5.1: Introduction

The fundamental question which comes to the study of Dalit Liberation Movement is to understand who are the Dalits? The term ‘Dalit’ a derivative of Sanskrit word ‘Dal’ which means to be crushed and destroyed, refers to the poor and downtrodden. According to Ghan Shyam Shah, “Dalit includes those termed in administrative parlance as Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward classes” (Shah, 8). Traditionally, in the Hindu social order, they are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, considered ‘Ati-Shudras’ or ‘Avarna’ and are treated as untouchables. Dalits are a mixed population of numerous castes and in Hindu society, Dalit state has been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure such as leather work, butchering or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and human waste. In pre-independence India Dalits stayed outside the village and worked as manual labourers and sweepers. They were segregated and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. Unfortunately, even after independence, discrimination against Dalits still exists in rural areas in routine matters such a access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources, though it has largely disappeared in urban areas and public spheres. Basically, “caste is a lived social experience in India more than a prescribed mode of social stratification” (Davy XV). Despite the massive changes brought about urbanization, industrialization and globalization, the grim reality of caste convention still looms large over the Indian social order and has not shown any substantial signs of reduction.
In 1901, Risely, then Census Commissioner of India, attempted to classify the Hindu castes. The term ‘Scheduled Castes’ appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act 1935. The Simon Commission coined this term in 1928, later on, the British Government issued the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936, specifying certain castes and tribes. Among whom the Balmikis/Bhangis were the first to be added. As compared to the term ‘Harijan’ given to the untouchables by Mahatma Gandhi, the term ‘Dalit’ found a ready acceptance among the untouchable communities all over India. It expresses Dalits’ awareness about themselves as oppressed people and signifies their resolve to demand liberation through a revolutionary transformation of the system that denies them the opportunities to ameliorate their lot. Bishop A.C. Lal considers “the word ‘Dalit’ as a beautiful word because it transcends narrow national and sectarian frontiers” (Lal,xiii). Arjun Dangle, a Dalit writer does not consider Dalit as a caste but rather ‘a realization’ which “is related to the experiences, joys, sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society”(Dangle,264).

The term Dalit is alluded to broken, oppressed individuals who become subject to deliberate act of exploitation by those above them in a hierarchical social system. The Dalit Panthers, once a militant organization had used the term in its Manifesto. It says, "Members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, nee-Buddhists, the working people, the landless poor peasants, women and those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion are called Dalits." It further elucidates, "We do not want a little place in Brahanman Alley. We want the rule of the whole land. We are not looking at persons by a system. Change of heart, liberal education, etc. will not end our state of exploitation. When

---

we gather a revolutionary mass, rouse the people, out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolution”\textsuperscript{2}

Thus, the Untouchables of country had themselves chosen an alternative character, 'a revised self-portrait' that of \textit{Dalit} to indicate their lack of belief in being polluted, their sense that their condition was the result of the lack of the caste system, and their inclusion in the Ambedkar movement of all those grounded by their religions, social and economic status.\textsuperscript{3}

Through this '\textit{new identity}', \textit{Dalit} Movement directed itself in the direction of status improvement vis-a-vis social mobility among \textit{Dalits} and shaping their agitation sensitivity and assertion for reaching their rights of equality and equal opportunity, self-respect and a respectful identity.\textsuperscript{4}

The community has chosen the word 'Dalit’ itself and has used proudly as a sign of self-consciousness. The world has been used in English Press, without its translation. Founder and editor of ‘\textit{Asmitadarsh}’ (Translation ‘\textit{Mirror of Identity}’), Professor Gangadhar Pantawane, has defines the word in the following manner, he says, “to me Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul and Holy Books teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in Humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.”\textsuperscript{5} These are the changing perceptions about the community, which was subjected to 'institutionalized deprivation' for centuries and its struggle for Liberation. It started with very reformative kind of attitudes and passed through several radical and revolutionary phases. There were dynamic changes occurred at definitional level of the movement and today in socio-political system the word 'Dalit' is widely acceptable and used. But, not much

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{2} Ibid.
\bibitem{3} Zelliot, Eleanor, \textit{Ibid.} Pp.V
\bibitem{5} Quoted in Eleanor Zelliot, \textit{Ibid.} Pp. 268.
\end{thebibliography}
of elucidation is available about the introduction of the term 'Scheduled Castes' either in the
Constitution or in any laws or rules. It was in 1901 that the then Census Commissioner of
India, Risley tried for the first time to classify the Hindu castes. Then in 1911 an interrogation
was made to identify which of the castes and tribes were discriminated and oppressed against
on religious and social grounds. In 1921, these castes and tribe were called the 'Depressed
Classes' and J.H. Hutton, the then Census Commissioner, systematically categorized the
Depressed Classes. The expression of the term 'Scheduled Castes' first was coined by the
Simon Commission and was placed in the Government of India Act, 1935. Prior to this Act,
they were known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes or exterior castes. In April 1936, the
Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order issued by British Government specified
certain castes, races, and tribes as Scheduled Castes in different Provinces of India and the
list was continuation of the earlier list of Depressed Classes. Further, the list drawn in the
Constitution of India (1950) was a revised version of the above-mentioned Order of 1936.
The test applied was the social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the
historical customs of Untouchability. Certain specific measures were taken to fulfil the
assurance of 'justice, social, economic and political' that was carried out by the Preamble of
the Constitution. There is no definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the Constitution
itself. But the President is empowered to draw up a list in consultation with the Governor of
each States, subject to revision by Parliament (Articles 341-342).

