

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

“Desh ko Premmai Lipta Bhaye Jailmai, Pranko Premlai Tyag Gari Cellmai” (with love of the country in Jail, sacrificing love of life in Cell).

The political role of women as a subject for research is of recent origin in India. (Dasgupta, 1976, p. 16). It is significant that there are so few studies of women's role in the nationalist movement or of the implications social or political-of their momentous entry into the public sphere. Important works on the national movement mostly fail to examine the significance of women's participation in the struggles. (Tarachand, 1961-72) (E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 1986) Analysis in this area so far has received insufficient attention in histories of India both before and after 1975 when the need to study women's role in history began to be acknowledged world-wide. One searches in vain for an adequate study of women's participation in nationalist historiography (Pearson, 1981, pp. 175. 188). Studies published between 1968 and 1988 do touch upon various aspects and dimensions of women's participation in the national struggle for freedom. There are some factual accounts: most standard histories of the national movement mention women's entry into the Civil Disobedience Movement.(Kaur, 1985) (Bakshi, 1988).

Some historians have noted the emancipatory effects of such participation.(Majumdar. 1962. 1963) (Mukhopadhyaya,1969, pp. 998-999) (Suda, 1969) (Chandra, 1971, pp. 184-186) (Chandra,1988, p. 528), (Singh, 1968) (Sarkar, 1983, p. 290).

Women in revolutionary terrorism have also been described (Majumdar, 1963, op.cit., pp. 280-281, 414) (Suda, op.cit., pp. 243-244.) and women have been occasionally discussed as a political nuisance (Brown, 1972, pp. 146, 168).

Some accounts of contemporaries who participated in the movement refer to the strength and broad base acquired by it as a whole through women's participation (Desai, 1945, p. 32). It is important to note that in general, information on women in the work of modern Indian historians writing in English prior to 1975 relates to women in elite sections of society.

The lives and conditions of the large majority of women, or their response to changing historical forces have consistently been unexplored and thus marginalized in history. (Dasgupta, 1976,p.5).The dominance of elite perspectives is best demonstrated by the efforts of most historians to link women's participation in the struggles with women's education or the social reform movement, ignoring the large number of women from the peasantry and the working class, including prostitutes, who took part in the various struggles directly, or the thousands of housewives mostly mothers and wives-who provided indirect support by shouldering family responsibilities when their men went to jail or got killed.(Kasturi and Mazumdar (ed), 1994).

Since nationalism is generally constructed from a masculine perspective, women's roles are often limited to supporting nation-building efforts through symbolic, moral and biological reproduction. Several scholars have pointed out that in nationalist movements there is a distinct division of labor in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically while men protect and defend the nation. Scholars have also demonstrated that nationalist identity discourse frequently celebrates motherhood and mothers as the bastion of the nation's traditions and values.

Throughout the world women's history has developed differently in different countries, and among groups within these countries, and cannot be separated from the political context. The new age woman of Darjeeling is politically aware and has been successful in etching out a space for herself in the ongoing struggle for Gorkhaland. She is participating equally with her fellow brethren. This, as is often commented by scholars is a new dimension to the movement heralding the emancipatory nature of the hill politics. We would rather disagree with this position and consider this as a continuity of the lineage of the past unsung heroines of Darjeeling. The women involved in politics today in Darjeeling region is a continuity of legacy of their mothers, sisters and has been a continuous process from generations. However, these unsung women's stories from the past have hardly been recorded in the historical accounts of the freedom struggle of India. There has been a strange forgetfulness noticed not just among the historians but also among the people of the region. This apathy has robbed us a sizeable part of the history and the celebration has been transformed into angst. One of our encounters with the son of one such freedom fighter who died in penury brought this out (Poddar, 2nd February, 2011).

Mary Beard in her seminal work on women in history, (Beard, 1946) argued that women were history makers just like men but had been left out of the narrative. Our exploration has been guided by this question, “*If so many great freedom fighters visited the region, then did it not create any ripples in otherwise the idyllic calm serene place called Darjeeling?*” It was obvious that the great leaders definitely interacted with the local population which possibly had an impact on the local people who too got stirred by the happenings in the entire country. Few male freedom fighter’s story has been recorded but no detail except few comments, nothing about the women of the region could be unearthed.

The colonial period is considered a watershed in gender relations. In India gender has been a central issue since the colonial encounter. An overwhelming pre-occupation with the question of women arose from the 19th century social reform movement, informed crucially anti-colonial nationalism, and remains a point of crisis in India’s cultural, social and political space. The gender recognition as an issue forms the basis for Indian women’s movement. The recognition of gender as an issue powered the post colonial movement of women, supported by feminist critique and women’s studies in academia. Since the early 1970s, feminist theorists have been examining familiar and not so familiar, ‘texts’ of political theory or ‘history of political thought’ with readings and interpretations that have revolutionary implications not only for ‘texts’ of political theory, but also for central political categories as citizenship, equality, freedom, justice, the public, the private, and democracy (Saxonhouse, 1985, Okin, 1989). The feminist scholarship has been critical of the exclusion of gender perspective leading to limits on political and civic equality. Our intention here is to reorient this gender perspective to the study of the Indian national movement. In fact, such intention is largely shaped by the ‘third wave’ (Mack-Conty, 2004) of feminism that has brought a number of regional or plural perspectives, such as ‘black feminism’ ‘youth feminism’ or ‘postcolonial feminism’ on to the ‘first wave’ feminism’s search for gender equality and ‘second wave’ feminism’s radical critique of ‘patriarchy’. While the general feminist direction to equality remains unchanged situational variations in women’s experience are now considered and brought to bear on current political issues and movements. We are also interested in the possible link between women’s quite visible frontal, numerous, and energetic political participation in Darjeeling hills in recent years and their connections with Indian national movement, if any.

Our freedom movement has been one of the major movers of the world history. It was not only one of the major mass movements that the world has seen but it was a movement that showed the world a mass movement that brought together people of all walks of life joining hands to remove a mighty colonial empire. It is also an example of how through a prolonged struggle many a hegemonic structures could be challenged. It was a challenge not only to the colonial regime but it also transformed the social order to a great extent. The establishment of British Empire in India was a prolonged process marked with a gradual consolidation of the empire through a process of annexation and colonization of the economy and the society. The popular resistance took three broad forms: a series of civil rebellions, tribal uprisings and peasant movements. The series of rebellions that took place during the first phase of the colonial rule were basically led by the deposed rajas and zamindars who were losing control over land revenue due to the changes initiated by the colonial rulers. These were basically localized in nature. The culmination of these rebellions was the Revolt of 1857 'the most dramatic instance of traditional India's struggle against foreign rule'. (Chandra. et al:1988)

