

Chapter IV

Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling Hills

4.1 Introduction

Discussions in the previous chapter about women's participation in various types of social movements in the hill region of Darjeeling district has provided a shred of historical evidence to argue that the contemporary proliferation of women's participation in Darjeeling Hills is not a new phenomenon rather it reflects a long heritage of women's struggle in the Hills. However, one of the important dimension which is visible in the Gorkhaland movement since 1986 is the re-emergence of women and children along the line of ethnic identity that perhaps cut across caste, class, age, location etc. Their organized mobilization and mass participation in the Gorkhaland movement is the first of its kind in the history of women's struggle in Darjeeling Hills. They were the major building forces of the movement and always visible as leaders, participants, opponents and supporters of the movement.

It has been witnessed that organization of any sort of movement is largely based on gender as an organizational principle of a particular society both for men and women. That means gender as an organizational principle of society has some influence on the movement organization and the participation of women. The gender division of 'political labour' (Sinha Roy: 2011) in any movement is largely based on this principle. The nature, type and role of the participants are likely to be reproduced in the movement situation.

Although the organization of a movement may be based on gender as a social organization of society, there are women participants who have often transformed the conventional gender role in the movement. Such a transforming role of women in the movement is not new in the history of social movements. The women participants are not always the victimhood agent in the movement, but they possess a strong agency of their own. Their public political participation is sometimes deeply motivated by the role of caring and protecting mother, motherhood and maternal identities of the private domain. However, both in the movement and outside the movement situation they have been playing such roles that transform their conventional gender roles and identities.

The present chapter is intended to look into these aspects of women's participants in the identity movement in Darjeeling Hills with the help of narrative methodology and ethnographic data. The homeland movement of the 1980s touched upon every section of Gorkha society including women and children of Darjeeling Hills, Dooars and Terai. The GNLFF as well as GJMM gave proper space to women which led to the formation of the Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO) in 1986 and Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GJMNM) in 2007 as the 'subsidiary unit for women'. Perhaps, women have already been there in public and private domain of the Gorkhaland movement but the formation of a women's wing brought them under one umbrella. Thus, the present chapter deals with the participation of women in both the phases of Gorkhaland movement i.e. during 1980s and post 2007.

4.2 Ethnic Movement and the Emergence of Women in Darjeeling Hills

The visibility of women in different spheres of socio-economic and political domain of the hill society is obvious historically. In the field study in various places of Darjeeling Hills, it has been observed that the hill women including Bhutias and Lepchas were deeply involved in the ethnic movement under GNLFF during the 1980s. Since the beginning of the ethnic upsurge women were directly or indirectly involved and also affected by the movement. Interaction with different sections of both men and women revealed that they have been a part and parcel of the movement from the very beginning. As a member of the civil society women had a greater role to play during the movement and they were successful in their objectives. It seems that when the movement turned violent women's wing was formed and patronized more as a 'strategic essentialism' (Pande 2017) by the movement leaders in particular and women themselves in general.

It has been found that different categories of women have participated in the Gorkhaland movement. They belong to the different sections of society. The larger part of them could be termed as a member of civil society; may or may not be affiliated with any political party. Secondly, there have been participants who are individual activists, writers, poets, etc. They may or may not be the member of a political party but mostly believers of Marxist ideology. Thirdly, the women wing of the respective political party demanding statehood. These stakeholders are mainly from the GNLFF and GJMM but after the

formation of CPRM, they are also supporting the statehood movement in their own perspectives. The nature and extent of their participation may vary from one another.

The participation of women in the movement is of different types. Their participation in the mobilization of movement includes hunger strikes, rallies, protest marches, gherao etc. Such participation could be seen by all because these activities take place in public places. However, in the movement situation, a lot of preparation is needed for organizing a movement. There are many activities of the movement organization which is away from the eyes of general public like informing about the upcoming meetings, cooking food, taking minutes and preparing the future plan of action. Many of the women activists and family members of the male participants have been involved in such activities which include the family dimension of a movement.

During field work it was noticed that there was heterogeneity of participants involved in the movement ideologically. One can find women activists who are involved in the movement consciously for the dream that they cherished because many considered it as a 'metaphysical mother' which fulfilled the dream that they cherished. On the other hand, there are participants who could be categorized as 'interest groups' having vested interests in the success of the movement. However, there are many who became a part of the movement because of the social circumstances not by their own choice. For example, women who have been living in such situation where a movement is an ongoing phenomenon for long, and she may have to go through a tyrannical situation. Sometimes their husband or son or male members of the family got arrested or died for the cause of movement.

Many of the participants had to run away or take asylum for a longer period of time. In such a situation women had to be involved in the movement or at least have to bear the pain of the aftermath. Such a situation brings the transforming gender roles for the women participants. These sort of incidents are not new in the conflict prone zones of south Asia. In one of the seminal works, Rita Manchanda (2001) highlighted the role of women in peace politics in South Asia as 'when there are no men there are women'. Though women are widely considered as the symbol of peace, indirectly or directly they have to be a part of the movement because sometimes it affects their family. They became the victimhood

agent in the movement but at the same time, strong agencies exist among them. Perhaps, in most of the studies on social movements, their agencies have not been taken into consideration.

If we look at the slogan of the Gorkhaland movement it is quite interesting from the sociological perspective, in order to know the genesis and nature of women's participation. The slogans and songs of the movement are very important in order to understand the philosophy and ideology of the movement itself. The two most important in the present context has been discussed and explained below. Since there is no literature available, it is helpful to understand the present context of the chapter.

“Maiti tima nadarou cheli timro saath cha” [Don't worry brother, sister is with you]

“Agi, agi hida yuba, cheli timro saath cha” [move ahead youth, sister is with you]

The first quoted line above is one of the famous slogans used by the women's front of GNLF during the movement mobilization for the separate statehood movement in the name of Gorkhaland during the 1980s. The slogan itself reflects some kind of emotional support to the maiti (brothers) by their cheli (sisters) which is based on the Gorkha fictive kin and kith relationship. The participation of men had been treated as the participation of fictive brothers and women as fictive sisters. The genesis of the slogans were the social circumstances where the Paramilitary and Police started arresting the male participants and put them behind the bars. In such circumstances, the women participants came out with the moral and emotional support for them. When they were detained by the police and were away from their homes and family members, the women folk came in support stating 'don't worry we will take care of the household'.

The second quoted slogan (line) came into the movement mobilization process almost after the two decades of the first phase of the Gorkhaland movement. It has been a famous slogan of the Nari Morcha, women's front of the GJMM in 2007 used during the movement mobilization. It is based on the similar fictive Gorkha kin and kith relationship in support of the youth participants. It has been witnessed from such slogans that the women formed the key part in the movement. However, it is a contentious matter as to how many of these women participants have their own voices to raise. It is also the fact that the

Gorkhaland movement is not a movement for ‘gender equality’ as responded by some of the respondents. Many believed that gender equality will come after achieving Gorkhaland.

The above lines also reflect their care for the male participants based on the maternal identity of the caring mother and sister of the private domain. Women participants were determined and true to their cause as stated by Ex. GLO, Deputy Chief during the 1980s and a vocal supporter of the Gorkhaland movement at present. He stated that:

“Yadi Gorkhaland andolanma nariharu nahunu ho vanay yati lamo andolan hunay thiyana. Dherai manchay haru marnay thiya. Uniharauko den atulaniya cha [If there would not have been the women participants in Gorkhaland movement it would not have lasted for long. Many people would have died. Their role in the movement is incomparable]”

Another very interesting slogan of the movement of sociological importance in the present phase as:

“Agi agi hida cheli, Mahakal timro saath cha”, [move ahead women, Mahakal is with you]

The above quoted line, the quite famous slogan of the Gorkhaland movement of the second phase which was led by GJMM of 2007 onwards. It is very clear from the lines that the Gorkha women were receiving support from the male activists of the movement. It says that move on cheli (sister) *Mahakal* is with you. *Mahakal Dham* is the most famous temple of Darjeeling situated on observatory Hills, just above the mall road. It is clear that women activists have been considered as spiritual and that God is with them.

