

Constructions of Gorkha Identity: A Case Study of the Discourse on Nationality and Citizenship in India

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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*Dedicated to
Appa, Aama,
and my dearest
Nanu, and Pukchu*



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DECLARATION

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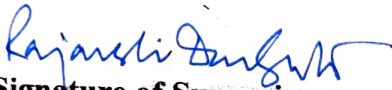
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Bidhan Golay

Abbreviations

AIGL	All India Gorkha League
AITBA	All India Tamang Buddhist Association
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DGHAC	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Autonomous Council
DGHC	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council
GDNS	Gorkha Dukh Niwarak Sammelan
GJM	Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
GTA	Gorkhaland Territorial Administration
INC	Indian National Congress
NCR	National Capital Region
NEFEN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
RNAC	Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation
SPUNER	Special Unit for the North-Eastern Region
TMC	Trinamool Congress

INTRODUCTION

A news item appeared in the back pages of a leading English language daily published from Kolkata sometime in May of 2017. It was about the decision of the Government of West Bengal to make the teaching of Bengali language ‘compulsory’ in schools, including private ones in the state. The story was titled, ‘Bengali Nanny State’.¹ The reportage, and its tone, did not find the policy faulty *per se* but it did take into account the opinion of stakeholders like school management, teachers as well as students. It also tried to give a token space of one line for what the political parties in ‘the hills’ thought about it as well as the opinion of the minority run institutions in the state. The Chief Minister herself took to Facebook to announce the decision. The newspaper, titled ‘The Telegraph’ on its part played along, by tucking the news item away in the back pages making the move look harmless and innocuous.

One got an impression that the tenor of the report coincided with the grouse of many middle-class Bengalis in Kolkata, who expressed their fears in closed circles about the growing political influence of the Hindi speaking rich businessmen in the city as well as across the state. Many complained in casual conversation about the demographic expansion of the ‘Hindi speakers’ from the traditional business districts like Bowbazar towards more up-market and tony neighbourhoods like Salt Lake and New Town, Rajarhat. Coupled with this is was the growing political presence of the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) among the Hindi speaking population, who have traditionally formed both the owners and the industrial work force in the manufacturing units, and jute mills that are located along the banks of Hoogly in Howrah district. The news reports that followed did throw up some interesting reactions. The media pundits started enlightening us with snippets of their political analysis. Some said that this move was targeted by the ruling party to consolidate the Bengali Hindus against the ever-growing influence of the more radical majoritarian Hinduism of the BJP variety. Others felt that this move had the tacit approval of a large number of ‘culture loving’, ‘chauvinist’ Bengali people. Then there were those who opposed the decision on altogether different grounds. Parents from upper middle-class families with their eyes fixed on International Baccalaureate degrees and who are usually keener on their wards taking German and French lessons rather than

¹ The Nanny State, The Telegraph, Siliguri, 17.05.2017 (<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/bengali-nanny-state/cid/1500105>) accessed on 21.10.2020

Bengali thought the move was somewhat regressive. Some school principals from reputed schools in Kolkata thought such a move would put additional burden on children. There were purely technical/pedagogical arguments against the move or plain political opposition even while trying not to hurt the ‘Bengali sentiment’.

But far away from the hustle and bustle of Kolkata or other major second tier towns in Bengal, the reaction in Darjeeling was that of a sullen and studied silence. The silence, one would imagine, was the result of shock and dismay, anger and hopelessness, against this latest decision of the Government. There was shock because people in Darjeeling had come to develop a certain trust that the present political dispensation was actually ‘liberal’ and ‘cared’ for the people of hills compared to any other previous dispensations. The Darjeeling based political parties took some time to react to the developments. One did get the impression that the Government did anticipate opposition from linguistic minorities in Bengal, particularly from the Nepali population, and hence made it a low-key policy announcement with a few cryptic sentences here and there. But the ploy did not seem to work in Darjeeling. The calibrated ambiguity or innocuousness of the announcement by the Government could hardly quell the already and always existing deep sense of suspicion and anxiety of the Nepalis towards the Government of West Bengal. It was as if the moment had finally arrived when the velvet gloves were finally taken off displaying the iron fist. There was no room for making concessions or allowances. The message was there on the wall written in bold letters for everyone to read.

The news spread thick and fast. Every form of reaction was taken as righteous anger. There was always underlying distrust and suspicion about the government. This latest move was only a reaffirmation of that feeling. Distrust and suspicion are indeed a heady concoction for any political movement; a perfect ferment for any political party to make hay, one would imagine. Thus, the movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland erupted in the hills of Darjeeling once again, for the third time in recent history. This latest phase, which now has subsided, will be remembered, among other things, for the longest unbroken spell of general strike that began on 15th June, 2017 and ended on 26th September, 2017. For one-hundred-and-four days Darjeeling remained shut to the outside world. No internet, no shops opened, no schools, people in their thousands bristling with anger were seen marching in the streets shouting slogans against the state government.

Those political theorists writing obituaries on ‘real politics’ appeared silly in the light of such events in Darjeeling. History had certainly not come to an ‘end’ in these parts and people were certainly living in very real historical times.

In today’s fast paced age of globalisation observing a strike of more than hundred days was almost like a resistance to modernity and the hegemony of time. Everything came to a standstill. There are a very few political movements that can boast of such distinction. Regardless of how history will judge this latest phase, the events in themselves represented the resilience and unwavering determination of the people against all forms of repression and domination. Even the worst critics will find it difficult to deny the popular nature of the movement. The mass participation of men, women, and youths, coming out in large numbers, gave the movement a certain unmistakeable dynamism and momentum. It seemed to announce that despite all repression and developmental intervention the movement for Gorkhaland refuses to die down easily. The tried and tested formula of ‘developmentalism and counter insurgency’ did not seem to be bearing fruits in these parts.

These political developments in Darjeeling not only upset the policy makers but also brought into question a large number of academic works on Gorkhaland movement that claimed to have arrived at “lasting solution” to the “problem” in the hills. The ‘suggestions’ and ‘policy implications’ lay exposed as mere academic exercises. The government of the day talked about ‘inclusive policy’ and ‘developmental activities’. However, no ‘administrative formula’, no ‘devolution of power’ seemed to have worked in the case of the Nepalis in West Bengal. One wrong step was all it took for the deep suspicion and cumulative mistrust seething under the skin to come alive.

Given this historical and political context there is an urgent need to ask some pointed questions: Why is there so much discontent and suspicion? Who are the Nepalis/Gorkhas? Do Indians or Bengal accept the Nepalis in Darjeeling as Indians? These are of course very crudely and bluntly framed questions but there are times when one does not know how to frame them any other way. And where do the academic discourses stand with regard to these pressing questions that haunt the Nepalis in Darjeeling and elsewhere in India? Let us make some effort in trying to unravel the nature of the academic discourses and the politics of knowledge vis-a-vis the Gorkhas and the Gorkhaland movement.

As a researcher one is sometimes confronted with a somewhat derisive and dismissive comment that the issue of Gorkhas or Gorkhaland movement is a 'beaten track'. One is required to 'justify' any further need for research in the area. But even then, one can still take heart from these criticisms in the sense that the question of Nepali identity and citizenship in India as well as the question of political freedom seem to finally occupy some sort of centre stage in the larger academic discourses. If not always and exactly the centre stage, at least there seems to be a steady out flow of information and details in the form of raw materials or 'data' to the metropolitan centres where these materials are being turned into finished products in the form of latest academic titles. Just like the 'East' was a career once upon a time, the Gorkhaland movement and the Gorkhas have become a profitable venture for a large number of Western researchers as well as mainstream researchers from our own country. A whole range of researchers have descended to Darjeeling to ply their trade. Armed with the latest theories and metropolitan academic rigour they hire young students from local colleges and universities to work as 'data collectors' and 'native informants'. These young students, who often get handsomely remunerated, feel a deep sense of academic vindication to be working for metropolitan – more often than not white - researchers.

The moot point here is not about who can do research on the Gorkhas, though such questions are legitimate to ask these days. The point one is labouring to make is that the very political economy of knowledge production is an unjust system favouring the metropolitan scholars and academia at the cost of native and vernacular scholarship. This stratification could have been acceptable if it were on the grounds of academic merit alone. But that hardly seems to be the case. The whole economy of knowledge production, as we know, is deeply tied with international academic networks, seminar circuits, funding agencies as also the economics of the large publishing houses. It bears elaboration of the fact that the ideological and economic agenda of global capitalism gets routed through their funding agencies via some of the elite universities on both sides of the Atlantic. There is a renewed focus of global capitalism on South Asia generally and India in particular. The academic agenda follows suit and redirects its focus. A field of specialisation like 'South Asian Studies', which for a very long time remained marginal and ghettoised in the Anglo-American universities, have now become very much part of the academic mainstream in these universities. Within South Asian Studies there is a renewed focus on questions of nation, caste, minority, environment and women's studies.

No one is suggesting that these issues are unimportant. They are as important and topical as they should have been, say some thirty years ago. And in this whole renewed academic focus on South Asia, there is some purchase for those plying their trade in 'Nepali Studies'. And yet we are crucially aware that within this gigantic field called South Asian Studies, Nepali studies would represent a very specialised niche taken in the context of the total funding, research output of these metropolitan universities as also the academic titles these universities as well as leading academic publishing houses generate at any given point.

Elitist as it might sound, these arguments would not be much of an interest to the political activists caught in the rough and tumble of politics in Darjeeling or lay readers. Rather they would argue that even bad publicity is better than no publicity. They would further state that it is helpful and beneficial that the question of Gorkhaland or the Gorkhas is getting highlighted as a result of the Western and metropolitan researchers writing tomes on the issue. And among the large number of native researchers there is a yearning and abiding hope that just like the late flourish of 'Caste', 'Dalits' or 'Women's Studies', there will be a mainstreaming of 'Nepali studies' and that the Nepalis/Gorkhas will firmly be rehabilitated as respectable as well a profitable pedagogical object.

The present study is principally concerned with ~~the~~ mapping the ways in which the Gorkha identity was constructed principally in the colonial discourse, and the subsequent problem of nationality and citizenship. The study will foreground the large body of colonial writings as the foundation of the construction of this identity but it will not restrict itself to these alone. This work contends that based on this foundation the academic discourses as well as popular writings have embarked on a specific way of pedagogically constructing the Gorkha identity in the post-colonial phase. At the epistemic level this engagement becomes important as the academic discourses have in a way contributed to the particular representation of the Nepali subject in mainstream discourses. At the level of everyday practices of government these academic discourses have informed the policies vis-à-vis Gorkhas and the region of Darjeeling in a major way. In the sections below we have tried to lay down the general characteristics of these works and talk about the politics of knowledge in some detail. A sustained discussion was felt necessary in order to drive home the point about the necessity of using postcolonial theory as a necessary framework to critique them.

The study on Gorkhas as well as on the Gorkhaland movement is as old as the ‘origin’ of the Gorkhas and their movement for political freedom. The ethnographical and anthropological studies on the Gorkhas have a much older tradition dating back to early nineteenth century, while the study on the movement for political freedom and more particularly the ‘agitation’, as it is commonly referred in academic discourses, began with the outbreak of the Gorkhaland movement in the 1980s. The Gorkhaland movement in the mid-1980s was undoubtedly the most serious mass movement but it must be borne in mind that this was the culmination as well as crystallisation of a series of political developments beginning from 1907. A broad classification could be made of the scholarship on the Gorkhas and the Gorkhaland movement. To begin with, there are a whole range of anthropologists studying the various ‘Castes’ and ‘Tribes’ among the Gorkhas. This is, in a way, a continuation of the much older tradition first established by the colonial administrators. Much like in the rest of the imperial world, colonial administrators in these parts also doubled up as part administrators and part scholars. The present crop of anthropological works is generally funded by Western universities and carried in a big way in rural Nepal, sometimes in collaboration with local universities in Nepal. The studies are mainly conducted on the ‘Rais’, the ‘Limbus’, the ‘Magars’, the ‘Newars’ or sometimes on typically orientalist fantasies like the study of ‘shamanic’ traditions.² For a very long time, the Western scholars did not venture across the border to Darjeeling until the outbreak of the Gorkhaland movement. Academic research in Darjeeling remained largely focussed on labour –management relations in the tea industry or may be an odd study on agrarian relations, although the touristic gaze remained trained on Darjeeling all the time. It was only with the outbreak of the Gorkhaland movement in the mid-1980s that a large number of metropolitan/mainstream researchers started taking serious note of the area, its people and their issues.

The important works that come to mind at this juncture immediately are T.B. Subba’s, *Dynamics of Hill Society: The Nepalis of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas* (1989), and, *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement* (1989), also, Nepal and Indian Nepalis, in Kanak Mani edited, *The State in Nepal* (2002). Dyutish Chakrabarty’s, *Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation*, Special Lecture, No. X. Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling,

² For a broad survey of anthropological studies on Nepal and Eastern Himalayas see, James F. Fisher, *The Historical Development of Himalayan Anthropology*, *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol.5, No.1, 1985, pp. 99-111

1988. Amiya Kumar Samanta's, Gorkhaland Movement: A Study in Ethnic Separatism (2000). Manas DasGupta's, The Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling: Some Political and Economic Dimensions (1988), S. K. Chaube's, The Darjeeling Imbroglia: Quest for Solution (1988). Milindo Chakrabarty's, Gorkhaland Agitation in the Light of IRDP Implementation Policies (1988). B.P. Mishra's, Behind Gorkhaland Agitation (1986)³. Some of these studies remain heavily influenced by the official narrative or by economism.

Tanka Bahadur Subba's work on the Gorkhaland agitation remains one of the earliest attempts to study the movement. He looks at the movement from the perspective of theories of ethnicity and argues the fundamental cultural difference between the Nepalis and the majority Bengali community. He says that the Nepalis are the victims of others ignorance and hence the crisis of identity. Dyutish Chakrabarty traces the origin of Gorkhaland movement in the colonial policies with respect to hills. The hills of Darjeeling, as we shall see in detail in subsequent chapters, was placed under various administrative arrangements like 'excluded area', 'partially excluded area' and such like. Milindo Chakrabarty's study shows that the Gorkhaland agitation primarily emerged as a result of the failure of policy implementation in the hills. He takes the case of the implementation of Integrated Rural Development Programme in gram panchayats across hills and concludes that the said programme was implemented most effectively in the Bijanbari block and hence the Bijanbari block largely remained loyal to the ruling party (Left Front) even at the height of GNLFF agitation. B.P. Mishra in his study puts forward an interesting thesis. He says that the eruption of Gorkhaland movement was largely because of 'transferred anger'. He cites the incidents of communal tension in Assam and Meghalaya and the hounding of Nepalis from certain parts of the states. So, for Mishra, Gorkhaland agitation was largely a reaction borne out of sense of insecurity.

³ T. B. Subba, Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement, Har – Anand Publications, 1989, T. B. Subba, Nepal and Indian Nepalis, in Kanak Mani. et. al. (ed.) The State in Nepal, Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2002. Dyutish Chakarabarty, Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation, Special Lecture, No. X. Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1988. Manash DasGupta, The Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling: Some Political and Economic Dimensions, Special Lecture No. IX, Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1988. S. K. Chaube, The Darjeeling Imbroglia: Quest for Solution Paper presented at a Seminar on Land Relation and Problems and Strategies in the Development of the Eastern Himalayas, Centre for Himalayan Studies, March, 1988. Milindo Chakarabarty, Gorkhaland Agitation in the Light of IRDP Implementation Policies, Lecture delivered at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, July, 1988. B. P. Mishra, Behind Gorkhaland Agitation, Mainstream, Vol. 25, No.7, 1986, pp. 15-20

The above studies have looked at Gorkhaland movement and Gorkha nationalism as purely reacting to certain external political and economic factors. Their kind of structural/instrumentalist understanding has traditionally explained away the movement as a reaction to unequal or differential development. And if it is not instrumentalist understanding then the movement is pitched as plain ‘separatism’ or ‘ethnic exclusivism.’ Both the variety of studies suffers from a certain degree of reductionism.

There is, in addition to this, another variety of research which has been emerging from within. This category of scholarship is produced by the Nepali scholars, university professors, and university research students. This group is largely made up of researchers who ply their trade in the vernacular language. The Nepali language is undoubtedly a well-developed language and so are the literary works written in Nepali. The Nepali public sphere which historically first made its appearance in the colonial public sphere in the early twentieth century is in fact a highly developed field. We shall have more to say about this in the pages to follow. But like most scholarships in vernacular languages, Nepali literary scholarship also suffers from poor readership and marketability. The readership issue has nothing to do with the literary merits of these works but there is a general lack of reading culture and rigorous intellectual tradition in Nepali society. The Nepali literary sphere is an invaluable storehouse of the history of the community, containing timeless wisdoms, anecdotes, social histories and narratives. But these remain mostly in circulation within the texts published in Nepali language unless some enterprising person takes the pain of translating them into other languages.⁴

There was also a genre of social science research that came out from Darjeeling which were usually written in English but they lacked theoretical rigour and knowledge about the debates taking place in metropolitan universities. Let us quickly discuss some general characteristics of such scholarships. The academic scholarship coming out from Darjeeling mostly remained a peripheral activity in relation to the metropolitan academic research. The scholarship churned out from Darjeeling thus tended to fare poorly in comparison to the academic titles produced in some of the major universities in India.

⁴ There is now a growing market for a new genre of Nepali writing in English. See, for instance, Prajwal Parajuli, *Gurkha’s Daughter*, Quercus, 2012, Prajwal Parajuli, *Land where I Flee*, Riverrun, 2013. Chetan Raj Shrestha, *The King’s Harvest: Two Novellas*, Aleph Book Company, 2013, Chetan Raj Shrestha, *The Light of his Clan*, Speaking Tree Publishing Private Limited, 2015

At the heart of what such scholarship failed to address is how colonial anthropology trained its gaze on the Gorkha body, subjecting the body to the disciplinary practices. It remained the case even to this day. The academic discourses thus failed to interrogate the dominant forms of representation of the Gorkha identity for too long. While claiming agency, the studies have failed to question the very discourse that produced the narrative underlying such claims. There is some purchase to be had in mobilising the famed ‘Gurkhas’ both in the sense of ensuring a steady employment in the Gorkha regiments as also in packaging it for some touristic consumption apart from the production of nationalist discourse.⁵ But in the strict academic sense, as this work understands it, the real need is to juxtapose this construction of a ‘martial race’ with the post-colonial imagination. The intellectual need to study the racial discourses really arises because the governmental practices of the post-colonial state in relation to the Gorkha community and a host of other tribal and Adivasi communities have not fundamentally altered with the formal end of colonialism. The reality of discursive colonisation is very much there functioning at every level as a stark truth and our academic studies must begin to tackle this without fail.

Another important feature has been the continuing use of categories like ‘Tribe’ and ‘Ethnic’ as signifiers for these groups. The hegemony of the dominant discourse is such that it has become nearly impossible to create an alternative discourse of identity outside the already existing framework.⁶ As a result, any form of academic resistance from the *margins* against the dominant imposition of meanings by the mainstream/metropolitan academia ends up as mere token resistance or internal critique at best. At worst it ends up playing into the hands of the dominant scholarships. A good majority of the works on Nepali identity, it would appear, seem to be innocent of the ways in which their ‘own voice’ gets structured by the ideological apparatuses of the state. The most striking features of these works therefore are their clichéd nature, rendering themselves almost incapable of producing any new meanings and debates. A logical corollary of these works therefore is the complete lack of autonomy in their voice.

⁵ The Trinamool Government ahead of the Assembly election in 2021 declared the instituting of Gorkha battalion in the state police along with Narayani battalion for the Rajbongshis from Coochbehar and Jangalmahal battalion for tribals from central Bengal. See, <https://www.news18.com/news/politics/getting-battle-ready-mamata-announces-3-new-police-battalions-in-bid-to-woo-rajbongshis-gorkhas-and-tribals-3070940.html> (accessed on 18.04.2021)

⁶ It is remarkable to note that only works within the Marxist tradition generally use categories like ‘Nationality’. A casual use of the category is sure to invite epithets like ‘separatist’ by the state.

Given this rather bleak situation the question one must ask now is whether the Nepali scholars have exhausted all possible ways of representing ‘*our*’ case or are there still newer ways of ‘*writing back*’.

Things have, however, changed for the better in the last ten years or so. The developments in the field of knowledge production despite its unequal nature are showing some early signs of taking off. There are a large number of young Nepali scholars coming out from universities who are beginning to display a handle over the skills of how to represent themselves on their own terms. Some notable names in this regard are Vimal Khawas, Binu Sundas, Samar Sinha, Pravesh Jung Golay, Tapasya Thapa, Mona Chhetri, Nilambar Chhetri, and Sangay Tamang.

Nilambar Chhetri’s study on the demand for tribal status by various *janajatis* that together constitute the Nepali community throw some interesting light. He studies the historical process through which the identities were constructed in Darjeeling and then subsequently the discursive strategies used by the ethnic groups in framing their identities are primitive tribals.⁷ Similarly, Sangay Tamang’s study reveals some interesting facts about the everyday negotiation of people of Darjeeling with the state and the political parties. He studies the various ways in which the ethnic groups in Darjeeling imagine, respond and create their own meaning of tribe and how the contestation between the tribal identity and Gorkha identity is played out.⁸

Going back to the earlier point we may add that this new way of writing and representing about oneself, one feels, should necessarily begin with the coming to awareness of the politics of knowledge production. These positive changes, one may perhaps venture to say, is due to changing social dynamism and economic development. At the level of the community the idea of what it means to be a Nepali and the experience of the central contradiction in their lives is no longer confined to a small section of the community, who, for the want of a better term, may be referred to as ‘nationalist elites’. The Nepali sense of beingness and the denial of this beingness outside the cultural boundaries are fast spreading to newer classes within the community. This coming to awareness of the contradiction in the lived experiences of the Nepalis in India seems to

⁷ Nilambar Chhetri, From Jat-Jati to Janajati: Demands for Recognition as Scheduled Tribes and Claims of Indigeneity in Darjeeling, *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 66. No. 1, 2017, pp. 75 - 90

⁸ Sangay Tamang, Becoming Twenty First Century Tribe: Between Gorkha and Tribal Identity in Darjeeling Hills, *Indian Anthropological Association*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (Jan-June 2018), pp. 61-77

be coinciding with the formation of a middle class from the ranks of the hitherto lower-middles class Nepalis.

Perhaps as a reaction to these developments and the growing clamour for the demand of Gorkhaland or may be out of genuine concerns, one can sense some discernible shifts in the interests and attitudes of the political class and the mainstream academia towards the identity question of the Nepalis. There is a general feeling that the question of Nepali identity is far too serious an issue to ignore. And this seriousness and urgency among the mainstream intellectual class and politicians, one suspects, is partly born out of their own sense of guilt for giving a mere token hearing to a very important issue thus far. This is not to suggest that the issue of identity is finally in the process of being resolved. The present study on the Gorkhas and the Gorkhaland movement seeks, however, to locate itself in this very troubled and poised historical juncture in the career of Nepali scholarship. In a modest way, this work hopes to contribute to this growing body of scholarship addressing the question of Nepali identity and Gorkha history. In the process, the study will deploy theoretical as well as analytical tools that postcolonial studies made available in problematising the issue and framing research questions. To this end let us for now turn our attention towards the theoretical developments that have taken place in the area of what may be broadly termed as postcolonial studies.

Postcolonial Studies as a discourse of freedom

Postcolonial studies refer to a wide field of interdisciplinary studies that encompass a wide variety of types of analysis. These analyses are essentially concerned with establishing the relation between the imperial past and the post-colonial present.⁹

As a distinct field of academic inquiry, postcolonial studies could be said to have begun with the publishing of Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978. Using Foucault's theoretical concepts like discourse and discursive formation, Said offered an extensive study of the way in which the 'Orient' has been taught, written about and represented in Europe. Edward Said defines *Orientalism* as a discursive field in which the Occident as a knowing subject comes into contact with the Orient. Orientalism, Said argues, is not simply a geographical entity but a very special place that was once colonised by the Occident. This Orient has always been the cultural Other that has come

⁹ Valerie Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2000. p.111

to shape the European culture and civilisation of the Occident. Orientalism, understood as a system of knowledge about Orient produced by a well-defined corporate body helped in expressing and representing that part culturally and even ideologically. Orientalism is a discursive network whose full power is actualised in the institutional practices, academic writings, cultures and styles of representation.¹⁰ One of the most enduring contributions of Said is his refusal to differentiate between what he calls ‘pure’ and ‘political’ knowledge. For him all forms of writings are political because the author who produces the knowledge is actively involved in his own circumstances.¹¹

The success of Orientalism owes a great deal to the distinctly poststructuralist linguistic turn in Western academia that effectively canonised intellectuals like Derrida and Foucault.¹² But there are many who refuse to take Orientalism as the moment of inauguration of postcolonial studies. Bart Moore Gilbert, for instance, criticizes Said, Bhabha, and Spivak for not giving what is due to Fanon, Achebe, and Ngugi in their works. He argues that *postcolonial criticism*, in what was then known as *Commonwealth Literature*, had undertaken the analysis of colonial systems of representation and cultural description long before Said’s intervention in the field.¹³

Postcolonial theory and of the colonial knowledge system

The word postcolonial is often used loosely in everyday conversation. Since the prefix ‘post’ is used before the word ‘colonial’ gives a sense of periodicity to the term ‘postcolonial’, as something coming after the formal end of colonialism. But we shall be using the word postcolonial in a somewhat different sense. To quote Bhabha; “... the term postcolonial is increasingly used to describe that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West”.¹⁴ Thus postcolonialism is not something that should be understood in the periodic sense and coming after the end of colonialism but as a systematic critique of the epistemic and

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1995. pp.1-3

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp.9-15

¹² Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Understanding*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p.25

¹³ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, Verso, London, 1997, pp.15-16

¹⁴ Quoted in, Padmini Mongia (ed.) *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997. p.1

conceptual legacies that colonial rule has left behind to for the former colonies to contend with.¹⁵

The rise of the literature on postcolonial theory in the Anglo-American academy, can be understood to be participating in two simultaneous projects. One of the aspects of postcolonial scholarship has been to reread the canonical texts of Euro-American literature and to place them in a critical relation to the larger project of imperialism and colonialism. The other aspect of postcolonial theory is labelled as “colonial discourse studies”, an interdisciplinary investigation of not only literary works but also letters, memoranda, diaries, political speeches, legal rulings and other texts written by imperial agents and colonial observers. It is concerned with the literary and cultural production of the *colonised subjects* and their postcolonial inheritors.¹⁶ In sum, postcolonial theory may be defined as a blanket terminology that encompasses within its rubric various critical approaches that seek to unravel the deep imprints that European thought has come to leave behind in the field of political science, anthropology, history, literary studies, etc. Postcolonial theory then stands for a methodological revisionism that offers a critique of relation between Western knowledge and power.¹⁷

The intellectual lineages of postcolonial theory can be said to go back to Nietzsche’s critique of Enlightenment and modernity. Beginning from there, it chiefly rests on the poststructuralist movement in the metropolitan academia. Poststructuralist thought has provided postcolonialism with the theoretical impetus by offering systemic critique of Western civilisation coming out from the West itself. This critique of Western civilisation has been largely possible because the philosophical as well as theoretical insights have shed new light on the true nature of relation between power and knowledge.¹⁸ Furthermore, poststructuralism directs its criticism mainly towards Western humanism which in spite of admitting diversity of human experience believes in a universal and given *human nature* that gets expressed in the common language of rationality. In opposition to this postulate, poststructuralism and postmodernism maintain that there is no such thing as a universal human nature. What is passed off as universal

¹⁵ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, India, 2001, p.12

¹⁶ Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair (ed.), *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, Berg, Oxford International Publishers Ltd., USA, 2005, pp. 3-4

¹⁷ Padmini Mongia, (ed.) *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p.2

¹⁸ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Understanding*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p.25

and hence rational nature derive its emergence to a specific Western epistemology that forecloses the possibility of the validation of otherness and difference.¹⁹ Postcolonialism thus emphasizes on the need to recognize and acknowledge the existence of plural voices and identities that were not granted recognition.²⁰ As a result of this recognition postcolonial theory has collaborated since the 1980s with what is now called ‘new humanities’, such as gay and lesbian studies, women’s studies, and also cultural studies, that have underscored the fact of marginalisation of these knowledges, pointing to the privileging of canonical knowledge systems. Central to the endeavour of the new humanities is their striving to recover subjugated knowledges.²¹

Michel Foucault can be rightfully regarded as one of the pre-eminent representatives of this tradition. Foucault began by rejecting the classical debate between idealists and materialist with regard to primacy of matter or idea. For him, human ideas and knowledge are produced through a definite process of structuring of knowledge which in itself is a function of a certain code of knowledge. This code imposes a certain pattern, which Foucault calls *discourse*. A discourse is essentially a way of representing, describing, classifying, a system of thought. Discourses are inevitably a system of meaning that are deeply implicated in power.

Such a system of meaning and representation are complicit in reinforcing a specific form of social system. Foucault emphasises the point that in every given society discourse is produced and controlled through a specific process. This process then guards the discourse against any possible challenge from other forms of knowledge systems. Discourses essentially play a crucial role in eliminating other means and forms of representation in a society.²² A discourse does not consist of one statement, but of several statements which combine to form a discursive formation. A discourse is thus a combination of diverse statements. There is an intimate relation between discourse and practice. The practice that emanates from a discourse is called discursive practice. So, a

¹⁹ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Understanding*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p.27

²⁰ Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Interrogating Postcolonialism*, in Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.), *Interrogating Post-colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla 1996. p.4

²¹ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Understanding*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p.42

²² Quoted in, Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, India, 2001, p.74

discourse and discursive practice are mutually reinforcing.²³ Furthermore, discourses are open systems, drawing elements from other discourses, knitting them together into a meaningful arrangement. As stated earlier, a discursive formation represents a combination of diverse statements. Even though the statements are diverse, the diversity is not random. They are, in fact, systematic. Foucault chose to refer to it as 'systems of dispersion'.²⁴

Foucault's seminal contribution lie in showing the very complex operation of power in the way knowledge has come to be constituted in modern society). He famously declared that knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power. He argued s that knowledge emerges through a discourse and is thus connected with power. The practices of that knowledge in its turn then makes possible of circulation of power in society. Foucault is principally concerned with knowledges that helped to discipline human beings in modern society. He calls them the human sciences. When the knowledge designed to discipline human conduct is practiced the result of such practice is the direct subjection of human beings. Such a practice almost always creates a power relation as power has the potential to create its own regimes of truth.²⁵ Foucault's powerful insights provided the theoretical frame for Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* and host of other such studies that have proved the connection between discourse, representation and subjection. Postcolonial studies have since then led to new ways of investigation, opening up a whole new perspective for looking at colonialism and the operation of the technologies of power in a colonial situation. A wide array of interdisciplinary research in the field literary studies, feminist studies, area studies, history and anthropology have been profoundly influenced by poststructuralist theoretical concepts and modes of analysis. The emphasis of postcolonial studies on understanding the operations of cultural domination through literary studies has, however, often been criticized as replacing material politics with textual politics.

But this is not wholly true. Making a case for the theoretical richness of the textual, Tiffin and Lawson argue that imperial relations may have long been founded through brute force of military might, deception and guile, but they were replaced by a more hideous method of control in the form of textual knowledge designed towards

²³ Stuart Hall, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (ed.), *Formations of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992. p.291

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.292

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp.294-295

subjection. Nicholas Dirks similarly argues that the only way colonialism could sustain itself for so long was mainly because colonial power began to rely more on cultural technologies of rule.²⁶ Postcolonial studies have thereafter gone on to scale new heights with the intervention of third world scholars particularly from India, some of which we touch upon below.

Postcolonial theory and the critique of liberal nationalist historiography of colonial India

The contours of social science research in India have been redefined by Postcolonial studies in a major way.²⁷ The lasting impact of this influence has been the founding of the *Subaltern Studies* collective. Initiated in 1982 with the publication of the first volume, *Subaltern Studies* marks an important event with regard to the writing of history of colonial India which up till that point was dominated by liberal and Marxist historians. Ranajit Guha, perhaps the most influential theorist of the group, criticized the historiography of colonial India for two kinds of elitism- colonial elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism, in a seminal essay. “Both these varieties of elitism”, according to him, “share the prejudices that the making of Indian nation and the development of the consciousness–nationalism–which informed this process, were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements.”²⁸

Another absolutely critical insight offered by Guha was the problem of incomplete transition of India into capitalism. His main contention was not that India is not at all connected to global capitalism but it was that capitalism does not produce the same history of power everywhere.²⁹ Guha called this particular configuration of power as dominance without hegemony – a phrase that has become famous thereafter. It refers to the historic role of Indian bourgeoisie, who unlike the western European counterparts, failed to bring about a complete bourgeois democratic revolution and hence can be seen

²⁶ Nicholas B. Dirks, Foreword, in Bernard S. Cohn’s, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002. p. IX

²⁷ For a detailed overview on the changing nature of social science research in India see, Sarah Joseph’s, *Interrogating Culture: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Social Theory*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997

²⁸ Ranajit Guha, On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India, in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982.p.1

²⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, A Small History of Subaltern Studies, in his, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 12-13

to exercise s dominance but not necessarily hegemony over the subaltern groups.³⁰ This results in a kind of modernity that is at once limited and incomplete, in which only a small section of the people, viz the elites, become full members of the arena created by the liberal democratic state, while large section of the population remain outside this elite domain, forming a distinct domain of subaltern politics. The subaltern classes, subjected as they were to exploitation, produced in turn their own mode of resistance to elite domination. Their mode of resistance was often endowed with idioms, norms and values that were quite different from elite politics.³¹

In this way, one might say, the Subaltern Studies collective truly acknowledged the explanatory potential of the analytical category of ‘subaltern’ used by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci had used the term ‘subaltern’ to explain the nature of relation between the dominant and the dominated in the realm of superstructure. This form of subordination was mainly in terms of gender, language, culture, and class.³² The Subaltern studies, seen to practice as a methodology of writing history, focussed on the figure of the subaltern, who, they argued, was constructed by the discourse of domination produced by the liberal nationalist and colonialist historiography. As a methodology, the subaltern studies sought to engage in an oppositional reading of the elite accounts of history and then unravel the world of the subaltern in terms of their ideologies, revolts, myths that the elite history appropriated as part of nationalist movement.³³

Rosalind O’ Hanlon has wonderfully summed up the central project of Subaltern Studies. She says that it aims to show the possibility of resisting the dominant modes of history writing that emerged in the West. Appropriating the non-Western world as its favoured location, the Subaltern Studies took up the cause of the dispossessed within this world by seeking to fully understand the particular forms of subjectivity of the subalterns that dominant historiographies appropriated. This has meant an extended engagement with the identification of forms of power in the fields and relations far removed from the domain of the political as we primarily understand it, such as colonialism’s production of

³⁰ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony and Its History*, in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies Vol. VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 20-23

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6

³² Gyan Prakash, *Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism*, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No.5, December, 1994. p. 1477

³³ Gyan Prakash, *Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography*, in Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (ed.) *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1995. p.88

new forms of knowledge of South Asian societies. Furthermore, it tries to engage itself in different ways of conceptualizing the nature of resistance and possibilities in a deeply coercive social context'.³⁴

The Subaltern Studies was primarily concerned with studying colonial discourse and its impact on the colonised, the relation between knowledge and domination, nationalism and the Indian nation-state. It has been their argument that the idea of 'history' is primarily the result of British colonialism. History and colonialism, as Gyan Prakash argues, came into being in India together. And when India became part of universal history, the past was rendered invisible by the Universal History.³⁵ Elsewhere, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that writing 'history' is a relatively recent innovation in Indian culture. While admitting the tradition of chronicling by court historians and some identifiable and vigorous practices of producing mythographies of various kinds, a modern and secular sense of history, he says, was something the British brought to the subcontinent.³⁶ Guha also remarks that 'history' was not a spiritual gift pressed by British liberalism on India for the benefit of the natives; rather the writing of history of India by the British as backward and uncivilised precisely provided the moral justification of colonial rule.³⁷

Postcolonial studies and Subaltern Studies have mainly concentrated on critiquing colonial discourse and history writing, and the way it has come to invade the epistemological world of the colonised. Ania Loomba remarks that "colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge. No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience. The process was somewhat like the functioning of ideology itself, simultaneously a misrepresentation of reality and its reordering."³⁸

Research problem

The initial pages of the introduction have sought to foreground the nature of knowledge production from different sites and locations on the question of Nepali identity and the

³⁴ Rosalind O' Hanlon, Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia, in, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.22. No. 1, 1988, pp.190

³⁵ Gyan Prakash, Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography, in Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (ed.) *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.97.

³⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, History as Critique and Critique(s) of History, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXVI, No.37. Sept, 14th, 1991, p.2162

³⁷ Quoted in Dipesh Chakrabarty (Ibid), p.2163

³⁸ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, India, 2001, p.57

Gorkhaland movement. This was necessary to provide an adequate background for understanding the problem of Nepali identity. The idea of a Gorkha/Nepali is as much a function of the Nepali nationalist discourse as it is a product of the pedagogical construction taking place in institutional sites. Even with regard to the production and articulation of the nationalist discourse there is clearly a problem of 'autonomy'. The lack of autonomy here essentially means that the huge body of colonial discourse has provided a basis for the self-construction of Nepali identity. So, there is a real problem of the discursive colonization of the Nepalis. The study thus underscores the need to engage with Nepali historiography. To start with, the historical works on Gorkhas have not made a serious attempt to engage with the fact of colonialism. There is a certain degree of obsession with it in the sense that the local historians have inevitably quoted from them liberally and with a certain degree of gullibility. In this way, the Vansittarts, the Hookers, and the O' Malleyes have indeed served as the authors of purportedly authentic and canonical texts for writing of the history of Darjeeling and the its people. As a result, the native voice has unfortunately tended to be more often than not a mere caricature of the colonial and now metropolitan voice. The more unsettling upshot from our perspective is that such a brand of historical writing endorses the idealized and orientalised identity as the self-identity. Edward Said put this point succinctly when he said that the Orient got Orientalised not necessarily because it was found to be 'Oriental' but because it could be made Oriental.³⁹ As we shall see, the curious case of the Company Gorkha is not very different in spirit, with the addendum that the Gorkha was not only discursively but also materially reconstructed in the process of colonization.

The present study will seek to engage this historical process in a limited way in trying to discover the particular forms of subjectivity of the Gorkhas that lie s hidden beneath the universalizing history of the nation. The study will undertake an oppositional reading of the colonial writings, choosing to closely read a representative sample, with the hope to liberate the figure of the Gorkha from the effects of power created by the practices of anthropological knowledge produced on the Gorkhas.

Then there is the spatial history of Darjeeling, which is so rich in terms of its fluidity, overlapping boundaries and the fact that Darjeeling was a frontier zone. But there seems to be very little mention of this fact save highlighting them as narrative

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 5-6

details. The present study shall try to locate the spatial history of Darjeeling in the broader colonial policy on frontiers and borders and the way the colonial policies have come to frame the people in these zones as ‘primitive’, ‘martial’, ‘warlike’, ‘barbaric’, ‘savage’ and what not. The historical and other writings emerging from Darjeeling have accepted the fact of nation and boundaries as something given. Instead of critically engaging with these hegemonic ideas as constructions and the violence it has inflicted on the people, the intellectuals in Darjeeling and elsewhere very often find themselves trapped in a twisted logic of citizenship of Nepalis in India. The fact remains that the Gorkha/Nepalis can do nothing about the hyphenated nature of their identity. This very fact of the people being hyphenated seems, however, to be a perennial source of anxiety and trepidation. As a result, the academic discourses in Darjeeling keep churning out terms like *Bharatiya-Gorkhali*, *Bhargoli*, or India-Nepalis. The aim of this study will be to move away from such anxieties and explore an open horizon of possibilities for the Nepalis of Darjeeling as subjects on their own rights.

Methodology and Objectives

The study will delve into the Gorkha history to explore the nature and dynamics of British colonial encounter. The Gorkha identity, we will try to argue, is the product of the discursive practices of British colonialism. In trying to study and unravel the meanings of signs and symbols of this identity, the study will undertake a detailed and thorough analysis of the colonial discourse and a large gamut of Orientalist writings. It will also carry out an extensive survey of literary sources and other forms of narratives available both in Darjeeling and in Nepal. It will undertake a detailed study of the native writings and see whether there are instances of oppositional reading and other forms of resistance. One of the objectives of the study is to provide persuasive evidence of the continuation of the colonial discourse in the production of knowledge about the community. The task of exposing this epistemic violence involves a thorough deconstructive reading of the texts emanating both from the West as well as from the mainstream academia. A logical extension of this project would mean undertaking the task of interrogating the dominant forms of historiography and representation. The goal of this study is partly to reveal how marginal communities, in particular their history, remain colonised by the liberal nationalist discourse. Furthermore, this research aims to offer a critique of the postcolonial states in general and particularly its subjugation of the micro narratives of

the numerous communities within the nation. In other words, in some sense the study espouses the cause of the subaltern project of reclaiming the subjugated history and space, and provide s a non-statist history of the Gorkha community. The study will conclude by making observations on the future of Gorkha identity in India.

Plan of Study

The present study has six chapters that includes Introduction and Conclusion. The Introduction will take the recent upsurge in 2017 as the background for the study. It will then survey a range of governmental, ethnographic and cultural discourses on Gorkha identity and movement and seek to locate them within the broader academic discourses. The Introduction will also foreground the nature of unequal relation in terms of academic production between the vernacular and metropolitan scholarship. We will try to identify certain lacunae in the vernacular scholarship in the sense that they have, despite forwarding seminal insights, have nonetheless failed to critically question the discourses that have served as the basis of construction of Gorkha identity. The Introduction will also foreground the broad discussion on the theoretical framework as well as categories that will be deployed in the study. Finally, the Introduction will lay down the research questions for the study to answer.

Chapter I is titled, ‘History of Darjeeling: Space, Territory and People’. This chapter will try to foreground the peculiar spatial and social history of Darjeeling as a frontier of the British empire as well as a fluid zone of overlapping ethnic and cultural boundaries. Using contemporary social theories of space and identity, we shall seek to understand the overlapping boundaries in Darjeeling with various narratives and incidents. The chapter shall try to understanding the spatial imagination that subsumes large parts of the Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Darjeeling. The chapter will also try to map the process of cartographic mapping and the production of a modern spatial imagination that overwrote sacred geographies. We will seek to show how with modern boundaries the mobile people came to live settled lives and once the settled in Darjeeling they came to be known as ‘Nepali diaspora’ or ‘*Munglane*’. We will then show how this production of a Nepali diaspora resulting out of modern cartography and colonial boundaries is at the heart of the ‘identity crisis’ of the Nepalis in Darjeeling.

Chapter II is titled, 'The "Brave" Gurkha: A Study of the Colonial Discourse on "Martial" Race'. This Chapter studies the emergence and the formation of the Gurkha identity built around the idea of "martial race" in colonial India and more particularly in Darjeeling. This is followed by the study of a substantial volume of colonial writings on the 'Gurkhas'. The purpose of the study of the detailed discourse on 'martial race' is to look at how a bio-political framing of the 'martial race' took place. It tries to underscore in the process the production of metaphysics around the body of the Gurkha through the 'martial race' discourse. The chapter relies heavily on the ideas forwarded by Michel Foucault on the emergence of new form of power targeted towards the body. With the continuation of such framing by the postcolonial state we see how these techniques become more intense with the increasing governmentalisation of state.

Chapter III is titled, 'The Emergence of the Gurkha Community: Colonial Public Sphere and the Nepali Nationalist Discourse'. This Chapter primarily maps the emergence of a modern sense of community among the Gurkhas in the context of the colonial public sphere in Darjeeling. As we shall see, this process takes place simultaneously with the penetration of colonial power. The chapter describes how this involves the transformation of semi-nomadic primitive tribes into a drilled and disciplined army on the one hand, and the selection and metamorphosis of certain parts of the population into proto-wage labourers in the tea gardens. Having set up this background, the discussion tracks the production of the Gurkha/Nepali nationalist discourse through the cultural productions. This is a process that took a much longer time as a new middle class emerged among the Nepali community sometime in the first decades of twentieth century. This chapter borrows theoretical insights provided in the writings of Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Joshi, and Udaya Kumar among others. Towards the end of the chapter there is an attempt to offer a critique of the nationalist discourse as being ambivalent and hence lacking emancipatory potential. The chapter will also engage with subaltern writings in Nepali literature and see if the subaltern turn represents a radical break in the Nepali nationalist discourse.

Chapter IV is titled, 'Gorkhaland Movement and the Question of Nationality and Citizenship'. This chapter principally deals with the assertion of Gurkha identity in the form of the movement for the separate state of Gorkhaland. We trace the origin of the assertion of this distinctness not just in the objective factors of race and language but also

in the British colonial policies with regard to the region. The chapter thus seeks to demonstrate how the British policy on ‘hills’ and ‘plains’ laid down the foundation for the political discourse in the hills of Darjeeling. The discussion then goes on to provide details, and the broad outline, about the trajectory of the movement through its different phases. Using the insights made available by Partha Chatterjee, the chapter has shown how the developments that began from 1920s signal a nationalist movement. The chapter concludes with narrating the latest phase of the movement in some detail, juxtaposing the phenomenon of ethnic revivalism with the penetration of the governmental apparatus in the hills, as paradoxically related developments.

