

## CHAPTER – 5

### **SUMMING UP**

#### **DARJEELING**

Historically, Darjeeling and its surrounding terai areas formed a part of the then Kirat kingdom called Bijaypur. After the disintegration of the Bijaypur kingdom, it annexed with Sikkim and Bhutan.

The seat of the GNLF movement had been Darjeeling although the other hill areas like Kalimpong, Kurseong and Mirik had also been centres of GNLF activities. It would therefore be better to get a bird's eye view about the place itself. The name Darjeeling is derived from Tibetan words meaning "place or town of the thunderbolt" It is also said that the name Darjeeling is named after the monastery Dor-Je-Ling. It is in the northern part of the West Bengal state. It is situated in the foothills of the Himalaya. It has an area of 3000 square kilometers and lies along a ridge rising 7376 feet (2.248 meters) above sea level, 6 miles (10 kilometers) south of the Sikkim border and 11 miles (18 kilometers) east of Nepal's border. It is a scattered bungalow town.

#### **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE MOVEMENT**

The demand for a separate state by the Gorkhas is not a new one. Rather it has long since been a demand of them to get a separate state. The first

movement for a separate state was initiated by the All India Gorkha League.

## **PRANTA PARISHAD**

During the British Rule, a separate administrative set up was sought to be created by the Hill Peoples' Association as early as 1907 and 1919. In between 1917 and 1940, there were various demands for the national identity of the Nepalis.

Ultimately, in the early forties the Gorkha League was formed. From that time, the demand for a separate land for Gorkhas or Nepalis became very common.

It was Pranta Parishad was the first to state the demand for a separate state for the identity of the Nepalis. During the 1980's it emerged as the leading political organization of the hill people. It also gave importance on the economic upliftment of the Nepalis. The leaders of the Pranta Parishad also met Rajiv Gandhi while he was at Darjeeling on an election campaign tour. The Pranta Parishad categorically pointed out that for all out development of the Gorkhas and the hill, a separate state for the Gorkhas was sine qua non

The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) led by Subhash Gheising, a former army officer, came into being on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1980. It was this organisation which carried forward the movement for a separate state and regional autonomy. It was their clear sentiment that we are stateless. We

are continuously tortured all over India. We want our own administration, return our land from Bengal. Our future is in great danger. The major slogan of the GNLF was "It is 'better to die than live as a slave. All are requested to fight for Gorkhaland.

## **THE AGITATION**

The programme of action of the GNLF was decided on 13.3.1986. In a meeting held in Ghoom at the hall of Bharat Dong, GNLF decided the following eleven point programme of action.

- (i) To observe a 'Black Flag Day' on 13.4.1986 in protest against alleged atrocities and discrimination perpetrated on the Indian Nepalis.
- (ii) To give a 72 hour Bundh 'Call' from 12th to 14th May, 1986 to highlight the constitutional and just demand for "Gorkhaland".
- iii) In 1955, the States Reorganisation Committee had increased the area of West Bengal allegedly by unconstitutionally annexing the area of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Mirik, Siliguri and Dooars which have different culture and language. The party decided to burn the said report of the States Reorganisation Committee.
- (iv) According to the party, Article 7 of the Indo Nepal Treaty of 1950 has relegated the Indian Nepalis to a status of immigrants. The party will burn Article 7 of the said Treaty.

- (v) The party will launch a movement against the indiscriminate felling of the trees of the hill areas by the Forest Corporation or sending them to the plains.
- (vi) The party will continue vote boycott movement with the slogan we will not stay in the other people's State of West Bengal".
- (vii) The party will boycott all MLAs, Ministers and parties, who are against the demand for "Gorkhaland".
- (viii) Over the demand for "Gorkhaland" and in protest against the policies of the central government, the party will launch a movement by way of stopping all vehicles taking the valuable boulders of Dudhia towards the plains.
- (ix) To launch a 'Do or die' movement in protest against the alleged treatment of the Gorkhas as domiciles.
- (x) The Gorkhas of Darjeeling and the plains will not observe or celebrate the 15th August, 26th January, Gandhi Jayanti, Netaji Jayanti and other National Celebrations until and unless the Government of India concedes the demand for Gorkhaland.
- (xi) In protest against the alleged colonial attitude towards the Gorkhas by the Government of India the party decided to organise a movement for non payment of taxes and loans.