The above slogan of the youth wing of Morcha seems to be strategic and systematic creation of the membership of a specific interest group i.e., women. In most of the movements throughout the world, women have been playing the key strategic role in the mobilization. The women participants have been treated as the sacred here as it is said that *Mahakal* (Mahadev) is with them. During the GJMM led movement after 2007 women have been used in key strategic positions in the movement mobilization and organization. If we see the resurrected movement after 2007 it has been witnessed that the nature of the

movement itself has changed from the 1980s. It is not as violent as the earlier one although violence occurs frequently. In these movements, women have been used in a more strategic position where police cannot easily catch the male participants. It is very interesting to note that women participants themselves are aware of their strategic position as witnessed in one of the protest rally organized by the GJMM in 2013:

On that day a rally was supposed to be organized by the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha in a small town of Kalimpong in support of the Gorkhaland movement. Hundreds of supporters had gathered from the periphery of the town. People were preparing for the rallies to be organized in front of the party office. In a cozy space behind the party office, a group of women was cooking *khichadi* for the participants. Many of them had brought bundle of wood from their villages for cooking food for the participants. The youth wing of Morcha, on the other hand, seemed busy in putting flags and festoon in order to be used for the procession. One of the influential members of Nari Morcha was motivating the women participants regarding their strategic position in the movement. They were discussing the importance of their presence in front of rallies, hartals or other forms of mobilization. To the question regarding their presence in front of the processions, she replied:

“.... Hami amaharu hou... hamiharu janu parcha... nava police lay atyachar garnu sakcha...” [We are the mothers... We have to be there.... Otherwise police may torture them].

Many of the respondents take their strategic position in the movement as *kartabya* (moral duty) and all of them are aware that police will not arrest them easily. Many of the respondents consider women as *shantiko pratik* (symbol of peace). For them their presence reduces the possibility of violence in the movement mobilization.

4.3 Gorkha National Liberation Front and the Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement During 1980s

4.3.1 Formation of Gorkha National Women's Organization

Women as a member of the civil society had been an integral part of every movement emerging in the region. Likewise in the Gorkhaland movement of the 1980s also women have been the forerunner of the movement. However, the GNLF and its supremo realized the women's power and gave an organizational shape by forming a Women's Front i.e., the Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO). Initially on 30th August 1985 at 2 P.M in Kurseong Muntipit ground, a meeting was convened by GNLF in the house of Yang Dolma. On the same day a tentative committee of women's wing was formed with Hema Lama (kurseong) as president, Mira (Darjeeling) as vice-president, Bharti (Mirik) as general secretary, Tilomtama Rana (Kurseong) as General Secretary, Smt. Kuwang Pradhan, secretary, Smt. Bhangali Tamang, treasurer along with the ten other women as members (Gorkha: 2018).

- I. The Gorkha National Women's Organization was formed on that day and all the members present promised to give their whole hearted support to the Gorkhaland movement.
- II. They also promised to convey the message to all the women about the problems of the Gorkha women.

4.3.2 Organizational Role of Gorkha National Women's Organization

On 2nd November 1986 new committee was formed which provided a strong organizational base and structural shape to the movement mobilization. The top level leaders of GNWO were selected democratically from Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, Mirik, Kalimpong and Dooars. The formation of GNWO brought all the women activists under one umbrella. They took active participation and became part of every incident of protest and action in the form of picketing, rallies, social boycott of the opposition party members. Following are the different units and dignitaries of the GNWO recorded by Nagendra

Gorkha in his upcoming unpublished book on 'Role of Women in Gorkhaland Movement During the 1980s':

Vice Presidents

I. Smt. Banda Rai (Dooars) II. Jungu Lama (Mirik) III. Gopi Gurung (Darjeeling) IV. Indira Thapa (Kalimpong) V. Nim Cheaki (Pradhan) Sherpa

Presidents

I. Tilotoma Rana (Kurseong) for Darjeeling district II. Vima Mukhia (Kalimpong) for Kurseong III. Indrakala Pradhan (Darjeeling) for Kalimpong IV. Bishnumati Sharma (Darjeeling) for Dooars

Finance Chiefs

I. Bhima Rai (Kurseong) II. Ratna Rai (Kurseong) III. Kwang Pradha (Kurseong)

Members

I. Devika Rai (Kurseong) II. Puspa Sharma (Kurseong) III. Usha Pradhan (Darjeeling) IV. Shanti Chettri (Tindharia) V. Kumar Chhetri (Kurseong) VI. Bimala Subba (Dooars) VII. Lilawai Pariyar (Tista Velly) VIII. Anuradha Tamang (Gail Bhanzyang) X. Nim Chaki Pradhan (Kurseong) (Gorkha 2018)

Role of the Gorkha National Women's Organization was very prominent in course of the entire movement of the 1980s (Chakraborty 2005:189). A large number of women emerged out of their private domain in order to participate in the Gorkhaland movement under the aegis of Mr. Subash Ghising in an organizational way. The entire region witnessed a violent turn for the separate statehood in the name of Gorkhaland and according to a government record there was a loss of 283 lives and 615 people were seriously injured (Dasgupta 1999:65) but the oral history claims the death of more than 1200 persons in Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars (Gorkha: 1992). Among them a sizeable number of women and children also lost their lives fighting against the State led Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other

paramilitary forces. The members of GNWO were very active throughout the Hills and the plains as stated by Mr. Subba. His wife was an active member of GNWO and GWO. He stated that:

“The GNWO played the most important role among the frontal wings of GNLFF. Their roles were of different types. Mostly the women were involved in nursing, carrying food and message to the GLO and secretly and silently finding out the probable CRPF raids. In general, they had the responsibility to protect the whole family and Gaon (village) in general. The most important among all was their protest against the arrest of activists who were taken to the Bhanu Bhawan because the family members of the arrested persons were not allowed to visit them. Relief camps were also organized by them for the displaced persons and families”.

4.3.3 Role of the Gorkha Welfare Organization

The Gorkha Welfare Organization was formed by the GNLFF. During the GNLFF led movement; activists were treated as anti national and they had to run here and there due to CRPF raids. The major responsibilities rested on the shoulders of women. Major activities of GWO were to protect its frontal organization, mother's organizations and its branches and sub-branches. Their main task was to collect donations from urban areas. They used to organize camps for the injured persons because there was inter party rivalry between GNLFF and CPI(M). The injured or those people who had been with the ruling government were taken to Siliguri by their party leaders. Those people who had been displaced because of the movement were given shelter at *Tilak Maidan* (Kanchenjunga stadium) and later on a plot of land at Himali Sahid Nagar, Siliguri. However, those with the GNLFF had to face several problems relating to food and shelter and taking care of those sick people admitted to the hospitals. The members of the welfare organization organized camps for those displaced persons whose houses were burnt down into ashes by the alleged supporters of the ruling government. The women folk used to collect *Musti Dan* from the people in an around so that the food could be served among them. Many people were killed by the police, paramilitary forces and by their own people because of intra party conflict and there was the absence of male members in the villages. Summary of a focused group interview

carried out with 16 members of GNWO and GWO in 2019 (active in 1896-88) has been given below:

“We were very young when *appa* (Ghishing) called us.... and gave us the responsibility of protecting people and to look after the welfare of the injured and displaced people. For us also it was not an easy task. We had organized a camp in Vivekananda School for the injured people, particularly for children and women. CRPF and task force used to visit and often tried to destroy our camps. They often asked about our husbands because they were not present in the village”.

Another old lady Nima Sherpa said that:

“I was running a small business in Bijanbari but my house was destroyed by an unknown person. I had to move to Ging camp with my relatives. Fubtshering camp was also organized by the GWO. In my village, one old *Limbunee Boju* (grandmother) at that time sold her traditional ring to a Marwari trader and donated half of its amount to GWO. I also became a member of GWO. The major hindrance that we were facing was the financial problem and shortage of food grains. We received help from several organizations like Marwari Sahayak Samiti, Hawker’s Association, Merchant’s Association, Driver’s Association, Ration Dealers Association and Hoteliers’ Association”.

