



# FOURTH CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE ON CONFLICT, AUTONOMY AND PEACE: A REPORT

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All these features built around concrete instances of history, politics, and society, call for a new theorizing of the theme of autonomy, which can take into account the tensions and the virtues of dialogic forms and dialogic order. A critical theory of autonomy will aim at making a fruitful negotiation with the paradox inherent in the politics of autonomy - namely that, it is the dual site of regulation and freedom, power and will.

### **3. Why is violence so pervasive in the movement of Autonomy?**

**Soumen Nag**

When the invitation of Calcutta Research Group to participate in the dialogue on Principal and practice of the Autonomy reached me, trepidation, not jubilation, hesitation, not satisfaction gripped instinctively. How come this? Why me. Who misjudge the judge. When I glanced through the great names who have been invited in this dialogue - a majestic procession of scholars - I wondered how dare I an anonymous persona - non - grate, from a small town like Siliguri venture to sit along with them. However, I take the Privilege to participate in this occasion and tender my grateful thanks specially to Dr. Ranabir Samaddar for his mystifying goodness in choosing me, whether I will fill the bill is a different matter.

I am also happy about another related fact, and that is the venue of this deliberation as no other part of the country has witnessed so much turbulence as the North East including Darjeeling has done.

There is no scope to go into details but this is much clear that both human rights and the rule of law have been conspicuously weak, if not also absent, from the way things have been conducted in this part of the Country. This is a cause for serious disquiet. The fact that it was decided to organize this function at Darjeeling speaks for itself. I hope, this initiative will be the precursor of many more similar initiative. I shall concentrate my deliberation on the title for discussion. **"Why is violence so pervasive in the movement of Autonomy?"** With special reference to the Autonomous Darjeeling Hill Council which was tabled after bloodshed and fire for long Four years and Kamtapur movement that rocked North East.

One after another autonomous council for different region have been signed and before each agreement there was clarion call to end the blood shed. Still the rattle of bullets echoes every nook and corner of this region. Here lies the riddle in the movement for autonomy. Another underground groups surfaced through their voice of gun claiming with further autonomy in other pretext.

So the basic question knocks our sagacity, how does one think? The question is important, whatever the issue or the area of one's concern, because of this thinking, on the nature and adequacy of the understanding it provides, depends the nature and adequacy, the ultimate effectiveness of how one acts, in the matter. It is our diagnosis of a disease, which determines its treatment. In the same way it is our explanation or understanding of social reality, any aspect of it, which indicates the prescription, the necessary purposeful action on our part.

The seed of violation in the movement for autonomy was germinated on the very day when the East India Co. annexed South Sikkim to their empire and for quite some times called the annexed portion British Sikkim while the left over of the kingdom was referred to as Independent

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Sikkim. The area was later named Darjeeling after a village that existed there and subsequently formed into a district by the same name. So Sikkim in reference to Darjeeling district can be called mother state and West Bengal to which this part of Sikkim was latter annexed as a district may be called surrogate mother state.

In searching the reply for the depicted issue, the basic questions surfaced in mind how far the movement of the autonomy is autonomous itself? Whether both internal and outside agency, taking the advantage of unique geographical position of North East have the remote control in steering the movement according to their projected program. Above all, the government tendency to view the unrest as a law and order issue ignoring the causes of conflict, such as the neglect of the region by economic decision makers, encroachment of land by immigrants, denigration of the Local Culture and attacks on peoples identity.

Despite the high level of education land continues to be the main source of live hood but immigrants encroaches on it and causes shortage. The Bangladeshis are such immigrant groups but not the only one. A much bigger number comes from the Hindi hear land of Bihar and U.P. Many local communities resent the fact that immigrants prosper on the land by encroach upon, while they are left behind. For example, most attacks in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam have been on the Biharis who have occupied land there.

The conflicts began with attacks on outsiders and slowly turn into ethnic conflicts within the region. In the context of the land shortage caused by encroachment and the failure to invest in productive jobs, as its exclusive rights, so each community rewrites its history to claim on indigenous status and the exclusive right over resources in a given area. Ethnic conflicts are a direct consequences of such hardened ethnic identities and exclusive claim.

It should be kept in mind, when the political system gives the votes to the many, and the economic system gives the bread to the few civic disorder is almost inevitable. When the vote is a human right and bread is a privilege of the few, democracy is a mockery, it cannot be an instrument of peace and harmony, because it is not instrument of Justice.

Please allow me to come back to Darjeeling. The demand of a separate state named Gorkha Land has a long history and all the demands coincide with specific historical background.

The first demand for separate state was made as far back in 1907. In spite of the justification of the demand in favour of imperialism, the British Crown failed to approve the demand, as at that time Britain and Czarist Russia was engaged in rivalries in Tibet. Since Himalayan state including the Indo-Mongoloid Buddhist of Darjeeling Hills had ethnic and super structural affinity with Tibet, formation of separate state by partitioning Bengal might have endangered British position in the Himalayas. So the British rules preferred to keep Darjeeling hills with Bengal. Had the demand of 1907 been accepted Nepali nationality in Darjeeling hill council never have emerged as according to the 1901 census, Nepali speaking people was 40,101 out of total of 1,42,492 hill people.

Again in 1917 Demand for a separate state named 'North Eastern Frontier State' (Darjeeling Jalpaiguri and part of Assam) was raised. But it was a period of First World War. Seeing the co-operative attitude of the Indian National Congress (being dominated by moderate group) the British Government feared to arose mass resentment in Bengal by further attempt of partition of their province.

The British planters renewed their effort for separate state in 1929. Dalai Lama, who had so far remained a friend of the British shifted his fraternal affinity to-wards China. The Indo-Mongoloid ethnic communities were also demonstrating their affinity so for a separate state was turned down.

Moves for separate state made in 1933, 1939 and 1943 were based on the same principle but was turned down as during this period the British was engaged in the Second World War and had no time to look into his home front.

The undivided Communist part of India, headed by present leadership of CPIM also raised to create a separate Gorkhasthan even with a option to create a sovereign state.

Gorkha Hill Council was formed but how it enjoys its autonomy in governing the Darjeeling Hills? Take for example about Municipality affairs. They are in a fix whether they are under the governess of West Bengal Municipality Act or by the Darjeeling Hill Council.

Kamtapur Demand of the Rajbangshi Community has emerged in the plains of North Bengal. K.L.O. (Kamtapur Liberation Organisation) has chosen the voice of the gun to register there autonomous existence but the time will not make a room for discussion.

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