bengal. This has caused a lot of resentment among ethnic Gorkhas, leading to various demands including the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland outside West Bengal but under the Union of India.

Formation of Gorkha Ethnicity

The present day Darjeeling district was originally a part of Sikkim. From Sikkim it was annexed by Nepal in 1780 and during 1780-1816 it remained under Nepal. In 1816 it was added to British India, which gave it back to Sikkim in 1817. However in 1835 British India acquired this land from Sikkim [6] and encouraged Gorkhas to settle down in the hills. Their population increased rapidly and today they constitute nearly 90 percent of the total population of the hill area. Thus today Darjeeling has a predominantly Gorkha population.

Their ethnic consciousness increased with the growth in their numbers. They organized themselves into a number of organizations [7] and put forward many demands asserting their identity, thereby giving birth to Gorkha ethnicity. Their demands ranged from district local administration to a separate province. However, it was Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) under the leadership of Subhash Ghising which took the lead and became their sole spokesman in the 1980s. It raised many demands from time to time such as: separate state of Gorkhahaland [8]; inclusion of Nepali / Gorkhali language in the VIII schedule of the constitution [9]; granting of citizenship to pre 1950 settlers [10]; abrogation of clause VII of Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 1950 [11]; and creation of a separate Indian Gorkha Regiment [12].

In spite of their grievance and urge to maintain their ethnic identity, they always expressed their desire to remain in the Indian mainstream, though at times their ethnic interests predominated national interests. Moreover, in the beginning they used peaceful means to express their demands and grievances. But the dereliction of this issue by the government till mid eighties resulted in adoption of violent means by them.

The Compromise

To resolve the problem, after a lot of negotiations, two agreements were signed in mid 1988 between the central government, the state government and the GNLF [13]. Under these agreements the GNLF

agreed to drop certain demands such as recognition of their language; a separate state of Gorkhaland; a separate Indian Gorkha Regiment; and abrogation of clause VII of the Indo-Nepal treaty of Friendship 1950. In order to accommodate their other demands, the government agreed to make provision for Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council or DGHC; conceded to their request of granting citizenship to pre - 1950 settlers; and also allowed them to join the regiment of their choice in Indian Army [14].

This was certainly not what agitationists had fought for. Granting these concessions did not fully satisfy their urge for establishing an ethnic identity within Indian union. It was not a zero-sum solution rather it was non-zero sum solution in which the state government agreed to grant autonomy to the Darjeeling area in form of DGHC with a mix of democracy as nearly half of the councilors were to be elected by the people of Darjeeling area. However, the government did not grant full statehood in form of Gorkhaland as demanded by the agitationists.

As per the agreements, the executive powers of the DGHC covered agriculture, public health, sanitation, hospitals, dispensaries, tourism, vocational training, public work, roads, transport, burial and cremation grounds, live stocks, water, fisheries, education, markets, fairs, small scale and cottage industry etc. The council had power of supervision over panchayat samities, gram panchayats and municipalities falling under the council jurisdiction. The general council consisted of a total of 42 members out of which 28 would be elected and rest nominated by the state government. The chairman and vice - chairman of the general council were to be ex-officio members of the executive council with the chairman of the general council as the chief executive councilor. The chief executive councilor had power to nominate five members to the executive council from out of the general council and the state government had the power to nominate two members to the executive council from out of the non-official nominated members of the general council. The general council was given the power to levy fees and would receive grants from the center and the state governments. It could also raise loans with the approval of the state government. The state government agreed to review all the cases against the GNLF activists and GNLF gave a call for surrender of unauthorized arms and withdrew all agitational activities. Ghising expressed happiness over the signing of the two accords. He said: "We are happy, very happy. We have got our 'identity' [15].

Functioning of the Council

So far elections for the D.G.H.C. have been held

thrice and GNLF has swept the poll each time. In the elections held on 13th December 1988 GNLF secured 26 out of 28 seats while CPI (M) got only two seats [16]. A very happy Ghising declared: "We will change the face of Darjeeling in the next few years [17]."