5.2: Balmiki Liberation

We find a long history of struggle for Dalit Liberation where they have gone for conscious
attempt to redefine their self-image and many dynamic and landmark changes have occurred
at the definitional level during the course of the movement. Today the word Dalit is widely
acceptable and used all over the country; many social scientists have started referring to the
Dalits and ex-Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes inter changeably. Balmikis are referred
as the *Dalit*, in this work, for the ex-Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes who by articulating their self-realization and their struggle against the caste oppression and by their "will to act against exploitation, a rise from oppression, from death to life, from darkness to light" are continuing their Movement.\(^6\)

An understanding of the development of term *Dalit* itself reflects changing nature of the community and provides meaningful insights to analyse the nature and scope of *Dalit* consciousness. In fact, *Dalit* consciousness is political consciousness that is expressed politically during the course of the *Dalit* movement. Political consciousness is a complex concept as discussed in the previous chapter and it is a very comprehensive concept playing a 'catalyst role' in the articulation of Balmiki community. It is participative having significant impact on the political system and its actors both subjectively and objectively. It connotes self-image vis-a-vis other individuals and communities, their relationship with socio-political locations and their linkages/connectivity with socio-eco-political and cultural structures of society. Political consciousness characterizes an individual's of community's cognitive comprehensibility of its objective conditions as well as its subjective awareness that, in turn, forms through social experiences, political struggles and cultural traits.

To understand *Balmiki* consciousness as a *Dalit* is a complex process as it incorporates several complexities like political consciousness. It includes the understanding of the Dalits politics, processes of political socialization and political culture among *Dalits*, its impact on the construction of political consciousness and its different ways of expressions including literature. An effort has been made to understand *Dalit* movement in India in the following section along with the understanding of *Dalit* aesthetics.

---

It was Dr. Ambedkar in the twentieth century, who took up cudgels against the injustice and exploitation meted out to Dalits due to caste discrimination. Balmiki consciousness is guided by the Ambedkarite ideology, programs, leadership and organization and incorporates both institutionalised and non-institutionalised individual and collective actions initiated and adopted by the community to achieve desired goals. Leadership provided by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had powerful impact on the community and subsequent course of Dalit movement draws inspiration and strength from his vision. We would discuss his impact on the Dalit movement in the next section.

Dr Ambedkar held Hindu religion and its teachings responsible for the fate of the untouchables. He had declared “you must burn away the Vedas and the Shastras, which deny any part to reason” (quoted in Valmiki, XIX). On 25 December 1927, Ambedkar had burnt a copy of Manusmriti in a bonfire as Manu, the ancient sage, is believed to have formulated the laws of pollution and untouchability. Moreover, as opposed to Gandhi’s efforts to remove untouchability through penance and acts of social service by caste Hindus, Ambedkar used the language of rights and legal provisions. He stressed upon a positive correlation between untouchability and economic deprivation and disparity, constantly emphasizing the exploitation of Dalits as to how they were denied the right to education, ownership of land and jobs above the level of scavenging or any other menial occupation and they were also forced to do the labour without any wages. Valmiki refers to a situation when his village men were beaten up for refusing to work without wages. He poses a question, ‘why it is a crime to ask for the price of one’s labour?’ (Valmiki, 39) Ambedkar endeavoured to inculcate awareness about such acts of injustice and exploitation and make the Dalits conscious that they have their own identity as human beings, equally equipped with physical and mental capacity as other human beings and equally entitled to enjoy all the human rights without any abridgement or limitation.
According to Valmiki, Dalit consciousness is elemental in opposing the cultural inheritance of the upper castes, the notion that culture is a hereditary right for them and one that is denied to Dalits. Defining Dalit consciousness further, Valmiki says “Dalit consciousness is deeply concerned with the question, “Who am I? What is my identity?” (Valmiki, 28). It is this consciousness that gives Dalit literature its unique power and separates it from traditional Hindi literature describing Dalit characters. According to Valmiki, “Dalit consciousness does not just make an account of or give a report on the anguish, misery, pain and exploitation of Dalits, or draw a tear-streaked and sensitive portrait of Dalit agony; rather it is that which is absent from “original” consciousness, the simple and straight forward perspective that breaks the spell of the shadow of the cultural, historical and social roles for Dalits. That is Dalit consciousness. Dalit means deprived of human rights, those who have been denied them on a social level. Their consciousness is Dalit consciousness”. (Valmiki, 29). It is a staunch feeling of protest against the imposed lower caste status and evil of untouchability and a sense of self-respect and pride for a new social order based on the values of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity.

Political consciousness is informed through the multiple factors: level of political education, articulated political opinion, amount and quantum of suppression, marginalization of a particular community, urge for radical changes and many more. It is to be noted that the greater amount of political consciousness would increase and enlarge the level of political participation. It would be observed, in the course of this study, that the greater amount of articulated political consciousness among the Dalit community has increased and broadened the level and scope of political participation, particularly since Dr. Ambedkar throughout the country. In fact, there exists a proliferation of consciousness that is felt politically and expressed politically among the Dalit community.
One can identify a progressive pattern in the expression of political consciousness through processes of political socialization, political participation and political culture, thus, making it 'a functional catalyst' providing general participation orientations, community mobilization and identity building processes. It can be identified that the political consciousness performs through the following stages:-

1. Subjective understanding of the self;
2. Transmission of knowledge from one generation to another;
3. Objective cognition of the socio-eco-politico-cultural conditions;
4. Critical relationship with other communities and the structures of powers and economic controls; and
5. Transforming society consciously with a visionary movement.

It can be observed that a new self-image with overall general political participation is being cultivated by Dalits through assertion of their rights and continuation of their movement for social change and for the establishment of an egalitarian society.

5.3: Dalit Collective Action

Various concepts such as social movement, revolt, agitation, political action, collective action, reform and revolution, have major thrust to bring about change in socio-political system. It has been a serious challenge for the scholars to construct the term movement with special reference to dalits. The term ‘movement’ has been used interchangeably with organization or union. Social activists, political leaders and also scholars have used the very term differently.

