

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A
SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE HILL REGION OF DARJEELING
DISTRICT**

A Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Ph.D) in Sociology under the University of North Bengal

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis entitled *Participation of Women in Social Movements: A Sociological Study of the Hill Region of Darjeeling District* has been prepared by me under the supervision of Prof. Saswati Biswas, Head of the Department of Sociology, North Bengal University. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award degree previously.

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Abstract

The present thesis entitled ‘Participation of Women in Social Movements: A Sociological Study of the Hill Region of Darjeeling District’ intends to bring out the participation of women in social movements in the hill region of Darjeeling district. The rationale behind the present endeavour is to fulfil the research gap in the context of social movements in the region. Darjeeling hills attracted a large number of international, national and local scholars but it seems that they failed to realise women as an analytical category in the social movements. These scholars made serious interventions from different dimensions and perspectives in social movements and produced ample literature in the context. However, gender/women’s perspectives have been largely ignored. The relative invisibility of women in the pioneering works in the region is not a coincidence but it is one of the many ways in which perspective remains gendered. It has been argued by the feminist scholars that there exist androcentrism and male-centric bias in the study of social movements. Such attitudes devalue their presence in the movements. Against this backdrop, the present thesis carefully examined the emergence and participation of women in social movements that have erupted in the hill region of Darjeeling district. It shows the public political participation of hill women of Darjeeling in various arenas of hill society and social movements in general and nature and dimension of their participation in the Gorkhaland movement in particular. It not only carefully examines the visibility of women in different types of movements in Darjeeling hills but it brings forth their agencies apart from the victimhood agents in the movements. It argues that women in the movement and post-movement situations are not always the passive victimhood agents but at the same time they possess strong agency of their own. Women in the gender integrative social movements like that of the present case (Gorkhaland movement, Nepali language movement and plantation movement in Darjeeling hills) have greater role to play both in the private and public domains as they constitute the larger part of the same society. However, the present work argues that their participation may not be the same as that of men because of the social construction of the public and private sphere of the Gorkha society. The role and participation of movement participants largely based on the gender division of labour where one can locate women in both private and public domains of the movement. The participants in the movement in general cannot be categorise as

homogeneous because they seek their own expression, inclusion and redress from the authority within and outside the movement situations. They have their own choices and preferences and their perceptions and actions differ according to their class, caste, educational qualification etc. Despite being gendered nature, the social movements in Darjeeling hills provided opportunities to women to be the leaders at the local levels and provided platforms for the women self. The victimhood agent is one dimension of their participation in social movements in general and Gorkhaland movement in particular but at the same time they seek their agencies through participation in the movement.

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Abbreviation

ABNVS	Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti
AIMC	All India Women's Conference
BNRP	Bharitya Nepali Rastrya Parishad
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPRM	Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxist
CRPF	Central Reserve Police Force
DGHC	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council
GDNS	Gorkha Dukha Niwaran Sammelan
GJMM	Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha
GJMNM	Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha
GLO	Gorkhaland Liberation Organization
GLP	Gorkhaland Personnel
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
GNWO	Gorkha National Women's Organization
GTA	Gorkhaland Territorial Administration
GVC	Gorkhaland Volunteer Cell
GWO	Gorkha Welfare Organization
NCWI	National Council for Women in India
NSM	New Social Movement

Map of Darjeeling District



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Chapter I

Introduction

“There is in every true woman's heart, a spark of heavenly fire, which lies dormant in the broad daylight of prosperity, but which kindles up and beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity”

--- Washington Irving (The Sketch Book)

1.1 Introduction

Participation of women in the public-political discourse is nothing new. Since time immemorial they have been active and passive participants in the resistance and peace movements throughout the world. However, traditionally the researches on social movement are particularly based on the centrality of men's experience as argued by the feminist scholars. The meta and mega narratives of social movement's history always projected men as the war heroes and role models. However, such works left behind the active and passive roles played by the women both at public and private domain of movement and outside the movement situation (Manchanda 2001: 09-15; Kuumba 2003: 03).

Social movement may be of different types and historically women have participated in most of the movements. However, their participation may not be always same as that of men due to the social, political and other structural inequalities and social roles that women have to face in the society. These stereotyping gender role expectations of production and reproduction are associated with women. Traditionally they have to perceive the dual dilemma at the level of family and outside and are mostly expected to fulfil the roles looked upon as inferior as compared to men. Their position has been denied at the upper level decision making body and often regarded as incapable and incompetent in the public sphere (Roth and Horan 2001). The existence theories of civil society locate women in the private/family domain and are particularly excluded from the public political or nationalist discourse. They are also oppressed by the traditional hierarchical structures and caste practices (Yuval-Davis 1997: 13).

The feminist scholarship and research relating to women challenges the exclusion and marginalization of women's experiences, perspectives and agencies in social science scholarship. The contemporary scholars and researchers are researching on issues concerning women in social movements and coming up with large number of research work concerning women (Manchanda 2001: 09-15; Kuumaba 2003: 03).

1.2 Problem of the Study

Darjeeling Hills have been the epicentre of several social movements in the region. These movements are remarkable for the participation and contribution of large number of women. It has been witnessed that their participation in social movements in Darjeeling Hills is old as the history of movements itself. Their historical emergence can be traced back to the independence movement of India where they have actively participated and contributed in the anti-colonial activities. In post-independence era their participation in tea plantation trade union movement, identity movement for the recognition of Nepali language and Gorkhaland movement have been remarkable (Bhattacharyya 1986, Rai 1992, Roy Sanyal 2010, Pakhrin 2009, Niroula 2015).

The history of social movements in the region shows that their contribution in the making of social movements in the region is not a new phenomenon. What is new is to rediscover their participation and rewrite their contribution in the making of history, society and culture. However, their participation, role and contributions are mostly put behind the curtain in both academic and non academic writings. On the other hand there is little work available in vernacular language regarding the women activists and their participation in various movements in the form of memorial, newspaper article, biography, family history and few research articles. However, there is not even a single comprehensive work available in the context of women's participation in social movements in Darjeeling Hills.

The social movements in the region attracted large number of local, national and international academicians, journalists and several other social scientists. They made serious interventions from different dimensions and perspectives and there is ample literature available in the context; however the gender/women's perspective has been

largely ignored (See, Sur 1983-84: 157-177; Dasgupta 1988; Chakraborty 1988; Mishra 1987: 15-20; Subba 1992; Bomzon: 2008; Sarkar 2011: 129-144; Chettri 2013). The relative invisibility of women in the pioneering works is not a coincidence but it is one of the many ways in which perspective remains gendered. It has been argued by the feminist scholars that there exists androcentricism and male centric bias in the study of social movements. Such attitudes devalue their presence in the movement (Kuumba 2003: 13).

On the other hand few minor attempts have been made in the context (see, Lama: 2015; Rai: 2015; Lepcha 2015 and others) which needs critical analysis. These works failed to realize the historical emergence of women in social movements in Darjeeling Hills. They also failed to cultivate the complex institutionalized gender relations that operate both at societal level and at the movement situations. So, there has been a paucity of information and critical analysis on their involvement in social movements in general and Gorkhaland movement in particular.

The present thesis is an attempt to locate and relocate their participation and contribution in the making of social movements that have erupted in Darjeeling Hills. It is basically about the participation and historical emergence of women in social movements but it specifically focuses on the Gorkhaland movement with greater concern and emphasis as because no public protest in the region witnessed such mass and prolonged participation of women in the history of social movements. The nature and dimension of these movements were different from one another but historically they have been playing active roles in their own capacities.

The present work not only tries to see the historical genesis and emergence of women in social movements but also focuses on their agency. Women in the movement and post-movement situations are not always the passive victimhood agents but at the same time they have their own agency. Women in the gender integrative social movements have greater role to play both in the private and public domain as they constitute larger part of the same society. However, their participation may not be the same as that of men because of the social construction of public and private sphere in the society. They often encounter some problems and discriminations on the basis of ethnicity, identity and nationalism as members of a society.

They seek their own expression, inclusion and redress from the authority. They are not always homogeneous. Their position, status, and level of participation vary with ethnicity, class, caste, spatial, and geographical location (Mohanty 1984). Thus, the present work in the light of the existing literature tries to fulfil the research and rewrites their narratives of public-political protests in the making of social movements in the region.

1.3 Understanding Sociology of Social Movements

Social movements or collective actions emerged as one of the most vibrant field of sociological inquiry in the present day academia. The term social movement has been used differently by the academicians, intellectuals, politicians and social activists depending upon the emergence, meaning and ideologies of the movement (Singharoy 2004).

The development of social movements as a sub-field within the discipline of sociology is a late entrant. However it was central to the classical thinkers like Marx, Weber, Durkheim and De Tocqueville. Marx throughout his writings advocated ‘proletariat revolution’. The ‘reformation theorization’ was the major area of Weber’s writings and ‘civic association’ was described by De Tocqueville (Moss and David A. Snow 2016: 247). It has been witnessed that the earliest growth of social movements was mainly concerned with broader economic and social change. It was a German Sociologist ‘Lorenz Von Stein’ who introduced the word ‘social movement’ into sociological literature in the year 1850 in his book ‘History of French Social Movement from 1789 to present (1885)’. In this book he disseminated the Marxian and Hegelian notion of class struggle as continuous and unitary process. He stated that it will empower the working class and produce self consciousness (Karki 2012, Singharoy 2004). Since then the word social movement has been slowly used in social science literature.

The social movement as an area of study developed along with emergence of different types of discrepancies and social problems in the society. The twentieth century world saw the emergence of wide range of social movements throughout the world. There was the emergence of worker’s rights and trade union movements in United States during the decade of 1930s. Movements for national liberation from foreign colonizing power erupted throughout the world ranging from Africa, Latin America and Asia during 1950s

and 1960s. The victory of Britain in Second World War gave rise to the period of radical reform and change.

The post war period saw the emergence of women's, civil rights, anti-nuclear, and environmental movements. The emergence of these types of social movements whose basis are different from the traditional movements are known as new social movements (NSM). These movements were seen as new in contrast to the old working-class movement identified by Marxist theory as the major challenger to capitalist society. By contrast, NSMs are organized around gender, race, ethnicity, youth, sexuality, spirituality, countercultures, environmentalism, animal rights, pacifism and human rights (Singh 2001).

1.3.1 Definitions of and Perspectives on Social Movement

It is difficult to find universally accepted definition of social movement which brings its practitioners into one single fold. The discourses on social movements have emerged from non rational to rational perspective in its different historical phases. Its perspectives among the scholars have time and space dimension. Earlier discourses on social movement were considered as non rational and harmful for social integration because of the horror and terror produced as a result of the French revolution, Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. These movements were considered as potentially dangerous form of non-institutionalized forms of collective behaviour. Such actions were considered to be threatening the stability of the established way of life by the scholar like Heberle (1951).

However, many of his predecessor theorists on social movement highlighted the positive functions apart from its disruptive nature in the society. They emphasized on the functional elements of the social movements. Scholar like Blumer emphasised on the importance of collective agency in social movements which possesses several creative potentials to bring about change or to resist change. He highlighted the emergence of new norms of adaptive behaviour, problem solving and learning orientation present in the movement.

Since 1950s various scholars have attempted to provide a thorough-going definition of the concept of social movement in their own ways. Heberle (1951) defined social

movement as “the conscious volition of individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social movement” (Sahu 2006 XXVI). Blumer (1951) defines social movements as “collective enterprises to establish a new social order of life”.

Torch (1972) stated that social movement is an ‘effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common’. JS Gusfield (1972) perceives social movements as ‘a socially shared demand in some aspect of social order’. Wilkinson, one of the most widely known social movement theorist stated social movement (1971: 27) as:

.... A deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into ‘utopian’ community..... A social movement must evidence a minimal degree of organization though this may range from loose in-formal or partial level of organization to the highly institutionalized and bureaucratized movement and the corporate group... A social movement’s commitment to change and the raison d’être of its organization are founded upon the conscious volition, normative, commitment to the movements aim or beliefs and active participation on the part of the followers or members (cited, Sahu 2012).

Charles Tilly (1978), in his book ‘From Mobilization to Revolution’ conceptualized social movement as a major vehicle for the ordinary people’s participation in politics. He defines social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaign by which ordinary people make collective claims on others.

He propounded three major elements of social movement which bring social change in the social order. Accordingly, these three elements are: campaigns, repertoire and WUNC displays.

- I. The campaign is to organize sustained public effort whose aims are to make collective claims on target authorities.
- II. Repertoire employs combination of political action for the creation of special purpose, association and coalitions, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statement to public media and pamphleteering.

- III. The last one is WUNC (Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitments). It is the participants' concerted public representation of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitments on their own part or their constituencies.

Armand L Mauss (1975) stated that social movement resembles a series of three concentric rings or series. The outermost ring represents a kind of public that usually carries a general movement. They are very important in providing a good deal of financial and other resources, vote's sheer number to add political strength. This ring or circle comprises those sympathetic public who lean in the direction of a particular movements program and ideology. The second ring is composed of a small sympathetic active public from the first ring itself. They consist of individuals and organizations that have definitive interest in the success of the movement, often educated and skilled in committee work and other kind of organizational behaviour. They are often influential people whose public support for a movement will help to give legitimacy and acceptance, especially if it begins as an unpopular movement suffering from repressive efforts by the government or by other traditional institutions. 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-coordinating organization committee and other organizational members (Mause 2004).

According to him the success of any movement depends on the quality of the membership distributed among the rings. Mere size in the outermost circle will be very important of course, but it has no substitute for commitment and skill in the two inner circles, especially in the core itself. The optimum circumstances for a successful movement, of course, would be large outer circle of sympathizers, mobilized by an able and committed inner circle, which is surrounded by an aroused and influential middle circle. The members and organizations at inner core will frequently try to keep the movement going in new directions with new goals and causes, rather than permit it to die out (Mause 2004).

There are basically two phases of recruitment of the members. The first phase will gather the people who are deeply interested towards the primary goals of the movement. The second phase which will usually come after the movement had some success. They do

participate in the movement because they have a strong desire for altruism or 'do good'. It is very important from the theoretical perspective why some people are more altruistic or sincere than others. What are the needs of their participation and affiliation towards a movement? They do participate in the movement because they have a strong altruism or 'doing well'.

Prof. TK Oommen stated that "A collective mobilization is called a social movement when it develops an organizational structure, rules, established leadership and division of labour. The criteria employed by him to define movement are goal, means, scope and content" (Oommen 2010). He classified movements into three types; viz.

- (I) Historical
- (II) Psychological
- (III) Sociological

According to Prof. PN Mukherjee, all forms of collectivities are not social movement. He stated that the three elements of society, viz., conflict, social collective/mobilization and social change must be structurally interrelated. Otherwise it will not be regarded as the social movement. He also stated that the presence of ideology, organizational base and leadership occupies the core of social movements (Mukherjee 2010: 126-27).

Ghanashyam Shah in his book *Social Movement and the State* (1990) stated that the social movements incorporate the following three features:-

- I. Commitment towards change.
- II. Normative commitment to the movement's aims and beliefs.
- III. Active participation from part of the followers.