In this struggle, one did see the participation of women, but they were participating as representatives of the monarchical order. The discourse of nationalism shows that the material/spiritual distinction was condensed into an analogous but ideologically far more powerful dichotomy: that between the inner and the outer domain. (Chatterjee, 1989) The new woman thus conceptualized on the Sati-Savitri-Sita construct became the dominant characteristic of femininity in the new woman, a repository of the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity etc, that did not in any way impede her from her moving out of the confines of her home, rather helped her to go out into the world, as the goddess or mother with the erasure of her sexuality outside the confines of her home. The nation is effeminate as a mother and the country as the motherland act emotional wake up call that surpasses historical realities and portrays women who are identified with the community as victim of colonial torture and subjection. A woman is a mother who gives birth to the present and future generations and so it is she who would nourish revolutions. She is a sister to be respected and defended. Prestige, honor and chastity are her qualities that would fix the standard of the society. Any damage done to her would correspondingly affect national identity or vice versa. On the other hand she is equally held responsible to defend her father, brother, husband and children from an unjust war by the colonial

power. She is no longer to be confined within the four walls of the traditional world requiring protection. She is open to enter into the public arena to redirect the future course of this nation towards ultimate freedom. The reconstruction of the war of women against the British Colonialism is framed by the nationalist project to recall the importance of the war of liberation. Women are said to have involved themselves in war of crucial historical junctures when the men were totally paralyzed and had succumbed to colonial suppression.

The participation of the ordinary women in the nationalist movement in India one could see during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as members of the extremist groups. Revolutionaries like Kalyani Das, Kamala Dasgupta, Surama Mitra, Santi Ghosh, Suniti Choudhury, Bina Das etc. were active in Bengal and similarly in other parts of India too there were women revolutionaries but they were mainly playing supportive role although some did participate in active revolutionary activities. However, these women in their own way, many a times challenged the stereotypical role as the patriarchal order required them to practice. Many of these women were getting educated and were refusing to go for an arranged marriage. However, their number was few and infact all of them were initiated by someone belonging to their families or a teacher and most of them belonged to the educated upcoming middle class in India.

In 1920s the women's movement in India took off, building on the nineteenth century social reform movement. Indian women began to change in response to the forces set in motion by the colonial regime along with the social reforms undertaken by the western educated Indian intelligentsia and the traditional elites who started the task of social reform through a reformation in their religion. The social reform movement was the mirror in which Indian men were invited to see themselves when colonial education began. It was an attempt to redress sometimes with and sometimes without British help, the worst features of the patriarchal order. James Mill wrote in his 'History of India' in 1817 that the condition of women in society is an index of that society's place in civilization. The women in the forefront were of all the main items on the agenda of the social reform movement. The movement of women progressed during the period of high nationalism and the freedom struggle, both of which shaped its contours. Indian political leaders focused their attention on the possibility of women entering the political arena. Women within the households of political leaders were

involved in the continuation of social reforms started by the men folk who had by then moved on to political issues. Initially the women formed associations that were attached to men's social reform organizations. Gradually the women decided to form organizations that would take up the issues differently, they were more concerned with female education than legislation and tried to work through the reform in social customs. Young women revolutionaries on the other hand were inspired by the Hindu goddesses like Durga and Kali who fought and defeated the Asuras and brought peace on Earth.

Within Congress women from the beginning participated but was limited to attending annual meetings and enlivening the meeting by singing songs. Women like Kadambini Ganguly, one of Bengal's first lady doctors, Swarnakumari Ghoshal, a novelist and editor, Saraladevi Choudhurani, a writer and organizer, etc., educated, professional, the new women conceptualized by the social reformers, were members but their role was merely decorative and symbolic if one looks at it from the present perspective. When Gandhi, after returning from South Africa addressed the women in Bombay, he found that women in urban centers were already politically conscious due to the growing women's movement and organizations in different regions of India. However, Gandhi after seeing how during the Non-Cooperation Movement, the women from C.R. Das' family participated by selling khaddar in the streets of Calcutta he was moved and inspired to develop the dormant force of India and involve them in the struggle. He chose Sita as his model, the wife of Rama, the righteous king, had been abducted by the demon Ravana. In Gandhi's speeches Ravana was the British Raj and Sita was the brave woman who resisted the advances of Ravana and the same had to be done by the Indian women. This tactic of Gandhi moved the common women who were familiar with the story and felt participation within the movement was part of their dharma. The model of an ideal modern Indian woman was also favorable for the men who did not feel threatened because the model was a moral model not the western feminist model 'parkati', the free emancipated women who resisted the patriarchal order. Conventional politics called for interaction with unrelated men that put the women in moral danger and were against their role in the family. The present model of Gandhi guaranteed that political activism and family role would be mutually compatible. This model was not only lapped by the men but women too adapted themselves to it. This also crystallized the division between the moral women, the

respectable women and the public women who were not respectable and were rebuffed not by the men within the Congress but the women's organizations when the prostitutes wanted to participate in the rallies. Women leaders were more concerned with the problems of the upper caste Hindu women rather than that of the women belonging to the different categories of caste, religion or economic strata. So women who belonged to the margins remained marginalized even though they participated in the struggle for freedom. There are a number of questions posed about the nature of involvement of the so called marginal people in the freedom movement of India. Were they at all touched by the grand project of freedom movement or remained aloof from the movement? If at all touched by the movement what/how had/has been their association with the project of nationalist movement in India? Historians while recording the stories of the freedom movements have been generally oblivious to the contribution of the so called marginal people. In the absence of appropriate focus on them by the so called mainstream writers and researchers, certain regions and the contribution of the people residing therein has not been adequately recorded. The region under focus for our study is such a region that has not received adequate focus. Darjeeling was famous for its exotic beauty with the colonial regime as well as with the rest of India but the other side of the story that of the people, their role in the nationalist movement and especially that of the women of the region has not received focus.

Mainstream perception has been mainly biased and skeptical about the role of the people of the region under focus in the nationalist movement of India. Historically women have been 'otherized' and denied a space in the political life of the community. Even if they had a role to play, that was not recognized as worth noting. The same can be said to the role played by the women of the region. When historians started to the injustice they did so by rewriting history through the incorporation of the omissions. Later not just recording of omissions but also through an analysis through the lens of gender a new history or rather 'her'story started its journey. The problem however was that or still is women in the margin especially of the region under focus have not been adequately focused upon. The study would try to humbly record the exploits of these hidden faces and through their stories and memoirs would decipher and deconstruct the process of the politicization of the private spaces.

Whenever a community's women built a firm solidarity and took up all necessary and important responsibilities, in each and every historical juncture, they

brought big revolutions and positive changes in society. Here we tried to take into account the few events and facts of the great Nepali women freedom fighter who continued her stay in politics even after independence and brought in a dynamic changes and development in the hill areas. The term 'Nepali' used in the study is an inclusive term to include the women from other communities who cannot be termed as Nepali. The Nepalese having the dominant position in the ethnic composition of Darjeeling naturally gave rise to the bond of unity that was provided by the Nepali language. Therefore, India, in general and Darjeeling, in particular, gradually Nepali language forged a bond of cultural unity and ethnic link among various groups. The Lepchas and the Bhutias too, in spite of their religious and linguistic differences with the Nepalese, slowly but ultimately accepted Nepali as the lingua franca in the hill subdivisions of Darjeeling. Towards the end of 19th century it became a hard reality due to overwhelming demographic predominance of the Nepalese which contributed to the acceptability of Nepali language as the lingua franca, making Nepali the language of communication with the non-Nepali people. We have also included tribal as general term.