It was during early nineteenth century that the term 'social movement' gained currency in Europe. This was the period of social upheaval and change where political leaders and
authors were concerned with emancipation of the exploited classes. But there was not a consistent definition of the term 'movement', and it was during second quarter of the last century that attempts were made to define the concept of social movement. One of the most important terms synonymous to movement is Collective action that may be of two kinds

1. Institutionalised collective action
2. Non-institutionalised collective action

Shah\(^7\) classifies movements as revolt, rebellion, reform and revolution to bring about changes in the political system. Reform does not challenge political system per se. It attempts to bring about changes in the relations between the parts of the system in order to make it more efficient, responsive and workable. A revolt is a challenge to political authority, aimed at overthrowing the government. A rebellion is an attack on existing authority without any intention of seizing power. In a revolution, a section of society launch an organized struggle to overthrow not only the established government and regime but also the socio economic structure which sustains it and replace the structure by an alternative social order. He further argues that there is another line of argument that asserts that mass movements or protests are redundant in the Indian culture and civilization due to its 'multilinear character' and all 'pervasive hierarchy'. Because of the Brahminical ideology and hierarchical social structure the oppressed classes have become docile, obedient and fatalist. But scholars who point to a number of struggles by the oppressed classes in pre and post Independence India refute such assertions. Some explain these protests as a result of the conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. According to them parliamentary democracy has been transplanted in India, where there is no tradition of voluntary effort. People have developed an ambivalent attitude.

towards authority, they take advantages offered by the political authority but at the same time

do not legitimise it.

Defining what, exactly, social movement is, can be difficult. It is not a political party, nor it is
an interest group, which are stable political entities that have regular access to political power
and political elites; nor it is a mass fad or trend, which are unorganised and without goals.
Instead they are somewhere in between (Freeman and Johnson, 1999). So characteristics of
social movements are that they are “involved in a conflictual relations with clearly identified
opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; and they share a distinct collective
identity” (De La Porta and Diani, 2006). Social movement thus, can be understood as an
organised yet informal social entity engaged in extra-constitutional conflict and is oriented
toward certain goals or objective, which may be specific or narrow or more broadly aimed at
complete change.

Social movements arise when social conditions create dissatisfaction within the existing
arrangement. People join movements for infinite variety of reasons - Idealism, compassion,
political consideration, neurotic frustration and so on. There are mainly three contending
theories which explain the origin of social movements- Relative Deprivation theory, the
Strain theory, and theory of Revitalisation (Rao, 1978).

“Relative Deprivation” is a concept developed by Stauffer (1949) “It holds that one ‘feels’
deprived according to the gap between expectations and realisations. The person who wants
little and has little, feels less deprived than the one who has much but expects still more”. A
point that is coincident by relative deprivation theorist is that a position of relative
depprivation alone will not generate a movement. The structural conditions of relative
derprivation provide necessary conditions. Sufficient conditions are provided by the
perception of a situation and by the estimate of capabilities by the leaders that they can do
something to remedy the situation (Rao, 1978). ‘The Strain Theory’ of social movement has
been propounded by Neil Smelser (1962). This theory considers structural strains as the underlying factor contributing to collective behaviour. Structural strain may occur at different level such as norms, values, mobility etc. Smelser’s analysis of the genesis of social movement is very much within the structural functional framework. He considers strain as something that endangers the relationship among the parts of a system leading to its malfunctioning (Smelser, 1962). It places stress on the feeling of deprivation also. The Relative Deprivation and the Strain Theory- give us an impression that social movement necessarily arise out of negative conditions such as ‘deprivation’ and ‘strain’. Wallace who championed the theory of Cultural Revitalisation assert “that social movement develop out of a deliberate, organised and conscious effort on the part of the members of the society to construct a more satisfying culture for themselves”. This theory suggests that adaptive processes are employed to established equilibrium situation. These movements tend to be double edged sword. On the one side, they express dissatisfaction, dissent and protest against existing conditions, and, on the other, they offer a positive programme of action to remedy the situation (Rao, 1978).

The identity movements a derivation of social movement that came to fore very recently, are of different nature, these movements are mainly collective actions or efforts for demands- the defence of interests and the promotion of rights of certain groups of individuals who feel discriminated against, the search for symbolic recognition by a significant others. This paper will focus on what should be understood by identity, define the characteristics of identity movements, and discusses the impacts of identity movements on Indian states.

Morris-Jones argues, "Even after Independence government is relied upon and at the same time spat upon and abused. The same man who is looking to government one moment may in the next take part in demonstrations involving violence and on a scale that threatens to make
any government impossible." This is the outcome of the constant conflict between traditional values and modern institutions.\(^8\)

According to Rajni Kothari, democracy in India has become a playground for growing corruption, criminalization, repression and intimidation of large masses of the people. The role of the State in 'social transformation' has been undermined. People have started asserting their rights through various struggles: "There is discontent and despair in the air still highly diffuse, fragmented and unorganised. But there is growing awareness of rights, felt politically and expressed politically, and by and large still aimed at the State. Whenever a mechanism of mobilization has become available, this consciousness has found expression often against very odds, against a constellation of interests that are too powerful and complacent to shed (even share) the privileges. At bottom it is consciousness against a paradigm of society that rests on deliberate indifference to the plight of impoverished and destitute who are being driven to the threshold of starvation by the logic of paradigm itself"\(^9\)

Thus, after analysing the above typologies, it is evident that to define a social movement is a difficult and complex task. However, a working definition of the social movement is necessary to examine the Dalit movement. Paul Wilkinson gives the following working concept of 'social movement': "A social movement is a deliberative collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence illegality, revolution or withdrawal into utopian community. Social movements are thus clearly different from historical movements, tendencies or trends. It is important to note, however, that such tendencies and trends, and the influence of the unconscious and irrational factors in human behaviour, may be of crucial importance in illuminating the problems of interpreting of explaining social movements. A social movement must evince a minimal degree and

---


organization though this may range from a loose, informal or partial level of organization to
the highly institutionalised and bureaucratised movements and the corporate group."  

There is some consensus among the scholars regarding element of volition and normative
commitment. For instance, "Heberle conceives of these belief systems, as an expression of
the collective will of the people among whom they are accepted. He is emphatic that it is the
element of volition that makes the beliefs socially effective, it is the conscious volition of
individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social
movements."  

Thus major ingredients of social movement consist of objectives, ideology, programs,
leadership and organization, which are co-ordinated and inter-dependent. We will examine
the Dalit movement with the above working concept of the social movement where efforts
are to seriously examine the important components and their effect on the Dalit movement in
its search for 'new self-image' and new identity-building process.