There are various ways in which social movements can be classified. Ralph H Turner and Levis M Killian (1975) classified it into three types

- I. Value oriented
- II. Power oriented

III. Participation oriented

Herbert Blumer classified it into three types (1969). They are:

- I. General social movements
- II. Specific social movements
- III. Expressive social movements

David Aberle (1966) in his study of Navaho Indian classified social movements into four types:

- I. Transformative/ revolutionary
- II. Reformative
- III. Redemptive
- IV. Alternative social movements

1.4 Ethnic Movement

There are various approaches used by the social scientists for understanding ethnic movement. Theories on ethnic movement provide the nature of ethnic group as a factor of human life and society.

1.4.1 Primordialist vs. Instrumentalist

The primordial school of ethnicity argues that ethnicity existed throughout the history of mankind. According to this school of thought modern ethnic groups are historical continuity of the ethnic symbolism and ethnic animosities. The animosities are said to be based on inherent differences of race, religion, or culture, and individuals acquiring the characteristics of their race, religion or cultures (Varshney 2002:28). A noted anthropologist Clifford Geertz maintained the different ideas of the primordial theory. For him biological, cultural and physical characteristics are the determinants of primordialism. The theoretical idea of Clifford Geertz lies in the periphery of traditionalism to modernity. The modern socio-political structure creates a threat to the identity of the ethnic groups which itself is not primordial but it is embedded in their experience of the world.

Whereas the instrumentalists discard the primordial ideas and “their key proposition rest on the purely instrumental use of ethnic identity for political or economic purpose by the elite, regardless of whether they believe in ethnicity” (Varshney 2002:27). For this school of thought the ethnic identity is a ‘tangible resource’ in order to achieve political power or economic gain and so on by the elite section. The instrumentalists perceived ethnicity as a versatile tool that identifies different ethnic groups and it changes according to the political interests. The social scientist like Donald Noel popularized the instrumental theoretical tradition, through his theory on the origin of ethnic stratification. According to him ethnic stratification will emerge only when specific groups are brought in contact with one another, and only when those groups are characterized by high a degree of ethnocentrism, competition and differential power (Eriksen 1994).

Both the schools of thought have almost universal acceptance. These two schools of thought are fundamentally opposite to one another. The former school draws its major inspiration from the ethnic symbolism or intrinsic power of ethnic differences whereas the latter school draws from instrumental values of an ethnic group. In true sense of the term neither pure primordialist nor instrumentalist has its existence in the present day context.

1.4.2 Constructivist vs. Postmodernist

Since two decades the study on ethnicity has been profoundly influenced by the constructivist and postmodernist approaches. As argue by Robert Bates the constructivist approaches to ethnicity is outcome of the combination of both primordial and instrumental elements. A constructivist draws major inspiration from post modernists but postmodernists are not regarded as the constructivists. Social scientist like Hobsbawn, Linda Colley and Benidict Anderrson have shared the constructivist view, and demonstrated how so many identities that we talk of granted today were quite recently constructed in history (Varshney 2004: 31). This group focused on the possible emergence of new forms of ethnicity for instance the cultural hybridity associated with a rising frequency of mixed racial ancestry in the United States. Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities*, focused on how modern technology and economic system made possible to have an imagination of popular and secular communities based on language.

The modern technologies are available to all the section of the society. They can be deployed to construct alternative techniques, alternative nationalities, alternative identities, some of which may determine the existing order (Varshney 2002:32-33).

It can be said that there is no precise and universally accepted definition of the term social movement. However, the definitions of social movement more or less revolves around or shares three important elements (Deani 1991). They are:-

- I. A network of informal interaction between the pluralities of individuals.
- II. Group or individuals or organizations engaged in a political or cultural conflict.
- III. Collectivities on the basis of shared collective identity.

The above discussion shows that movements are something that people create to press for social change. It is difficult to conceptualize social movement precisely. The words like protest, collective actions, agitations, and rebellions, resistances, collective mobilizations has been used synonymously to describe the social movement phenomena. On the other hand all forms of collectivity like mob or crowd etc cannot be categorized as social movements.

To qualify as a social movement there must be some sort of organization, ideology, leadership and a belief system among the participants. It must sustain or must possess some degree of continuing temperament. Social movement occurs not only for change but it may be for or against or to resist change. It may be formal or informal groupings of individuals or organizations particularly focusing on specific political or social issues. The movement participants employ various means both institutional and extra-institutional means to achieve desirable goals. So, broadly social movement is defined as a conscious, organized form of collective action to bring or to resist change.

1.5 Feminist/Women's Movement

Emergence of women in the public-political domain is incomplete without having an understanding of feminist and women's movement in the west. However at the same time it is also the fact that non-western countries do have their own indigenous roots of feminism and women's consciousness (Jayewardene 1982). Feminism can be understood

both as an ideology and a social movement in itself against the unequal power relation between femininity and masculinity. As an ideology it can be understood as the response to historical subjugation and domination of women by men in the society. The proponents of feminism advocate bringing social change in the unequal power relation between men and women in the society, culture, polity, family etc., through public-political protests, institutional and extra institutional means.

The position of women was not at par with men even in the wake of liberal ideas like liberty, equality and justice. In the early periods political thinkers like Aristotle said that 'the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and of ruler to ruled.' The citizenship rights and other benefits were vested in men by marginalizing women as the 'second sex'. However, this view of justifying women as second sex was slowly challenged by the small number of conscious citizens particularly in United States of America and United Kingdom from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Since then the different waves of feminist movements have been constantly emerging around the world with their own specific issues and agendas.

The western feminist movement that has been widely recognised particularly after 1960s has a long history of its own struggle. One of the most remarkable contributions in women's rights movement was made by Mary Wollstonecraft in the publication of her book 'Vindication of the Rights of Women' in the year 1792. She advocated for equal educational, social and other opportunities for both men and women. She highlighted how women possess reasons and rationality at par with men and demanded for women's equality to end discrimination. The historic Seneca Fall Conference was the first and most important formal convention held in Seneca Falls, USA in 1848. More than three hundred women and men participated for the cause for women's equality. It was regarded as the beginning of the first wave feminism. The major demands put forward by them were legal and political rights for women. To achieve suffrage or right to vote for women was their main objective. This phase of feminist movement is known as first wave feminism which was mainly concentrated in the USA and UK.

The publication of 'Feminine Mystique' by Betty Frieden in 1963 was the beginning of second wave feminism in the western world. Another most remarkable work which

brought the second wave feminist movement into the fore was the publication of the 'Second Sex' by Simon De Beauvoir in 1949. This book has been considered as the feminist canon. The second phase feminist movement roughly began in 1960s in the United States of America. It included wide range of issues concerning women apart from suffragette and property rights. They raised the issues concerning women within the periphery of family, workplace, society, reproductive rights, sexuality, domestic violence, marital rape etc.

Third wave feminism was the result of the discontentment between western and Asian-African feminist scholars. The scholars like Chandra Talapaty Mohanty (1990) criticized the western notion of looking at the third world women as homogeneous. William Crenshaw in her concept of 'intersectionality' stated how black women have been subject of multiplicity of oppressions. This wave of feminism basically talked about the multiplicity of women's experiences on the basis of caste, class, ethnicity, colour etc.

However, in the context of India in general and third world countries in particular feminist movement rose along with the nationalist movement which has been discussed in the next section.

1.5.1 Feminism and Nationalism in Third World

Sri Lankan feminist scholar and historian, Kumari Jayawardena in her book 'Nationalism and Feminism in Third world' (1981) stated that though feminism was largely considered as the western ideal, the non-western countries do have their own roots of indigenous feminism. She argued that feminism as a concept may not be necessarily a western concept by drawing wide range of examples from Asia and Middle East. They may have their own indigenous roots of feminism. The indigenous roots of revolutionary and transformative ideas on women from the countries like Turkey, Iran, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Egypt, China and Vietnam have been shown in her book. She argued that the women's issues and their right in these countries were raised and advocated long before the establishment of western feminism.

1.5.2 Women's Movement and Women in Movement

'The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1900' by Radha Kumar (1994) shows the relationship between nationalism and feminism in India. The concept of feminism grew up along with nationalism in the context of India. In the western countries the feminist movement started with specific women's issues like voting and property rights for women. However in India the women's rights movements were started by male reformers in the wake of social movements led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar and others.

By the end of nineteenth century few women reformers from families of reformers started forming women's organizations in India. The Ladies Society came up as early as 1882 in Calcutta by Swarna Kumari Devi with the aim of imparting education and skill development to the widows and other economically backward women. Bharat Mahila Parishad was formed in 1905 as a frontal wing of Indian National Congress (INC). They mainly focussed on child marriage, dowry, education, and other social evils and customs. Their branches were established in major and smaller towns and cities. The major task of this group was to bring women out of home, doing philanthropic work and to motivate them to take part in public affairs.

The Bharat Stree Mandal (Great Circle of Indian Women) was formed by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani in the year 1910. However it was mainly confined to the major Indian cities. The most important women's organizations in India came up in 1927. These were; Women's India Association (WIA), the National Council for Women in India (NCWI), and All India Women's Conference (AIWC). They played important role in bringing issues concerning women. They aimed at imparting education and bringing overall development of the Indian women. So, it has been witnessed that in pre-independence India two main issues were taken up; viz. political rights and reforms of personal law.

1.6 Participation of Indian Women in Social Movements: Review of Literature

Indian women historically became the part of both the types of movements; viz. women's movement and women in movement (gender integrative movements). The term women's movement is basically a movement for the rights of women because they believed that

women have been subjugated in society, politics, economy and others. On the other hand, it has been witnessed women have been participating in the various type of movements apart from the movement for their own rights. Women in movement may incorporate their participation, role and various types of activities in any type of movement but women's movement means their involvement for their own rights. Women in movement mostly take into the account the gender integrative movements for the common agenda as the member of the society. In the history of social movements women have been found everywhere. It may not be necessarily as the leaders but as the active participants, supporters and opponents of the movement.

Pandhe, S (1988: 2049-2050) gives utmost importance on bringing interdisciplinary approach between the women's movement and women's studies in India. She states that women activist must encounter not only the patriarchal relations but the existing intellectual traditions because it is often supported by the patriarchal ethos. Her note highlighted the importance to draw conceptual framework and roots of oppression from the women's studies by the women activist. She realized the needs of making women studies visible and shows a serious concern on the exploitation of the economically advanced countries of the backward and weaker countries. Her notes show the concern while studying women's movement in India and asked for keen observation on the legal judgment cases, which is often supported by the patriarchal values. Relationship between the political parties and women activist must be carefully studied because sometimes they got engrossed with the vested interest.

Sen, Sumita (1992) produced a scholarly work on women's movement in the different historical perspectives. The marginalization of women's movement in the entire discourse of its history has been narrated. She beautifully highlighted how the women's organizations were started by male social reformers and how the women were influenced and motivated by male counterparts to start their own organization. Her scholarship reflects how women's involvement in freedom movement strengthens their hands for women's rights and to voice collectively against patriarchy. The marginalizations of women by not incorporating their social and economic rights before and after independence are the basic things highlighted in the entire paper.

Manchanda, Riat (2001) in her edited book “Women, War and Peace in South Asia” beautifully narrated the contribution of South Asian Women in peace politics. This book is the conglomeration of seven articles. In her introductory note she argued women are not necessarily a victimhood agent in war but they always have their own agencies. The other articles in this collection focus on women in Kashmir conflict, Assam and Nagaland. Other articles focus each on the Pakistani women in MQM conflict, Women in Maoist insurgency in Nepal, Tamil women in conflict, Women narrative from the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh.

Custers, Peter (1986: 97-104) in his paper “Women’s Role in Tebhaga Movement” stated that the Tebhaga Movement erupted in 1946 in undivided rural Bengal on the eve of withdrawal of the British from India for the two-third share of harvest/paddy by the landlords/Jotedars to the sharecroppers and it is regarded as one of the most important political event in twentieth century Bengal. One of the most important features of the movement is the spontaneous creation of women’s fighting troops called *Nari Bahini*. Though this movement did not succeed, it shows courageous deeds of women who stage semi-militant and defensive action to fight against the state led forces at the latter phase of the movement. The genesis and nature of the movement throughout rural Bengal varied from place to place where the women were in forefront everywhere. The *Nari Bahini* was formed by the oppressed and proletariat women by themselves which was different from Kisan Sabha and MARS to fight against the Jotedars and to protect the village and male folk from the police raids. They were doubly exploited by the burden of household and pseudo-patriarchal ideology. The names of the troops varied from region to region such as, *Jhata* (Broom) *Bahini*, *Protirodhs* (Resistance) *Bahini*, *Nari* (Defence) *Bahini*, *Gayen* (Pestler) *Bahini* and others but they share a common feature whose primary task was to protect villagers and paddy field by using their traditional knowledge such as raising alarming system by blowing conch shells etc. The paper beautifully showed the gender biasness in the leadership pattern in the Tebhaga movement and left many interesting questions which really need to be rethought.

Paykurel, Uddhab P. (2006: 237-248) critically compared the women in armed conflict in Telangana peasant uprising with the women in Maoist movement in Nepal. The Telengana

movement started in middle of 1946 and was called off in October 1951 against autocratic rule of Nizam and oppression of landlords in the princely state of Hyderabad, India and Maoist movement in Nepal started during 1990s and ended after the civil war in the country. He had lucidly explained and compared the genesis, gender discourses, and impact on the life of women in both the movement. The Telangana uprising was particularly focused on bringing democratic ideology whereas the Maoist movement was against democracy in Nepal where a massive participation of women was witnessed particularly in rural Western districts. He came out with the narratives and data on how women were betrayed and empowered to a certain extent in both the movements. Though there was massive participation of women in armed conflict their percentage in decision making body was particularly very low and neither of the movements was gender free. They failed to achieve the real objectives of the movement. He ended his paper by saying that the radical agenda in the movement would be harmful for the society and success of 33% reservation of women in Nepali parliament would be a great question mark.

Jain, Shobhita (1984: 1788-1794) in her article 'Women and People's Ecological Movement: A Case Study of Women's Role in the Chipko Movement in Uttar Pradesh' stated that the Chipko movement emerged during the decades of 1960s and 70s witnessed the significant participation of women and emergence of women leadership. The movement came out as a resistance against the mass destruction of forest in Uttar Pradesh. The Chipko movement was not only significant to the environmentalist in India but abroad as well. This movement contributed to the knowledge building process which is commonly known as 'eco-feminism'. The movement lasted for many years with the help of spontaneous local outcomes and decentralized initiatives which began from 1974. The activist and leaders of the movement were mainly village women who were trying to save their means of subsistence and ecology. The women leaders like Gauri Devi, Sudesha Devi, Suraksha Devi and others took the active role in mobilizing village women and children when private contractors marched to cut down the trees. This movement is often considered as a feminist movement against deforestation and to promote ecology. However, many considered it as interwoven between ecological and economic concern. The women folk and their dependency on forest and forest product was the main reason of

the protest. The Chipko movement became very successful and was able to create pressure on the government for the introduction of environmental concern policies in the country.