However, soon Ghising and the state government started accusing each other of attempting to sabotage the newborn council. Ghising accused the state government of withholding the funds meant for the council [18]. The state government in turn alleged that this had been done because of non-submission of accounts by the council [19]. Ghising also criticized the state government for not providing the needed infrastructure for smooth working of the council. The center and the state government in turn warned Ghising not to waste funds on non-developmental things such as building lavish hill council secretariat [20].

Meanwhile dissatisfaction against Ghising rose due to his dictatorial style of functioning, unfulfilled promises and rumors of corruption [21]. In order to divert people's attention Ghising raised issues of 'Greater Nepal' and 'no man's land'. He alleged that an international conspiracy to form a 'Greater Nepal' is being hatched by clubbing together Darjeeling, Sikkim, the Duars and parts of lower Bhutan with the ultimate aim of joining the Himalayan Kingdom. In January 1992 he argued that Darjeeling and its adjoining areas were leased out to British India by Nepal. After independence the lease expired and nothing was done to sign a fresh treaty. Since Nepal has not reclaimed the territory, the hills of West Bengal formed a 'no man's land'. He declared that no elections can be held in the hill until the center proved that the region had been incorporated into the Indian union after British rule. The Indian prime minister warned him that stern action would be taken if he tried to inflame passion in the area once again [22]. A crestfallen Ghising turned towards CPI (M) and a short honeymoon period followed. During this period the DGHC decided to send a report on council expenditure to the Government [23].

Meanwhile the Nepali language was included in the VIII schedule of the constitution in August 1992. This too angered Ghising who wanted Gorkhali instead of Nepali to be included in the VIII Schedule [24]. Soon Ghising threatened to revive the agitation for a separate state. He refused to talk to the state government and decided to dissolve the council [25]. However, in a sudden reversal of stand, he agreed to talks and after a number of meetings on the issues of how to make the council more powerful and efficient [26] it was finally agreed that the bureaucratic setup of the council would be restructured by appointing a principal secretary at the helm of affairs, along with

a finance secretary and individual secretaries for other departments under the council. Chief Minister Basu assured Ghising that there would not be any problem of funds. He promised that "suitable arrangements will be made for coordination between the hill council and the home department [27]." A satisfied Ghising claimed that "There is no difference between the council and Gorkhaland." He added that government has agreed to add more area under the council and that the council would be given rights and greater powers to raise revenue [28].

In the elections held in December 1993 for the DGHC, the GNLF got 24 out of 28 seats while CPI (M) got one and the Congress drew a blank [29]. A pleased Ghising later announced that he would like to work in cooperation with the state Government [30]. However soon Ghising and state government drifted apart on the issue of panchayat (local self government) polls which were scheduled to be held in April 1994. Ghising argued that there was no need for the panchayat bodies in the hills because the DGHC was empowered to look after most aspects of the administration [31]. The DGHC requested the state government for the postponement of the elections and also to examine the various issues and implications of holding the elections in the hill council. But the state government maintained that the panchayat elections are now a constitutional obligation in view of the 73rd amended of the constitution. The state Government proposed a two tier panchayat system with the third tier taken care of by the council. The state government offered to make some concessions such as to make DGHC councilors ex-officio members of panchayat samities and vice-versa. Further, certain activities like women and child development, poverty alleviation and employment guarantee, which are solely looked after by the panchayats would be incorporated in the DGHC by amending the section 24 of the DGHC Act [32]. But Ghising argued that no poll could be held in Darjeeling since the GNLF has filed a case in the supreme court seeking clarification on the status of Darjeeling [33]. The state Government tried to avoid a confrontation and Information Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya took the stand that everyone has a right to go to the court. He also said that panchayat polls were not time bound and Ghising needed time to sort out the relationship between the DGHC and the panchayat [34].