5.4: Social Mobility among the Darjeeling Balmikis

In the 1970, the Bhangi Conference was held at Naval Ashram in Mokha Bhangi Bustee,
Jodhpur Rajasthan, which was also attended by the Balmikis from Darjeeling. The conference
was of great importance and significance for the Balmikis as it emphasised on the socio-
political mobility of the sweeper community of the country. The Conference provided the
platform for the delegates coming from entire North Indian states such as, Uttar Pradesh,
Haryana, Punjab, Delhi etc., where they can discuss the upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis.
This yearly conference is the chance where the leading members of the Balmiki Caste of the
country meet and make discussions on the contemporary issues for the betterment of the

---

In Indian context, any attempt by a particular caste to raise its status has been closely associated with the process of Sanskritization. Through Sanskritization movement, a section of Untouchables who could enhance their economic condition, either by disserting or continuing their traditional occupations, fought struggle for higher status in the caste hierarchy. The founder of this concept, M.N. Srinivas, defines the concept of Sanskritization as follows: "The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism or teetotalism, and by Sanskritising its rituals and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins and the adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called Sanskritization."  

In this way the lower castes followed Sanskritic practices and cultures. They tried to clarify their claims to higher castes in the social order by inventing suitable mythologies. The Sharars or Nadars of Tamil Nadu out-pasted the limit of Untouchability. The Iravas or Ezhavas of Kerala have also bluned, if not completely spoiled, the line of Untouchability. The Nadar organised movements in the late nineteenth century against the civic disabilities they suffered. They entered the political system by first supporting the Justice Party in the

---


early 1930s and later the Congress party. They have moved from the lower rungs of the ritual hierarchy to a position of status and power. Similarly, the Ezhavas formed their caste organization in 1903, known as SNDA Yogam (Association for the Maintenance of Dharma founded by Sri Narayana). The Association initiated activities for Sanskritizing norms and customs of the Jravas. They initiated a Satyagraha for temple entry in 1920s, as well as bargained with the government for economic opportunities and political positions, thus, improving their status.

It is clear by now that the Dalit movement in pre-Independence period had achieved a respectable status. Though reformative in nature, the Bhakti movement, the Neo-Vadantic and Sanskritization movements have contributed very meaningfully for the proliferation of political consciousness among Dalits and it can be said that these movements laid down firm foundations for the Dalit Liberation movement whose agenda include recognition of human existence, social mobility, political participation, social change and establishment of an egalitarian society.

The Balmikis regarded the Brahmans and non-Brahmans as superior to them in terms of social status, economic and political power. However, the ritual difference does seem to be very great. For there are restrictions on commensally relations and the upper and lower classes (from Nepali community) do not mingle freely with the Balmiki community in the Darjeeling.

5.4.1: Limited Scope of Sanskritization

Caste Hindus tended to treat the Balmikis with an amount of con-dissension because they are treated lowest of the low. Here, again the differences between the two groups were expressed in terms of style of life. In brief, I want to address that Sanskritization as defined above has very limited scope for the Balmikis as an avenue of social mobility. Imitation implies the existence of social elite what can be initiated though the non caste groups are considered to
be socially higher, economically better off and politically more powerful. There higher position in these spheres is not accepted as legitimate by the Balmikis. Sanskritization in the sense of copying customs of other castes has very limited scope for the Balmikis as an avenue of social mobility. Shyamlal in his essay “The Bhangis and religious reform movement in Jodhpur in 19th Century: Naval Dharma” has pointed out that sectarian movements have often acted as important agents of Sanskritization. He treated these cases as of the same kind where ‘low’ caste takes over the style of life of a higher caste.

It was found that the Naval Sect had a strong influence on the thinking of some of the leaders and that some of them at least thought that the teaching of Naval sect should be adopted and advocated for the caste improvement. However, here in one sense the case was important in respect of very different form the process through which one group initiated the style of life of another. The influence of Naval sect was very important and included teaching such as:

1. The Bhangis should give up the bad habits of eating meat, drinking alcohol etc. It is proper to meditate about the naval Prakash and Bhajans and to acquire knowledge.

2. Every Bhangi member should know the Naval’s ideas of religious teachings Maharshi Naval expounded these in his Naval Prakash.\[14\]

The Head Mahant of Naval sect urged the leaders and the caste fellows to follow the teaching of Naval Swami and the leaders also urged to follow up the suggestion very seriously. Though within the caste the majority of the people felt respectful towards those who followed the teachings, yet the majority of the people did not seem anxious to emulate them. Whatever the degree of influence of the Naval sect, it is not difficult here to accept the argument that the sect was regarded as a caste by the outsiders. Sanskritization according to Srinivas, implies that the imitating and the imitated group are different. Here one can found that the

\[14\] Ibid.
leaders who were arguing for taking over the teachings were themselves members of the Naval sect. Thus, it was not that one group was taking over another groups’ customs, but that the same members of the caste who were the other caste member to follow their own model.\footnote{Ibid.}

5.4.2. Mobility through Education

Education is regarded as an important avenue of mobility. Besides being an important avenue of economic mobility, education by itself was considered to be status conferring device. The prestige attached to education was not only because of economic opportunities. However, differences between the style of life of educated and uneducated are very apparent. The educated Balmiki, though small in numbers, generally speak a refined Hindi, Nepali and English even Bengali which is very different from that of the migrated Marwari and Nepalese. Those employed in urban sectors dress in western clothes which are looked upon with considerable respect in comparison with the Balmikis residing in their native places at Rajasthan, Haryana etc. It has been find out that educated Balmikis are more hygiene conscious and culturally refined than the rest of the members of the caste. As such education is a symbol of higher status, but the attitude of the illiterate towards the educated is not one of complete admiration. They feel a certain amount of alienation from educated and this has led to significant grift within the caste.