Finally, the Conclusion tries to provide the overall summary of the study and then makes an attempt to study the identity movement in its latest phase. We witness the current intersections at which the Nepali identity is renegotiating its engagement with the state as governmental subjects. This turning of governmental subjects from autonomous subjects is creating new ethnicities in the form of revivalist movements. We look at the future of the Gorkha identity mainly in terms of the contestation between the collective identity and the plural identities of the ethnic groups. Finally, we argue that there is no such threat to the larger collective identity but the community must brace for new set of contradictions emerging out of the penetration of neoliberal economic regimes that will produce new types of essentialised identities draws them closer to Nepal even though the political movements have largely sought to claim an identity that is distinct from the Nepalese of Nepal. Further, we shall dwell on the future of the Gorkha identity, on the true nature of postcolonial agency of the Gorkha. We will try to make some salutary observations about the way the spatial region should be imagined perhaps with an intent to rewrite modern cartography.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF DARJEELING: SPACE, TERRITORY AND PEOPLE

Around the same time the English of South Asian and Caribbean descent faced the ‘Tebbit Test’ in England, the people of Darjeeling too underwent through a similar test. Except that there was no equivalent of the British Conservative Party, or a certain Mr. Tebbit to make such pronouncements here. But it was a test nonetheless. But let us take a quick detour before we come back to that specific moment. Darjeeling had through the late 1960s, 70s and early 80s established itself as one of the favourite ‘Hill Stations’ for tourists and casual visitors. It was, and still is, a must visit place in the travel itinerary of Western tourists and domestic travellers alike. The town is perched along the ridge that overlooks a vast valley with the magnificent Kanchanjunga on the north. No wonder the hill station was a much sought-after location for the Bollywood directors those days.¹

Darjeeling was many things to many people. Most of all Darjeeling also served as the ‘Hill Station’ for the British. Among the vestiges of the British rule is the ‘Governor’s House’, a sprawling bungalow, showcasing colonial architecture, located on the northern end of the Mall Road. In keeping with the imperial splendour, the Gurkha personnel serving in the British Army instituted a football tournament called, ‘The All-India Brigade of Gurkha Gold Cup’ or simply “Gold Cup” in 1975. The annual tourney attracted some of the top football clubs like the Calcutta based Mohun Bagan, East Bengal, including foreign teams from neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan. The year was 1984. The pre-tournament favourite East Bengal met with a relatively unheralded Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) team in the finals. The RNAC team was led by the young talismanic striker Ganesh Thapa whose genius and skill on the football field had endeared himself to the football enthusiasts in Darjeeling in the lead up to the finals. No sooner that the ball was kicked into play than the local supporters shed all inhibitions to support the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation team. The East Bengal players were bemused to say the very least. They now had to suddenly deal with a partisan crowd

¹ A leading English daily published from Darjeeling puts a catchy title: “Bollywood Back in Darjeeling”, *The Telegraph*, Siliguri, 11.06.2011.(<https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/bollywood-back-in-darjeeling/cid/383294>) Also see, “Bollywood Laps Up Darjeeling Again: Queen of Hills Goes Gaga as Stars Hit the Streets”, *The Telegraph*, Siliguri, 16.06.2011 (<https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/bollywood-laps-up-darjeeling-again-queen-of-hills-goes-gaga-as-stars-hit-the-street/cid/387683>)

whom they thought would anyway support the home club against a foreign team. This particular event can be read as the ‘Tebbit’ moment for the people of Darjeeling. Needless to say that the RNAC team lifted the trophy handing defeat to the Calcutta club that year. In the same year East Bengal signed up Ganesh Thapa.

The history of Darjeeling is quite unlike the history of other ‘Hill Stations’ in India in the sense that unlike other hill stations, Darjeeling was located right at the edge of the British frontier. As a result, Darjeeling has always remained the bearer of ‘doubleness’. It is the bearer of overlapping boundaries of histories, cultures and identities. This fact came into sharp relief when this researcher visited the Nepalese Embassy situated at the Barakhamba Road, New Delhi, during the initial years of research. Upon entering the researcher was told to meet the Second Secretary for the necessary permission to access the library. The gentleman was very warm and offered tea. One never felt that the embassy was that of a foreign country. It was indeed easy to break into conversation quite effortlessly – effortlessly because it was in our mother tongue - and in the course of the conversation it turned out that the Second Secretary’s native place was no more than thirty kilometres away from this researcher’s home in the border town of Pashupati in Nepal. It was so close and yet very far. Such personal experiences have generated a deep interest in the history of Darjeeling in this researcher’s mind.

The spatial region comprising the mid hills or *pahad* starting from far west of present-day Nepal all the way to the borders of present-day Bhutan represents a space that had always been a fluid zone for a population that was continuously moving from one end to the other. Novels like *Naya Chhitijko Khoj* (In Search of New Horizon) have richly documented this nomadic life of the people across the borders and frontiers.² If one visits the ‘Observatory Hill’ or *Mahakal Dara* just above Chowrashta, the famous promenade in the town, then we get to see a temple with a Buddhist monk seated on the right and a Hindu priest seated opposite him propitiating the *Mahakal Baba*. It is said that the King of Nepal and the King of Sikkim contested each other’s claim of suzerainty over the place and hence the presence of the monk and priest. The nomadic nature of life of the people living in the *pahad* had produced an imaginative geography that was at once

² Asit Rai, *Naya Chhitijko Khoj* (In Nepali), Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1984

sacred and holy. Tribal forms of worship consisted of propitiating nature gods, rivers, a tree or a hillock.³ But all this changed with the coming of the British in Darjeeling.

The political history of Darjeeling is more or less well documented; at least the history after 1835, the year British East India Company took over from the Maharaja of Sikkim. Even so, the historical works that are there seem to overlook some crucial aspects. For starters, let us of hope that those practicing their trade on Gorkha/Nepali studies concede that the body of knowledge produced as history of Darjeeling has not passed the rigour and test of most advanced methods of history writing. Let us, for instance, take the analytical category of colonial governmentality in understanding the evolution of modern power in colonial context. One cannot recall works that have used such a framework to write the history of the region. Similar is the case with the writing of social history. One can rarely come across terminologies like colonial modernity, leave alone the efforts to trace their imprints in Nepali social and cultural life.⁴ To recognize this lack is to begin to study the history of Darjeeling as the history of ‘modern regime of power’.

The study of ‘colonial governmentality’ as actualized in Darjeeling should ideally be the starting point for any study of the region and the people. One of the most important features of the colonial governmentality was the use of modern technologies of rule in Darjeeling. Mapping and cartography, census and objectification of “tribes” as also the production of space in terms of its administrative and official categorization led to fundamental changes in the self-conceptualization of the people and the space they inhabited. As a result, one significant change came in the way the people who up until now had led nomadic lives. Mapping was effectively a cartographic incision that produced borders in the hitherto seamless zone. Thus, nomadic life now gave way to a more sedentary life as the free movement of people came to be regulated and policed. The need for ‘Hill Coolies’ for building the summer retreat meant that more labour force comprising specific tribes needed to be stationed permanently in Darjeeling. This resulted in creating settlement for coolies and their families. This segment of population

³ Even to this day people in Darjeeling offer animal sacrifice at the meeting point of rivers Teesta and Rangit in the month of *Maagh*.

⁴ A latest title on the history of Darjeeling has made a decent attempt but it fails to bring together the various coordinates in a single narrative. See, Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.) *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018

brought with them a new technology of cultivation called ‘terraced cultivation’.⁵ Terraced cultivation is a sedentary agricultural practice that was quite different from shifting cultivation traditionally practiced by the Lepchas.

Furthermore, the production of frontiers and boundaries led to a reconfiguration of the space that now threatened to overwrite the sacred geographies. As a result, the people who now started to live a sedentary life in Darjeeling became the Nepali diaspora. The Nepali diaspora who made Darjeeling their home began to be referred to as *Munglane* or those living in the land of Mughals. This production of Nepali diaspora resulting out of modern cartography and mapping is at the heart of the ‘identity crisis’ of the Nepalis in Darjeeling. There are no readymade answers to the questions on identity and citizenship nor are there any readymade solutions. The pre-colonial and colonial past has always remained contested and so will the future of Nepalis in India. It is to these very important questions that we will now turn our attention to.

Darjeeling is predominantly a hill district situated at the northern most tip of West Bengal. The legacy of colonial rule, the magnificent bungalows in the town, the Planters Club as also the Gymkhana and the numerous schools modelled after British public schools and the culture has still lingered on long after the British left the shores of India. The famous tea gardens are every visitor’s delight. It occupies, strategically speaking, a very important position. On the western part lies Nepal and, in the east, lies Bhutan. In the north of its borders is Sikkim, which until its incorporation into the Indian Union in 1975 was a sovereign monarchy.

The word Darjeeling is supposed to have been derived from the words *Dorje* and *Ling*. Many historical accounts suggest that there use to be a monastery on the Observatory Hill under the charge of a certain Lama named Dorje. The Lama, responsible to the Durbar of Sikkim had the specific duty of collecting taxes from a ‘population of hundred souls’ living in and around the monastery. Thus, *Dorje-Ling* at that time meant village governed by Dorje. The same name was later extended to the

⁵ T. B. Subba, Socio-Cultural Aspects of Sikkim: Chie Nakane Re-Examined, *Man in India*, Vol. 65. No. 1, March, 1985, pp. 103-104

whole district when the British annexed it in 1850.⁶ The total area of Darjeeling at present consists of a total area of 3149 square kilometres.

Early history

The early history of Darjeeling remains contested as there are very scarce written documents. But there is an abundance of stories and anecdotes about the Lepchas, Rais, and Limbus moving seamlessly between the mid hills of present Nepal and furthest to the present-day Sikkim. Among the many gifts of colonialism to the ‘barbarians’ and the ‘uncivilised’ was a written account of their history. When colonialism expanded and set foot in the hills of Darjeeling, they also gifted us our history. So what we read as ‘History of Darjeeling’ is some kind of an assortment of writings by British botanists, naturalist, travel writers, and also by what Susan Bayly calls ‘scholar-officials.’⁷ There are rarely any works that have dealt directly with the political status of Darjeeling prior to the Treaty of Sugauli. (1815).⁸ Worse still, there are no authoritative accounts of the history of settlement. One of the possible reasons is because Darjeeling did not have an independent political existence. Since it was a part of Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim at various points, the history of Darjeeling has to be gleaned from the histories of these three kingdoms. Thus, labels like “no man’s land” were coined during the Gorkhaland movement in the mid-1980s. This uncertainty has in the process led to the creation of a hyphenated identity in the form of Indian-Nepalis or Indian – Gorkhas.

The Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-1816)

The fragments culled out from the official discourse inform us that what is today the district of Darjeeling was originally part of the Kingdom of Sikkim. Around the year 1706 the part of Kalimpong which is now a district was won over by the Bhutanese King. Again, in the year 1780, the King of Sikkim waged an unsuccessful war with the Kingdom of Nepal where the Gurkhas had already established hegemony over other principalities. The Gurkhas controlled Sikkim for the next thirty years and came as close

⁶ E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835*, Printed and Published at The Art Press, 1, Wellington Square, Calcutta, 1916, pp.37-38

⁷ See Susan Bayly, “Caste and Race in Colonial Ethnography”, in Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 165-218

⁸ See Appendix I

as the banks of river Teesta while capturing the foothills. In the meanwhile, the Anglo-Gurkha War broke out.⁹

Darjeeling's political status prior to the Treaty of Sugauli (1815) was characterized by uncertainty. All the territories of present-day Darjeeling prior to the war against Nepal in 1788 belonged to Sikkim. This war was not a one-off incident. The war was a natural fallout of the policy Nepal had vis-à-vis Tibet. Monopolization of trade routes to Tibet had always been the state policy of Nepal. In fact, the treaty following the war between Nepal and Tibet in 1775 had stipulated that Tibet would trade only through routes in Nepal. But in 1784 Tibet opened a trade route through the Chumbi Valley leading to Sikkim. It therefore appeared a strategic imperative for Nepal to enter into a war with Sikkim to protect its commercial and strategic interests. The war in 1788 saw the Gorkhali soldiers come inward as far as Rabdentse, the then capital of Sikkim. As Kumar Pradhan informs us, a column of the Gorkhalis had entered deep into Chongtong, a place now falling in Darjeeling. The invading Gorkha forces also stationed themselves at Darjeeling and Nagari.¹⁰ The frontiers of Nepal by the turn of century thus extended thirteen hundred miles from the river Sutlej in the west and all the way up to river Teesta in the east.¹¹

But before long Nepal had to fight another war against the British in 1814. This war following a boundary dispute along the thirteen hundred miles stretch in the south of Nepal ended with the capitulation of Nepal. Since Sikkim had helped the British in their war efforts, it demanded the restoration of the pre-1788 boundary with Nepal. The Treaty signed thereafter between Nepal and British East India Company led to the permanent demarcation of the frontiers of Nepal. Nepal had to forgo all the territories lying west of river Mahakali and all the territories lying east of river Mechi. Even though Nepal's territory was reduced, the British did not return those territories which Sikkim legitimately claimed as its own. The territory lying between Mechi and Teesta (the territory which now forms Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri sub-division of the Darjeeling district) was returned back to Sikkim through the Treaty of Titaliya¹² signed

⁹ A.J. Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p. 37

¹⁰ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, pp.131-134

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.152

¹² See Appendix II

between Sikkim and the Company on February 10th 1817.¹³ The treaty also, among other things, stipulated that Sikkim would hereafter submit to the arbitration of the Company any dispute between Sikkim and Nepal. The two treaties thus laid down the foundations for British hegemony in this part of India.¹⁴

But peace did not last long between the two Kingdoms. Disputes and differences arose when Nepal tried to help the Lepchas rebel against the Bhutia king of Sikkim. The relations were further aggravated following a boundary dispute concerning river Mechi and Sidhi Khola.¹⁵ Sikkim as per article three of the Treaty of Titaliya reported the matter to the British for arbitration. Accordingly, in 1828 General Lloyd and the Commercial Resident of Malda Mr. J. W. Grant was sent for arbitration. On their way to Rinchinpong, now in Nepal, they saw the hills of Darjeeling from Chungthung. L.S.S. O'Malley quotes a report by H. V. Bayley, 1838, in which Lloyd is supposed to have claimed to have been 'the only European who ever visited the place'.¹⁶ It turned out that Lloyd had paid a visit to the "old Goorkha (sic) station"¹⁷ called Darjeeling" and spent six days in February 1829, and was impressed by the usefulness of the land and by its being well adapted for the purpose of a sanatorium.¹⁸ Lloyd, in his representations to the Governor General Lord William Bentick, highlighted the strategic value of the place as the region appeared to him as the gateway to Bhutan and Nepal. Lord William Bentick, in turn, deputed Capt. Herbert, then Deputy Surveyor General along with Mr. Grant to explore the possibilities of establishing a sanatorium at Darjeeling.

Following a positive assessment from the two officers, the Court of Directors approved the project with the motive of establishing a military cantonment for the British Army. Accordingly, General Lloyd opened negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim. The negotiation led to the signing of the deed of grant by the King of Sikkim on 1st February, 1835.

¹³ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991 p.156

¹⁴ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, p.142

¹⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar* (In Nepali), Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, p.18

¹⁶ L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.20

¹⁷ The "station" is at a place called Bhanjyang, some nine kilometres away from Darjeeling town.

¹⁸ L.S.S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.20

This oft-quoted text of grant reads the following way:

“ The Governor- General having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkimputte 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 Rangit river, and west of the Rungno and Mahanudi rivers”.¹⁹

The historian Tanka Bahadur Subba has, however, rejected this official version with regard to the handing of Darjeeling²⁰ over to the British. He calls this entire episode ‘a mysterious story’. He has brought to the fore some glaring discrepancies in the events leading to the execution of the deed of grant. He records that it was on January 23rd 1835 that a proposal was first passed to send Major Lloyd “to open negotiations with the Sikkim Rajah for the transfer of Darjeeling to the British Government.” Lloyd first met the Rajah on the banks of Teesta on February 12th 1835. But he first made a written request only on February 19th 1835. Following the request, the Rajah had granted the permission to build houses and in no case did the Rajah ever intend to part with Darjeeling. When the British Government became aware of the unwillingness of the Rajah in meeting their request, the Council sent an order to Lloyd on June 15th, 1835 directing him to abstain from urging any further negotiations with the King. Surprisingly, Lloyd on October 31st 1835 wrote back saying that he had acquired the grant of Darjeeling exactly as he desired and that it was in his possession. So the mystery remains as to how could Lloyd obtain a deed dated 1st February 1835 when he made a formal request for the first time only on February. ²¹

Notwithstanding this fact, the Britishers went ahead with their plan. Shortly, in 1836, General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman visited Darjeeling to assess the feasibility of establishing a military cantonment and setting up a summer retreat for European officers. The two officers spent the latter part of 1836 and the summer of 1837 and submitted a

¹⁹ A.J. Dash, Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, pp.37-38

²⁰ Darjeeling used to be referred to as ‘British Sikkim’ in official documents and correspondences.

²¹ Tanka Bahadur Subba, Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp.34-36

favourable report. Accordingly, General Lloyd was appointed Local Agent to oversee new settlements.²²

It is said that when General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman reached Darjeeling they found the place was barely inhabited save few huts built by the King of Sikkim, in which they 'spent a night shivering with cold, without food or bedding'. Elsewhere, there is a reference to a report by Dr. Campbell who as the Superintendent of Darjeeling claimed to have encouraged 'immigration' from Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and thereby raised the population which was no more than hundred people in 1839 to about ten thousand in 1849.²³ Not surprisingly, those who are currently opposed to the Gorkhaland movement, particularly in the plains of North Bengal, and elsewhere have latched on to such contentious descriptions in the "official documents" to drive home the point that Darjeeling was indeed thinly populated and "migration" of Nepalis from Nepal took place with the settlement of British in Darjeeling.

The historian Kumar Pradhan, a local historian has, however, rejected this version of the history of Darjeeling, which has been taken as an 'authoritative account'. In his '*Pahilo Pahar*', he points out that when Campbell reported that the population was not more than hundred souls he was referring to the places in and around the Observatory Hill or at the most to the present day Darjeeling town. This is so because what the British had got as Darjeeling in 1835 was a narrow strip of land comprising not more than 138 sq. miles. This excluded places like Poolbazar, Sukhiapokhari, Mirik, Siliguri, and Kalimpong (Kalimpong until 1865 was under Bhutan).²⁴ He has dismissed most of the subsequent gazetteers as they have taken Campbell's report as the basis and taken the figure alluded by him to be the population of not just of Darjeeling town but that of the entire Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong and Siliguri sub-division.²⁵ Many believe that there is merit in Kumar Pradhan's argument because they argue that Darjeeling Municipality was established in the year 1850 and the police stations and prisons in Darjeeling were set up around the same time.

In a similar vein Pratap Chandra Pradhan has also tried to show that there were much earlier settlements. Referring to, what he calls 'untold history', he says there are

²² L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.21

²³ Ibid, p.22

²⁴ See, Appendix III

²⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar* (In Nepali), Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, pp. 19-20

enough archaeological evidences to show that there were Mongoloid Nepalis living in these parts. There are also other evidences, which lend credence to the theory that there was a Magar Kingdom in this place.²⁶ J.D. Hooker has also written about the presence of Magars in Sikkim. To quote Hooker: “[...] the Magars, a tribe now confined to Nepal west of river Arun, are aborigines of Sikkim, whence they were driven by the Lepchas westward into the country of the Limbus, and by these latter further west still”.²⁷ Many others have argued that the name Magarjung, a place in Darjeeling, comes from the word Magar. But this is not to deny that eastward movement or for that matter large-scale settlement did not take place in Darjeeling subsequently. But to call Darjeeling ‘a destitute of inhabitants’ certainly appears to be an over exaggeration. Even while admitting that large parts of the region was covered by dense forests there are enough indications confirming the settlements of Limbus and Lepchas. More importantly, the large-scale eastward movement, which is seen as the product of the British policy had been happening long before the British set their foot in these parts. There are also anecdotal accounts of how the Nepalis used to run away or climb trees and hide when the British enumerators came down to their villages. The veracity of the stories cannot possibly be established but the argument nonetheless sounds plausible in the light of Cohn’s argument that it was basically the educated and literate sections of the people who actively participated in the census process and made it a success.²⁸

British territorial expansion in Darjeeling

It is quite clear from the representations of Capt. Lloyd to the Governor General that the Britishers were enthralled by Darjeeling not just on account of its cool climate alone. Other than the climate Darjeeling was to serve their strategic and trade interests. So it was quite natural that they would not remain content with the narrow strip of land (25 miles long and 5 to 6 miles wide). The relation between the Sikkim Rajah and the British was not cordial right from the beginning. According to Fred Pinn the Raja while granting Darjeeling had only given the house – building license and nothing more. But Lloyd was clever enough to make amendments on his own without [any] consultation with the

²⁶ Pratap Chandra Pradhan, *Purano Gorkha Thum Darjeeling Uhile Ra Aahile Gorkhaland Tira*, (In Nepali) Deep Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1984, pp. 7-8

²⁷ J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Ward, Lock and Co. Ltd., London, 1891, p.95

²⁸ Bernard Cohn, “The Census and Objectification in South Asia”, in Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, p. 248

government.²⁹ So what follows after 1835 is the gradual territorial aggrandizement by the British. In 1849 the none too cordial relation between the ‘old and infirm’ Raja and the British reached a flash point when of Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell were apprehended by the kings forces in Sikkimese territory. The two Englishmen were ‘kicked and buffeted’ and released after six weeks on 24th December 1849.³⁰

In 1850 the British forces crossed the Great Rangit river. The Sikkim terai, which was handed back to Sikkim under the Treaty of Titaliya, was captured. Furthermore, the British captured a portion of land in the northern part bordering River Rangit and River Teesta lying towards the eastern part, and by the Nepal frontiers towards the western part, a small geographical region containing about 5000 souls.³¹ In all, the above captured territories added 640 sq. miles of territory to the existing 138 sq. miles. A further addition to this came about after the Anglo-Bhutanese War. The most important fallout of the war was the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865 that led to the ceding of the foothills to the British on payment of a fixed amount annually. In the following year, the hilly tract lying east of Teesta, which now forms the district of Kalimpong, was added to the present district of Darjeeling.³²

Governmentality, modern regime of power and Darjeeling

Having discussed the political history of Darjeeling it is imperative to turn towards a brief theoretical discussion on Michel Foucault’s concept of Governmentality³³ and follow it up David Scott’s work on colonial governmentality.³⁴ Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ has proved to be a key analytical tool to study the process of governmentalisation of European modern states as well as post-colonial states. Governmentalisation would essentially mean the emergence of a modern form of power that exercises power over the population through the institutions of society. The goal of governmentality is to create a subject that is governable. In this seminal study Foucault traces the changing nature of sovereign power vis-à-vis the people who are now

²⁹ Fred Pinn, *The Road of Destiny: Darjeeling Letters, 1835*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1986, p.123

³⁰ A.J. Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, 1947, p. 39

³¹ L.S.S. O’ Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.24

³² *Ibid.* pp.25-26

³³ For a detailed discussion, please see, Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon et. al. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect Studies: Studies in Governmentality*, The University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 87-104

³⁴ David Scott, *Colonial Governmentality, Social Text*, No. 43, (Autumn, 1995), pp. 191-220

extricated out of the family and reconstituted as ‘population’. This population which displays specific phenomena like regularities of birth and death, and disease lends itself amenable to statistics.³⁵ As a result governmentality is conceptualised as a complex of and practices, a set of procedures for generating empirically verifiable data as well as their analyses and calculations to serve specific purpose of governing that eventually facilitate the operation of a complex form of power that is directed towards population.³⁶

Taking Foucault’s concept of governmentality as the starting point David Scott elaborates the operation of modern power in the colonial context. His principal objective is to study the effects of power on the colonised people. According to Scott, the objective of political rationality in the colonial context is essentially to perform a set of activities that produces intended effects of power on the population.³⁷ This modern power, according to Scott, forms a break with the past where it reaches a point of no return. He further states that the coming of the modern is essentially concerned with disabling non-modern forms of life as it dismantles their very conditions [Emphasis in the original]. And in place of this it puts new conditions and different conditions that are designed to produce governable subjects. What is more, modern regime of power sets up a new condition that are discursive and non-discursive that eventually turn the subjects towards improving direction. This modern power is actualised in the domain of civil society.³⁸

Indeed, concepts like ‘governmentality’ and ‘colonial governmentality’ form a key analytical category to help understand the development of modern regime of power in Darjeeling. We will look into the specific effects of both in the manner in which the discourse of ‘martial race’ created a specific kind of subjectivity among the Nepalis/Gorkhas and also the production of Nepali nationalist discourse within the domain of civil society in the subsequent chapters.

The establishment of a modern regime of power can be said to have been more or less complete in the first decades of the twentieth century. The most immediately observable and important effect of the modern power was to turn the unmapped hills into a ‘Hill Station’. In this manner, one might say that the operation of modern power in the

³⁵ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon et. al. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect Studies: Studies in Governmentality*, The University of Chicago Press, 1991, p.99

³⁶ Ibid. p. 102

³⁷ David Scott, Colonial Governmentality, *Social Text*, No. 43, (Autumn, 1995), p. 193

³⁸ Ibid. p. 200

form of governmentality effectively brought the fluid zone under the control of colonial knowledge. The principal tools of operationalisation and control in the process involved were cartography, mapping, enumeration, and ethnography. As a result, colonial knowledge effectively put an end to what Sudipta Kaviraj calls ‘fuzzy’ identities and replaced it with ‘enumerated’ community. It is imperative to discuss some of the arguments by Sudipta Kaviraj with regard to the construction of colonial power in some detail. Kaviraj says that the history of the British in India must be seen essentially as the history of ‘rationalist modernity’. The British, Kaviraj says, claimed invincibility on the basis of its claim that its rule represented a rationalist programme. This rationalist programme was essentially a construction of the world in terms of a modern outlook that sought to rearrange the heterogenous world into a more precise, effective, amenable to technical and scientific intervention that eventually makes it beneficial to everyone.³⁹ As a result, the communities underwent a change in their ‘cognitive identification’. Hence, the traditional construction of community in India underwent a significant change towards community in a more modern sense. In traditional societies the members of a community had several layers of identities. They belonged to castes, *samaj* etc. The identities were also fuzzy because the members belonging to a particular community was never enumerated.⁴⁰ This fuzziness was put to an end by the British with the introduction of a highly ‘symmetrical, centralized, technologically effective apparatus of control’.⁴¹

From this standpoint the relation between the necessity to produce knowledge and the larger objective of control of the natives becomes more clearer. The most common tools of enumeration, as stated earlier, were statistical surveys and cartography. Statistical survey, as Peter Pels defines, was originally a late 18th century transformation of the ‘art of travel into the format of expeditions which were sent out to gather knowledge parcelled into the slots of questionnaire. Statistics was based on the idea of a ‘population’ a certain quantity of human bodies inhabiting a state’s ‘territory’. Thus, it called for a geographical arrangement of knowledge needed for state supervision.’⁴² Extensive surveys were carried out in Darjeeling, for instance, to enumerate the

³⁹ Sudipta Kaviraj, “On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony”, in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed.) *Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p. 146

⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 147-148

⁴¹ Ibid. p.148

⁴² Peter Pels, “From Text to Bodies: Brian Houghton Hodgson and the Emergence of Ethnology in India”, in Jan Van Bremen and Akitoshi Shimizu (ed.) *Colonialism and Anthropology in Asia and Oceania*, Curzon Press, Surrey, U.K. 2000, pp.66-68

population inhabiting the area. Botanist and naturalist conducted studies and wrote about the natural vegetation and fauna of the region, producing voluminous treatises on them. Notable among them are A Campbell's, *On Tribes Around Darjeeling*, Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart's, *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army*, Major W. Brook Northey's, *The Land of the Gurkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*. Another interesting work is Joseph Dalton Hooker's, *Himalayan Journals or Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, The Sikkim and Nepal Himalaya, and The Khasia Mountains*.⁴³ A prominent road in the outskirts of Darjeeling town is named after the botanist. A bookstore in Darjeeling by the name 'Oxford Bookstore' has an entire section dedicated to such books mostly in reprints. The beauty of these reprints is that they carefully recreate the old maroon hardbound cover with golden inscriptions giving its readers a feel of authenticity of the distinct colonial flavour.

The Darjeeling Municipality came into being in 1850. And the official census was undertaken for the very first time in the year 1872. It is interesting to note that the first official census pegged the population of Darjeeling at 94,712. The population in 1891 is recorded as 2,23,314.⁴⁴ Kumar Pradhan argues that there was an error in computing the population of Darjeeling in 1871. Citing 'official sources' he says that a large number of people fled away to Nepal at the time of census enumeration or most of them recorded as 'born in Nepal'. This number came down sharply in the subsequent censuses. Also, till 1951, people in Darjeeling recorded themselves after tribes and castes. The Census had on different occasions recorded the mother tongue of the various tribes as Nepali and at other times the languages and dialects of the tribes were recorded as 'mother tongue'.⁴⁵ Political parties and literary bodies routinely made fervent appeal to the people of Darjeeling to record their mother tongue as 'Nepali' and not anything else. Attempts by

⁴³ A Campbell, *On the Tribes around Darjeeling*, *Transaction of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. VII, (1869). pp. 144-159. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals or Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, The Sikkim and Nepal Himalaya, The Khasia Mountains*, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles) , *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India*, 1906, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, Capt. Eden Vansittart (2/5th Gurkha Rifles) , *Notes on Nepal* (First published by Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi

⁴⁴ Kumar Pradhan, *Darjeelingma Nepali Jati ra Janjatiya Chinharika Naya Adaanharoo*, (In Nepali) Social Science Baha, Kathmandu, 2005, p.10

⁴⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar* (In Nepali), Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, pp. 26-35

the government – real or imagined – to elicit information on tribal languages came to be seen as hideous attempts to ‘break’ the unity of the Nepalis.

Darjeeling was apparently not a densely populated place when the British came to the region. The borders were fluid and as a result there was a continuous movement of people across the *pahad* region for rearing cattle and for cutting timber. With the coming of the British and the production of knowledge reconfigured this fluid zone into a sedentary summer retreat. ‘Immigration’ was encouraged by the British as it required cheap labour for construction of bungalows, roads, civic facilities, recreational centres and most of all as plantation labourers in the tea gardens.

The British Empire, it must be made clear, was never a monolithic whole or a realm of single rule. The British had a very clear policy with regard to frontiers and margins. The emergence of colonial state in India followed a clear trajectory where it first mapped the territory and the subjects inhabiting that territory and eventually moving towards the reconstruction of the society itself. Peter Robbs study of the evolution of the colonial state and its jurisdiction provides us with a useful illustration. He says that the British created two types of borders and frontiers. The borders included both internal and external borders. Similarly, there were two types of frontiers viz. narrow and broad frontiers.⁴⁶ Consequently, the colonial state marked its map on the narrow external frontiers while the broad external borders represented a zone of contestation without any definite jurisdiction. What is more, the colonial state actually encouraged the existence of zones that was not clearly under a determinate jurisdiction. The existence of narrow frontier meant the establishment of a rule of law over a territory but even then, such an establishment always made exception of the law in its application over life and certain classes of people and territories. These exceptions then formed the broad internal frontiers of British rule.⁴⁷

Darjeeling was no exception to this tactical administrative rule. Darjeeling was put under various administrative categories like ‘Non-Regulated’ scheme with a view to ‘preservation of indigenous system of the simple people’. This arrangement was further reinforced by the Act No. XV of 1874 which led to the creation of a “Scheduled

⁴⁶ Peter Robb, *The Colonial State and the Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example of the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No.2, 1997. pp. 248-249

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.250

District”. The Government of India Act, 1919, further mandated that replacement of the Scheduled District by another arrangement known as “Backward Tract”. Finally, a new administrative designation, “Partially Excluded Area” was given vide Government of India Act, 1935.⁴⁸

Such colonial administrative practices have profoundly shaped the history and identity of the people of Darjeeling. As part of the colonial policy the British designed specific policies to control “unruly” tribal chieftains and ‘hill tribes’. This was particularly true in the case of the ‘Northeast’ frontier. Administrative categories like “Excluded Areas”, “Partially Excluded Areas” were the preferred modes of control which subsequently transformed into administrative structures of the nascent Indian state. The creation of such administrative unit as a peripheral, marginal zone continues to order the spatial imagination in present times.⁴⁹

According to Bimol Akoijam the “invisibility” of the North East has its roots in the continuity between the colonial and the postcolonial. The British constructed the “North Eastern Frontier” and the postcolonial Indian state reproduced as the “North East” India, with all the trappings of the colonial past.⁵⁰ Such a spatial imagination along with the construction of the ‘wild’, ‘barbaric’ or ‘martial’ people has served as a principal racial fault line between the people of Darjeeling and the rest of Bengal. In a similar vein Dyutish Chakrabarty sees the movement for Gorkhaland in 1986 not as an ‘abrupt upsurge’. He traces its roots ‘in the very character of the land, the people and more significantly, the politico-administrative arrangements that shaped the attitude of a *migrant population for nearly a hundred years*’⁵¹ It may not be proper to apportion blame either on the colonial state, the post- Independence state or even the ‘migrant population’ at the moment. What remains true is that there is deep sense of political, administrative, and cultural alienation of the people of Darjeeling from the rest of West Bengal. A telling instance is how whenever Nepalis from Darjeeling fall victim to crimes in Delhi and the

⁴⁸ Dyutis Chakrabarty, Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation, Special Lecture, No. X. Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1988. pp. 6-9

⁴⁹ Yengkhom Jilangamba, “Frontier Regime and Colonial Rule”, in Neeladri Bhattacharya and Joy L. K. Pachuau (eds.) *Landscape, Culture, and Belonging: Writing the History of the Northeast*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019, pp.179-180

⁵⁰ A. Bimol Akoijam, “The Ghosts of Colonial Modernity: Identity and Conflict in Eastern Frontier of South Asia”, in Prasenjit Biswas and Thomas C. Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India’s North East: Meaning, Metaphor and Method: Essays of Concern and Commitment*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p.120

⁵¹ Dyutis Chakrabarty, Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation, Special Lecture, No. X. Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1988, p.4

National Capital Region (NCR) the first reaction is to report to the Special Unit for the North- Eastern Region (SPUNER), a special wing of Delhi Police, and not 'Banga Bhawan' at Delhi or the Government of West Bengal. Darjeeling is politically part of West Bengal but in racial terms it sees itself as part of the 'Northeast'.

To return to the question of spatial imagination, interestingly enough, we find that different but proximate administrative practices as regards the governing of various categories of territories were prevalent in Nepal, then a fledgling state. The Gorkha rulers exercised exclusive sovereignty by proclaiming 'proprietary authority' over their possession of territory which was called '*muluk*'. They also exercised 'ritual authority' over the *desa*. Such possession significantly made room for the coexistence of countries known as *desa* or *des*.⁵² The country as stated earlier had a plural existence in the sense that it had a diverse group of people who nonetheless lived and entered into social relations. As a result, they developed a common identity and shared moral universe. This common moral universe was characterized by common language, lores, and a certain practice that became objectified.⁵³ At the same time, the possession that was held within the boundary was not a permanent one. It depended on various factors like collection of revenue. The boundary thus contingently expanded and at receded depending on the ability of the tax collectors' ability to raise taxes from subjects. The ritual boundaries, on the other hand, were quite unlike boundary of the possession and fixed in certain areas. Indeed, the ritual boundaries sometimes were actually located outside the administrative boundaries.

The larger point we can derive from the above is the fact of fuzziness of space that obtained in the northern borders as it obtained both in British India as well as in Nepal. For instance, in the case of Nepal, which was until recently a Hindu kingdom, most Hindus dreamt of visiting Kashi, i.e., Banaras once in their life time.⁵⁴ For them Kashi or Benaras was already and always part of the spatial imagination of the Kingdom and not outside. The Shah Kings of Nepal maintained a retreat at Benaras, while a large number of Nepali literary works were published from Benaras.⁵⁵ A similar spatial

⁵² Richard Burghart, The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XLIV, No.1, November 1984, pp.103-105

⁵³ Ibid. p.106

⁵⁴ There is a popular belief among the Hindus in Nepal that they must travel to Kashi or Benaras at least once in their life time.

⁵⁵ A large number of Nepali literary works used to and still continue to be published from various printing houses in Benaras. The Nepali script is very similar to the Devnagiri script except for a few linguistic and

imagination is very much in evidence in Darjeeling. It is articulated there in the proverbs, ritual incantations and also in hymns. For instance, there is a proverb: *Lhasa ma soon chha kaan mero buchhe* (Literally meaning, there is gold in Lhasa (Tibet) but my ears are without them), bringing Tibet into the sacred territory of the kingdom. The incantations by the *purohit* (chief priest) at the sanctum sanctorum at *Mahakal Dara* (A temple/Monastery at the Observatory Hill) and at *Sinchel Dhaam* (A Durga temple at Tiger Hill) similarly invoke together the names of rivers in present day Nepal and Sikkim.

Eastward movement and settlement

In the present-day political context, the territory lying in the foothills of Darjeeling has become a much-contested space, and the question of ‘migration’ has suddenly become a ‘sensitive’ and a highly charged issue. Since this is hardly the place to deal with these questions in greater detail it will suffice to say the following: The British establishment of a modern regime of power in Darjeeling profoundly altered the earlier pattern of people moving back and forth across the mid hills of present-day Nepal and Sikkim. It slowly gave way to a different pattern of movement where people started moving east of Mechi river to Darjeeling on a permanent basis. The key factors behind this human movement are involved in the setting up of the infrastructure for the establishment of a ‘hill station’ for the Company officers from Calcutta, establishment of tea gardens that was dependent on massive labour which the non-Hindu natives were to provide, and finally, the establishment of ‘Gurkha’ regiments for the defense of the British Empire.

Feudalism, land and labour in 19th century Nepal

It is interesting for us to note that most academic studies on the Nepalis in Darjeeling are incomplete without any reference to Nepal. Nepal has truly become the template for understanding the history, society and culture of Nepalis in India. More recently, there is also this academic movement to label all Nepalis living outside Nepal as the “Nepali diaspora”. In fact, the publication of a well-known work with the title, *Nepali Diaspora in the Globalised Era*, evoked much resentment and anger among a section of academia and

stylistic conventions. For a detailed study on the emergence and flourishing of printing houses see, Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920 – 1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002

political circles.⁵⁶ The ensuing debate suggested that the word ‘diaspora’ has become a dreaded word in the changing political dynamics of Darjeeling. It appeared as if the use of such words only buttresses the claim of those opposed to Gorkhaland since the implication is that Nepalis are indeed from Nepal and that they have migrated to India. The everyday experiences of the Indians of Nepali origin suggest an element of truth in such claim but those experiences remain distant and apart from the discussions that take place in high academics. To be fair to all we can say that such claims are made both out of ignorance as well as deep-seated political motivations. For someone embedded in the complex belongings pervasive in Darjeeling to find their people invisible in such academic discourse and by extension in the eyes of the nation is disappointing to say the very least. But equally disappointing is the understanding of the political leaders about the spatial histories of the region. They fall victim to this narrative that the history of the nation is something that has been always and already existing from antiquity not subject to change and contestation.⁵⁷

Nepal in the nineteenth century was predominantly a rural economy whose agriculture was subsistence.⁵⁸ The state as the all-powerful entity was the biggest landowner. This traditional state landlordism was known as *raiker*. The word *raiker* is supposed to have been derived two Sanskrit words *Rajya* (State) and *kara* (tax) denoting land on which state levies tax. ⁵⁹Within this broad system of *raiker*, the state allowed the co-existence of other forms of land tenure, like *birta*, *guthi*, and *jagir*. There was also, in addition to the above three forms, the communal ownership practiced among the indigenous tribes known as *Kipat*. The system of *birta*, *jagir*, and *guthi* simply understood was the grant of the state land to either an individual or to a religious institution.⁶⁰ Baburam Acharya informs us that the word *birta* was probably derived from the Sanskrit word *Britti*, meaning livelihood.⁶¹ *Birta* was given to individuals in appreciation to their services, as ritual gifts, or as a token of patronage. It was usually

⁵⁶ Tanka B. Subba and A. C. Sinha (eds.) *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised Era*, Routledge, London, 2016

⁵⁷ For a fuller discussion on the narrative of the nation, see, Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology”, in Etienne Balibar and in Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.) *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 86

⁵⁸ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846*, Manjushree Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.38

⁵⁹ Baburam Acharya, *Land Tenure and Land Registration in Nepal, Integrating Generations*, FIG Working Week, Stockholm, 2008, p. 4

⁶⁰ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846*, Manjushree Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.38

⁶¹ Baburam Acharya, *Land Tenure and Land Registration in Nepal, Integrating Generations*, FIG Working Week, Stockholm, 2008, p. 4

priests, religious teachers, soldiers, members of the nobility and royal family land often endowed by the King for temples or monasteries as well as other charitable purposes was called *guthi*.⁶² *Jagir* was another form of a land tenure in which the members of the nobility as well as civil or military employees got land as emolument for the services they rendered to the state. The state started paying salaries to its officers in the form of land grants because it had land in abundance after the capture of eastern Nepal. Moreover, the system of 'in-kind' rent payments had created problems of collection, storage and disposal of agriculture rent. It was difficult for the state to use land as a direct source of monetary revenue other than assigning land as emoluments to its officers.⁶³

There is little doubt in that the policy of land grant was followed in favour of particular social classes while excluding certain communities. They tended to be concentrated, for the most part, among the Brahmins, Chhetris, and Thakuris mostly from western Nepal, who sustained the political authority of the new rulers. The Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Limbus, Khambus and Newars generally did not receive such favours. On the contrary, they suffered encroachment leading to a gradual depletion of the lands they had obtained during the previous regimes as a result of *birta* grants and *jagir* assignments.⁶⁴ The beneficiaries of the *birta* and the *jagir* grants were entitled to raise revenue from various bases in the region. In addition to this, they performed certain judicial functions like administering justice and take unpaid labour into account. In such a system the peasants cultivating in *birta* and *jagir* land were subjected to exploitation of the worst type. In the case of *jagir*, the assignee, who was normally in active military or civil services, seldom lived in his *jagir* land. So, he left the cultivation of his *Jagir* to the *mohi* or the cultivator. The absentee *jagirdar* sold his *tirja* or the authority to collect taxes to brokers called *dhokres*. The *dhokres* profited by collecting more than their investment.⁶⁵ Similar was the case in *birta* lands where the *birtawals* exploited the *adhiyars* (share croppers). Under such a system rural indebtedness became the most common feature. In addition to this, the peasants were to provide free and compulsory

⁶² Mahesh Chandra Regmi, Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces: Peasants and Landlords in 19th Century Nepal, Adroit Publishers, Delhi, p. 39

⁶³ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, A Study in Nepali Economic History, 1768-1846, Manjushree Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.39

⁶⁴ Lionel Caplan, Some Political Consequences of State Land Policy in East Nepal, *Man*, Vol. 2. No. 1, March, 1976, p. 109. Also see, Thomas Cox, Land Rights and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 25., No. 24/25, June, 1990

⁶⁵ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces: Peasants and Landlords in 19th Century Nepal, Adroit Publishers, Delhi, p. 81

labour like *jhara*, *kagate hulak* and *thapale hulak* to the state. One of the important aspects of this compulsory labour was that the upper castes were exempted from such obligations.⁶⁶

While the general policy of the Gorkhali State was to maintain the existing economic system, its policies did affect the *kipat* system practiced by the indigenous tribes in central and eastern Nepal. The *kipat* system was a system of communal ownership of land by a particular ethnic group. The ownership rights were generally customary, acquired on account of settlement over a long period of time. This *kipat* system was a major hurdle for the state whose primary objective was maximization of *raiker* land. Prithivinarayan Shah initially followed a conciliatory policy towards these groups. But these assurances did not appear to comfort the tribes who preferred to move further east to the adjoining areas of India and Sikkim in the last decades of the 18th century. It was only after the Limbus, in particular, joined the Chinese in the war against Nepal in 1788-93 that the Nepali State restored their traditional rights over their land.⁶⁷

Mahesh Chandra Regmi has alluded to a very important aspect of the Nepali economy. He says there was never a disparity between population and land. He in fact sees the factor of low ratio between land and population as the reason behind state imposition of forced labour. Similarly, Kumar Pradhan in his, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, has looked into this aspect in greater detail. He rejects all those theories that assign the cause of eastward movement to an increase in population and the consequent pressure on land.⁶⁸ On the contrary, he argues that land was plentiful and that vast tracts of land in the *terai* region (foothills) had yet to be reclaimed. In fact, people from the adjoining Indian plains were often induced to migrate into the Nepal *terai* to hoe up the land.⁶⁹

In spite of this crucial fact the eastward movement of the people across the mid hills of present-day Nepal became an increasingly noticeable phenomenon in the first

⁶⁶Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces: Peasants and Landlords in 19th Century Nepal*, Adroit Publishers, Delhi, pp. 108-109

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp.49-51

⁶⁸ L. S.S. O' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.37

⁶⁹ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, pp.178-179. Also See, Nanda R. Shrestha, *The Political Economy of Economic Underdevelopment and External Migration in Nepal*, in *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol.4. No.4, October, 1985, pp.247-298

decades of 19th century. And the volume only increased after the Anglo-Gurkha War (1814-1816). A better understanding of the causes can still be had if we look into the nature of the Nepali State. R.S. Chauhan in his, *Society and State Building in Nepal*, has referred to the Nepali state under Prithivinarayan Shah as ‘compensatory power’. Chauhan defines a compensatory state as a weak state in which the execution of its commands depends on the awards or incentives it can bestow on its subordinates. It does not become strong and determined enough as to compel its subordinates to carry out its will. Though the state at times may issue threats but these threats are hardly heeded. Its commands are executed only when those in charge of the execution receive more than what is stipulated in the rule or is legitimately due to them.⁷⁰

One of the important characteristics of the 19th century Nepali state was that it was an avowedly Hindu state. Over the centuries the nature-worshipping animists or Buddhist communities were gradually Hinduised mainly due to the conquest of non-Hindu communities by Hindu kings and the migration of *Parbatiyas* (Bahuns, Chhetris, and Thakuris) to different parts of present-day Nepal. The spread of *Parbatiyas* (people from the mid hills) essentially meant the imposition of Nepali or Khas Kura, and Hindu religion across the entire region.⁷¹ This sanskritisation process was actively enforced by the state. The process further intensified with the promulgation of *Muluki Ain* (a national civil code) in 1854. Interestingly, the *Muluki Ain* was imposed to establish a homogeneous application of law for the whole of country.⁷² In an interesting parallel to British governmentality, this code led to the creation of a fivefold division of society in which the majority of the ethnic (Mongoloids) groups were clubbed as *matwalis* (people for whom drinking liquor is not a taboo) Thus the social conceptual world of the Mongoloids was disrupted. The concept of caste was alien to them but they were nonetheless forced into the Hindu caste system thereby turning *jatis* or tribes into *jaat* or caste.⁷³

The society was clearly divided into two groups. The upper castes that drew their sustenance from the state formed a group at the top, and the Mongoloid tribes who were

⁷⁰ R.S. Chauhan, *Society and State Building in Nepal: From Ancient Times to Mid-Twentieth Century*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1989, p.76

⁷¹ Rajendra Pradhan, “Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society”, in Kanak Mani Dixit, et al. (eds.) *State of Nepal*, Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2002, pp.3-4

⁷² Andras Hofer, *The Caste Hierarchy and the State of Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*, Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2004, p. 179

⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 110 - 128

mostly peasants formed the group below. It was this section of the people who left their homes and hearths and migrated towards *Munglan* (India). The more familiar name Darjeeling, which is the anglicized version of Dorjeling, was popularized only with the coming of the British. Even to this day Darjeeling is still referred to as *Munglan* in many parts of Nepal.