The focus group interview with them reveals that the most remarkable contribution of the GWO was the performance of funeral rites of the dead. There had been the transformation of role proper because funeral rite in the hill society of Darjeeling is performed by the male. According to them, many funeral rites were solely performed by the females in many tea gardens and villages in absence of male members. Most important leaders of GWO were Lalita Sangden, Punya Subba, Usha Roka, Gunkeshary Pradhan, Kamat Rai, Saraswati Tamang and others.

4.3.4 Women in the Gorkhaland Volunteer Cell

Gorkhaland Volunteer Cell (GVC) was an armed group formed by the GNLF activists to fight against the CRPF and other paramilitary forces during the 1980s. This group was more popular in Kalimpong, Terai and Dooars. During the field work, Mr. Rai of Kalimpong who as a Deputy Commandant of GVC stated that he was called by Subash Ghishing when he was still in his youth and offered the post of Deputy Commandant in GVC. He along with two men of his village joined the GVC. In the interview with the other two persons, they stated that there were many women in GVC in different villages.

The major task of the women volunteers was to look after the people who got injured during the movement. The people from far of places were admitted to the hospitals and the women volunteers in GVC used to look after them. They used to deliver food for sick persons in the jungles. However, at the same time, there were women who used to work along with men in the field. There were several women particularly in Kalimpong and Dooars who worked at par with men. They learned to prepare locally made guns called *khaduwa* and locally made bomb called, *khaduwa bomb* and *petrol bomb*.

4.3.5 Participation of Women as Informers

Whatever may be the movement the role of women in passive participation like carrying messages or passing information secretly has been praiseworthy. In the context of Gorkhaland movement also they are not exception since 1980s to present. The major roles were played by the members of GNWO, GWO and GJMNM. Such role depends upon the situation. During 1980s, Mrs. Srijana Darnal, member of GNWO used to carry important informations not only regarding raids of the police personnel but also where to meet and what were the future plans of the movement decided by the party president and top level leaders. The transport and communication system during the decade of 1980s was not as developed as today. There was no mobile phone and people at the distant places used to write letters as a medium of communication.

According to her the police used to motivate the arrested persons to help them. In many cases the arrested persons helped them to identify the house of activists. On the other hand since there was the rivalry between the GNLF and CPI(M); the CPI(M) working

under the patronage of the government used to work as the messengers. According to her husband there was a task force formed by the anti movement outfits to suppress them. The task force constituted of police, arrested local activists and supporters of the state government at the local level. The role of women was highlighted by Mr. Rajeed Yonzon as:

“There were many innocent people who were killed due to lack of proper communication. It was impossible to distinguish innocent (if he or she was unknown) or who they are actually. There were many agents of the government. What I realize today is that *Lata sudho ra nirdosh janta kai besi khati vayo* (innocent people suffered the most). They are not as diplomatic as those who are not innocent and cunning. We heard few instances of people who went to Siliguri and other places. They neither reached their destination nor came back home. They are simply missing. Till date no one knows what had happened to them actually. In such situation women were directed to keep close eye on village and to collect information. Men used to stay away from the house due to fear of getting arrested by the police. In the night we developed the warning system if there was a police raid. Women were most active. We used to beat empty oil tin. In some cases we used to throw stones on the roof of the houses. Whenever there were CRPF raids we used to run in the jungles. In the jungles also women were the key informants.”

4.4 State Patriarchy, Intra-group Conflict and Micro Level Role of Women in Peace Resolution

During 1980s the role of women in peace keeping was praiseworthy in the entire course of the two year long agitation in general and 40 days long bandh call (strike) in particular. It has been bitterly remembered by the hill people as '*chayalisko andolane*' (agitation of the 1986). On the other hand women became the victim of rape, murder and inhuman incidents particularly in tea gardens and rural areas. The incidents such as shooting down of Sangita Pradhan to death by CRPF at Mela ground in Kalimpong on 27th July 1987 in a peaceful protest rally was not new (Gorkha 1992: 281-282, Khaling 1887).

During the course of field work in Kalimpong in 2016, Dhan Narayan Pradhan, 72 year old GNLFF activist whose 14 year old daughter was killed by the CRPF during 1980s, stated that her daughter was very active and used to participate in the outdoor activities of the statehood movement. Suddenly her daughter was missing and after one day her body was recovered from the police station. No one from her village and relatives (except family members) were allowed to perform her last funeral rites. He felt that after lots of struggle and hardship the Gorkhas had been betrayed by their own leaders. He said that his daughter's contribution had gone in vain although she was a *sacho youdha* (true soldier) of the Gorkhaland movement. Similar story was revealed by Ruk Mani Chhetri who was injured in a firing. She was charged with more than 12 cases. She told that she was harassed by the state and had to experience immense hardship and suffering even after the peace accord of 1988 just because of her active participation in the Gorkhaland movement. She felt that nothing has been done as promised by the leaders and their conditions remain same as before. She further stated that their contribution has never been taken into serious consideration nor has it been praised as deserved. Though women were involved in more supportive, expressive and background roles their contribution was of great importance in the movement.

The turmoil or violence in the movement was not always created by the CRPF, police and other paramilitary forces but also by the people belonging to the same community. The intra community conflict within the Gorkhas under different political banners was another major problem. The Gorkhas themselves were divided into Communist Party of India (Marxist) and GNLFF and there was the ideological clash between the two political rival groups (Subba 1992: 123-150). Among the several respondents, Phulmaya Dewan, 80 year old retired plantation labour who participated in the plantation movement which took place in the year 1955 and witnessed both the phases of Gorkhaland movement said that her family had to face difficult situation because of their affiliation with the Communist Party of India/Marxist. The GNLFF considered CPI(M) as their enemy as there were ideological conflicts between them. The GNLFF considered CPI(M) as the anti-Gorkhaland outfit and state machinery. In such situation general women were the worst victim of movement as explained by her:

“68 houses in my village were set on fire by the alleged supporters of the movement. The other daily commodities like rice, dal, clothes etc. were ransacked but we did not have to face the problems of raids by CRPF and other paramilitary forces which were faced by the different villagers having strong GNLf base. In such situation women had to face several problems. Men used to run away and the whole responsibility of taking care of family and household rested on women. Women had to suffer more than men because they had to take care of the households and look after the children and other family members.”

At present she feels that the CPI(M) leaders cheated them because they always motivated them not to take GNLf membership and take part in ethnic movement; however they themselves always remained under the state protection. Most of the CPI(M) leaders had been given land somewhere in Siliguri and teaching jobs in primary schools after the agitation.

The interview with CPRM, central committee member; Sanjila Ghishing and Bindhya Dukpa, showed that they were the members of the Communist Party of India when GNLf launched the Gorkhaland movement in 1986. The ideological basis of CPI(M) is ‘class politics’ so they did not support GNLf. According to them the members of the CPI(M) had to face many problems. There was the division of people between CPI(M) and GNLf. The women and children were the worst victims during that period of time. The members of CPI(M) were given ultimatum to join GNLf otherwise they would face problems created by the GNLf. They used to come to those places where CPI(M) had strong base and used to torture the people as they were considered as *mato birodhi* (anti movement).

Bindhya Dukpa stated that many people were killed by the supporters of the movement. One of the woman cadres of communist party Rekha Tamang was kidnapped and murdered by them. Bal Kumari Sharma mother of six was also raped and murdered by the supporters of the movement. There were famous slogans ringing in the mouth of movement’s supporters against CPI(M); like:

- I. *Ma-k-pa-ko garbako nani marnuma kehi paap chain* (There is no sin on killing the baby in the womb of the communists).
- II. *Cobra saphlai chodidinu tara ma-k-pa-lai na chodnu* (leave cobra snakes but don't leave communist)

One of the famous Rumuk- Seder and other areas where CPI(M) were having strong base were the centers of intra-group conflict. The most remarkable contribution was made by the women in maintaining peace and protecting their families. Since most of the males were not in the village. For males it was quite difficult to be in the village because of the probability of conflict between the cadres of GNLF and also with the Para Military forces. The women folk had prepared the helmet of karai and bravely fought with the people who came to attack them with caterpillars, khukuries, bow and arrow. This was how they saved their village, women and children.