The Balmikis of Darjeeling doesn’t have much scope in the local economy and are forced to seek opportunities outside in wider economic system especially in unorganised sectors. Hence, practically every leader, educated or illiterate said that the only way to improve economically was to effectively employ education as an avenue of mobility and to enter the salaried and professional classes in large numbers. The trend, however seems recent though
there have been some educated, occupationally mobile individuals among the Balmikis, whereas, the bulk of them are illiterate and are still carrying on the traditional occupations. It is not worthy to mention neither the State government nor the Central Government shown any interest in collecting data of the Balmikis. Even the educational institutions and the universities did not bother to take initiative for the collection of data of a marginalised small community which is becoming marginalised more and more. This hunted an individual researcher who himself belongs to this community. Thus, he carried out research all by himself, roaming about here and there for nearly four years though out the hill areas of Darjeeling. The data furnished by the researcher is not a concocted story; it’s an outcome of the tireless journey of a hungry research worker.

Table: 5

Balmiki Literacy in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Standards</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Class 8</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8 Pass</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 10</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D</td>
<td>02 pursuing</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field Data*
The literacy rate among the Balmikis is much alarming. Total population in the three hills sub-divisions of Darjeeling is 4,914 of which 3,563 people never attended any school. In the turst sense of the term the huge majority of the Balmikis were illiterate. Percentage wise 72.5% of the Balmiki population in hills is illiterate. Approximately 13.49% could not cross the bench mark of Class 8. Only 3.5% people passed the Madhyamik examination. 2.74% could not enter the college education. Only 1.2% of the population graduated themselves but could attend the Post-graduation classes. Only 0.36% could earn their masters from universities.

This has been the main reason why the leaders of this community have become so conscious of the opportunities of the wider economic system is that those of them who moved out into

---

Here by illiterate we mean those who cannot sign their names.
urban middle class occupations have realised that scavenging is the main reason of their low position. Hence, it is important and essential to be conscious to improve the socio-economic position by developing the ability to take up new jobs as technicians, engineers, professors, lawyers and administrators. This is the need of the time in this competitive world. Moreover, this is because more scholarships and seats are reserved for the Harijans in schools, colleges, and government jobs. If this community fail to improve their position, time is coming when such facilities and opportunities will cease to exit.

Education is considered to be the key to mobility in this field. It is pointed out in this context that Balmiki should get their children educated in larger numbers. Most of the respondents expressed that they are the poorest lot and most backward in economic and educational field and therefore lower in social hierarchy than the other scheduled castes, in getting jobs in the professions and the services they have to face competition from the other scheduled castes rather than caste Hindus. So the sentiment of antagonism was expressed against the advanced scheduled caste communities.

The Balmikis tend to identify the Nepali Scheduled Caste, such as Kami, Damai advanced caste in the hills. The Balmiki as Safai Karamcharis, speak of themselves along with other caste as the poorest among the poor, and most backward people in Hills population.

5.4.3: Move towards Political Power

The political representatives or the leaders from Balmiki community are very anxious to use the political power as an avenue of mobility. The community has its affiliations with Congress party in the early 1980s during the Indira Gandhi regime. During my field visit one of the respondents\textsuperscript{17} showed me photographs of his father with Indira Gandhi sharing the

\textsuperscript{17} Name not revealed on the request of respondent.
same dais in a public meeting in Darjeeling. Though, less in numbers the Balmikis were interested in state and national politics.

Contemporary political structure can serve an important avenue of mobility. Though among the Balmikis we can find awareness of this, they argue that they are a numerical minority caste in the Darjeeling region. It is rare to find a whole caste group identifying itself with one particular party consistently. Yet, majority of the Balmikis show their allegiance to the main stream political parties in Darjeeling. By the term main stream political party we off course to like to refer both national levels, state level, as well as regional or local level political party. Which have their support base throughout the hill areas of Darjeeling? As a community Balmikis usually do not like go against the current. Thus, with the change over in the political scenario of Darjeeling, they also used to change their political affiliations. The Balmikis believed in short term gains, they never thought about far reaching future profits. As a caste community they are the worst suffers. Hence, fear psychosis often chased the Balmikis to take a political refuge, thus they often choose to go under the safest umbrella at hand. Taking into considerations about their hopes and aspirations, dreams and desires, they remained with the majority Nepali community in political spheres. Knowing fully well about the exploitation both in the socio-economic and political sphere they could hardly find any alternative but to stay at Darjeeling, because leaving Darjeeling for them could be a suicidal as a communities Nepalese were very brave expansionist and allegiant to the Indian State. But rivalry between the right and the left, the national and the regional, made some Nepalese hostile towards the ‘others’. The Balmikis no doubt belongs to the ‘others’. Inspite of their best wishes and support towards the causes of the Nepalese they started losing their ground in Darjeeling Hills.
5.5: Gorkhaland Movement and the Balmikis

Right from the early 20th century encouraged the emergence of a distinct identity among the people of the hills. Nepali language and culture dictated the overarching features of the population which originally came from Nepal, but was composed of many different groups. However, the demand for a separate entity, distinct from Bengali speaking counterpart was raised mainly in 1917, when Hillmen’s Association submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Bengal, demanding a separate administrative unit. In subsequent years, the Association continued its demand and presented memoranda to the British Government in 1930 and 1941. A petition was placed by them to Sir John Anderson, the than Governor of Bengal, in 1934, for special safeguard for hill people and preferential treatment. The alternative was total segregation of the district, and creation of an autonomous administrative unit.

The course of segregation took a new turn with the formation of All India Gorkha League on May 1943. For the first time a political organisation, exclusively for the hills populace under the banner of ‘Gorkha’ was formed. The demand for a separate administrative unit grew stronger after independence in 1947. Autonomy was demanded in a public meeting in Darjeeling in August, 1947. The District Committee of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in memoranda to the States Constituent Assembly requested the constitution of ‘Gorkhastan’ comprising Nepali speaking areas. In 1952, Gorkha League in a memorandum to the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru offered two alternative proposals: Inclusion of Darjeeling and Doars in Assam, or creation of a separate province comprising Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and the States of Sikkim and Coochbehar. 1950s and 1960s was characterized by the demand of the recognition of Nepali language as an official language under Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution as well as for the autonomy status of Darjeeling. In 1961, West Bengal Government passed an Act, accepting Nepali as an official language in the three
hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling, that is, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. Conversely, Nepali language did not get recognition under the Eight Schedule of the constitution. Such attitude of the Indian government towards Nepali language was followed by the formation of All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti in 1972. The same year is followed by the demand of an ‘Autonomous State’ after the creation of new states of Assam.