Meanwhile Ghising demanded 'Other Background Community' (OBC) status for whole of the Gorkha Community in April 1994 as they were a minority in the state and their position was backward by any definition [35]. In 1995 Ghising again threatened to dissolve the council and revert to his

original demand for a separate state. He alleged that the functioning of the council was being hampered by the formation of the panchayats. Later he called off his threat of agitation after state Information Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya assured Ghising that any anxiety about the council's power overlapping the panchayat's will be solved cordially as the state Government has no intention to encroach open council's powers [36].

In November 1996 Ghising met Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to plead for up gradation of the status of the council to a full - fledged state. He charged the CPI(M) led West Bengal government with creating hurdles in the functioning of the hill council by refusing to delegate powers and providing adequate funds. He told the Prime Minister that latter's Independence Day announcement regarding formation of Uttrakhand has led to the rise of new hope for the creation of Gorkhaland [37].

In the DGHC elections held in 1999 the GNLF won 23 out of 28 seats in the council [38]. However, the centre's decision to create Jharkhand, Uttranchal and Chattisgarh gave a new fillip to the agitation for separate state of Gorkhaland [39]. Meanwhile, the GNLF boycotted the Lok Sabha elections of 1996, 1998 and 1999. Ahead of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections GNLF supported congress candidate Dawa Narbula resulting in his election victory with a large margin in the Darjeeling constituency. In the state assembly elections in West Bengal in 2001 GNLF had put five candidates out of who three got elected.

In March 2005 Ghising threatened to stall the election to the DGHC if the state and centre failed to declare an 'alternative' to the council [40]. To resolve the deadlock a tripartite meeting was held in April 2005 and it was decided that special status would be granted to the DGHC either under the 6th schedule (which is about autonomy to the tribals) or under Article 371 (which empowers the Governor to safeguard the identity of the ethnic people) [41]. The Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist (CPRM) General Secretary R.B. Rai rejected the 6th schedule as an option. He retorted that if the Government wants permanent peace in hills it must accede to the demand for Gorkhaland [42]. The council's performance under Ghising and GNLF left many disillusioned.

It seems that the easy wins in DGHC elections led to lethargy towards work and development efforts took a back seat. As a result Ghising had to face some opposition from the likes of Madan Tamang, General Secretary of Akhil Bhartiya Gorkha League, who alleged that Ghising has no right to hold the chair in DGHC as he did not convene a single meeting of the

general council of DGHC for the last four years. Moreover, he had not prepared the hill council budget nor allowed an audit of the same in the last 14 years [43]. Earlier in February 2001 Ghising sustained injuries when he was attacked with AK-47 rifles and grenades near Kurseong.

Resurgence of Demand for Gorkhaland

The term of last DGHC had expired on March 23, 2005 but for three years Ghising continued as caretaker administrator of the Council thanks to the state government which passed the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Council (Amendment) Bill. Elections could not be held because of opposition from Ghising who demanded tribal status for Darjeeling hills in June 2005 when his demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland was not accepted [44]. A tripartite agreement was signed on December 6, 2005 for inclusion of hill council in the in the 6th schedule of the constitution to give the council more legislative and administrative powers [45].

The Union cabinet on October 1, 2007 approved the proposal to amend the constitution to create the council bill council bill for amending article 244 and 332 and the sixth schedule of the constitution [46]. However soon the intelligence agencies warned the government against giving special status to the region in haste till there is consensus among different factions including non tribals and tribals represented by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) and GNLF respectively. The fear of intelligence agencies soon became real when thousands of GJM activists resorted to indefinite bandh in February 2008. GJM leader Bimal Gurung- demanded ouster of Ghising from the council; halt to the process of conferring 6th schedule status to Darjeeling hills and a separate state of Gorkhaland [47]. In February 2008 GJM supporters kept Ghising waiting at Pintail village for three weeks refusing to let Ghising enter Darjeeling [48]. Later Ghising was forced to resign as caretaker of the council [49] and GJM resorted to bandhs, hunger strikes and rallies in June 2008 to press for their demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland [50]. They refused to talk to state government alone asking for tripartite talks with the center and state government. The GJM emphasized that their demand for Gorkhaland is not separatist and that it is within the framework of the constitution [51].