This process of eastward movement started spiralling after the Anglo-Gurkha war, and it only increased further with the consolidation of the British power in Darjeeling. It is to be noted that Darjeeling prior to the coming of the British did not provide any economic opportunities. But people did come to this part mainly for two reasons. Firstly, since most of the people came from the mid hills known as *pahad*, their choice of Darjeeling was natural given its geographical similarity. Secondly, they could not move southwards to the *Terai* regions of Nepal because they feared *awoole joro* or malaria (literally meaning fever of the low lands).⁷⁴ However, with the settlement of the British, Darjeeling provided new economic opportunities in the shape of casual labourers in building roads, clearing forests, recruitment in the British Indian Army, and a certain type of skilled labourers in tea gardens and cinchona plantations.

Colonial capitalism and the tea industry in Darjeeling

It is well-known that the establishment of tea industry in India was the British response to the dangers of monopoly trade over tea held by the Chinese.⁷⁵ But it was not in Darjeeling that the British first started tea plantations. Many Britishers had reported about the discovery of tea bushes in Assam. After confirming that those were tea bushes, tea production started in Assam in 1836. By 1839 the industry had grown considerably under the Assam Tea Company. In 1840 it produced 10,000 lbs of tea which by 1858 rose to 770000. On January 10th, 1839, the East India Company did the first auction sale. But the tea brokers were quoted as saying the tea was “not of good quality, but a curiosity”. It was this report that was instrumental in Dr. Campbell’s obtaining sanction to give the Chinese variety a chance. Accordingly, the first lot of seeds and plants were

⁷⁴ There is an interesting passage in Indra Bahadur Rai’s novel, *Aaja Ramita Chha*, where a comparison between *pahad* and Morang (Now a district) in the terai region is made. Dharmaprasad Shrestha, the protagonist in the novel, has married second wife and now settled in Morang leaving behind his first wife in *pahad*. The novel is replete with descriptions like, “[...] *awoolle khayeko kaalo suska sareer*”, meaning a body burnt and worn out by the heat in the plains”. Again, “[...] *chaarai tira garmi ra awoole feri machinnda*”, meaning *once the onset of heatwave and malaria*. Indra Bahadur Rai, *Aaja Ramita Chha*, (In Nepali) Navyuwak Nepali Pustak Mandir, Gorubathan, 1964

⁷⁵ E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835*, Bibliophile, Kolkata, 2012, p. 193

imported into Darjeeling in 1841 along with a number of Chinamen (sic) to teach the pioneers in this industry how to lay out gardens and manufacture tea.⁷⁶

There is a mention in West Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling that it was Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling who laid the foundations of the tea industry. By 1840 he had started experimental plantations. Seeing that prospects were good, others followed, the seeds being supplied by the government. Mr. Jackson, in 1852 is supposed to have reported that both the Chinese and Assam varieties were doing well in Dr. Campbell's Garden in Darjeeling. The plantations of Dr. Withcombe and Major Crommelin did well too.⁷⁷

By 1856-57 the tea industry had taken deep roots in Darjeeling as a viable commercial enterprise. The planting of Makaibari and Alubarie tea gardens was completed in 1857. The Tukvar Tea Company, Mundakothi, followed soon. In 1860, Mrs. H.C. Taylor and Dr. Roberts of Raniganj laid out the Neej Kaman. Similarly, the Rangmok Tea estate became operational. In 1866, the Dhotrey, Nahori and Margeret's Hope Gardens were planted. By 1866, i.e., only ten years after the establishment of the first industry on a commercial basis, there were thirty-nine each of them producing large quantity of tea covering 256 ½ acres and producing 133,000 lbs in aggregate. In Kurseong too, the Springfield and Castleton were laid out in 1871. Similarly, Eden Vale in Toong, Maharanee Tea Estate was laid out in 1874.⁷⁸

Table 1: Expansion of the tea industry after 1870

Year	Number of gardens	Area under tea (in acres)	Outturn (in lbs.)
1874	113	18,888	39,28,000
1885	175	38,499	90,90,500
1895	186	48,692	1,17,14,500
1905	148	50,618	1,24,47,500
1910	148	51,281	1,41,37,500

⁷⁶ E.C. Dozey, A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835, Printed and Published at The Art Press, 1, Wellington Square, Calcutta, 1916, pp.195-196

⁷⁷ West Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjiling, Printed and Published by the Superintendent of Printing, Govt. of West Bengal, Kadarpara, 1980, p.228

⁷⁸ E.C. Dozey, A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835, Bibliophile, Kolkata, 2012, pp.196-197

Year	Number of gardens	Area under tea (in acres)	Outturn (in lbs.)
1915	148	54,024	2,03,03,500
1920	148	59,356	1,58,50,000
1925	148	59,356	1,87,32,500
1930	148	59,356	2,08,70,500
1935	148	59,356	2,07,98,000 black 2,28,000 green
1940	142	63,059	2,27,43,000 black 9,87,500 green

Source: A.J. Dash, Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, p.114

Beginning from 1940 the production of tea went up considerably. In 1942 itself the total tea production stood at twenty-six million four hundred seventy-eight thousand pounds of black tea and one million two hundred forty-two thousand pounds of green tea. In the following year the total production of black tea was twenty-five million five hundred ninety-three thousand pounds. The production of green tea the same year was two million five hundred seventy-two thousand pounds.⁷⁹

From the above figures one can notice that the tea enterprise expanded to areas mainly in the east of Teesta. This was so because of certain policies enforced by the British to prevent exploitation of the ‘hillmen’. After the annexation of Kalimpong in 1865, the Government followed a policy of not allowing of setting up of tea gardens. The authorities generally viewed the “hillmen” as “prodigal” and particularly the *ryots* of the *Khas Mahal* in Kalimpong in particular. To prevent the more “thrifty” and “enterprising” taking over the lands of the hill tribes, the authorities made provision by which only Lepchas and Bhutias were allowed to dispose of their land among themselves and not with Nepalese.⁸⁰ The availability of cheap labour in this way was central to the growth of productivity and expansion of tea gardens under cultivation.

⁷⁹ E.C. Dozey, A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835, Printed and Published at The Art Press, 1, Wellington Square, Calcutta, 1916, p. 44

⁸⁰ E.C. Dozey, A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835, Printed and Published at The Art Press, 1, Wellington Square, Calcutta, 1916, p.177

Table 2: Impact of tea industry on the population growth of Darjeeling district from 1861-1966

Year	No. of tea estates	Total area in hectares under tea	Approximate yield in kilograms	Average yield in kgs. Per hectare	Total No. of all kinds of tea workers	Total of working force	Percentage of tea workers to total working force
1861	22	1317	19323	15	2534	-	-
1871	56	-	-	-	8000	94712 (in 1872)	8.45
1881	155	11,489	23,40,719	204	-	1,55,179	-
1891	177	18,462	49,48,997	268	-	1,55,207	-
1901	170	20,948	61,39,720	293	40,451	1,55,235	26.06
1911	156	20,853	64,64,079	310	39,561	1,51,604	26.09
1921	168	23,897	63,87,117	267	48,710	1,74,167	27.97
1931	169	24,777	92,97,204	375	63,665	1,29,070	43.33
1941	136	25,585	1,12,56,182	440	69,699	1,33,306	52.28
1951	138	25,345	1,32,82,995	524	69,590	1,37,541	50.60
1961	145	27,709	1,80,50,271	651	59,844	2,66,105	22.49
1966	144	28,121	1,73,98,000	619	-	-	-

Source: A.J. Dash, Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, p. 100

Samita Sen's seminal study on women and labour in late colonial India has documented the role of *sardars* in bringing labourers from rural hinterland of Bengal to work in the jute mills in Jessore, Faridpur, Hooghly, Howrah, and 24 Parganas. Most often, the scarcity of labourers for these mills forced the East India Company to commission contractors of various kinds – *sardars*, *buxies*, and *daffadars*.⁸¹ The situation was not any different in the tea industry in Darjeeling. According to Townshend Middleton, despite the Nepali government's disapproval and legal hurdles against migration of Nepalis to Darjeeling, the British were convinced that no development was possible in Darjeeling without the Nepali coolies and that 'they are the best tea coolies known'.⁸² Hence the British depended heavily on informal labour recruiters known as *sardars*. The native

⁸¹ See, Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India: The Bengal Jute Industry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999

⁸² Townshend Middleton, "Unwritten Histories: Difference, Capital, and the Darjeeling Exception", in Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.), *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018, p.36

recruiters tapped the ethnic connections, with their knowledge of their traditional habitats to promise a better future to entice labourers. *Sardars* typically brought together large groups of coolies usually belonging to a particular tribe to particular tea gardens where labour was needed. The *sardars* thus performed an important function of acting as a bridge between the planters and leaders of the coolies attending to both material and cultural needs.⁸³ In a similar vein the anthropologist Tanka Bahadur Subba talks about the importance of ethnic ties in the import of labour. Migration, he says, always happened on the basis of ‘family’ and not ‘individual’. As a result, the mobility of labour from one place to another rarely happened resulting in the scope to employ even the children at less than half of the wage of an adult.⁸⁴

Back home the Nepalis weaved their own stories about Darjeeling. As they prepared to leave their home and hearth, they began imagining about Darjeeling and tea gardens as a place of freedom and better life. Most people were told: *chiyaa ko bot maa paisaa falchha*, which can be loosely translated to mean that money will grow on tea bushes).⁸⁵ Another saying that became common at that time was, ‘*soonako lingo, chaandi ko ping, ek jieu khaana laauna lai thikai chha Darjeeling*’, (roughly translated and summed it means Darjeeling will end my sorrow).⁸⁶ Paradoxically, at the same time, migration was never a simply happy moment for the people who got lured by *sardars*. They were never sure of what the new life was going to offer to them. As they prepared themselves for a new regimen, they often consoled themselves saying: *ek jhoomro launchu, ek maanaa khanchu*, meaning I will wear soiled clothes just enough to cover my body and eat just enough to survive.⁸⁷

Another important aspect in the ‘importing’ of plantation labourers from Nepal is the question of race relation in a colonial situation. As Ania Loomba argues that it was the prevailing racial discourse that constituted certain races as naturally suited to perform specific labour. The ideology of racial superiority more than often translated into class terms. Furthermore, it was very much in keeping with the hierarchy of mankind in which

⁸³ Townshend Middleton, “Unwritten Histories: Difference, Capital, and the Darjeeling Exception”, in Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.), *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018, p. 37

⁸⁴ Tanka Bahadur Subba, *Dynamics of a Hill Society: The Nepalis of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1989, p.4

⁸⁵ Bidhan Golay, *Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony, and History, Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2, 2006, p. 37

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.40

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 41

the white races were at the top. It immediately implied that the black [brown] men must forever remain cheap labour and slaves.⁸⁸ The history of indentured labour is replete with this particular intersection of ‘race’ and ‘labour’.

Edgar L Erickson’s study on the introduction of Indian coolies to the sugarcane plantation in British West Indies refers to a certain John Gladstone representing the West Indian proprietors writing to the Calcutta based Messrs. Gellanders, Arbuthnot and Company. Mr Gladstone enquired if the company could send a body of labourers that was healthy, active, docile, manageable, intelligent but one without prejudices of caste to work in the plantations.⁸⁹ Closer home, Jayeeta Sharma’s study of the labour market in tea plantation in colonial Assam discusses the production of a tension-ridden racial discourse where the planters found that the native Assamese and Naga worker were found ‘independent and footloose’ and actively showed resentment of low wages.⁹⁰ Even the peasants who worked on the plantation did not find wage labour attractive as there was abundance of land. This can be seen as one of the reasons that may have led to the discovery of the ‘lazy native’. It was believed that it was opium which was widely grown in the region that made the locals ‘indolent’ and ‘opium sodden natives’.⁹¹ A discursive framework was produced to create a discourse about civilized and uncivilized, about traditional hunting and gathering people, and those engaged in agricultural practice and commerce. It was believed that the tribes due to their long exposure to mountainous terrain made the tribes better suited to work better in inhospitable terrains.⁹² As a result, the ‘Hill Coolies’ were thought to be useful plantation labourers as unlike others they were ‘casteless’, ‘docile’ and ‘hardworking’.⁹³

Establishment of the ‘Hill Station’ in Darjeeling

⁸⁸ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London, 1994, pp.125-126

⁸⁹ Edgar L. Erickson, *The Introduction of East Indian Coolies into the British West Indies*, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jun. 1934), pp. 127-129

⁹⁰ Jayeeta Sharma, ‘Lazy’ Native, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No.6, (Nov. 2009), p. 1293

⁹¹ Jayeeta Sharma, ‘Lazy’ Native, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No.6, (Nov. 2009), pp. 1295-1296

⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 1298-1300

⁹³ For a discussion on the colonial labour market see, Kaushik Ghosh, “A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and Race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India”, in Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Sussie Tharu (eds.) *Subaltern Studies Vol. X.: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 8-48. Pia Chatterjee’s studies have shown how the colonial state encouraged migration of entire family to work as plantation labourers. See her, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labour and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation*, Duke University Press, 2001

In popular imagination, more than anything else, Darjeeling is known as the ‘Queen of Hill Stations’. What was once the British effort in recreating ‘home far away from home’ became the unique selling proposition for the travel and tourism industry. Darjeeling still retains the very English bungalows, a Gymkhana Club, a Planters’ Club, a Mall Road to take an evening stroll, and some of the famous residential schools modeled after the public schools in England. The town also boasts of some of the very famous bakeries and restaurants that can treat your palette with the very typical English breakfast of sausages, and hams topped with sunny-side up eggs. The residential schools, which number quite a few, continue to affect the now slowly fading colonial culture in all its resplendence and grandeur. These schools which during their heydays of colonial rule were nurseries and training grounds for the ruling classes are reluctant to shed that legacy. Rather they take utmost care in carefully recreating that culture of race superiority and domination.

It is well known that the British developed ‘Hills Stations’ in the in the higher reaches to avoid tropical heat of the plains. The British found it difficult to bear the heat as they were used to more cooler climate of the British Isles but more importantly the British had anxieties about disease.⁹⁴ As a result, the hill stations became the perfect sanatoria for the Europeans to recover. It also provided relief to the colonial officers as the hill station partially filed away the pain of being so far away from home in an alien land. The British established close communities of their own kind and developed the stations in the image of the European towns. Interestingly, the hill stations also served as the centres of command. The British established political headquarters and military cantonments. The hill stations then became sites where the ‘British endeavoured to both engage and disengage with the dominion they ruled.’⁹⁵

Darjeeling as stated earlier thus still retains the vestiges of a European town. It was also the summer capital of the British Empire. The military cantonments at Jalapahar, Lebong and Takdah do point towards the larger project of the British Empire. In a recent study, Rune Bennike has traced the framing of Darjeeling as ‘a summer place’ all the way to the 1850s of nineteenth century particularly through the study of guidebooks and guiding materials on Darjeeling. He points out that the establishment of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway happened only a year after the setting up of railway

⁹⁴ Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.19

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p.1

line in Switzerland. Soon after, picturesque paintings, tourist guides and imageries of Darjeeling mushroomed and started coming together to create an image of Darjeeling typically through a touristic gaze.⁹⁶

In terms of infrastructure, the establishment of the ‘hills station’ began with building roads and laying down the tracks for railways. O’Malley has remarked that it was the British who established the roads and railways in Darjeeling.⁹⁷ However, this ‘creation’ has to be put in a perspective. The first major road construction was done within four years of the ‘occupation’ of Darjeeling.⁹⁸ Between the year 1839 the road from Siliguri to Darjeeling was laid down by one Lord Napier of Magdala. The road known as the Old Military Road was built through the winding hills of Pankhabarie to Kurseong and then along the spurs until it reached Senchel from where it descended to Jorebunglow. But as the town started growing, and more importantly with the expansion of the tea industry, this road was found unsuitable for wheeled traffic owing to its steep gradient. So, in 1861, sanction was obtained for the construction of the Cart Road. The road from Darjeeling to Kurseong was opened in 1864, and the construction was done by 1869).⁹⁹ By the second decade of 20th century Darjeeling already boasted of 533 miles of roads in the district. A road of 46 miles called the Teesta Valley Road connecting Siliguri and Rangpo in Sikkim was laid down in 1888.¹⁰⁰

The laying down of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway known as the ‘Toy Train’ started under the Managing Agency of Messrs. Gillanders Arbuthnot & Co. in 1879. The portion between Siliguri and Kurseong (52 km.) was opened on 23rd August 1880 and that between Kurseong and Darjeeling (29 km.) in 1881. In 1913 the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Extension Co. started construction of the Teesta Valley (Siliguri-Gielkhola) project and was completed in 1915. This railway line was abandoned later due to landslides and severe earthquake of 15th August 1950.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Rune Bennike, “‘A Summer Place’: Darjeeling in the Tourist Gaze”, in Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.), *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018, pp. 56-57

⁹⁷ L. S. S. O’ Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p. 132

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.132

¹⁰⁰ E.C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835*, Bibliophil, Kolkata, 2012, p. 41

¹⁰¹ *West Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjiling*, Printed and Published by the Superintendent of Printing, Govt. of West Bengal, Kadarpara, 1980, p. 317

Two factors, viz, the growth of tea industry and the building of roads and railways as also the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British army, which shall be dealt separately at length in the subsequent chapter, were the major factors behind the large-scale eastward movement of population to Darjeeling. But among these three factors the growth of the tea industry was the most important one. This resulted in giving a peculiar characteristic to the ethnic landscape of Darjeeling.

Table 3: Decadal growth of population of Darjeeling during the (1835 1991)

Year	Total population in the whole district	Total number of inhabitants in the three hill sub-divisions	Total number of Nepali speakers in the district
1835	100	Campbell's estimate.	
1850	10,000		
1869	22,000		
1872(1 st Official Census)	94,712		
1881	1,55,179		
1891	2,23,314		88,000
1901	2,49,117		1,34,000
1911	2,65,550		1,52,167
1921	2,82,748		1,66,794
1931	3,19,635		1,61,308
1941	3,76,369		1,75,285
1951	4,45,260		2,23,88
1961	6,24,640		
1971	7,81,777		
1981	10,24,269		
1991	13,35,618		

Source: Census Reports:

Conclusion

The present chapter has tried to lay down a broad political, historical and sociological background for the second chapter in which we will be discussing the process of construction of Gorkha identity particularly in the colonial discourse. But before we

proceed to the second chapter it is imperative to underscore the importance of some of the key theoretical and analytical concepts for the study. We all know very well that ever since the outbreak of Gorkhaland movement in 1986 and the subsequent phases there has been a steady growth in the literature on Gorkhas, Gorkhaland movement and the 'identity crisis' of the Gorkhas. This documentation has primarily taken the form of academic titles, journal articles, official policy papers of the governments, and numerous other fragmentary writings by journalists and editorial writers. Though it may well be seen as somewhat presumptuous on the part of this researcher to talk about the lack theoretical engagements in these works the painful fact remains that there is only a handful of such efforts. The present chapter by drawing on a wide array of contemporary social theories has sought to fill that void in a modest way. The chapter has tried to foreground the history of a space and people in both their fuzzy and mapped and enumerated forms. To this purpose the present chapter has used Foucauldian analytical categories like colonial governmentality to understand the evolution of modern power in Darjeeling. As pointed out, one of the first changes was in the spatial imagination of the people. The mid hills of the Himalayas from the far west to the east were known as '*pahad*' This zone was at once fluid and sacred before being subjected to governmentalisation. Many tribes seem to have practiced a form of 'primitive communism' characterized by communal ownership of land called *kipats*. This however needs more research to be made into a proper claim. What is clear is that most of the tribes and communities worshipped nature gods by propitiating mountains, brooks, trees, etc., This sacred geography was disrupted with the process of mapping and cartographic incision. The coming of the British in Darjeeling ushered in new forms of sedentary life practices. It established a 'hill station' in Darjeeling and tea gardens thereby turning the tribes into what can be described as 'proto – wage labourers'. As we shall see, colonial modernity in a sense created a new subjectivity among the people and one subsequently came to witness the construction of the Nepali nationalist discourse that took place in the specific domain of colonial public sphere. These developments as they unfolded in the early part of twentieth century will be taken up in the later chapters. For now, let us turn our attention to the study of the construction of the 'brave' 'Gurkha' identity.

CHAPTER II

THE 'BRAVE' GURKHA: A STUDY OF THE COLONIAL DISCOURSE ON 'MARTIAL' RACE

The construction of identities has always been in the form of opposition or exclusion of some other identities. The everyday construction of Gorkha identity in Darjeeling inevitably takes the Bengalis – who form the majority and hence 'dominant'- as its 'Other'. This 'Other' is presumed to bear certain character traits and features that are quite different or opposed to the assumed traits of the self. The very first point of difference is between the '*sahashi*' or 'brave' Gorkha and the 'effeminate' Bengali that helps legitimise homophobic invectives and prejudices that are routinely used as slur. The second is the 'Gorkha height' that is notionally five feet and a couple of inches. It is a matter of surprise and amusement that vacancies in the Indian Army as well as vacancies in 'Group B' of West Bengal Civil Services even to this day categorically make exception for the Gorkhas against the minimum requirement of 1.65 metres for male and 1.50 metres for female candidates for aspiring to be Deputy Superintendent of Police.¹

The third one is the construction of the binary between the 'cunningness' of the Bengali and the 'simplicity' of the Nepalis. Such construction of identities bordering on exoticism locates the source of this 'cunningness' of the Bengalis in their food habit, particularly the head of the fish. However, besides the myriad and curious aspects, the need to properly study the construction of Gorkha identity arises because the very source of this construction can be squarely located in the colonial discourse. What is more, such a construction has been inserted not just in the Nepali nationalist discourse but also in everyday life in Darjeeling.

To this end the present chapter shall have as its objective the study of the process of emergence of Gorkha identity in colonial India and more particularly in Darjeeling. This will be done by first laying down a theoretical framework in which the historical process of the formation of Gorkha as a 'brave' soldier belonging to a 'martial race' is shown to be constructed through colonial discourse. This will be backed up by the study

¹ See, Public Service Commission, West Bengal, Advertisement No – 22/2019, http://pscwbapplication.in/pdf19/2713287_2019.pdf (retrieved on 18.10.2021)

of a considerable volume of colonial writings on the ‘Gurkhas’. Such an approach to the problem of the formation of Gorkha identity is required on various counts. Elsewhere this researcher has argued the place of the Nepali social and conceptual world continues to remain outside the national culture of the imagined nation. This marginalisation has come to signify not just a location but a shorthand to mean the oppressed and dispossessed. One of the important characteristics of this marginality is that the epistemological world of the Gorkhas is colonised by the dominant knowledge systems leading to the dispossession of the vernacular narratives.² It will be unfair to overlook that whenever the Gorkhas have written back such interventions did not get the space and respect for long in the larger metropolitan academic circles. The metropolitan academia, it must be noted, thus goes intellectually conceive and form the periphery vis-à-vis the Anglo-American academic production.³

The problem of Gorkhas in the main has been the historical subjection which is characterised by the reduction of the Gorkha into an object of the gaze of colonial knowledge and the continuing subjection to the practices of that knowledge. Without the realisation of this crucial fact the any academic or political gesture of liberation coming out from the community shall remain constrained by the methodological rigidities forms of academic studies that have outlived their usefulness and relevance. To begin with, these narratives accept the representation of Gorkhas as “martial race” without actually questioning the discourse that produced it in the first place. There are only a handful of works that may be termed ‘insurrectionary’ in this regard.⁴ What becomes clear from these works is that the Gorkha subject appears ambivalent towards colonialism. But of course, the dominant sense in which colonialism has been understood is more in its brutal forms. And they are believed to have ended with the formal end of colonialism.

It is imperative to realise that much of the everyday experiences of violence – both in its material form as well as epistemic forms – stems from the reality of a discursive colonialism. The latter draws its sustenance from a set of discursive practices

² For details see, Bidhan Golay, Rethinking Gorkha Identity, Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony, and History, *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2, 2006, pp.23-49

³ Ibid. p. 26

⁴ Notable among them are, Prem Poddar and T. B. Subba, Unpacking Home-Grown Orientalism and Area Studies in India, *Journal of Anthropological Society*, Vol. 27, 1992, pp. 247-251. Also see, Mona Chhetri, *Ethnicity and Democracy in the Eastern Himalayan Borderland: Constructing Democracy*, Amsterdam University Press, 2017

that the post-colonial state has chosen to continue in independent India.⁵ The critical awareness of this reality in the lives of the Gorkhas will lead any attempt to reclaim the body from such discursive colonialism will take the inevitable route of deconstructing the colonial discourses. And any kind of oppositional reading of colonial discourse must necessarily begin with the appreciation of the role of knowledge and power. Once again, Michel Foucault's seminal ideas on power and knowledge are instructive here, as well as that of historians like Bernard Cohn. Foucault says the modern conception of power is quite unlike the power formulated by the theory of sovereignty. Again, unlike the traditional form of power exercised over the Earth, modern forms of power are directed through knowledge, not on the souls but on the bodies and their operations.⁶ Historical anthropologists like Dirks have meticulously studied the history of India beginning mid-19th century in the light of these changing forms of rule and their specific effects.⁷

It is often stated that colonial conquest was initially established with the help of superior military strategy, political clout and economic might. But colonialism was sustained thereafter by the gradual replacement of brute power by more subtle forms of production of knowledge and practices that put in place new modes of subjection of the native society.⁸ There is a general agreement among historians that the British brought about significant changes in the governance after the 'Sepoy mutiny' or the first war of Independence. It is at this point anthropological knowledge became the new basis of rule and control replacing brute sovereignty. Hence, Nicholas B. Dirks labels the nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial state in India as the *ethnographic state*.⁹ To elaborate in a pithy way, at this point the Britishers felt the necessity to know about the native people, their language, culture, religion, and caste system better in order to avoid future occurrences of rebellion like the one witnessed in 1857. Significantly, hereafter the

⁵ Bidhan Golay, Rethinking Gorkha Identity, Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony, and History, *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2, 2006, pp. 26-27

⁶ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures", in Colin Gordon (ed.) Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, The Harvest Press, Sussex, U.K., 1980, p.104. Also see, Michel Foucault, The Subject and Power, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No.4 (Summer, 1982), pp. 777-795

⁷ See, Bernard S. Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996. Also see, Nicholas B. Dirks, "The Ethnographic State", in Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2006

⁸ Nicholas B. Dirks, "Foreword", in Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p. IX

⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, "The Ethnographic State", in Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2006, p.43

‘knowledge’ had to be about the society of India, not just its political economy. Thus, colonial ethnology took the place that had once been held by colonial historiography.¹⁰

The colonial knowledge that henceforth came to be produced through the institution of the fledgling colonial state which in turn fulfilled its project of legitimation.¹¹ It was also produced with a specific intent of disciplining and controlling the natives. In order to create a new regime of disciplinary powers the colonial state employed ‘scientific’ techniques of collecting data and information as the foundation and basis of the exercise of those power. In the process, the British soon realised that the knowledge of native language was key to create an apparatus of command, raise taxes, enforce laws and access vernacular literature was the knowledge of native languages. It was this linguistic knowledge to begin with that could produce knowledge on the local people. The British philologists thus studied the local languages, their origin, grammar, enabling the British to categorise and organise knowledge more effectively.¹² Such imperatives of colonial control led to the devising by the colonial state, what Bernard Cohn calls, the ‘*investigative modality*’. This method, according to Cohn, included several stages. They started with the specific definition of knowledge, and fixing the set of procedures for gathering that knowledge onwards to its classification and finally its conversion into a report, gazetteers, and legal codes. This had the salutary effect making the knowledge usable in the practical realm of governing.¹³

With this broad theoretical framework as a necessary background for what is to unfold, we can now proceed to the specific case of the Gorkhas. The objective is to map the process through which specific racial theories were advanced with respect to the Gorkhas. One of the objectives is to study the production of an official anthropometry of the Gorkhas within the larger scheme of racial taxonomy. But such a project must inevitably be linked with the larger discourses concerning the body and how a certain type of metaphysics of the body of the Gorkha was produced in the process.

¹⁰ Nicholas B. Dirks, “The Ethnographic State”, in Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2006, p.44

¹¹ See, Bernard Cohn and Nicholas B. Dirks, Beyond the Fringe: The Nation-State, Colonialism, and the Technologies of Power, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol.1, No.2, June, 1988, pp.224-229

¹² Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 4-5

¹³ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p.5

Who are the Gorkhas?

There has been much debate among the proponents of the term Gorkha and Nepali with regard to the question of identity and nationality of Nepalis from Darjeeling. It is a measure of this continuing and unresolved debate that we have chosen to use the terms Gorkha and Nepali interchangeably. And we feel it is imperative for us to deal with this matter right away rather than setting aside the discussion because using the terms Gorkha and Nepali may otherwise create a degree of confusion.

We may well have chosen to use the two terms interchangeably but for the proponents of either term the debate and issues are much more than lexical. Although, during the language movement for enshrining the Nepali language as one of the official languages in the eight schedule of the constitution no such controversy arose with the name of the language. In fact, the historian and literary critic Kumar Pradhan writes that the word 'Nepali' denotes three things: first, the word Nepali signifies a language. Secondly, it refers to Nepalis of Nepal who may speak different languages and dialects but are citizens of Nepal. Thirdly, the word Nepali signifies a cultural identity of those people who have a well-developed ethnicity living outside Nepal.¹⁴ People in Darjeeling used the term 'Nepali' mostly in the sense of language and also in the collective ethno-cultural sense. In many ways, at the same time, the controversy with the word 'Nepali' reflects the sense of insecurity and identity crisis of the Nepalis in India.

Several well-known figures like Shivraj Sharma, Prof. Laxmikant Sharma, Dr. Mani Kumar Sharma, Nagendra 'Gorkha' and others have strongly advocated the use of the term Gorkha and have glorified the community in racial terms as a 'warrior' or a 'martial' race. They invoke the 'glorious' history of the Gorkha kings in Nepal and draw pride and sustenance from the historical memory of the kingdom of the house of Gorkhas expanding from the present-day Uttarakhand all the way to the borders of present-day Sikkim in the initial years of nineteenth century.¹⁵ The argument they put forward against the proponents of the term Nepali is that if the entire community is referred to as Nepalis, then it could mean a nationality making it easy for the people of mainstream India to confuse the people that actually inhabit many different spaces, including

¹⁴ Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, p. 4

¹⁵ For details see, Shivraj Sharma (ed.) *Gorkhawangmai* (In Nepali) Published by Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha Bhasha Samity, Darjeeling, 1990

Darjeeling with that of the citizens of Nepal. Hence, for them, the use of the word Gorkha is not only politically prudent but historically more accurate.

The votaries of the term 'Nepali' like Indra Bahadur Rai and Indra Sundas on the other hand argue that the term Gorkha in itself is derived from the original kingdom of the Shahs. The Shah rulers, it is argued, were themselves foreigners in Nepal in the sense that they migrated from present day Rajasthan towards mid hills of the Himalayas fearing 'Muslim persecution'. They argue that there is no such thing as a Gorkha language, whereas there is a Nepali language. And if the Nepalis in Darjeeling are called 'migrants' or 'foreigners', then it must be argued that the Nepalis were always and already inhabiting the hills of Darjeeling. What really happened was that the large portions of the land east of river Mechi and west of river Teesta changed hands at least three times between the Kingdom of Nepal, Kingdom of Sikkim, and then finally the East India Company.¹⁶

Thus, the names or terms like Gorkha and Nepali raise host of thorny and interesting questions about overlapping boundaries and overlapping nationalities. Let us now briefly delve into the history of the origin of the term 'Gorkha'.¹⁷ The word 'Gorkha' originally is derived from the name of the kingdom by the same name. As Kumar Pradhan has informed us, the kingdom of Gorkha is believed to have been captured by Drabya Shah around 1550 A. D. The Shahs were believed to be fugitive Rajput chieftains whose origin could be traced to the dynasty of the Rawal kings of Medapat (Mewar) in Rajasthan. Drabya Shah was the descendent of the ruler of Lamjung and Kaski.¹⁸ The kingdom of Gorkha surrounded by fertile lands and containing the broad valley of the river Darraundi, soon became the centre of the new kingdom. To the north of it was Barpak, a Gurung settlement. Interestingly, salt, a most essential but a rare commodity in the hills, could be procured from adjoining Tibet.¹⁹ There are various accounts of the origin of the word 'Gorkha'. Like most myths of origin, it is generally believed that the land came to be described as Gorkha because a certain Nath Yogi had installed an idol of Gorakhnath there even before its capture by Drabya Shah. But Kumar

¹⁶ For a detailed study, see, Phanindra Nepal, *Nepal: Teesta Dekhi Sutlej Samma*, (In Nepali) Nepal Nationalist Front, Kathmandu, 1998

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that while most vernacular writings have chosen to spell the word as 'Gorkha', Western and colonial writings have spelt it as 'Gurkha'.

¹⁸ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests: The Process of Unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, p. 23

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 24

Pradhan debunks this theory of origin and suggests that what seems probable is the derivation of the name from a Tibetan-Burmese word *garkha* meaning a cluster of villages. Others have tended to associate the name with *Kharka* meaning grassland or pasture. A Lichchhavi inscription that was found in Gorkha indicates the probability of early settlement.²⁰

Drabya Shah was succeeded by Ram Shah, Dambar Shah, Krishna Shah, Rudra Shah until eventually Prithivinarayan Shah ascended the throne of Gorkha in 1743. It is during the reign of Prithivinarayan Shah that the expansion of the Gorkha kingdom took place as the new king conquered the three kingdoms of the then Nepal viz. Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhadgaon in 1769. The name Nepal which referred to these three kingdoms in the valley was extended to the rest of the Gorkha Empire subsequently. There is, as we can see, an overlapping and tangled history of the Gorkha and Nepali, especially from this point.

British colonial expansion in India and the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British Indian Army

Before we discuss the specific case of the British colonial expansion and consolidation in Darjeeling during the middle of the 19th century a brief discussion on the history of the British – Nepal (Gorkha) encounter is in order. As discussed above, the expansion and consolidation of the minor principalities across the present Nepal, including the three principalities gave a somewhat permanent shape to the Kingdom of Nepal as it appears now. With this unification process more or less complete, Prithivinarayan Shah, the Raja of Nepal was making an effort to forge a Hindu military identity amongst the heterogeneous ‘tribal’ groups of Nepal. His efforts to create a model of Kshatriya warrior mirrored the changes taking place, according to historians like Seema Alavi, at the same time in Awadh, Benaras and other kingdoms.²¹ It was the Anglo Gurkha war of 1814 - 1816 that gave the opportunity to the British for the first time to witness the ‘valour’ and ‘bravery’ of the Gurkha soldiers. John Ship, then an ensign in the 87th Foot, is supposed to have paid tribute to the Gurkhas in the following words: “I never saw more steadiness or bravery exhibited in my life. Run they would not and of death they seemed to have no

²⁰ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests: The Process of Unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, p. 24

²¹ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770- 1830*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 264

fear, though their comrades were falling thick around them, for we were so near that every shot told”²²

In the light of such descriptions, it appears rather ironical that the Gurkha forces under the command of Amar Singh Thapa lost against the Company soldiers. Yet General Ochterlony saw it as a right moment to write to the Company recommending for the recruitment of “the short, broad chested, flat faced, snub-nosed men with their *khukuris*”²³ into their ranks. The thought may have been triggered by the fact that even though the British were successful in the war, the victory itself was an empty one as it came at the cost of death of several generals and officers.²⁴ The Company admired the sophisticated tactics of the Gurkhas in the hill warfare. However, it was unable to win over the personnel which constituted this military base of the Nepal kingdom. As a result, during the first Anglo- Gorkha war of 1815-1816, the Company invented its own counter-model of a Gorkha soldier with the view to police the hills. The ‘Company Gorkha’, as it was called, was recruited from the Kumaonis, Garhwali, and the Sirmouri hill men who flocked to its service because of the Gorkha rule over their lands. This invented Gurkha tradition welded together the customs of Prithivinarayan Shah’s Gurkhas and the European practices of drill and discipline. An additional novel feature was the Company Gurkha’s use of Mughal imagery that was drawn from the Company’s practice of exploiting Mughal symbols.²⁵

Three battalions were raised accordingly. The Nusseree Battalion and the Sirmour Battalion were raised on 24th June 1815. The Kumaon Battalion was raised on 11th June 1815. ²⁶ These battalions were known as the Kumaoni battalions and became the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Gurkha Rifles. By the end of the nineteenth century no less than ten regiments of the Gurkha rifles had been raised in this manner.²⁷ The Sirmour battalion consisted of 1223 recruits, chiefly Hindus from the Sirmour state. It was initially based in Nahan, the

²² Quoted in Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur’s, *The Gurkhas: A History of the Recruitment in the British Indian Army*, Nirala Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p.30

²³ Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur’s, *The Gurkhas: A History of the Recruitment in the British Indian Army*, Nirala Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p.33 (Khukuri is a traditional short knife of the Gorkhas)

²⁴ Kanchanmoy Mozumdar, Recruitment of the Gurkhas in the Indian Army 1814-187” in *The Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. LXXXIII, April-June, 1963, p.143

²⁵ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770- 1830*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 264

²⁶ Kamal Raj Singh, Recruitment of the Gurkhas in the Indian Army 1814-187” in *The Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. LXXXIII, April-June, 1963, p.53

²⁷ Gurung Chandra Bahadur, *British Medals and Gurkhas*, Published by The Gorkha Memorial Trust, Gurkha Memorial Museum, Kathmandu, Nepal, 1998, p.7

capital of Sirmour state. By 1816 the Company combined together the military practices of Sirmour with the ‘tribal’ customs of the Gurkhas of Nepal. Added to them were the European military uniforms and ethics. The traditional arms of the Gurkhas now formed part of the regimental arms. The Company also encouraged the celebration of Dasai or Dushera in the Sirmour Regiment. It is interesting to note that Dushera was not actually celebrated in the Gorkha regiments of Nepal. The celebration of Dushera became necessary as large number of men who filled the ranks were Hindus from Sirmour and Garhwal. But this Dushera was distinctly a non-Brahmin form of ‘tribal’ practice as it was interwoven with European military practices.²⁸

The decision of the British to enlist the Gurkhas can be better understood if we take the prevailing conditions and political imperatives of the colonial power into account. To put it nutshell, the dictates of building an Empire led the Company to think that they would do better if they could rope in natives to partake in shouldering the burden of the Whiteman.²⁹ But this factor alone was not responsible for the eventual decision. Lionel Caplan makes a persuasive argument about the origin of theory of martial race not in the necessity of meeting the immediate military needs alone but as part of the prevailing biological theories about races and tribes.³⁰ The emerging biological theories of race directly led to the search for bodies that inherently stood for the best ‘fighting material’. This is what the Company Gorkha was to embody and illustrate.

In addition to the above factors, Kanchanmoy Mozumdar points out to the political considerations of the British policy. He says from the British viewpoint the martial population of Nepal appeared to be itching for wars against them. But the state policy under Bhim Sen had been to conserve their energy so that it can be given vent at the right moment against the Company forces. Thus, there prevailed an uneasy calm which could be disrupted any moment when the British are besieged with problems. So, it became strategically and was politically prudent on the part of the British to employ

²⁸ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770- 1830*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 278-279

²⁹ Kamal Raj Singh, ‘Recruitment of the Gurkhas in the Indian Army 1814-187’ in *The Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. LXXXIII, April-June, 1963, p.2

³⁰ Lionel Caplan, ‘Martial Race: The Persistence of a Military Discourse on ‘Race’’, in Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p.261

these people in the British army.³¹ At the same time, the British wanted to reduce the influence of the Brahmins in the army by recruiting more Muslims and Gurkhas.

But there were other causes as well that contributed to hordes of people joining to British Indian Army and armies of other princely states. The usurpation of power in Nepal by the Ranas in 1846 had led to drastic changes in the state policy of Nepal. It was felt by Jang Bahadur Rana that to stay in power he had to check the army and the bureaucracy which had entrenched themselves under the Shahs. This understanding had led to steady curtailment of the powers of the army. Even more so, a large number of soldiers were given compulsory retirement. But fearing that such a large-scale retrenchment would trigger backlash, the Ranas allowed the Nepalis to get them recruited in the British army. They were free to go to the Lahore cantonment for this purpose.³² However, even before this, there were instances where the Gurkhas had joined the Khalsa or Sikh army after the treaty was signed between the Khalsa and the Nepal government in 1839.³³ But the word *Lahure* which was initially used denote Gorkha soldiers who got enlisted in Lahore gradually began to refer to all Gorkha soldiers.

Nevertheless, the enlistment of the 'Gukhas' in the British Indian Army was not easy. Jang Bahadur Rana, contrary to his public pronouncements, threw spanners in the British design. The Nepalese government, even after a peace treaty of 1816 which had put an end to Anglo – Gurkha war, continued with his un-cooperative attitude towards the Company. Nepal did not allow the British Resident in Kathmandu to interfere in its affairs, and the Company could not get permission to send its recruiting parties to Nepal.³⁴ As the British could not enter Nepal to enlist the Gurkhas, they established recruiting depots at the border towns like Gorakhpur, Almora, Shillong, and Darjeeling. The commanding officers of these recruiting centres used to send *gallowalas* (local term for recruiting agents) to the most interior parts of Nepal. Gurkha subedars were encouraged to bring back young Nepalis to be recruited into the British Army.³⁵ The British

³¹ Kanchanmoy Mozumdar, Recruitment of the Gorkhas in the Indian Army 1814-1877, in *The Journal of United Service Institution of India*, Vol. LXXXXIII, April- June, 1963, pp. 145-146

³² R.S. Chauhan, Society and State Building in Nepal: From Ancient Times to Mid- Twentieth Century, Sterling Publishers, Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1989, p.124

³³ Tanka Bahadur Subba, Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.57

³⁴ Seema Alavi, The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770- 1830, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 276

³⁵ Kanchanmoy Mozumdar, Recruitment of the Gorkhas in the Indian Army 1814-1877, in *The Journal of United Service Institution of India*, Vol. LXXXXIII, April- June, 1963, p.148

government subsequently issued orders in 1864 allowing the Gurkha regiments to purchase of parcels of land to set up military centers at places like Almora, Dehradun, Dharmasala, Bakoh etc, there was no recruiting depot in Darjeeling prior to 1890. The first Gurkha recruitment depot is supposed to have opened in Darjeeling in 1890. The office was first situated at Darjeeling Bazar in Kutchery loaned by the Deputy Commissioner for an hour or two each morning.³⁶ In 1901 the British Mountain Battery at Ghoom vacated the accommodation in Katakpahar area and in 1902 the Gorkha Recruiting Depot was allotted the entire accommodation for occupation at the lower portion of Katakpahar. The setting up of this depot triggered a fresh wave of mass movement of Nepalis eastward through the mid hills particularly to the adjoining hill areas. This is how the martial version of the Gorkha arrived in Darjeeling, moving through the intersections of ethnic migration and making of colonial army.