Sanjila Ghishing recalled her memory that she had just completed her college education. Her maternal uncle was injured in an attack by an unknown person as because he was a well known CPI(M) leader of Darjeeling. He was taken to the planter's hospital but there were injured people who belonged to GNLF. It came to a notice that the people were trying to kill her uncle but she was unaware of it. Her sister was there to look after him. She also went to see him. Later on they came to know that their relatives were able to take him to North Bengal Medical College and Hospital. In those days communication system was not easy as today. However, she and her sister were kidnapped by two unknown persons and they were asked details about their uncle. Sisters were taken to an ambassador car; however they were able to run away.

However, later on particularly in 1996, after the formation of CPRM they have been constantly participating in the separate statehood movement. According to them hill people were not given proper attention and care by the CPI(M) and as a result of which they had formed separate party that is CPRM. They are the members of the communist party of India and occasionally they also contribute donation to GJMM led movement. The women wing of CPRM had participated in conventions organized in Punjab and Calcutta.

4.5 Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha and the Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement Since 2007

4.5.1 Organizational Role and Mobilization of Women

The demand for Gorkhaland resurrected in the entire region under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha which was formed on 7th October 2007. The Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha, a frontal women wing of GJMM was formed on 18th October 2007, on the initiative of the party president Mr. Bimal Gurung as a 'frontal organization' in Gorkhaland movement. His wife Smt. Asha Gurung was elected as its president along with seven core committee members. Soon as a part of movement mobilization process around 350 units of Nari Morcha were formed in different parts of Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars. However, it has to be understood that the formation of women's wing channelized women participants for the movement but they were already present in the public-political domain since formation of GJMM like 1980s.

The major task of the Nari Morcha as directed by the central committee was membership recruitment and their mobilization. As a result of which many women became its member irrespective of their age, caste, religion and class and actively participated in the public protest for the creation of a separate statehood. Soon after the formation of GJMM various activities were started by them where Nari Morcha played a vital role in the Gorkhaland agitation. Since its inception it adopted the Gandhian methods of peaceful protest in the form of hunger strike, hartals, picketing, processions, road blockades, rail roko, jail bhara andolan, demonstration at Jantar Mantar (New Delhi), social boycott of opposition leaders etc. Women were always in the forefront everywhere. They were also actively involved in awareness programmes for the creation of Gorkhaland.

Initially the protest was started against Subash Ghising and demanded his resignation from being the caretaker of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. They also demanded the audit of the DGHC. During the month of February, 2008 fast unto death and relay hunger strike were organized by the GJMM in front of the District Magistrate Office in Darjeeling. There was a mass protest against Ghising and as a result of which he had to resign on 10th February 2008. The major protest broke out against the implementation of

the 6th Schedule Bill for Darjeeling Hills. They stated that Darjeeling Hills do not have the majority of tribal population. So, there was the wide protest against all these activities of the government and women were the forerunner in all forms of protest. On 23rd July 2008, one of the active members of Nari Morcha from Marry Villa, Pramila Sharma was killed in Darjeeling in a protest rally. She was declared as martyred by the GJMM on 25th July 2008 and they had announced Rs. 1.5 lakh for her family. She was the only member of the family to accompany her old widowed mother. Although her mother was not physically participating in the movement, she had to bear the pain of losing her only hope of her old age.

In 2009, major confrontation had taken place when the GJMM announced 'Dooars Chalo Abhiyan' because the area of proposed state was set up to Sunkosh River and they wanted to visit every nook and corner. The opposition of the Gorkhaland movement like Adivashi Bikash Parishad, Jan Jagaran Manch and Bangla Bhasa Bachao Samity organized the counter-movement as a result of which inter-ethnic tension had risen in Terai and Dooars. The Nari Morcha also organized Gorkha-Adivashi mela at Gurbathan. The major objectives were to convince the people of Terai and Dooars in support of the proposed state of Gorkhaland. This took a violent turn in the places like Gurbathan, Nagrakata, Malbazar and Jaigaan. The Nari Morcha sat on hunger strike in many places of Dooars, Terai and Hills questioning the role of police.

The 'padyatra' as a part of 'March for Gorkhaland' was announced by the GJMM leadership in Darjeeling in the month of January 2011, leading to several rounds of violence in Dooars and Terai. Political analysts consider such activities as 'a strategy to delineate the areas of Dooars to be included in the proposed Gorkhaland state'. As a part of the movement a major incident took place at Sipchu (western Dooars) on 8th January 2011 where around 3,000 supporters of the GJMM had gathered. The rally was organized in violation of prohibitory order under section 144 of the criminal procedure code. The Gorkhaland activists came in confrontation with the armed forces and turned violent. There was firing by the police personnel as a result of which two activists of GJMM died on the spot. They were 16 year-old Vikey Lama of Dooars and 24 year-old Bimala Rai of

Kalimpong. Nita Khawas- a 23-year old lady of Sittong (Kurseong) died four days later (Chattapadhaya 2011).

On 18th July 2011, a memorandum was signed between the representatives of State, Central Government and GJMM which is called Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) Agreement. Many promises were made in the GTA agreement most of which have not been implemented till now. The movement was again resurrected in the year 2013 when the UPA government passed a resolution for the creation of separate state of Telangana to be carved out of Andhra Pradesh. The GJMM leadership called for indefinite strike for creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland but strike was declared illegal by the government of West Bengal as result of which 10 companies of paramilitary forces had been sent to Darjeeling Hills. The new strategy was adopted as a mark of protest which is called 'Ghar Bhitrai Janta' or 'Janta Bandh' where hill people were asked to voluntarily remain inside their respective houses on 13th and 14th August 2013. However, on 1st of August 2013, Mangal Singh Rajput, a 45 year-old father of two self immolated himself and died on 3rd August 2013 (Sinha: 2013).

On 8th August 2013, eight women activists shaved their hair at Chock Bazar of Darjeeling town in support of Gorkhaland movement. Ramayanti Rai, one among them said in the local newspaper as:

“For a woman, the hair is considered as an ornament, as asset. We have tonsured our hair today to send a message that we are ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of Gorkhaland.”

Throughout the course of Gorkhaland movement the participation of women is not less than men. Their participation in every sphere of the movement had been significant. It has been evident from the field work, newspaper reports and coverage on the regional and national media that women constitute the important actors in the movement mobilization. It has been witnessed that the women participated in various ways in the public-political discourse of the Gorkhaland movement. The women participants often had to confront the police and paramilitary forces and they even sacrificed their lives.

4.5.2 Women in the Organization of Movement and their Place in Organizational Structure

The GJMM is a centralized party having hierarchical structure headed by the party president and its parent body. It is divided into different frontal organizations like Gorkha Jana Mukti Youva Morcha (GJMYM), Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GNMNM), Gorkha Jana Mukti Asthai Karmachari Sangathan (GNMAKS), Gorkha Jana Mukti Vidhyarthi Morcha (GNMNM) and others. The Central committee has been regarded as the apex body headed by the party president with five working committee members and it is further divided into core and national committees. The central committee is followed by mahakuma, zones, blocks, sakhas and pra-sakhas (lowest). Each committee has its own president, vice-president, secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, adviser and members of the working committee (Achar Sanhita: 2007).

The Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha is also organized on a similar hierarchical structural basis like its parent body. At the top there is a core committee of seven members from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Siliguri, Mirik and Dooars which is followed by central committee and it is further divided into mahakuma, zones, sakhas and pra-sakhas. Every committee has its own president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and executive members, advisers and observers (Achar Sanhita 2007). All the frontal organizations remain under the subordination of party supreme and central committee.

The GNLFF led movement of 1980s was also organized on a similar organizational structure like that of GJMM. The women participants or any of its frontal organizations have no voices of their own than to follow the direction of the party supreme and central committee.