The imminent cause of the resurgence of demand seemed to be the attempt to turn Darjeeling into a tribal region by putting the council in the 6th schedule of the constitution. This upset the non- tribal who formed about 70% of the hill population. They felt

that the move will divide the community. They were hurt as the center and state governments did not take any other leader in confidence apart from Ghising. Ghising became an outcaste in his own community when the center recognized two ethnic groups- Tamang (to which Ghising belongs) and Limbas- as scheduled tribes. Ghising's loss became GJM chief Bimal Gurung's gain [52]. However underneath it all was the neglect of real problems of Darjeeling such as poverty alleviation, unemployment, corruption and the dying economy [53]. The GJM during the agitation for Gorkhaland turned the Left Front government of West Bengal irrelevant in Darjeeling by introducing its own vehicle registration numbers (GL instead of WB), setting up a police unit called Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP), imposing dress code on civilians, enforcing tax boycott, banning parties opposed to it and writing 'Government of Gorkhaland' on official signboards. However the agitationists refrained from using weapons. This caused a lot of worry in Kolkata for the government was unable to resist GJM either politically or administratively [54]. The GJM was formed in October 2007 and its leader Bimal Gurung claimed to be a Gandhian and advised his followers to keep the 'khukri' but not to use it. However the Left Front Government of West Bengal rejected the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland although offering talks for more autonomy within West Bengal [55]. The then External Affairs Minister at centre Pranab Mukherji, a Bengali, categorically rejected the demand for Gorkhaland [56]. The GJM refused to talk with the West Bengal government and insisted on talks with central government [57]. The central government in turn wanted talks without any precondition. Talks were finally held between GJM and Congress led government at centre. The GJM later changed its strategy and aligned with BJP which reiterated its support for smaller states and promised to create two more states of Telengana and Gorkhaland if they came to power in 2009 general elections [58]. In return GJM offered them support for Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat. The BJP candidate Jaswant Singh won from Darjeeling however BJP lost the general elections and Congress led government was formed at centre with the support of Trinmool Congress. Trinmool being a regional political party of West Bengal must take care of Bengali sentiments and will oppose Gorkhaland.

The G.J.M. reached an agreement with the state government to form a semi-autonomous body to administer the Darjeeling hills. The Memorandum of Agreement for Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) was signed on 18 July 2011 at Pintail Village near Siliguri in the presence of Union Home Minister P Chidambaram, West Bengal Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha leaders. A bill for the creation of GTA was passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 2 September 2011. It was decided that GTA presently will have three hill subdivisions Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Kurseong and some areas of Siliguri subdivision under its authority. The GTA will have administrative, executive and financial powers but no legislative powers. A 10-member joint verification committee headed by a retired High Court judge would examine the demand to bring the Gorkha-inhabited pockets of the Dooars and the Terai under the GTA. It was also decided that there shall be a GTA Sabha for the GTA which will have a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman to conduct the business of Council. The GTA Sabha shall consist of forty five elected members and five members to be nominated by the Governor to give representation to members of SC, ST, women and minority communities. The MPs, MLAs, and Chairpersons of municipality(s) of the region shall be Ex-officio Members to this GTA Sabha. The term of the GTA shall be five years. The Executive Body shall consist of a Chief Executive who will nominate fourteen members out of the elected / nominated members as Executive Member. One of them shall be the Deputy Chief to be nominated by the Chief Executive. Every member of the GTA shall before taking seat make and subscribe before the Governor or one of the elected members appointed in that behalf by him an oath or affirmation. The Chief Executive shall be administered an oath or affirmation by the Governor [59]. The Government of India and the Government of West Bengal will provide all possible assistance to the G.T.A. for the overall development of the region. The Government of India will provide financial assistance of Rs. 200 crore (Rupees Two Hundred Crore) per annum for 3 years for projects to develop the socio-economic infrastructure in G.T.A. over and above the normal plan assistance to the State of West Bengal. The West Bengal government announced that the election for the GTA would be held on 29 July 2012. Parties that formed the Gorkhaland Task Force (CPRM, ABGL, Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh, GNLF(C), Gorkhaland Rajya Nirman Morcha and others) decided not to contest the GTA elections. Trinamool Congress fielded candidates in the election. The GNLF chairman filed a case in the Kolkata High Court challenging the GTA. The CPI(M) withdrew the nominations of all its 13 candidates from the GTA elections, alleging threats and intimidation by the GJM and the GJM received 28 seats of the GTA uncontested. In the elections of the remaining 17 seats of the GTA held on 29 July 2012, GJM candidates won from all the constituencies. Sanchibir Subba,