The Gorkhaland movement received impetus when the Pranta Parishad raised the demand for a separate state. In September 1980, in a memorandum to the Prime Minister, the Pranta Parishad first demanded a separate state and claimed the recognition of Nepali language under the Eight Schedule of the constitution. However, the demand was more systematically articulated by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), under the leadership of Subash Ghisinh after 1985. The struggle reached its peak in 1986-88. The mass movement finally yielded the constitution of ‘Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council’ (DGHC) in 1988, which intended to ensure genuine territorial autonomy by giving the community of three hills sub-division of Darjeeling the chance to control its social, economic, cultural and educational development. However, it was alleged that DGHC under the leadership of GNLF, became more and more inefficient and corrupt. As a result it is taken as the failure of DGHC to bring about what the people of Darjeeling hills wanted. The movement yet, continued under GNLF demanding a separate state of ‘Gorkhaland’. Meanwhile, the demand of separate statehood was dropped by the GNLF leadership and submitted a proposal for recognition of Darjeeling region as Sixth Schedule area. Such attitude of the GNLF leadership was met with large scale protest by the people of Darjeeling. As a result the fraction within the party leadership occurred, which led the seeds for future majority party Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM) in 2007 under the leadership of Bimal Gurung.

Bimal Gurung rejected the proposal of Sixth Schedule forwarded by the GNLF leadership. The movement since then have been able to draw the support of not only the Nepali speaking
people of Darjeeling district but is been able to ally with non Nepali speaking population of the region as well as the Adivasi of eastern part of the district and the people of Dooars. The movement for separate state of Gorkhaland is still a hot topic in the state of West Bengal though it has lost its momentum with the signing of Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) between GJMM leadership on the one side and Centre and State Government on the other and after the GTA election in Darjeeling hills area, the successive demands of the Gorkhaland movement focused chiefly on the following issues:

1. **Racial and cultural differences between Bengalis and Gorkhali as Justification for Separate Administrative Unit or State**

2. **The fear of losing linguistic and cultural identity of Gorkhas as a result of domination of advanced Bengalis.**

3. **Historical differences between Bengal and Darjeeling.**

4. **Economic Development of the region**

5. **Exploitation and marginalization of Gorkhas by the majority Bengalis.**

After looking into the history of the demands of the people of Darjeeling hills and the States reaction to the movement, so far as initial phase of the movement is concerned, it can be said that the voices of the people of Darjeeling hills were completely submerged, neither the demand of the recognition of Nepali language nor the claim of autonomy was considered by the government. The issue of Darjeeling hills was simply over passed during state reorganization. The Gorkhaland movement under GNLF, what we call a second phase of the movement, here to some extent the voices were being heard in the form of DGHC. For some Gorkhaland movement observed it is considered as a victory of the movement or a step towards a goal of separate statehood. On the one hand, it can be seen on the part of the State Government as an experiment before forming a separate state to observe whether the people of Darjeeling hills are really in a position to run the State or not. On the contrary, it can also
be seen as strategy of the governments to destabilise the mass movement by giving the people alternative to their demand of separate state, and to note the government was successful in implementing their policies into action.

Considering the third phase of the movement what the GJMM leadership calls ‘Antim Ladai’ (Nepali word meaning ‘final battle’), the party leadership has been able to draw the attention of the government as a result of the mass support of Darjeeling hills as well as from the adjoining areas of Terai and Doars. Withstanding the rising strains and tensions arising out of the movement launched by GJMM the Centre and the State Government reacted and responded with an idea of formation of the constitution of Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA), in 2011. Moreover, the original voice for the demand of separate state is yet to get heard and achieved.

In the mid 80s of the previous century, the Gorkhaland movement came into existence, which brought about a total chaos in the peace loving people of Darjeeling irrespective of caste, creed, religion and sex etc. Though the Nepalese had the strangle hold in the movement yet, the marginalized smaller communities including the Balmikis came forward with a strong support to the Gorkhaland movement which worked as a two way traffic. Although the Balmikis extended their support to the movement at the outset but they started losing their ground because of the fact that the police force tried to disassociate the Balmikis from the movement. The police often tapped their backs used to bring them as informers, a kind of mutual hatred developed between the agitating Nepalese and the others like Gorkhey Marwaris, Gorkhey Balmikis etc. Once who were the ‘Dajus’ (loving elder brothers) at once became ‘Bhaiya’ (elder brother from alien state or community). The so called tapping and support of the police to the Balmikis created hatred in the mind set of the agitators in the one hand and police atrocities on the Balmikis overtly or covertly injected fear psychosis on them. Thus, they slowly became the men of nowhere. They were isolated both from the
Nepalese and the police. Neither they could leave Darjeeling nor could they live in Darjeeling. Their overall conditions became standstill in Hill politics.

During this whole period of First Wave of Gorkhaland movement the role of the Balmikis slowly but steadily became insignificant. This is because of the fact some of the Balmikis in order to survive from being sandwiched by the police and the Nepalese, thought better to re-migrate to their native places. Some were killed in the encounters, some lost their jobs, many drops out took place from the schools and colleges; some lost their properties due to arson, robbery and theft. Thus, the Balmikis, a marginalised community became even more marginalised in terms of population and property in the District of Darjeeling.