Colonial discourse and disciplinary power as bio-politics

The purpose of the study of the discourse on ‘martial race’ is not only about imperial ideologies but also to shed light on the bio-political framing of the question of ‘martial race’. We shall also try to see how a certain metaphysics of the Gorkha body is produced in the discourse on ‘martial race’. It becomes essential to touch upon some of the key ideas forwarded by Michel Foucault in order to arrive at this point on the targeting of the body by modern forms of power. Foucault calls such techniques of control ‘bio- power’. These techniques of bio-power become more intense with the increasing governmentalisation of state. The state now takes the duty to promote conditions of good life and growth, taking care its of population as its main responsibility. This transformation in the nature of state leads to the emergence of modern regime of power in society. Foucault describes how ‘bio power’ led to bringing about every aspect of life within the domain of scientific knowledge produced by the state about the population. Knowledge thus acquires a new meaning and utility in modern society where it acts as the power as well agent for transforming human society.³⁷

Foucault goes on to argue that bio power should be seen as working on the entire human species. Human species taken together with its various aspects like fertility,

³⁶ Based on the documents from the archives of Gorkha Recruiting Depot, Jalapahar, Darjeeling (File No. untraceable)

³⁷ Paul Rabinow, “Introduction”, in Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books. New York, 1984, p. 17

mortality and the capacity to labour, come to provide a new focus of political action and intervention for the state. Alongside this, the other point was bio power that had human body itself as its focus. A complimentary focus of bio-power is on the individual body. The objective of bio-power in this regard is to transform the human body into an object that can be made amenable to minute scales of manipulation and control. Such manipulation and control could be achieved by combining the new knowledge about population and subjecting them to ‘disciplines’ – that were new kinds of habits cultivated through new ‘technologies’ of power, in short, amounting to disciplinary technologies.³⁸ Such kinds of disciplinary technology, according to Foucault, works in a modern society in variety of institutional forms and settings like workshops, schools, prisons, hospitals, and importantly for us, army barracks, with one common objective. The goal of all these varied settings is to produce what Foucault calls as ‘docile bodies’ that may be subjected and used, invested with new productive capacities and politically transformed.³⁹

It is this insight of Foucault that we find useful in understanding the problematic relation between the Gorkha subject and colonial knowledge. In order to reach there, however, we need to dwell a little more on how ‘docile bodies’ are produced by means of ‘correct training’. According to Foucault the project of creating docile bodies underwent significant changes in the eighteenth century. This period produced new methods of applying subtle coercion over the body;s mechanism, particularly its movements and gestures, besides its speed of functioning and general disposition. The aim to achieve economy in terms of the efficiency of the movements and organize their internal organisation in the body. ⁴⁰ It was, according to Foucault, the making of the new art of the human body that not only focussed on increasing skills and the degree of subjection but also creating a mechanism that makes the body more repetitive and usefulness. The intended output of this mechanism was a policy to facilitate a calculated manipulation of the body’s elements particularly its gestures and behaviour. In short, the human body had come to be subjected to a specific functioning of power that explored it, broke it down and rearranged it.⁴¹

³⁸ Paul Rabinow, “Introduction”, in Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books. New York, 1984, p.17

³⁹ Ibid. p. 17

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, London, 1991, p. 137

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 137-138

There was a natural corollary to this development - a 'political anatomy' of the body. This political anatomy defined how one may control others' bodies. This control meant that the body would be acting according to one's wishes but it also implied that such a body will act on the basis of a set of instructions according to predetermined techniques, necessary speed, and proficiency. The end result of this disciplinary power, of course is, 'subjected' and 'practiced bodies', 'docile bodies'.⁴² And here lies the most powerful insight in Foucault's analysis for understanding a range of bodies, from the prisoner's body to the soldier's body, indicating the model would characterize the citizen and the 'normal' member of society. According to Foucault discipline multiplies the forces within the body in terms of economic production and divided or weakens these forces in political terms, that is, in relation to power, making it more obedient in the process. The result is the potential of the body in terms of power stands diminished and dissociated from the body. The force of the body has been transformed into an 'aptitude, a 'capacity' that the body now seeks to constantly maximise. But this increase in power is directly proportionate to the growing subjection of the body.

This theoretical framework offers us a number of necessary analytical elements that can help to situate the colonial discourse of race and the concomitant construction of the natives' bodily dispositions and their use. In what follows we shall witness how these processes unfolded on the ground, and reveal the conditions for the emergence of the Gorkha, as an exceptional race made of specifically oriented bodies, best suited for certain crucial operations of the empire, including war. There is no undermining of the sedimented power of this discourse, which, as we remarked before, is not only repurposed by the independent state but profoundly informs the ideas of selfhood among the very people in question.

Framing the Gorkha race and the metaphysics of the Gorkha body

In the light of the above discussed theoretical framework we may now proceed to map the operationalization of the actual practices of the knowledge on the body of the Gorkha. We have already seen how the Gorkhas as a 'martial race' is actually the 'discovery' of colonial ethnography. The idea of martial race was perhaps most clearly laid down by Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn in his, *The Armies of India* (1911). He writes:

⁴² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, London, 1991, p. 138

“It is one of the essential differences between the East and the West, that in the East, with certain exceptions, only certain clans and classes can bear arms; others have not the physical courage necessary for the warrior. In Europe as we know, every able-bodied man, given food and arms, is a fighting man of some sort ... In the East, or certainly in India, this is not so ... Nor are appearances of any use as a criterion (sic). Some of the most manly looking people in India are in this respect the most despicable.”⁴³

Martial race theory had two main aspects. Firstly, martial race theorists believed that martiality is part of a natural - what we call genetic today – type of quality that is inherited. So martiality must be a characteristic feature or quality of a given ‘race’. Secondly, martial race theory also took into account the climatic-environment variable element. The argument was that people with martial qualities were usually found in regions that are hilly and in higher altitudes, whereas in plain and tropical weather conditions people were generally meek, submissive and unfit to join an army.⁴⁴ Before long, a new breed of race specialists emerged in the nineteenth century who created and systematised the new discourse of martial race. This new discourse had a profound impact in thoroughly reshaping the British Indian army and strikingly enough, continues to inform the recruiting policies even to this day. By the late 1890s, the idea of “martial races” came to be written in the codified form of official “Recruiting Handbooks” for the different classes of the Indian Army. These recruiting handbooks were usually written by the recruiting officers who had spent considerable amount of time with the troops. The discourse, of course, did not merely limit itself to classification of tribes and training manuals for the purpose of recruitment of the Gorkha into the British Army. In addition to these, a whole body of anthropological knowledge was produced about the Gorkhas with relation to their manners, customs, traditions, history and habitat.

Lionel Caplan’s work is of immense value in this regard. He has divided the vast literature on Gurkhas into four main kinds. He says there are firstly regiment histories. At the peak of its peace time strength the Gurkha Brigade comprised ten regiments, each of which had its own history, which was updated periodically. Secondly, there are personal memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies by officers who commanded Gurkhas, and these

⁴³ Quoted in, Lionel Caplan, *Bravest of the Brave: Representation of ‘The Gurkha’ in the British Military Writings*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.25. No. 3, July, 1991. p.580

⁴⁴ Lionel Caplan, “Martial Race: The Persistence of a Military Discourse on ‘Race’”, in Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006pp. 260-261

usually include accounts of particular campaigns or battles in which they took part with Gorkhas. Thirdly, and of more recent vintage, are coffee table picture books with splendid photographs of Gurkhas in various settings. Finally, there are books, probably the majority, which attempt to tell the Gurkha story in general and popular ways.⁴⁵

It is to these texts that we now turn our attention to undertake a close reading. In doing a close textual analysis of the literature on the Gorkhas we will limit ourselves, for the sake of convenience, to studying three key critical texts, as representative of the larger gamut of writings on Gorkhas. These are authored by Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart, titled, *Gurkhas: Handbook for the India Army*, Compiled under the orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906⁴⁶, Major W. Brook Northey's, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*⁴⁷, and again Captain Eden Vansittart's, *Notes on Nepal and Other Commentaries*.⁴⁸ We shall be focussing primarily on two aspects of the racial theory in mining these texts, viz, biological determinism, and climatic - geographical determinism in order to make sense of the bio-political framing of the question of 'martial race' and to unpack the production of metaphysics of the Gurkha body in the process.

Eden Vansittart believed that the hilly region of Nepal undoubtedly was the traditional home of the tribes belonging to the Mongolian racial stock. He based this conviction on his understanding of the physical types, physiognomic and anthropological features of the tribes of the mid hills (including their language). Vansittart then lists the following tribes, viz, Magars, Goorongs, Newars, Sunwars, Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Lepchas, and Kirata tribes. All these are understood to have directly descended from the Mongolian or Tibetan stock. About the Newars, he said, they carry more sharper features as compared to other aboriginal groups because their traditional homeland which is valley did not provide them the scope and opportunity to move out. They are also, he

⁴⁵ Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentleman: 'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination*, Bergham Books, Oxford, UK, 2009, p. 6

⁴⁶ Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906*, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012

⁴⁷ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998

⁴⁸ Capt. Eden Vansittart (2/5th Gurkha Rifles), *Notes on Nepal* (First published by Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1992

claimed, more ‘civilised’, having a literature of their own, and skilled in art.⁴⁹ One can sense without too much difficulty the binary between the ‘civilized’ and ‘savage’ playing out in these profiling of what can be described as different stocks. Not surprisingly, there is a systematic deployment of anthropometry here. Brian Hodgson, the Assistant British Resident at Kathmandu, describes the Himalayan tribes in the following manner:

“Head and face very broad, usually widest between the cheek bones, sometimes as wide between the angles of the jaws; forehead broad, but often narrowing upwards; chin defective; mouth large and salient, but the teeth vertical and the lips not tumid; gums especially the upper, thickened remarkably; eyes wide apart, flush with the cheeks, and more or less obliquely set in the head; nose pyramidal, sufficiently long and elevated, save at the base, where it is depressed, so as often to let the eyes run together, coarsely formed and thick, specially towards the end, and furnished with large round nostrils; hair of head copious and straight; of the face and body deficient; stature rather low, but muscular and strong. Character phlegmatic, and slow in intellect and feeling, but good humoured cheerful and tractable though somewhat impatient of continuous toil.⁵⁰

It is quite clear from the above description how the British racial theories created a binary of ideal types: between the ‘savage’ and the ‘civilised’ based on the appearance of certain physiognomic, especially, facial features and formation. The civilised obviously resembled those bearers of Western rationality with what was taken to be the ideal shape, physiognomy, and features with aesthetically better and intellectually superior head and face implicitly held as the standard – that of the white race. As a binary opposite of this white man stood the figure of a ‘primitive’ Gurkha. Despite possessing bodily strength, he lacked the very rationality of the Western man and hence made themselves well-suited to be pressed to certain kinds of service – bodies that are like empty machines: apparently devoid of thoughts and purpose but capable and waiting to be exploited.

⁴⁹ Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906*, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, p. 7

⁵⁰ Quoted in Lt. Col. Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906*, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, p. 9

For Vansittart not all the tribes discussed above belonged to the 'martial race'. Such tribes had to be carefully chosen from the larger group. Vansittart lists out the 'military tribes' to be considered the 'fighting elements'. These tribes are: The Khas, Magar, Gurung, and Thakur. It also included a few Limbus, Khambus, and Sunwars. These tribes were to form the bulk of the Military Police Battalions of Burma and Assam. Vansittart went on to further suggest that the Limbus, Rais and Sunwars have lately proved to be 'excellent soldiers' during the expedition of Sikkim and Burma. The Murmis (Tamangs) also have been enlisted in fairly large numbers in Military Police battalions. Significantly, barring the Khas and Thakur the rest of the tribes were considered as the aborigines of Nepal. In fact, even now they are taken to show an undoubted Mongolian origin. The Khas and Thakurs, on the other hand, show traces of Mongolian blood but only to an insignificant extent.⁵¹

Another prominent British officer Major W. Brook Northey's description of the Gurkhas captures the 19th century proto - scientific racism wonderfully. He says about the Gurkhas that the Gurkhas are decidedly on the short side, for the average height of the full-grown man is a mere five foot three inches,⁵² and unlike in other parts of the world where being tall may bring admiration, in Nepal being tall does not so much as attract attention of people in Nepal. He goes on to add, again without much surprise, that among the Gurkhas the fair complexioned is always preferred to dark, and a well raised Gurkha was usually fair skinned.⁵³

Northey has more detailed observation to offer about the physiognomic feature, for instance. the Nepalese have very little hair on face and body, and until they approach middle age usually but only a stubble grows on their upper lip. Thus, they are generally spared the burden of early morning shave.⁵⁴ About the body of the Gurkha, Northey writes that the Gurkha is 'sturdy' and 'thick set', his nether limbs are exceptionally well formed and admirably adapted to bear him over the rough and pathless country of his mountain home. And what is it that makes the Gurkha 'cheerful', it is his Mongolian

⁵¹ Capt. Eden Vansittart (2/5th Gurkha Rifles), Notes on Nepal (First published by Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 58-59

⁵² It is interesting to note that even to this day most Gorkha recruitment advertisements as also recruitment advertisements in state armed police forces specify the minimum height of 5 feet 3 inches. In local parlance it is called 'Gorkha height'.

⁵³ Major W. Brook Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 95

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 95

strain that makes the Gurkha a rounded 'cheerful' personality that he is. As a result, the Gurkha possesses one of the most important character traits, a sense of humour, to an extent which is rarely found in a well-meaning man of Aryan descent. His 'frank', 'open character' permits a degree of intimacy in his intercourse with the Europeans that is seldom achieved by other native races in the East.⁵⁵ Here is an interesting passage from Northey describing the Gurkhas affable nature: "His ability to fraternise with the British soldier, especially with those of Highland regiments, between whom there seems always to be a special sort of freemasonry, is proverbial. Few things are more amusing, indeed, than to see a diminutive Gurkha and a tall British soldier engaged in an animated conversation, the flow of which is not hampered in the least apparently by the fact that their knowledge of each other's language is practically nil."⁵⁶

The above passages show the remarkable fascination of the British officials with race as their primary optics peppered with blood and heredity but also other biological aspects of men. Such observations were very much in keeping with the prevailing time. The later part of the nineteenth century is generally regarded as the high noon of this kind of proto - scientific racism. There was a general belief that the consolidation of the empire must begin with the steady replacement of Hindustani sepoy of Bengal with the more 'warlike' and 'hardy races'. It was widely held that while the English, Scott and Irish had the natural 'military instinct', the same was not thought to be true in the case of diverse peoples of India. The Gorkhas were as close to an exception as there could be among the natives. Thus, the British recruiting officers laid down the first principles of 'martiality' as embedded in race that very soon turned into a dogma.⁵⁷ In sum, it came to be widely believed that 'martiality' was a given 'natural quality' in a given ethnic group. The dogma underscored the importance of 'race' as it was considered to be the carrier of certain inherited traits among which the fact of martiality was one of the most important one. This effectively meant that 'fighting capacity' was entirely dependent on race. The result of this racial theory is that an entire ethnic community was taken to be inherently inclined towards military occupation, and that is because they were seen to possess some

⁵⁵ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 97

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 97

⁵⁷ Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentleman: 'Gurkhas' in the Western Imagination*, Bergham Books, Oxford, UK, 2009, pp. 116-117

special characteristics embedded in their physical make up, even in ‘blood’.⁵⁸ It was a common place belief among racial theorists to believe that blood was the substance responsible for the transmission of hereditary features, so that all the members of a particular race would be endowed with the same qualities. Martiality from such a view point was deemed to be inherited in blood.⁵⁹

Perhaps as a necessary digression it is important to highlight the role of ‘science’ as an epistemology, as a philosophy of knowledge at this point. While the historical role of science has been liberatory and progressive in the context of Western civilisation, the same cannot be said to be true in the colonial context. Governmental rationality as informed by science and reason of the day led without any doubt to an epistemic violence of far-reaching proportions, that fundamentally transformed the way the colonised people and particularly the Gorkhas have come to conceptualise themselves. And it is not this self-conceptualisation alone that is troubling. What is even more troubling is that the post-colonial developmental state appears to be equally taken in by the claims of scientificity and rationality of colonial governmentality. Hence the governmental categories produced by the ethnography and anthropology of the colonial state have been accepted as the fundamental premise of policy framing and governmental practices by the post-colonial state in India.

It should not surprise us if we find the present state highly of valour, courage, honour, masculinity, and martiality, as the inherent characteristics of a race, and these ‘qualities’ were believed to be biologically transmitted. The British recruiting officers and other colonial ethnographers wrote copiously about the Gorkhas’ love for freedom, independence, masculinity and valour. According to Northey, for instance, the ‘Gurkhas’ are extremely ‘independent’, possess the utmost confidence in themselves, and in their own country are apt to be suspicious of foreigners and somewhat self-assertive. Though ‘shy’ at the beginning and somewhat reserved at the first, once he is at the service of a person the Gurkha becomes close to the person and soon shows his virtues of being ‘staunch’ and ‘faithful’ to the person he serves.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentleman: ‘Gurkhas’ in the Western Imagination*, Bergham Books, Oxford, UK, 2009, p. 117

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 117

⁶⁰ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 98

Northey's patronising portrayal does not end here. He says that the 'devotion' and 'loyalty' to their British officers are too well known to need enlarging on. He illustrates with an anecdotal account: "Are you ever homesick?", he once asked a young Gurkha from a remote village in Nepal after he had been a year in his regiment. The young soldier replied, "I was terribly so at first, but I am no longer. The regiment has become a second home".⁶¹

It must be borne in mind that though martiality was a function of race and blood in the British imagination, they did not discount factors of climate and habitation in shaping such 'martiality' and 'masculinity'. The emphasis was really on purity and authenticity, about a pristine habitat that reared a pure race. The British stressed highly on the importance of 'place' in certifying groups and individuals as 'martial'. Thus, a group which was normally deemed martial could only be so in its peculiarly own native territory. Northey writes that the 'Magars and Gurungs are also to be found in eastern Nepal, *but they are usually of inferior quality* and are not enlisted for the Indian Army.⁶² [Emphasis mine]. Vansittart says that Magars and Gurungs primarily belong to the central Nepal region. And it is from this region that we will get all the information we want on the two tribes. Like Northey, Vansittart also feels that those Magars who are not from the traditional habitat of central Nepal like the Magars of Eastern Himalaya are definitely inferior to those from central Nepal in terms of their bodily constitution, appearance and in all other respects.⁶³ Did such descriptions vary when they came to individuals from particular localities? Was the British perspective too hung up on race to waver from the stereotype of loyal and brave Gurkhas? We find that there was room for scepticism and indeed suspicions about moral probity.

What about those Gorkhas who migrated further eastward to Darjeeling from their 'natural habitats'? Northey makes some interesting observations in this regard. He says that while selecting a 'Darjeeling boy' as a servant one should always be careful to take one that comes from a tea garden, and avoid anyone from Darjeeling itself.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 98

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 94

⁶³ Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906*, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, p. 89

⁶⁴ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 225

He says, “far be it from me to say that every Gurkha who lives in Darjeeling is a shady character; ... and the fact remains that the lives they [Gorkhas in Darjeeling] lead are entire different from those of other Gurkhas and that they are in consequence sophisticated to a degree unknown amongst Nepalese elsewhere”.⁶⁵ Northey’s warning is instructive in the sense that he was cautious to not entirely trust the Gurkhas from Darjeeling, paradoxically the only fragments who were getting a taste of the modern and urban. By Darjeeling Northey naturally means the Darjeeling town. Darjeeling by the turn of the century had become a fledgling British hill station. The native Gorkhas was perhaps for the first time witnessing urban life and some fruits of western civilisation particularly in the form of elementary liberal education. That was enough to create doubts in the mind of the likes of Mr. Northey. But to be fair to Northey even today in Sikkim (where this researcher works) people in general look at those from Darjeeling with a mix of a certain degree of admiration, suspicion and caution. The argument is that the people in Darjeeling as opposed to the ‘simple’ people of Sikkim are much more ‘hardworking’, ‘advanced’ educationally and culturally as they came into contact with the British and benefitted from their education system.

Nowhere is the importance of a place in shaping racial characteristic emphasized better than the British debate about the ‘martial’ quality of ‘line boys’⁶⁶. It is here that Vansittart displays his ostensible expertise on matters of eugenics and miscegenation. He makes a distinction between two types of progenies of Gurkha soldiers. The first one, he says, come from ‘purely Gurkha parents. The second one is that coming out of a wedlock of a Gurkha soldier with a ‘hill woman’. He says that some ‘excellent’ soldiers can be obtained from the first group and that the second group must be avoided altogether.⁶⁷ So, there are assumptions and anxieties of purity of blood and loyalty and strength that become absent or dubious with inter-community or caste marriage, putting a premium on endogamy. Furthermore, the line boys, according to Vansittart, is to be taken for only band, or such men as clerks because though in their first generation their physique did not deteriorate much, unfortunately they proved to be men of very ‘loose habits’ presumably

⁶⁵ Major W. Brook Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, (First published in Cambridge, 1937) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1998, p. 225

⁶⁶ In the Gorkha regiments the ‘line boys’ were also known as ‘*line chhokras*’. The term ‘*line chhokras*’ was used with a deliberate attempt to emphasize the racial impurity of the young recruits as immature.

⁶⁷ Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), *Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906*, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, p. 94

in the succeeding generations. ⁶⁸ Caplan says that the prejudice against line boys developed fully in the latter part of the nineteenth century alongside the British preference for what were assumed to be simple villagers, and the distrust of literate or semi-literate urban dwellers. ⁶⁹ With regard to the recruiting handbooks and training manuals that have become bibles for the recruiting officers, Caplan says that they have become objective and timeless, that they rely on stereotypes and does not necessarily reflect the social and political realities.’⁷⁰

One of the most significant impacts of this huge body of ethnographic and anthropological body of knowledge was the objectification of the body of Gorkha was objectified in the training manuals of the regiments complete with anthropometric details. The body of the Gorkha was literally seen as source of force which can be then directed towards specific action. The objectification of the Gorkha body essentialised in this way the entire Gorkha community by emptying the cultural meaning and inscribing over it the anthropometric discourse of the martial Gorkha body. We will discuss the implications of this at more length in the subsequent chapters.

The discourse on the Gurkhas as a ‘martial race’ provides an excellent example of Foucault’s ‘systems of dispersion’. The Foucauldian idea of ‘systems of dispersion’ comes from his theory of ‘discourse’. Discourse in simple sense is a particular way of representation. Discourse is mainly produced through language using which a group of statements are made producing a particular representation. It is in a sense particular kind of knowledge produced about an object. More interestingly, this particular representation actually limits other ways of representing the object. A discourse consists of several statements working together to form a ‘discursive formation’.⁷¹ Also, discourses are not closed systems in the sense they draw from other discourses too. These statements in the discourse need not be all the same. Even then the set of statements must in some sense be regular and systematic and not necessarily random. Foucault has defined it system of

⁶⁸ Eden Vansittart (2nd BN. 10th Gurkha Rifles), Gurkhas: Handbook for the Indian Army: Compiled under the Orders of the Imperial Government of India, 1906, (First Published by the Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1906) Reprinted by Asian Educational Service, 2012, p.95

⁶⁹ Lionel Caplan, “Martial Gurkhas: The Persistence of a British Military Discourse on ‘Race’”, in Kaushik Roy (ed.) *War and Society in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, p. 223

⁷⁰ Lionel Caplan, Bravest of the Brave: Representation of ‘The Gurkha’ in the British Military Writings, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.25. No. 3, July, 1991. p. 573

⁷¹ Stuart Hall, “The West vs The Rest Discourse”, in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.) *Formations of Modernity*, Polity Press, 1992, p. 303

dispersion.⁷² The statements or stereotypes we have seen above are at times telling quite opposite things but they are more of mirror images rather than complete opposites. They appear to be negating each other but these statements actually feed off each other. Each required the other, though in opposition but yet requiring each other.⁷³

The description of the Gorkhas in these writings does represent this system of dispersion. In a strange but perhaps telling way, the British admiration of the ‘martial qualities’ of the Gurkhas was limited only to the low ranked soldiers and not of the Gurkha officers. Despite their martial edge they were not deemed competent to exercise authority even at intermediary levels. Further, the discourse created a representation of the brave Gurkha endowed with masculine qualities. But at the same time the discourse also highlighted the cultural difference. It was a common place belief among the British officers to believe that even though the Gurkhas had enormous potential this could be realised *only* under their leadership and supervision. The British believed the while the ‘bravery’ of the ‘Gurkha’ was actually quite useful but it could be a danger to himself. This required the British to maintain constant supervision. Eden Vansittart is supposed to have observed that the Gurkhas have enormous potential but without guidance that had tendency to deteriorate and become slovenly.⁷⁴ Indeed, racist slur of all manner like “tykes”, “little highlanders”, “little Gurkha”, “little blighters”, “doughty little Mongolian hillmen” were generously used at the same time fetishizing the Gurkha soldiers for their bravery.⁷⁵ A joke that did the rounds is about the thickness of Gurkha minds when a mule kicked the head of a Gurkha soldier it went lame while the Gurkha suffered only a mild headache.⁷⁶ Such a description served as an immediate foil to their battle-worthy bodies. So it was not surprising to know that the British chose the most illiterate people coming from the remotest regions of Nepal as recruits. In these many intricate and remarkable ways, therefore, colonialism came to caricature and aestheticize the Gurkha soldier in the most Orientalist image- the most Gorkha of all Gorkhas – who standing beside the white man offered the perfect binary of the simplicity of the native and the overbearing presence of the white man.

⁷² Stuart Hall, “The West vs The Rest Discourse”, in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.) *Formations of Modernity*, Polity Press, 1992, p. 303

⁷³ Ibid. p. 308

⁷⁴ Lionel Caplan, *Bravest of the Brave: Representation of ‘The Gurkha’ in the British Military Writings*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.25. No. 3, July, 1991. p. 573

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 573

⁷⁶ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: Indian Army, 1860-1940*, Macmillan Press, London, 1994, p. 26

The wider social and long-term historical consequences of these moves are however more complicated than what can be accounted only with the epistemological violence of orientalist stereotype. Through various measures undertaken to nurture its military recruits the colonial state followed a clear policy of providing incentives in terms of cash and status. The Company introduced ‘good conduct’ pay in 1837. Those with clean slate for two years in a row was entitled to one rupee more after putting in sixteen years of service, and another two rupees a month after completing twenty years. In 1877, the pay structure was changed in order to incentivise the obedient sepoys by giving them an additional rupee every month after putting in three years of service.⁷⁷ The colonial state took every step to see that to ensure that when the soldiers retire and go back to their villages they are treated with respect and honour). In 1899, for instance, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts restored an old order providing precedence to Ex British army personnel while disposing civil cases in courts. Following suit, Lord Kitchener was able to extract an exemption from the Prime Minister of Nepal for the Gorkha soldiers from rendering compulsory corvee works. Soldiers were honoured and feted in public occasion.⁷⁸

The notion of military honour and pride are deeply woven into the psycho-social fabric of the Gorkhas in Darjeeling. The body of a ‘*Lahure*’ or a Gorkha soldier is at once the symbol of the masculine and erotic. The Darjeeling Carnival, an initiative by local groups associated with hotels and travel, routinely organised programmes in which the war veterans, particularly those who were conscripted during the World War I & II, were publicly feted. A War Memorial dedicated to the Gorkha martyrs is instituted at Batasia just outside Darjeeling town. On an elevated platform stands a thirty feet cenotaph with a nine feet soldier in bronze paying homage. The roll of honours is engraved on the platform of the cenotaph. The War Memorial at Batasia is a must visit place in the travel itinerary.

Taken together, the construction of the Gorkhas as ‘martial race’, and their recruitment into the British Army changed the course of the history of the community. At the discursive level, the discourse about race and geography effectively created a mechanism of disciplinary control over the hill societies by ‘civilising’ and normalising the ‘frontiers’.

⁷⁷ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: Indian Army, 1860-1940*, Macmillan Press, London, 1994, p. 67

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 69

As a result, the plural identities of the communities along with their fluidities came to be arrested from within and began to be represented and as a singular martial identity. The tribal identities of the hill communities were consequently essentialised, stereotyped and continuously reproduced through the discursive practice of the colonial state. Jeffrey Greenhut makes an interesting remark about the structure of racism in the British Indian Army. He says that the British deliberately labelled the most backward and illiterate as brave while the brighter ones were called cowards. On the other hand, the British Gentleman personified the virtues of intelligence and courage necessary to become an officer.⁷⁹

It is remarkable how colonial knowledges has outlived their times and persists in the spatial afterlife and imagination of Nepal among the Gorkhas in Darjeeling. Indeed, it is strongly anchored in the categories of military regiments, as martial traditions. The Gorkha Brigade in the Indian army or *paltaan*, as it is commonly referred to in Darjeeling, is divided into *Paschhime paltaan* (meaning Western regiment) and *Poorvelli paltaan* (meaning Eastern regiment), indicating the catchment areas for recruits in Nepal. The *Paschhime paltaan* generally takes recruits from the Gurung and Magar tribes, whereas the *Poorvelli paltaan* takes recruits from Rais and Limbus. An interesting fact came to light in this regard when the Tamang community was awarded the status of Scheduled Tribe in 2005. It was found that a large number of former army men belonging to the Tamang tribe who had served either in the *Paschhime* and *Poorvelli paltaans* had actually forged their 'caste certificate' from schools or panchayats and declared themselves as either Rai, Limbu, Gurung, or Magar.⁸⁰ After they were commissioned in the Indian army those army men belonging to the Tamang tribe were virtually for all practical purposes converted to any of the above four tribes. As a result, their wards and family members had to face serious difficulties acquiring Schedule Tribe certificates from authorities due to the change in the tribe.

What continues to remain remarkable is that the 'recruiting handbooks', authored by the British, with their accounts on races, climate, food, festivals, and the racial characteristics analysed above, do indeed continue to function as the backbone of military

⁷⁹ Jeffrey Greenhut, *Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship Between Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army*, *Military Affairs*, Vol. 48, No.1, January, 1984, pp.15-16

⁸⁰ Transpired in an interview with M.S. Bomzon, General Secretary, All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBA), Darjeeling. (12.03.2011) The Association was primarily responsible for certifying someone as Tamang before the Backward Classes Welfare Department would issue a 'caste certificate'.

bureaucracy and sense of tradition. The recruitment process in Gorkha regiments follow the same pattern as it was left behind by the British. Even though ‘tribe’ is not a necessary criterion there is nonetheless an unstated rule to favour those tribes who belong to specific geographical regions that have acted as traditional catchment areas. The aspirants are nowadays additionally required to acquire a ‘Gorkha’ certificate from the current district administration authorities. Even Lepchas, who are not Gorkhas were required to produce a ‘Gorkha’ certificate. It is after a sustained agitation by various Lepcha associations that they were exempted from this requirement.⁸¹

Conclusion

We began the study by looking at the ‘history’ of Darjeeling in terms of space, territory and its people in the first chapter. The study took the late eighteenth century as a sort of a starting point for our narrative. This was so not because there is no written record before that but because the study is primarily interested in unravelling the nature of the colonial encounter and its implications. This encounter, like elsewhere, took the form of an elaboration of the rationalist project in Darjeeling. Colonialism with its superior cognitive apparatus created a new ontological world. The fluid geographical space that was hitherto inscribed by sacred beliefs and rituals now came to be objectified with a new topography. The people themselves had their own specific forms of social conceptual world consisting of supernatural forces and spirits that was intertwined with these spaces. But cartography performed an incision on these spaces and created new frontiers and boundaries that violently ruptured the traditional forms of nomadic lives of peoples. The region that we know today as Darjeeling was always a part of the grand Himalayan land formations. But now this space and territory came to bear specific administrative identities and nomenclature lending itself to the grand imperial design. The making of the ‘Hill Station’ marked the beginning of the elaboration of colonial governmentality. Mapping and census became a necessary tool for converting ostensible barbarism into civilised data. The discovery and codification of tribes, their customs, traditions, and language together produced a discourse that, as we are well aware, has outlived colonialism. Along with the establishment of Hill station began a tea industry giving toehold to colonial capitalism. While imperial botany came in handy to tame the wild flora of the region, the taxonomy

⁸¹ See, GO. No. 13-229/2000 East. Dated: 10/09/2004 of Ministry of Culture Department, Government of India.

of race ensured a steady supply of captive labour force to work on the tea gardens. The steady expansion of Darjeeling town led to establishment of modern institutions of civic life howsoever in a limited form giving perhaps for the first time an opportunity to the Nepalis to get a sense of western cultural life. The Nepali nationalist discourse in some sense represents the intermeshing of a discourse produced by the modernising elites with careful insertion of aspects of working-class politics. We will take this up in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

Drawing upon the foundation laid down in the earlier chapter the present chapter draws a fairly broad canvas by first looking at the origin of the Gorkhas from the Kingdom of Gorkha. From there on the chapter has tried to trace the history of the coming into contact of the Gorkha forces with the East India Company. The decision of the Company to enlist the services of the Gorkhas becomes a crucial point for the study to embark on a textual study of the vast body of colonial literature on Gorkhas that came into existence subsequently. These texts consist of detailed description of the ‘martial’ tribes, their manners, and customs. They became, and still are, a useful guide for recruiting officers subsequently. Taking the insights provided by Michel Foucault, the present chapter has tried to study the colonial discourse in some of its varying forms. Taking three important works as representative texts, the chapter has made an attempt to show how the colonial state used the mode of bio-power as a disciplinary technology vis-a-vis the Gorkhas. The chapter argues that this disciplinary technology was directed on the Gorkhas both as a species as well as in terms of individual human body with an aim to objectify him so they can be manipulated and controlled. The study has shown the ways in which the colonial discourse produced a metaphysics of the Gorkha body in the texts that continue to guide policies. This very metaphysics informed the discursive practices in the Gorkha regiments and to a lesser extent in the tea gardens that employed ‘hill coolies’.

We have spent considerable amount of time trying to show that the idea of a ‘brave’ Gorkha is essentially a product of colonial discourse. Even so, we must not lose sight of the fact that the production and dissemination of this discourse did have real and lasting effect on the Gorkhas themselves, in terms of their self-construction. Bernard Cohn in his masterly study on the effect of census on the native societies argues that when the British undertook census enumeration the Indians were perhaps confronted with the

question of who they were. Cohn says the mere act of asking a specific set of question did not contribute much in this construction of castes. Conducting census at a mass scale was in itself an onerous task. According to Cohn it was actually the literate and educated Indians who voluntarily made census successful.⁸² And it was this highly significant section of people who showed much interest in census classification of castes and were actively involved in organising caste *sabhas* for petitioning authorities to have their caste status changed or altered.⁸³

Udaya Kumar has discussed similar kinds of developments in Kerala towards the end of nineteenth century where the operations of enumeration and ethnography had led to the formation of various caste organisations whose ‘actions, ideas, and ways of speaking generated by these organisations suggested new conceptions of the collectivity and caste identity. The caste organisations as a reaction to the efforts of enumeration and ethnography by the colonial authorities started writing their own histories and myths of origin. Kumar has called these new discourses of the community a ‘dovetailing of the ethnographic and the mythographic’.⁸⁴ Such a dovetailing of the ethnographic and the mythographic is also evident in the formation of the Gorkha identity. The nationalist discourse that came to be produced in the Nepali literary public sphere displayed similar tendencies. Beginning with the earliest demands for separate administrative set made in 1907 and the later demands made by the Hillmens’ Association in 1918 in Darjeeling point towards a combining of a discourse of the Nepalis as the descendants of Guru Gorakhnath sect of the Gorkha kingdom within a distinct modern language of prayer and petition to the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal.

In the following chapter we will try to map this very emergence of a modern sense of community among Gorkhas in the context of colonial public sphere. Drawing on the insights provided in the writings of Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Udaya Kumar and others an attempt will be made to trace the trajectory of the production of Nepali nationalist discourse through the cultural productions of the new middle class in the early part of the twentieth century colonial Darjeeling. The chapter shall try to show how this

⁸² Bernard Cohn, “The Census and Objectification in South Asia”, in Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, p. 248

⁸³ Ibid. p. 248

⁸⁴ Udaya Kumar, *Writing the First Person: Literature, History, and Autobiography in Modern Kerala*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2016, pp. 6-10

formation of identities indeed has had a direct bearing on the current politics and social configuration of Darjeeling and adjoining places.

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GORKHA COMMUNITY: COLONIAL PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE NEPALI NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

The discussion on public sphere or even colonial public sphere for that matter must inevitably begin with some preliminary discussion on the emergence of a public sphere in Europe. This emergence of the public sphere began with the destruction of traditional societies and the establishment of a bourgeois class and culture on the ruins of feudalism. Jurgen Habermas provides a neat historical trajectory of the rise of this public sphere as a domain that lies between the civil society and the state. The public sphere emerged historically as a space that created conditions promoting critical public discussion on matters of general interest. It must be borne in mind that the liberal public sphere as an institutionally guaranteed domain was taking shape in the backdrop of a developing market economy. The rise of the new class of bourgeoisie inevitably led to a conflict with the absolutist state. It was principally a clash between the now emerging market economy and the old and traditional practices of the absolutist state. The result of this conflict was that the hitherto existing sphere of the 'absolutist state' in which the rulers' sovereign power was displayed in all its symbolism before the common mass was replaced by a public sphere which now served as a platform that ensured public censure of the authority of the king. The role of public discourse attained its importance from this point.¹

Habermas goes on to elaborate the idea of bourgeois public sphere as sphere that facilitated the coming together of 'private' people as 'public'. This sphere which up until now was being regulated by the state was now turned against itself. This critical role primarily constituted in questioning and critiquing those very rules that governed relations between individuals in a market society. Such a form of political confrontation was indeed novel and without historical precedent. This was perhaps the first instance of people's public use of reason.² What Habermas discusses is the gradual evolution of modern political institutions in the aftermath of the decline of feudalism in Europe, and

¹ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. XI

² *Ibid.* p. 27

how these new democratic spaces and institutions eventually came under the control of the bourgeoisie.

But far away from Europe, the career of concepts like public sphere and civil society and the very establishment of modern state has a very different historical trajectory in the non-Western world. Sudipta Kaviraj suggests that modern power as it moved outside its traditional boundaries of Europe came to be known to the non-Western world by its specific features. These characteristics were derived from a mix of capitalism, liberalism, and colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than experiencing it as the sole universalising force of capital. He goes on to underscore the importance of modern sovereign state in the sense that the foreign powers defeated political regimes and used those regimes in introducing colonial power.³

The establishment of colonial states in non-Western world marks an important event with particular regard to our discussion in the sense that colonial sovereign states gave rise to early ideas of ‘civil society’ in at least two different ways. Kaviraj argues that the principal goal of European states was to stabilise their rule in the foreign land and hence the idea worked within a narrow sphere. They were wary of an attempt to bring all parts of life under their control. As a result, colonial rulers made a neat division of spheres where in one sphere the state exercised control while left the province of society largely untouched by the regulation of the state.

And with the growth of newspapers a public arena of discussion on common issues came into existence.⁴ Further development of economic processes like mining and extractive industries usually contributed to the growth of commercial classes, who showed astonishing subtlety in appreciating opportunities of enrichment created by the modern market.⁵ Thus, the colonial rulers perhaps out of habit as well as convenience laid down the first foundation of an early ‘civil society’ as it left out large parts of social life out of the ambit of direct control of state.⁶ However, in the middle of these paradoxes, the emergence of public sphere and civil society in the colonial world was

³ Sudipta Kaviraj, “In Search of Civil Society”, in Sunil Khilnani and Sudipta Kaviraj (eds.) *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 307-308

⁴ Ibid. p. 309

⁵ Ibid. p. 309

⁶ Ibid. p. 310

marked by the emergence of a new middle class that was distinctly urbanised and western educated.

But before we take the discussion on the development of colonial public sphere any further a brief discussion on the nature of development of institutions in the non-Western world is in order. It must be borne in mind that the peculiarity of the non-Western experience is not limited with regard to the evolution of modern state and civil society alone. It has been felt in many other spheres including the evolution of national community and nationalism. Here, it is instructive to briefly discuss Partha Chatterjee's refutation of Benedict Anderson's 'modular' forms of nationalism and his conceptualisation of the 'inner domain' and the 'outer domain' as the instance of deviation of Indian nationalism from the 'modular' forms as laid down by Anderson.⁷ In fact, Chatterjee's refutation comes at two levels in his influential work on nationalism.⁸ He first refutes the point made by Anderson that nationalism is not the determinate product of a pre-existing sociological conditions like language, race or religion. The argument being that in Europe and indeed in the rest of the world nationalism was imagined into existence through a combination of institutional forms that contributed to the development of the idea but most notably it was the contribution of 'print capitalism'. The second point Chatterjee refutes is the point made by historians of Indian nationalism with regard to the origin of nationalism in India. He points out that most 'standard nationalist history' identifies the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1985 as the formal beginning of Indian nationalism.

Taking the specific case of rise of Indian nationalism, Chatterjee argues that Indian nationalism long before it became manifest in its political form around 1885 went through a process of creating specific domains – inner and outer – as sites for claiming sovereignty. He says that anticolonial nationalism before it launched itself into a political struggle against the British began claiming sovereignty over the colonial society. It did this by effectively carving out two separate spheres –the inner and outer, in other words, the spiritual world and the material world.⁹ The material world, according to Chatterjee, is the domain that is constituted by the outside, that is the area of economy, statecraft,

⁷ For details, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006

⁸ Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?", in Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 3- 13

⁹ *Ibid.* p.6

science and technology. Anticolonial nationalism, in a way, acknowledged the superiority of the West in the regard. The task for the East was to essentially ‘study and replicate’ those accomplishments. The spiritual, on the other hand, represented by ‘inner’ domain was the domain of spirituality and cultural identity. In a peculiar way anticolonial nationalism strived to imitate the success of the West in the outer/material domain and yet struggled to shut out the inner domain from the outer - Western – influence. ¹⁰

The colonial state also introduced key educational reforms that resulted in the formation of new Europeanized class of elites who were becoming familiar with European forms of social life. Here, Homi Bhabha’s study of ‘mimicry’ as a strategy deployed by colonial rule in its desire to make colonial power and knowledge an effective tool of control merits discussion. He begins by foregrounding the English philosophers like Locke and Mill in the way their ideas of liberalism and freedom though claiming to be universal made exceptions about the non-European people. Bhabha thus likened English colonialism to a forked tongue. According to him, colonialism tried to ‘civilise’ the colonised people and introduce them to universal History and yet it made no sincere attempt to fully ‘civilise’ them. ¹¹ Instead, colonial discourse sought to produce a subject that was at once ‘reformed and recognisable’ but nonetheless different. For Bhabha colonial discourse is fundamentally ambivalent in the sense that ‘mimicry’ as a strategy of discourse must necessarily produce ‘slippage’, ‘excess’, ‘difference’ making it a sign of double articulation that seeks to reform, regulate, discipline and appropriate the Other all at the same time. ¹² At the same time, this by imitative enthusiasm was a key element that developed a literary public sphere.

At this point it is imperative to briefly dwell on Anderson’s point about impact of print capitalism in the development of an imagined community. For Anderson the invention of print as a commodity was central to the imagination of nation. He says that the coming of print produced the idea of simultaneity or what he calls the ‘horizontal secular – transverse time’. ¹³ The idea of nation became more popular among communities that developed print technology. The expansion of print as a commodity,

¹⁰ Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?”, in Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 6

¹¹ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 122

¹² Ibid p. 122

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, p. 37

according to Anderson, had a lot to do with the development and expansion of capitalism itself. Anderson traces the history of print capitalism in Europe to the sixteenth century when books were mainly published in Latin and how very soon due to some extraneous reasons like the shortage of money the printers soon began publishing in vernacular and started looking for markets beyond Europe.¹⁴ This vernacular thrust of capitalism gave impetus to Protestantism and also the development of administrative vernacular in an otherwise fragmented political system in Europe. These factors, in Anderson's estimate, directly led to the development of national consciousness in Europe.¹⁵

To return to the discussion on colonial civil society and colonial publics, Sanjay Joshi's seminal work on the making of the middle class in North India points to the fact that the middle class commanded power not so much on the basis of economic power as much as it commanded cultural capital.¹⁶ This middle class, Joshi suggests, has to be defined beyond the simple economic indicators of income and occupation. Joshi points to the historical tendency among the middle class who shared common background in terms of profession, occupation, and education to engage in the production of a new site of cultural politics and at once become products of this very process. The production of such a site of politics and agency allowed them to exchange among the social class a radically modern set of mores, norms and beliefs that set them apart from other social classes.¹⁷

Francesca Orsini's comprehensive work on the emergence of public sphere in the colonial North India in the early decades of the last century looks at the role of this educated middle class in creating new institutional spaces.¹⁸ For Orsini these institutions came in the form of press, education and school, literary genres, associations and political activities that at once provided a new space for both concrete and discursive production of Hindi and Hindu as a dominant ideology.¹⁹ Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty's study of the origins of Bengali modernity emphasize on the role of *adda* as a modern institution constructed by the Bengali middle class designed to serve as a site

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, p. 38

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 39-41

¹⁶ Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p. 2

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 7

¹⁸ Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism (1920 - 1940)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p. 7

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 7

for self-presentation and cultivation of a new style of being in the eyes of the other. The *adda* as such afforded a space for the middle class to produce a modern Bengali reading public.²⁰

A further engagement with the colonial middle class reveals some interesting facets of their lives. In this regard, Sumit Sarkar's study of the ready acceptance of Ramakrishna by the emerging *bhadralok* (educated middle class) in colonial Calcutta in the age of *Kaliyuga* (Modern age) provides us with the rare insight into the world of contradictions in the life of the colonial middle class. The coming together of the Ramakrishna – a rustic Brahman – and the urban educated middle class, for Sarkar, revealed the deep-seated unhappiness with English culture that ruled their surface lives of the colonial middle class.²¹ For Sarkar, Ramakrishna was the Other that was constructed by the *bhadralok* in the sense that despite Ramakrishna's opposition to book learning and activism that have become the defining characteristic of the social group, devotion towards Ramakrishna did not demand a break with the normal forms of life of the *bhadralok*. He could still carry on with his new life, of course enriched by spirituality and inner life that suited the demands of the times. Ramakrishna's *bhakti* (devotion) afforded an antidote for a social group that was suffering from a sense of alienation from the roots.

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As stated earlier the establishment of civil society, or public sphere for that matter, in non-Western societies went on to follow a trajectory quite different from the place where it first emerged. Partha Chatterjee makes an important intervention in the debate surrounding civil society in post-colonial societies. He says that the emergence of modern state in India, particularly in the post-colonial phase, is marked by the expansion of the legal bureaucratic apparatus of the state to encompass virtually all the population as the targets of its activities. But quite unlike the expansion of the legal bureaucratic apparatus the institutions of civil society that is central to the modern associational life based on the notion of equality, autonomy and freedom of entry and exit continue to remain limited to a very a small group of people who are 'citizens'. This deviation, Chatterjee further suggests, is central to the characteristic feature of modernity in the

²⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Adda: A History of Sociality", in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 187-188

²¹ Sumit Sarkar, "Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti: Ramakrishna and His Times", in Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 284 - 285

²² Ibid. pp. 287-288

Non-Western world. The peculiarity of non-Western modernity, to Chatterjee, is its incompleteness, that the project of modernisation then opens up social space for those members of the civil society, the enlightened elites, who now arrogate to themselves a messianic role of educating and transforming the society.²³

Let us not forget that the colonial state created a civil society with the principal aim of legitimising the foreign rule. But since the foreign rule was based on colonial difference, the membership of the civil society had to be but limited to a small group as the colonial state did not grant citizenship to any and everyone. The colonised subjects in response refused to accept the membership of this civil society of subjects and began constructing their national identity very much grounded within the narrative of community.²⁴ This important theoretical intervention about the salience of community in colonial modernity provides us with an appropriate point of entry into the immediate historical site of our discussion.