the rebel GJM candidate from Giddabaling-Nimbong, narrowly lost to the party's official contestant Kalyan Dewan by 677 votes. The newly elected members of the GTA were sworn in on 4 August 2012 at Darjeeling in the presence of home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee [60].

Conclusion

The ethnic Gorkhas had always aspired to have a separate state of Gorkhaland for the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling area. Ethnically and linguistically Gorkhas are different from Bengalis and although they are in a majority in Darjeeling however in West Bengal as a whole they are in a minority. As a result Bengalis dominate the political, economic, judicial, bureaucratic, social, cultural life of West Bengal. If so many other states have been created on the basis of language then why not the state of Gorkhaland. The GJM, has not dropped its demand for a separate State of Gorkhaland, and has only agreed to the setting up of an 'autonomous body' (empowered with administrative, financial and executive powers) for the overall development and restoration of peace and normalcy in the region. It is worth noting that both the State and Central governments kept it on record that the GJM's aspiration for a separate State remains unabated. The problem is that governments in India look into the problem more as an issue of law and order and the consequence of uneven development, or the lack of development. Such crucial issues like culture, self-respect, or self-rule are all clubbed together and considered as significant only when they are pitted against the discourse of development [61]. A look at other federal countries of the world shows a different attitude. A tiny and much less diverse Switzerland has twenty six Cantons (states) [62] and USA with a population of 315,676,000 (as compared to India with 1,210,193,422) [63] has fifty states but India keeps resisting creation of new states till forced by popular movements. The reason for non acceptance in case of Gorkhaland also lies in the strategic and sensitive location of Darjeeling as it has three international boundaries with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It also links India to Sikkim and whole of north east. Hence it is very important both for international security, national unity and commerce. Moreover ethnic Bengalis whether in Left Front, Trinamool Congress or Congress are against the division of West Bengal. So there is a situation in which incompatible demands exist with ethnic Gorkhas wanting a separate state of Gorkhaland by division of West Bengal while ethnic Bengalis

resisting any thought of division of West Bengal. Both sides aspire for a zero sum solution in their own favour. The compromise of GTA meant autonomy to Gorkhas without division of West Bengal. It is not as if autonomy experience has been completely unsuccessful. It has ensured absence of armed conflict as witnessed during mid-1980. It had satisfied the ethnic Bengalis as well as Gorkhas to some extent.

However, the hopes of development of the area have not become a reality due to non-performance of hill council. In a way the DGHC and GTA has been a victim of the same disease that affects the whole of Indian polity and administration i.e. autocratic and corrupt politicians and officials who are more interested in self-aggrandizement than welfare of the masses that they profess to represent and serve. The masses are cheated by politicians who raise emotional issues instead of concentrating on the development. The only possible solution for this problem lies in successful combination of autonomy, democracy and development. GTA must get real autonomy to function and perform on development front so as to meet the aspirations of people of Darjeeling for better living conditions as well as empowerment. For that transparency and responsiveness in functioning is needed along with a comprehensive regional development strategy capable of addressing socio-economic and environmental issues that concern this region in order to bring sustainable development and general improvement in the quality of life of the masses.

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