A mentioned must be made here that the Balmikis started to suffer from identity crises. As they were treated in Darjeeling as outsiders, although, they were the permanent residents in Darjeeling for more than four generations. On the contrary those who re-migrated to their native places also faced the same challenges. As they were treated as the outsiders or guests who came for a while would enjoy some time and would return back to Darjeeling after peace being re-established there. The masses of Darjeeling now started to think that the people from outside have no affinity towards the mother soil and people of Darjeeling. They have only come here to earn money and send to their native places. They have no contribution to Darjeeling as they hardly invest money there, other than to purchase their livelihoods. Neither the native communities of the Balmikis nor the Nepalese majority in Darjeeling could have sympathy and time to understand the position of Balmikis, that, they were not business magnets neither they were placed in lucrative high or dignify governments jobs. The Balmikis however, were living in peace in Darjeeling because nobody treated them as untouchables in Darjeeling. As soon as they tried to re-settle themselves in their native places they had to face the crude caste hatred with which they were not accustomed to.
It is interesting to note that the identity crisis was not an issue only for the Balmikis, even the majority of the Darjeeling people have been suffering from identity crisis from a purely different point of vision. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that, the agitating Nepalese in order to establish their own identity to a new birth. First, they tried to segregate themselves from the Nepalese of Nepal in the one hand and treated as first class citizens in India rather than as foreigners. They tried to show that their language, tradition, culture, dress, food habit etc. are different from the Nepalese of Nepal. Moreover, from the geopolitical perspective also they should be treated separately. They are very much Indian, they speak in the same tone as the most of Indian people speak. They speak in the same voice as Indians as a nation should speak. They are patriots in every respect that they despite being deprive of facilities as an Indian citizen must enjoy. Yet, they never opt for any secessionist movement; neither had they tried to create a separate state fully free from the Indian Federation. Rather, they are interested to stay within the political framework of Indian Federation. They are ready to abide by the law of the land in toto led down in the Constitution of India. Their only aim was to receive the status of Indian citizen as enjoy the same respect the other main land Indians do enjoy. Of course, sometimes this movement crossed the limit of constitutionalism or legal basis but that too, to a very limited extent. The reason why the Balmikis came up with the strong support to this movement at the initial stage. The Indian Nepalese refrained from calling themselves as Nepali. Rather, they used to call themselves as Gorkhali. They tried to preach that Gorkhali Language, Gorkhali Tradition, Gorkhali culture, are totally not similar from the Nepalese of Nepali. Thus, they tried to earn a new identity of their own to show they are not enemy, aliened or foreigner, or friendly neighbourhood. But the domicile of a part of India is deprived of natural facilities of the region. Moreover, this Gorkhali people are over burdened by the influx of refugees coming from Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Bangladesh and many states of India as well. Identity crisis of the two communities of the Gorkhali and the
Balmikis somehow locked them together but later developed a hot and cold relationship between them.

Political parties, to be more precise the ruling parties did not miss much to utilise these crisis to meet their long cherished desires to win the election which takes place periodically in a democracy. But democracy should be delimited within election, party, majoritarianism etc. To have flavour of democracy one must aim at to an all round development of each and every community at the grassroots. As the Britishers used, Tibet, Nepal, as buffers, the New Delhi Government, showed hardly any difference in this attitude as well. The State Government of West Bengal that is, the Left Front Government on the other hand often alleged about the state motherly attitude of the Centre in regard to West Bengal. But they forget about the every nook and corner of West Bengal, far from Kolkata, the Gangetic Plain especially the Jungle Mahal of Chhota Nagpur Plateau or for that matter the bordering area of Sundarban or the Hilly area of Darjeeling, about the steps they themselves take.

The First Wave of Gorkhaland movement was concluded with an aspiration of fulfilling the demands of having a separate identity of Darjeeling with the State of West Bengal in India. Other communities who supported this movement also had the same vision that in near future the short term gains will be fulfilled. The formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) under the leadership of Mr. Subhash Ghishing, the uncrowned king of Darjeeling Hills created a new zeal in the mind frame of the masses of the hills. From the Government point of view it was an ointment to the wound to suppress. The establishment of DGHC couldn’t be a permanent solution of the Gorkhaland movement. It was just a temporary arrangement for both the State Government and the Gorkhas. Within a short span of time rebellion broke out in Darjeeling for further demands. They were not satisfied with the semi-autonomous status of the Darjeeling Hill Council. The inability of Mr. Subhash Ghishing, in controlling the rebel forces with the GNLF, the mistrust and the misconduct on the part of
second grade leaders of the GNLF, the mutual misbehave amongst different communities residing in Darjeeling, the antagonism between the centre and the state in relation to Darjeeling the indulgence from some national parties in the one hand and the violent opposition from the ruling parties within the state added fuel to the fire. Thus, for darjeeling people as a whole this was the salt to injuries, when Mr. Bimal Gurung, once the right hand of their unchallenged leader Mr. Subhash Ghishing, to accomplish his personal gains, bluntly blamed Mr. Ghishing of misusing the power along with monetary corruption, paved the way for the second phase of movement.

In 2006, March just seven months before the birth of GJMM, an incident took place, in Darjeeling Municipality, which naked the true face of GNLF. There was a long standing demand of the Casual workers mostly scavengers working in the Darjeeling Municipality, to make them permanent. The State Government issued an order in this respect, for making them permanent. But due to the lack of education and not been organised three high dignitaries of the GNLF including Mr. Pranay Rai (MLA), Mr. Madan Munshi (Badababu/Supervisor) and Aamir Munshi (Badababu/Supervisor), took bribes of huge amount from the aspirants who names have been already been published in the government notification for making them permanent.¹⁸ One journalist Deep Bantawa, has published a full paper on this issue which has been cited here.

Table: 6

Bribe paid by Safai Karamcharis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of Representative</th>
<th>Bribes Paid (Amount)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Shri Ashok Bhadur Tamang</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Shri Arun Pardhan</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Smt. Sashi Harijan</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Smt. Sushila Harijan</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Smt. Ramawati</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Shri Puran Balmiki</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Shri Janak Lama</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Smt. Udmit Lepcha</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Shri Suresh Harijan</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Shri shyam Tamang</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Smt. Radhika Chettri</td>
<td>Rs. 30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Shri Bimal Basnet</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Shri Ajay Tamang</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Smt. Khamoshi</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Shri RajKumar Thakur</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Shri Anil Chettri</td>
<td>Rs. 20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Smt. Sumitra Balmiki</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Smt. Narayani</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Shri Milan Sharki</td>
<td>Rs. 20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Smt. Chameli Harijan</td>
<td>Rs. 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Shri Passang Tamang</td>
<td>Rs. 15,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Gorkha Patrika.*