The women leaders like Sabitri Devi, Puttalimaya Devi Poddar, Maya Devi Chettri etc had provided the ideological foundation in the movement of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas, also a distinct ideological character to the Nepali community and also a legacy to many generation to come. They were the strong proponents of independent India and justified struggle as a means to actualize the dream of independent India. More importantly these women leaders in the post independence era remained in politics and other associations for several years.

The proposed study's problem is not only to bring out the presence of the 'other' (women) in the nationalist movement but also to understand the form and content of that presence. There is an ongoing debate among the feminist scholars about the political implications of biological differences between men and women, for instance, the question of special citizenship rights for performing the nurturing motherly role while sharing the same capacity with men at 'rational' level (Shanley and Pateman, 1989). The 'reason' apart the very gendered structure of private/public for women problematizes the nature of participation of women in domestic and non-domestic spheres and their connections. We need to understand the implications for women's role in domestic sphere for a nationalist movement where women might not

have come out in large numbers in public space, yet might have performed crucial role in relation to the national movement. If such a connection is conceived we need to study that more closely. Another aspect of that connection that needs to be probed is the nature of consequences of women's role in domestic sphere stretching across the period of the nationalist movement and extending onto the present, affecting nature of women's participation in the public sphere in contemporary period. We have a theoretical basis for presuming such connection which we will take up while discussing our hypothesis.

1.2. Review of Literature

The Indian Nationalist Movement has been viewed from a variety of historiographic perspectives ranging from the hardcore imperialist through the Marxist to the Subaltern School. The imperialist approach emerged in the official pronouncement of the viceroys of the Colonial regime and the different reports brought out by the colonial government. It was theorized by Bruce P. T. Mee Cully an American scholar in 1940.

Seal (1968), Gallagher (1973), developed the liberal version. They denied the existence of colonialism as an economic, political, social and cultural structure in Indian and they saw colonialism primarily a foreign rule and the Nationalist Movement was struggle against foreign rule. It was basically as struggle of Indian one elite group and against another for British favour. This school of historians treated the Indian Nationalist Movement as a cloak for the struggle for power between different sections of the Indian elite and denied the entry of categories of nation, class, ideology, caste or gender in their analysis.

This approach was rejected by Marxist perspectives as elite Historiography. The other major approach was the nationalist historiography represented by political activists such as Rajpat Rai, A. C. Mazumdar, R. G. Pradhan, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Surendranath Banerjee, C.F.Andrews, Girija Mukherjee. More recently B.R.Nanda, Amalesh Tripathi have contributed within this framework. They analyzed the nationalist movement as the movement of the people, in terms of awakening of the Indian people to the spirit of nationalism. However the major weakness of this school was that, they failed to recognize the inner contradictions of Indian society in terms of class, caste, and gender.

The Marxist school that emerged on the scene later, foundations being led by Rajai Pam Dutt and A.R.Desai and later on developed by scholars like Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee. They tried to analyze the class character of the movement. However there are differences between the classical approach of Dutt and Desai and Chandra for example. The earlier school tended to see the movement as a structured Bourgeois movement and missed the open ended and the all class character of the movement. The later school tried to analyzed the movement by looking into the nature of contradictions in colonial India, the class character of the movement, the ideology, strategy and mass character of the movement. However the Marxist school fails to incorporate the issue of gender within their analysis.

Historians like Ranajit Guha, Gyanendra Pandey developed a new approach peoples or subaltern approach. This historiography developed the analysis of the Nationalist Movement from the people's perspectives.

Sumit Sarkar (1983) opines that the nationalist school within modern historiographical trends has been criticized for uncritically emphasizing and glorifying the role of 'few great leaders' in the movement.

Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar (1994) stated that in the pursuit of projecting the movement as homogeneous, some forms of social division within Indian society were overlooked. Thus, the gender relationship specifically women's participation in the movement were not addressed.

J.H.Broomfield (1968), Anil Seal (1968), C.A.Bayly (1975), B.R.Tomlinson (1976), David Wasbrook (1976) and Judith Brown (1977), referred to as the 'Cambridge School'. This school projected their understanding of the nationalist movement and viewed the nationalist politics primarily in terms of British Colonial elites. It also credited the British Colonial elites who trained the native population in the ethics of Parliamentary democracy and then gradually handing over power to them. Michelguglielmo Torri (1990) stated that some of this analyst later on identified themselves with the 'new Cambridge school' and portrayed the westernized Indian elites as 'clients and spokesman' of the indigenous notables, controlled the Indian society and were intermediaries between the latter and the British Raj.

Ranajit Guha (1892) address that this 'new' Cambridge school reduced the over emphasis and the glorification of the elite leaders and instead of this it projected them

as 'middlemen'. But in a nutshell, the representation of the nationalist politics was incomplete in many respects due to the fact that politics was implied unmistakably as an 'aggregation of activities and ideas of those who were directly involved in this institutional operation i.e. the colonial ruler and the dominant group in native society to such an extent that their mutual transaction were thought to be there was all to Indian nationalism.

M. Kaur (1968) addresses that very few among the Cambridge school have made references to the women's activities in Indian society and particularly no sense of the significance of political consciousness of women and their contribution to the nationalist movement was accounted.

From the middle of the 19th century women were actively involved in nationalist politics in which they formed organization for social reforms where they addressed issues relating to women. Even in the first struggle against British rule in 1857, the women voiced their opinion and participated in the movement. But this school did not mentioned about the women and rested their interest elsewhere.

G.Pandey (1978), Ranajit Guha (1982), Stephen Henningham (1983), Shahid Amin (1984) and David Hardiman (1997) developed in late 1970s and 1980s was the emergence of new body of historical knowledge which referred to itself as 'subaltern studies'. This school dismissed the previous historical writings as elitist. They focused on marginal and non-elite groups, and their autonomous resistance at various stages in the development of Indian nationalist politics. Gayatri Spivak (1998) stated that subaltern have provided insight into hoe non-elite, under privileged groups perceive their reality. She argues that in the context of Bengal though the upper middle class educated *bhadramahila* was in absolute terms privileged but she was clearly under-privileged in terms of *bhadralok* category.

Antoinette Burton (1998) and Kamala Viswesaran (1996) stated that although subaltern historiography re interprets official sources and makes us analyze subaltern classes but re- reading history from their perspectives were the sources incidentally incorporated by women themselves. Tara Ali Baig edited a book 'Women of India' as early as 1958 documented the activities of women those who particularly inherited political tradition from their families and were primarily from the elite households,

such as Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Hansa Mehta and Vijaylaskmi Pandit.