By the turn of the nineteenth century Darjeeling had carved a space for itself in the imagination of the British. It had not only become a hill station bustling with activities, it had also earned itself a reputation as the “Queen of Hills”. Like elsewhere, Darjeeling also witnessed the slow process of establishment of civil society and civic institutions along the European lines even while remaining an incomplete project.²⁵ To briefly recall the previous chapter as a thread intersecting here, let us note again that, like elsewhere, the operations of governmental technologies had a deep impact on the formation of Gorkha identity in Darjeeling. The objectification of the Gorkha identity and the body of the Gorkha itself, we have demonstrated, is the product of governmental technologies in the form of enumeration – such as census. Such processes were

²³ Partha Chatterjee, “Post-colonial Civil and Political Society”, in Sunil Khilnani and Sudipta Kaviraj (eds.) *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 172. Also see, “Beyond the Nation? Or Within?” in Partha Chatterjee, *Empire and Nations: Essential Writings 1985-2005*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2010, pp. 164-177

²⁴ Partha Chatterjee, “Communities and Nation”, in Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.237

²⁵ Madan Gurung and Passang Bhutia (eds.) *Souvenir: Darjeeling Municipality (1850 – 2000)*, published by Darjeeling Municipality, Darjeeling, 2000. Ram Sharma (ed.) *Mirmireka Ujyala*, (In Nepali) published by GDNS, Darjeeling, 1998. Sadeep Pradhan, *Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan* (In Nepali), Darjeeling, Gama Prakashan, Darjeeling, 2012. R. P. Lama, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan: Darjeeling (1924 – 1999): An Introduction*, published by Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling, 1999. Sanjay Biswas, *Samjhanako Kuirobhitra Kanchanjunga Atitko* (In Nepali), Published by Chumki Biswas, Darjeeling, 2009. Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996. Rune Bennike, “‘A Summer Place’: Darjeeling in the Tourist Gaze”, in, Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.), *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018

supplemented, as Udaya Kumar suggests, by the extensive ethnography, that provided anthropological substance to the presence of distinction within castes and religious communities. The project of governance and production of colonial knowledge relied on sundry sources like myths of origin, occupational profiles, customary practices, and physiognomic features. Paradoxically, and this our point of departure, these very sources supplied vital components in the construction of new community identities.²⁶ Kumar goes on to show how the governmental technologies of enumeration and ethnography contributed in producing a new social were the newly formed identities based on caste, race and religion fashioning a new language of identities. This new discourse of communities was a curious mixture of the empirical and the myths of origins the communities produced about themselves. The language of the community identities of the time, seems to parallel the curious combination of governmental and sovereign vocabularies of power and subjection under colonial rule.²⁷

Taking cues from this insight, the present chapter will make a modest attempt to trace the development of a public sphere and civil society institutions in Darjeeling, which coincided with a larger discursive formation of the Gorkha from the members of its community. We will mainly focus on the contributions of literary and social associations in creating a new social as well as a ‘print public sphere’ where a new Gorkha identity came to be shaped.

In addition to the above discussion, a further, and somewhat theoretical engagement with the social process of identity formation in Darjeeling is in order. This becomes necessary because what we are calling Nepali/Gorkha is actually a coalescing of various ‘ethnic/tribal’ groups that became possible in last decades of 19th century and early part of 20th century colonial Darjeeling. Allow me to limit this discussion to the work of Frederik Barth for our immediate purpose. Frederik Barth’s critical anthropological insights on the social evolution of identity out of plural cultures can according to me prove instructive in mapping the experiences of the Gorkhas in Darjeeling. Interestingly enough, Barth begins by rejecting the idea that common culture is the primary and definitional characteristic of any cultural group organisation. In place of this, Barth emphasizes the fact that culture is nothing but an “implication” or “result”

²⁶ Udaya Kumar, *Writing the First Person: Literature, History, and Autobiography in Modern Kerala*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2016, p. 7

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 10

of inter-group relations. This is so because, for Barth, cultural features that signal the boundary of the cultural group keep constantly changing. This becomes possible because membership in the cultural group is based on only socially relevant criteria.²⁸ Thus, for any process of inclusion or exclusion the features that are taken into account are not the totality of physical differences but only such aspects that the members of the group find it necessary. He goes on to suggest that members of cultural groups use cultural features as markers of difference while ignoring those aspects that may be actually pointing towards commonality among groups. And in certain cases, radical differences are overlooked. He says that constant interaction among different cultural groups result not only in the formulation of common codes and values, but also regulation of social interaction that will at the same time ensure the maintenance of cultural difference. He further adds that in all organised social life what can be made relevant to interaction in any particular situation is proscribed. This structuring of interaction involves a set of things that are permissible with regard to inter group interactions and also setting rules for what aspects of social life and activity may be talked about and what is to be left out untouched. It also means that certain things are proscribed in social situations that have the potential to create rift in inter- group interactions. Hence, some aspects of culture are insulated from any unnecessary confrontation and modification.²⁹ Things, as we shall see, were not very differently structured in the Gorkha community.

Migration, memory and the diasporic subject

Before we go into the specific theme of print capitalism, literary public sphere and the production of Nepali nationalist discourse it is imperative to trace the formation of Nepali *jati* (nation)³⁰ in Darjeeling. Among the many factors that brought the various tribes together, the factor of memory and ‘migration’ appear crucial to the political and social imagination of the Nepalis in Darjeeling. Of course, the issue of ‘migration’ has become a thorny issue lately. Many social organisations based in the plains of Siliguri and beyond have been openly labelling the Nepalis in Darjeeling as ‘illegal migrants’ from Nepal.³¹ It

²⁸ Frederik Barth, (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. George Allen & Unwin, 1969, pp. 14-15

²⁹ Frederik Barth, (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. George Allen & Unwin, 1969, p. 16

³⁰ The word *jati* does not lend itself to easy translation. The term ‘nation’ has been deployed here to loosely mean a group of people with a common culture, language, religion and a myth of origin.

³¹ Take for instance the Siliguri based civil society group like Bangla O Bangla Bhasha Banchoa Committee. For details about the organization and its activities please visit their official blog: Bangla O

is interesting to note in passing here that of late many political parties have visibly started carrying along the Indian national flag in most political demonstrations in Darjeeling. Earlier we have discussed the role of colonial capitalism behind the eastward movement of people to Darjeeling in some detail to not merit elaborate repetition here. The word ‘movement’ has been, at the same time, used advisedly as mapping and cartography had not taken cognizance of the fluid human geography of the ‘virgin’ hills. One may further add that Darjeeling always had a significant population which was not ‘discovered’ by the governmental technologies of the colonial state.

To drive the point of migration and memory home, with suitable illustrations, let us take up an interesting exchange that took place between the poet Laxuman Lohani from Nepal and poet Agam Singh Giri from Darjeeling in the backdrop of *Gaon Farka Rashtriya Abhiyan* (Back to Village National Campaign) in Nepal. This particular campaign was initiated by Nepal’s Panchayat regime between the years 1967 – 1975 urging young Nepalese to return to their villages and live among village communities to usher in a new development. It was around the year 1975 that some of the famous theatre personalities and artists from Nepal like Nati Kaji, Tara Devi, and Pushpa Nepali travelled to Darjeeling. The singer Pushpa Nepali had then sung the song *Farka hai farka Nepali, timilai dakchha Nepal* (return, all Nepalis please return, Nepal beckons you) composed by Laxuman Lohani, in the GDNS Hall.³² To which the poet Agam Singh Giri gave a moving response. It was a response made all the more moving by its ambivalence and unsureness that slips out of the interstices of the text. In his widely popular song *Suna hai suna Nepali* he writes:

Suna hai suna Nepali, hamila dakchha himali

Aanshuko binti pokhera ragatko maaya sanghali

Mutu yo haamro chirinchha, pira ra markaa biijaunchha

Paschim Pahar byunjhera hamilai jaba thitaunchha

Thitaina deu hamila nirball banna shikai

Bangla Bhasha Banchao Committee | Official blog of the Bangla Bhasha Society (wordpress.com). Also see, D. P. Kar, Gorkhaland Movement: A Clandestine Invasion, Published by Janachetna, Siliguri, 2009

³² Satish Rasaily, “*Girika Kewal Kehi Geetharoo*” (In Nepali) in, K.M.S. Subba, L. B. Rai et. al. (eds.) *Samjhauni: Sangeet Madhuri* (A commemorative volume on Nepali songs) (In Nepali) published by GDNS, Darjeeling, 2001, pp. 64-65

*Farkana pare farkaunla pranako baaji lagai...*³³

Listen, listen all Nepalis, Nepal beckons us

Nepal is pleading with tears and invoking our blood ties

Our hearts are torn apart, reminds us our pain and sufferings

The western hills are awake and pleading us to return

Please don't call us, help us to be strong here

If we ever have to then we shall wager our lives and come back...

[Translation mine]

In much of what Agam Singh Giri has written one can see the traces of what Frederic Jameson had called the 'national allegory'.³⁴ Indeed, the literary production in the Nepali public sphere has successfully canonised the idea of *jati ko unnati* (progress of the community) as the central motif.³⁵ In Kumar Pradhan's assessment Agam Singh Giri's writings represent the desire of the Nepalis in Darjeeling to develop a new language of kinship and brotherhood. The writer works on two separate registers; one traces and recounts the history of strife, struggle and diasporic yearning, and at another level, it tries to map the desire of the community to create a national feeling bound together with common history and memory.³⁶ And this not a specific characteristic of Giri's writings alone. Indeed, most Nepali writers writing around 1950s wrestled with the subject that was trying to navigate through the complex terrain of collective oppression, migration and memory.

This material history has not only been a part of the folklore but has also been subjectively reconstructed in in some of the major works in Nepali literature. Novels like Lilabhadur Chhetri's, *Basaai* (Settlement), and *Brahmaputra Ko Chheeu Chhaau* (On

³³ Chandra Sharma and Sujata Rani Rai (eds.) *Agam Singh Giri Rachnavali*, Vol 1, (In Nepali) Nirman Prakashan, Namchi, Sikkim, 1998, pp. 642-643

³⁴For Jameson the nature of relation between the 'subjective, public and political' quite unlike the 'First World is wholly different in 'Third World Literature'. He says that even those texts that are private and having the property of libidinal even then makes room for projecting a political dimension in the form of national allegory. Frederic James, Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism, *Social Text*, Autumn, 1986, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), p. 6

³⁵ For a detailed discussion, see, Pratyoush Onta, Creating a Brave Nepali Nation in British India: The Rhetoric of *Jati* Improvement, Rediscovery of Bhanubhakta and the Writings of Bir History, in *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. I, No.1, June, 1996, pp. 37-76

³⁶ Kumar Pradhan, "Agam Singh Girika Kabitama Jatiyata ko Bhawana" (In Nepali), in Kumar Pradhan, *Adhiti Kehi* (In Nepali), Purnima Prakashan, Siliguri, p. 121

the Banks of Brahmaputra), Laina Sing Bangdel's, *Muluk Bahira* (Outside the Homeland), and Rudraraj Pande's *Prayaschit* (Penance), were all predicated on the leitmotif of migration and memory.³⁷ It may be worth unpacking the plots in some of the novels to illustrate the point of memory. Let us take Laina Singh Bangdel's *Muluk Bahira* that narrates the story of Rane and Myauchi. Like most people living in *pahad*³⁸, Rane too lived a marginal life steeped in poverty and hardship. Young and able-bodied men like Rane would often travel eastward to *Munglan*³⁹ the older name for the area called Darjeeling to work as wood cutters along the banks of river Teesta during the winter months.

On one such winter month Myauchi, a young and jovial woman run away with hordes of people travelling to *Munglan* just to run away from the drudgery of peasant life. Working in the banks of Teesta the two young *pravashi* man and woman fall in love. People come to know about their budding love and soon Khaling Buda arranges their marriage. Rane and Myauchi occasionally get into a tiff and on one such occasion Myauchi runs away from Rane to her friends. Rane goes looking after Myauchi. Finding Myauchi with her friends Rane forces her to return home with him. On their way Rane accuses Myauchi of sitting next to Maila Bhujel and flirting with him. The pure hearted Myauchi is heart broken by this accusation and refuses to go home. Rane is filled with anger and jealousy. He ties Myauchi's hands and pushes her into the gushing water of Teesta River. Having lost his moorings Rane runs away from that place and enlists himself in the British Army at the Gorkha Recruiting Depot in Darjeeling. Rane is soon posted to Quetta in Balochistan during the 1st world war. At the end of the war Rane returns to live in Darjeeling. The novel thus captures the stories of strife and struggle of Nepalese people who left their home and hearth to come to *Munglan*.

The story of Rane, according to Michael Hutt, captures the poverty and hardship of the Nepalis. Hutt says that year after year the poor by their thousands, uneducated and lowly people left behind their home and hearth (*muluk*) and entered *Munglan* (India) and Burma. They began to live in these places and with time became local residents

³⁷ Michael Hutt, "Being Nepali without Nepal: Reflections on a South Asian Diaspora", in David N. Gellner et. al. (ed.), *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Netherlands, 1997, p.102. p.140

³⁸ *Pahad* means hill in Nepali. But more specifically *pahad* refers to the mid hills of present-day Nepal.

³⁹ Darjeeling was known as *Munglan* in the *pahad* region back in Nepal.

(*raithane*). Once they settled in *pravas* (another land) they never dreamt of returning to their country (*muluk*).⁴⁰

The reasons are similar for the huge popularity of Manbahadur Mukhia's drama, *Ani Deorali Roonchha* (And the Valley Cries) not only in Darjeeling but also in Nepal. Songs like *Nau Laakhe Tara Udayo*, a lyrical poetry written by Agam Singh Giri and sung before the visiting King Mahendra by Gagan Gurung in 1959, struck an emotional chord with the Nepalis in Darjeeling.⁴¹ The following lines from the song are worth quoting in this context:

Na samjha aaja Nepali sanchole yahan bancheko;

Kada kai majha pahadi phul chhaina ra kahan hanseko;

Suna ko sapana aanshu ma kina po bandhi lyayau nee;

Mana ko aago nevhauna kina po yahan aayau nee.

Don't think the Nepalis are living here [in Darjeeling] peacefully;

Living amidst thorns, the flowers of the hills are without their smiles;

Tying your dreams of gold with tears why did you bring it here;

To douse the flames of your heart why did you come here?

[Translation mine]

The new sense of belonging of the migrants to Darjeeling was thus ridden with tension, and bearing wounds of the remembered *muluk*. At the same time, it no longer quite belonged to the *muluk*, the emotions were beginning to lean more towards making a home in the *pravash*, without entirely losing the links with their *muluk*.

Nepali language, colonial public sphere, reading public and the discourse of community

The Nepali literary public sphere proved central to the production of discourse of Nepali nationalism in Darjeeling. The production of the reading public, like elsewhere, became

⁴⁰ Michael Hutt, "Where is the Home for an Indian Nepali Writer?", in T. B. Subba, A.C. Sinha et. al. (eds.) *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 33-34

⁴¹ Sanjay Biswas, *Samjhanako Kurobhitra Kanchanjunga Atitko* (In Nepali), Published by Chumki Biswas, Darjeeling, 2009, p. 21

possible only with the invention of print technology and standardization of Nepali language. Acknowledging the centrality of language, let us briefly outline and discuss the history of Nepali language. The trajectory includes standardization of the language and the circulation of printed books among the new educated middle class. One begins to witness the traces of a reading culture and the production of a new sociality perhaps loosely resembling an urban modernity in Darjeeling in the following section. This is what we take up in what follows.

The fact that Nepali language has played a crucial role in the formation and articulation of Nepali identity can be hardly overemphasized. This fact will come into sharp relief when we take into account the fact that each of the tribes and communities spoke in their own dialects. Just to give an idea of the sheer diversity in terms of tribes and languages let us take the case of the Rai (*Khambu*) community. A recent study by Reena Rai on the community has identified no fewer than ten sub tribes within the Rai community where each of them spoke with separate dialects.⁴² There is, in fact, a new revivalist movement that is sweeping the political and socio-cultural landscape of Darjeeling hills where there is talk of Nepali language being dominant' and hegemonic.⁴³ In this context Samar Sinha argues that following the rise of Nepali identity movement based on Nepali language, other languages within the 'Nepali speech community have lost their pace and space in the linguistic ecological condition of Darjeeling and Sikkim'.⁴⁴

The Nepali language is part of the Indo-Aryan family. Long before the language came to be known as 'Nepali', it was referred with various names like *Khus-Kura*, *Purbate or Parbatiyya* or *Gorkhali*.⁴⁵ The entry of the Rajputs into the Himalayan region of present-day Nepal following the Muslim invasion in India, led to the disintegration of the *Khasa* Empire from the thirteenth century. This led to the eastward movement of the *Khasas*. A good number of principalities came up after the fall of the *Khasa* empire) and various dialects of the *Khasa* speech were spoken in the present-day Kathmandu

⁴² The ten sub-tribes are: *Kulung*, *Thulung*, *Bantawa*, *Sampang*, *Rakhali*, *Dumi*, *Nechali*, *Nachhiring*, *Chamling*, *Rokdung*, etc. Reena Rai, "Sikkimko Sandharvhama Bhasha ko Biluptikaran: *Kulung Bhashako Addhyann*", (In Nepali) in Tekbahadur Chhetri (ed.) *Sikkimka Bhasha: Dasa Abom Disha*, (In Nepali) Published by Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Sikkim, 2020, p. 141. There is a popular Nepali saying: *jati Rai uti koora*. Meaning there are as many Rai languages as there are Rais.

⁴³ The movement and dynamics of cultural revivalism as witnessed in Darjeeling is discussed in Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ Samar Sinha, "Endangerment of Indigenous Languages in Sikkim", in, Tekbahadur Chhetri (ed.) *Sikkimka Bhasha: Dasa Abom Disha*, (In Nepali) Published by Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Sikkim, 2020, p. 94

⁴⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 3

valley.⁴⁶ It appears that the name *Khas Kura* itself was given by the Mongoloids who spoke Tibeto-Burman language. The *Newars* of Katmandu called it *Khay-Bhay*. It was also known as *Parbatiya* or mountain dialect.⁴⁷ Among the number of principalities, the house of Gorkha became the most powerful kingdom. Prithivinarayan Shah, the King of Gorkha, overpowered the three principalities in the present-day Kathmandu Valley between the years 1768-69, and subsequently the eastern part was also conquered by his successors. The *Khas* speech which was spoken by the Gorkhas of the Gorkha Kingdom at this point became the language of the *darbar* and the administration. This language then came to be known as *Gorkha bhasa* (Gorkha language).⁴⁸

This Gorkha *bhasa* played a pivotal role bringing together the ethnic groups.⁴⁹ In Nepal the people use to speak in their own dialects among their friends and kin groups. The British Resident Brian Hodgson's study on the language, literature and religion of Nepal and Tibet talks about the presence of thirteen languages and dialects that are confined to the hilly region of the kingdom of Nepal.⁵⁰ The languages Hodgson listed are the *Khus* or *Parbattili*, the Magar, the Gurung, the Sunwar, the Kachari, the Haiyu, the Chepang, the Koosunda, the Moormi, the Newari, the Kiranti, the Limbuan) and the *Lepchan*.⁵¹ Though Kumar Pradhan has cited many instances where Nepali was used to denote the Gorkha *bhasa*, the language in Darjeeling was popularly known as Gorkha *bhasa* till the the forming of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (Nepali Literature Organisation) in 1924.⁵² Even in Nepal, the state funded literary institution was named as *Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti*. It was only in 1932 that the Government of Nepal replaced the name Gorkha *bhasa* with Nepali *bhasa*.

Surveying the broad canvas of the history of Nepali literature, Kumar Pradhan identifies the period between 1880 – 1940 as founding period of the Nepali literary sphere. This period witnessed a sudden growth in the publication of Nepali journals.⁵³ These journals played a crucial role in first creating a reading public and then disseminating new ideas to then. The first periodical to be published in Nepali was

⁴⁶ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 6

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 6

⁴⁸ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 1-11

⁴⁹ C.M. Bandhu, The Role of Nepali Language in Establishing the National Unity an Identity of Nepal, in *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayan Studies*, Vol. XV. No.3-4., 1989, pp.121-177

⁵⁰ Quoted in Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 3-4

⁵¹ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 4

⁵² Ibid, p.10

⁵³ Ibid. p. 73

Gorkha Bharat Jiwan, edited by Motiram Bhatta and published from Benares in 1886.⁵⁴ Motiram Bhatta is said to have formed a literary circle of young poets in 1881 in Benares. The primary goal of the circle was to create a conducive atmosphere to encourage the members of the circle to compose poems and to train them in the craft of writing. This circle came to be known as ‘*Moti Mandali*’. Young poets like Padamvilas Pantha, Kashinath, Ranganath, Chetansingh and Tejbahadur Rana were part of the *Mandali*.⁵⁵ Benares for a very long time was the centre of Hindu spiritual authority for the Shahs and Ranas as well as for the common folks in Nepal. But with the Nepali literary movements inaugurated by figures like Motiram Bhatta this traditional authority of Benares came to be replaced by new experiments in literary movements as also the development of printing and publishing industry.⁵⁶ We will return to print technology, the Nepali public sphere and the new modes of literary expression in a while. At this moment it is important to remember that the Nepali literary sphere constituted of a wider geographical region bringing together three distinct locations of Darjeeling, Kathmandu and Benares. As a result, the literary movements and experiments actually created a wider reading public than the conventional geography we understand as inhabited by Nepalis. Even today the circulation of printed material in Nepali language largely follows this historical pattern.

Gorkhapatra was another influential weekly newspaper that began publishing in 1901 from Kathmandu.⁵⁷ It carried news and serialised novels and published stories. Similarly, *Sundari* published from Benares was started in 1906. It gave more prominence to poetry. *Madhavi* was another notable literary journal, started in 1908 and edited by Rammani Acharya Dikshit that gave prominence to both prose and poetry.⁵⁸ In the second decade a literary journal *Gorkhali* began publication from Benares around 1921 edited by Devi Prasad Sapkota. *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* was another prominent monthly published in Darjeeling and edited by Ganga Prasad Pradhan between 1901 to 1932.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 73

⁵⁵ Mohan P. Dahal, “*Moti Mandali, Benares*” (1881), in Mohan P. Dahal (ed.), *Hamra Sanstha: Ek Parichaya*, (In Nepali) *Sumeru Publication*, Siliguri, 2008, p. 1

⁵⁶ Rhoderick Chalmers, *Pandits and Pulp Fiction: Popular Publishing and the Birth of Nepali Print Capitalism in Benares*, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol 7, No. 1, June, 2002, pp. 36-37

⁵⁷ Nirvik Thapa, *A Peek into the Hundred- and Twenty-Year-Old History of Gorkhapatra*, *The Annapurna Express*, 03.09.2021. Available online: theannapurnaexpress.com/news/a-peek-into-the-120-year-old-history-of-gorkhapatra-3580 (accessed on 12.02.2022)

⁵⁸ Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 74

⁵⁹ Salom Karthak, “*Gorkha Khabar Kagat ko Ubaru Khabar*”, in Narbahadur Dahal and Dr. Edon Rongong (eds.) *Ajambari Ganga Prasad Pradhan: Shrasta Haroo ko Dristima* (In Nepali), Published by Ekta Book House, Siliguri, 2012, p. 171

Alongside these crucial developments in the field of publication of literary journals and newspapers and their circulation, another important development that was taking place in the literary public sphere was the engagement of the emerging middle class in the politics of pedagogical. For long, Benares had been the centre of the development of Nepali print capitalism catering to students. The need for publishing Nepali school textbooks in Darjeeling now became their new focus. Parasmani Pradhan's contribution in producing over thirty original textbooks has been richly documented.⁶⁰ Rhoderick Chalmers makes an interesting observation with regard to the shifting of textbook writing from Benares to Darjeeling. He says this shift of location was not merely a logistical change but it also meant a shift from Brahminical tradition to Western-oriented modernism.⁶¹

Having broadly outlined the developments within the Nepali literary public sphere in the preceding sections it is necessary to dwell a bit on the development of Nepali print capitalism. As mentioned earlier, it was towards the end of the nineteenth century that Benares established itself as the centre of Nepali print capitalism. And it remained so till around the second decade of twentieth century. The place became the centre of Nepali print capitalism and also the birth place of modern literature in Nepali as Motiram Bhatta (1866-1897) had adopted this place as his home.⁶² But as mentioned earlier, print capitalism soon made its way to Darjeeling. This coming of print in Darjeeling mainly happened through the Christian missionaries. In fact, the first book to be published in Nepali was J.A. Ayton's, *A Grammar of Nepali Language*, published by the missionaries in Serampore.⁶³ In Darjeeling itself the Christian missionaries established the first printing apparatus in the year 1870 known as the Scott Mission Orphanage Press. The first books that came out from the Scott Mission Press were Nepali translations of Book of Genesis (1877), and St. Mathew (1877) translated by *Padari Ganga Prasad Pradhan* and St. McFarlane.⁶⁴ Through the closing decades of 19th century

⁶⁰ Rhoderick Chalmers, "Education, Institutions and Elites Building and Bounding Nepali Public Life in Early Twentieth Century India", in T. B. Subba, A.C. Sinha et. al. (eds.) *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 115-116

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 116

⁶² Rhoderick Chalmers, 'We Nepalis': Language, Literature and the Formation of a Nepali Public Sphere in India, 1914-1940, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2018, p. 58

⁶³ Mohan P. Dahal, "*Darjeeling Zillako Mudran Itihaasma Gorkha Press ra Hari Printing Press*", (In Nepali) in Narbahadur Dahal and Dr. Edon Rongong (eds.) *Ajambari Ganga Prasad Pradhan: Shrasta Haroo Ko Dristima* (In Nepali), Published by Ekta Book House, Siliguri, 2012, p. 181.

⁶⁴ Mohan P. Dahal, "*Darjeeling Zillako Mudran Itihaasma Gorkha Press ra Hari Printing Press*", (In Nepali) in Narbahadur Dahal and Dr. Edon Rongong (eds.) *Ajambari Ganga Prasad Pradhan: Shrasta Haroo Ko Dristima* (In Nepali), Published by Ekta Book House, Siliguri, 2012, p. 181

the Mission Press churned out translations of Bible and other books. Notable among them are *The Proverb in Nepalese* (1877) by an anonymous author, and Archibald Turnbull's *A Nepali Grammar and English-Nepali*, and *Nepali & Nepali English Vocabulary* (1887).⁶⁵

By the turn of the twentieth century many more printing presses came up in Darjeeling. Around 1909 *Padari Ganga Prasad Pradhan* bought over the Scott Mission Press and renamed it as Gorkha Press. He personally ran the press between the years 1909 to 1932. It was during this period *Padari Ganga Prasad* came out with *Gorkha Khabar Kagat*, the literary journal. The Press also came out with books like *Nepali Pahilo Pustak*, *School Sodhunuttar*, *Ukhaan Pustak* among others.⁶⁶

The Hari Printing Press is also one of the earliest presses in Darjeeling. One Hari Singh Thapa who had earlier worked at Government press is said to have bought over the sick unit from the Government and took it to Kurseong where he renamed it as Hari Printing Press in the year 1917. The literary journal *Chandrika* edited by Parasmani Pradhan was published from Hari Press for a short period from 1918 – 19.⁶⁷ The material conditions of print capitalism had by this time established a modest but local logistical system of functioning.

Alongside these activities of writing and publishing a major development that came to redefine the Nepali literary sphere and indeed the future course of Nepali identity itself was with the establishment of the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* on May 25th, 1924.⁶⁸ Hari Prasad Pradhan who was unanimously elected the first President of the *Sammelan* addressed the gathering. His Presidential address was one of the earliest articulations of nationalism, mediated through the standardization of the Nepali language. As he stated:

We have felt that we might have to name this organization as *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* because the word Nepali denotes a broader meaning.

⁶⁵ Mohan P. Dahal, “*Darjeeling Zillako Mudran Itihaasma Gorkha Press ra Hari Printing Press*”, (In Nepali) in Narbahadur Dahal and Dr. Edon Rongong (eds.) *Ajambari Ganga Prasad Pradhan: Shrasta Haroo Ko Dristima* (In Nepali), Published by Ekta Book House, Siliguri, 2012, p p. 181, Also see, Kumar Pradhan, “*Padari Ganga Prasad Pradhanko Sandharvama*”, in Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, pp. 44-64

⁶⁶ Ibid. pp. 190-191

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 193

⁶⁸ R.P. Lama, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling: An Introduction*, Published by *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations: (1924-1999), 1999, p. 7

This word will signify all the *jatis* [ethnic groups] of Nepal like *Magar*, *Gurung*, *Kirati*, *Newar*, *Limbu*, etc. It will also help us in showing that all the above *jatis* are part of the one great Nepali nation. People might think that the real intention of this organization is to impose the language of the Gorkhalis, but these fears are baseless because Nepali has now become almost like a lingua franca of Himachal Pradesh. Though people living in this part speak different dialects there are hardly any who don't understand Nepali language...Moreover, no particular *jati* can claim the Nepali language to be their own.⁶⁹

Hari Prasad Pradhan was subsequently elected the president of *Sammelan* in 1924. The main objectives of the *Sammelan* were outlined as follows:

- a) To work for the development and promotion of Nepali language, literature and culture;
- b) Publication of original and translated literature;
- c) To hold literary seminars, exchange programmes, organize writers meet, symposiums, etc, to further the cause of Nepali language;
- d) Publication of literary magazines, souvenirs and other periodicals, to encourage young and upcoming writers and poets;
- e) To undertake research of ancient history, ancient literature, cultural heritage and civilization of Nepal.⁷⁰

While assessing the role of the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* the contribution of three leading poets of the time viz. Suryavikram Gyawali, Dharnidhar Koirala, and Parasmani Pradhan better known as *Su-dha-pa* stands out in prominence. Pratyoush Onta says that the proto-middle class principally identified education and Gorkha language as the means towards the self-improvement of the community. And this call for self-improvement resonated as the major concerns in the writings of *Su-dha-pa*.⁷¹ Dharnidhar Koirala's poem titled *Udbodhan* (clarion call) published in the third edition

⁶⁹ Quoted in Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, pp.37-38

⁷⁰ R.P. Lama, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan*, Darjeeling: An Introduction, Published by *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations: (1924-1999), 1999, p.12

⁷¹ Pratyoush Onta, *Creating a Brave Nepali Nation in British India: The Rhetoric of Jati Improvement, Rediscovery of Bhanubhakta and the Writings of Bir History*, in *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. I, No.1, June, 1996, p.39

of *Chandrika* in 1918, edited by Parasmani Pradhan, belongs to such genre. It is worth quoting here for our purpose

The poem runs as follows:

Jaaga jaaga abha jaagana jaaga;
Laaga oonnati bhise abaa laaga;
Ghuraa neendra aabata parityagaa;
Vho bhaayo aati sutew abaa jaaga;
Dessh bandhoo haroo ho ootha jaaga;
Laaga oonnati bhise abaa laaga;
Hera lau aru haru saba jage;
Desa unnati vise saba lage;
Hami haru pani lau aba jagaun;
Desa unnati vise saba lagaun.

Rise up now, you rise;
Now march towards the path of progress;
Forsake that slumber now;
Enough you have slept get up now
My dear country men get up, rise up;
March towards the path of progress;
Look around you; others have already woken up;
They are working hard for the progress of their country;
So let us also now wake up;
Let us also work hard for the progress of our country.

[Translation mine]

It may be interesting at this point to steel a glance at the colonial metropolitan locations. Until 1932, the Calcutta University had recognized Nepali as a language to be taught till the undergraduate level. But it was referred to as *Nepali Pahariya* or *Khas Koora*. The

Sammelan passed a resolution in its Executive Committee meeting held on 30th April, 1932 demanding the change in the nomenclature from *Nepali Pahariya* or *Khas Kura* to simply Nepali. Accordingly, the resolution of the *Sammelan* signed by Shri Gobardhan Gurung, Vice Chairman of the *Sammelan* was addressed to the Vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta on 4th May, 1932.⁷² The University of Calcutta endorsed the proposal of the *Sammelan* the following month. A letter informing the renaming the language as Nepali was addressed to the Secretary, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan*. The letter signed by J. C. Chakrabarty, Assistant Registrar is dated 30th May 1932.⁷³ The *Sammelan* expanded its activities in the field of Nepali language. Its activities remained unfazed in the postcolonial period. The *Sammelan* placed a memorandum before the Governor of West Bengal for teaching Nepali at the post-graduate level in 1961. Accordingly, at the personal initiative of Governor of West Bengal Shri A. L. Dias the University of North Bengal began post-graduate course in 1977.⁷⁴ Similarly, as a result of the tireless efforts of the members of the *Sammelan*, the *Sahitya Akademi* recognised Nepali as an independent modern literary language.⁷⁵

Around the middle of the twentieth century, the *Sammelan* trained its attention towards making Nepali language as the official language in the hills of Darjeeling. Towards this end the members of the *Sammelan* met the Prime Minister Nehru and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal on 10th April, 1961 at Rajbhavan, Darjeeling and submitted a memorandum for expediting the recognition of Nepali as the official language in the hill regions of Darjeeling. Subsequently, the state Assembly passed the West Bengal Act XXIV of 1961 declaring Nepali as one of the official languages in the hills.⁷⁶

Alongside these developments the 1970s witnessed the demand for recognising Nepali language as one of the languages within the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution started gaining serious momentum. The immediate reason for the movement was the refusal of Gurudayal Singh, the then Speaker of Lok Sabha, to allow Ratanlal Brahmin (popularly known as *Maila Bajey*) to take his oath in Nepali as a member in the fifth Lok

⁷² R.P. Lama, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling: An Introduction*, Published by *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations: (1924-1999), 1999, p.13

⁷³ Ibid. p.14

⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 28-29

⁷⁵ Ibid. pp. 30-31

⁷⁶ R.P. Lama, *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Darjeeling: An Introduction*, Published by *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations: (1924-1999), 1999, p. 33

Sabha on 22nd March, 1971. But once again taking part in the debate in the Lok Sabha on 28th June, 1971 Ratanlal Brahmin initiated the debate once more in Nepali. He was denied permission once again. This created an uproar in the House and eventually the Speaker allowed him to make his intervention in his mother tongue.⁷⁷ Soon after at a meeting held on 31st January, 1972 the *Nepali Bhasa Samiti* was formed consisting of fifteen-members. In no time branches of the Samiti were opened at the all-India level. It was subsequently renamed *Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasha Samiti*. One of the main goals of the Samiti was to bring together organisations working on diverse fields like politics, literature, culture, and social issues to work together for the official recognition of the Nepali language.⁷⁸

Once the *Samiti* began mobilising public opinion and soon it made a representation to the PM Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 11th April, 1972 and thereafter Morarji Desai on 20th September, 1977.⁷⁹ The language movement thereafter lost its momentum somewhat and it was only around 1990 after the end of the first phase of Gorkhaland Movement (1986-88) that the language activists from across different states met this time in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, on 19th and 20th of June, 1990. The *Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Parishad* came into existence at Gangtok to take forward the movement.⁸⁰ Finally, it was the collective efforts of the literary organizations like the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan*, *All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti*, *Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Parishad* and other social and political organizations that led to the inclusion of Nepali in the Constitution. The Bill was passed by the Parliament on 20th August, 1992.⁸¹

Alongside these movements in the literary field, Darjeeling also witnessed fairly social reform movements. The earliest social reform movement can be traced to the second half of the nineteenth century. Kumar Pradhan has traced the origins of the *Joshmani panth* (sect) to eastern Nepal even though nothing definite to the best of my knowledge has been said about its origin. As a religious movement it was based on a philosophy of devotion to Nirguna or attribute less God. It was opposed to casteism, and

⁷⁷ Subash Sotang, *Bhasha Andolan: Itihash Ra Upalabdhi*, (In Nepali) Published by Kewalprasad Sharma, West Sikkim, 2019, pp. 39-40

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 41

⁷⁹ Subash Sotang, *Bhasha Andolan: Itihash Ra Upalabdhi*, (In Nepali) Published by Kewalprasad Sharma, West Sikkim, 2019, p. 48

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 73-74

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 89

marketisation) of spiritual knowledge and other evil practices of Brahminical society.⁸² According to Pradhan, the pioneers of this cult were *Sant* Dhirjedil Das and his disciple Sashidhar. But it was *Sant* Jnandil Das (c. A.D. 1821-1883), who took the teachings of the sect to the masses.⁸³ Born to a Brahmin family at Fikal near Ilam in Eastern Nepal, his activities were directed against casteism, bigotry, superstitious rituals and sacrifices. Following his arrest and expulsion by the Rana rulers of Nepal, the *Sant* made Rangbul (a small hamlet some 11 km away from Darjeeling town) his base. His *Udayalahari*, a poetical work completed at Darjeeling in 1877 offers an illuminating glimpse of the *joshmani* doctrine.⁸⁴

The following are a few lines from *Udayalahari*:

Ain bajryo dhaniko firyo jagamaahaa;

Ghuryaha bichari nisap herchha kaahaa;

Ghusyaha bichari jagatama firchhan;

Dhana bhannya Sadhu jani jani girchhan.

Laws are made for the rich, such appears the universal rule;

From judges taking bribes none can get justice;

There are many in the world who are untrue;

Like friars who run after wealth;

Be sure, they will fall down the precipice.⁸⁵

[Translations in original]

The discourse seemed to combine trenchant critiques of the state and religious establishment ruling the contemporary society. Indeed, inequality and a rudimentary notion of capitalism appeared to be a running theme in these verses in the closing decades of the nineteenth century:

Dhan jana bhandai gau byari garchha;

Lagchha ringata bharkhalama parchha;

Kama ra kisa dhanda dherai garchha;

⁸² Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of the Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, p. 188

⁸³ *Ibid.* pp.188-189

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* pp.171-172

⁸⁵ Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p.63

Launa khana napai akalaima marchha.

Run after wealth and kith from hilltops to the valley;
You will only feel giddy and fall into a ditch;
Labour and hard work poor peasants do;
Hungry and naked they die...⁸⁶

[Translations in original]

Indra Bahadur Rai makes an interesting distinction between the Indian literary writing and the literary writing in Nepal. He says in Nepal the literary world is dominated by elite Brahmins (Aryans) whose writings were mostly praised the King. But in India the Nepali literature was popularised by soldiers and commoners who came from ethnic groups belonging to the Mongoloid stock.⁸⁷ The earliest form of Nepali literature mainly came in the form of *sawais* penned by soldiers stationed in Assam, and in *laharis* composed by Nepali labourers working in tea gardens owned by British planters. According to Kumar Pradhan the *sawais* and *lahari* (a type of folk prosody) were more earthy and proletarian as compositions in folk rhythms.⁸⁸ This point becomes clear in the *sawai* by Dharamsingh Chamling Rai of the Daliram Tea Garden, Darjeeling, in his *Maya Lahari* (1919). He writes:

Rujhi ra bhiji patti ra tipchhyau

das paisa rojaima

Paach paisa khayau tin paisa laya

Dui paisa furmasi

Drenched in rain you pick tea leaves
at the wage of ten pice a day,
Of five you eat, of three you wear
For pocket keeping two away.⁸⁹

[Translation in original]

⁸⁶ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p.64

⁸⁷ Indra Bahadur Rai, Indian Nepali Nationalism and Nepali Poetry, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Winter, Spring, Vol. 29. No.1, 1994, p. 152

⁸⁸ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 50

⁸⁹ Kumar Pradhan, A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. 61

Some of the *sawais* popular at that time are Tulache Aley of the 43/44th Gorkha Regiment's 'Sawai of the Battle of Manipur' in 1893, and Dhanbir Bhandari of the 44th Gorkha Regiment's 'Sawai of the Battle of the Abhor Hills' in 1894.⁹⁰ The effusion of such literature of course accompanied reformist interventions by new social associations, which practically began to give a tangible shape to the social by offering care for the members, pedagogy for the children and relief to the destitute at crucial intervals.

Prior to the establishment of the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* there were many social organizations named after the word Gorkha, as follows: *Gorkha Library*, *Gorkha National Theatre Party*, *Gorkha Samiti*, *Gorkha Association*, etc. Many social organizations came up by the 1920s. A prominent one among them is the *Gorkha Dukh Niwarak Sammelan* (hereafter GDNS). It was in the year 1932 that people in Darjeeling used to routinely witness unclaimed bodies hung perilously on bamboo sticks taken away by the *doms* for cremation.⁹¹ Young men like Dhanbir Mukhia (Gurung), Harshadhoj Lama, Jitbahadur Khadka, Manbahadur Mukhia and Laloo Pradhan are supposed to have cut their fingers and written the name of the organization with their blood.⁹² The organization was thus formally established on June 3rd, 1932. The motto of the organization is '*manavta nai sarvaseshta dharma ho*', meaning 'humanism is the greatest religion'. As stated in the '*GDNS Sammelan ko Gyapan Patra ra Byawasthapan ra Niyamawali*', the following were some of the key objectives of the organisation:

- a) To help people who are orphans, physically handicapped or ill irrespective of their religion, caste, community or culture;
- b) To provide help (kind and cash) at time of death, illness or marriage to the people of economically weaker sections;
- c) To give a decent burial to unclaimed dead bodies; and
- d) To open and run orphanages.⁹³

[Translation mine]

⁹⁰ Indra Bahadur Rai, Indian Nepali Nationalism and Nepali Poetry, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Winter, Spring, Vol. 29. No.1, 1994, p. 152

⁹¹ Sadeep Pradhan, *Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan Darjeeling*, (In Nepali) Gama Prakashan, Darjeeling, 2012, pp. 35-36

⁹² Ram Sharma, et. al. (ed.), *Mir Mireka Ujyala*, (In Nepali) Published by GDNS, Darjeeling, 1998, p.15
Also See, Jiwan Laber, *Hamra Byakti ra Byaktitwa Haroo*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 2003

⁹³ *GDNS. Sammelan ko Gyapan Patra ra Byawasthapan ra Niyamawali*, (In Nepali) Sammelan's Memorandum, Letters and Rules of Organisation as Amended in the Annual General Meeting of 1996. p.1-2

However, the organization had to face stiff resistance from the conservatives, who actively opposed its efforts to uproot caste prejudices and social evils. Nevertheless, the GDNS did a commendable job in rehabilitating the Nepali refugees fleeing from Burma during the Second World War. It organised *musti daan* (fistful contribution of grain) for which the members went to each household collecting handful of grains and cereals. They also went to tea gardens for distributing blankets, rice, lentil and medicine during the earthquake of 1934.⁹⁴ The GDNS. also held cultural events and staged many dramas among which the most popular one was *Ani Deorali Runchha* (And the Valley Cries). The organization is active even now working on areas like providing education and scholarship to underprivileged children, mediating on social issues arising out of inter caste marriages, marital discords, domestic fights, managing orphanages etc.⁹⁵

Another earliest social organization of significance is the *Sri Hitkari Sammelan* (Sri Philanthropists' Association) established in 1945. Its goals were similar to that of GDNS Its *Sambidhan* (Constitution) emphasized the importance of education and unity of the community.⁹⁶ Within a span of few years, the *Sri Hitkari Sammelan* established a number of associations, like the *Bhanubhakta*⁹⁷ *Vidyalaya* (Bhanubhakta School), *Rashtriya Pustakalaya* (National Library), *Baal Samiti* (Boys' Association), *Nepali Sahitya Parishad* (Nepali Literature Council), *Bhanubhakta Proudr Sikchha Kendra* (Bhanubhakta Adult Education Centre), etc.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, most of these civil society associations died. However, taken together, the GDNS and *Sri Hitkari Sammelan* played a historic role in strengthening the emerging Nepali civil society in Darjeeling. Committed to the idea of progress they were not only progressive but a revolutionary force as well in many ways.

In this way, as the idea of Gorkha identity and community was taking shape through the activities outlined above and the literary articulations in print, Darjeeling also witnessed, what can be described for the lack of a better word, the beginning of some kind of cultural renaissance. This period saw the thorough refashioning of the cultural artefacts symbolizing Nepali/Gorkha pride and identity. One organization

⁹⁴ Ram Sharma, et. al., (ed.), *Mir Mireka Ujyala*, (In Nepali) GDNS, Darjeeling, 1998, pp.7-10

⁹⁵ Sadeep Pradhan, *Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan Darjeeling*, (In Nepali) Gama Prakashan, Darjeeling, 2012, pp. 44-48

⁹⁶ *Srihitkari Sammelan, Sambidhan*, Darjeeling. (Undated)

⁹⁷ Bhanubhakti (1814-1868) was the first modern Nepali poet.

⁹⁸ Agam Singh Giri, Amrita Devi Chhetri et. al. (ed.) *Kamal*, (In Nepali) Published by Kamal Prakashini Samiti for *Bhanubhakta Vidhyalaya (Sahitya Bivhag)*, 1953, pp.59-62

thickly involved in this process was the *Himalaya Kala Mandir* founded in 1950 with the objective of conserving and promoting Nepali art and culture. Its founder members were major theatre personalities and dancers like Ranjit Ghising, R.D. Rai, Manbir Singh, Shiv Prasad Singh, Tika Prasad, Tejender Gurung and others. Some of the artists in the troupe were singers like Amber Gurung, Gagan Gurung, Rudramani Gurung and others. The *Himalaya Kala Mandir* travelled to various places, holding exhibitions, including to Sikkim and Bhutan showcasing Nepali art and culture. The high point for this group was the featuring of the group in the song “*lahure ko relimai fesana ramrod; rato rumal relimai khukuri bhireko*”. (The fashion of the soldier *relimai* is very good; red handkerchief *relimai* and the tugging of *khukuri*.) in the film *Humraaz* written by Akhtar ul Imam and produced and directed by B. R. Chopra was shot in Darjeeling in 1967.⁹⁹ The legacy of this musical troupe of *Himalaya Kala Mandir* is quite evident in the number of musical groups and rock bands we find in Darjeeling today.