This paper has opened the curtain that how the poorest of the poor including the Balmikis became the victims of corruption. The government officials of such higher position could exploit people like anything.
A new phase of the Gorkha movement ushered in since 2007. Some decadents of GNLF came up with a new organisation of the Gorkhas in the form of GJMM, under the leadership of Bimal Gurung. The main purpose behind this movement was to establish a separate state within the Indian Federal structure. They were not at all satisfied with functioning of the Darjeeling Hill Council. With the changes in the political scenario in West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee assumed power defeating the CPI (M) Left Front Government after three and a half decades of Communist Rule. Showing more liberal approach towards the Gorkha problem in Darjeeling Mamata’s endeavour was to mitigate the displeasure and discomfort of the Hill communities. This resulted in the formation of GTA (Gorkhaland Territorial Administration). GTA was endowed with more political and economic power in compared to DGHC. The identity crises, however, of different communities in Darjeeling took a new turn. Unlike the GNLF, Bimal Gurung and men initiated the movement keeping all communities and sub-communities of Darjeeling in view to grab the power from the Bengalis.

Thus, the immediate enemy for Bimal Gurung and his company is seen to be the Government of West Bengal. But Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal had a long history of struggle behind her to uproot the Left Government came in between them, with newer solutions. The formation of GTA is one such step. Moreover, she formed Development Boards of different Hill communities one after another, in order to weaken the strength of the GJMM. At the advent of such Boards, the identity crises of different communities came under sharp challenge. Balmikis as a community is not free from such crises. With the Clarian call of Mr. Gurung all out struggle against the Bengal Government every community leaving in Darjeeling hills got together and talked in same tone. The Balmikis were an exception in this perspective. But as soon as different hill communities got some sort of identity of their own the Balmikis remained in the dark. As none talked about them, there was hardly any leadership of their own to convince Mamata for creating such a Development
Board for them. Both Gurung and Mamata had their agenda in Darjeeling most of which was hidden behind the bamboo curtain. Gurung’s aim was to dislodge the GNLF and grab the predominance over Darjeeling. On the other hand Mamata to disperse the unity and integrity of the Hill people under the aegis of the hegemonic rule of the GTA and its leader Bimal Gurung. A special mention must be made here that the identity crisis of the Balmikis fail further deep in to gorge behind because of the fact that they became ‘Gorkhey Balmikis’ to the Gurung and company in one hand and insignificant group of people to Mamata and her men on the other. CPI (M) was losing its strength throughout Bengal and in Darjeeling too, it at once became a meagre force. Similarly, at the beginning of the movement the whole gamut of the Gorkhalis supported Bimal Gurung and his men which resulted in the rapid decaying of the strength of the GNLF. Mamata’s Trinmool Congress took this opportunity of political doldrums went from strength to strength. On the contrary the GJMM backing the wrong horse by supporting BJP could make them isolated from the Communists and the other liberal forces. BJP as the most viable political actor entered into the scene having picked up one Lok Sabha seat for two successive terms but without any real damage to the ruling party of Bengal. Bimal Gurung likewise, could gain hardly anything but to give away one parliamentary seat to the BJP. Under such circumstances, the fate of the Balmikis suffered a lot as their identity has lost the sight of all political actors including the BJP, Trinmool Congress and GJMM.

During the second phase of the Gorkha movement a series of upheavals took place under the umbrella of GJMM. The first of this kind was the ‘Bhash Bhusha Andolan’ (Dress code Movement), the main objective behind this movement was to keep the traditional dresses of each and every community intact. Thus, through this cultural movement a multicultural atmosphere was created in the Hills, which could combine different communities of Darjeeling together with separate cultural identities.
‘Bhash Bhusha Andolan’ had its own limitations as the demand for the traditional clothes of each community raised so high that the supply was not adequate, sometimes it got down even to zero and the price hike took a heave all round. Balmikis in particular faced much more trouble in importing such dresses from Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Moreover, smaller sects of different communities felt shy to come out with the uncomfortable dresses which they did not wear for long. Thus, this movement lost its credibility within a short period of time.

Another fairly important movement during this phase was a hunger strike/Bhook Hartal. People from all works of life took active part in this movement at the beginning. The Balmikis extended their heartfelt support to it with the staunch belief for upholding their causes and consequences. But this sort of movement could not last long for its own limitations. Many stakeholders of this movement immediately failed ill. They had to rush to the hospitals, without proper medication they has to return back home. As the movement being initiated at random in a sporadic basis, it failed to provide any impetus to the higher cause of the establishment of the separate statehood.

The GJMM gave a call for a unique movement entitled ‘Ghar Bhitrai Andolan’ or ‘stay within house’. Due to this movement people at large have to confine themselves with the boundaries of four walls. Offices were not attended by the employees, schools and colleges remained empty, teagardens were closed, factories were shut down, the shopkeepers could not open their shutters, streets and markets remained manless, drains and streets were covered by garbage, bad smell rented the air of Darjeeling as a whole, travellers and tourists found no cause to visit. In a word, the normal life of the people of Hills, had been shattered, the overall environment for human residence was going from worse to worse. The entire situation of the Balmikis under these circumstances went further deteriorated. The salaries of the casual workers and scavengers were cut-off; they had no money to earn their livelihoods. Very few
of the Balmikis were engaged in the government jobs and attended the day to day office were however, paid off but due to the closing of banks and ATM counters even ample money was not available.

Besides these movements apart the rallies and processions, picketing, setting of fire etc. became a daily routine for the agitators. The peace wanting people of Darjeeling now became ready to give up these movements forever, as they failed to receive any satisfactory outcome from these struggles.

Changing of political parties in power, transformation of leadership gave birth to the suspicion to the people of Darjeeling. They at once started to show back towards these movements. They found no fruit to pluck from these movements. The marginalised Balmikis as a consequence, became more and more marginalised in due course.

However, the long pending problems of the Gorkhas or Gorkhaland unresolved till date. As a result of which the future of the Balmikis are also at stake. Although the pace of the Balmiki consciousness is slow but here, it can be observed that there has been a silent revolution,\textsuperscript{19} in the Darjeeling hills by this dalit community which has been continuously trying to uplift themselves in one or the other ways.