

Preface

At the very beginning, mention has to be made as to why the word “Autonomous” was included in the topic of this Thesis – “*District Administration in Darjeeling and the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council, A Study in the context of Decentralization, Democracy and Development.*” The reason was that at the time of the registration of this Thesis in December 2003, the Hill Council in Darjeeling was known as Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC). When the Hill Council was set up in 1988, it was known as Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). But in 1999 a High Power Committee, set up to review and examine the provisions contained in DGHC Act, recommended that Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) would be henceforth known as Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC). However, from March 2005 onwards the word “Autonomous” was omitted from the Council’s name and Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC) reverted to being called Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) once more.

While returning back from one of my field visit to Today-Tangta Gram Panchayat, which is one of the most remote area situated on the border of India and Bhutan, I got on a Pizo Jeep. Only 1 to 2 vehicles plied in a day to and from Today-Tangta. The road downhill was narrow and steep and the roads were damaged due to the rains. The vehicle we rode had to move at a snail’s pace. One wrong move would have been fatal for we would all crash deep down into a gorge. The driver boasted that only experts could drive on such a dangerous road and he admitted that even on a cool day as that he was in a sweat negotiating the steep twists and the curves. As the vehicle moved downhill more passengers (mostly students and farmers) kept getting on it. Soon the jeep was packed to capacity, and beyond. People were hanging on the back, as well as on the side of the jeep. The roof of the jeep was crowded. The total number of passengers on that jeep came to 35. More people on the way wanted to get onto the vehicle but there was no place even to put a foot on the vehicle. At many places that was narrow, steep and bumpy, the passengers sitting on the roof and those hanging at the back and at the sides would get down and walk for some time and again board the vehicle. This journey which seemed like an adventure to me was a daily routine for the people living in that area.

In Darjeeling hills there is one group of political voice which lays claims on great developments being done after DGHC came into existence. But another group contradicts this and opines that development done is absolutely nil. The ordinary people are pressurized to take sides with these political voices. What are the people's genuine needs, demands, views and opinions (without political color) are not taken up seriously. The ordinary people are further confused by the fact that in Darjeeling hills two governmental organizations – District Administration and DGHC are operating. While before 1988, people had only District Administration to approach to as government at the district level, after 1988 there was DGHC as government at the sub-state level.

This Thesis attempts to clear the confusions, arising in the intellectual mind, of the function and working of District Administration and DGHC and the dynamic relationship between them.

Chapter 1 deals with the Introduction and contains the Introduction, Objectives of the Study, Universe of the Study, Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Framework, Overview of Literature, Significance of the Study, and Methodology used for the Study.

Chapter 2 looks into the History of Darjeeling consisting of Early History of Darjeeling, Administrative History of Darjeeling and History of Regional Movement in Darjeeling.

Chapter 3 highlights the respective functions of District Administration in Darjeeling and the DGHC and shows their comparison pointing out areas of conflict and tension. This chapter also attempts a journey of facts and events from DGHC to Sixth Schedule.

Chapter 4 makes an empirical study of the Development Programs (Rural, Rural-cum-Urban, and Urban Development Programs) and their beneficiaries in Darjeeling (within 1999-2006).

Chapter 5 discusses DGHC and District Government; DGHC and Zilla Parishad; DGHC and Sixth Schedule. It looks into the question can DGHC fit into the description of District Government? Is DGHC a Zilla Parishad with extended powers? Similarities and differences between DGHC and District Councils under Sixth Schedule. Shortcomings of District Councils under Sixth Schedule and remedies suggested for their improvement.

Chapter 6 deals with the views of the People on District Administration and DGHC and the relationship between these two organizations, along with some available data are shown.

Chapter 7 contains the concluding observations of the entire study.