Baig's edited book along with later work by Manmohan Kaur (1968) and Aparna Basu (1976) reflected three main issues. Firstly, in the participation of the movement elite women set the precedent for the other middle class women. Secondly, women were very eager and enthusiastic to participate in the movement but Gandhi advised women to restrict their Satyagraha to picketing liquor and foreign cloth. Uma Rao (1994) argued that the struggle for the non-violent movement assisted women's equal participation because the women possessed amply the qualities required for a non-violent struggle, e.g., tolerance, courage and capacity for suffering.

Thirdly, Aparna Basu (1976) and Manmohan Kaur reflected that the emerging movement of Indian women were different from the movement of women projected in the west which clearly recognized antagonistic and conflicting interests with men. But in India the women were accepted as political comrades and given equal opportunities for participation in the freedom struggle.

K. Chattopadhyay (1983) stated that Indian women sought political rights in order to perform their civil duties, and not to compete with men. Women aligned with the nationalist movement to argue for their own rights as much as to achieve political independence: 'As... the way of patriotism for political freedom began to sweep... this movement revealed a realization that this freedom should be for both men and women.' (Thapar BJorkert: 2006:45).

Geraldine Forbes (1982) argued that women saw their advancement and India's freedom as been closely related. They felt that their right seemed dependent on freedom from imperialism and saw themselves working for women's right when they demonstrated, marched or supported revolutionary activities. However women realized that the main cause for gender inequality was both colonial structure and hierarchical structures.

Therefore, one should note that in the participation of the movement the Congress leaders themselves felt the necessity of mass participation to universalize the movement and solidify the claim to be representing a unified India nation. But the history of the independence struggle mentioned about only those women who were from the elite families or the families having political background. But the question is if

the movement was dependent on mass participation were all the sections of people in the society was involved including ordinary, simple, and unsophisticated middle class women then what happened to this middle class women? Why their voices are not part of the Nationalist Cannon? Those women who came out of their houses and demonstrated on the streets were well documented but what about those ordinary middle class women who could not cross the domestic threshold? Thus, it is very necessary that one needs to understand the lives of those ordinary middle class women and the way they engaged with the nationalist politics despite of social constraints of *pardah* segregation and low literacy rates. One needs to understand the activities in the domestic sphere these women undertook and about their perception of the movement.

We still need to fill out our notions about how the participation of ordinary middle class women should be conceptualized in the freedom movement of India. An attempt has also been made to bring into limelight even the most unknown freedom fighters. Though these middle class women were less educated or in some cases illiterate but had such a marvelous understanding that when they got an opportunity to prove their might and caliber they did not lag behind. Their joining the movement is itself creditable. Through their valuable assistance, strong dedication and deep involvement in Nationalist Movement they have earned the right to be mentioned in the Roll of Honour of those who fought for India's independence. Thus, the purpose of the study is to assess the role of these ordinary middle class women in the freedom movement during the period when the social set up in India was marked by backwardness, orthodoxy, conservatism and traditionalism. Hence, there is a research gap and we would rather hopefully try to bridge the gap and explore that how these women in sizeable numbers came forward and helped in further the cause of India's freedom. Geraldine Forbes (2000) reinforced a growing interest in women's history. A small determined group of academics started re-examining the questions relating to women's status. This group of historians attention was first to the glaring omissions in accounts of politically significant events and later on they started studying the issues of greatest salience to specific groups of women's past. Hence, the student's history recognized that they were witnessing a revolution.

Gerda Lerner was the first person to hold a chair in women's history. Her words, "women have a history; women are in a history" (Forbes 2000), became a manifesto. Therefore, there was an emergence of new way of thinking about new way

and instead of accepting Feminine identity as natural and essential, the historians and other social scientists started treating it as constructed. Thus, this liberating hypothesis stimulated the questions of unequal position of women. This approach also introduced a gender perspective in history, or in other words, a feminist perspective was drawn to rethink historiography. The gender difference was made a key to analyse social relations.

Partha Chatterjee (1989) presented an additional challenge of writing a history of women in a colonial setting. According to him, Nationalist discourse, resolved the “woman question”, by the end of the nineteenth century. The “women question”, was revived by Gandhi and the nationalist historians have also concluded that Gandhi brought women into public life and gave them the tools to solve their own problems. But this explanation was too simplistic as it ignored the history of women before Gandhi came on the scene. The new challenges in the task of writing women’s history came from the subaltern school as originated in Calcutta. In 1982, the first volume of subaltern studies appeared. It was a new school of history which focused on all non-elite colonial subjects. The term “subaltern” was borrowed from Antonio Gramsci. These historians have explained the detailed interplay of coercing and consent during 200 years of British rule. In order to explain the hegemonic processes, subaltern historians have uncovered and articulated the stories of suppressed peoples. But they paid only some attention to women as their ultimate focus was not the uncovering of women’s subalternity.

Gayatri Spivak (1988) led the project of subaltern and wrote her challenging article: “can the subaltern speak?” She states in this article, the problem of writing the history of colonial women, where the ideological construction of gender have kept the male dominant. In such context of colonial production where the subaltern had no history and cannot speak than the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in shadow. She also explained that subaltern as a female was double oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy and encouraged the Feminist to take her work seriously.

James Scott (1985) challenged the work in uncovering the everyday forms of resistance in Southeast Asia. Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash have extended this idea and the issues of gender to South Asia. Their aim was to shift the focus away from “extraordinary moments of collective protest” to a “variety of non-confrontational resistances and contestatory behavior”. (Forbes: 2000). Thus, this can lead the women’s

history to a way of examining women's agency even while they belong to and participate in an oppressive patriarchal society.

Miriam Schneir in a book entitled *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (1972), stated: "No Feminist works emerged from behind the Hindu purdah or out of Moslem harems; centuries of slavery do not provide a fertile soil for intellectual development or expression". This construction of the veiled and enslaved woman historically has fired the colonial imagination and allowed it to cloak outright exploitation as a civilizing mission. Mary Daly (1990) a post-colonial cold war feminist have condemned their own patriarchal systems but saved their most vitriolic for third-world men in a form of literary "Paki-bashing".

According to Mary Daly (1990), all Indian women were not behind veils as certain ideas about modesty and respectability were shared widely. It is also equally false to define women's world as one which suppresses the female agency totally. Generally, whether it be women's history or a new questioning of the documents of history is fueled by the work of archivists and historians locating and saving writings of women and their material objects. The records of women were not in libraries or achieves but in the homes and memories of individuals. Thus, women were met who were willing to record their oral histories. Hence, the researchers collected songs, folk tales, artistic works etc. which led to a new sensitivity to gender.