Nepali subject formation and the ‘subaltern’ turn

The above section has hopefully presented an arguably substantive discussion on the evolution of public sphere beginning from the formation of which can be traced from the last decades of nineteenth century to the better part 20th century along with the attendant forms of cultural productions. Now we must turn to what we have flagged earlier as the process of a mass Nepali subject formation. This formation of the mass Gorkha/Nepali subject took place principally in the domain of Nepali literary sphere and later became actualised in the form of mass political movement. It is true that the historical experiences of Nepalis, their encounter with colonial modernity and capitalism remained the central themes of Nepali literary romanticism found in the works of such canonical figures like the poet Agam Singh Giri. This tradition is then taken forward and transformed by one of the most hegemonic and canonical figures - Indra Bahadur Rai. In true sense, Nepali literary tradition has creatively constructed a discursive sphere for the pedagogic construction of the Nepali subject and its articulation. This Nepali subject thus constructed in the literary sphere and subsequently sub-planted in the political discourse is a subject constituted as a suffering being perhaps waiting to be delivered by the modernising elites. As a result, much of the literary and political discourse takes a

⁹⁹ This nugget of information was given by Jiwan Laber, a cultural historian, during a personal interview on 26th November, 2017

messianic form in which the role of the middle-class bourgeois intellectuals ends up being valorised.

To substantiate the above point let us take a short passage from one of the more compelling essays by Indra Bahadur Rai. In *Darjeelingko Janajati*, he writes: '*Darjeelingma coolie kabadi shrenibata ukhleka hami aaja nimna madhyabargiya Nepaliharoo bhayeka chhaun. Darjeelingma Nepali samaj laukik sanskritiko chha, tyo abhijaat bargabata prasarit hoyana. Darjeelingma abhijaat barga kahile thiyena.*'¹⁰⁰ The sentences do not lend itself to easy translation but loosely one might say that the Nepalis in Darjeeling are mostly from the working-class sections – *coolie kabadi* – and it is only now that the Nepalis have managed to become part of the lower middle class. However, this Nepali society is egalitarian and the culture too is egalitarian. There are no aristocratic classes in Darjeeling, according to Indra Bahadur Rai. As one can see, such lines are thickly layered with multiple meanings. One, of course, is the representation of the marginal existence of the Nepalis within the larger framework of the ideological construction of the space into an idyllic hill station. Set against this background, the Nepalis lived the life of a coolie in tea gardens as well as domestic servants; the text thus registers a gradual transformation of a somewhat pre-modern indigenous community into one of the fundamental classes of colonial capitalism – the plantation labourer in this case - in howsoever imperfect form. Secondly, the text can be seen to hint at egalitarianism, but not so much inspired by socialism as much as a romantic yielding of the subject to the discreet charms of liberal and some may add bourgeois values of equality and freedom reproduced by colonial modernity, albeit in a crude form. It is this idea of a marginal figure of proletariat in a tea plantation or that of a subaltern that has been canonised by later Nepali literary and cultural productions and then subsequently inserted into the nationalist discourse.

We will do well to remember that this nationalist discourse was, and still is, avowedly bourgeois humanist in its orientation and aspiration. The question of class was carefully elided by the emerging bourgeois class through a hegemonic and totalising nationalist ideology. At the same time, a section within the Nepali literary tradition though inspired by Marxist/socialist ideals of freedom and equality could not

¹⁰⁰ Indra Bahadur Rai, "*Darjeelingko Nepali Janajati*" (In Nepali), in Indra Bahadur Rai, *Pahaad Ra Khola*, in Bijay Kumar Rai (ed.) *Indra Sampurna*, Nirman Prakashan, Namchi, Sikkim, 2004, *Granthaghar Sahitya Sahakari Samity*, Darjeeling, 1993, pp. 114-115

convincingly produce a radically different imagination of a marginalised Nepali subject and socialist modernity that could rescue the proletariat and the subaltern from the bourgeois nationalist discourse

The Marxist literary critique Rupesh Sharma laments that even though there is a rich body of Marxist literary writings in Nepali there has, so far, not been a systematic study of the Marxist literary tradition in Nepali literature. He says that for long '*pragatisheel*' - loosely translated into bourgeois humanist - literature in Nepali has passed off as '*pragatiwadi*' (progressive) literature.¹⁰¹ This confusion and in fact elision of the Marxist literary tradition points towards the hegemonic nature of bourgeois liberal cultural production – literary as well as aesthetic – in the public sphere that emerged under specific conditions of colonial modernity.

This point can be gleaned from the recent book by Gokul Sinha, a well-known writer, linguist and literary critic from Darjeeling, in which he has fictionalised an interview that supposedly took place between a teacher and the writer Achchha Rai '*Rasik*'. The writer '*Rasik*' inspired by the newly launched movement by Progressive Writers' Association in Hindi literature had started the '*Nepali Pragatisheel Sahitya Parishad*' around 1935.¹⁰² In the interview the writer Achchha Rai castigates the doctrinaire nature of progressivism by arguing that while in the political realm the term 'progressive' distinctly stands for socialism but in the realm of literature 'progressive' does not carry a distinct meaning and hence signifies a generalised process of social development.¹⁰³ There is indeed a rich tradition of Marxist literary writing in Nepali literature. Writers like Badri Narayan Pradhan, Asit Rai, Mohan P. Dahal, Nanda Hangkhim, and Dhanbir Puri are well regarded in the Nepali literary scene. So are Marxist literary critics like B. Yonzon, Laxmi Shrimal, and poet Bikash Gotame.¹⁰⁴ But on the whole, and unlike in the Bengali context, this remained a minor tradition.

In more recent times there has been a tendency to refashion the Nepali subject as the exemplary illustration of the theoretical category of subaltern within the larger academic discourses of postcolonial theory and subaltern studies. It has arrived late in

¹⁰¹ Rupesh Sharma, *Shrijana ra Dristi*, (In Nepali) Published by *Badrinarayan Pradhan Smriti Pratisthan*, Bagrakote, Jalpaiguri, 2019, p. 27

¹⁰² Gokul Sinha, *Gya Dekhi Aa Samma*, (In Nepali) Published by Graphic Printers, Siliguri, 2022, p. 58

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 59

¹⁰⁴ Rupesh Sharma, *Shrijana ra Dristi*, (In Nepali) Published by *Badrinarayan Pradhan Smriti Pratisthan*, Bagrakote, Jalpaiguri, 2019, p. 29

Nepali academia but it has certainly become the current intellectual fashion in the Nepali literary as well as academic circles. It is generally accepted that postcolonial/subaltern writing in Nepali literature was formally inaugurated with the publishing of a collection of poems in a book titled *Kinarako Awajharoo* (Voices from the Margin) by Manprasad Subba and Remika Thapa in 2008.¹⁰⁵ Manprasad Subba himself makes this point about the inauguration of subaltern turn in Nepali literature in one of his articles written some seven years after the publication of *Kinarako Awajharoo*.¹⁰⁶ In fact, it is not the poems themselves, which are of admittedly high literary standard, but the long introduction to the poems that is of our immediate concern here. The introduction seeks to draw a broad canvas on the development of postcolonial theory in the West and tries to show how these ideas have influenced the authors. The ambition certainly deserves admiration but at times it seems that despite the best efforts of the authors to make a case for the postcolonial/subaltern turn in Nepali literature, it suffers from a lack of a clear conceptualisation of what constitutes ‘postcolonial’ or ‘post – colonial’. Basically, the authors have, perhaps unconsciously, treated categories like postcolonial, subaltern, margin and marginality to denote more or less the same thing. Even the 2015 essay by Manprasad Subba only further elaborates concepts like margin and marginality, leaving out the necessity for a substantive engagement with subaltern and postcolonial writing. At one point in the introduction the authors say that even with formal end of colonialism the Nepalis continue to live in a condition of ‘internal colonialism’.¹⁰⁷ We are given to believe that there are fundamental differences between colonialism and internal colonialism and that the latter has apparently continued even after the formal independence of the country. But the authors do not fully elaborate these concepts or spell out the precise differences between them.

The authors do make a few passing remarks on the nature of relation between the coloniser and colonised but the discussion does not really take us anywhere new. The text is without doubt a serious attempt in engaging with the marginalised and suppressed subaltern subject. But just as we laud this moment and the literary flourish, another question about the notion of centre and the margin does trouble our mind. Nowhere in the text do we come across a clear theorisation or elaboration of these critical concepts that

¹⁰⁵ Manprasad Subba & Remika Thapa, *Kinarako Awajharoo*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 2008

¹⁰⁶ Manprasad Subba, Marginality in Contemporary Nepali Writing, *Café Dissensus*, December, 4, 2015 <https://cafedissensus.com/2015/12/04/marginality-in-contemporary-indian-nepali-writing/> (retrieved on 10.04.2022)

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15

are deployed in the larger framing. The idea of the margin and the fact of Nepalis being marginalised is admittedly not a novel contribution of *Kinarako Awajharoo*. As discussed before, they have been part of a long tradition of literary and political discourses in the Darjeeling hills. What is then achieved in merging this marginal location with the subaltern figure and who stands as the elite with regard to them continue to remain obscure.

Further, there is considerable confusion resulting from the uneasy relation that postcolonial writing seems to be sharing with the Marxist literary tradition. The onus is really on the writers to point out the precise delineation of the idea of ‘fragment’ or ‘subaltern’ and the ways it differs from the Marxian idea of peasant and the proletariat. Perhaps it needs to be made clear that any critique of colonialism prior to the coming of postcolonial theory often took three divergent and opposing directions. These can be recognised in the striking array of anti-colonial discourses articulated firstly by figures like Fanon, Achebe, and Gandhi, that are hard to categorise; secondly the radical Marxist/socialist critique of colonial rule; and, thirdly, the standard anti colonial nationalism of the liberal bourgeoisie variety. The authors somehow do not quite elaborate their position with regard to these different streams but seemingly suggest postcolonial theory as better alternative to the existing forms of articulation. It might seem at this point that we are nit-picking at certain specific points about a literary text whose task is not academic exegesis. However, it is imperative to point out that these problems are not specific to this particular text alone. Rather, they are symptomatic of the problem of Nepali subject formation and the manner in which literary and cultural productions have sought to turn them into larger national allegories.

We would like to contend that the authors in question convey a vague sense of a deepening crisis in the Nepali nationalist discourse even though it is not spelt out in so many words. But the realisation of this deepening crisis itself is being felt at a particular moment of political and economic shifts that are taking place the world over. This has resulted in deeper structural shifts in the new configuration of class and culture within the community formation. There is a change in the form of growth of a large middle class with steady income and rising living standards; a highly visible segment of population has become available that is fired by new aspirations aggressively seeking to acquire newer forms of educational and cultural capital. Alongside these developments, the

community has also witnessed the growth of a sizeable diasporic community that finds itself in the heart of global economic processes made possible by neoliberal economic regimes creating - all of which are new tensions in the available conception of the self.¹⁰⁸

The formal inauguration of postcolonial writing in *Kinarako Awajharoo* is perhaps an unconscious attempt towards the resolution of this problem in the Nepali subject and related discourse. The authors suggest that both the romantic and modernist literary traditions have not addressed the question of identity which is, according to them, *the* central contradiction in the lives of the Nepalis in India. However, from the point of view of postcolonial theory, the nation itself tends to be a centralising and totalising idea that has inflicted violence on communities and their sense of identity. Despite this obvious confusion, the authors propose their postcolonial critique as an *avant garde* movement signalling a radical departure from the accepted modes of engagement with the question of Nepali identity and subjecthood.

The book was, quite understandably, given a warm reception; for it was truly a novel moment in the manner of engaging with the pedagogical object called the Nepali subject. Perhaps for the first time *Kinarako Awajharoo* had made the conscious choice of deploying theoretical as well as conceptual categories of postcolonial theory in engaging with the problem of Nepali subject. The publication of the text was followed by many reviews and seminars wherein the idea of subalternity and marginalisation were discussed and further elaborated. But strangely, the initial enthusiasm seems to have died down somewhat prematurely. Why this subaltern turn in Nepali literature lost its sheen all too soon in this case is a difficult question to answer. Only a tentative explanation may be proposed at this stage. That explanation would suggest that the Nepali literary tradition has been, to use Jameson's phrase, national allegories in one form or the other.¹⁰⁹ The question of liberation as well as social transformation has been the leitmotif around which the Nepali literary tradition has been assiduously built, as we have outlined above. Even while claiming to infuse a fresh breath of life, *Kinarako Awajharoo* does not quite succeed in breaking away from that mainstream liberal tradition of Nepali

¹⁰⁸ There is a clear indication in the sense in which the question of diaspora – a forbidden word in Darjeeling until sometime - is now being freely used and aggressively debated in academic circles. See, T. B. Subba and A. C. Sinha (eds.) *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised Era*, Routledge, New York, 2017

¹⁰⁹ For a detailed discussion on the idea of Third World literature as national allegories, see, Frederic Jameson, *Third – World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*, *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-88

literature. This inability on the part of text has less to do with its literary merit and more with the lack of clarity with regard to the theoretical categories deployed. Ideally speaking, postcolonial writing in Nepali should have avowedly rejected the liberal construction of the Nepali subject for its failure to interrogate the idea of a universal subject where the Gorkha/Nepali is racially constituted as the ‘Other’ of this universal. Equally, importantly, the postcolonial writing should have clearly taken a position against progressive writing for its complicit role in constituting the masses that are to be liberated by the ‘vanguard’. Unfortunately, none of these signals were even distantly visible in what claimed to be the postcolonial moment in Nepali.

However, what is interesting to note is that such postcolonial writings in Nepali have influenced the recent nationalist and political discourses to a great extent, often in adverse ways. Ideologically and theoretically loaded terms, like ‘postcolonial’ and ‘subalternity’ or ‘subaltern’, are often used loosely and frequently, as superficial and polemical rhetoric. Such uses end up overlooking politically relevant ruptures as well as underlying connections between different historical conditions and political strategies, unable to grasp the difference thrown up by specific contexts. One of the key charges against the blanket use of the term ‘postcolonial’ that remains germane to this study is the persistent and problematic use of the very element of discursive colonialism particularly with respect to the Gorkhas. It is not difficult to realise that under the ostensibly ‘postcolonial’ democratic regime, the Indian state has more or less arguably replicated or reproduced the colonial knowledge by bringing into effect its own version of the rule of colonial difference. It is, to borrow Bimol Akoijam’s phrase, the continuation of the colonial in the ‘postcolonial’.¹¹⁰

Further, there is considerable confusion with the conceptualisation of the Gorkhas as *subaltern*. There is uncertainty about how does the subaltern attribute sit with the idea of martial race that remains an important cornerstone for the ethnic identity in question. Moreover, a great deal of problem in this regard owes to the fact that the postcolonial/subaltern writings in Nepali literature have not posed any categorical distance from or offered a sharp critique of the bourgeois class, their cultural production and social dispositions. Much of the Nepali nationalist discourse is indeed the sum total of the literary and cultural productions of the historically emerging bourgeois class. In a

¹¹⁰ Bimol Akoijam, <https://tamohan.wordpress.com/2007/05/20/towards-a-wholesome-holistic-self-on-silence-identity-and-coloniality-of-the-postcolonial-2/> (accessed on 19th February 2018)

technical and strict sense, the people in question may not have fully belonged to the bourgeois class but their aspirations were and remain very much bourgeois like modernising elites elsewhere. This is so because the nationalist discourse – as we have tried to underscore before – is itself a product of colonial governmentality. Their desire to break from the past was indeed one of the specific effects of power.¹¹¹ Since such a nationalist discourse happily revels within the liberal framework created by colonial modernity, it fails to embrace the other face of modernity in the form of a genuinely egalitarian or socialist modernity. Postcolonial writings in Nepali, while claiming to speak for the dispossessed, reflects this difficult manoeuvring and negotiation between these two competing visions of modernity.

As we have noted before, along with certain associated categories of postcolonial theory, the term *subaltern* is now much in circulation in extant Nepali literature. One cannot stress enough on the need to thickly engage with this concept at some depth, instead of using it as a free-floating signifier. It is well-known that the initial phase of Subaltern Studies was deeply inspired by Gramsci's theory of hegemony at the level of the cultural superstructure and its relation to the economic base of any given society. Some of the central points of Subaltern Studies drive home the point that unlike in Europe, the bourgeoisie in the Indian context could not, or chose not to secure a leading position for itself in the struggle against *ancien regime*. This is what Sudipta Kaviraj and others have formulated as the 'passive revolution'.¹¹² While the bourgeoisie was the most progressive force in Europe by Marx's own admission, they eschewed revolutionary ambition and made peace with traditional feudal landed class in the colonial situation. Ranajit Guha has termed this particular configuration of power as 'dominance without hegemony'.¹¹³ Thus capital poorly fared in its universalising mission and created a peculiar kind of postcolonial modernity where there is peaceful collaboration of apparently classical bourgeois relations between labourer and capitalist together with form of domination that is characteristic of what have been described as pre-capitalist social formations.¹¹⁴ The implication is that since postcolonial modernity

¹¹¹ For a discussion on the effects of power see, David Scott, Colonial Governmentality, *Social Text*, No. 3 (Autumn) 1995, pp. 191-220

¹¹² Sudipta Kaviraj, A Critique of the Passive Revolution, *Economic and Political Weekly*, November, 1988, Vol. 23. No. 45/47, pp. 2429 - 2444

¹¹³ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 20-23

¹¹⁴ For details, see, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890 to 1940*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000

leaves untouched older forms of power relations, the bourgeoisie does not integrate the subaltern culture into its own modernising discourse. Guha points to the fact that large parts of social life of the people and their consciousness never came under the sway of bourgeois hegemony. As a result, the split between two domains remains persistent in which the elite and the popular remain distinct social formations. There is, therefore, a recognisably a domain of politics that typically represents the subaltern world and yet it remains distinct from that of the ruling classes. The subaltern classes, subjected as they were to exploitation, produced a set of practices that resisted domination of the elites. The mode of resistance was often endowed with idioms, norms and values that were quite different from elite politics.¹¹⁵ Some political theorists like Partha Chatterjee of course refuse to see this as vestiges of pre-modern and frames this domain as that of the ‘political society’.¹¹⁶ We shall have a fuller discussion of this concept and the question it raises in the following chapter.

The idea behind this theoretical detour was to create a sort of conceptual terrain to ascertain the position of Nepali postcolonial writings on such matters as raised above. Standing on such a ground one could begin to pose a series of fresh questions that are begging to be asked: do the Nepali speaking people constitute the subaltern inhabiting the domain of the popular in totality? Alternatively, are there internal differentiations within them that bear upon such theoretical frameworks? Does the inauguration of postcolonial writing mark an embracing and celebration of the *popular* in the sense that implies a hostility towards the *elite*? Is it not an anti-historicist position to celebrate the subaltern and the popular at this juncture? Or does it amount to making a rightful case for historical, material and cultural justice? These are indeed the angularities and complexities entangled with the question of Nepali subjectivity as a whole and not that of a particular literary movement. Such questions are however becoming more acute with the steady growth of the middle class that is increasingly inserted into the neoliberal economic regimes produced in the first world and the travel of those images as well as ideologies of consumption to the familiar parts. This phenomenon is most evident in the manner how brand ‘Darjeeling’ has come to be promoted and marketed in metropolises like Kolkata, Delhi and Bangalore of late. ‘Darjeeling Momo’ is a hugely popular item

¹¹⁵ Ranajit Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”, in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982, pp.5-6

¹¹⁶ Partha Chatterjee, “Population and Political Society”, in his, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2006, pp.27-51

in the menu of fancy restaurants as well as street joints in these cities. So is the '*Nepali Thaali*', that is fast catching up with a niche clientele who visit these new age restaurants serving 'ethnic cuisine'. There is a steady supply chain established between Darjeeling based entrepreneurs who produce raw materials – mostly fermented items – and those young entrepreneurs whose restaurants are located in the heart of a mega city.¹¹⁷ A similarly intriguing phenomenon is the popularity of Bipul Chhetri, a composer and singer, particularly among the Nepali diaspora, living in metropolises and those who have become part of the global work force in West Asia. Much of Chhetri's popularity can be understood as yearning, nostalgia, loss and the need to reinvent Nepali identity all at the same time. Bipul Chhetri's songs take its listeners back to the now-lost earthy world of a simple village life set in a bucolic setting that once afforded everyone the peace of salubrious climes.¹¹⁸

This segment of the Nepali population may, in fact, more readily welcome yet another strand of postcolonial writing that celebrates exile, hybridity, diaspora, etc., in the name of yet another subaltern location, instead of engaging the everyday problem of difficult and depleting political choices or access to livelihood and unequal distribution of resources within a nation state. That really brings us to the big question if the postcolonial writing in Nepali literature has actually begun to make a choice in this direction or will it continue to remain evasive on such matters? It is difficult to say anything conclusive at this stage, given the fact that postcolonial writing has not really taken off as much as all of us had thought it would in the wake of the publications flagged above. The sense one gets is that postcolonial/subaltern writers have not taken a clear position on many pressing issues till now. Ironically enough, therefore, the position of the postcolonial writers, not unlike those who produced the discourse of nationalism, remains an ambivalent one.

¹¹⁷ Leaving aside the small eateries in Delhi streets selling 'Darjeeling Momo', the more fancier ones like Yankiez, Darjeeling Steamers, Darjeeling Momos, and Momo King have more than one outlet in Delhi.

¹¹⁸ Some of the popular numbers by Bipul Chhetri are, *Rail Garee*, and *Deorali Darah*, from the album *Sketches from Darjeeling*, *Bhaans Ghari* from the album, *Samaya*. For details, please visit the site: <https://www.bipulchettri.com/music>

Conclusion

This Chapter had a specific aim to study the emergence of Nepali nationalist discourse in colonial Darjeeling and its subsequent development. In doing so, the chapter has sought to locate the emergence of Nepali nationalism within a specific context. As we have seen above, it was a colonial public sphere in which the emerging nationalist elites created a literary sphere that at once performed the function of a discursive sphere where the production of a nationalist articulation became possible. While studying the Nepali nationalist discourse the chapter took into account the nature of the emerging middle class in terms of the ideas it espoused as well as the limitations within which it performed these specific functions. Thus, the chapter began with a broad theoretical engagement with an outline of the emergence of public sphere in Europe. We engaged with the most important and representative text by Jürgen Habermas to understand this process. Using the insights provided by Habermas the chapter then shifted its focus to the study of the formation of public sphere in the colonial context and the rise of middle class. Here, we engaged, however cursorily, with some of the key texts that have offered seminal theoretical insights in the study of the emergence of colonial public sphere and Indian nationalism. The study has borrowed theoretical and analytical categories rather generously from scholars like Jürgen Habermas, Benedict Anderson, Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Homi Bhabha, Sumit Sarkar, Sanjay Joshi, Francesca Orsini, Udaya Kumar and others.

Having set up this theoretical framework the chapter then built on the arguments made in the preceding chapter. It has tried to contend that the formation of the Nepali identity and emergence of nationalist thinking is the function of a specific historical context as it obtained in colonial Darjeeling beginning from the late 19th century and the better part of 20th century. We have outlined how the thematic foundation of the making of the community was the historical experience of migration and reproduction of that specific experience in the literary production subsequently. A related argument is about the role of colonial modernity in creating a new form of sociality which then enabled the emerging elites to produce a new kind of nationalist discourse. This production of nationalist discourse actually became possible with the coming of Nepali print and publication. The chapter has tried to provide the relevant details about the development of this process in Benares and its relocation to Darjeeling in the first decades of the 20th

century. Owing to these developments, Darjeeling witnessed the standardisation of Nepali language and literature. We have discussed the role of *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* in particular to study the various stages of development of Nepali language and its recognition under VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The chapter has taken care to discuss some of the representative texts that have contributed in the pedagogical construction of the Nepali subject. The chapter also took care to discuss some of the representative texts that have contributed in the pedagogical construction of the Nepali subject. We then went on to narrate the language recognition movement in some detail trying to show how language basis of unity of the various ethnic groups that together constitute the Nepalis and how the nationalist discourse was produced around the question of language.

In addition to the literary movements the chapter has narrated, somewhat broadly, the social and cultural history of Darjeeling. It has taken into consideration the role and activities of various social organisations like the GDNS, and cultural troupes in contributing to creating a distinct identity of the Nepalis and Darjeeling. The chapter has provided some interesting facts about the GDNS and also tried to understand the ideology of the modernising elites. Towards the end of the chapter, we have attempted a theoretical engagement with what we have called the ‘subaltern turn’ in Nepali literature and nationalist discourse. The discussion critically engaged with the key text of this moment viz., *Kinarako Awajharoo*, that is said to have inaugurated this particular moment. We have tried to show how, despite the celebration of the moment, the authors may be seen as failing to engage more clearly with concepts like subaltern and postcolonial by limiting themselves to lengthy and hazy discussion of ‘marginality’.

On the whole, the chapter tries to argue that there is indeed a crisis in Nepali nationalism that is resulting from the rise of a middle class that has taken advantage of the neoliberal economic changes. This crisis is being felt with new modes of representation of Nepali identity that has become necessary as well as possible with the aggressive penetration of consumer culture and market ideology. We will take up this issue of ever-changing nature of Nepali identity in the larger context of the unfolding the impact of neoliberalism and gradual expansion of governmental apparatus and practices in the Darjeeling hills in the following chapter. In order to arrive at this latest stage, however, we must inevitably trace the roots of such development by studying the

Gorkhaland movement itself. So, the following chapter will take up in broad strokes the study of the origin of Nepali nationalist movement from around 1907 all the way to the present times, and see how political subjectivity comes to be reconstituted with the increasing penetration of governmental practices.

CHAPTER IV

GORKHALAND MOVEMENT AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONALITY AND CITIZENSHIP

The present chapter draws from the major arguments made in the preceding chapter and seeks to study the development of identity consciousness and the subsequent Gorkhaland movement that broke out in the mid-1980s. Our aim is to study the historical conditions and the first stirrings of the identity movement in Darjeeling. In doing so, the chapter will seek to demonstrate how the specific historical conditions shaped the practices that had come to define politics in Darjeeling for the better part of the twentieth century. The chapter further seeks to argue that the specific conditions as they obtained in Darjeeling created a specific kind of political subjectivity which may be called 'autonomous subject'.¹

It is a well-known fact that the demand for the homeland for Gorkha began in right earnest in 1986. But it will be wrong to identify the birth and rise of Gorkha nationalism with this political movement alone. Partha Chatterjee in his critique of Benedict Anderson provides a useful insight into the understanding of the rise of nationalism as an idea and movement. Anderson for one believed that nations are not a determinate product that nations are not unlike popular assumptions a result of the sociological factors, common language, religion or race. Rather, they had been imagined into existence in Europe and elsewhere. Anderson, in particular, identifies the role of what he calls 'print capitalism' as one of the important institutional and technological factors which help in the crystallisation of the imagination of the political community into some kind of concrete shape. He then goes on to argue that the emergence of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas, and in Russia, their historical contexts, the particular form they acquired came to serve as a template for all nationalist elites in Asia and Africa to emulate and replicate.² As we have noted before as well, Chatterjee objects to this line of argument on the ground that Anderson treats those very particular historical conditions as it obtained in Western Europe and other places as the key

¹ For details, see, Ranabir Samaddar, "The Politics of Autonomy: An Introduction", in Ranabir Samaddar (ed.) *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian Experiences*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005

² Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?", in Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, pp. 4-5. Also see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, pp.37-38

development in the unfolding of universal history and thereby forecloses the possibility of the post-colonial nations becoming subjects of history as they have been made to accept or emulate their ‘imagined community’ from one among the many ‘modular’ forms made available by Europe and the Americas. Chatterjee believes that scholars have done much disservice to anti-colonial nationalism and its actual *difference* with modular forms because nationalism has been principally identified to be a *political* movement.³ [Emphasis in original]

Chatterjee, on the contrary, argues that the characteristic feature of nationalism is that it is avowedly political even during the so-called period of “social reform”. According to him, nationalism, out of necessity, passes through different stages before it becomes a full-blown political confrontation with the foreign rule. In the initial stages its confrontation mainly within the social realm, where it divides the social institutions and practices into two independent domains. These two domains correspond to the material and spiritual world. The material, according to Chatterjee, is the domain of the “outside”, of the economy and of practices of state, the world of science and technology where the colonised people acknowledged people accepted the superiority of the West. The spiritual domain, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. Nationalism, according to Chatterjee, asserts its sovereign claim over the spiritual domain where it resists all manner of intervention by the colonial state. This spiritual domain then forms the repository and symbol of ‘national culture’.⁴

The insights, which have been flagged here at the risk of repetition, will prove to be useful to create an alternative narrative in the case under study, as most literature on Gorkha/Nepali nationalism traces its origins to the Gorkhaland movement of the 1980s. An analogy, howsoever tenuous, is being drawn here between the study of the emergence of Indian nationalism and the rise and growth of Nepali nationalism. It may be recalled from the previous chapter that the formation of a new middle class and the making of a modest public sphere in colonial Darjeeling afforded the creation of a discursive sphere for the production of a discourse of Gorkha/Nepali cultural identity. There is a plethora of works on this period. But they are principally in the form of literary criticisms. One is yet to come across works that have engaged in a sustained

³ Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?”, in Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 5

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5

manner with both the discourse of Gorkha nationalism and also the movement by locating them within one larger theoretical framework. The present chapter in a way seeks to fill this gap by making an attempt to locate the phenomenon of Gorkha nationalism within a theoretical framework made available by existing scholarship.

Even as we trace the development of national consciousness among the Gorkha community it is important to understand the role of British colonial policies in the region that led to a specific kind of subjectivisation. Bimol Akoijam has put this problematic elegantly. He says:

‘Not only the past inhabits the present but also haunts it. And this insight which is usually associated with psychoanalysis holds true for realities beyond the world of a person lying on the psychoanalyst’s couch. Its truth pervades the collective realm as well. The way people feel about their collective identities, and the conflict among those identities in this part of the world called North East India is a case in point. Not only the identities in this region carry the imprints of colonial past but also they are constantly nurtured and reproduced by the colonial modernity of the post-colonial Indian state.’⁵

Akoijam’s point provides us with a sort of template for engaging with the phenomenon of Gorkha nationalism even in the supposedly post-colonial times. This is so because the postcolonial Indian state has, after all, merely expanded without actually transforming those very institutional terms and categories, the architecture of colonial law and the working of the administration, the functioning of the courts, army, police and the bureaucracy and also the technical services apparatus of the government.⁶

Geography, discontent and unruly hills

The British, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, followed specific administrative policies with regard to ‘Hills’, ‘Plains’, and ‘Valleys’. They followed a policy of isolation of the ‘tribal community’, separate system of administration, division of areas

⁵ A. Bimol Akoijam, “The Ghosts of Colonial Modernity: Identity and Conflict in Eastern Frontier of South Asia”, in Prasenjit Biswas and Thomas C. Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India’s North East: Meaning, Metaphor and Method: Essays of Concern and Commitment*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 113-114

⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p.15

into “Excluded areas”, “Partially excluded” areas and so on. These hill administrative units were formed purportedly with a view to create an exceptional zone where the ‘tribal people to were free to practice their ‘customary practices’ along with rules governing kinship and clan-based land holding.

The British indeed followed a similar administrative policy with respect to the Darjeeling Hills. In fact, many scholars believe that the seed of such ‘separatism’ was laid down by the British themselves. Dyutish Chakrabarty, for instance, says that the Gorkhaland agitation (1986-88), i.e., the movement claiming separate statehood of the district, should not be conceived as an abrupt upsurge devoid of historical antecedents. Rather, it has its seeds rooted deeply in the developments at the turn of the twentieth century. Chakrabarty argues that the ‘problem’ arises out of the very character of the land, of the people and more significantly, the politico-administrative arrangements that shaped the attitude of ‘migrant population’ for nearly a hundred years.⁷ There is much merit in what Chakrabarty says. Let us delve a bit deeper to look at some of the administrative changes that took place with regard to the governing of Darjeeling Hills.

To start with, the Indian Councils Act, 1861, did abolish administrative distinctions but it was the Act of 1870, which in many ways restored the pre-1861 position, under which the Governor-General or Lieutenant General was empowered with the authority to enact legislation by means of executive order for less advanced districts. After having consolidated the territorial acquisition since 1835, Darjeeling from 1870 onwards was placed under the “Non-regulated” scheme for the protection of the indigenous systems of social practices and ways of life.⁸ This position was subsequently changed by the Act. No. XV of 1874 that declared Darjeeling as “Scheduled District”. The general laws and rules that were in force in India did not apply in such districts.⁹ However, under the Government of India Act of 1919, the terminology “Scheduled District” was substituted by a new category called “Backward Tract”. The Governor General-in- Council was to have the sole responsibility of administering such backward

⁷ Dyutish Chakrabarty, Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation, Special Lecture No X, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, 1988, p. 4

⁸ T. B. Subba, Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 36

⁹ Dyutish Chakrabarty, Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation, Special Lecture No X, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, 1988, p. 7

tracts. Once again, under the Government of India Act, 1935, the term ‘Backward Tract’ was replaced by “Partially Excluded Areas”.¹⁰

It is both instructive and useful to draw a parallel between the British administrative policies and the racial theories of classification of ‘tribes’ and ‘non-tribes’. It is clear from the above that the British colonial administration had always placed the hilly region of Darjeeling outside the purview of general administration purportedly to safeguard the indigenous people from outsiders. Secondly, the ‘hills’ also formed the ‘natural habitat’ of the ‘martial’ tribes in the racial theories. For the Nepalis themselves, at the same time, the plains was a place of ‘*awule jwaro*’ (malaria), of ‘*madhesis*’ (plains people), of ‘cunning people’. Thus, the administrative practices and the reification of the idea of “Hills” and “Plains”, between “Tribes” and “plains people” had an important impact in the development of a specific form of political subjectivity. Significantly enough, as early as in 1907, there was a growing clamour for treating the district of Darjeeling as distinctly different from the plain areas and declaring it as a ‘separate administrative set up’ placed by the “leaders of the hill people”. This was the first instance where a political discourse was being created not by the Britishers alone but also by the people in Darjeeling marking a difference between the “hill people” and the “plains people”. Let us for instance take the Memorandum placed before the Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal on November 8, 1917, pleading for the formation of a ‘separate unit by the representatives of district of Darjeeling. The representatives were S.W. Ladenla (Bhutia), Dr. Yensingh Sitling (Lepcha), and Khadga Bahadur Chhetri (Nepali). The contents of the memorandum foreshadow the shape of discourse to come and are worth quoting at length here:

“...that it may now be established as a settled principle in any arrangements for the realisation of the Home Rule for the people of the plains of Bengal that the district should be excluded from them and that the evolution of our political life should be towards a distinct local government of our own on such lines as may be approved by the British Government...”

“...that in laying down plans for the future, the Government should aim at the creation of a separate unit comprising the present Darjeeling District

¹⁰ Karma T. Pempahishey, *Road on the Trail to Gorkhaland: Excluded Area – The Constitutional Guarantee*, Published by Karma T. Pempahishey, Kalimpong, 2013, p. 1

with the portion of the Jalpaiguri District which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865...”

“...that the Government might consider it wise to create a still wider North Eastern Frontier Province to include in addition to this District the Assam Dooars and hill territories which lie to the east of Bhutan and whose people have affinities with our people...”¹¹

In the above memorandum the representatives clearly demand the separation of Darjeeling District from the people of plains and the establishment of a ‘distinct local government of our own’. This sentiment of separation from the plains became more stronger with the establishment of the Hillmens' Association sometime in 1918. Also, what is significant here is that the Hillmens' Association, perhaps for the first time, brought together the three main communities, viz., Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas on an official platform. T. B. Subba attributes this formation of the social coalition among various tribes and communities for the long interaction between them from roughly around 1866- 1907 and also between these communities and the people from the plains’.¹²

In the year 1934 the ‘Hillmens’ Association’ was renamed the Hill Peoples Social Union’ for promoting “fraternity among Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalis, and their social development”. They also started a Nepali monthly magazine aptly named “Nebula”, (“N” standing for Nepali, “Bu” standing for Bhutia, and “La” standing for Lepcha.)¹³ The magazine was established on 9th February, 1935. It was edited by K. D. Pradhan and published by Madan Kumar Pradhan. Among the many objectives, the first and foremost was to nurture a sense of unity and fraternity among the three hill communities.¹⁴ Similarly, Miriam Wenner’s study on the Gorkhaland movement has shown how the political leaders have drawn on these historical developments to construct a nationalist discourse based on what she calls two ‘imaginative geographies.’¹⁵ According to

¹¹ Quoted in Indra Bahadur Rai, “*Rajnitik Parasmani*”, (In Nepali) *Diyalo: Nepali Sahityik Mashik Patrika*, Year: 22, Issue. 100, February, 1984, p. 339

¹² T.B. Subba, *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Har- Anand Publications, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 76

¹³ *Ibid.* pp.75-83

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 82

¹⁵ Miriam Wenner, *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, p. 208

Wenner, the political leaders constructed the space that constitutes Darjeeling as distinctly ‘different place’. This difference was not only imagined in terms of ‘language’ and ‘culture’ vis-à-vis mainstream Bengal but also in terms of ‘physical and ‘topographical’ characteristics of the hills that made the Gorkhas ‘a different race’ altogether.¹⁶ The second imaginative geography that Wenner highlights is how the political discourse led to the construction of Darjeeling as the centre for all social, political, and symbolic activities for all Indian Gorkhas. The leadership provided by Darjeeling in the language recognition movement thus came to be sighted as one of the key instances to highlight the importance of Darjeeling in the imagination of Gorkhaland.

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Put together, these organisations that came up in the first decades of the last century in many ways provided a basic framework for engaging first with the colonial government and subsequently with the post-colonial government. The political movements largely followed this template for a long time. It is only recently with the ‘fragmentation’ or ‘ethnic revivalism’ witnessed in Darjeeling that the people seem to have renegotiated their terms of engagement with the government. It is significant to note that this renegotiation is taking place in the context of the ever-deeper penetration of the governmental apparatus of the state in the Darjeeling hills. We shall return to discuss some of these issues in greater detail towards the end of this chapter.

The next stage of the identity movement, so to speak, began with the formation of the *All-India Gorkha League* in 1943 (hereafter AIGL). However, the AIGL should be seen as a later reincarnation of the older *Gorkha League* formed by Thakur Chandan Singh on February 15th, 1924 in Dehradun. Among its many objectives was its desire to integrate the Gorkha society into the Indian national mainstream.¹⁸ Bhai Nahar Singh and Bhai Kirpal Singh in their widely read book, *History of All India Gurkha League (1943-1949)*, writes about the formative history of the party. The Singhs write that the All-India Gorkha League was formed on May 15th, 1943. Addressing an audience of roughly two thousand people at the Rink Hall, the first President of AIGL, Sri Damber Singh Gurung

¹⁶ Miriam Wenner, *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, p. 208

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 208

¹⁸ Mahendra P. Lama, Thakur Chandan Singh, *Makers of Indian Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1997, p.35

is supposed to have read out the objectives finalized in a meeting held at Kalimpong on May 10th, 1943. Among the many objectives of Gorkha League the foremost were as follows:

1. To organise and consolidate all the Gurkhas spread throughout and elsewhere into one organic whole;
2. To make everyone realise that Gurkhas belong to the great martial race;
3. To preserve the development of the Nepali language and make the propaganda for its use etc.¹⁹

The AIGL became the foremost platform for voicing the demands of the Indian Nepalis. In large number of memoranda to the British Government as well as to the Indian leaders it put forward a strong case for the need to recognise ‘Gurkhas’ as a distinct community. In a memorandum to the Governor General of India, Lord Linlithgow, dated 12th August, 1943, Damber Singh Gurung, General Secretary of AIGL lamented that despite the Gurkhas service to the British Empire and the fact that they have been domiciled for five generations in Burma and India they have not been recognised as a community.²⁰

These demands soon took a more concrete shape after the independence, as the AIGL began demanding a separate administrative unit in 1949. The call given was given by Randhir Subba, Vice President of AIGL, to form a ‘*Uttarakhand Pradesh*’ comprising Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and the princely state of Cooch Behar. The Annual Conference of the All-India Gurkha League was held in Darjeeling that was attended most notably by Sri S. C. Roy, Vice President, Cooch Behar State Praja Congress, Sri Jaladhar Shaha, Secretary, Cooch Behar State Praja Congress, and Mvi M. Ahmed, Assistant Secretary, Cooch Behar State Praja Congress.²¹ Subsequently, the AIGL in a memorandum of 1952 suggested three main alternatives:

1. To create Darjeeling into a distinct administrative unit and place it under the direct supervision of the Centre;
2. Formation a separate province comprising Sikkim, Jalpaiguri, and Coochbehar; and

¹⁹ Bhai Nahar Singh et. al. (eds.), *History of All India Gorkha League 1943-1949*. Nirmal Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 1-2

²⁰ Ibid. p. 9

²¹ Ibid. pp. 85-87

3. Merging of Assam and Jalpaiguri with Darjeeling.²²

From the very beginning, as we can see, the demand for separation seems to have been raised by parties of all hues. Even the then undivided Communist Party of India is supposed to have given a representation before the Vice President of the Interim Government, Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Finance Member, demanding an independent nation taking together Sikkim, excluding its present North district, Nepal and Darjeeling to be named *Gorkhasthan*.²³ In hindsight it thus appears that the issue of a separate state has been the proverbial hobby horse which has been flogged by every party in the hills. In spite of this, the period after the independence has seen the gradual consolidation of the Nepali people with the rest of West Bengal and India: economically, socially and culturally. It was, despite the tensions, also a phase of political socialization and increasing participation in the wider political process. However, the movements for the recognition of Nepali language in accordance with the 8th Schedule of the Constitution contributed in a major way to the larger movement for assertion of identity and the demand for some kind of regional autonomy.

The demand for the separate state became more shriller by the 1980s. The movement became broad based growing popular participation. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (hereafter GNLF) and the Pranta Parishad became the key players during this phase. The Pranta Parishad was formed on 8th August 1980. Some of the prominent leaders of Pranta Parishad were Indra Bahadur Rai, Madam Tamang, C. K. Shrestha, and Gajendra Gurung. In its document titled “Why Gorkhaland” (1980), the ‘Pranta Parishad’ put forward its demand for separate state on the grounds of distinctiveness of the people living in the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri (Dooars). They argued that the communities in the hills are ethnically, culturally, linguistically, socially and historically different from that of the plains. They further suggested that the “locking up” of the Gorkhas with West Bengal has reduced the region to the position of a “subservient colony of Bengal”. Highlighting the history of the separatist movement

²² Amiya Kumar Samanta, *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study in Ethnic Separatism*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2002, p. 88

²³ T. B. Subba, *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, Har- Anand Publications, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, pp. 89-90

they reiterated the demand for nothing less than a “full-fledged statehood for the region of Darjeeling and Dooars.”²⁴

By the early 1980s the people in Darjeeling were bristling with fear and anger. As we shall see below, the Nepalis began to be hounded out from Assam and Meghalaya. There were already first signs of tension between the ruling Bhutanese Drukpas and the Bhutanese of Nepali origin in Bhutan. B.P. Mishra, a former faculty with the Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University, saw these incidents in the North-East as the primary reason behind the upsurge in Darjeeling. He called it “transferred anger”.²⁵ Anup Shekhar Chakraborty and Subhash Ranjan Chakraborty in their study of Gorkhas in the Northeast point out that the Chief Secretary of Assam Government had termed the ‘immigration’ of Nepalis in the Assam region as ‘administrative nuisance’ rather than a political one’ as early as in 1930. Soon after, Nagaland adopted a policy to drive out Nepalis who were seen as a threat to the indigenous population.²⁶ The situation became more acute with the anti-foreigner movement in Assam from 1979 onwards. In an autobiographical account the writer Manash Firaq Bhattacharya writes movingly about his own experience as a young Bengali boy during those turbulent times. He talks about the Assamese battle cries of ‘Foreigners get out’. The slogans, he recollects, had a particularly racial tone to it: ‘*Ali, Coolie, Bongali* (Bengali)/ *Naak sepeta* (blunt nosed) *Nepali*.’²⁷ Similarly, Atis Dasgupta makes an interesting observation about factors leading to the outbreak of Gorkhaland movement in the mid-1980s. He says that Rajiv Gandhi followed a policy of creating smaller provinces in the Northeast on the ground of ethnic considerations and even gave concessions to militant and ethnic movements in Mizoram and Assam. This policy, according to Dasgupta, encouraged ‘ethnic militancy’ among the Nepalis for creation of the state of Gorkhaland.²⁸

²⁴ Why Gorkhaland? A Document Issued by *Pranta Parishad* on the occasion of the 6th Annual Conference, August 8th, 1986. Published by *Pranta Parishad*, Darjeeling, pp.1-3

²⁵ B.P. Mishra, Behind Gorkhaland Agitation, *Mainstream*, Vol. XXX, No. 7, Nov.1, 1986, pp.15-19

²⁶ Anup Shekhar Chakraborty and Subhash Ranjan Chakraborty, “Ambiguous Identities: Statelessness of Gorkhas in Northeast India”, in Paula Banerjee, Anasua Basu Raychaudhury et. al. (eds.) *The State of Being Stateless: An Account of South Asia*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 205, p. 107

²⁷ Manash Firaq Bhattacharya, Decades of Discord: Assam Against Itself, *The Wire* 11.09.2018 (available online) <https://thewire.in/rights/assam-nrc-anti-foreigner-bengali-assamese> (accessed on 12.02.2022) Also see, A.C. Sinha and T. B. Subba (eds.) *The Nepalis in Northeast India: A Community in Search of Indian Identity*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007

²⁸ Atis Dasgupta, Ethnic Problems and Movements for Autonomy, *Social Scientist*, Nov-Dec, Vol. 27, No. 11 & 12, 1999, p.63

These were indeed difficult times for the Nepalis. The GNLF took the mantle of political leadership in the Darjeeling hills, after being formed on July 30th, 1980. The late Subash Ghising was the tallest leader of the movement. The political problem of the Nepalis in India was perhaps articulated in most clearer terms by Ghising in an interview given to the news magazine, *The Frontline*, in August, 1986. It is worth quoting what he said at some length:

It is by being known as West Bengal that... its people affirm their Indian identity which is different from the identity of the people of Bangladesh who also are Bengalis. We Indian Nepalis who have nothing to do with Nepal are constantly confused with "Nepalis," that is, citizens of Nepal, a foreign country. But if there is Gorkhaland then our identity as Indians belonging to an Indian state... will be clear. If there is no Gorkhaland, we will continue to be identified as Nepalis, under the stigma of being citizens of a foreign country residing here out of courtesy.²⁹

The GNLF, and Mr Ghising in particular, in my view, should be credited for understanding the deep-seated anxiety among Nepalis in India with regard to questions of identity and citizenship. From the above cited interview, it is clear the way GNLF understood the identity crisis. It contended that this crisis stemmed from the presence of Nepal as an independent sovereign state, and more particularly, Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950. The said treaty binds both the signatories to grant, on reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other, the same privileges in the matter residential needs, right of owning property, engaging in trade and commercial activities and such other matters of similar nature.³⁰ This clause, according to the GNLF., blurred the distinction between citizens of Nepal living in India, and people of Nepali origin who are citizens of India. Hence their demand for its abrogation.