Rajashree and Amrita (2003: 22-27) in their work 'Movement of Jharkhand Adivasi Women' brought out the historiography of the Adivasi women's participation in Social movement. Their participation in Social movement is not new in the history of Jharkhand region; it goes back to the Santhal rebellion against colonial rule and Munda uprising led by Birsa Munda. During the decades of 1960s and 1970s women were very active in the movement led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) for the seizure of land, harvesting paddy and land appropriated by the moneylenders, recovery of pawned articles and others. A keen observation of the present work shows that Women's participation under the banner of JMM was based on gender role segregation because they focused on teaching chores such as cooking, stitching, embroidery etc to the women. Though women have a role at the level of village council there is low participation at the real decision making body. Their scholarship also focused on how JMM especially the women actively participated in those issues relating to women such as child marriage, dowry and dowry related deaths/ harassment, sexual harassment, rape, anti-liquor struggles and wife beating, on health problems, polygamy, equal wages for equal works, superstitions and witchcraft, saving forest etc. They formed Jan Adalat in order to punish the culprits who committed social evils in the region. The JMM also published magazines and books where the women's issues and women's liberation were discussed. Their work also focused on how women were mobilized under the banner of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. Though the entire paper is very informative but it would have been better if the author could have brought some more gender related issues which would have enriched the quality of the present work.

Bhattacharya, Joyati (2010: 233-239) in her work 'Gender, Peacemaking and the Case of Northeast India' showed the role of women in peacemaking processes in North east India during the decades of armed conflict. Formation of Mothers Association like Naga Mothers Association (NMA), Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM), *Meira Paibes*, etc. played an important role in peace negotiations in the region. Though the women and mother's fronts in the region made an important contribution not only from the perspective

of civil Society also but from the vantage point of political sphere, they are still not free from patriarchal biasness and subjugations in terms of their political representation and participation.

Sen Chaudhury, Suchita (1999) in 'Women's Participation in Bodo Movement' brought out the detail outline of women's participation in Bodo Movement. She argued that though women played a significant role in the entire course of the Movement their role is perceived as of secondary importance. Their role in the different phases of the movement has been observed by the author's scholarship in day to day realities. She brings out the detailed narration of the important political activities for the rights of the Bodo women. How the leaders of the All Bodo Students Union encouraged the educated women to join the movement, women's representation in the different Bodo organization and their role has been narrated in her thesis. She brings out the role of the women leaders in bringing awareness among the Bodo women and their role in the society. Her scholarship brought out the detailed outline of the nature of women's participation and narrates how their role is perceived of secondary importance by both male and the female in their own society.

Sharma, Nabanita (2017) in her article 'Role of Women during Anti-foreigner's Agitation in Assam 1979-85' stated that the participation of women in anti-foreigner's movement led by All Assam Student's Union during 1979-85 was participated by a large number of women. She highlighted how women have been most vulnerable to violence that occurred during agitation and after the movement. She argued that the police atrocities and arrest of the male agitators by the police and government compelled women to come out of their traditional domain which in fact brought socio-political empowerment of Assamese women of different categories in the long run. She argued that Assamese women in their attempt to protect their community identity neglected the cause of women. Her paper shows how women have been neglected in the aftermath of the movement. She argued how women have been neglected throughout the movement in the decision making processes and other benefits related issues.

Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar (2008) in 'Emergence of Women from 'Private' to 'Public': A Narrative of Power Politics from Mizoram' critically analyse the emergence of women from public to private particularly from the insurgency period in Mizoram. He traces out

the gender history of the region in Mizo tradition and culture which was accelerated through the process of colonialism in the advent of British rule. The author was able to trace the relationship between the church and the patriarchal discourse in the Mizo society. The main crux of his work is to critically look into the insurgency and counter-insurgency and its effects on the human rights violation particularly on women. The process of militarization from the central government further marginalized the marginal.

Sen, Deborati (2012) in her work 'Illustrative Justice: the Gendered Labour Politics of Sub-nationalism in Darjeeling Tea Plantations', produced one of the most important aspects of everyday gender-power politics in the tea plantations of sub-nationalist Darjeeling. Mainly drawing from Nancy Fraser's conceptual distinctions between 'Politics of recognition' and 'politics of equality', she moved beyond the 'redistribution dilemma to locate Nepali women plantation worker's complex positionalities within the sub-national Darjeeling' (131). She argues that gender-power politics of everyday life of the plantation can be understood by the 'place based meaning making' because they have to suffer from multiple patriarchies at family, work, and as a citizen as well. She has pointed out how the homeland movement has sidelined the issues concerning plantation in general and plantation women in particular by the male leaders.

Lama, Sanjeeb (2014) in his work 'Role of Women in Gorkhaland Movement: Assessing the Issues of Power Sharing' highlighted the various dynamics and nature of women's engagement in the Gorkhaland movement led by Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha under the leadership of Bimal Gurung. Although the present work beautifully brings into fore the emergence of women and their mobilization in the second phase of the Gorkhaland movement, however the author seems to be perplexed as whether the Nari Morcha has been used as political tool in Gorkhaland movement or empowered in terms of their decision making process. The author shows the existence of gender bias and incapability of women leaders in movement mobilization which failed to counter the gender dimension of the Gorkha society.

Namit Lepcha (2009) in her M.Phil dissertation 'Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement' stated that mass participation of women was witnessed in the Gorkhaland movement led by the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha. She argued that the Nari Morcha, one of

the frontal organizations of GJMM played an important and vital role in the movement since its inception, 2007. The members participated in the form of hunger strike, procession and dharna, social boycott of Gorkha National Liberation Front's and All India Gorkha League leaders. They come out of their homes in order to participate in the movement because they did not want to lose their near and dear ones in the movement like the agitation of 1987 carried out by GNLF under the leadership of Subash Ghishing. She identified that though there was a mass participation of women at the ground level their presence in the decision making body was almost zero.

From above discussion it is clear that the women's participation in social movement is nothing new. They have been the active participants in all types of movements in the country. The contemporary women's movement from 1975 onwards is playing important role in bringing the gender issues to the fore. The women's movement or women in movements progressed through the nineteenth century reform movements, nationalism and freedom struggle of India. The development of the women's movement in India is altogether a different story than that of the western feminism. It emerged through the various reform movements where the educated male reformers raised the issues like child marriage, prohibition of sati, widow remarriage and educational reforms for women. Later on these movements were joined by many female reformers as well.

1.7 Relevance of the Proposed Study

One of the major thrust of Sociological and Anthropological research has been studying on women in social movement. There has not been much systematic development of women studies in Indian Sociological and Anthropological tradition but after 1960's a good number of studies have been undertaken by the social scientists on women from different dimensions and perspectives.

“In the field of academic discipline, it owes its origin and existence to the distinctive practice of women's movement which have gained momentum in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Most of the research work done in the field of women's studies was by and large generated by the needs of the movement and was finally

meant to lead to social action having an emancipatory effect on women” (Pandhe 1988: 2049-2050).

The present study shall fulfil the research gap on women's participation in the Social movement in Darjeeling Hills which had been overlooked by available scholarship. Though there are several works available in the context of social movements in Darjeeling Hills the gender perspectives have been largely ignored and they failed to realize gender relation as an analytical category. The women of Darjeeling Hills were very active since the inception of the social movement in India. They fought against the colonial regime and came in forefront in Swadeshi and Boycott movement. They formed *Nari Bahini* (Women's group) (Singh and Singh 1987:74-79) to gain consistency in the freedom movement. In post-independence India they participated and contributed in the different types of movements such as tea plantation trade union movement, Nepali/Gorkha language movement and the Gorkhaland movement particularly after 1980's.

Their roles have never been taken into consideration either socially or academically by the Scholars. The methodology in the available scholarship is reflective of the androcentric tradition. The significance of present study is to underscore women's participation in social movements in the region, gender issues underlying the movement, role of the women in peace keeping in the movement, their self-identity in the entire discourse, gender development agenda in DGHC and GTA and impact of the movement in the lives of the Gorkha women.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

Present work in the light of existing literature tries to fulfil the research gap on participation of women in social movements in Darjeeling Hills. It aims to bring their narratives of public-political protests in the making of social movements in the region. The major objectives are to seek: -

(1) Firstly, to trace out the historical emergence and participation of women in social movements in Darjeeling Hills. As argued by the feminist sociologists the present work argues that the participation of women in contemporary ethnic movement in Darjeeling

Hills is not sudden or abrupt. They were very active since inception of the social movements in the region however they remained neglected by the social scientists.

(2) Secondly, to study the participation of women in separate statehood movement in the name of Gorkhaland movement. It focuses to bring out how their participation differs based on their gender identities. It has been witnessed in many movements that the movement roles are basically based on the gender identity. However, it transgresses when it comes to the peace keeping role of women in movement and aftermath of the movement.

(3) Thirdly, it aims to cultivate the women's invisible role and their agency in both public and private domain of the Gorkhaland movement. The role of women has been primarily neglected in every society. In terms of movement also they are basically considered as the victimhood agent only. The present research tries to see their invisible roles and their agency.

(4) Fourthly, to know the gender discourse underlying the movement in Darjeeling Hills. It tries to seek how women are placed in the overall context of social movements in Darjeeling Hills.

1.9 Research Questions

My research shall seeks answers to the following research questions-

1. What is the nature and what are the causes of women's participation in social protest/movement in Darjeeling Hills?
 1. What is the genesis of Women's collective identity that contributed in the mobilization process in the movement?
 2. What are the gender discourses underlying the movement in Darjeeling Hills?
 3. What is the nature of political socialization of the Hill/Gorkha Women?
 4. How are women placed in the overall context of social movements?
 5. What is the nature of gendered power distribution in the organization of a movement?
 6. What is the impact of movement on everyday life experiences of the women?

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The present work is based on the feminist approach in understanding critical research. The feminist sociologists argued the existence of androcentrism and male-centric bias in the study of social movement which devalued their presence in movement. There are various approaches and perspectives in social movements but none of these perspectives considered women as an analytical category in social movements as argued by Kuumba (2003: 52-55).

The mainstream movement theories had been developed and applied with the assumption of gender neutrality and rarely took the gender relation, equality, structure and process into consideration. For, example, the political process model has been criticized because of not emphasizing on gender as power relation and neglecting subjective interpretation and the resource mobilization theory also did not explicitly incorporate gender as an analytic category; however the new social movement theories focus on the gender analysis.

The present study is intended to understand women's participation and their emergence in social movements in Darjeeling Hills with help of following concepts and methodology.

1.10.1 Feminist Methodology

The feminist scholars and activists have been constantly working on the feminist ways of doing and looking at critical research. They have been contributing towards the various approaches. The approaches to feminist methodology particularly highlighted the major three influential areas (Chanter 2006: 69-89). These are:-

1. The feminist approaches developed their quest of researching their own contribution in the making of culture, history, society and others. In doing so they often criticized the previous research as the 'malestream' research for being based on sexist and patriarchal principles.
2. Secondly, they claimed that the approaches used by the malestream researchers are more conventional and scientific which are not exclusive or strong enough to understand the social reality of women.

3. Thirdly, they argued for the need of superior epistemology and theory of knowledge for knowledge building processes to understand the everyday women's social realities.

1.10.2 Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist standpoint is the most influential feminist epistemology. It is grounded on the distinctive feminist science, gender activities and women's social experiences. The feminist standpoint argues that knowledge building is only possible through experiencing the unique women's everyday life practices. It is because of this fact they argued, the men and women experience their everyday life differently. They seek to find out the truth by understanding unique experiences of women. They believe that women's experience is not homogeneous. However, they have certain experiences in common although it differs according to their social groupings. They believe that these differences of women's experiences must be captured before drawing the full pictures of their experiences.

1.10.3 Role Performance

The post modern/ post colonial feminist thinker Judith Butler believed that gender is socially constructed and the very conception of gender is based on the role performance. However, there are other set of thinkers who are known as essentialist because they believe that men and women are not same biologically. So, there exist differences. Whatever the approach may be whether essentialist or constructivists they seek equality for women at par with men. The contemporary feminist movement or women's movement tend to be broadened by the incorporation of the issues like ecology, culture, pornography, gay and lesbian or third gender etc (Salih 2000).

1.10.4 Third World Feminism

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1987) in her widely acclaimed essay "Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" made thorough critiques of the western feminist writings on the "third world women". She argued how the colonial discourse of unequal political and economical hierarchies produced the unequal cultural discourse on third world countries by the first world. She stated that the colonial and western feminist representation and production of third world women is as a monolithic subject. They fail to

see the historical heterogeneity of the lives of third world women; thereby producing/re-presenting the image of the third world women as singular “third world women”. In her thesis she highlighted the fundamental complexities and conflicts based on the lives of women across classes, religions, cultures, and races in the third world countries. She uncovers how ethnocentric universalism is produced in certain analysis and the content by the hegemonic first world feminists. Throughout her writing she tries to demystify the hegemonic notion of women’s oppression as a group homogeneous entity. In this essay, Mohanty critiques the political project of western feminism and discursive construction of the category of third world women. The experience of the women in the third world countries and even in the first world also is diverse. She highlighted that the women in third world do not have a singular identity. Their identity and positionality and everyday life experiences/practices differ based on class, caste, religion, social structure, ideology etc.

Feminist writers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty challenged the western way of looking at the third world women [South Asian and African women]. In her widely acclaimed essay ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminism in third world’ she argued that third world women cannot be categorised as ‘homogeneous’ as ‘third world women’ because their experience as women differ along with factors like class, caste, religion, and other social factors. Their position also criss-cross with the time and space dimension.

1.10.5 Intersectionality

Anna carastathis (2019) in her article “The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory” brought out the critical analysis on the concept of intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality in feminist theory developed as antiracist feminist critique of women oppression by the women of colours. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, the main propounder of the intersectionality theory in feminism rejected women’s oppression as binary political relation or singular process. It states that the lives of women are constructed around the multiple intersecting system of oppression. They believe that the various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, sexual orientation, religion, age and others do not exist separately but they are intersecting with each other. In the contemporary feminist theory intersectionality has taken the shape of analytical framework. They show how the

interlocking system of oppression impacted on the marginalized in the society. Crenshaw offers the three fold aspects of intersectionality. These are: - (1) Structural intersectionality: It refers to the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender. (2) Political intersectionality: it refers the historical, feminist and antiracist politics in U. S. (3) Representational intersectionality: It is concerned with the production of image of coloured women. It critiques the representation of the women of colour drawing on sexist racist narratives tropes.