The British Colonial Officials especially men presented a report on how women perceived their interaction and nationalist contribution in the anti-colonial movements. But these reports were continuously subjected to re-construction and re-interpretation. Though the official reports were useful for documenting certain sections of the history of the nationalist movement in the public domain particularly, but they failed to provide a lot of information about women's activities in the domestic domain which is the central theme of the women's writings regarding women's experiences. Therefore, the re-interpretation of the history of Indian Nationalist requires going beyond archival, official and unofficial sources.

Malvika Karlekar (1991) presented the study of Bengal in the 19th century which referred to the personal narratives and her work also highlighted their importance in 're-creation of women's lives'. Pandey G. (1978) states that some historians have perceived oral narratives as a set of rambles and recollections which were unsupported

by the contemporary writings and were considered inappropriate as evidence, but this would provide many useful leads and feel for the time which the written accounts could scarcely convey. Thapar-Bjorkert states that these narratives as a methodological tool revealed the individual subjectivities of participants in the nationalist movement. Hence, in documenting these life histories opened a new world more real than the official records.

According to Borland (1991), Fonow and Cook 1991 etc, in particular a western feminist approaches have challenged the positivist and empiricist methods of analysis of the main stream history due to the fact that these methods failed to facilitate women's lives studies and experiences either in the past or present.

Judith Allen (1986) argued that the mainstream methods privileged only 'public matters', but most importantly failed to examine the inadequacies of the divisions of public and private, leading to the exclusion of women's experience. Thus, by locating absences and silences and re-investigating the past of women, by searching the limited evidence with different questions and not inferring a silence have distinguished the objectives of feminist from those of mainstream history.

E. Fox. Genovese (1982), Linda Gordan (1988) and Natalie Z Davis (1988), stated that there was a need to contribute to the existing interpretation which was based on the exclusion of women and non-recognition of women's past by working from the outside mainstream disciplines. Thus, presented approaches as a separatist which were different from inclusive approach as they argued to highlight women as valid historical subjects within the mainstream disciplines. Fox Genovese (1982) argued that in order to address women's experiences within wider historical processes there is a need for developing women's history within mainstream history.

As the dominant historical subject has been male and the written history has treated all the non-male as 'Others'. There is a need to move away from the mainstream history so that women's history and women's experiences could be projected as unique and different. Linda Gordan (1988) addresses that the essential focus of the feminist historians was the inclusion of social and cultural spheres of domestic, the family and sexuality within mainstream analysis, 'historicising' activities of women which had not previously been seen as 'historical' in wider historical processes. (Forbes:2000:31). Natalie Zemon-Davis (1988) argued that the women's history should be comparative

i.e. women's experience compared to men and women's experience in one class compared to those of another.

Linda Gordon (1988) stated that such comparison would contextualize women's resistance, conflicts and ambiguities that arise during the constant negotiations between the sexes. Fox Genovese (1982) stated that such challenges were not to substitute 'female' subject for 'male' subject but to explore the ambiguous and unequal ways in which the relationship between gender, race and class specific subjects are moved forward to progress. This would also prompt the researcher to explore the role of gender and gender conflict within the context of social, economic and political relations.

1.3. Research Gap, Research Questions and Research Objectives

Some of the early historical accounts of women's nationalist activities (Kaur: 1968) traced the course of the nationalist activity and participation of women from the period of Rani of Jhansi and portrayed the women activists of 1920s and 1930s as the bearers of the Rani's legacy. However, the limitation of her work was that she failed to pay much attention to the categories of caste, class, and religion, regional and most importantly the issue of gender. Later studies like Agnew (1979) focused on elite women's participation in the freedom struggle, Sharma (1981) focused on the positive change in the position of women after the movement. At the same time studies like that of Jayawardhena (1986) pointed out that Indian women although were heroic but submitted to the traditional roles and never protested against the male authority. Since then a good number of studies was made on the women freedom fighters of different regions like the studies by Forbes (2001) and Thapar (2006).

Existing research on women and Indian nationalism can therefore be described as noncomprehensive, cursory in nature, and generally a "history from above" (Alexander, 1984, pp.1-5).

After Independence, state-sponsored directories of freedom fighters including women were compiled in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. But this did not happen for the Darjeeling subdivision which entered the annals of history as a colonial master's favorite health resort or a safe haven for the freedom fighters from Calcutta. As we were scanning the various available literatures on the women freedom fighters of the Darjeeling subdivision, we found that

there were hardly any recorded authentic material available and most documents made passing references to these women. Our study's objective was very clear to us, these women's contribution to the freedom movement however, marginal (?) or inconsequent (?) needs to be incorporated in the record on Indian history. But we tried to record it as 'her' story by also looking into the interface of the role performance of these freedom fighters belonging to a marginal group/hill tribals /women.

The study sought to focus on the following research questions:

1) Who were these women freedom fighters and what socio-economic categories they belonged to?

2) What sort of institutions shaped their political values and their political actions?

3) How did they participate in the freedom movement and in the process what challenges they faced?

4) How or what kind of political consciousness they were able to generate in their region so that other men and women were made politically aware and at the same time bring changes in the status of women of their region?

1.4. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

Writing Modern History in colonial nations basically started when the Colonial rulers started recording the personal narratives and other narratives on the basis of their Colonial understanding. The historical accounts of the Indian women can be found from the 19th Century as a product of these Colonial rulers understanding of the position of women in India. Both European inspired History and the Indian texts they cited essentialized women as devoted and self sacrificing, yet occasionally rebellious and dangerous. Immediately after independence mainstream Historical perspectives engaged discussing the tensions between British Colonialism and the emerging Indian National sentiment. However this account was confined to the elites only especially the western educated elite. The earlier writings on the anti Colonial movement (Sitaramayya : 1946, 1947; Tara Chand:1961-1972) focused specifically on 'few great leaders' in the Movement (Sarkar:1983:6). It was not surprising that, the nationalist schools, as the earlier group of Historians were called, projected the Nationalist Movements as homogenous overlooking the social divisions within Indian Society as

well as gender relationships specifically women participation in the Nationalist Movement (Kasturi & Majundar: 1994:16).

In the 1960s Historians such as J. H. Broomfield (1968), Anil Seal (1968), C. A. Bayly (1975), B.R. Tomlinson (1976), David Washbrook (1976) and Judith Brown (1977), referred to as the “Cambridge School” viewed the Nationalist politics in terms of the British and the Colonial elites. ‘the new Cambridge School that emerged later reduced this over emphasis and instead projected the elites leaders as middle men. Amongst the historians of the Cambridge School very few made references to women’s political consciousness or their contributions to the Nationalist Movement. The Cambridge School yet more emphasis on the division between social sub categories existing in the Indian Society such as the ‘westernized elites’, ‘intelligentsia’ and the ‘indigenous notables’ (those possessing economic power), rather than gender as a social division.

The late 70’s and 80’s saw the emergence of new body of historical knowledge “Subaltern Studies” (Pandey:1978; Guha:1982; Henminghal:1983; Amin:1984; Hardiman:1997) who dismissed the previous historical writings and focused on the marginal groups and tried to understand the oppression and exclusion of specific social groups free from the influence of the elites. This school was criticized for not explicitly discussing the role of women in relation to ‘Subaltern’ men (Spivak:1988; Viswesaran:1996).