4.5.3 Movement Mobilization and Women in Cultural Programmes

As a part of the cultural movement the GJMM directed the hill people to wear traditional attires from 7th October to 7 November 2008 throughout the Hills. In one easy Google search on Gorkhaland one can notice women participating in the movement in various forms like dharnas, hunger strikes, procession, picketing and others and are seen mostly wearing cultural traditional attires. The most remarkable feature of the Gorkhaland

movement led by GJMM has been the participation of women in traditional attires; although Gorkhas of Darjeeling Hills are highly modernized/westernized in terms of dressings. It was not that male were not in their cultural attires; however the women outnumbered the male in terms of ground level mobilization process and wearing traditional attires.

As a part of the ethnic collectivity various cultural programmes were organized by the GJMM to show the distinct ethnic culture of their own other than that of mainstream Bengal. Throughout the movement it has been reflected that the Gorkhas of West Bengal are different from the mainstream Bengalis historically, culturally, socially and geographically. Introduction of the dress code was one of them but it became controversial issue among Lepchas, Bhutias and people of plains origin who have been there in the Hills since generations. From the very beginning of the second phase of Gorkhaland movement the Gorkha women have been seen everywhere and are mostly directed to be present in their cultural dresses i.e, *choubandi cholo* and *dhaka sari*. A large number of women members of GJMM and other frontal organization used to perform cultural programmes in festivals and peak tourist seasons.

4.5.4 Women in Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP)

A large number of women had been largely involved in a volunteer organization called Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP) formed by the GJMM. Though it was claimed to be a peaceful and non-violent movement, violence occurred frequently and they became integral part of every volatile and violent incident that erupted in the entire course of the movement. The sacrifice of life made by them for the sake of 'Gorkhaland' is reflective of their dedication and commitment towards the ongoing ethnic upsurge. In most of the cases GLP women were largely affected. Although the major part of the GLP was constituted by the male, female also acted as the major actors. The concept of GLP was something similar as the volunteer group of 1980s like GVC and GLO but it is formed as volunteer group without arms. The ex-servicemen organized the training camps for GLP cadres. They used to work as volunteers in security forces in different shifts and provided security and looked after the activities during the processions and rallies. The women members of GLP had

been actively mobilized to keep eye open on those illegal activities like dealing drugs, alcohol and similar other activities.

4.5.5 Invisible Leaders: Movement Housewifery and Domestic Role

It has been witnessed that participation of women is very significant which could be termed as the ‘movement housewifery’ or ‘domestic role’ (Rooth and Hora: 2001) that a social movement needs. Although the movement provides several opportunities for women to be leaders, their greatest contribution and roles have been seen behind the curtain in most of the movements around the world.

Women in Gorkhaland movement have greater contribution than men in the most important private domain of the movement like running movement offices, typing reports and visiting neighbourhood for donation collection and selling of the party flags. Movement housewifery is other types of important movement activities where the contribution of women is remarkable. It includes attending the needs of the movement community like cleaning up after meeting and cooking food for the participants, taking minutes and resolutions etc. So, it has been witnessed that women have been the leaders in the movement perhaps their greatest contribution have been as leaders behind the scenes. The following case studies help us to understand the women’s invisible role in the private domain of the Gorkhaland movement.

Case study 1; Like several respondents, 45 year old Manila Rai is a married woman whose formal education is H.S (failed). She is a Member of the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha in one of the small hill town of Kalimpong. She used to get up early in the morning in order to get rid of her household work before she left her house to participate in the movement. She used to take-care of the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morchas’ *Sakha* (branch) office, collect membership fees, maintain register, collect wood that was brought by the different *sakhas* and *prasakhas* in order to cook food for the participants. She participated in almost all the activities directed by the party high command. Her family members did not allow her to stay outside the home for party campaigning like some of her friends did. She thinks that it is very important to participate in the Gorkhaland movement

in order to secure the future of the upcoming generation. She stated that our fore fathers also had contributed in the nation formation.

According to her, when the movement became intense they used to carry out the domestic role which could be termed as the movement housewifery. She and her friends often had to be present in meetings no matter whether it was organized by the central committee or local sakhas. Preparing tea, snacks and cooking food and distributing them were the main task. She considered that her involvement in such activities would contribute to the movement.

Case study 2; Name: Kalyani Tamang, Age- 40 years, Place- Jamunay, Darjeeling

Mrs. Tamang was very active since 2007 in the Gorkhaland movement. She used to deliver food to the movement participants when there was a police raid and the male participants had to flee away to the jungles. She was arrested and remained in custody for three days. Her friend was in custody for three months. Now both of them have to go for hearing every month. This had created many problems in their families because she used to run a small business in one of the tourist spots which is the only source of income for her family. She stated that she had participated in all the plans and programmes of the movement since 2007.

She is unhappy and feels that most of the participants are from rural areas and tea gardens; however the urban people are mostly benefited every time. Her every day routine started early in the morning preparing food for the whole family and carrying lunch for the day she used to go to Darjeeling for participation in the movement. She stated that she was very close to the party central committee members. Whenever any troublesome situations arose many party top level leaders used to flee in and around because her shop is located in Sikkim-Bengal border which is far from Darjeeling town. She recalls her hectic schedule of looking after them. She stated that she often remained fearful because of the police raids and she had to lie them.

According to her there are several women who have been contributing to the movement from the private domain like her. She is happy that she received a means for her livelihood because land for her shop was given to her by party supremo after the GTA

agreement in 2011. Earlier she used to work in Siliguri after separating from her first husband.

She further replied to my question: 'since my childhood we heard lots of narratives/stories but I have not heard any story which emphasized on women. The story tellers glorify masculinity where women activists are missing. They have contributed a lot but their contribution is yet to be recognized'.

4.5.6 Movement Organization and Campaign Against Alcoholism and Drugs

Women of Darjeeling Hills under the banner of Nari Morcha strongly opposed the selling of alcohol in the local areas. They brought out the anti-alcohol movement. They not only participated in various forms of movement organization but also actively campaigned against the alcohol and drugs related activities in their respective villages. They used to go for campaign in and around their villages because many people used to prepare local alcohol which is called *rakshi* and *jaanr*. The women folk were aware of the negative effects of alcoholism among the hill people. According to them they used to check vehicles in the NH 10. Many time they caught people carrying liquor which they used to destroy.

The Women's Wing of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha in a move to social disciplining used to confine drunkard men for several hours as punishment. According to Suchitra Rai, a woman activist of the Morcha in a media report (ETI: 2008):

'It is a move to establish social discipline and teach inebriated men loitering on roads... Women have been facing problems stemming from the drinking habit of male members of their families. We expect that women in the Hills would launch a movement within a couple of months to make Darjeeling Hills a liquor-free zone.'

The Nari Morcha of Peshok Sakha, 11 km from Darjeeling, constructed a 'wooden jail' of 5X4 feet on the roadside. They not only confined the drunkards but also collected fines of Rs. 500 each from them. It was deposited in the Nari Morcha fund. Many people were arrested and imprisoned for two months. They also kept close eye on the selling of

gutkas, cigarettes, and other toxic elements but it did not last for long. The Singmari branch of Nari Morcha was very active in such activities.

Women of Darjeeling Hills were encouraged by the move of Nari Morcha. However, soon such move of Nari Morcha became matter of controversies. Police also declared such activities as illegal. Finally such steps had been discontinued by the Nari Morcha. Though it did not last for long, the locals considered it as a significant step taken by them.

4.5.7 Class Interest through Ethnic Collectivity

The frequent closing down of the tea gardens in Darjeeling Hills have been a regular phenomenon in Darjeeling Hills. In such gardens many participants participated to achieve their 'class interest through ethnic collectivity' that was noticed in one of the closed tea gardens. Phulmith Rai, zonal president of the Nari Morcha and one of the earliest to take membership of GJMM in her garden stated that the main purpose behind taking membership was to re-open their garden which was closed since 18 years.

She and her husband convinced the workers and demanded for re-opening of their garden collectively through trade union. They went for indefinite hunger strike for 8 days in front of District Magistrate office in Darjeeling and finally the management agreed to re-open on *sukkha roze* (daily wage). Apart from daily wage the workers did not receive anything which is laid down in the Plantation Labour Act. However, the situation of the nearby properly functioning garden is not much better.