1.10.6 Gender Relation

SC Dube (1990) *Indian Society*; Cf. 'Gender relation' critically analyse the two contradictory images of women in Indian society and culture. The sacred Hindu texts in one hand treated women as the manifestation of mother Goddess; on the other women are referred in some religious writings and folklores as fickle and fragile minded. He briefly traces down the continuity and change in term of gender relation among the castes, tribes, urban dwellers. Their positionality largely depends on the value premises, role allocation, social structure and rigidity and flexibility of social control to a great extent. He argued that among the tribes and matrilineal tribes in particular the elements of patriarchy are present because the political and military powers are vested in the male folks. However the women folk exercise considerable freedom in terms of movement, resource control and household management. There are multiple forces like market economy, modern education, increased geographical mobility, and new employment opportunities etc are responsible for bringing change in the gender relation across the communities in India. He also highlighted the role of religious-reform movements and Indian legislature concerning women in Indian context. He argued that although the status of women and gender relation among Indian are changing but women still have a long way to achieve gender equality.

1.10.7 Motherist Frame

In many movements it has been witnessed that motherhood became the major driving forces in the movement mobilization. The 'motherist frame' stress the need to fight for equality and justice with the characteristic associated with being a good mother. The activist mothers have united their power as mother to create a collective 'political

motherhood' that has restricted many patriarchal institutions in the past and could be the driving force of a new society. Motherhood is a broad-based identity, widely shared and ideologically unconstrained, that leads itself across the political spectrum. Mother is portrayed as self sacrificing women, nurturer, protector and educator of child at the centre of the family. There has been a complex relationship between motherhood and political attitudes (Greenlee 2014)

1.11 Methodology and Field Work

Present study is a qualitative research based on both primary and secondary data. It tries to look into the participation of women in contemporary movement for the separate statehood in the name of Gorkhaland vis-a-vis their historical roots in other types of movements. The selection of the field was based on purposive sampling. The target population has been the women participants in social movement in the region. Field work was carried out in one tea estate (Kurseong), one revenue village (Kalimpong) and one hill town (Darjeeling town).

1. **Margaret's Hope Tea Garden:** Field work was carried out at Margaret's hope tea garden in the month of May-June 2016. It was followed by occasional trip for one or two to four days many times. The rationale to choose this place was the historical significance of the place. This place is very important in the history of social movement not only in Darjeeling but in the entire country which has a far reaching impact on the socio-political scenario of the region. This was a place where a movement was launched by the tea plantation trade union in the year 1955 against the forceful eviction of plantation laborers, child labour, wage discrimination between the Hills and plains and other forms of exploitation introduced by the British planters which continued in independent India. Since then this place became a centre of trade union activities and separate statehood movement. Data has been collected from the Ringtang tea garden also which is a sick garden since 2 decades.
2. **Singmari (Part of Darjeeling Municipality):** The primary data has been collected from Singmari. This place was purposefully chosen for the field work because it was the epicenter of the Gorkhaland movement after 2007. This place has been

considered as one of the epicenters of women's participation in Gorkhaland movement under the leadership of GJMM. The field work in Singmari was based on both 'off and on way' of doing field work. Field work was carried out at Singmari in February 2016 for 15 days and followed by 1 month field work in August-September 2019. I also made several visit to Darjeeling from 2016 to 2019.

3. **Lower Neoang Goan, Kalimpong Block-II:** The social formation of Kalimpong sub-division is different from that of Darjeeling Sadar and Kurseong sub-division because the entire Kalimpong sub-division is agriculturally dominated. Lower Neoang Goan is an agricultural village which lies in Kalimpong sub-division (district since 2015), block- II in the district of Darjeeling. The rural hamlets have higher rate of participants in the movement. So, it was considered very important to take agricultural village from Kalimpong sub-division as the field for the present research. One month long field work was carried out in 2018 but I also did several rounds of field work from 2016 to 2019 for short period of time.

Data has been collected from various sources following the ethnographic way of doing research. Primary data has been collected by following interview, observation, focus group interview, case study, case history etc. with the participants in the Gorkhaland movement. The respondents were the women participants in the movement viz. young, middle aged, and old women activist. The male activists and leaders and member of the civil society were also interviewed whenever required.

Present study also employed the narrative methodology to understand women's participation in the Gorkhaland movement. The everyday life experiences of the movement activists have been recorded through conversation, interviews, family histories, photographs, autobiographies etc. It has been very useful to understand the context of the present thesis because through narratives one can understand how people create meaning in their lives (Indra 2020: 04-07).

Apart from carrying out field work in these areas the data has been collected with the help of purposive snow ball sampling from important leaders and resource persons in the context. Interview was more of an informal type on the basis of both structure and

unstructured interview schedules. The daily life experiences of the respondents were recorded through observation, case studies, interview followed by focused group interview.

Initially, the data was collected through intensive field work for one month each. However, no complete and intensive data have been received from the respondent for which another set of field work was carried out following the snow ball sampling. This method greatly enhanced the present work. Meeting and informal communication with the different sets of people; young, old, students, local vendors etc. had been one of the methods that were used in the field work. The field work was started with semi-structured questions but quite often the respondent felt uneasy with the method of interviewing. So, the informal interview was carried out with the movement activists and members of the civil society, general participants and counter movement activists.

The relevant published journals, books, newspaper, guides, register web sites (online sources viz. Digital Himalaya, Jstor etc), pamphlets and leaflets have been used. However, the utmost importance has been given to the vernacular dailies and magazines (viz. Nepali, English, Bengali and Hindi) published from this region.

For the library work, Darjeeling district library (Darjeeling), Kurseong town library, Gorkha Library (Kurseong), Netaji Museum (Kurseong) Kalimpong town library, Paras Mani Pradhan library (Kalimpong), Pedong Town Library, Library of North Bengal University, Jadavpur University library and IIT, Kharagpur library were visited for the secondary sources.

1.12 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Darjeeling Hills: land and its People

Chapter 3: Women and the Making of Social Movements in Darjeeling Hills

Chapter 4: Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling Hills

Chapter 5: Summarization of the Thesis and Conclusion

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Chapter II

Darjeeling Hills: Land and its People

2.1 Introduction

A social movement cannot be studied in isolation without referring to the history and culture of a society in which it emerges. The hill region of Darjeeling has witnessed the emergence of several movements based on nationalism, language, underdevelopment and other important socio-political and cultural issues. It maintains a long heritage of people's protests for social change in the region. The interpretation of regional history and its people plays an important role in the movement and counter movement mobilization. It has been witnessed from the past experiences of social movements that the supporters of a movement often make a claim over the territory and the opponent may contradict. It is because the people have their ways of objective and subject understanding of the history, region and its people. This is a common phenomenon in social movements around the world where a sense of belonging towards a region occupies a significant position (Subba 1992). The present chapter is a brief overview of the regional history, community and identity formation and gender dimensions of the hill society of Darjeeling Hills which helps us to understand the background of social movements and women's participation.

2.2. Darjeeling Hills: History and Society

It is very difficult to trace the early history of Darjeeling Hills because there is no clear, concise and documented history on the region before the advent of the British. The early history of the region has not been written by trained historians but it is either written or documented by British administrators, missionaries, botanists or travellers and others. Many scholars expressed reservation on the authenticity on these writings particularly on some aspects of demographic history (Shneiderman and Middleton 2018: 01-13, Subba 1992). They argued that before the advent of the British, the region was sparsely populated hillocks of few households of Lepchas, Mangars, Limboos and Rais (Pradhan 1982,

Bhattacharyya-Panda 2005). However, the development of Darjeeling from sparsely populated hillock to a famous hill station is the contribution of the Raj (Chettri 2013: 02) with the immense contribution of the hard working Lepchas, Nepalis and Bhutias. Their contribution to the making of Darjeeling has developed a sense of belonging towards the region in the present generation hill communities.

Darjeeling as a Himalayan frontier evolved through the different stages with the then kingdom of Sikkim and two sovereign nations- Nepal and Bhutan. Pre-colonial Darjeeling belonged to the then Royal Kingdom of Sikkim but it was conquered by the Gorkhas of Nepal in 1780 (Shneiderman and Middleton 2018: 01-13). It became the root cause of the Anglo-Gorkha war nearly after two decades. Troublesome situations emerged between the kingdom of Nepal and the British East India Company from 1804 to 1812 and frequent war broke out between them. The troop of Shah Dynasty was defeated by the British East India Company in the battle of Nalapani at Kangara in 1815. As a result of which the treaty of Sugauli was signed between them. Nepal had to cede its Terai region which included the present day Darjeeling district to the British East India Company. They returned Darjeeling to the Maharaja of Sikkim through the treaty of Titlaya in 1817 to establish a relationship of friendship and non-alliance. Townsend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman explained the early history of Darjeeling as:

“Throughout much of the eighteenth century, the territory between the Mechi and Teesta river was claimed by the Chogyal of Sikkim. Nepal’s military expansion eastward in the final decades of that century brought the tract under the control of Nepal’s Gorkha Empire. The area east of Teesta river meanwhile remained part of Bhutan. Nepal’s rule over Darjeeling came to an end in 1815, when the British mandated Nepal return the tract to Sikkim at the conclusion of the Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-16) by the treaty of Segowlee or Sugauli (1815) and subsequent treaty of Titalia (1817)” (2018: 05).

The hill stations in India have been inherited from the British colonizers. They considered summer as inhospitable and threat to a good health. All hill stations were

established by the British as early as 1815. They had already discovered the nearest hill station for metropolitan cities like Nilgiri-Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu, Mahabaleswar in the Western Ghats near Bombay and Simla-Mussoorie-Nainital near Delhi. However, till then they were in search of a proximate hill station from the then British capital- Calcutta. Darjeeling was discovered by the two British officers, Captain Lloyd and Mr. Grant who were sent by the Governor-General of Bengal to settle down the disputes that arose in Nepal-Sikkim frontier between Sikkim and Nepal in the year 1826. The two representatives discovered the entire region as favorable for a sanatorium to the British soldiers and they expressed their desire to the Viceroy. The Deputy Surveyor general Captain Herbert was sent to the area for examination. The court of Directors of the East India Company approved the project and General Lloyd was given the responsibility to negotiate a lease of the area to the Chogyal of Sikkim. The lease was granted on 1st February 1835 following the Deed of Grant. Kalimpong on the other hand belonged to the then Royal Kingdom of Sikkim but it was conquered by the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan in the year 1706. This was annexed to British India following the treaty of Sinchula on November 11, 1865, as a result of the Anglo-Bhutan war and after three years it was annexed to Darjeeling district (O'Malley 1907). Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarty summarises the formation of Darjeeling district in his article "Silence Under freedom: The Strange Story of Democracy in the Darjeeling Hills" as:

"The district of Darjeeling evolved through different stages. In 1835, Darjeeling was ceded to the English East India Company by the Raja of Sikkim. Darjeeling meant all land "south of the great Rungeet river, east of Balasun, Kahail and Little Rungeet rivers, and the west of the Rungnoo and Mahanadi rivers". Relations with Sikkim did not always remain peaceful thereafter and two further expeditions were led by the British in 1850 and 1861. A treaty concluded with the prince of Sikkim at Tumlung confirmed the British possession of Darjeeling. The war with Bhutan in 1861 led to the acquisition of Kalimpong and territories to the east of the Teesta. Thus the contours of the district of Darjeeling were formed" (2005: 173-174).

The British East India Company after acquiring Deeds of Grants from Raja of Sikkim wanted to develop a hill station and a sanatorium for the British soldiers, European and Eurasian elites and their families. On the other hand, its strategic location attracted the British as it was surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. They were very much interested to establish trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet through Sikkim (O'Malley 1907: 24, Chakrabarty 2005: 172-178). Perhaps, it was not an easy task because the entire region was covered by dense forest with scare helmets of habitants. The British acquisition of Darjeeling from Sikkim gave opportunities to the people of neighbouring areas i.e. Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and Hindustanis from the plains below. The British did not find much difficulty in acquiring cheap laborers from east of Mechi due to the prevalence of slavery and caste based discrimination and economic hardship in their native places. The arrangements for the permanent settlement of the laborers were made by the British. Initially, large numbers of coolies were needed to transport goods from one place to another and to carry out the development works like construction of roads, hotels, school buildings, etc. (Pinn 1987, Pradhan 1982, Chakrabarty 2018).

The growth of population further increased after the successful experimentation of tea seeds and the establishment of the tea industry in Darjeeling particularly after 1856. The establishment of the plantation industry led to the huge flow of European capital in Darjeeling and later on in Terai and Dooars. The shortage of labour was a major problem faced by British entrepreneurs. The planters employed large numbers of *Sardars* to bring the hard working labourer from east of *Mechi* river for which the *Sardars* were highly paid. It provided great opportunities to the economically and socially oppressed Nepalese from Eastern Nepal. The enforcement of *Muluki-Aien* (the national legal code introduced by Janj Bahadur Rana after his visit to Europe) and domination of the Brahmanical religion was absolute over the lower castes. So, the majority of people who came to Darjeeling were from lower castes. It has been evident that there were multiple forces of push factors responsible for their migration to Darjeeling. Apart from the abolition of the *Kipat* (communal ownership of land particularly among the Kiratis), there were many factors of Nepali migration particularly to Darjeeling-Sikkim and North-east India. It has been evident that the British encouraged Nepali migration and their settlements through

‘official sponsorship’ particularly in North-East India, Sikkim-Darjeeling, Bhutan and Burma. Several scholars acknowledge their ‘contribution in economic development of the region’ (Dutt 1981; Devi 2007). The British encouraged Nepali settlements to have easy access to cheap labour from their descendants. However, some scholars believed that the Kiratas of Nepali groups to be the earliest inhabitants of North-East India (Devi 2007: 3005). The Nepalis came to the various tracts of North-East India and Darjeeling Hills as the grazers and cultivators (Nath 2006; Sapkota 2009). In the successive years to come, the number of tea gardens went on increasing and the population too. It further increased due to the establishment of the Gorkha recruitment depot in Darjeeling in the year 1890. It continues to draw recruitment from India and Nepal. British wanted to recruit a large number of Gorkhas in the British Army because they were free from traditional bondage of both Hinduism and Islam. The British had already witnessed the great revolt of 1857 and they were facing turbulent years in other colonies too. They wanted Gorkhas to fight battles around the world for them (Shneiderman and Middleton 2018: 01-13). However, many Gorkha war prisoners in Singapore joined Indian National Army (INA) under the aegis of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose and actively participated in the nationalist movement and sacrificed their lives (Bagchi: 2009, Muktan 2015).

It is also a fact that since time immemorial the present day India and Nepal which was then divided into different principalities shared socio-cultural and religious proximity and migration between these principalities were vice-a-versa (Viehbeck 2017: 01-15). In pre-colonial India, the Nepalese had migrated to Munger (land of Mughals) and *Lahure* (Lahore) for their recruitment in the army of King Ranjit Singh (Golay 2009), although it became a significant phenomenon after the treaty of Sugauli of 1815-16 in the British army. In contemporary India, the Nepalis are found almost throughout India but they are generally concentrated in clusters of villages in different parts of North-East, Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Dehradun, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and much smaller numbers in metropolises like Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai (Subba 2003; Kumari 1999). There are three categories of Nepalis found in India. The first category comprises those Indian Nepali/Gorkhas who are Indian citizens and are living in this land for many generations. The second category comprises Nepali citizens

and seasonal migrant workers from Nepal in search of their livelihood. The third category comprises a minute section that illegally holds the citizenship of both countries (Subba 2014). The second and third categories of Nepalis in India are the result of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship and Peace (1950)'. Many Nepali/Gorkha raised their voice against this treaty because Article 7 of this treaty allows the 'reciprocal ties between India-Nepal and vice versa in terms of same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature.' This treaty does not talk about the earlier treaties that were signed between British Indian and Nepal. Since the treaty allows reciprocal ties in terms of residence and works the identity of the Indian Nepalis/Gorkhas who are living since generation in India often get confused with the citizens of Nepal. This was a major reason that most of the regional parties in Darjeeling are demanding the abrogation or modification of Article 7 of the India-Nepal treaty of friendship and peace. Such demand was raised by the GNLF and GJMM along with the statehood movement.