However the Subaltern studies have contributed in the form of the practice of re-reading History from the perspective of under privileged. Although Tara Ali Baig in 1958 edited a book ‘Women of India’ documented the activities of women who inherited political traditions from their families and belonged to elite households. However this dominations of elite women’s histories in the historiography of feminism has been challenged of late with the documentations of the contribution of the non- elite women in the freedom struggle (Bjorkert: 2006; Verma: 2003) The new feminist historiography engages in the exploration of the unheard voices and unseen faces through a re-interpretation of the personal memoirs of women and oral narratives, explores the unknown facet of the lives of the marginal under-privileged women. The women who are the focused of my study are doubly marginalized as people belonging to a marginal area like Darjeeling sub-division known for its beauty with no focus on

the real people and their problem, and also marginalized by virtue of patriarchal structure.

As far as patriarchal structure is concerned women's acquiescence to domestication brings to mind Steven Luke's (1974) reference to a dimension of power where people, due to specific kinds of socialization, accept subordination, for they are not aware of their real interest. This actually presents a manipulative aspect of power but the mechanisms of manipulation are difficult to prove. For a more meaningful perspective one can refer to Bob Jessop's (Jessop 1982) distinction between the structural elements or 'those elements in a social function that cannot be altered by a given agent (or set of agents) during a given period' and the 'conjunctural' elements or modifiable elements that constitute a restraint on potential reformers. Women's confinement to private sphere may more meaningfully be understood in terms of those restraints where another concept of power employed by the feminists, namely, 'raising of consciousness' (Birch, 2001 p.169) may be seen as a way of modifying those conjunctural elements or 'patriarchy' in this case. In the context of ordinary or common hill women of Darjeeling their awareness of and role in the national movement might have been shaped by a patriarchal structure where they might have only played a supportive role to their male family members and not allowed to come out of their domestic sphere. To this extent Luke's manipulative notion of power could be working on them. However, one cannot discount 'raising of consciousness' of these women in the process of national movement itself where they gradually saw themselves as performing a crucial, albeit indirect, political role relevant to the country's freedom and their own liberation from oppression. One might not be wrong to surmise that such involvement brought about a qualitative transformation in their own self image and role in the domestic sphere affecting the gender status within family and set in motion a socialization process having a generational impact or a tradition of political participation of women in movement spreading out from home to public arena. The nationalist movement in India was one of the major democratic movement that not only challenged the imperialistic colonial empire but also created a nation where women and men belonging to different regions, caste, class, communities joined together to oust a foreign rule. In the process of the generation of the new political consciousness women got the space to challenge the patriarchal social order. Although scholars like Mies (1980) and Jayawardena (1986) differ to say that women submitted to the existing

power structure as was also pointed out by Chatterjee (1989) but there were many instances where women challenged the order and if not they themselves were able to bring major change but they were able to show the path of light to future women like us by raising consciousness and percolating it down the generations. On the basis of the above arguments one can delineate the following hypotheses:

1) The participation of women of the Darjeeling subdivision of India in the nationalist movement was conditioned by the existing patriarchal structure and the participating women failed to make any major change in the status of women of their region.

2) The majority of women freedom fighters of the Darjeeling subdivision of India worked in the domestic sphere and that raised their level of political consciousness that brought about slow changes in the gender balance within the family and paved the role for greater participatory role of women of the next generation.

3) Women's involvement in the national movement contributed significantly to the movement in the subdivision and in the process developed the potential to challenge the existing power structure.

1.5. Reflections on Methodology

The relevance of a study of women's role in the national movement cannot be over estimated for either the discipline of history or the study of women. But where do we start and what are our sources? There is a scarcity and unevenness of material in terms of region and time periods. Government documents form a major source of information. Some historians go beyond conventional sources of history such as official and archival records instead employs a diverse range of materials including oral narratives as a set of 'rambles and recollections; unsupported by contemporary writings and not appropriate as 'evidence', but 'would provide many useful leads and a "feel" for the time which written accounts could scarcely convey' (Pandey 1978:preface). It intends to highlight oral narratives as an alternative source for those region where historical sources are in dearth and whatever sources are there, are in the form of oral history. The history of such communities is rooted in oral traditions and can only be traced through oral evidences. The sources of oral nature plays an important part as they give the information which are not there and fill up the voids which are there in the documented works. Oral narratives are important for the

reconstruction of the history of the people having their own collective notion and perception of its past. There are valuable historical narrative documents and are records of the story of events and people that history had forgotten. Oral history gives history back to the people in their own words. These narratives as a methodological tool revealed the subjectivities of the individual participants in the nationalist movement. The documentation of this life histories opened a new world which was more real than official records. The historical accounts have been challenged by the contemporary feminist historical enquiries as the methodology and tools of analysis used for research were constructed by the male researchers. Western feminist epistemological and methodological approaches in particular have challenged main stream history for their positivist and empiricist methods of analysis, because these methods primarily did not facilitate the study of women's lives and their experiences, either in the past or the present (see Bell et al. 1993; Borland 1991; Fonow and Cook 1991; Gluck and Patai 1991; Harding 1987; Lather 1988; Narayan 1989, 1997; Oakley 1981; Stacey 1991; Stree Shakti Sanghatana 1989; Suleri 1989; Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004; Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996; Wolf 1996).

It was argued that the mainstream methods privileged 'public matters' and more importantly failed to examine the inadequacies of the divisions of public and private, which excluded women's experience. Locating absences and silences and reinvestigating the past of women, searching the 'limited evidence with different questions' and not inferring a 'silence; distinguished feminist objectives from those of mainstream history (Allen 1986:184). It was necessary in order to contribute to the existing interpretations which were based on the women's exclusion and non-recognition of women's past; there was a need to work from outside mainstream disciplines. This separatist approach was different from the inclusion approach, which argued for highlighting women as valid Historical subjects within mainstream disciplines (Genovese 1982; Gordon 1988; Davis 1988). Fox Genovese (1982) argued to develop history of women within mainstream history so that for her this would address women's experiences within wider historical processes. Since until now the male has been the dominant historical subject and the written history has treated everything non - male as the 'other'. Thus it is necessary to move away from the mainstream history so that women's history and experiences could be projected as unique and different, and also would be to accept the existing categorization of women

as the 'other'. This feminist historians focused essentially on the inclusion of social and cultural spheres of domestic, the family and sexuality within mainstream analysis, 'historicizing' women's activities which had not previously been seen as 'historical' in wider historical processes (Gordon 1988:92). Since due to the exclusion of activities of women, the partial view of what constitutes social and political life was subjected to rigorous scrutiny. It was also argued that the women's history should be comparative; women's experience compared to men's, and women's experience in one class compared to those of another (Zemon Davis 1988:86). This would also contextualize women's resistance, and conflict and ambiguities that arise during constant negotiations between the sexes (Gordon 1988:92). Moreover, the challenge is not to substitute the 'female' subject for the 'male' subject, but to explore the ambiguous and unequal ways that relationship between gender, race and class specific subjects are forged (Genovese 1982). In doing so, it prompts researchers to explore the role of gender and 'gender conflict within in the context of social, economic and political relations' (Genovese 1982:17).