This reflects critical condition of plantation labourer in many tea gardens of Darjeeling Hill. Further conversation with her and other trade union activists made the point clear as to how ethnic collectivity over Gorkhaland has submerged the class interest among plantation labourer in Darjeeling tea landscape:

[Conversation with member of Nari Morcha, Mrs. Dewan, June 2016]:

Q: Since you were able to achieve what you have fought for, then, you must be happy?

Respondent: No, we are not happy but it's okay; at least we have something to do....

Q: Why?

Respondent: Because we have to work in sukkha roje.

Q: What do you mean by sukkha roje?

Respondent: It means no work no pay. Not only this, there are no other provisions like ration, shoes, wood, umbrella, bonus, medical facilities etc.

Q: Are not trade unions doing something in this regard?

Respondent: We don't want trade unions to interfere in this matter. We are fearful if the garden will close again. Something is better than nothing...

[Conversation with one of the eminent trade union activist, Mr. Rai June, 2016]

Q: Do you think Gorkhaland movement sidelines the issues concerning trade union?

Respondent: Yes, because tea constitutes the backbone of Darjeeling Hills and people have to sacrifice otherwise how can we achieve our own goal [statehood]?

Q: Why do you think that they must sacrifice?

Respondent: After achieving Gorkhaland everything will be resolved. They must not run behind the minor issues like roje bredhi (high wage), bonus etc.

Almost everyone from both the gardens had participated in the Gorkhaland movement led by GJMM but only few women leaders have emerged. This is because of the structural gender constraints that have been associated with women. They have to engage in production and reproduction of household activities in the patriarchal social order. Life for the plantation women is very tough because early in the morning they have to engage with the household chores. The whole day they have to work in the garden and

in the evening with the same household activities but males are relieved from such household activities. Since they have to engage with both public (paid) and private (unpaid) domain and generally remain busy all the time.

4.6 Political Economy and Participation of Women

In the following section we will discuss how a section of the movement participants try to gain material or economic benefits through their participation, influence and association with the party in long run. This may not be the objective of the movement at the beginning but it may be considered as one dimension of the later stage.

“Khoi dherai khatay, na Gorkhaland nai payo, na mailay nai kehi paye” (we work hard, neither we got Gorkhaland nor I got anything) (Hema Thapa, Kurseong, 2016)

The majority of the women participants think that identity issues are behind the Gorkhaland movement. However, one cannot deny that a section of the participants use the political economy of the movement in a strategic manner. There are the people who are running behind the material benefits like getting small contracts as a result of their participation. The rise of ‘contractor class’ in Darjeeling hill post 1980s is one of the outcomes of the movement itself. However they are also connected with the identity issues but at the same time they wanted to enhance their economic status by their participation. These set of people have greater influence in the resource distribution like MGNREGA, PMGRSY, getting contractual and permanent job in the aftermath of the movement. Many of the women participants are happy that their son or husband got contract through her influence in the party. In my conversation with zonal president of Nari Morcha in 2016 regarding her involvement and economic empowerment through her participation she said to me:

“I am very happy that I became the vocal supporter of the Gorkhaland movement. I took participation in hunger strike, formation of sakhas and pra-sakhas, jail varou andolan etc. I am very happy that my son received a small road contract. You know he is unemployed. It is because of me. You know he is not good in education as you people. We are doing so much for the Gorkhaland. You know who will be benefited at last? You people...”

On the other, she was not happy with the activities of those students and scholars from Hills who have been taking education in good colleges and universities. She thinks that they are contributing nothing in the movement. Her satire ‘at least they can write in public forum like newspaper and convince their non-Gorkha friends regarding the validity of the Gorkhaland.’

During field work, Kabita Tamang, a tea garden worker informed about a popular phrase used by the people of tea gardens. She was member of Nari Morcha and participated in all the activities of Gorkhaland movement of post 2007. She stated that:

“busty kolay loan paucha, bazarko lay kam pauchu, Kamanko lay chal paucha”
(villagers get loan, town people get job, tea garden dwellers get only information)

It has been a common phrase to signify the benefits that has been received by the people in the aftermath of the movement. The strong movement was raised in 1980s and resurrected in 2007, 2013 and 2017 and according to her most of the benefits as outcome of the movement was received by the those people who are from urban areas. These urban people are not that active in the movement. They are the opportunistic section. The significant contributors of the movement are from rural and tea garden areas. The movement resulted into the growth of ‘contractor class’ mostly from the urban and higher level of the party. Most of the people who have to sacrifice their lives were from the rural areas and tea gardens.

It reflects the political economy of the movement and region itself. The region can roughly be divided into *bazaar* (town), *busty* (revenue village) and *Kaman* (tea garden). It has been witnessed in the field work that most of the participants are from rural areas and tea gardens where women have an important role in the movement mobilization process. The socio-economic matrix of these three landscapes is different from one another.

- I. The urban areas are the centre of movement and protest where all the movement activities had taken place. These people are conscious about the happenings because of the easy flow of information and access to upper level leaders. They get preference in getting benefits.

- II. The second category of people is from busties (agricultural background) and they have the resources i.c. agricultural land in their name. They are liable to get loan at least for their upliftment.
- III. The third category of people is from Kaman (tea garden). They do not have access to land pattas and belong to the most marginal sections. They are from the far off the places and basically they do not have time in their hand because they have to go for work. Otherwise there will be a problem for their livelihood. So, they only get information (chal paunu). Despite their selfless contribution they remain marginal. Even they do not have access to land pattas (land rights) even after living in the same house for generations.

4.7 Complexity of Participation and Perceptions of the Participants

The women participants in Gorkhaland movement cannot be homogenized into a single category. The different categories of participants have participated which intersects with class, caste and gender. The participants in general and women in particular are of different categories like simple participants, leaders, supporters etc. In course of their participation several participants got the opportunity to 'transgress their roles proper'. However, at the same time many have to remain submissive in patriarchal social order of the Nepali/Gorkha society. We try to see the complexities and perceptions of their participation through few case histories of the participants. It will help to understand their agency apart from victimhood agent in the movement. The following case studies show how the perception of the participants in Gorkhaland movement differs with socio-economic and spatial variations. The addresses and actual names have been withheld.

Case study 1; Saraswati Chhetri, Age-37, Marital Status- Married, Qualification- BA (H) Pol. Science, Designation- Central Committee Member, Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha and GTA Sabah Member (elected) from Terai.

Her daily routine was to get up early at 5 am in order to finish her household chores such as cleaning, cooking and taking care of her 14 years old girl child and 70 years old father-in-law. Sharp at 9 in the morning she used to leave her house in order to take part in the movement. She took active participation in almost all the actions that came across the

movement such as hunger strike, rallies, picketing, cultural feasts and others and she even remained in police custody for one night. She travelled to the remote places of Dooars and Terai in order to form *Gorkha-Adivashi Nari Morcha* and *Gorkha-Dukpa Nari Morcha* in Buxa Dooars and under her leadership there was formation of 86 branches and sub-branches (*Sakhas* and *pra-sakhas*) of Nari Morcha. Since her husband is associated with Indian defence, she had to do those works also which was supposed to be carried out by her husband. During Dooars campaign her long stay outside home became the root cause of quarrels at her home. She stated that taking part in the movement is as important as her family affairs. According to her the mass participation of women in the movement is not a mere reflection of the identity crises but there were many other issues. She thinks that the fear psychosis of tea garden labourer, exploitation by the owners, growing rate of women trafficking and under-development of entire area etc. are the contributory factors behind women's participation in Gorkhaland movement.

She thinks that Indian Nepali/Gorkha women are doubly exploited first as 'women' or 'second sex' and second as 'the subaltern community' (identity crises). She thinks that the creation of Gorkhaland is very tough but not impossible. It is important to have own state because it would secure the future of upcoming generations. Her participation in Gorkhaland was very important in organizing hunger strikes, rallies, picketing in Terai and Dooars. Despite being central committee member and Savashad, her presence in the decision making body does not matter a lot. She found problematic to maintain time because she had to take care of her daughter and father-in-law.