The colonial administrative policies have been largely responsible for the establishment of Darjeeling Hills as a colonial hinterland. The hill region was excluded from mainstream Bengal due to the vested interests of the British Raj. As a summer capital, the region was administered with special administrative policies. The district of Darjeeling was excluded from some of the general Regulations and Acts of Bengal in the name of the Non-regulation District. It was formerly a part of the Rajshahi Division but at the time of partition of Bengal in 1905, it was transferred to Bhagalpur Division. It was classified into a Non-Regulated Area for the preservation of the indigenous systems of natives from 1870-1874. It was a Scheduled District from 1874 to 1919. According to which it was kept outside the purview of general laws operating throughout the country. Again it was considered as a Backward Tract from 1919 to 1935 under which the Governor of a province had the sole responsibility of its administration. Darjeeling remained a Partially Excluded Area from 1935 to 1947 for which the Governor was to consult the Council of Ministers for its administration (O'Malley 1907: 156). Many argued that such policies along with the demand of 'separate administrative set up' in 1907 were supported by the

planters in order to have more control over labour recruitment policies in the plantation sector.

The contemporary tea garden workers have been forced to live in servitude even after the seven decades of independence. The plantation workers even after working in the same garden for many generations are deprived of land rights. Even they do not have homestead land in their name. Technically they are deprived of many schemes of the Panchayati Raj Institution due to lack of land documents. Ganguly (2012) locates the Gorkhaland movement in the light of 'poverty, malgovernance and ethnopolitical mobilization' and considered communities like Gorkhas as 'entrapped minorities'. He argued that most of such ethnic groups are subordinated by the majoritarian group who are culturally different and politically and economically powerful. Their deprivation, endemic poverty and underdevelopment status manifested in the statehood demands to establish a direct relationship with the central government (Ganguly 2012: 470-475).

2.3. Darjeeling Hills: Demographic Features and Social Structure

2.3.1. Communities and Demographic Features

The demographic features of Darjeeling Hills have been multi-ethnic constituted by the large numbers of communities belonging to different ethnic and caste backgrounds. The community and ethnic background vary with the landscape of the region itself. The urban center or hill town is multi ethnic and a type of mosaic culture can be witnessed among the communities living there like Bengalis, Nepalis, Marwaris, Biharis, Bengalis, Tibetans, Bhutias, and Lepchas etc. The Nepalis/Gorkhas constituted the numerically dominant community in Darjeeling Hills. Apart from towns and urban hamlets particularly in tea gardens, agriculture village and forest villages etc. Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas occupied the dominant position in the region. The Nepali language is lingua-franca of the region.

2.3.2. Nepalis/Gorkhas of Darjeeling Hills and their Social Structure

The Nepalis/Gorkhas can be defined as 'a group of people who share a common language i.e., Nepali'. The word Nepali signifies multiple connotations like language, community, and nationality (Pradhan 1987: 01-03). The Indian Nepalis also popularly call themselves

as the Indian Gorkhas to differentiate them from the citizens of Nepal. They are synonymously known as the hill community in West Bengal and their ethnographic boundaries have been extended up to Siliguri, Terai, Dooars and clusters of urban hamlets almost throughout North Bengal.

The Nepali/Gorkhas of Darjeeling Hills are heterogeneous and divided into several castes and sub-castes. The word Nepali or Gorkha is an umbrella term for several endogamous groups and castes or *jatis* that constitute a linguistic community. This community can be broadly categorized into *Tagadhary* and *Matawali*. Tagadhary literary means the “sacred thread wearer” and traditionally they do not drink or use alcohol in their rituals. They are regarded as the clean caste in the Nepali caste hierarchy. The Bahuns (Brahmins) occupy the topmost position followed by the Kshatriyas like Chhetris (warriors) and Thakuris (aristocrats). Bahuns are further divided into *Jharra Bahun* who traditionally perform rituals and *Jaisey Bahuns*, the astrologers. Among them also there are certain restrictions in terms of caste occupation and marriage etc. The Jharra Bahuns consider themselves as superior to the Jaishis. The Matwali are those endogamous groups who traditionally use locally prepared alcohol called *Rakshi* or *Jaavr* in their ceremonies and rituals. It literary means “alcohol users” or “alcohol consumer”. Traditionally the Newar (businessman), Gurung (Shepherds), Tamang (horse traders/cavaliers), *Rai*, *Limboo*, *Yakkha*, *Mukhia*, *Mangar*, *Thami* (agriculturists), *Sherpa* (potters and potato growers), *Bhujel* (beaten rice makers/ palanquin bearers), *Jogi* (ascetics) and others belong to *Matawali* group.

The lower strata of the Nepali caste hierarchy are occupied by the Indo-Aryan origin/stock scheduled castes or Dalits like *Sunar* (goldsmith) *Kami* (ironsmith), *Damai* (tailor and musician) and *Sarki* (cobbler) and they are commonly referred as *Kalo Matwali* (Singh 2010; Subba 1989; Subedi 2010). Most of the high and low caste Nepalis had migrated from India to Nepal during the Muslim invasion. All these endogamous groups or *jatis* are further divided into different clans and sub-clans, for instance, *Karki* is one of the sub-castes of the Chhetris who are further divided into *Mudula Karki*, *Sutar Karki* and *Lama Karki* and each of these sub-castes have further divisions.

One can notice differences among the Nepali speaking population in terms of their religious affiliations. The Tagadharis and scheduled castes are basically Hindu while the Tamangs, Sherpas, a section of Newars and Gurungs follow Buddhism. A large section of the Nepalis in Darjeeling and Sikkim are Christian. All other endogamous Nepalis are basically Hindu and some of them also follow their traditional religious beliefs and practices like shamanism, naturalism, animism and ancestor worship. All endogamous groups and castes possess their own way of life relating to birth and death ceremonies, marriage practices, folk songs and dance, myths and folklores, food habits and attires. Each and every group has its own dialect but the Nepali language has been the lingua-franca of all ethnic groups.

There are numerous festivals, big or small, celebrated by the Nepalis like *Dashain* (Durga Puja), *Tihar* (Dipawali), *Pahilo Baisakh* (Nepali New Year), *Chaita Dashain* (celebrated in the month of *Chait*), *Maghey Sankriti* (which is commonly known as *Makkar Sankriti*), *Guru Puja* (worshipping of the guru or teacher), *Sansari Puja* (worshipping of nature), *Lho-char* (new year of Lepchas, Bhutias, Tamangs, Gurungs and Sherpas). *Khukuri* is the most important religious and traditional weapon of the Nepalis. The traditional food of the Nepalis are *Salroti* (a ring shaped, spongy, pretzel-like bread), *Gundruk* (non-salted, fermented and sun-dried leaves), *Kinema* (a traditional fermented soybean food), *Senki* (non-salted fermented radish taproot), *Makai-ko-bhat* (an edible dish prepared from the flour of maize), *Chhurpi* (prepared from milk), *Mohi* (buttermilk), *Dahi* (traditional curd), *Dhero* (porridge-like Nepali food), *Masu* (meat), *Rakshi* (locally prepared beverage), *Jaanr* (alcohol made of grains) etc. Culturally these food have great significance and are traditionally important in different festivals and ceremonies (Liwang 2006; Tamang 2009).

In Darjeeling Hills, many of the characteristic features of the traditional Nepali/Gorkha society have been blurred. It is because of the impact of colonialism, modern education and the impact of tribal cultural traits among them. At present some of the elements of Hindu culture have been discarded by many Nepali/Gorkha sub-groups like

Rai, Mangar, Gurung and others due to the tribalization movement which has been pertinent in the region particularly after the 2000s.

2.3.3. Community and Identity Formation

Despite heterogeneity, the Nepalis/Gorkhas appear as a unified whole based on common language i.e. Nepali. The formation of Nepali identity in Darjeeling Hills in particular and Nepali diaspora outside Nepal in general has been based on a common language i.c. Nepali (Hutt 1997: 101-102). For Pradhan (1987), Nepali society of Darjeeling particularly emerged out from the *Sarvahara Varga* (proletariat basis) because they entirely constituted of *coolies* in contrast to the *Gora Sahib* (owners) and *Babus* (clerical staff from mainland India) in the colonial setting. The expression of proletariat basis of Nepalis in Darjeeling found in *Nepali Sawai* written by Hajariman Rai in 1900: '*Daju sardar, boini kulli, tupisamma wrin*' ('elder brother is Sardar, the sister is coolie- both are indebted up to the tip of their hair') (cited in, Chakrabarty 2018: 154). In the context of community formation of Nepalis in colonial Darjeeling, Pradhan (1982: 11) observed that:

“Those who had left Nepal encountering the feudal atrocities, soon realized that the feudal exploitation of Nepal was usurped by the force of British colonial exploitation in Darjeeling and became aware of the very fact that *Ramrajya* did not prevail in the then Darjeeling. Nationality question of the Nepalis was not the brainchild of the rising middle class nor did it even reflect the interests of the capitalist class as the Nepali society of Darjeeling was then entirely composed of sipahis (corps), laborers, agriculturalists, and plantation (tea, chinchona) workers.”(Translated and cited in, Sarkar and Khawas 2018: 183).

He further argued in his essay '*Darjeelingma Nepali Jati*' (1982) that the Nepali language developed as a lingua-franca among the diverse group in the colonial setting. There was a need for a common language among the coolies, sahibs and babus. In the course of time, Nepali emerged as a lingua-franca not only among the diverse groups within the Nepalis but also among the Lepchas, Bhutias and people of plains origin living in Hills. This language was also prioritised by the colonial agency because it was close to

Hindi and easier than the other dialects/languages. Secondly, the move for the development of the Nepali language was taken up by the Christian missionaries. They may have had vested interests behind such activities but it contributed much to the development of Nepali language and literature in India. The contribution of Col. Krikpatrik has been significant in publishing a Parbate (Nepali) vocabulary of 550 words with its English translation as early as 1811. J.A Ayton published “A Grammar of the Nepalese Language” as early as 1820 with Devnagri script. In the year 1869, the translation of the Holy Bible into Nepali was started by Rev. William Macfarlane and Ganga Prasad Pradhan. The publication of ‘*Gorkha Khabar Kagat*’- a Nepali monthly magazine from Kurseong in 1901 was very important in the history of Nepali language and literature. He made a notable contribution by establishing print culture among the locals by setting up the ‘Gorkha Press’ in Kurseong in 1901. William Carey identified this language as one of the major 33 languages of India during the decades of the 1920s. However, it is to be remembered that the earliest contributions made by the Christian missionaries reflected more concern with the zeal of conversion than truly educating the natives but it inadvertently sowed the seed of modern education among the hill people (Sundas 1993: 09-10, Sarkar 2008: 89-91). The Nepali language has always been the driving force behind many social movements in the region due to these historical reasons. It has a long historical significance of its growth, development and community and ethnic identity formation based on language.

The formation of two most important literary and cultural institutions of Darjeeling, namely, Gorkha Jana Pustakalaya (1919) and Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924) were the most significant events in the history of Darjeeling which shaped the society and community at large. The trio legends of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan; namely, Suryabikram Gnawali, Dharnidhar Sharma and Parasmani Pradhan who are commonly known as *Su-Dha-Pa* immensely contributed in publication of Nepali text books and other literary activities. Parasmani Pradhan in his early age established the *Gorkha Sahitya Samaj* in 1916 and demanded for the Nepali language to be medium of instruction at school level by discarding Hindi. It was recognised as a medium of instruction at the primary level in 1935 and at the intermediary level it was recognised in 1953 (Sundas 1993: 109). The recognition of Nepali language as medium of instruction at intermediary level by the

Calcutta University in 1911 and its recognition by Allahabad University in 1918 brought enthusiasm among the Nepalis in India. The development of print culture was another significant event. Since early days there have been publication of literary magazines; such as, Gorkha Khabar Kagat (1901), Upanayas Tarangeni (1902), Sundari (1906), Gorkha Sathi (1907), Madhawi (1908), Chandra (1914), Chandrika (1918), Tarun Gorkha (1928), Gorkha Sewak (1935) and many others. These magazines advertently or inadvertently were successful in producing a long term effect in the development of Nepali literature and society not only in Darjeeling but throughout India and outside as well. The socio-political consciousness among the Nepalis had developed through these literary activities. Their sense of belonging had been expressed through these literary journals (Sarkar 2008: 89-91, Rai 2012).

Since the early decades of the twentieth century, there was the growth of consciousness among them which resulted in the formation of vibrant civil societies and political organizations not only in Darjeeling and Banaras but throughout India. This resulted in the formation of various non-political organizations like the All India Gorkha League (1919) by Thakur Chandan Singh as the purely non-political organization in Dehradun which later on became the dominant political organization, particularly in Darjeeling. The Gorkha Dukha Niwaran Sammelan (1929) was another vibrant organization whose aim was to collect the unclaimed dead bodies and perform the funeral rites. A flurry of social organizations like Sri Hitkari Sammelan (1942), Himalaya Kala Mandir (1950), and others emerged which were objectively involved in redefining and creating a new Self-identity on the kinship of *Nepali Daju-Bhai* (Golay 2008: 09-11). All these organizations and Associations played a very crucial role in the social formation of the Nepali/Gorkhas in India. So, in the early twentieth century Darjeeling emerged as the centre of learning and development of Nepali literature, culture and society.

2.4. Darjeeling Hills: Women, Culture and Society

The gender dimension of any movement cannot be understood without understanding the ‘institutionalized gender relationship’ of a patriarchal social order. Gender is one of the bases of social inequality in Nepali/Gorkha society; however, there is a spatial-temporal, class and caste variation. It is normally understood as the ‘parallel and socially unequal

division of femininity and masculinity'. This distinction operates at the various levels of family, caste, class, economy, religion, politics and culture etc. It has been argued by most of the sociologist, feminist and the post-feminist that there exists gender inequality in every society.

The women in every society some way or the other have a low social position than the men. The development of feminism saw the subordinate position of women in society. There are various theoretical paradigms that deal with the whole issue of gender inequality in society. It is a hot and debatable issue among the scholars themselves who deal with the gender discourses. There are various groups of scholars such as Marxists who believe that the mode of production is the root cause of gender inequality but for the liberal, it is unpaid work of women for men by carrying out household work.