Our study is largely based on qualitative methodological tools of intensive interviewing and case studies of women freedom fighters in addition to archival source materials on the national movement of this region. While working on the study we tried to focus our attention on any available secondary references. Some vernacular medium literature was available but the method was more subjective than objective. We have tried to search the official documents, newspapers and met the relatives of the freedom fighters to get to the truth.

1.6. Glimpses of our Journey through The Past

To construct the nationalist narrative of unheard voices, we have gone beyond conventional sources of history such as official and archival records, which we have collected a few as most either was lost or were not preserved, or were in foreign hands. We have employed a diverse range of tools to secure information as it was quite difficult as most were either infirm or dead. Our sources included oral narratives, poetry, vernacular magazines and private correspondence with an objective to let these women speak for themselves.

Drawing upon field studies in Darjeeling and its adjoining areas the study of research focuses on the nationalist participation of ordinary middle class women at the local level out in the streets as well as inside their homes especially in the hilly regions.

We have conducted several interviews with the family members of the women freedom fighters from Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Siliguri etc. In order to provide them comfort and easy atmosphere we prepared a set of structured questionnaire specifically on the issues of the political participation of their father, mother, brother and sister in the freedom movement of India. Our study's core objective was to discover the lineage of political awareness and participation among the women of the region about whose heightened role the new age social media seems to be in a celebratory mood of new found emancipation which we contend through our study and at the same intend to record in our history, these as *'her' stories*.

While our journey to the field was a very challenging one as we knew it would be a very difficult part to begin with. This was due to the fact that till now, whatever little information we could gather, none of the freedom fighters, whose names were traced, were alive and their family members those who were alive, have either grown too old or had migrated to abroad. With a hope and prayer we started our journey.

There are several incidents and stories to begin with but it would not be appropriate to include all which best remains as treasured memories.

It was on 10th September 2011 we interviewed Sir Surendranath Poddar (son of Saryu Prasad Poddar and Puttalimaya Devi). He gave a strong introduction of native community and literature and how the sacrifices made by our forefathers and mothers to make our life secured to live in this place. Instead of us starting an interview, he started asking us what type of political participation we were writing about whether about sacrifice, consciousness or about the development of the native people. This took us aback, because we were just planning to write about the participation of those in the nationalist movement we figured that this interview would be very interesting and surprising too. He said people often get vague when they try to recall the participation of hill people as we are always treated as foreigners till date and the issue of identity is still a question. We asked him about his point of view on this issue of political participation of his parent. He answered it was very difficult because in those days society, environment, circumstances, and communication were not easy and reliable as

today. Still the people managed to overcome all the hurdles without any complain. They were the people who were born strong and courageous indeed. My parent faced lots of physical, mental, emotional and financial problems but never let the movement to discontinue in the region. They kept all their problems aside and did stay without food for week. They even went to jail for their political activities and still remained an active participants of the movement. However, one other aspect of the interview we wanted to note was that throughout the entire thing Sir Poddar not only provided information about his parent but offered us many new names of women who were an active member along with his mother. The other specific information from the interview that we would like to relate is that it was here in this place we discovered and came across many new names of women freedom fighters. Therefore, this interview really helped us write our research paper especially in the areas of Subaltern history. His experience in the writing seemed like he had have a good understanding of writing history of his parent and we also found out that he had written about the political participation of his parent in the freedom movement. Beside, he gave us many pamphlets, diaries of Saryu Prasad Poddar which was an immense help and support to our work further. But unfortunately the son of such great man died soon after a year of this interview. So we felt very fortunate to come across such a great figure and we decided that we are never loosing these qualities of him which helped us with a new search to the direction of our research work.

On 27th February 2011 we interviewed Ratnamani lama (daughter of Mayadevi Chettri) in Kurseong. When we first saw her it was an eye catching moment as she was a 75 year old smart, tall and a beautiful lady with a smile on her face came wearing smart attire. Her husband was a retired Brigadier named P.S.Lama. She has published two books entitled “Perna Ko Shroth” and “Ojhal Ma Pareka Gorkha Swantantra Sangramiharu”. On 10th July 2012 we also interviewed Rajan Pradhan (son of Chandra Devi Pradhan) who is an employee in electricity board. On 8th February 2014, we headed for Kalimpong to conduct an interview of Pushpa Lama who is a daughter of great freedom fighter Nabir Lama. She stays in Hatbazaar, East Mile, Kalimpong. She was quite reluctant to give even 10 minutes to us. The fact was she is in very deteriorating condition, poverty; unemployment and hardship in her life made her so. She finally agreed for the interview, she was dressed in traditional Nepali attire called Guneau Cholo which was old and faded. From her appearance one could understand

that she was dissatisfied and struggling for her livelihood. The house that she lived in was a small wooden house and the condition of the house was in a pathetic state, if we compare people below poverty level, lived in better condition than this. She had two broken chairs and a long bench to sit on. When we reached there she was busy in her usual household chores. She showed least interest in talking to us, may be because of the circumstances that persisted. It was quite disheartening and sad experience for us. As the interview proceeded she was not very open and less expressive may be because of the fact that though being a daughter of a freedom fighter nor did she received any recognition nor did she get any aid from the government. With every negative vibes she was rendering we gathered our positivity and started with our interview. Pushpa Lama starts her interview by saying that my emphasis on the home front as a site of political activity has its own history. She said I grew up in a household in which my mother Jeetmaya Tamang saw herself as having made significant contributions to the nationalist movement. It is because my mother was confined to the domestic spheres and her activities have never been acknowledged within the dominant public discourse. My mother was not able to come out in public or leave the house as there was no one to take care of us.

On 19th of August 2013 we interviewd Malati Chettri, the only child of the great freedom fighter Harish Chettri. She started the interview by saying “*mero baba le hamilai chorera goyo jaba moh ek barsa ko pani thiyena*” (my father left us when I was not even one year old). He joined the movement and sacrificed us in the name of the nation. In a nutshell, we found that she was discontented with her father being involved in a movement sacrificing family life.

On 8th of February 2014 we interviewd Nanita Gautam in Kalimpong. She beggar conversation talking about many problems of the recent movement and why she left GJM (Gorkha Janmukti Morcha). She said “after signing GTA there is no scope for the demand of Gorkhaland”. But our question was the agreement of GTA was with the state government and after resigning from GJM why did she join the same opposition party (i.e Trinamool) for some moment she was quiet and then she started saying that we all now should seek for development rather than Gorkhaland which she feels its impossible. She said “this is the 3rd phase and still we had to give up. Why don’t we seek for development in the field of education especially for girls. She asserts there is a basic need of awareness among the women and education will definitely help them to

become confident and independent. Her thinking was upright. She was a lady of essence and had many saying regarding the present party which we would not like to emphasize because our thesis is on rediscovering the history and present situation and not making critical analysis as our research ethics would not permit us to do so.

