

CHAPTER – 5

SUMMING UP

CONCLUSION – SURVEY OF THE SCENARIO AT A GLANCE

On December 06, 2005 a Memorandum of Settlement to replace the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council with an autonomous self-governing council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution was signed by then Union Home Secretary, V.K. Duggal, Benagal Chief Secretary Amit Kiran Deb and by Subash Ghisingh as DGHC Administrator purportedly to fulfil the aspirations of the people residing in the Darjeeling hills.

Two years later on October 01, 2007 this special status bill received the approval of the Union Cabinet to be placed in the session of Parliament.

While there were sproadic celebrations in a few places welcoming the approval of the bill, former GNLFC councillor Bimal Gurung announced that he would oppose this anti-people bill 'tooth and nail' on the ground that the Darjeeling hills was such a place where people of all communities lived together and the Sixth Schedule bill which was essentially a provision under the constitution to safeguard the rights of the tribals, if implemented, would divide the people of the hills on ethnic lines. Other

hill political parties like AGBL and CPRM also opposed the implementation of the Sixth Schedule status to the Darjeeling hills on the ground that this damaging bill would promote disharmony among the various communities residing in the hills.

In the evening of October 01, 2007 Bimal Gurung declared that the hills should accept nothing short of Gorkhaland as only a separate state would fulfil the social, economic, educational and linguistic aspirations of the people living in the Darjeeling hills, the Terai and the Doars and he welcomed everyone to join the movement to attain this age old demand. He categorically stressed that he would avoid a bloody agitation and said that the demand could be achieved in a peaceful, non-violent and a democratic manner.

A week later on October 07, 2007 thousands of people thronged the Darjeeling Motor Stand and raised Gorkhaland slogans while welcoming the formation of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) by Bimal Gurung who emphasised that the party had been formed primarily to fight for a state of Gorkhaland.

Within a very short period of GJM received popular support from every nook and cranny of the hills, the Terai and the Doars. The popularity of the GJM has resulted from the fact that the Indian Gorkhas in India and

all over the world are wholly convinced about the commitment and dedication of Bimal Gurung to the statehood issue. Units of the GJM have been opened in New Delhi and in several other states and these units In the evening of October 01, 2007 Bimal Gurung declared that the hills should accept nothing short of Gorkhaland as only a separate state would fulfil the social, economic, educational and linguistic aspirations of the people living in the Darjeeling hills, the Terai and the Doars and he welcomed everyone to join the movement to attain this age old demand. He categorically stressed that he would avoid a bloody agitation and said that the demand could be achieved in a peaceful, non-violent and a democratic manner.

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dedication of Bimal Gurung to the statehood issue. Units of the GJM have been opened in New Delhi and in several other states and these units are lending their earnest support to the GJM's movement.

The GJM has the unstinted support of all the people living in the hills, the Terai and the Doars. It is a party which is made up of people from all walks of life - lawyers, teachers, authors, litterateurs, lecturers, doctors, retired bureaucrats, ex-servicemen, businessmen etc. all actively involved with the

GJM in its movement for statehood and this has provided the party with strength, credibility and respectability.

The GJM has been demanding that a separate state of Gorkhaland be carved out of West Bengal under the provisions of Article 3(a) of the constitution comprised of the Darjeeling hills, the Siliguri Terai and the Doars where there is a sizeable Gorkha population. The Adivasis populating the Doars have also supported the movement as the party has been actively involved in bringing about social and economic upliftment of the Adivasis. GJM is headed by Bimal Gurung as the president with Roshan Giri as the General Secretary and other office bearers including a central committee with members.

The party has an active Women's wing, a Youth Front, a Students' Front, an Ex-Servicemen's association and is supported by various other frontal organisations which include the All Gorkha Minority Front consisting of members of other communities besides the Gorkhas.

Since its formation in October 2007 the GJM has been able to accomplish a lot in its journey towards a separate state of Gorkhaland. The first significant achievement of the GJM came within a couple of months from its formation in December 2007 when it was able to convince the Lok Sabha to refer the Sixth Schedule Bill to the Standing Committee. The bill had been on the verge of being passed in Parliament. In February 2008 the bill was headed to the cold storage when the parliamentary panel advised the Centre to make a fresh assessment before proceeding with the two pieces of legislation that would have granted the Sixth Schedule status of Darjeeling.

On March 2008 the Bengal government under continuous pressure from the GJM asked GNLFC chief Subash Ghisingh to resign as the caretaker administrator of the DGHC thus bringing to an end the 21 years of dictatorial and tyrannical rule of the GNLFC over the Darjeeling hills.

The GJM has been responsible in uniting not only the Gorkhas but other communities as well and people belonging to other communities are

also sincerely and enthusiastically involved in the GJM's movement for Gorkhaland.

In th 2009 Lok Sabha polls the GJM leadership was able to bring a leader of Jaswant Singh's stature to Darjeeling to contest the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat on a BJP ticket. For the first time the long pending problems and demands of the Gorkhas and the Adivasis found place in the election manifesto of a national party like the BJP. The demand to separate from Bengal is a century old but it was for the first time that the demand for Gorkhaland was voiced in both Houses of Parliament by BJP leaders and is now supported by leaders of other political parties.

A number of tripartite talks have been held between the GJM, the Centre and the State governments regarding the statehood demand and the party has been firm on not compromising in any way on the demand for a separate state. It is also praiseworthy that the GJM though formed solely to pursue the demand for Gorkhaland has also seen the need to protect the rights of the people residing within the Gorkhaland area and has been responsible for bringing in a lot of development in the hills and the Doars. It has always kept the problems of the people in mind and has been responsible for opening up closed tea gardens in the Doars and has

all along been fighting for the social and economic rights of the Gorkhas and the Adivasis.

The most noteworthy feature of the GJM's agitation since its formation in October 2007 is that the movement has been totally democratic, peaceful, non-violent and non-communal. It is undeniably apparent that no other political party in the hills and the plains has been able to achieve so much in so short a period as has been achieved by the GJM. The GJM has come as a breath of fresh air and hope for the long-suffering and misunderstood

Gorkha community for those who have for years been on a relentless quest for dignity, security and more importantly , for an Indian identity.

The GJM is truly a party of the people.