In his book, *Gorkhas' Quest for Indian Identity*, C. K. Shrestha, a well-known theatre activist and journalist in his book, raises the question: Why do Gorkhas need a State? He points out that the Gorkhas will always be 'misconceived' and 'misconstrued'

²⁹ Cited in Mahendra P. Lama, (ed.) *Gorkhaland Movement: Quest for an Identity*, Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, Darjeeling, 1994, p. 52

³⁰ See Appendix IV

without a state in India. As a result, the Gorkhas will always be ‘under the scanner and humiliated as outsiders, immigrants, infiltrators and even foreigners’.³¹

An important aspect of the GNLFF led Gorkha movement was to lay emphasis on the word *Gorkha* in the place of *Nepali* – a move that follows from the above conundrum. By doing so the GNLFF believed there would be an end to the confusion that the word ‘Nepali’ generates in the minds of mainstream Indians. According to them, the best possible way of creating and preserving this new identity was through a formation of the state for Gorkhas. Indeed, the desire for a separate identity was so strong that they sought to snap cultural ties with Nepal. Notable in this regard is the projection of Agam Singh Giri as the *Jatiya Kabi* (National poet) in the place of the familiar figure of Bhanubhakta.

The GNLFF-led movement was simmering from the early 1980s. It then took a violent turn between the years 1986-1988. Under the leadership of Subash Ghising it swept the entire region. The nature of violence and its magnitude must not however blind us from the serious shortcomings of the movement. Though the movement had enough political content, it, however, lacked a comprehensive economic programme. It was based more on the nostalgia of a heroic past and emotion. It therefore failed to provide any serious alternative political arrangement. The separatist ideology also had enemies within. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M) supporters in the hills openly opposed the GNLFF demand for Gorkhaland. So, a lot of energy was lost in fighting its own people rather than the alleged enemy. After much lives were lost and properties destroyed the GNLFF, the State Government, and the Central Government came to a political understanding. An agreement declaring the cessation of agitational activities was reached between the GNLFF and the Government of West Bengal) on August 22nd, 1988.³² Popularly known as the Accord, it provided for the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, (later Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Autonomous Council) consisting of a popular chamber with forty-two members of which twenty-eight were to be elected directly. The Hill Council was given charge of nineteen departments and

³¹ C. K. Shrestha, *Gorkhas’ Quest for Indian Identity*, Published by *Gorkha Bharati Vichar Mancha*, Siliguri, 2013, p. 19

³² See Appendix V

financial grants were to come from the Government of West Bengal as well as the Centre.³³

Following the Memorandum of Settlement, a day later on the 23rd of August, Subash Ghising signed an agreement with the Government of India on Citizenship of Nepalis in India. A part of the notification reads as follows:

“Whereas it has come to the notice of the Central Government that there have been some misconceptions about the citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution of India of certain classes of persons commonly known as Gorkhas who has settled in India at such commencement: Every Gorkha domiciled in the territory of India on 26.1.1950, and those born in the Indian territory shall be citizen of India.”³⁴

The Memorandum of Settlement did manage to quell the violence and restore peace in the Darjeeling Hills. It was also the first serious attempt in experimenting with regional autonomy outside the North-eastern part of India. However, within twenty years of the experiment in regional autonomy, the DGHC stood a much-discredited institution as it failed to meet the popular aspirations.

Alina Pradhan says that in the years to follow Subash Ghising was not concerned with the sentiment of the Nepalis anymore. In the process, Bimal Gurung, one of his most trusted lieutenants, who was once upon a time a Councillor in the DGHAC, took over the leadership and declared himself the ‘king of hills’.³⁵ Anjan Ghosh too points out that it was the disaffection with the functioning of DGHAC that led to the revival of the movement for Gorkhaland with Bimal Gurung as its new leader.³⁶ The immediate context of this rebellion was the acceptance of Sixth Schedule by Subash Ghising. As a Chief Administrator of DGHAC Subash Ghising signed an agreement with Government of West Bengal and Central Government on 6th December, 2006, to formally bring the hill areas of Darjeeling within the ambit of 6th Schedule of the Constitution. Ghising is reported to have remarked that the Sixth Schedule was better than separate state as: “In a

³³ Amiya Kumar Samanta, *Gorkhaland Movement: A Study in Ethnic Separatism*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2002, pp.117-135

³⁴ See Appendix VI

³⁵ Alina Pradhan, *Politics of Separation: The Case of Gorkhaland Movement*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 73, No. 4, October – December, 2012, p.688

³⁶ Anjan Ghosh, *Gorkhaland Redux*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIV, No. 23, June, 2009, p.12

separate State there would be two classes of people - Ministers and the common folk. Ministers are all corrupt. Instead, the Sixth Schedule is better because leaders and the people will all sit on the same platform at the same level. There will be no distinctions.”³⁷

As the discontent against Ghising and Sixth Schedule gathered storm, Bimal Gurung formed a new party, the ‘Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha’ (hereafter GJMM) in 2007. In keeping with the public mood, the GJMM rejected the offer of Sixth Schedule in Darjeeling before the Parliamentary Standing Committee constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs and suggested amendments to two Acts related to the Sixth Schedule.³⁸ This phase of movement starting from 2007 was quite different from that in 1986-1988 in the sense that the leaders of the GJMM avowedly claimed to make the movement Gandhian. Mona Chhetri sees it as a process in which regional politics becomes sharply visible and gets incorporated as part of the cultural expression of the community of the region.³⁹ Chhetri refers to the ‘Dress Code’ enforced by GJMM in 2008, whereby all members of the Gorkha community were to mandatorily wear the traditional attire. The men were to wear the *daura -suruwal* while the women were to wear the traditional *chaubandi* and *cholo*. Such instructions constituted the specific instance of the political beginning to be incorporated in the cultural, and if one may add here, in the identarian turn.⁴⁰

However, the second wave of Gorkhaland movement witnessed a much more serious effort to build a wider solidarity among oppressed nationalities in the plains of North Bengal. There was greater emphasis on the inclusion of Dooars and Terai region in the future state of Gorkhaland. In view of this the GJM leaders talked of floating a separate body, the *Gorkha Janmukti Adivasi Morcha* in a meeting held at Dooars on June 29th 2008.⁴¹ A protracted agitation played out once again between three parties at this time: the GJM, the State government, and the Central government. Eventually, the

³⁷ Quoted in Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, Ghising’s Game Plan, The Frontline, January 27, 2006 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30208079.ece> (retrieved on 12.02.2022)

³⁸ T. B. Subba, Darjeeling and the Sixth Schedule, Dr. Panchanan Mitra Memorial Lecture, delivered at, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 29 August, 2008, p. 1. For further details see, Barun Roy, Gorkhas and Gorkhaland, Published by Parbati Roy Research Foundation, Darjeeling, 2012, pp. 432-440

³⁹ Mona Chhetri, Ethnicity and Democracy in the Eastern Himalayan Borderland: Constructing Democracy, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2017, pp. 119-120

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 120

⁴¹ Swatahsiddha Sarkar, Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 98-99

GJM agreed to a new arrangement in September 2010. The ‘Gorkha Territorial Administration’ (hereafter GTA) was set up and Mr. Bimal Gurung was elected the chief executive officer. The viability and the future of GTA depended on the changing nature of relation between the GJM, the ruling party at the state, and at the centre.

From autonomous subject to governmental subject

Having doused the fire in the hills the Government of West Bengal started working clandestinely on an altogether different register. The state now started actively expanding the developmental as well as surveillance apparatus and began penetrating deep into the lives of the Nepalis. As the governmental apparatuses penetrated they created new ethnicities quite different from the collective mass political subject as a legitimate basis and category of political negotiation. This new form of negotiation between the now fragmenting mass political subject of the Nepalis and the government began to rewrite itself over the old template of political agency and action of the Nepalis. This is also the period when development discourse gained currency and acceptance in the political discourse as a legitimate basis for political action. But before we get into a fuller discussion on this point a quick digression is in order. Let us very briefly return to Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, which we have touched upon in previous chapters. In his essay titled, *Governmentality*, Foucault defines governmentality, among other things, as a series of institutional arrangement, their practices and procedures, and the knowledge these institutions produce in the form of calculations and analyses and also tactics of governing that go on to form the exercise of complex form of power. This power, according to Foucault, creates the population as its target. The knowledge that power creates about the population is principally in the shape of political economy whereas it uses a complex set of technical means in the shape of the apparatuses of security.⁴² What unfolded in Darjeeling in the first decades of the twenty-first century resonate with the insights of Foucault.

The government silently began drawing up new rules of engagement with the rebellious subjects. The neoliberal governmental apparatus of the state, particularly its welfare schemes and programmes, started penetrating deeper and deeper into the unruly

⁴² Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”, in Graham Burchell, Colin Miller et. al. (eds.) *The Foucault Effect Studies: Studies in Governmentality*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 102. Also see, Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*, Palgrave, New York, 2007

Darjeeling Hills. Perhaps with a view to make the hills more governable the Government of West Bengal merged the hitherto independently existing Department of Hill Affairs with the Department of Home Affairs in 2016 that was now called the Department of Home and Hill Affairs.⁴³ The targeting of policies was not surprisingly done on the basis of ethnic and cultural classification of the hill people. So, the ethnic or tribal identity now became the targets of this new tactic of delivering public goods. The government started creating ‘Development Boards’ on ‘tribal’ lines, something that was difficult to comprehend without cynicism. By 2019 there were as many as fifteen such boards constituted.⁴⁴ On the surface it appeared like a policy move aimed by the Trinamool Congress (hereafter TMC) led government with an eye on electoral calculations. But more fundamentally the penetration of governmental apparatus and its practices had led to a basic reconstitution of the mass Nepali subject. This change may be tentatively called, I suggest, the transformation from ‘autonomous subject’ to ‘governmental subject’.⁴⁵ The upshot of these developments is the political change that has now come to sweep the political landscape of Darjeeling. Perhaps for the first time the people in Darjeeling are beginning to see the state and its apparatus in a new perspective. We will return to this theme shortly.

The period between 2010 and 2017 was marked by relative peace in Darjeeling. At least that is what the current Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed before her core constituency in mainstream West Bengal. Seen from the centre of political power in Kolkata, places like Darjeeling and the Junglemahal region in central Bengal are seen as regions inhabited by unruly and ungovernable subjects. Having reached some kind of settlement with a section of the Adivasi leadership in Junglemahal, and with GJM in Darjeeling in 2011, Ms. Banerjee would often claim in her speeches: I have brought peace to Junglemahal and Darjeeling.⁴⁶ At times this claim became a bit patronising and

⁴³ The Hill Affairs Department was merged in terms of Notification No. 1006-Home (Cons)/R2R (Cons)-08/2016 dated 19-12-2016 and called as Hill Affairs Branch of Home & Hill Affairs Department (<https://wb.gov.in/departments-details.aspx?id=D171020123459389&page=Home-and-Hill-Affairs>) (retrieved on 14.02.2022)

⁴⁴ Santanu Chandhury, With fifteen ‘development boards’ funding, Mamata Banerjee woos the hills as BJP slides. (<https://indianexpress.com/elections/with-15-development-boards-funding-mamata-banerjee-woos-the-hills-as-bjp-slides-5588498/>) (retrieved on 25.02.2022)

⁴⁵ For governmental subject, see, Partha Chatterjee, “Governmentality in the East”, in Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (eds.) *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 37-57

⁴⁶ See, Mamata Showcases Achievement of her Government, 21.07.2011 <https://www.news18.com/news/politics/wb-mamata-showcases-achievements-of-her-govt-385841.html> (retrieved on 12, 01.2022)

infantilising. The Chief Minister would post photos of her visit to Darjeeling in her official Facebook page with a caption in Bengali: '*Pahar Hasche*', meaning, the Hills are smiling.⁴⁷ One is immediately reminded of Satyajit Ray's portrayal of the young tribal woman *Duli* (portrayed by the actress Simi Garewal) in the film *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1970). Maroona Murmu, a tribal woman teaching History at Jadavpur University, accuses Ray of having no inhibition in transforming 'a fair skinned Simi Garewal with pointed nose and large eyes into a woman with a dab of soot on her body.'⁴⁸ Murmu points out that the Santhals continue to be framed in literature and cinema in stereotypical image, that is created by the urban folk who continue to stare the aboriginal tribes from a safe distance and interpret them in exotic terms'.⁴⁹ Following Murmu we can say that the portrayal of Nepalis in the Kolkata based mainstream media and elsewhere is not very different in spirit. In fact, the stock media representation of the agitation in Bengali news channels used to be: *Aabar pahar uttejito hoye uthechhe*, meaning the hills have become excited and agitated once more. The larger discursive context of the representation of the mass movement was to portray a democratic mass movement as a collection of motley crowd engaging in an emotional and hence irrational mob action.

The public discourse in civil society and the vast swathes of rural Bengal are heavily dominated by political parties – a legacy from the heady days of Left Front rule. Here it may be more than useful to dwell on the exact nature of domination and control of democratic experience of rural Bengal by political parties. We have already discussed how the political society has come to form to specific domain where the urban poor organise themselves collectively to engage in a specific kind of political action that is quite different to the normative understanding of citizenship. Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya provides an alternative imagination to the 'Political Society' as conceptualised by Partha Chatterjee. Bhattacharyya calls this alternative concept, 'Party Society'.⁵⁰ Bhattacharyya says that while 'Political Society' is quite useful in capturing the politics of urban poor, it does not adequately explain the changes in rural Bengal. For Bhattacharyya, the socio-

⁴⁷ Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's Last Stand, 17.06.2017) <https://www.newslaundry.com/2017/06/17/gorkha-janmukti-morchas-last-stand> (retrieved on 12.01.2022)

⁴⁸ Quoted in, Rabanta Gupta, The Feminine Mystique: Representation of *Duli* in *Aranyer Din Ratri*, in *All About Ambedkar: A Journal on Theory and Practice*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Jan – April, 2021, p. 36

⁴⁹ Rabanta Gupta, The Feminine Mystique: Representation of *Duli* in *Aranyer Din Ratri*, in *All About Ambedkar: A Journal on Theory and Practice*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Jan – April, 2021, p. 36

⁵⁰ Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice: Democratic Left in a Transforming India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 128

political life in rural Bengal is dominated by political parties cancelling other channels of interaction. The political parties deeply penetrated the lives of the rural folk and assumed the role of moral guardians. Further, political parties played a mediatory role in social life in rural Bengal and managed to create a specific kind of sociability which Bhattacharya calls 'Party Society'.⁵¹

This domination of civil society and public life by political parties has led to the shrinking of democratic space in West Bengal through the years of Left Front rule and continues unabated even now. As a result, leaving aside a small group of democratic minded student groups in universities like Jadavpur University or a handful of last remaining rights groups that occasionally raise questions of human rights violations in Darjeeling and elsewhere, public opinion in mainstream Bengal is largely shaped by the official discourse of the government and ruling party or parties. This has led Anjan Ghosh to remark that the response of the state government to the demands for separate state or autonomy has mostly met with a 'majoritarian response'.⁵²

Meanwhile, let us return to how the effective functioning of GTA was predicated on the nature of relation the GJM had with the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). There were times when there was lot of bonhomie between the two parties and at other times it turned frosty. But before long the GTA reached a dead end with the state government's declaration of making the teaching of Bengali 'compulsory' in schools.⁵³ There was widespread protest in the hills with a renewed call for a final battle (*antim ladai*) for the separate state. There was violence and counter violence resulting in deaths of activists. There was a general strike called by GJM from 15th June, 2017 that continued until 26th September, 2017. The state government shut down the region's internet service during this period.⁵⁴ At the peak of the movement, however, the Government successfully engineered defection within the GJM. In September 2017 a breakaway group led by Binay Tamang and Amit Thapa began negotiating with the government and soon after, Binay Tamang was nominated Chief Executive of a nine-member Board of Administrators. The government declared that the Board of Administrators would enjoy

⁵¹ I Dwaipayana Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice: Democratic Left in a Transforming India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, pp. 122-127

⁵² Anjan Ghosh, Gorkhaland Redux, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIV, No. 23, June, 2009, p. 12

⁵³ For details, please see, Introduction in this study.

⁵⁴ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/sep/25/suspension-of-internet-services-extended-in-darjeeling-1662541.html> (retrieved on 15.03.2022)

the same powers as the members of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.⁵⁵ However, quite apart from the shenanigans and chicanery of the political parties in Darjeeling, the idea of ‘autonomy’ remains the fulcrum of most political actions in Darjeeling. To parse what autonomy might mean here it may be relevant to take a leaf out of what Ranabir Samaddar has to say. Samaddar looks at autonomy as the Other of governmentality. He says autonomy is a set of practices that bear a political subject whose very existence is in opposition to the governmentalities of the world. Conceived thus autonomy stands for the resistance against the power of the state.⁵⁶

Neoliberal governmentality, new ethnicities and the future of Gorkha identity

To answer the above question, we can say that right now, at this very moment, it is the governmental rationality that has been successful in casting its spell. As we have seen, effecting a plural synthesis among the heterogeneous communities that constitute the Nepali community was a long-drawn-out process. The deconstruction of that synthesis, however, seems to be happening rather swiftly. This was possible because the ontological field that forms the basis of representative politics in post-colonial India was already laid down by colonial governmentality. So, the government had to merely return to the ethnographic and anthropological knowledge created by colonial state with a bit of contemporary spin on its part. As Dipesh Chakrabarty remarks that the late nineteenth century colonial state made clear to everyone that they can use instruments like census and institutions to reconstitute the meaning of community and ethnicity. This had major implications for the native society where they came to believe that the political clout of the community lies in the enumerated number, that the social and economic progress of a community can be measured, and that statistical data enables the government to devise objective parameters for measuring relative backwardness or otherwise.⁵⁷

Indeed, the production of new ethnicities has for good reasons posed the most serious challenge to the question of Nepali identity and its political future. How does one

⁵⁵ <https://www.firstpost.com/india/gorkhaland-agitation-binay-tamang-led-board-of-administrators-hold-first-meeting-to-carry-out-special-gta-audit-4081917.html> (retrieved on 16.03.2022)

⁵⁶ Ranabir Samaddar, “The Politics of Autonomy: An Introduction”, in Ranabir Samaddar (ed.) *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian Experiences*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp.9-10

⁵⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Governmental Roots of Modern Ethnicity”, in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2002, p. 88

then address the question of citizenship of Nepalis in India? The problem at the very basic level arises out of the overlapping boundaries of culture and territory. Though the terms Gorkha and Nepali have been used interchangeably in the context under study, Subash Ghising himself wanted to use the term “Gorkha”. The argument was that when a group calls itself “Nepalis” they are likely to be mistaken with the citizens of Nepal. He even advocated calling the Nepali language as *Gorkha bhasa* and said that those who call themselves ‘Nepalis’ must go to Nepal. The Gorkhaland agitation of 1986-1988 marked the first mass movement by the Gorkhas demanding a resolution of the citizenship issue of the Nepalis in Darjeeling and elsewhere. The idea of Gorkhaland became the rallying point for a population who up until this point had not claimed any kind of post-colonial agency. The Nepali nationalist discourse did not provide a nuanced treatment of the ideas of nation and citizenship but it nonetheless provided a platform for claiming collective political agency.

As stated in the preceding chapter, the cultural productions in the public sphere and also the political discourse derived from it have provided a template for all future movements as well as the constitution of political discourse itself. Traditionally, Nepali intellectuals have not engaged in a sustained manner with the idea of nation, national culture and the hegemonic tendencies that are congenitally built into it. The problem was in many ways simplified into a binary of Gorkhas of India and Nepalis of Nepal. Thus, the solution given was seen as fairly simplistic – to have no truck with Nepal. The refrain was, ‘we are Indian Gorkhas...we must have a separate Gorkha regiment. There is a demand for abrogation of Article VII of Indo – Nepal Friendship Treaty (1950) as the said article states that the “...the government of Nepal and India will grant citizens of each country the same kind of privileges with regard to property rights, and freedom to carry out trade and commerce.’⁵⁸

Alongside the ebb and flow of the struggle for Gorkhaland, a new movement emphasising the distinctness of the various castes and tribes that together constitute the Gorkhas gathered pace from the early part of 1990s. At a very elementary level we may term this as ‘identity politics’ of one kind or another. But at another level it also points towards the greater penetration of governmental practices resulting in the deepening crisis of the Gorkha nationalist discourse that is no longer able to evolve with the

⁵⁸ See Appendix IV

changing times. There is no denying that the new wave of identity politics came to have an important bearing on the Gorkha nationalist discourse and the demand for Gorkhaland. To what extent the larger Nepali nationalism has been able to hold together against what is being seen as challenge to the very unity of the Nepali people is something we will examine towards the end of this chapter. But before that let us turn our attention to this latest phenomenon.

To get a clearer idea of the basis of this identity politics it is imperative for us to take a detour into the relatively distant past and understand the sedimented social history of the Gorkhas. This will involve recalling elements we have gone over in earlier chapters. To return is, however, relevant for understanding the layered dynamics of the identitarian surge of late. For long, Darjeeling was seen as the veritable crucible from which had emerged the idea of a Nepali identity subsuming the specific ethno-cultural identities of the various ethnic groups. Indeed, nation building had always been one of the major goals of the Nepali State.⁵⁹ But it was in Darjeeling that the process came to fruition. Scholars like Harka Gurung and Kumar Pradhan have clearly acknowledged this fact.⁶⁰ But this idea of a singular Gorkha/Nepali community began to be challenged by the “tribal” and “caste” groups as ‘brahmanical’ and ‘hegemonic’. This charge by the ‘tribes’ can be understood better if we go back to look into the social history of what is present day Nepal.

One of the important characteristics of the Nepalis in Darjeeling was that a sizeable section of the population had moved eastwards along the mid hills as new economic opportunities opened up after Darjeeling was firmly put under British control. It is also equally important to understand not just the historical fact of migration but the causes of migration and the nature of migrants. With the consolidation of the rule by the Shahs and Ranas, the Nepali State in the 19th century had become a proper Hindu state. Over the centuries, nature worshipping animists or Buddhist communities were gradually ‘Hinduised’ mainly due to the conquest of non-Hindu communities by Hindu kings and

⁵⁹ See Prayag Raj Sharma, “Nation- Building, Multi Ethnicity, and the Hindu State”, in David N. Gellner, et.al. (eds.) *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Netherlands, 1997

Also see, Richard Burghart, The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal, in *Journal of Asian Studies*, November 1984, Vol. XLIV, No.1, pp.101-122

⁶⁰ Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982, p.22

See, Harka Gurung, Nepali Nationalism a Matter of Consolidation, in *Himal: South Asia*, Vol.14, No.3, March, 2001, p.22

the migration of *Parbatiyas* (Bahuns, Chhetris, and Thakuris) to different parts of Nepal. The spread of the *Parbatiyas* provided the motive force of Hinduisation. This Hinduisation, in fact, was nothing but *Parbatiyasation*, i.e., the spread and imposition of the culture of the *Parbatiyas*, most significantly their language, Nepali (originally known as Khas Kura), and religion, Hinduism.⁶¹ Prayag Raj Sharma has also talked about a two-stage sanskritisation process in Nepal. The first stage, he says, was characterized by the acceptance of a way of life ordained by Sanskritic ideas in social, cultural, political and economic ways of the hill people who were traditionally believers in shamanic traditions, and in the second stage by the absorption and mutation of these ideas into regionally and locally expressed forms. So, an acculturation of Hindu-Ethnic cultures materialized in the second stage.⁶²

This project of sanskritisation was actively enforced by the Nepali state. The process further intensified with the promulgation of *Muluki Ain* (a national civil code) by Jang Bahadur Rana in 1854. Interestingly, this code led to the creation of a fivefold division of society in which majority of the ethnic (Mongoloids) groups were clubbed together as *matwalis* (people for whom drinking liquor is not a taboo). This caste division had a clear convergence with class divisions. It was this section of the people, subjected to oppression of all forms, that had moved to Darjeeling. They consisted mainly of Magars, Gurungs Tamangs, Limbus, Khambus, Bhujels, Newars, Sunwars, and other lowers castes.

This convergence had an important significance on the emerging caste and class structure in Darjeeling.

Table 4: Illustrates the caste structure in Darjeeling

STATUS	CASTE	TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION
HIGH (UPPER)	Bahuns	Priest
	Thakuris	Aristocrats
	Chhetris	Warriors

⁶¹ Rajendra Pradhan, "Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society", in Kanak Mani Dixit, et.al. (eds.) *State of Nepal*, Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2002, pp.3-4

⁶² Prayag Raj Sharma, Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritisation: A Study of Nepalis Old Legal Code, in *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayan Studies*, Vol. V. No.4., 1977, p.292

STATUS	CASTE	TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION
	Newars	Businessmen
	Rais, Limbus, Yakhas, Thamis	Agriculturalists
	Magars, Sunwars	Agriculturalists
	Gurungs	Sheperds
MIDDLE ORDER	Tamangs	Horse traders/ cavaliers
	Bhujels	Beaten rice makers
	Jogis	Ascetics
	Yolmos	Paper makers
	Sherpas	Porters
	Sunars	Goldsmiths
LOW (UNTOUCHABLES)	Kami	Ironsmiths
	Sarki	Cobblers
	Damai/Darji	Musician/tailors

Source: T.B. Subba: Dynamics of a Hill Society, p.56

Note: The occupational division is only an ideal form. The actual social division of labour does not always strictly follow the above pattern.

Note: Except for the high order there is no internal hierarchy within the middle and lower order.

Tanka Bahadur Subba has traced some distinctive features in each of the above tier. The high castes, he says, wear or are supposed to wear sacred threads, have Aryan features and are often fair complexioned. In contrast, the middle caste members are not supposed to, and do not wear sacred threads, have Mongoloid features, and are often yellowish in complexion. The untouchables also have Aryan features but they are not supposed to wear the sacred threads and are often dark complexioned. Almost all the middle castes (Mongoloids) have their own dialects, while the high and untouchable castes do not have individual dialects as such. Even culturally, the high castes and low castes form part of the Hindu caste system whereas the Mongoloid tribes followed animistic traditions. The upper castes and lower castes thus followed the principle of purity and pollution.⁶³ This delicate and internally graded ordering of the Gorkha/Nepali society seems to be now seeding the new identity politics in the form of 'ethnic' revivalism.

⁶³ T.B. Subba, Dynamics of a Hill Society: The Nepalis of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p.58

It must be said, however, that this latest phase of ‘identity politics’ takes a great deal of inspiration from the kind of identity politics that is being played out in neighboring Nepal. Notwithstanding the modern political boundaries there are deep kinship bonds that tie the people across the boundaries together. And they often partake from each other quite liberally. Without denying the agency of the people one may also argue that this latest phase in politics in the hills of Darjeeling owe a great deal to the electoral/political process at the state as well as the national level. In that sense there is a process of mainstreaming of both the politics of Gorkhaland as well the politics of ‘ethnic revivalism’.⁶⁴

This phase of identity politics has been variously described as ‘ethnic revivalism’ or ‘retribalisation’. Townshend Middleton sees the rise of this new form of assertion by the tribes as the ‘tribal option’ for the Nepalis on the road to recognition. He squarely holds the failure of the Gorkhaland movement responsible for pushing the people to think of such new possibilities. With the implementation of the report of Mandal Commission in granting quotas to SCs, STs, and OBCs, the official designation of ‘Scheduled Tribe’ seems to have caught the imagination in Darjeeling. Middleton says that as a result individual ethnicities have come to recalibrate the terms of mobilization and engagement with the state that is marked by a shift from the ‘Gorkha’ to ‘tribe’.⁶⁵ Sangay Tamang also identifies the failure of the Gorkhaland movement and that of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in addressing the issue of identity crisis and developments coinciding with ‘Mandal politics’ as the factors behind assertion of the ‘tribal’ identity by the Nepalis in Darjeeling.⁶⁶ As a result, the ethnic groups seem to have shifted their focus away from the older constructed identity, i.e. the Nepali identity, toward a more ascriptive identity, i.e. the ‘tribal’ or ‘ethnic’ identity. So, what we have in Darjeeling now is the growing polarization of the Nepali community along tribal/ethnic lines.

In addition to the factors cited by the two scholars, let us flag certain developments that have taken place from the early 1990s as contributing to the above

⁶⁴ For a study on the phenomenon on ethnic revivalism in Darjeeling, see, Nilamber Chhetri, “The Quest to Belong and Become: Ethnic Associations and Changing Trajectories of Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling”, in Townshend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman (eds.) *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environments*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018, pp. 154 – 176

⁶⁵ Townshend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State, Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2016, p. 47

⁶⁶ Sangay Tamang, *Becoming Twenty First Century Tribe: Between Gorkha and Tribal Identity in Darjeeling Hills*, *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January – June 2018), p.70

process. Perhaps the most proximate causes can be traced to the Backward Classes Commissions' hearings held in Darjeeling in 1992. Since the Commission required every tribal/ethnic group to be represented by an organization, the sub-groups had to organize themselves formally.

Nilambar Chhetri has drawn up a list of 'Ethnic Associations' in Darjeeling along with the year of establishment.

Table 5: List of Ethnic Associations in Darjeeling

Name of the Association	Year of Establishment
Kiranti Khambu Rai Sanskriti Sanasthan	1994
Akhil Bharatiya Gurung (Tamu) Bodha Sangathan	1992
Tamu Choj Dhi	1992
Tamu (Gurung) Kalyan Sanghathan	1999
Akhil Bharatiya Magan Sangh	2002
Magar Samaj Darjeeling	1939
Lafa Magar Sangh	1992
Magar Sangh Bharat	2006
All India Kirat Yakha (Dewan) Chumma	2003
Bharatiya Thami Welfare Association	1990
Gorkha Yogi (Jogi) Kalyan Sangh	2007-2008
Khas Janjati Mahasangh	2014
Khas Bharatiya Hitkari Sammelan	1995
Bharatiya Sunuwar (Mukhia/Koich) Samaj	1992
Bhujel Kalyan (Welfare) Association	1994
Akhil Bharatiya Newar Sangathan	1993

Source: Nilamber Chhetri, (2018) p. 169

A cursory glance at the above list would suggest that most of the 'ethnic' organisations were formed roughly around the time the Commission heard the matter in Darjeeling. The spectre of governmentality, as we can see, is never too far from the present puzzles.

Another significant factor that provided further impetus to the phenomenon of ethnic revivalism is the nationality movement that took place in Nepal under the aegis of *Nepal Janajati Mahasang* (Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities). This began with the process of 'identification of indigenous nationalities of Nepal' in 2003. A Task Force set up by His Majesty's Government for setting up the Foundation for the Upliftment of Nationalities submitted its report wherein sixty-one '*Adivasi Janajatis*'

were identified. The Task Force's report defined a Nationality or *Janajati* as those communities who are not part of the fourfold Varna of the Hindu caste system, who have their own language and culture.'⁶⁷

Soon ethnic organizations began mushrooming in the political landscape of Darjeeling. It is not the organization in themselves but the nature and the direction towards which these organizations are headed that is important for us. These organizations, which emerged purely for an instrumental purpose, i.e., demand for scheduled tribe status is now acquiring symbolic and expressive value.⁶⁸ It is this symbolic and expressive value that seems to be in some sort of confrontation with the larger Gorkha/Nepali identity. As Townshend would argue that though the mobilization of tribal identities is happening at particular moment in the global, national, and local histories, they introduced new questions about who these communities originally came from and why does it turn back to the past. He says that tribal revivalism as a process assertion worked against the hallowed Gorkha identity. He claims that 'inter mixing' was the characteristic feature of a shared Gorkha culture, the exigencies of tribal recognition made 'hybridity' something to be combated and/ or suppressed. The imperatives of ethnic singularity divided the Gorkha conglomerate.⁶⁹

It is in this general context of social churning that the Nepali society in Darjeeling is witnessing from the 1990s a sharp division of opinion with regard to the political future of the Nepalis and also the realization of the proposed state of Gorkhaland. It is indeed a very important question both from the point of academic research as well as for the political actors in the field. From the point of view of academic research, the question that we really need to probe deeper is the question of Gorkha subjecthood: Is the 'tribal turn' in the politics in Darjeeling and the attendant mobilization of 'ethnic' identities replacing the age old Gorkha subject constructed through colonial discourse by a new form of a governmental subject?

The issue is a complex one. And hence there cannot be a simple answer to the question. But let us nevertheless make an attempt to understand the phenomenon. Firstly, it does appear a little farfetched to argue that the 'tribal turn' in politics in Darjeeling has

⁶⁷ National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities: An Introduction, 2003, p. 6

⁶⁸ See, Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change", in Nathan and Glazer (eds.) *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, 1995, p.165

⁶⁹ Townshend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State, Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2016, pp. 47-48

effectively sounded the death knell to the larger Gorkha identity politics. We shall shortly furnish our reasons for making a qualified and careful consideration of the case. Secondly, it is this author's view that Nepali modernity has been dovetailed into a particular mold by the social history of Darjeeling making it into a rather insular community. One feels that even as the post-colonial state takes its cue from colonial modernity in constituting new targets for its policies, the people themselves have not been able to fully claim their post-colonial democratic subjecthood mainly because of the systematic forms of cultural and governmental discrimination that takes place on the ground.

One cannot underscore more the fact that the Nepali society in Darjeeling has emerged in the context of colonial rule leading to a pluralist synthesis. The author is aware that the analytical purchase of a category like 'synthesis' is both out of fashion and can be easily associated with what is usually perceived as a hegemonic project of dominant Nepali community. My plea against such criticism is to plumb the reality beyond the apparent and give the proposition a fair consideration, regardless of its current intellectual prestige. The engagements of the likes of Indra Bahadur Rai and Kumar Pradhan with the Nepali literary public sphere and the question of Nepali culture and identity indicate the great depth and need for understanding implicated in this dimension.⁷⁰ It is most unfortunate that the above writers have mostly chosen to write in the vernacular and hence what they have written is not available to those with no knowledge of Nepali. Readers who are unable to access the Nepali literary public sphere will have to wait till these works are translated into other languages.⁷¹ About the pluralist synthesis that became possible in Darjeeling much has been written both in Darjeeling and interestingly in Nepal too. And this has been acknowledged by scholars from Nepal. For instance, Harka Gurung, who is a well-known figure in the Nepali academic world remarked at one point:

“... the future of Nepali society can be conjectured by looking east, at the social dynamism of the Nepali speakers across the Mechi. While the pandits under the *Muluki Ain* regime in Nepal busied themselves with

⁷⁰ Some of the works that come to mind immediately are: Indra Bahadur Rai, “*Paripekchhama Bharatiya Nepali Sanskriti*”, in Pawan Chamling (ed.) *Sanskriti Bishesh Anka*, Nirman Prakashan, Vol.34, Year.16, April 1996, Kumar Pradhan, *Darjeelingma Nepali Jati Ra Janajatiya Chinariko Naya Adanharu*, Social Science Baha, Kathmandu, 2005, Kumar Pradhan, *Pahilo Pahar*, Shyam Prakashan, Darjeeling, 1982

⁷¹ The process has already started with the translation of short stories of Indra Bahadur Rai into English by Prem Poddar and Anmole Prasad. See, Prem Poddar et. al. (ed.) *Gorkhas Imagined: I. B. Rai in Translation*, Mukti Prakashan, Kalimpong, 2009

rituals and sycophancy, the Nepali speaking population across the Mechi river showed the path to genuine Nepali nationalism: Darjeeling's Gyawali and Kalimpong's Chemjong in history, Darjeeling's Koirala and Kalimpong's Pradhan in language, Kalimpong's Gurung and Subba in politics, and so on. In contrast to Nepal, the politics of Sikkim and Darjeeling is not the monopoly of the upper castes. In Sikkim, the chief ministership passes from a Gurung to a Basnet, Limbu and Chamling, while in Darjeeling the political contenders are Ghising and Subba."⁷²

Such a statement and portrayal of the Nepali society in Darjeeling is in large measure a reflection of at once the success as well as dominance of the Nepali nationalist discourse. There is little doubt that the 'ethnic' groups have repositioned themselves in negotiating their relation with the state apparatus and governmental structures. But at the same time there is no significant instance of this new identity discourse spelling out anything that can be taken as an outright rejection of the larger identity of Gorkha by these groups. There is a process in which the ethnic groups are recreating or even inventing traditions to claim antiquity. But this claim of antiquity does by extension appear to be endangering the larger nationalist discourse of Nepali identity that is deeply embedded in the narrative of community.

Indeed, this idea of Nepali community is performatively actualised in the way in which individuals social conduct is governed. There is also the construction of the geobody in the form of '*pahad*'. In this regard, as noted before, Miriam Wenner's study has tried to show how the political parties of the region have strategically constructed Gorkhaland as an 'imaginative geography'. She has demonstrated the ways in which this the imaginative geography is constructed not just as a bearer of ethno-symbolic resources but also a means of coming to terms with the past and present of a deterritorialised community.⁷³

Let us once more return to a poem by Agam Singh Giri. Giri, as we know, is a canonical figure in the Nepali literary public sphere. He is revered as the *Jatiya Kabi* (National poet). Giri's influence in the Nepali subject formation is deep and wide. The

⁷² Harka Gurung, Nepal Nationalism: A Matter of Consolidation, *Himal: Southasian*, Vol.14, No.3, 2001, p.22

⁷³ Miriam Wenner, "Diasporic Imaginations of Darjeeling: Gorkhaland as an Imaginative Geography", in T. B. Subba A. C. Sinha (eds.) *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalised World*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2016, p. 109

nationalist discourse is profoundly shaped by his writings. He has, through his writings, successfully canonized the idea of ‘*Pahad*’ (Hill) ‘*Maato*’ (Homeland), and *Kamaan* (Tea Garden)

He writes: “*Maatoko maya birsera yahan*

Bhanchera ke po saar

Pahadki raani Darjeelinglai

Maya chha baarambaar

Deorali paakha bhijaunchha aankha

Timile aaja birsema

Aglera himal mushkai dinchha

Timile aaja samjhema

Chodera katai najau nuhera bhanchha bhansghari

Samati deula paitala timro

Chhekeri bhanchha chiya... ”⁷⁴

Forgetting here the love for hills

What worth is this life.

The Queen of Hills Darjeeling

Our love for you is forever

The glen and the ridge will weep

If you forget them

The towering mountains will smile again

If you remember them

The bamboo grove begs you not to leave them

I will stop and clasp your footsteps

The tea garden stops you...

[Translation mine]

⁷⁴ Mohun Thakuri (ed.) *Agam Singh Giri Rachna Sanchayan*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1992, p. 144

To return to the earlier point, parallel to the study of the nationalist discourse and subject formation, we must also take into account the various administrative policies of the colonial state as well as the state making process that led to the production of this specific subjectivity. The anthropologist James C. Scott in his seminal study on state making in Southeast Asia has shown how the state making process carried out in the 'valleys' and 'plains' have left out the 'hills'. He calls this 'non-state' space or *Zomia*. The hill people, according to Scott, perhaps not without a touch of romanticism, have actively resisted incorporation into the framework of the classical state, and the independent nation-state.⁷⁵ There is of late an increasing tendency in academic writings to regard the Himalayan region as *Zomia* - a non-state space.⁷⁶ The specific administrative policies adopted during the British colonial rule with respect to the hills did have a significant role in producing a particular kind of subjects. The distinctness of the Nepalis in terms of race, culture, language and physiognomic features sets them quite apart from the mainstream people. And this subject position gets reinforced when the colonial past is constantly reproduced and signposted by the colonial modernity of the postcolonial state.

While surveying the Gorkhaland movement at its different stages and acknowledging its importance, the present study has made an attempt to provide a new dimension to the political discourse on identity and citizenship of the Nepalis in Darjeeling. A close study of the Nepali literary productions would suggest that it has successfully produced a diasporic subject yearning to go back home. Literary figures like Agam Singh Giri, Leela Bahadur Chhetri, Laina Singh Bangdel and host of others have time and again produced the multiplying leitmotif of migration and memory. The political discourse in the hills, I would like to contend, is unconsciously shaped by this ambivalent and torn diasporic subject. At a more conscious level the argument is that Nepalis came along with the land when the Gorkha Kingdom won over large part of territories all the way to the Teesta River in 1788.⁷⁷ But tragically, the nationalist discourse has singularly failed to interrogate the discursive ideas like nation, national culture and the way ideas of modern political community in the form of 'citizen' have been imposed on culturally diverse groups.

⁷⁵ James C Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2010, p. 19

⁷⁶ See, Sara Shneiderman, Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations Across Time and Space, *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 5, 2010, pp. 289-312

⁷⁷ Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process and Consequences of Unification of Nepal with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1991, pp.131-134

Beginning with the liberal nationalist historiography to the more active ‘nation – building’ process, the nationalist rendering of history has silenced and suppressed forms of memories and voices of the marginalised people. These plural histories and memories could not simply be wished away except by hegemonic suppression by the ‘national culture’. But as Bimol Akoijam puts it, the national consciousness shaped by a singular history carries its own unconscious where the suppressed *memories* take refuge and these *memories* exert critical influence on the nation as it experiences itself. This influence is seen in the form of resistances by the hitherto existing groups and cultures to the process of hegemonic homogenisation unleashed by the nation- building project.⁷⁸

Etienne Balibar reminds us that the narrative of the nations is presented to us in such ways as to suggest that nations have existed from antiquity.⁷⁹ He argues that nation is a way of representing the entity as a historical given with its origins in the antiquity. This is achieved by ‘ethnicisation’ of the irreconcilable social difference and ‘retrospective illusion’ of the past.⁸⁰ The Nepali identity movement has accepted the ideas of ‘nation’ and national culture’ as given and unmarked. The relation between the nation and the invisible minorities is much more problematic than it is made out to be. There is a desire at once to be part of the nation and to reject it altogether. At one level there is this deep-seated suspicion of being mistreated and marginalised by the apparatuses of the state. At another level there is a growing tendency in the community to come closer to state power. Most community leaders urge the young generation to become ‘IAS and IPS officers’. There is also a tendency among the upwardly mobile Nepalis to purchase flats and houses in the plains of Siliguri perhaps giving them a sense of being closer to power.

This desire to come closer to state power has resulted in the acceptance of plains based political parties in the hills. Significantly, the BJP has won the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat for three consecutive terms. This also marks the process of mainstreaming of ‘hill politics’ as the right-wing parties have out smarted rivals in tapping into the ‘martial’ and ‘masculine’ traditions of the Nepali society. The liberal space is shrinking

⁷⁸ A. Bimol Akoijam, “The Ghosts of Colonial Modernity: Identity and Conflict in Eastern Frontier of South Asia”, in Prasenjit Biswas and Thomas C. Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India’s North East: Meaning, Metaphor and Method: Essays of Concern and Commitment*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p.118

⁷⁹ Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology”, in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.) *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Verso, London, 1991, p.86

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 99 - 101

and Nepali nationalism is often caught up in the vortex of a shrill communal rhetoric. Nepali nationalism must soon reinvent itself in order to carve out a space where it can find the political recognition of its cultural identity.

Conclusion

In this fourth and final chapter we have tried to offer a brief survey of the Gorkhaland movement right from its historical origin in the first decade of the last century to the most recent developments. Even though the chapter was primarily a narration of the movement as it passed through various stages, an attempt was nevertheless made to tentatively theorise the transformation of the Nepali nationalist discourse and the changing nature of Nepali subject. The chapter took its cue from the response that Partha Chatterjee offered to Benedict Anderson in asserting that Anderson unfairly tried to write a universal history of nationalism foreclosing the possibility of the post-colonial nations becoming subjects of history. We tried to make use of Chatterjee's suggestion that national movement is wrongly identified with political movement leaving out the stages of social and cultural reform in studying the social and cultural movements in Darjeeling as part and prehistory of the Gorkhaland movement in the previous chapter.

The effort in the current chapter was to locate the origin and source of the perceived 'exclusivism' of the Nepalis. The chapter has accepted the argument forwarded by Dyutish Chakrabarty where he has traced the movement to the politico-administrative arrangements the British made vis-à-vis Darjeeling hills. Taking the argument further the chapter has argued how such administrative arrangements together with the colonial administrative discourse of 'hills' and 'plains' had led to the conceptualisation of a special kind of 'imaginative geography'. In the process, the chapter has dealt in some detail the earliest correspondences that took place between the Hill leaders and the British government. It is interesting to note that these exchanges have in a way served as the template for all future articulation of the problem of Nepalis in India.