The two most important factors that determine the position of women in society are tangible and intangible resource control. Tangible factors are the material resources controlled by the women for instance bank balance, land, gold ornaments, and any other forms of material wealth. The intangible include non-tangible things such as educational qualification, technical know-how, rational mentality and so on. Many scholars argue that without knowing the gender dimension of a particular society it is not possible to understand the gender dimension of a social movement. As argued by Kuumba:

“Gender, on both objective and subjective levels, significantly impacts social movement recruitment and mobilization, roles played and activities performed within movements, resistance strategies and organizational structure, and the relevance and impact of movement outcome” (Kuumba 2003: 15).

2.4.1. Social Structure and Women

The position of women in the hill society of Darjeeling has been highly contested. This is because of the complex Nepali social structure on the one hand and its exposure to the colonial economy, modernity, and Christianity on the other. It is not possible to draw a firm understanding of society before knowing the society and its social structure. The norms, values, beliefs and practices, culture, tradition, customs differ from society to

society. To know the position of women in Nepali society one has to understand the Nepali culture, Nepali caste system, customs, beliefs and practices, social structure, etc in a unified complex whole.

It is a common notion among the masses that the Nepali society of Darjeeling Hills is a modern and gender neutral society; however in reality it is not, although it is relatively more liberal than its counterpart in the plains. The everyday life practices of gender construction among them have been deeply inculcated in the Nepali culture itself. The influences of caste, Brahmanical religion and new religions particularly among the Matwalis have been the important factors that tightened the ideologies of patriarchal norms. This society is not as patriarchal as the pan Indian society where violence against women, dowry death, female infanticide and male preference, etc are found. The Brahmanical patriarchal attributes are more acute among the high caste Nepalis, particularly the *Bahun*s, *Chhetris*, *Thakuris* and *Jaishis*. They are locally leveled as the *Tagadhary* or twice born caste because they are a class of people who traditionally wore sacred threads and do not drink alcohol. The Matwalis such as *Rai*, *Limboo*, *Yakha*, *Tamang*, *Sherpa*, *Mangar*, *Gurung*, *Thami*, *Mukhia*, *Bhujel*, *Newar*, *Yalmoo*, *Kami*, *Damai*, *Sarki* and others are much more liberal in their beliefs and practices. This is because the twice born castes are more inclined towards Hinduism and Brahmanical form of religious beliefs and practices; although one cannot deny the influence of Hinduism and new religion among the Matwalis.

‘Kinship structure and family structure account for some critical differences among societies in which it operate.’ Nepalis belong to patrilineal descent systems which organize marital, inheritance, and ritual behaviour in varying degrees (Dube 2009: 03). Like the rest India it is also a patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal society with the male domination in all spheres of domestic, social, economic and political life. The Patriarchal attributes and male hegemony is less visible among the Nepalis but its norms, values, culture, tradition and social structure supports male hegemony and subordination of women. Women have the inferior role and position in the family. Father is the head of the family or in case of his absence the eldest son has to take the responsibility of the whole family. The matter of

sexual hegemony is often controlled by the male not by the female. The inheritance of property is patrilineal. The father's property is usually distributed equally among the sons although there is legal provision for daughters to inherit parental property. The birth of a son is considered auspicious in as much as it enables the parents to receive a birth in heaven. A son has to perform funeral rites of the parents. However; the female has no such rights traditionally (Shrestha 1997: 184-185). The Nepali women of Darjeeling Hills enjoy considerable freedom in terms of match-making, sex, divorce, dress and being economically independent still the forces of patriarchy plays a dominant role in terms of property right, decision making and politics.

On the other hand, traditionally women are regarded as the portrayal of *Mata Lakshmi* (Lord of wealth) and touching of feet of parents by the daughter is a taboo among the Nepalis/Gorkhas. No religious ceremony is completed without the presence of unmarried girls but in reality, the situation is something different; even the great poet like Adhikavi Bhanubhakta Acharya compares women with the prostitute in his poem- *Badhu Siksha*. The modern fiction like 'Gurkha's Daughter' also reveals the same thing, which shows how the Nepali/Gorkha women are bound by the structure of patriarchy and how they are treated as unwanted in their own society (Parajuly 2013; Chhetri 2015). A recently published anthology of contemporary Nepali poems "*Ucchwas*" by Urmila Ghishing from Mirik (Darjeeling) expressed the sorrowful life led by the Nepali/Gorkha women. In her poem *Nariprati* (towards women) where she has narrated the subjugation and domination faced by them and urged for the revolution to get justice (Ghishing 2011-17-19).

2.4.2. Colonial Economy, Education and Modernity

The tea plantation provided employment in a different social set-up which had produced far reaching impact on the Nepalis. The traditional dependency of women decreased because of their shift from home production to wage employment in which they had a direct control over the income. They were strong and capable of doing work at par with their male counterparts; however their projection in the eyes of the European planters was weak and feeble because the British planters were only interested in acquiring cheap labour which came to them in the form of women and children. There was the feminization

of wages as well and women and children were paid lower salary than the men (Lama 2012: 202). Even now women are not promoted to higher ranks in plantation. Majority of the tea pluckers are women and all the official posts have been occupied by men.

The British wanted to preserve Darjeeling like all other hill stations of India which reminded them of the ‘second home away from home (Britain)’. They enforced western oriented superior construct upon the non-western indigenous hill people because they always wanted to maintain their supremacy upon the native. It does not mean that the natives were not having their traditional forms of knowledge in various fields. They constructed the traditional knowledge of natives as inferior and western modernity as the superior; that was how they maintained a distance between rulers and subjects/ruled. On the other hand, the Christian missionaries entered into the region with their civilization mission idolizing the ‘white man’s burden’ for evangelical purpose but they soon realized that without literacy it was impossible to preach the gospel (Chatterjee 1997). So, the primary work of Christian missionaries in the field of education was inspired by religion rather than the socio-political upliftment of the general masses. They opened many schools for the common people in order to carry out their evangelical mission and they encouraged education for all (Dewan, 1991: 312-315). Though initially there was resistance from the part of the hill people, particularly by the high caste Nepalis against Christianity, Christian education and conversion, it sowed the seed of western English education in the region. In due time, many people received education and accepted Christianity and western ideals partly, if not fully. This had a far-reaching impact on the life of the hill people in general and women in particular. Modern English education and Christianity brought empowerment to the life of hill people in general and women in particular but it also sowed the seeds of Victorian patriarchy. In the long run, the liberal tribal groups imitated the sharp division of ‘public-private role for men and women’ of the English society. Prof. Partha Chatterjee argued that the reforms brought by the colonial government were defined by the benevolent male patriarchs and women participated little in deciding the course of their own progress to modernity (Sinha Roy 2015: 31). The colonial modernity brought empowerment with new patriarchies (Chatterjee 1997).

2.4.3 Women in Oral Tradition

The oral Nepali tradition serves as the evidence for the historic role ascribed to women in their society. It shows the broad spectrum of marginalization of women in the past. There is a famous proverb in Nepali; *chhoraa paaye khasi khauli chhori paaye pharsi* (beget a son to get mutton, beget a daughter to get pumpkin). The present proverb reflects the element of patriarchy in Nepali society and also shows the differences in treatment received by the mother if she fails to give birth to a male child. The Nepali proverb says *dhilo hos chhoro hos* (let there be a son, no matter how late). It does not directly discriminate the girl child but preference of male child is directly proportional to the marginalization of women in due time. It identifies women as the *parayadhan* (others wealth) like *cheli paali kutumblaai, kukur paali chituwaalaai* (a daughter is reared up for the son-in-laws as a dog is for the leopard) and makes a shameful comparison of a daughter with a dog.

There has been a separation of public and private roles between the male and female like *ghar khaanu chhorile, desh khaanu chhoraale* (the daughter is for managing the household; the son is for the world) and *baabu choraa hisaapkitap, amma chhori aincho-paincho* (father son doing audit; mother daughter swapping things). It restricts the women stereotypically within the four walls of domesticity and associate male with the public and political domain. The Nepali oral tradition does not allow female to take the decision in the public sphere by saying *pothi baseko suhaudaina* (The crowing of hen is rather unbecoming) and considered daughter as infamy like *Chhori cheli gaalko gund* (a daughter is the nest of shame), *chhori mari gaal tari* (the daughter is dead and so is infamy) (Translated and cited, Uprety 2008, Sharma 2010: 44-54).

These proverbs may not be traditionally used in everyday life in the context of Darjeeling Hills but at the ideological level it is highly relevant. Such gender ideologies highly relevant both at public and private domain of the hill society.

2.5. History of Social Movements in Darjeeling Hills

The hill region of Darjeeling district is known as the historical site of social movement emergence due to the long standing demand for autonomy of the region. It is one of the

known movements in India particularly after 1980s in the name of Gorkhaland. However, the region witnessed several important movements based on anti-colonial activities, class, and language since first half of the twentieth century. There were several instances of protest of the plantation labourers against plantation owners and colonial agencies but the organized form of movement was started after the formation of the Indian National Congress of Darjeeling district in 1921 by Dalbahadur Giri (Chaudhuri 1988: 24-26, Bhandari 1996, Bhattacharyya 1986, Bagchi 2009). Their participation in the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22 was the first political movement of the hill people in an organized movement (Dash 1947: 37). The region was kept under the strict surveillance of the British government but it was unable to restrict the hill people from participating in the freedom movement of the country. The emergence of the class base movement of tea plantation workers during the decades of the 1940s under the leadership of CPI(M) occupies another important event in the history of social movements of the region. As a result of which an organized movement was launched in the year 1955 against the neo-colonial forms of exploitation (Sharma 2003). Such movement of the plantation workers continues even today for basic rights like minimum wage, land rights and several principles laid down in the Plantation Labour Act (1951). The Nepali language movement has been another important movement initially launched by the Nepali Bhasa Samiti in 1961 for the recognition of Nepali as the official language of the three sub-divisions in the Hills. Later on, a movement for the inclusion of Nepali in the eighth schedule of Indian constitution was launched through various organizations that got its recognition in the year 1992.

Gorkhaland movement is a widely known and studied ethnic movement in India. It is a demand for the separation of Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars from the domain of West Bengal under Article 3 of the Indian constitution. The demand for a separation of Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars from the domain of West Bengal under the Indian union was 'first placed before the government by the hill people/Gorkhas in the year 1907' (Subba 1992: 76, Chakraborty 2005: 171-195, Chakrabarti 1988). The Hillmen's Association, one of the earliest formed organizations of the hill people of Darjeeling district continuously placed its petitions one after another to the British government till

1942 for the creation of a separate administrative set-up but it could not achieve its objective (Dasgupta: 1999). On 15th may 1943, a branch of All India Gorkha League (AIGL) was formed in Darjeeling which was established by Thakur Chandan Singh in the year 1929 in Dehradun to look after the Socio-cultural and literary upliftment of the Gorkhas in India. The foremost objectives of the AIGL was to integrate the Gorkha Society into mainstream India but soon it emerged as the only dominant political organization of the Gorkhas in northern part of West Bengal. Mr. Damber Singh Gurung, 1st president of AIGL (Darjeeling) initially came out with the idea of merger of Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars with Assam but later on raised the demand of 'Uttarakhand' (Chakraborty 2005:179, Subba 1992:90). The decades of 1940s in the history of autonomy movement in the region was marked by the demand of 'Gorkha Sthaan' comprising Darjeeling, Terai and some parts of Assam by the communist activists of Darjeeling district like Ratanlal Brahamin, Charu Mujumdar and others (Bomzon 2008). Like all other political parties it also could not achieved its goal.

The most important and crucial phase of the identity movement could be considered as that of the post 1980s because for the first time the autonomy movement witnessed a massive participation of the Gorkhas with the clear vision of a separate state i.e, Gorkhaland under the banner of Gorkha National liberation Front (GNLF). This movement was much stronger than the earlier in terms of demands and articulation. It was the brainchild of Prantha Prashid formed by the intellectuals of Darjeeling. The GNLF supremo Subash Ghising organized the Gorkhaland movement in the light of regional history, Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan treaties, Gorkha recruitment in military and most importantly projected Agham Sing Giri as the *jatia kabi*. This movement emerged as the 'jati, asmita ra matoko larai' (movement for Gorkha identity and ethnicity) and took a violent shape caused hundreds of deaths, demolition of government properties etc. The GNLF dropped Gorkhaland movement as a result of the 'Gorkha Accord' and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) came into being in 1988. The demand for Gorkhaland again resurrected in North Bengal under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) since 2007 and it is still going on even after the formation the

Gorkhaland Territorial Administration 2011 (GTA), it resurrected in the year 2013 and 2017.

The available works on Gorkhaland movement such as, 'Migration and Scarcity of Land and Employment' (Sur 1983-84:157-177), 'Economic Stagnation' (Dasgupta 1988), 'Colonial Administrative Policy' (Chakraborty 1988), 'Transferring Anger Which Emerged from the Eviction of Gorkha from Meghalaya and Assam' (Mishra 1987:15-20), 'Internal Colonialism' (Bomzon: 2008), 'Poverty, Malgovernance and Ethnopolitical Mobilization' (Gangualy 2005), 'Gorkhaland: Crisis of Statehood' (Bagchi 2012), 'Challenging the State by Reproducing its Principles' (Wenner 2013), 'Choosing the Gorkha: at the Crossroads of Class and Ethnicity in the Darjeeling Hills' (Chettri 2013) 'Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response' (Sarkar 2013) 'Anxious Belongings: Anxiety and the politics of Belonging in Subnationalist Darjeeling' (2013), and others how that the Gorkhaland movement have been widely studied from different dimensions and perspectives. These works represented the identity movement in relation to nationalism, language, identity etc. The independence movement, trade union movement and language movement in Darjeeling Hills also got attention of the scholars (See, Karkidoli 1993, Sotang 2017, Rai 1992, Sharma 2003, Rai 2006, Muktan 2015, Bhattacharya 1986). A critical review on these works shows that the contributions of women in social movements in Darjeeling Hills have been largely neglected. In the following chapters we will discuss the contributions of women activists in the making of social movements in the Darjeeling Hills.

2.6 Summing up

The present chapter traced out the regional history of Darjeeling Hills with special reference to the community and identity formation and gender dimension. There has been a cultural exchange between the Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans, Nepalis and other communities which makes Darjeeling a distinct region in the Eastern Himalayas. The flow of colonial capital and the cultural encounter with Christianity and Christian missionaries, modern and western education brought far reaching impact in the region (Viehbeck 2017 01-15). The socio-cultural, gender and educational developments of the region have been largely shaped by these factors. Darjeeling emerged as the centre of Nepali/Gorkha culture and

society in India. The formation of various socio-cultural and literary institutions largely shaped the formation of Nepali/Gorkha identity and society in Darjeeling Hills. The region became the epicentre of various movements in both pre and post colonial India.