In accordance with this programme, a meeting was held in Kalimpong stadium on 29.3.86, where the supporters of GNLF displayed Kukri and then on 13th April another public meeting was called in Darjeeling, which was attended by about 3,500 people. In both the meetings, Gheising made speeches more or less on the line of the speech outlined above, tried to rouse ethnic passion and hinted at the adoption of violent means to achieve their end. On 4th May, about 30 supporters of GNLF drew blood from their thumbs with Kukri to write a poster in blood demanding Gorkhaland.

## **ISSUES OF GNLF MOVEMENT**

The GNLF movement was initiated with several demands which, according to the spokesmen of the movement are long overdue. It was stated that the Gorkhas have long been deprived and the basic demands have long been neglected. However, the following were the basic issues behind the GNLF movement.

- (1) Abrogation of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal, 1950;
- (2) Citizenship;
- (3) Language Issue
- (4) Creation of Gorkhaland and
- (5) Gorkha Regiment.

In the following lines we are taking up the various issues behind the GNLF movement for analysis and discussion.

### **ABROGATION OF THE TREATY, 1950.**

A leading demand of the GNLF movement had been the scrapping of Clause VII, of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal, 1950. It is relevant to quote Art. VII of the Treaty which reads as: "The Government of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country, in the territories of the other, same privileges in the matter of residence ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of similar nature." It was a firm demand of the GNLF that this Art. VII must be scrapped which would greatly solve the problem of identity of the Indian Gorkhas and as a result, the demand of the GNLF would also be met significantly, In fact, the Indian Nepalis are treated as 'reciprocal' citizens of Nepali origin which is the product of the treaty. Again, the GNLF has categorically pointed out that although Art. VII of the 1950 treaty allows the Nepalis to enter in the Indian territory for the purpose of bread and butter but put restriction to become citizens and exercise the right to vote and thus they are deprived from all the rights and privileges of citizenship.

### **CITIZENSHIP**

One of the most important issues of the GNLF movement had been the issue of the identity of citizenship. The major demand of the GNLF had

been the grant of citizenship to migrants who came to India before 1950. The problem was looked into by the then Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who held the idea that the Indo Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950 requires some amendments in order to solve the citizenship problem. Mr. Subhash Gheising, the leader of the GNLF movement had been urging that Article VII of the Treaty be scrapped.

The line of argument which Gheising advanced, said that this Article has made the Gorkhas absolutely stateless or identity less, thus creating not only a national problem but also an international problem. Therefore, the Gorkhas must be granted Indian citizenship and be treated as Indian nationals.

## **LANGUAGE ISSUE**

One of the basic issues of the GNLF movement had been the issue of language. It had been a longstanding demand of the Gorkhas that the Nepali language be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in addition to the fifteen other languages which are already there. In fact, this demand was crystallised during the mid fifties. From that time onwards, the language problem has traveled a long path with almost no success and this issue again catapulted the GNLF movement and this sparked off serious problems, not only in the hill areas of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Mirik but also it had exerted a tremendous impact on Indian politics as well.

The GNLF supporters have pointed out that the demand for the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution has been rejected on flimsy grounds. The main argument which was advanced against non inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution was that the Nepali is a foreign language. But the demand of the GNLF had been that the number of Nepali speaking people in India is nearly one lakh. A temporary solution to this problem was made by the 'West Bengal' Official Language Bill, 1961. This bill recognised Nepali as an additional official language for the district of Darjeeling. The 'West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961 states, "In the three hill subdivisions of the district of Darjeeling namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, the Bengali language and the Nepali language, and elsewhere, the Bengali language, shall be the language' or languages to be used for the official purposes of the State of West Bengal.

## **CREATION OF GORKHALAND**

The heart of the demands of the GNLF had been the demand for the creation of Gorkhaland taking into account the areas which are domiciled by the Nepalis. It had been the clear demand of Gheising that the Gorkhas should have a separate state and it should be known as Gorkhaland. The areas which the GNLF wanted to include in Gorkhaland was Darjeeling, Kurseong,, Kalimpong,, Mirik Siliguri and some other parts of the Dooars area. In fact, Gheising demanded that the areas domiciled by the Nepalis should be included in the territory of Gorkhaland which should have full autonomy as a State under Article 3 of the Indian

Constitution. The GNLF advanced their arguments in the way that a number of States have been created after Independence and therefore the creation of another new state could fulfill the longstanding dream of the hill people and thereby bring a solution to this thorny problem.

## **GORKHA REGIMENT**

Another demand of the GNLF had been the creation of the Indian Gorkha Regiment like other existing regiments. Presently, the Gorkhas are recruited as Agreement Gorkha Troops (meaning Gorkhas recruited from Nepal) This problem might have risen due to growing conflict of interests between the Indian Gorkhas and the Nepalese Gorkhas in the India army. In fact, the number of Nepali Gorkhas are much more than the Indian Gorkhas, All these led to make this demand by the GNLF.