The chapter then traced the political developments that took place with the formation of AIGL in 1943, and flagged the early stage when there was a proposal to form a *Uttarakhand Pradesh* comprising Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and the princely state of Coochbehar and Sikkim which was a British Protectorate. Following this, we took up the history of the *Pranta Parishad* and subsequently the GNLF led Gorkhaland movement.

Together with the narration of unfolding events including the violent stages of Gorkhaland movement, the chapter has tried to study the various ways in which the state has consciously sought to produce new kind of political subjects that is different from the ‘autonomous’ and rebellious subjects. Focussing on the more recent developments, our contention has been that the penetration of state apparatus and governmental agencies is transforming the Nepali subject into governmental subjects and hence posing a serious challenge to the Nepali nationalist discourse.

The last section took up the crucial phenomenon of ethnic revivalism that is sweeping the social and political landscape of Darjeeling hills. The discussion suggested that this phenomenon is partly drawing inspiration from the declaration of reservation to various jobs following the mandate of Mandal Commission and in part from the developments in neighbouring Nepal. There the *Janajati Adivasis* are spearheading a political movement for social justice and forming new kinds of social coalitions in their struggle against upper caste, Brahminical hegemony. We suggest, however, that although this revivalism should not be seen as some kind of fragmentation of the Nepali community there is at the same time a crisis of Nepali nationalist discourse that has failed to respond to the changing social and economic realities.

Finally, the Chapter flagged the nature of formation of Nepali community in Darjeeling and recalled how the nation-building process took place in Darjeeling under a unique context of a diasporic public sphere and how the consequent literary discourse then shaped the political discourses in the hills. We drew the discussion to an end with theoretical writings that are critical of the violence that the nation form inflicts on communities. Our closing observation was that, however, Nepali nationalism is not yet sufficiently critical of the process through which nations took a hegemonic form and continues to accept the nation as given and unmarked, that may well prove to be its Achilles’ heel.

CONCLUSION

The present study began in right earnest in the summer of 2004 in JNU. It has taken a good eighteen years for both the researcher and the research to arrive at this point. There is little doubt that the project has been the most faithful fellow traveler partaking in the trial and tribulations and the occasional joys that life could afford to this researcher. We will return to narrate this personal journey in a bit but for now let us consider the academic climate in which this research originally began its journey and how with each passing year it stood witness to the changes in intellectual fashions. Before everything, let us begin with the most serious crisis in this journey. In the summer of 2017, the research faced an existential crisis when the movement for Gorkhaland was at its peak and one almost got a sense that Gorkhaland was indeed going to become a reality. This predicament was no different from that of scores of researchers who had put their heart and soul into researching about Soviet state system and economy and just when they were finishing their books the whole system collapsed. The only difference, of course, was that one actually collapsed bringing an end to socialist idealism and imagination. The other one would have come out of a covenant, as it were, with hundreds of people who laid down their lives for Gorkhaland. It would have held out the promise of a bright political future for the people who have been victims of systematic forms of oppression. In hindsight, the researcher's predicament seems, however, rather selfish. It probably wanted to have nothing to do with the collective aspirations of the people.

At the time this researcher undertook this study, talking about the world of academic scholarship, postcolonial theory and Subaltern Studies appeared to be passing through a crisis in the aftermath of 9/11. Even so, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha were names that still commanded awe and respect even in a progressive metropolitan campus like JNU. The author's friends, many of who were dyed-in-the-wool leftists, did concede the theoretical and intellectual contributions of Subaltern Studies of the initial years. However, they were unhappy as they felt the project rejected Enlightenment and Universal History in the later volumes. While the author himself felt an affinity to socialism, there was increasingly a feeling of uneasiness with the way the Left academic discourses explained away questions of identity formation, race and nation. At a very personal level, it was the novelty of postcolonial theory and Subaltern Studies' way of dealing with these issues that drew the author

towards them. The exposure to this new literature soon led the researcher to framing questions that emerged from the specific subject position that he inhabited as a young Nepali growing up in Darjeeling.

But what began with so much enthusiasm soon hit a dead end from where it became almost impossible to come out. In the meanwhile, postcolonial theory started feeling the impact of the unprecedented backlash across campuses in American universities. Subaltern Studies collective too came out with what turned out to be the final volume in the Subaltern Studies series in 2005.¹ Soon after in 2012, the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* carried a piece by Partha Chatterjee titled, 'After Subaltern Studies'.² No sooner had academic world come to reconcile with the formal end of Subaltern Studies, at least in the form of a collective endeavour, than interest on Subaltern Studies was rekindled with the publication of Vivek Chibber's, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, the very next year.³ The book did initially provide an occasion for celebration among the global left intellectuals but it turned out to be a short lived one as Partha Chatterjee returned back to offer one of the most erudite response to the arguments put forward by Chibber in his book.⁴ We will come back to this theoretical juncture in a moment. What may have seemed like an autobiographical digression has, however, prepared the ground to return to the task of drawing the discussion in the thesis to a conclusion. What follows therefore is an effort to recall, in a pithy manner, all that we have discussed so far, by focusing on the key insights and postulates that we have put forward, not always without with some degree of tentativeness, and trepidation.

The Introduction drew up a broad canvas, beginning with the narration of the Gorkhaland movement that broke out in 2017, in the immediate context of declaration by the Government of West Bengal to make the teaching of Bengali 'compulsory' in all government, state aided, and private schools across the state. We saw this declaration as a governmental strategy to mobilize a collective based on the language and identity of the

¹ Shail Mayaram, M.S.S. Pandian and Ajay Skaria (eds.) Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits and the Fabrication of History, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2005

² Partha Chatterjee, After Subaltern Studies, *Economic and Political Weekly*, September, 2012, Vol. XLVII, No. 35, pp. 44 - 49

³ Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Spectre of Capital*, Navayana Publishing Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2013.

⁴ Partha Chatterjee, Subaltern Studies and 'Capital', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September, 2013, Vol. 48. No. 37, pp. 69-75

majority against then growing influence of the BJP among the Hindi speaking population who have migrated from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to form a sizeable workforce in manufacturing units that dot the banks of Hooghly river. We discussed the agitation in fair detail, including the general strike that was called for one hundred and four days across the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts. We also noted in passing the lack of protest by rights groups and Left parties against the wanton violation of rights of the people and the extent to which civil society in Bengal had become communalized bringing the hitherto carefully hidden racial fault lines out in the open.

It is on this background that the present study took up a rather ambitious project of surveying the wide-ranging governmental, ethnographic and cultural discourses on Gorkha identity and movement and locating them within the broader academic discourses. In the process, one could not but take careful note of the uneasy and unequal relation between the vernacular scholarship and metropolitan academic production. The growing academic interest on Darjeeling and Nepali identity, in our opinion, signals one part of the shift in focus in what is known in global academic circles as ‘South Asian Studies’. Given what the protocols of such intellectual shifts tend to involve, this study is meant to be a critique of ways in which the natives tend to be reduced to mere ‘informants’ and ‘data collectors’, foreclosing the possibility of Nepalis becoming an epistemic community. The study underscores the need to intervene at the epistemic level as it believes that academic discourses are deeply complicit in producing a particular representation of the Nepali subject in mainstream discourses. There is, of course, a deep connection between these academic discourses and governmental practices vis-à-vis Nepalis.

The study has offered a broad categorisation of available studies on Nepalis. The first category is ethnographical/anthropological in nature with a longer tradition dating back to early nineteenth century. But, as we argue, it is with the Gorkhaland movement in the 1980s that the region started attracting the attention of metropolitan social scientists. Alongside these, a third category of academic works emerged from within, that were produced by mostly Nepali scholars. We have tried to study the broad characteristics of these relatively more organic works and in the process pointed out how they suffered from a lack of exposure to latest academic trends and theoretical developments that might have enriched these studies. In the absence of what is taken to

be the necessary academic rigour these works have failed to interrogate the dominant forms of representations of the Gorkhas. We argue that as a result, despite their wealth of insights, these studies stopped short of critically questioning the discourse that constructed the foundations of Nepali identity. This work took this up as the most necessary task because this is precisely where the governmental practices of the post-colonial state in relation to Gorkha community as well as other tribal and Adivasi communities have not fundamentally changed even with the formal end of colonialism.

Another important feature we would like to flag here is the use of colonial categories like 'Tribe' and 'Ethnic'. It is our contention that since we use these very categories in our writings as a supposed act of 'writing back' it becomes cliched and incapable of producing an alternative narrative. We asked whether native and indigenous scholars have found newer ways of representing their case, newer ways of 'writing back'. This work replies in the affirmative to this question by identifying a new crop of young scholars. They are not just fast appropriating the metropolitan academic vocabulary and style in writing and speaking about themselves but also appropriating for themselves the very right to represent themselves.

The work then relies on the works of Michel Foucault and Edward Said for creating a conceptual frame to approach the question of how colonialism creates a body of knowledge about the ruled population, and how that becomes the crucible of self-recognition for the colonized subject. This is what the later chapter on the Company Gorkha would illustrate and speak to fleshing out the process with examples. But of course, the operationalization of the frame had to be mediated by the insights of Subaltern studies. The critique offered by Subaltern Studies broadly of the liberal nationalist historiography of colonial India and the subsequent characterisation of India as a society with incomplete bourgeois democratic revolution where the bourgeoisie enjoys dominance without hegemony over the subalterns has proved to be extremely useful in explaining some of the problems of writing the history of Nepalis in India.⁵

Further, the theoretical insights of Subaltern Studies and postcolonial theory have helped us to assess the impact of colonial discourse on the Gorkhas as well as the symbiotic relation between knowledge and domination. The study thus trains its focus on

⁵ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony and Its History*, in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies Vol. VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 20-23

the emergence of particular forms of subjectivity of the Gorkhas, through an oppositional reading of the colonial writings, an interrogation of the use of the same subjectivity by the independent state, as well as the fractures and fault-lines of its repurposing by the people in question.

In the first chapter titled, 'History of Darjeeling: Space, Territory and People', we have tried to emphasize the peculiar spatial and social history of Darjeeling as a frontier of the British empire as well as a fluid zone of overlapping ethnic and cultural boundaries. Using contemporary social theories of space and identity, we foregrounded the fact of overlapping boundaries in Darjeeling with various narratives and incidents. The chapter has described how the spatial zone that is Darjeeling today was historically a contested zone between kingdoms of Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal, and of course, the East India Company subsequently. It then proceeded to underscore the nature of fluidness and fuzziness of the region, using various historical as well as literary sources, highlighting an imaginative geography that was at once sacred and holy. Such was the idea of *Pahad* (Mid Hills) starting from far western Nepal stretching all the way to the borders of Bhutan, that was a fluid zone for people continuously moving from one end to the other.

The other important aspect of this chapter was to study the history of Darjeeling through the prism of colonial governmentality. The narrative illustrated how the coming of the British and the establishment of a 'hill station' in Darjeeling implied the laying down of a modern regime of power. What were the key consequences? The British used modern cognitive apparatus to produce a rich body of knowledge about the space, the people, the vegetation of the region, the languages, etc. We saw how colonial cartography overwrote the existing sacred geographies and produced new boundaries and frontiers. As the fluid zone became mapped it spelt an end to the free movement of people across the mid hills. The nomadic forms of life came to an end, paving way for sedentary forms of existence. The people who began to lead a sedentary life in Darjeeling came to be known as the 'Nepali diaspora' or '*Munglane*' in Nepal. It is crucial to note that this production of a Nepali diaspora resulting out of modern cartography and colonial boundaries is at the heart of the 'identity crisis' of the Nepalis in Darjeeling.

Thereafter, we trained our focus in studying the impact of colonial governmentality and discourse on the production of the Gorkha subject, focusing on events from 1835, the year when the Darjeeling region was gifted to the Company. The

essence of the discussion that followed is what the scholar Sudipta Kaviraj calls 'cognitive identification'. This can be seen to begin in 1839 with the Superintendent of Darjeeling encouraged 'immigration' of people from the neighbouring regions of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal and raised the population from a few hundreds to about 10,000. The first official census was undertaken in 1872, a key step for colonial knowledge production. It reported a population of 94,712 in Darjeeling.

We also discussed in some detail the socio-economic condition in Nepal as 'push factors' for the eastward movement of people towards Darjeeling. These conditions in nineteenth century Nepal resembled a feudal society. The Brahmins, Chhetris, and Thakuris enjoyed political power and control over land. The other groups like the Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Limbus, Khambus, and Newars were mostly marginalised. The royal army received their salaries in the form of land grants known as '*jagir*'. The priestly class, we have seen, received royal patronage in the form of land rights for temples known as '*guthi*'. The Mongoloid groups, on the other hand, followed a system of collective ownership of land known as '*kipats*'. The expansion of the Nepali state by Prithivinarayan Shah and the resulting expansion of *raiker* land led to largescale migration of the tribes from their traditional *kipats*. It is believed that this very segment of people moved eastward to settle in Darjeeling.

The chapter also focussed on the growth of colonial capitalism, principally in the form of tea plantation. Central to the growth and expansion of tea plantation was the production of a discourse of race and labour that was applied in the case of Nepalis too. We discussed how the production of the figure of a 'Hill coolie' was part of this project. The turning of the tribes into 'proto- wage labourers' is central to the history of migration. 'Immigration' of the 'hill coolies' was encouraged as the infrastructure of a 'hill station' was to be laid down in Darjeeling and most certainly the teeming tea gardens whose numbers swelled towards the latter half of nineteenth century. An interesting parallel can be drawn between the racial theory of 'martial race' and 'hill coolie'. The 'Gurkha' soldier whose simplicity in terms of commensality and religious practices was found to be ideally suited to serve the Company Army was also thought to be useful plantation worker as he was casteless, docile and hardworking hill-man. The chapter ends with the contention that the production of Darjeeling as 'Hill station' has endured in the way the town continues to be subjected to touristic gaze.

In the second chapter titled, 'The 'Brave' Gurkha: A Study of the Colonial Discourse on 'Martial'' Race, we took up some of the key texts as representative of the body of colonial discourse on the Gurkhas by British recruiting officers. This is where we underscored the importance of the theoretical insights on discourse and bio power in framing the Gorkha body. We also looked at the role of ethnography as an important means through which colonial knowledge was produced.

The idea behind engaging with these texts was to understand the process through which the body of the Gorkha came to be framed in the popular imagination. The chapter described how the recruiting officers deployed racial theory that justified the production of an anthropology of the Gorkha body in its most telling details. Every physiognomic aspect about the 'Himalayan tribes' was meticulously described: forehead, cheek bones, mouth, chin, lips, gums eyes and what have you. We described how the key outcome of such ethnographic and anthropological body of knowledge was the objectification of the body of Gorkha in the training manuals of the regiments. The body of the Gorkha thus came to be seen as source of force which could be directed towards certain specific action. In this manner, the chapter argued, the objectification of the Gorkha body essentialised the Gorkha community, by emptying them of their cultural meanings and inscribing the anthropometric discourse as the scientific truth about the community. Of course, the British racial theories created an ideal binary: between the 'savage' and the 'civilised'. The civilised were the bearers of Western rationality with ideal shape, physiognomy, features with aesthetically better and intellectually superior head and face as the standard – the white race. The figure of a 'primitive' Gurkha, stood opposed to the white man. Despite possessing bodily strength, he lacked the very rationality of the Western man, and hence made themselves available to be pressed to certain kinds of service – bodies that are like foolish machines: apparently empty of thoughts but capable and waiting to be exploited.

The third chapter is titled, 'The Emergence of the Gorkha Community: Colonial Public Sphere and the Nepali Nationalist Discourse'. This chapter begins with looking at the emergence of a colonial public sphere and trains our focus on its evolution in Darjeeling, starting in the late nineteenth century and growing through the early twentieth century. The study of the colonial public sphere became all the more central since the chapter argues that the formation of Nepali discourse is principally a function of the

emerging elites. These elites were the first beneficiaries of modern western liberal education who created a literary sphere which produced a discourse of identity and nationalism. In mapping the emergence of the literary public sphere, reading public and the modern middle class in Darjeeling, the chapter took insights from a wide range of scholars, from Jurgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson to Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Dipesh Chakrabarty and a host of others.

The chapter reveals how the literary public sphere worked on multiple registers. It worked towards the standardisation of Nepali language, grammar, as well as linguistic conventions. Many literary organisations came up that worked for the development and recognition of Nepali language by governmental authorities. An important aspect of the creation of the literary public sphere was the production of the reading public, which grew with the spread of school education in Darjeeling, led by the Christian missionaries. The early twentieth century thus witnessed the development of Nepali print capitalism, initially in Benaras, and subsequently in Darjeeling. It mostly produced school textbooks but also literary journals and newspapers. Such developments created a reading public that gradually began to consume the discourse of nationalism that made its appearance in the form of *jati ko unnati* (progress of the community). Significantly, the chapter pointed out how this literary public sphere was both diasporic and at once trying to make a home in Darjeeling. There is thus yearning for home in the writings of canonical figures like Agam Singh but also a new sense of belonging of the migrants in *pravash* at the same time. The chapter then goes on to analyse how early twentieth century Nepali literary production valorised the role of a modernising elite as the principal subject of history. We cited canonical figures like Indra Bahadur Rai, who laid down the basic template for the discourse of Nepali identity that was decidedly bourgeois humanist in orientation. It is this variety of literary production that effectively produced a mass Nepali subject. The chapter also reviewed the contemporary literary trends in Nepali literature, particularly the subaltern turn that took place with the publication of *Kinara Ka Awajharoo*. We tried to interpret how *Kinarako Awajharoo*, was able to sense the crisis in the Nepali discourse, and the injecting of the discourse of ‘subaltern’ can be read as new ways of engaging with the political centre. There is a lack of theoretical clarity, according to us, such turn to the subaltern position, but that should not stop us from acknowledging the novelty the book brought into the Nepali literary scene.

The fourth chapter is titled, 'Gorkhaland Movement and the Question of Nationality and Citizenship'. This chapter takes a broad sweep in tracing the origin and development of nationalist thinking in the shape of the demand for homeland for Gorkhas in India from the first decades of the twentieth century all the way to the present. We began by arguing that the feeling of distinctiveness of the Gorkhas culturally, racially, and even geographically, was in large measure a function of the colonial policies. The British administrative policy with regard to 'Hills', 'Plains', and 'Valleys' led to the isolation of the 'tribal community' with separate systems of administration. The chapter also argued, in keeping with the discussion of preceding chapters, that such an administrative policy with respect to Darjeeling hills led to a specific kind of subjectivisation of the Nepalis in Darjeeling. We thus traced the movement through various stages. The first clamour for a distinct administrative arrangement in Darjeeling took place in 1907. The second instance was in 1917 where the leaders placed a representation before the British government. The memorandum contained a reconstruction of the geography and the people who inhabit it. The big push for a separate identity or state became vociferous with the founding of the All-India Gorkha League (AIGL) in 1943. The AIGL experimented with several claims including the demand for Uttarakhand Pradesh that included Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Sikkim, Cooch Behar among other. Towards the 1980s, the Pranta Parishad and Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) was formed. The chapter narrates how the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland became sharper and shriller from this juncture. By the middle of the 1980s the demand gathered steam and the movement turned violent. The chapter then highlighted the rising phenomenon of 'ethnic revivalism' among the various tribes that together constituted the Nepali community from the 1990s. The reason behind such revivalism, we tried to explain, was the gradual penetration of neo-liberal governmental state that started producing new ethnicities as the legitimate targets of policies. If the earlier phase of Gorkhaland movement was marked by what Ranabir Samaddar calls the 'autonomous subject' as someone who resisted the operations of governmentality, the ethnic turn marked the entry of a proper neoliberal governmental subject. This transformation is currently realigning the very terms of engagement of the Nepalis of Darjeeling with the governmental apparatus of the state. The chapter looks at this period as one in which the governmental and surveillance apparatus of the state penetrated deeply in the hills. This had a direct impact in the way it struck at the very heart of the Nepali identity. The Nepali identity as a mass political subjectivity was assiduously created by a nationalist discourse that

emanated from the cultural productions in the Nepali literary sphere. This sense of a collective self is straining at the edges as governmentality is able to create newer categories as the targets of governance and welfare.

From the summary of the above chapters, we can now deduce certain conclusions. These conclusions will take the form of observations about the space the Nepalis inhabit, the nature of their identity, the nationalist discourse, the movement as well as the future of Nepali identity. Some of them follow as logical inferences based on arguments made before, the rest remain speculative and somewhat tentative in nature. However, certain aspects of the present study must be flagged as novel, for instance, the treatment of the central problem with the help of theoretical lenses that have hitherto not been deployed in the study of the Nepali identity formation and movement. First and foremost, here is the use of postcolonial theory as a framework for the analysis of Gorkha identity. The second is the use of Foucauldian categories like governmentality and discourse for analysing the problem of construction of Gorkha identity. The third one follows from the other two but should be seen as analytically separate: It is the study of the Gorkha body as the site of operation of the disciplinary power. None of the works referred in the study has expressly used the categories and problematics like the above made use by us to engage with these questions, particularly, the question of the body. The fourth point of departure is the deployment of theories of colonial modernity and governmentality to map the formation of the discourse of Nepali nationalism in the literary public sphere. Once again, there are works that routinely describe the same events but without a critical engagement with that period or the significance of the arrival of print for the nationalist discourse. Finally, and this may well be one of the most striking insights thrown up in this work, the rise of ethnic revivalism in Nepali society is a subject matter of growing academic research, but such a process has not been seen as resulting out of the increasing penetration of governmental practices till date to the best of our knowledge.

Having made these claims – some of which readers may choose to see as tall - let us move towards a critical survey of the present. The Gorkha community has come a really long way from the first stirrings of identity movement in 1907 all the way to the present juncture. There is a growing realisation of the discursive colonisation of the Gorkha identity and more specifically the body of the Gorkha, that we have tried to

articulate here. This has become possible due to the emergence of a section of organic intellectuals from within the community that has now begun to critically engage with the question of identity from the level of epistemology and knowledge production. There is a sense in which these organic intellectuals are talking about intellectual decolonisation and claiming post-colonial agency. But who really is this postcolonial Gorkha? There is no readymade or immediate answer to this question. May be there need not be one in the first place. A postcolonial Gorkha, in our view, is one that is deeply aware of the history of the discourse of ‘martial race’, aware of the epistemic violence that colonial knowledge has inflicted upon the community in the form of essentialisation of identity, and aware of the violence that modern cartography has done to the sacred geographies. While bearing the marks of violence on his body and being, the postcolonial Gorkha now begins to resist them in order to claim postcolonial agency. This begs a further question: what do we mean by postcolonial agency? We believe postcolonial agency as a moment where the Gorkha subject comes out of this singular, racialised identity to claim a plural being-ness. It is a move that is simultaneously rooted in its cultural moorings and yet at the same time cosmopolitan in its general orientation. A postcolonial Gorkha is a subject that rewrites her geographies, potentially erasing modern boundaries and laying claim over a larger terrain that comprises large parts of Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan, parts of Tibet, stretching all the way to northern Burma. One is immediately reminded of a short story by Indra Bahadur Rai titled, *Jai Maya Afu Matra Likhapani Aaipugee*.⁶ The story is about one Jaibahadur, who like many others, leaves his home and hearth in a village in northern Burma in the wake of Japanese shelling during World War II and arrives at Likhapani in Tinsukia, Assam. The Nepalis inhabiting this region stand testimony to the history of indentured labour and migration. The explosion of information technology and social media is creating the necessary conditions where the forging of new solidarities among Nepalis distributed across disparate geographies is becoming possible. The signs of forging a pan South Asian identity of the Nepalis looks well on course.

The sense of rootedness we talked about earlier can be traced to the particular kind of subjectivisation of the people of Darjeeling. There is widespread social change and development that one is witnessing in every sphere of the Nepali society. And yet

⁶ Indra Bahadur Rai, “*Jaimaya Afu Matra Likhapani Aaipugee*” (In Nepali), in Bijay Kumar Rai (ed.) *Indra Sampoorana*, Nirman Prakashan. Sikkim, 2004

there is an intransigent, autonomous subjectivity of the Nepalis that seems to resist inclusion. This resistance is not just to governmentality but it also results from a deep sense of political and cultural alienation of the Nepalis from the rest of West Bengal. There are indeed very deep racial fault lines that separate the majority community from the Nepalis in the state. The fault lines are not entirely social, though it cannot be ruled out altogether, but they are more so when it comes to political and administrative arrangements. This gap is, however, narrowing down lately and it is not necessarily because the government is taking a conscious, deliberate action of making the general administration more sensitive and inclusive. It is taking place through a completely new set of developments. The state apparatus of the Government of West Bengal had always remained outside the reach of most Nepalis, except Bhutias and Lepchas who could join higher echelons of bureaucracy as they belonged to Scheduled Tribe category. But this has dramatically changed in the last fifteen-twenty years. With the inclusion of Tamangs and Limbus in the Scheduled Tribes category around 2005 and the general spread of English education among the masses in the hills of Darjeeling, a larger number of candidates from the Nepali community are now part of the higher bureaucracy. This has resulted in greater integration of the educated Nepalis with the general administrative apparatuses of the state. But it has also resulted in creating a tension of a different kind where the upwardly mobile segment of a marginalised community has to face resistance and hostility more than others. This is part of the experience, in fact, of this author, who joined the University of North Bengal in 2006 as lecturer in Political Science along with three others who belonged to Nepali community. Such a batch of Nepali teachers were appointed for the first time outside the Department of Nepali Literature. The experience of becoming part of the civil society is therefore paradoxically not without a concomitant sense of how marginal one continues to be.

The Nepali subject that is represented by the Nepali nationalist discourse is similarly that of a marginalised figure. As we have seen, the political movement for the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland emerged out of a sense of mistaken identity between the Nepalis of India and Nepal. So, the historically constructed Nepali identity was dovetailed to reconstruct it as distinct from the Nepalis of Nepal. The movement largely took its cue from this understanding of the crisis. And may also add that the Nepali nationalist discourse has been a hegemonic force foreclosing possibilities for the emergence of other forms of movements based on caste and gender. off late the Nepali

community has been grappling with a crisis of a very different kind. One such crisis is the upshot of the neoliberal governmental gaze, that is leading to the creation of new ethnicities. Tied to this development is the intensification of the touristic, exotic gaze on the community and the space the community inhabits. This touristic gaze has necessarily resulted in the reproduction of Darjeeling and the Nepali community in its most essentialist image, meant for the consumption of an ever-growing niche consumers. Similarly, the ethnicization of Nepali identity has become a necessary condition in order to qualify as the new targets of welfare policies of neoliberal governmentality. This has resulted in a peculiar condition for the Nepalis in India. On the one hand, the insecurities of the hill population drive them towards further integration with mainstream India. On the other hand, the exigencies of electoral democratic politics and neo-liberal market reforms demand the reproduction, curation and, indeed, commodification, of their old ethnic identity. Nepali nationalism is thus confronted with a perplexing situation, where the Gorkhas must make a capital out of their distinctive Nepali identity and hence their deep ties with Nepal. At the same time, their political stake very much depends on how far they manage to juggle the elements of their Gorkha identity and make assertions of being at once different from the people of Nepal. The future of Nepali identity will thus depend on how the community can creatively use their embattled tradition to negotiate with their troubled modernity.

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Annexure 1

Treaty of Segauli, 1815

TREATY of PEACE between the HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND MAHA RAJAH BIKRAM SHAH, Rajah of Nipal, settled between LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BRADSHAW on the part of the HONOURABLE COMPANY, in virtue of the full powers vested in him by HIS EXCELLENCY the RIGHT HONOURABLE FRANCIS, EARL of MOIRA, KNIGHT of the MOST NOBLE ORDER of the GARTER, one of HIS MAJESTY's MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL, appointed by the Court of Directors of the said HONOURABLE COMPANY to direct and control all the affairs of the East Indies, and by SREE GOOROO GUJRAJ MISSER and CHUNDER SEEKUR OPEDEEA on the part of MAHA RAJAH GRIMAUN JODE BIKRAM SAH BAHAUDER, SHUMSHEER JUNG, in virtue of the powers to that effect vested in them by the said Rajah of Nipal, -2nd December 1815.

Whereas war has arisen between the Honourable East India Company and the Rajah of Nipal, and whereas the parties are mutually disposed to restore the relations of peace and amity which, previously to the occurrence of the late differences, had long subsisted between the two states, the following terms of peace have been agreed upon.

Article 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable East India Company and the Rajah of Nipal.

Article 2

The Rajah of Nipal renounces all claim to the lands which were the subject of discussion between the two States before the war; and acknowledges the right of the Honourable Company to the sovereignty of those lands.

Article 3

The Rajah of Nipal hereby cedes to the Honourable East India Company in perpetuity all the under mentioned territories, viz—

First—The whole of the low lands between the Rivers Kali and Rapti.

Second—The whole of the low lands (with the exception of Bootwul Khass) lying between the Rapti and the Gundruck.

Thirdly—The whole of the low lands between the Gundruck and Coosah, in which the authority of the British Government has been introduced, or is in actual course of introduction.

Fourthly—All the low lands between the Rivers Mitchee and the Teestah.

Fifthly—All the territories within the hills eastward of the River Mitchee including the fort and the lands of Nagree and the Pass of Nagarcote leading from Morubg into the

hills, together with the territory lying between that Pass and Nagree. The aforesaid territory shall be evacuated by the Gurkha troops within forty days from this date.

Article 4

With a view to indemnify the Chiefs and Barahdars of the State of Nipal, whose interests will suffer by the alienation of the lands ceded by the foregoing Article, the British Government agrees to settle pensions to the aggregate amount of two lakhs of rupees per annum on such Chiefs as may be selected by the Rajah of Nipal, and in the proportions which the Rajah may fix. As soon as the selection is made, Sunnuds shall be granted under the seal and signature of the Governor-General for the pensions respectively.

Article 5

The Rajah of Nipal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connexion with the countries lying to the west of the River Kali and engages never to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof.

Article 6

The Rajah of Nipal engages never to molest or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim in the possession of his territories, but agrees, if any difference shall arise between the State of Nipal and the Rajah of Sikkim, or the subjects of either, that such differences shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government by which award the Rajah of Nipal engages to abide.

Article 7

The Rajah of Nipal hereby engages never to take or retain in his service any British subject of any European or American State, without the consent of the British Government.

Article 8

In order to secure and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two States, it is agreed that accredited Ministers from each shall reside at the Court of the other.

Article 9

This treaty, consisting of nine Articles, shall be ratified by the Rajah of Nipal within fifteen days from this date, and the ratification shall be delivered to Lieutenant-Colonel Bradshaw, who engages to obtain and deliver the ratification of the Governor-General within twenty days or sooner, if practicable.

Done at Segowlee, on the 2nd day of December 1815.

PARIS BRADSHAW, LT.-COL., P.A.
DD. OCHITERLONY,
Agent Governor-General

Annexure 2

Treaty of Titalya, 1817

TREATY, COVENANT, or AGREEMENT entered into by CAPTAIN BARRE LATTER, AGENT on the part of His Excellency the RIGHT HONOURABLE the EARL of MOIRA, K.G., GOVERNOR-GENERAL, &c., &c., &c., and by NAZISR CHAINA TENJIN and MACHA TEINBAH and LAMA DUCHIM LONGDOO, Deputies on the part of the RAJNI of SIKKIMPUTTEE, being severally authorized and duly appointed for the above purpose – 1817.

Article 1

The Honourable East India Company cedes, transfers, and makes over in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, his heirs or successors, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward of the Mechi River and to the westward of the Teesta River, formerly possessed and occupied by the Rajah of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the Treaty of Peace signed at Segoulee.

Article 2

The Sikkimputtee Rajah engages for himself and successors to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against the Goorkhas or any other State.

Article 3

That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or questions that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul, or any neighboring State, and to abide by the decision of the British Government.

Article 4

He engages for himself and successors to join the British Troops with the whole of the Military Force when employed within the Hills, and in general to afford the British Troops every aid and facility in his power.

Article 5

That he will not permit any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American State, to reside within his dominions, without the permission of the English Government.

Article 6

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits or notorious offenders that may take refuge within his territories.

Article 7

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue or other delinquents when demanded by the British Government through their Accredited Agents.

Article 8

That he will afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's Province, and he engages that no duties shall be levied on the transit of merchandise beyond the established custom at the several golahs or marts.

Article 9

The Honourable East India Company guarantees to the Sikkimputtee Rajah and his successors the full and peaceable possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the first Article of the present Agreement.

Article 10

This Treaty shall be ratified and exchanged by the Sikkimputtee Rajah within one month from the present date, and the counterpart, when confirmed by His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General, shall be transmitted to the Rajah.

Done at Titalya, this 10th day of February 1817, answering to the 9th of Phagoon 1873 Sumbut, and to the 30th of Maugh 1223 Bengallie.

Barre Latter
Nazir Chaina Tinjin
Macha Timbah
Lama Duchim LAongadoc

Moir
N.B. Edmonstone
Archd. Seton
Geo. Dowdeswell

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William, this fifteenth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

J. Adam
Acting Chief Secy. To Govt.

Annexure 3

The Sinchula Treaty of 1865

Treaty between His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir John Lawrence, G.C.B., K.S.I. Viceroy and Governor General of Her Britannic Majesty's possessions in the East Indies , and Their Highness the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs of Bhutan concluded on the one part by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Viceroy and Governor-General, and on the other part by Samdojey Deb Jimpey and Themseyrensey Donai according to full powers conferred on them by the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs-1865.

Article 1

There shall henceforth be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government and the Government of Bhootan.

Article 2

Whereas in consequence of repeated aggressions of the Bhootan Government and of the refusal of that Government to afford satisfaction for those aggressions, and of their insulting treatment of the officers sent by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of procuring in amicable adjustment of differences existing between the two States, the British Government has been compelled to seize by an armed force the whole of the Dooars and certain Hill Posts protecting the passes into Bhootan, and whereas the Bhootan Government has now expressed its regret for past misconduct and a desire for the establishment of friendly relations with the British Government, it is hereby agreed that the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars, bordering on the Districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, and Assam, together with the Talook of Ambaree Fallacottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta up to such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose is ceded by the Bhootan Government to the British Government forever.

Article 3

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to surrender all British subjects, as well as subjects of the Chiefs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who are now detained in Bhootan against their will, and to place no impediment in the way of the return of all or any of such persons into British territory.

Article 4

In consideration of the cession by the Bhootan Government of the territories specified in Article 2 of this Treaty, and of the said Government having expressed its regret for past misconduct, and having hereby engaged for the future to restrain all evil disposed persons from committing crimes within British territory the territories of the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to give prompt and full redress for all such crimes which may be committed in defiance of their commands, the British Government agree to make an annual allowance to the Government of Bhootan of a sum not exceeding fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000) to be paid to officers not below the rank of Jungpen,

who shall be disputed by the Government of Bhootan to receive the same. And it is further hereby agreed that the payments shall be made as specified below:

On the fulfillment by the Bhootan Government of the conditions of this Treaty twenty-five thousand rupees (Rupees 25,000).

On the 10th January following forty-five thousand rupees (Rupees 45,000).

On every succeeding 10th January fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 45,000).

Article 5

The British Government will hold itself at liberty at any time to suspend the payment of this compensation money either in whole or in part in the event of misconduct on the part of the Bhootan Government or its failure to check the aggression of its subjects or to comply with the provisions of this treaty.

Article 6

The British Government hereby agree on demand being duly made in writing by the Bhootan Government to surrender under the provisions of Act VII of 1854 of which a copy shall be furnished to the Bhootan Government, all Bhootanese subjects accused of any of the following crimes who may take refuge in British dominions. The crimes are murder, attempting to murder, rape, kidnapping, great personal violence, maiming, dacoity, thuggee, robbery or burglary, cattle stealing, breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing therein, arson, setting fire to a village, house, or town, forgery or uttering forged documents, counterfeiting current coin, knowingly uttering base or counterfeit coin, perjury, embezzlement by public officers or other persons, and being an accessory to any of the above offences.

Article 7

The Bhootan Government hereby agree on requisition being duly made by, or by the authority of, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to surrender any British subjects accused of any of the crimes specifies in the above Article who may take refuge in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Bhootan Government, and also any Bhootanese subjects who after committing any of the above crimes in British territory shall flee into Bhootan on such evidence of their guilt being produced as shall satisfy the Local Court of the district in which the offence may have been committed.

Article 8

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with, or causes of complaint against the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, and to abide by the decision of the British Government, and the British Government hereby engage to enquire into and settle all such disputes and complaints in such manner as justice may require, and to insist on the observance of the decision by the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar.

Article 9

There shall be free trade and commerce between the two Governments. No duties shall be levied on Bhootanese goods imported into British territories, nor shall the Bhootan

Government levy any duties on British goods imported into, or transported through the Bhootan territories. Bhootanese subjects residing and British residing in Bhootan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Bhootan Government.

Article 10

The present Treaty of ten Articles having been concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day of November 1865, corresponding with the Bhootea year Shim Lung 24th day of the 9th month, and signed and sealed by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., and Samdojey Deb Jimpey and Themseyrensey Donai, the ratifications of the same by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council and by Their Highness the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs shall be mutually delivered within thirty days from this date.

(Sd.) H. Bruce, Lieut-Col.
Chief Civil and Polt. Officer.

(Sd.) In Deb Nagri
(Sd.) In Bhootea Language.

This Treaty was ratified on the 29th November 1865 in Calcutta by me.

25th January 1866

Sd/-
John Lawrence,
Governor-General

25th January 1866 (Sd.)

Sd/-
Muir,
Secy. To the Govt. of India

Annexure 4

Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India, July 31, 1950

The Government of India and the Government of Nepal recognizing the ancient ties which have happily existed between the two countries for centuries:

Desiring still further to strengthen and develop these ties and to perpetuate peace between the two countries.

Have resolved therefore to enter into a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with each other, and have, for this purpose, appointed as their plenipotentiaries the following persons, namely, the Government of India, his Excellency Shri Chandreshwar Prasad Narain Singh, Ambassador of India in Nepal: The Government of Nepal, Mohun Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, Maharaja, Prime Minister and Supreme-Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, who having examined each other's credentials and found them good and in due form have agreed as follows:

Article I

There shall be everlasting peace and friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal. The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other.

Article II

The two Governments hereby undertake to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighboring State likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two Governments.

Article III

In order to establish and maintain the relations referred to in Article I the two Governments agree to continue diplomatic relations with each other by means of representatives with such staff as is necessary for the due performance of their functions.

The representatives and such of their staffs as may be agreed upon shall enjoy such diplomatic privileges and immunities as are customarily granted by international law on a reciprocal basis: Provided that in no case shall these be less than those granted to persons of a similar status of any other State having diplomatic relations with either Government.

Article IV

The two Governments agree to appoint Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice Consuls and other consular agents, who shall reside in towns, ports and other places in each other's territory as may be agreed to.

Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls and consular agents be provided with exequaturs or authorization of their appointment. Such exequatur or authorization is liable to be withdrawn by the authority which issued it if considered necessary. The reasons for the withdrawal shall be indicated wherever possible.

The persons mentioned above shall enjoy on a reciprocal basis all the rights, privileges, exemptions and immunities that are accorded to persons of corresponding status of any other State.

Article V

The Government of Nepal shall be free to import from or through the territory of India, arms, ammunition or war-like material and equipment necessary for the security of Nepal and the procedure for giving effect to this arrangement shall be worked out by the two Governments acting in consultation.

Article VI

Each Government undertakes, in token of the neighborly friendship between India and Nepal, to give to the nationals of the other, in its territory, national treatment with regard to participation in industrial and economic development of such territory and to the grant of concessions and contracts relating to such development.

Article VII

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.

Article VIII

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.

Article IX

This Treaty shall come into force from the date of signature by both Governments.

Article X

The Treaty shall remain in force until it is terminated by either party by giving one year's notice.

Done in duplicate at Kathmandu this 31st day of July 1950.

(Sd.)
Chandreshwar Prasad
Narain Singh
for the Government of India

(Sd.)
Mohun Shamsher Jang
Bahadur Rana
for the Government of Nepal

Annexure 5

Memorandum of Settlement

The demands of the GNLF having been considered by the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal and consequent upon the tripartite meeting between Shri Buta Singh, Union Home Minister, Shri Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal and Shri Subash Ghisingh, President, GNLF at New Delhi on 25.7.1988, it is hereby agreed between Government of India, Government of West Bengal and GNLF as below:

1. SEPARATE STATE OF GORKHALAND

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. The salient features of the Hill Council would be as follows:

1(i). The name of the council will be "Darjeeling Gorkha Hill council."

1(ii). The Council will cover the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling district, namely, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, plus the Mouzas of Lohagarh T.C., Lohagarh Forest, Eangmohan, Barachenga, Panighata, Choto Adalpur, Paharu, Sukna Forest, Sukna Part-I, Pantapati Forest-I, Mahanadi Forest, Champasari Forest and Salbari Chhat Part II within Siliguri subdivision.

1(iii). The State Government agrees to lease to the Council after it is formed, or acquire for it the use of such land as maybe required and necessary for administrative and developmental purposes anywhere in the State and in particular in or around 'Darjeeling More' in Siliguri subdivision.

1(iv). The executive powers of the Council will cover the following subjects, subject to the provisions of the Central and State laws:

- (1) The allotment, occupation or use, or setting apart, of land other than any land which is a reserved forest, for the purpose of agriculture or grazing, or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes, or for any other purpose likely to promote the interest of the inhabitants of any village, locally or town;
- (2) The management of any forest, not being a reserved forest;
- (3) The use of any canal or watercourse for the purpose of agriculture;
- (4) Agriculture;
- (5) Public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries;
- (6) Tourism;
- (7) Vocational training;
- (8) Public works-development and planning;
- (9) Construction and maintenance of all roads except national highways and State highways;

- (10) Transport and development of transport;
- (11) Management of burials and burial grounds, cremation and cremation grounds;
- (12) Preservation, protection and improvement of livestock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice;
- (13) Pounds and the prevention of cattle trespass;
- (14) water, that is to say, water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankment, water storage;
- (15) fisheries;
- (16) management of markets and fairs not being already managed by Municipal authorities, Panchayat Samiti or Gram Panchayats;
- (17) Education—primary, secondary and higher secondary;
- (18) works, lands and buildings vested in or in the lawful possession of the Council;
- (19) small scale and cottage industries.

1(v). The Council shall exercise general powers of supervision over Panchayats and Municipalities falling within the area of the Council's jurisdiction.

1(vi). The General Council will have a total of 42 Members out of which 28 will be elected and the rest nominated by the State Government.

1(vii). There will be an Executive Council and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the General Council will be ex-officio members of the Executive Council with the Chairman of the General Council functioning as the Chief Executive Councillor. The Chief Executive Councillor will nominate 5 members to the Executive Council from out of the elected members of the Council and the State Government will nominate 2 members to the Executive Council from out of the non-official nominated members of the General Council.

1(viii). The Chairman of the General Council cum Chief Executive Councillor will have the ex-officio status and privileges of a Minister in the Council of Ministers in the State.

1(ix). The Bill for setting up the Hill Council will be introduced and passed in a special session of the State Legislature which has been summoned. The election to the Hill Council will be held by the 15th December, 1988.

2. RESTORATION OF NORMALCY

2(i). Review of pending criminal cases: It is agreed that a review will be done by the State Government of all the cases registered under various laws against persons involved in the GNLf agitation. Action will be taken, in the light of the review, not to proceed with prosecution in all cases except those charged with murder. Release of persons in custody will follow the withdrawal of cases. This review will be completed within 15 days of signing of this agreement.

2(ii). Action against Government servants: The State Government agrees to withdraw all cases of disciplinary action taken against employees in the context of the agitation. There will be no victimization of Government servants.

2(iii). The GNLFF agrees to issue a call to its cadre for the surrender of all unauthorized arms to the district administration. It will be made clear in the call that such surrenders made voluntarily within the prescribed date will not attract any prosecution.

2(iv). The GNLFF hereby agrees to withdraw all agitational activities and to extend full cooperation to the administration for the maintenance of peace and normalization of the political process in the hill areas of Darjeeling.

Subash Ghisingh
President, GNLFF,
On behalf of GNLFF

R.N. Sen Gupta
Chief Secretary,
On behalf of the Govt. of Bengal
C.G. Somiah
Union Home Secretary
On behalf of the Central Government

In the presence of:
Union Home Minister

Chief Minister
Government of West Bengal

Place: Calcutta
Date: August 22, 1988

Annexure 6

Text of Notification on Citizenship Issues

The following is the text of the notification on the citizenship issue following the signing of memorandum of settlement with the Gorkha National Front President Mr. Subhas Ghising:

Whereas it has come to the notice of the Central Government that there have been some misconceptions about the citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution of India of certain classes of persons commonly known as Gorkhas who had settled in India at such commencement.

And whereas it is considered necessary to clear such mis-conceptions, it is hereby clarified as follows:

(1). As from the commencement of the Constitution that is, as from 26.1.1950, every Gorkha who had his domicile in the territory of India, that is, in the territories which on 26.1.1950 became part of or constituted in the territory of India as defined in Article 1(2) of the Constitution of India, and

(A) Who was born in the territory of India, or

(B) Either of whose parents was born in the territory of India, or

(C) Who had been ordinarily resident in the territory of India for not less than five years before such commencement shall be a citizen of India as provided in Article 5 of the Constitution of India.

(2). No such person as is referred to in paragraph (1) above shall be a citizen of India or be deemed to be citizen of India if he has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of any foreign state, as provided in Article 9 of the Constitution of India.

(3). Every person who is a citizen of India at the commencement of the Constitution as aforesaid shall continue to be such citizen subject to the provisions of any law that may be made by Parliament as provided in Article 10 of the Constitution of India.

(4). The provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the rules and orders made thereunder shall apply to the persons referred to in paragraph (1) after the commencement of the Constitution.

(Source: *Indian Express*, Aug. 24, 1988).