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Chapter III

Women and the Making of Social Movements in Darjeeling Hills

Sabetri Deviko santan hou hami. Jasari uslay deshko nimti laryo, tesari nai hami pani jatiko nimti larchou. [We are the descendents of Sabetri Devi. The way she fought for the nation; we will fight for our Jati] --- Dina Chhetri (Gorkhaland activist, Darjeeling, 2016)

3.1 Introduction

Contextualizing Darjeeling Hills in terms of women's movement reveals that there is no such movement that has erupted in the region which can be regarded as women's movement in true sense of the term. However, one can witness the emergence of women both as participants and leaders of the movement since the inception of the social movements in the region. There are many reasons for this. Most importantly it is necessary to understand the socio-historical context that gave rise to such movements. The movement that has been erupting in Darjeeling Hills is more gender integrative like tea plantation worker's movement, Nepali language movement and identity movement (Bhandari: 1996, Bhattacharyya: 1986, Bagchi 2009, Rai: 1992, Sarkar 2008, Rai: 2012). The problems and demands of the region have been different from the other parts of the country and so the social movements as well.

The present chapter argued that the participation of women in the contemporary movements in Darjeeling Hills has not come up in an abrupt manner but is the culmination of long historical realities. They were historically active in the various arenas of public domain and particularly in social movements in their own capacities. On the contrary women's voices were relatively silent but one can witness their emergence in the public-political domain which was considered as the male domain in the society. Their voices however, relatively remain unsung and unheard in the history of Darjeeling Hills. Thus, the following head briefly describes their participation in public-political arena of the Hill society and their emergence and contribution in the anti-colonial movement, trade union movement and constitutional recognition of Nepali language in India.

3.2 Women in the Making of Nationalist Movement in Darjeeling Hills

The anti-imperial wave touched upon every segment of Indian society irrespective of class, caste, community, religion and sex. People from all walks of life from all over the country contributed a lot and participated in the nationalist endeavor. The most prominent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Subash Chandra Bose encouraged women and children to be a part of nationalist movement. Women were very important contributors in non-cooperation, Quit India movement and other extremist activities in the freedom movement. The role of elite women in freedom struggle is well known. However, the contribution of the marginal women does not receive much attention in both academic and non-academic writings. It has been evident that although few in number the Gorkha women contributed in the freedom struggle both as the moderates and the extremists. Their participation in public political domain itself was a major challenge because they were not free from the bondage of indigenous patriarchy on the one hand and tremendously affected by the colonial patriarchy on the other.

It is necessary to understand the genesis of nationalist movement in Darjeeling before discussing their participation in nationalist movement. The early wave of nationalist movement hardly touched upon the lives of the hill society. The anti partition movement of 1905 also did not reach Darjeeling Hills but the same time witnessed the publication of Nepali newspaper called 'Gorkha Sathi' by the Nepalis living in Calcutta. Its objective was to spread nationalist awakening among the Nepalis but it was soon banned by the British in 1907. As a summer capital, Darjeeling was kept under the strict surveillance of the colonial government through various administrative mechanisms like provisions of Excluded and Partially Excluded areas. The British government and planters did not want the anti-colonial wave of the plains because it was a second home for them. Darjeeling provided huge sources of income for the planters from tea, cinchona, forest and others (Gurung 1989: 105).

The ideological basis of governmentality was the most important weapon through which the colonial government was able to maintain its hegemony in the whole country and the same has been applied to Darjeeling. They considered 'anglicized machine based

civilization’ of the west as superior to the ‘traditional indigenous civilization’ of the natives. The Christian missionaries with their civilizational mission were successful in converting a large number of people (Chatterjee 1989). They considered as their responsibility to civilize the east and various activities like opening of the schools, homes, churches, etc. were taken up by them. One can understand the western notion of superiority over the natives of Darjeeling as recorded by the British official and Gazetteers:

“Darjeeling has also been fortunate in having several officials, many tea planters, and a succession of missionaries who have devoted themselves to advancing not only the moral and spiritual but also the mental welfare of the people. Many have taught with their hands, more have shown by their example and active influence the uplifting power of a progressive civilization” (O’Malley 1907: 33-34).

3.2.1 Dal Bahadur Giri and the Awakening of Hill People

In such condition Dal Bahadur Giri initiated to unite not only the tea garden laborer but the whole region against the colonial ruler in 1921. He was thrown out of the Sikkim durbar by the colonial agent on his denial of preparing a false certificate and taking bribe from the colonial agents (Chaudhuri 1988: 24).

He returned to his native place and established Darjeeling branch of the Indian National Congress in 1921 and actively contributed in the freedom movement of the country. He was inspired by a large number of people and admired by the nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subash Chandra Bose and others. A large number of people followed him and took active participation in non-cooperation movement (Chaudhuri 1988: 24). The British official A.J. Dash in the ‘Darjeeling District Gazetteer’ recorded the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22 as:

“The district police have never had to deal with much serious political activity. The non co-operation movement of 1921-22 was the first occasion hillmen showed an interest in politics. It aroused excitement for a short time amongst tea garden labour and there was some boycott of foreign goods. There was a revival of interest in political agitation from 1931 to 1939 and in 1935 Lebung

was the scene of murderous attempt on the governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson” (Dash 1947: 37)

3.2.2 Participation of Hill Women in Nationalist Movement

In the successive years to come the path of Dal Bahadur was followed by a large number of men, women and children. Pioneer among the women leaders were Halen Lepcha (whose name was changed to Sabetri Devi by Gandhiji), Maya Devi Chhetry (who became the president of the congress branch of Kurseong sub-division of Darjeeling district in 1945 and member of Rajya Sabha from Darjeeling, 1952-62), Putali Devi Tamang (who established a night school and Harijan Samaj in Kurseong with Sarju Prasad Poddar to popularize the freedom movement) and among many others, however due to lack of proper documentation they remain as the unheard and unsung voices in the history of India (Bhandari 1996, Bhattacharyya 1986, Bagchi 2009).

Halen Lepcha from Kurseong in her early age went to Calcutta to learn the spinning of khadi in a school run by the granddaughter of Ishwar Chandra Vidhyasagar. She was born in Kurseong in 1902 and her family was migrated from Sikkim. She studied in Scout’s Mission School at Kurseong but she could not complete her schooling. It is said that she was deeply inspired by a speech of Bengali nationalist who came to Kurseong from Calcutta. This was her turning point and decided to give up her life for the freedom movement of the country. She was greatly inspired by the swadeshi and boycott movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. In this phase of nationalist movement Gandhiji was inspiring and encouraging women to be a part of non-cooperation movement (1920-21) (Roy Sanyal 2010). However, his view on women participants/activists as self sacrificing as Sita and sacrificing mother has been countered by the feminist writers. On the other hand it was his contribution that encouraged large number of women to come out of their traditional boundaries for the cause of nationalist endeavor (Kumar 1993: 05).

Halen mastered over the art of weaving charka and popularization of khadi in Calcutta. She represented as the head of khadi and charka exhibition organized at Muzaffarpur in Bihar. It was her turning point in political career. She also spent some time in teaching weaving charka in Bihar and was accepted by the locals as a nationalist leader

in some parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. During 1920s when Bihar was overtaken by the devastating flood, she took active participation in organizing relief operation and came in support of flood victims. This was greatly admired by Mahatma Gandhi. He met with Halen in the house of congress activist Serif Saudi and changed her name to Sabetri Debi. Since then she came to known as Sabetri Debi as because for Gandhiji Halen was alien name (Bhandari 1996, Rai: 1992, Roy Sanyal 2010).

As a nationalist and congress activist she widely worked with the people of Patna, Danapur, Bakipur and Muzaffarpur. During the non-cooperation movement she organized the working class of Jharia coal field and took out a procession of the thousands of coal workers. She participated in the Mammoth public meeting held in Calcutta and Ahmedabad session of All India National Congress. For a short time she stayed at Sewagram and Ananda Bhawan at Allahabad. She was greatly admired by the leaders like Kamala Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Urmila Devi and others (Rai 1992, Roy Sanyal 2010).

The British government issued an arrest warrant in her name in Bihar due to her anti-British activities. She returned to her home town- Kurseong after hearing the news of her ailing mother. It was the time when non-cooperation movement was widely spreading in North Bengal and Siliguri was one of the main centers of freedom movement activities. The nationalist and congress activists like Siv Mangal Singh and his associates were selflessly working among the people of Siliguri, Terai and Dooars. Sabetri Devi joined hands with him in Siliguri. They were campaigning against foreign goods in the villages. On 29th January 1922, Sabetri Devi, E Ahmed and many Gorkha volunteers were arrested from Siliguri while leading a procession violating section 144. This incident has been reported in the famous newspaper- Amrita Bazaar Patrika on 31st January 1922. It was mentioned that “Sabetri Devi with the congress secretary and E. Ahmed and Gorkha volunteers has been arrested” (Roy Sanyal 2010). She was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment in Darjeeling jail for several months. After her release from the jail, she was kept under the house arrest and restricted to move beyond Kurseong municipality.

Though she was kept under the strict surveillance of the government she carried out her nationalist activities silently and secretly. She played the leading role of a secret informer when Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was interned at his ancestral house, Gidday

Pahar, Kurseong in the year 1939-40. It is said that she used to deliver secret letters to Netaji inside the bread supplied from her husband's bakery. According to the 'Directory of Indian Women Today',

'Sabetri Devi helped Netaji Subash Bose to escape from imprisonment in Kharsang and migrate to Germany through Kabul. Her areas of activities were Jharia coal field, Bankura, Danapur and Patna' (cited in, Roy sanyal 2010: 12).

After independence she contributed actively in the various political and non-political activities. Mostly she has been remembered as a social worker in Kurseong. She became the chairperson of the various associations in Kurseong like Sherpa Association, Nagar Congress, Anjuman Islamia and Lepcha Association. In the year 1950 the government of West Bengal awarded her with the title of "Tribal Headman of the District". She was felicitated with Tamra Patra and a freedom fighter pension on the eve of silver jubilee of the Indian independence. The Netaji Institute of Asian Studies converted the house of Sarat Chandra Bose into the Netaji museum in Kurseong. In the museum, life of Sabetri Devi is described as:

"Halen or Sabetri Devi was born sometimes in 1902-03 in a Lepcha family migrated from Sikkim and settled at Kurseong. She was sentenced to three months of rigorous imprisonment for participating in non-cooperation movement. On another occasion she was kept under house arrest within Kurseong municipality. Her area of political and social activities extended from Darjeeling to Bihar and U.P. She had the occasion to be acquainted with Mahatma Gandhi, Ali Brothers, C.R Das, Subash Chandra Bose and some other eminent national leaders. She was the first woman to become commissioner of Kurseong municipality in 1936. She passed away on 18th August at Darjeeling".

Putali Maya Tamang was another well known freedom fighter from this region. Though her area of activities concentrated only within the district of Darjeeling, she played dynamic roles igniting the tea garden masses for the nationalist endeavor. There is no extensive written document on her life and her involvement in freedom movement. Her life

story is preserved in a biography written by her husband Sarju Prasad Poddar entitled “Swantra Sangram Darjeeling Oue Ma” published by himself from Kurseong. M.P Rai in his book “Bir Jatiko Amar Kahani” contributed one chapter on the life history of Putali Maya Tamang [Poddar]. Suryamani Sharma also contributed one chapter on the life history of Putali Maya based on the book “Bir Jatiko Amar Kahani” and interview with her son Surendra Poddar. In this section her life history and her contribution in nationalist movement is based on these available literature and oral history method based on the field work. Apart from these the Netaji Institute of Asian Studies which is commonly known as Netaji Museum situated in Kurseong preserved the life of Putali Maya Tamang Poddar as:

“Putali Maya was born on 14th February 1920 at Kurseong. Putali Maya Devi Poddar was attracted towards freedom movement when she was a school student. In 1937 when a branch of All India Congress Committee was formed at Kurseong Putali Devi became its active member. At the instance of Sarju Prasad she formed Harijan Samaj in 1939 and started night school for Harijans. Same year she also formed Mahila Samaj. On 13th August 1942 while she was leading a procession of quit India movement, she was arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one and half years. Having been released from jail she was not allowed to enter her paternal house and Sarju married her and gave her shelter. She passed away on 1st December 1984.”

Putali Maya Devi Tamang was born on 14th February 1920 in Kurseong. She was the youngest out of four siblings of Madan Bahadur Tamang. Her father was a peon in Kurseong Sub-divisional office. Like Sabetri Debi she was also the student of Scout’s Mission School in Kurseong. According to her son Surendra Poddar, his mother came under the influence of Sarju Prasad Poddar in an early age. He was a congress activist from Bihar and came to Kurseong because the British government had issued an arrest warrant in his name.

It was well known fact that the sudden demise of Hill Gandhi- Dal Bahadur Giri in 1924 created a certain vacuum for few years in Darjeeling. However, the people like Janga Bir Sapkota, Gaga Tshering Dukpa, Puspa Kumar Ghishing, Agam Sing Giri, Ramchandra

Giri, Madan Subba, Siv Mangal Singh and others were working in their own capacities and able to keep alive the dream of Giri in the region. Sarju did not remain quietly in Kurseong. He along with the other congress activists started giving more organizational structure to nationalist activities and popularized khadi (Poddar 1993).

After the formation of the Kurseong branch of Congress, Putali Devi formally took congress membership and actively participated in the indoor activities. The major hurdles she faced from her own family members were in two ways. Firstly, since her father was a government employ he was threatened by the colonial agencies regarding her activities in congress. Her father did not like her to engage with such activities. Even she was offered the job of a nurse in Kurseong hospital. However, she did not care and kept on moving with her involvement with the congress. Secondly, the society of that particular time was more patriarchal than the present day. There were certain obstacles from the part of the society because outdoor activities of women were not accepted. Her family and relatives had objection on her involvement in outdoor activities and they wanted her to be confined within the four walls of domesticity. Nothing could stop her from the ignited minds of nationalism.

She established Harijan Samaj in Kurseong in the year 1938. She was greatly helped by the other members of the congress. The major objective of this Samaj was to create an alcohol free society. They used to motivate locals and Harijans regarding the ill effects of alcoholism in the society and family. Her noted contribution was the establishment of the night school in Harijan building. She educated people about the ill effects of alcoholism and taught them to read and write. In due time, she became very successful in her work. Though the motive behind the establishment of Harijan Samaj and night school was to draw social consciousness but its major objective was to motivate them for the national awakening. She also imparted the knowledge and trained women in charkha [spinning wheels] and woved khadi [hand woven cloth].

She also established Nari Kalyan Samiti apart from the Harijan Samaj and Night School around 1939. The aim of Nari Kalyan Samaj was to address all kind of socio-economic issues concerning women and to impart knowledge and training in charkha. She

frequently came across such incidents of wife battering in her neighborhood. The husbands used to drink and came home late at night and beat up their wives. So, she decided to form Nari Samiti to protect women from such domination of the male. The major purpose was to solve the problems faced by the women. Slowly, a large number of people began to associate with her. The women openly started promoting the nationalist movement keeping photographs of Gandhi. In addition, throughout the entire hill region of Kurseong, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, the congress committee began to hold a strong position. These activities caught the attention of British officials and she was warned to keep away from the movement (Barla 2016: 44).