Apart from the above issues, mention should also be made of some other important issues of the GNLF movement, they are:

- (a) Industrial, Backwardness;
- (b) Lack of Educational facilities; and
- (c) Expulsion of Nepalese from Meghalaya.

## **INDUSTRIAL BACKWARDNESS**

It has been stated that although India has attained Independence for quite a considerable time but no big industry has yet been established in

the hill areas so that there can be economic development. As a result, the hill areas are still backward in respect of industries. The economy of the hill areas is mainly dependent on the tea gardens and partly on tourism.

### **LACK OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

Again, the educational facilities of the hill people are much less as compared to necessity. The number of government schools and colleges are very few. Of course, there are some leading public schools and colleges but they involve a substantial amount of expenditure which the poor hill people can hardly afford. As a result, there has been a longstanding grievance in this respect.

### **EXPULSION OF NEPALIS FROM MEGHALAYA**

The expulsion of Nepalīs from Meghalaya added salt to the injury of the GNLf movement. According to Article VII of the Indo Nepal Treaty of 1950, the nationals of both the countries were supposed to have free movement and pursue any business except the right to vote. But due to the Amendment of 1976, it was necessary to obtain Restricted Area Entry Permit which most of the Gorkhas residing in Meghalaya for a long time, did not know and as a result they had to face expulsion.

### **THE SOLUTION**

The solution of the GNLf problem was sought to be attempted not by granting statehood to Gorkhaland but by the creation of Hill Development Council for three hill sub divisions of Darjeeling Kurseong and Kalimpong.

Although Gheising demanded that a larger area to be included under the Hill Development Council including Siliguri and some parts of Dooars. The responsibility of the social, cultural and economic development was entrusted with the Hill Council. But it must be pointed out that militants of the GNLFF movement are not at all happy with the Hill Council, which according to them is nothing but a farce. They have pointed out that it is far away from their original demands. Militants like Chhatre Subba of Kalimpong are still trying to pursue the demand for the creation of Gorkhaland.

In the year 2007, a new chapter started in the history of the Gorkhaland Movement. It was a departure of Subhash Ghising from the political stage and the entry of Mr. Bimal Gurung, the leader of the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha. The demand for a separate state within the Indian Union has been started more intensively by the Gorkha leader Mr. Bimal Gurung, under the newly formed party called Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) This movement has vowed to create a separate state by 2010. The Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha, the new political force in Darjeeling hills, is determined to demonstrate its influence not only in Darjeeling hills but also in country capital. one could hardly imagine the downfall of most powerful political party of Darjeeling hills, GNLFF and Subash Ghising; tough to crack the nut, once considered by state and central government, swiped away by the surge of Morcha. One after another, day by day, its councilors, MLAs, veteran party members are resigning from GNLFF, leaving it for its natural death.

In fact, Bimal Gurung is getting support from the common man and women for the original demand of Gorkhaland as a separate state. He has taken non-violent methods in the line of Gandhiji and asked the people to carry on the movement in a peaceful manner and taking steps against the government by different other ways like non paying of taxes, electricity bill, telephone bill until and unless they gain a separate statehood. He also ordered the change of vehicle nos. In place of W.B. it was suggested to use GL. In fact, he successfully arranged many rallies and procession wherein he got the support of the common people, students, govt. employees.

The administrative machinery in the hills of Darjeeling seems to have broken down, with most of the Government offices non-functional, and even the police unable to maintain law and order in the district. The scene became particularly violent when a female GJMM supporter was allegedly shot dead by GNLFF supporters during a protest. Rioting followed. The situation became normal after GJMM leaders called for restraint. The central and the West Bengal governments have called for a tripartite meeting with the GJMM leaders to resolve the issue, although breakthrough seems unlikely as both the GJMM leaders as well as the West Bengal government are taking a hard line. The former has refused to consider anything less than Gorkhaland while the later has been adamant in claiming that they would not allow further division of Bengal.

It should be mentioned that activities for support of Gorkhaland has also been seen in areas outside Gorkhaland. The mainstream parties of Sikkim have openly supported the Gorkhaland movement and pledged solidarity

It is now a matter of time to see the fate of the movement in the latest stage. Future alone will tell what is the outcome of the movement, the State of Gorkhaland to be added to the list of the existing states or again the movement will be stopped in the midway as many times before.

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