Case study 2; Reena Thapa and Rekha Thapa, Age- 40 plus, Marital Status- Unmarried, Qualification- Upper Primary, Designation- Member, Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha, 3rd Mile Darjeeling.

Reena and Rekha are sisters and both are unmarried. They live in the outskirts but adjacent to NH 10 of Darjeeling town. They stated that few years back they went to Rajasthan to attend the 'Om Shanti Om' convention. They stated that they felt alienated when their identity was often confused with the citizen of Nepal because there were thousands of people from Nepal in the same convention. Reena explained to them that they are not foreigners (citizen of Nepal). However, due to their mongoloid looks they had to

show their identity card again and again. She often explained them that she is from Darjeeling district of West Bengal. However, again their identity got confused with the Bengalis and they were often asked that they do not look like a Bengali. She stated that she had to explain them regarding her identity. She feels that if a separate state is created it would give them an Indian identity.

As believers of 'Om shanty Om' they had participated in the cultural movement where all the religious organizations were invited by the GJMM for prayers and masses. Like all other women of their village they had participated in a ground level movement mobilization like processes, picketing etc. since 2007. Many people had to sacrifice their life in the movement and they used to be present in the prayer mass in their last rites. Both of them felt that there was rise of opportunist section among the participants themselves which led to the failure of the movement.

Rekha Thapa stated that the number of male participants had been outnumbered by the female participants because of several reasons. Firstly, female are sincere as compared to men and according to her in her locality male used to drink alcohol whenever they met with their friends. Secondly, there are many families whose male members are working outside in police, army and other formal and informal sectors.

She stated that she joined with her friends in a campaign to motivate their neighbors to come out of their households. She thinks that "*nariharulay chula chouka matrai garera hudaina*" (women should not do only household chores).

Case study 3; Sangita Chhetri, Age- 40 Years, House Wife, Qualification- X, Designation- Member, Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha, 3rd Mile, Darjeeling.

Sangita Chhetri was born in Lebong and after her marriage she was settled in 3rd mile Darjeeling. She is a mother of one daughter and one son. Her husband is driver in West Bengal Police Department. She stated that in her young age she had witnessed the Gorkhaland movement of 1980s where all of her family members had participated. So, for her Gorkhaland movement was not new. She recalled her memories of 1980s where her mother and she used to run away from her house due to CRPF raids otherwise according to

her CRPF would torture them. The CRPF and other Para Military forces were regularly patrolling and in search of Gorkhaland activists.

In 2007 when the Gorkhaland movement was resurrected she was having fresh memories of 1980s. She stated that since everyone was participating from her village in the movement she also participated. However, when the movement became intense she was told by her husband not to participate because his senior officer directed them so. Even then she used to participate in the rallies by putting scarf on the lower portion of her face.

According to her in 2007 when everyone was taking the membership of Nari Morcha she also became its member by contributing Rs. 330 as membership fees. However after getting warning from her husband she continued with her activities of participating in the movement. She feels that it was necessary because the creation of Gorkhaland is very essential as it would lead to the progress of the community as a whole. She stated that there are lots of educated youths moving to the metros and other towns for their livelihood. She believes that a new state within Indian union will solve the problem of identity and it will also bring a socio-economic upliftment of the people in the region.

She had to face many problems when the government started arresting the movement participants particularly at night. Her husband had to drive the police vehicle and accompany the police force to the accused person because he was a local. Many people were not happy with them. The movement participants sometimes leveled them as *mato birodhi* (anti movement) because of his performance of his duty. Same problem had been faced by her because she stopped participating in the movement.

Case study 4; Subarna Subba, Sex- Female, Age- 40 years, Qualification- M.A, Place- Kalimpong Town (resigned from Oil India Limited)

She was educated outside the Darjeeling Hills and spent good time outside West Bengal. She stated that the movement for Gorkhaland is not only a movement for identity but there are political, economic and social factors behind it. She felt that identity is not only given by others but it is self perception also. According to her it depends on how you think about yourself and your community and how you construct your identity.

For her *matoko maya* (quest of one's own land) is the major factor behind it. She stated that once Darjeeling was very advanced. According to her the people of Darjeeling have contributed in making of neighboring country like Bhutan and Sikkim. In Sikkim after its merger the people of Darjeeling were invited in the administrative and teaching posts. In Nepal and Bhutan also they were invited in various posts and they have done well. According to her it shows the capacities and capabilities of the hill people but on the other hand it is difficult to survive in West Bengal because of the cultural differences.

Case study 5; Ralima Subba, Age- 34 years, Sex- Female, college teacher by profession stated that she is from Kalimpong and staying in Darjeeling because of her job. She stated that she has been observing this movement since many years. According to her most of the participants are from far off places. She stated that one can notice that most of the people from the urban areas even do not come out of their houses. However, the rural and tea garden people are emotionally involved in the movement. Throughout the day they used to carry a small tiffin box with few chapattis. They are the major sufferers during the movements because most of the people who died in the movement are either from rural areas or from tea gardens. Previously she served in a government college of South Bengal. It was a rural place where she had to encounter everyday gender stereotype in and around. Her Indian identity was wrongly interpreted and questioned by the people. She thinks that Gorkhas have contributed a lot in making India. So, government should consider their demand according to the Indian constitution.

Case study 6; Tshering Bhutia, Age-20 years, Marital Status- Un-married, Qualification- Under Graduate, Designation- Student, Place- Darjeeling.

Since, she is a student in one of the college in Siliguri, had not participated in the Gorkhaland Movement in any form. Her father used to discuss the needs of separate state for the Gorkhas in their house. She said if situation arose then she would not hesitate to take part in the movement but leader should be determinant for the cause. She feels that there is nepotism and corruption in the GTA and it failed to solve the problems of the people in general and women's issues in particular. Very interestingly she feels that Gorkhaland will provide material benefit for the people that is why she supports the movement.

During the field work it was noticed that majority of the general participants had similar answer to a few questions related to the movement. These are mention below:

Q. What is Gorkhaland movement?

A. *Gorkhaland hamro janma siddha adhikar ho* [Gorkhaland is our birth rights]

However, some of respondents do not directly pronounce the above cited phrase but they feel that it will give identity to the Indian Nepalis.

Q. Why did you participate?

A. *Gorkhaland payencha vanera* [hoping to get Gorkhaland].

There are the educated, sincere and conscious participants or village level leader who stated that many people are running behind the economic benefits rather than understanding the political ideology of the movement. Sradha Chhetri, a village level leader of Nari Morcha stated that:

Rajnitita chakka panja garnayko lagi matrai raicha (It seems that politics is for the cunning people). Hami jasto lata sudhoharuko lagi hoina raicha (It is not for the sincere people like us).

The women participants in Gorkhaland movement cannot be categorized as homogeneous entity. There are sets of women participants who are general participants. The nature of their participation is very simple and basically based on emotion. This set of participants lean towards the movement by their emotion and they have basically one true cause which they aspire for. For the general women participants, identity is the main reason. However in the field study it was found that they educationally vary from illiterate to highly educated ones and they are specific about the goal. The nature of their participation were mass rally, religious prayers, national highway blocked, cultural rallies, village based mobilization and cooking food for the participants.

4.8 Women in Post Movement Arrangements

After a long agitation a semi-autonomous body within West Bengal called 'Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council' (DGHC) was formed on 22nd August 1988 through the tripartite agreement with the central and state and representative of the GNLFF. Though their contributions were made rather selflessly, they did not however fetch the attention that they deserved. Their position was denied in the decision making body that runs by the name of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. There were only 3 (10.72%) women dignitaries during the first tenure and 2 (7.14%) dignitaries after the first tenure in the DGHC out of 28 dignitaries (councillors). On July 18th 2011, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was replaced by a newly formed administrative body called- Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. This administrative set up was constituted out of general election held for 48 seats in which only 9 (18.75%) tickets (including 2 nominated by the chief minister) were allotted to women by the GJMM and they are representing their constituencies through the GTA arrangement. Their presence in local governing bodies both in municipalities and Panchayats is distressing. However their representations have successively increased after incorporation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment Act (Chakraborty, Nepal and Pariyar 2005: 333-344, Dural 2009: 53-61) in which DGHC and GTA had no role.