1.7. Synoptic Review of the Study

The history of women in the world has developed differently in different countries. Throughout history the roles of women has changed dramatically from a typical voiceless human being to one that dominates a story. The Indian Nationalist Movement was one of the historic movement that world have ever witnessed. The movement facilitated the huge participation of the women especially with the entry of Gandhi during the period marked by orthodoxy and traditions. The women started poring in more and more to the nationalist movement, adding more responsibilities and reforming their roles eventually from the housewife to active participants. Although, in India there were many regions that did not get desired focus even though the people of the region equally participated in the movement. The participation of women of Darjeeling subdivision in the nationalist movement was indeed an incredible one but due to marginality of people or marginality of the region in the context of political importance their contributions and sacrifices still is behind the scene. Darjeeling as a hill station, much adored by the colonial rulers has received the place for exotic beauty and had a summer resort for colonial masters, but no one can distinguish the other side of the stories. However, very little of it is known in vernacular literature, magazines, nobles, pamphlets etc.

The second chapter comprises of socio-economic and political sphere. We have emphasized on the study of the racial character of the region. The racial composition of the population of the region is been precisely explained with the available data and the implications of ethnic complexities in the district resulting in a composite culture taking shape in the three hill sub-divisions at the initial stage of the present century. However, we have also focused on socio-economic, political and religious composition of the region that had a major influence on the women living in Darjeeling. Along with it we have tried to focus on the position of the women in society during the period and the spread of European education facilitating the establishment of many renowned Schools in the region. We also tried to focus on the economic sector of the region and the contributions of women for maintaining the family expenditure. Lastly, we have

also taken into account about the establishment of Hospitals in the region and thereby a gradual growth of politics in the region.

In third chapter we have emphasized on the indirect role of hill women, the domestic sphere and the nationalist movement. The political participation begins with the historic political role set by few women from their domestic threshold as a wife, mother, daughter and sister. We have tried to portray few dynamic real life stories of those subaltern women from Darjeeling and its adjoining areas. We have interpreted the social realities and the life world and their difficulties to work and accentuate their political implications.

The fourth chapter emphasized entirely on the women's entry into the nationalist movement. The women of the region entered the political scenario with the entry of Gandhi in 1920s. The most prominent Nepali women leaders in the Nationalist Movement as mentioned in the previous chapters from this region were Sabitri Devi, Puttalimaya Devi Poddar, Maya Devi Chettri etc.

The contribution of Gandhi in the process of new awakening among women from the domestic to the public arenas has been incorporated cautiously. We have selected and included some of the momentous incidents that took place in Darjeeling along with the active participation of few hill women leaders in the movement.

In the fifth chapter we have tried to elucidate how the participation of women in the nationalist movement has explicitly facilitated the women in hill politics at present. We have attempted explicitly to how the pattern of political participation was set by these nationalist women freedom fighters of the region for the future generations and the women active participation in the post independent period following the ethnic movement is not an abrupt act but perhaps these women had an inherent link to; and therefore their activities should be counted as a lineage of their predecessors. Thus, we came across the fact that not surprisingly but there is a history behind and some argue that this was inevitable in integrating women in the mainstream politics. This led to a hard-won achievement on the part of women in recent hill politics as women started poring in great majority as compared to the past political history. In this continuity of participation, the historic political role set by Renu Leena Subba (MLA), Shanta Chhetri, Nanita Gautam etc are noteworthy and they have many such recounted

political activities narrated by them in an interview. However, a deeper insight brings up their narratives that are different from the role played by the past leaders.

1.8. Conclusion

In the colonial period the caste system in Darjeeling emerged with the emergence of various groups who migrated from Nepal. There were several reasons as mentioned in the chapter for the reason of the migration. This migration greatly influenced the basic caste structure of the region. Therefore, the colonial regime in the region provided people with variety of opportunities to migrate for maintaining their livelihood that caused in the creation of new caste structure. Along with it the Christian missionaries particularly to those of the church of Scotland Mission brought in many European educational institutions to the region that greatly facilitated the girls in particular. Besides, several Hospitals were too established in the region. Thus, all this development paved the way for new awakening resulting change in peoples outlook in understanding society and politics to some extent. The other remaining chapter reflects the indirect role of hill women, the domestic sphere and the nationalist movement. Few dynamic real life stories have been collected of those subaltern women living in Darjeeling and its adjoining areas. We have attempted to interpret social realities and the life world, their difficulties to work and accentuate their political implications. The chapter states that with the nature of changes first felt in the domestic sphere, had a major influence on the women of the region. In the last chapter we have tried to explain the active role played by the middle class women of the region despite of their family support and social backwardness. Here we have interpreted few real life stories of the participation of women in the nationalist movement, as well as women's movement and the local women's associations with few records. Several interviews had been conducted with the family members of women. The women who participated spontaneously in the movement, their family members refuse to or find it painful to talk about that period now. Thus, there is a need of much more to be done in this respect.

The participation of women in the nationalist movement particularly from the Darjeeling region was perhaps defined as a repository of enlightenment whose utmost aim was to defend and save society from the unjust rule of the colonial administration. It reveals a new development of the movement of women as an integral part of the nationalist movement in India along with Darjeeling. It analyzed the historic juncture (of Darjeeling) and the causes for the evolution and the various changes in the women

participation in society. It represent the present state or attempt to illustrate the present women in politics of Darjeeling and suggest that it has to be understood and analyze as a lineage of continuity, that evolved from their predecessors who sacrificed their life for liberating the country. The women involved in politics today in Darjeeling region is a continuity of legacy of their mothers, sisters and has been a continuous process from generations. There is also an attempt to revive the fading legacy of great women historic facts. It is helpful in establishing the primordial tie between the land and the people by arousing sentiments and emotions on the basis of what people observe. The history is interpreted in such a way as to praise their achievement. Here we tried to take into account the few events and facts of the great women freedom fighter who continued her stay in politics even after independence and brought in a dynamic changes and development in the hill areas. The women leaders like Sabitri Devi, Puttalimaya Devi Poddar, Maya Devi Chettri etc had provided the ideological foundation in the movement of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas, also a distinct ideological character to the Nepali community and also a legacy to many generation to come. They were the strong proponents of independent India and justified struggle as a means to actualize the dream of independent India. More importantly these women leaders in the post independence era remained in politics and other associations for several years. This has been discussed under by following the case of Maya Devi Chettri who continued to be an active political member as well a member of many other associations even after independence.

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All interviews were conducted between January 2011 and February 2014. All the respondents were middle class Hindu, Buddhist men and women.

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