Thus, the women participants in the Gorkhaland movement can be brought under the reference of 'a series of three concentric rings or circles' that had been propounded by Mauss. The outermost ring represents a kind of public that usually carries a general movement who are often the laymen and they do not know much about the movement strategy. They have blind faith in their leaders and are very sure that they will achieve the dreams that they have cherished. They are the sympathetic public who lean in the direction of a particular movement program and ideology. The second ring composed of small sympathetic active public from the first ring itself. They consist of individuals and organizations that have definitive interest in success of the movement. They are often educated and skilled in committee work and other kind of organizational behavior. They are influential people whose public support for a movement will help to give legitimacy and acceptance. The innermost ring of the social movement is its heart or core. It contains the principal leaders and the organizations having their goal exclusively in the success of

the movement. This layer consists of central co-ordinating organization, committee and other organizational members (Mause 2001). The innermost ring has been occupied by the male leaders where the women members do not have much scope in decision making body but to follow the plans, programmes and strategies of their leaders. The proportion of women participants in the Gorkhaland movement has been much higher in the outermost and second circle than that of the inner one. Their presence in the coordinating organization and important committees has been minimum. They have to follow the decision of the higher authority. So, they have no choices of their own. Numerically their presence may be considered very significant in the mobilization process but they do not hold real power of the decision making body of the inner circle.

4.9 Participation and Gendering Consciousness

Urmila Ghishing, one of the activists of GNLF led movement of 1980s ironically hinted on the false assurance and motivation delivered on women by leaders to participate in the movement. The pathetic condition of the women has been narrated in her poem:

“Ma Aansan Basdaichu” (I am setting for the hunger strike) (2011: 42-45).

Her poem reflects some kind of historical gender consciousness which has been missing on general women’s perceptions. On the other hand a large number of participants remain submissive to their male leaders. It was witnessed in the field work with one of the zonal secretaries of Nari Morcha and among many others. On reaching her house with prior-permission it was seen that she asked her husband to respond. She said:

“I am only the participant and I follow the direction of the party high command.”

Her husband, the zonal president of GJMM also felt that they (women) know little about the Gorkhaland movement. He said:

“They know little about the Gorkhaland movement. We guide them and they co-operate with us. They have equal position and rights in our party. We are much better than the GNLF.”

On the other hand it has been observed that often male members do not allow woman to speak because they consider it as a male domain. My ethnographic encounter with the different category of leaders, participants and common people belonging to different political parties (GJMM, GNLF and GPRM) in one of the remote tea garden of Darjeeling revealed that gender and patriarchal attributes has been deeply inculcated in the everyday life practices of the Nepali/Gorkha culture. Gender has been the pertinent issue not only inside the house but at the movement situation as well.

Similar frustration had been expressed by one of the lady members of the Communist Party of India/ Revolutionary-Marxist (CPRM) that of the unequal treatment received by her; although one of the charters of their constitution is to look after the emancipation of women. Once she had to lead a delegation to Patna in support of smaller states in the country and many of her party members were doubtful on her quality and a male assistant was given to assist her. She said that”

“It is not their fault. Our society has been constructed in a patriarchal social order. Even, we (women) do not have faith on ourselves and every time we remain dependent on male. Our party is much concerned about women issues but patriarchy is always visible at the ideological level of our leaders because they are the part of the same patriarchal social order”.

On the other hand, for the movement activist like Prabha Tamang, a 28 year old, volunteer teacher in a primary school it is an opportunity to enhance her status through participation in the movement. According to her she belonged to a poor family and she stated that:

“In my family we don’t have brother... We are six daughters in the family. Mostly it was looked down upon differently. The GNLF cadres and the people of our village ideologically dominate us. After the formation of GJMM I got the opportunity. I became the secretary of this Sakha of Nari Morcha. I feel it gave me a space within the political and social arenas of the society.”

The women wings of GJMM not only participated in ethnic movement and related social issues but they actively participated against the presence of Baba Ram

Rahim in Darjeeling in the year 2011. On 7th June 2012, Darjeeling Town Committee of Nari Morcha protested against Dera Sacha Duda Guru, Ram Rahim and his followers. It was stated in the FIR that ‘the women of Darjeeling increasingly feel very uncomfortable and unsafe by the presence of the Dera Sacha Sauda Guru, Ram Rahim and the invasion in Darjeeling by a large numbers of his followers from other states’ (FIR submitted in police station). At last he had to leave Darjeeling.

So, the different categories of participants have been seen which intersects with class, caste and gender. Many tried to transgress their roles proper; however at the same time many remained submissive in the patriarchal social order of the Nepali/Gorkha society.

4.5 Summing up

The entire populace including women have been emotionally involved in the Gorkhaland movement because it is being considered as ‘a metaphysical mother’ that has been closely related to their identity of being Indian. So, there has been a collective participation of people for the definitive aim and to bring social change in the social order. The participation of women in the Gorkhaland movement is not sudden but it is the culmination of a long drawn historical process. The emergence of women in the Gorkhaland movement was largely self conscious; although the historical gender consciousness has been missing on them. Their public participation has been supported by their male counter-parts by framing ‘subsidiary units for them’. As argued by the third world feminist, this has been a common phenomenon in the entire South Asian countries (Yuval-Davis 1997). However, on the other hand there has been a strong ‘women’s agency’ that encouraged them to come out of their private domain for the Gorkha collectivity. The formation of women’s wing brought them into one frontal organization.

The Gorkha women became part of every action across the length and breadth of the movement mobilization but the major decision making activities have been dominated by the phallocentric attributes both at the structural and organizational domain. Mostly they have been mobilized as the peace keeping force at the forefront of the movement mobilization. Since 1986 almost all the negotiation processes and post movement

arrangements (bipartite and tripartite talks and agreements held in Kolkata and Delhi) were represented by the male or few elite women leaders. Their presence has been seen largely at the ground level mobilization processes but they do not hold the real decision making and negotiation power. There was no Gender development agenda in DGHC and despite having Women and Child Development provision in GTA agreement nothing has been done for women's development.

Women participants at the individual level are not always aware of their own/individual identity which helps their husband and family members to maintain a gender based politics. As argued by the feminist sociologists that it is because of the societal gender role segregation and structural constraints that they have to face in their everyday life. There is no gender development agenda in both GNLF and GJMM because the issues that have been raised by them are 'gender integrative' where both men and women have the common agenda and objective to achieve i.e. Gorkhaland. The nature of women's participation in Gorkhaland movement has found many similarities with the nationalist and anti racist movement of Asia and Africa where, "Women activists themselves became submerged in the political struggle, women being lauded for being good Satyagrahis, but the real issues which concerned them as women, being regarded as secondary" (Jayawardena 1982: 97). Despite their collective participation in the entire course of the agitation with their male-counterparts the Gorkha women continue to be under patriarchy both at the level of family and outside. At the political domain, women fought collectively for the Gorkha identity, on the other hand they were playing the vital (dual) role of looking after the family and domestic affairs at the private domain. However, their participation in the Gorkhaland movement provided them the opportunities to be leaders and activists at the ground level. Through their participation they also seek their agencies.

It seems that the relationship between the women participants and the Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) remained paradoxical in the history of social movements in India in general and Gorkhaland in particular. One of the major problems for women participants in Gorkhaland movement like all other social movements is the social construction of 'public and political sphere with the male and private sphere with the

female' (Rooth and Hora 2001) and they are particularly excluded from the 'public political and nationalist discourse' (Yuval-Davis 1997:13). The role assigned to the participants in the movement situation has been based on the 'public-private dichotomy' of the Gorkha society. The males are always placed in a position higher than that of women and women have been relegated to more supportive roles in both the phases of the Gorkhaland movement. Although the movement brings opportunities to be leaders and raised their status through participation in movement, the Gorkha women have to witness multiple patriarchies with multiple marginalities at the level of family, household, work and identity movement as well despite their strong agencies in the identity movement.

4.6 References

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