8th August 1942 was a significant day in the history of India. It was on this day Mahatma Gandhi launched Quit India movement in Bombay. The top leaders of Indian National Congress including Mahatma Gandhi were arrested on 9th August. It spread like fire in the whole country. The congress activists organized a huge protest rally in support of Quit India movement on 12th August. Most of them were arrested and taken to Darjeeling jail. Putali Maya brought out a huge protest rally against the arrest of the congress activists and they were also arrested and taken to the same place by the British government. The congress supporters were released but the top and influential leaders like Putali Devi, Sarju Prasad and Janaklal Kurmi were given the imprisonment of one and half year. Sarju Prasad was shifted to Rajshahi jail. Putali Maya was released in 1944 from Darjeeling jail.

The life of Putali Maya was not easy because she was not fully welcomed by her own family. Her health was deteriorating because of her mal-treatment in the jail. Her family was threatened by the colonial agencies on her involvement in the movement. Sarju was also released in the same year. The congress activists of the district advised them to get married. Their wedding was opposed by many locals because they believed it was against their customs and traditions. Wedding took place at Gorkha Jana Pustakalaya [library]. However, a large number of locals attempted to stop the marriage ceremony. Her parents were also against and did not support their marriage. Since both of them were involved in freedom movement without any source of income, they had to face acute economic problem for their livelihood.

After marriage they faced acute economic problems due to lack of income. There were even days when they went without food and yet continued their activities on behalf of the freedom movement. After independence she was engaged in social work in Kurseong. She and her husband Sarju Prasad Poddar were awarded with the freedom fighter pension and tamra patra by the Government of India in due recognition of their contribution in the freedom movement in the year 1972 (Barla 2016, Poddar 1996).

Mayadevi Chhetry was one of the most influential and inspirational figures among the Nepalis in India. She has been remembered for her dynamic leadership qualities and contributions in the various fields in the socio-political arenas. At an early age, she had to get married with Dil Bahadur Chhetri who was a primary school teacher and a social activist in Kurseong. Influenced by her husband and Naina Bahadur Sinha she educated herself in reading and writing without going to school. Dil Bahadur whole heartedly supported and inspired Mayadevi to take participation in public domain. She voluntarily began to teach at Davies primary school. Davies school was established by the retired Railways and government employees. She started participating in social work along with her husband.

She was an active member of the Mahila Samiti. In Mahila Samiti, the women publicly started preaching the nationalist movement by keeping the photograph of Gandhiji. In all the hill sub-divisions- Kurseong, Darjeeling and Kalimpong the Congress Samiti began to hold a strong position. The main objective of this organization was to look after health and hygiene, education etc. The sick women were taken to the hospital along with their kids and families for a regular checkup and to provide them with necessary medicines etc. Besides this, the women were also given knowledge about the values of education and the importance of education for their children and getting them admitted to the school. They were also provided with the knowledge of rearing children, health and hygiene etc. The effort made by this organization led to the decrease in physical violence against women by their husbands to a very great extent. In 1935 Gorkha Dukh Niwarak Sammelan was formed in association with this Mahila Samiti (Giri 2010).

She was one of the active participants in the freedom struggle during the decade of 1940s. In Independent India, she was elected as the Member of Rajya Sabha for the two

constitutive years (1951-61) from West Bengal. In the parliament, she greatly contributed for the recognition of Nepali language and other related issues with the Nepalis in India (Giri 2010).

The Gorkhas in India not only participated in the Gandhian path of non-violence but they also actively participated as extremists in the nationalist movement. The extremists challenged the inefficiency of the non-violent methods of satyagrahis. The participation of Gorkhas in the Indian National Army (INA) under the leadership of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose has been well acknowledged in history. However, there was a small group of Gorkha women particularly in Kalimpong who joined Rani Jhansi Regiment-women's troop of INA. Sunkesari Chettri was one of its active leaders. She was also actively involved in the All India Gorkha League. There were the active members like Pema Doma, Prembadha Subba, Tiny Gurung, Shanka Gurung, Phoolmaya Dahal, and Pavitramala Moktan among many others who participated in the plans and programmes of Rani Jhansi Regiment. It is very difficult to get the descriptive account of their plans, programmes and activities due to lack of proper documentation. These women activists also participated in the boycott of foreign goods in the hill town of Kalimpong.

The feeling of nationalism touched upon the tea garden labourers of Dooars. Despite many difficulties, the people of Dooars contributed selflessly to the independence movement. Workers were subjugated by the owners and they were treated as slaves. Their interaction with the outside world was forbidden and was a punishable offence. The activities of the Congress were initiated much earlier; however it got momentum only after 1942 when Mahatma Gandhi launched the quit India movement. The working class leaders like Dutta Singh Sanyasi, Kuber Rai, Shanta Pradhan, Birkaji Pradhan, Gyan Bahadur Rasailey and others played an important role. Agam Maya Rai, Nina Maya, Shanta Rai and Gita Limbu were few among many invisible women leaders who united working class for freeing India from the hand of British. Many of them were arrested and imprisoned for initiating anti British activities among the tea garden workers in 1946. They were released by their party activists- Sunil Sarkar, Daven Sarkar, Diyush Kati Mukherjee and others; however the British official passed an order for expulsion on them from their respective tea

garden (Lama 2014: 99-112). After independence they returned to their garden and contributed in the trade union movement against the neo colonial form of subjugation.

The above discussion shows the active participation of Hill women of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas in the Indian independence movement. Darjeeling was kept under the strict surveillance of the government but natives of the region including women and children made noteworthy contributions both at the national and regional context. Though few in numbers these women freedom fighters of the region had the heterogeneity of their experiences in the context of their participation in nationalist discourse and the family support received by them.

3.3 Working Class (Plantation) Movement and the Participation of Women in Darjeeling Hills

The year 1955 has often been considered as the landmark year in the history of social movements in the region. It was on 25th June 1955, thousands of members of the working class from different tea estates gathered at Margaret's Hope tea garden to protest against the colonial law and neo-colonial form of subjugation in the tea belt of North Bengal. The unarmed workers were subjected to indiscriminate firing by the government authorities where six people died which included one child and two women. Since then Margaret's Hope became synonymous with labour movement in the region. Although it failed to bring structural changes it taught a lesson that subaltern can speak and raise their voice. This movement was indeed a significant event because such protest was first of its kind participated by thousands of men, women and children. This movement largely impacted on the shaping of the contemporary identity politics and social movements in Darjeeling Hills.

It has been witnessed that the working class movement in mainstream India started quite early but not in Darjeeling. One of the most important reasons was that the planters did not want to lose out the huge profit from the branded tea of Darjeeling in the international market. Plantation economy in the forms of tea and cinchona plantations constituted the backbone of colonial and post-colonial Darjeeling. The British government and planters in Darjeeling Hills followed every possible way to protect Darjeeling from the

anti-colonial activities of the plains. However, in post independent India also such colonial legacy and laws continued in the tea belt of both Hills and plains. The plantation working class movement of 1955 which had its genesis in 1940s was against such laws which were continuing in the tea gardens even after eight years of Indian independence.

3.3.1 *Lal Tara* (Communist Party) and Women's Question in Darjeeling Hills

Without going through the contribution of Ratanlal Brahmin the history of tea plantation movement would remain incomplete. Since his childhood he was greatly inspired by the community sentiment (*jatiya chetna*) and involved in the social activities for welfare of the people. The communist activist Sushil Chatterjee was sent to Darjeeling district for the extension of communist party in Darjeeling district. Though Brahmin was not aware of the ideology of communism, his ideas had great similarities with the communist ideologue Sushil Chatterjee. This led to the establishment of the Communist Party of India of Darjeeling district in 1943. In the same year another dominant political party of Darjeeling district the All India Gorkha League came into being under the aegis of Damber Singh Gurung.

The establishment of the Communist Party of India was most significant event in the history of Darjeeling in general and trade union movement in particular. Since the inception of the communist party in Darjeeling they started working for the rights of the working class. As a result of which *Lal Tara* (communist party) received huge support from the working class of different tea gardens. The CPI(M) had to face difficult situation in this respect because they were organizing the workers against exploitative age old institution of the colonial capitalist economy. The lives of the workers were very pathetic as they suffered from the hardship of life for their survival.

In the mean time Ratanlal Brahmin was declared as the CPI(M) candidate from labour constituency for the election going to be held in 1946. The labour constituency constituted of only twelve tea gardens. Those tea gardens were Pandam, Harsing, Baneberg, fubtshering, Pattabung, Soam, Singtham, Ringnith, Happy Valley, Stanthal, Sidrabung and Dali and rest of the gardens were excluded from the labour constituency. He

was gaining popularity as working class communist leader in one hand but he was facing troubling situations from the authorities and government on the other.

Ratanlal Brahmin received huge support from the tea garden labourers. Intellectually he was guided by the learned and dedicated comrades like Sushil Chatterjee, Ganeshlal Subba, Satyender Majumdar and many others. They came out with the eleven point agenda in the election. They were: (1) eradication of *hatta bahira* (2) increase of wage (3) maternity allowance (4) eradication of child labour of children below ten years (5) sports for labourers (6) schooling for children (7) nationalization of tea gardens (8) establishment of hospitals and free medicine (9) pensions for the retired persons (10) *baksis* (bonus) and leave during festivals (11) exemption of tax for animals and kitchen garden (Brahmin 1951).

It was for the first time in the history of Darjeeling issues concerning women was raised by the CPI(M). The British legislature passed various Acts like maternity benefits in 1919 but it was not formally incorporated in the tea gardens of Darjeeling-Dooars. By looking at the eleven points election agenda one can understand the social condition of the plantation workers not only in Darjeeling Hills but the conditions of workers was not better in Dooars-Terai also. The eleven point agenda was significant where the labour class was living in servitude and destitution. The eradication of *hatta-bahira* was the most important demand that they had raised. It was designed by the colonial agencies for the extraction of surplus value from the labour power. The workers were not allowed to speak against management and in case of any such activities and incidents from the part of the workers they were thrown out of the colony which was known as *hatta-bahira* (forceful eviction of workers from the garden). The Communist stalwart of Darjeeling, R.B Rai, in his book “1955 *Agi Ani Pachi*” (before and after 1955) mentioned the numerous incidents of labourers being thrown out of the plantation for the reason like wearing wrist watch and shoes and buying umbrellas etc.. Such incidents continued even after independence also (Rai 2005: 03).

Since the establishment of the plantation economy in the region the workers were under paid and wage discrimination was another major problem and issue in the garden. Even during the decades of 1940s the daily wage of the workers in Darjeeling Hills was

only 5 anna for marad (men), 4 anna for aurat (women) and 1 anna and 6 pie for chokralokera (child labour). The Royal Commission was formed by the British government for the well being of the workers as early as 1931 but it was not implemented in the tea belt of North Bengal. Apart from these, the British government legislature passed the Trade Union Act (1926), Fatal Accidents Act (1855), Employee's Compensation Act (1923) but these were not incorporated in the tea gardens.

The tea industry as a labour intensive industry constituted the large number of women labourers. Although the colonialist and planters considered themselves as superior and rational, they were very cruel to the plantation labourer particularly to women that they even did not allow the maternity leave to them. The women were threatened by the agents of the planters and their wages was cut off. The communists of the district were also concerned with the women's issues. Three most important issues that they had raised in the 1946 election was wage, maternity allowances and eradication of child labour. Such was the condition of the working class as described by a retired school teacher:

“My mother used to narrate her story of being labour in the tea garden in my childhood. During company government the condition was worse. Even now also it is not that good... The company used to give only one set of cloth. The way she used to describe it must be jeans. Workers were allotted one room thatched house made of up mud.... Later on roof was replaced by tin. All the members had to accommodate in the room. There was no separate kitchen even. Despite of working hard for the whole day she used to get lower wage than the male. They had to work bare footed without umbrella and raincoat and the gardens were full of leaches. The children were least encouraged to take education because of poverty but later on Christian missionaries encouraged them. There was no maternity leave. Even the pregnant women had to go for plucking early in the morning, otherwise their *hajira* (wage) was cut” (Rai: 2016).

Women and children were not only underpaid but they were also not promoted to any managerial posts by the authorities. The colonial managers officially employed young girls whom they called *chokri* in their bungalows as servants and there were many

instances of physical exploitation of the women. They have been the subject of discriminations and exploitations both in colonial and post colonial India. The workers were exploited and marginalized through multiple mechanisms. The colonial governmentality followed all possible ways to extract maximum profit from labour exploitation. The colonial legislature was much in favor of planters. They were not given shoes, umbrella, clothes and proper medicine even in the rainy season. The workers were not allowed to wear wrist watch, listen to radio and wear shoes and full pants because it symbolizes British culture. This was how they maintained distance between the ruler and the ruled (Pradhan 2005: 1-4).

The working class was deprived of basic human rights like maternity leave and allowance, casual leave and sick leave, festivals leaves and bonus among many others. In order to maintain low labour cost, no welfare benefits were introduced in the plantations, despite the fact that maternity leave legislation was passed in the colonial-era Bengal in 1939. Situation was very pathetic and tough in the plantation as stated by an old retired plantation woman who had seen both pre and post independence phase.

“I was born in a village near Balasan. Name of the village was Pachyang. Sardar brought my family to work because of labour shortage when I was eight years old. Along with my parents I had to work as a chokra. Children of my age were not allowed to go to the school rather encouraged to work as child labour. Gora Sahibs and company Sarkar even after independence used to rule in the name of discipline (*kara kanun*).

She further narrated how the labourer used to work bare footed with full of leaches during rainy season without barsati (umbrella). She sadly narrated how the hatta bahira was not restricted to the workers but also to the Bengali Doctor like Aviranjan Talapatra. She also narrated the compartmentalization of health during colonial days. She narrated the story of how Tuberculosis patients were treated and compartmentalized in the colonial hospitals. According to her, planters were responsible for such condition of the labourer because they had to work very hard but the quantity and quality of ration distributed by them was very low” (Dewan 2016).

3.3.2 Trade Union Movement and the Labour Politics

It is needless to mention that Ratanlal Brahmin and his communist activists immensely contributed to raise subaltern consciousness not only among the tea garden laborers but they equally focused on the other downtrodden section of the hill society. There was a slow and steady rise of working class consciousness among them along with nationalist movement in the region. The Gandhian activists of the region like Dal Bahadur Giri, Swami Sachitananda, Bhagat Bahadur Tamang, Halen Lepcha, Harish Chhetri, Gaga Tshering Lepcha, Sarju Prasad Poddar, Jangabir Sapkota, Putali Devi Tamang, Harish Chhetri and others actively worked with tea garden masses. Nevertheless, it received much success during the decades of 1940s under the communist leadership. They initiated to give collective voice to the marginal by establishing various organizations like Driver's Union, Rickshaw-man Union, Din Mazdoor Union, Chattra Federation, Milkmen's Union, Mahila Samity and Kisan Sabha in an around 1943 (Brahmin 1951: 08, Rai: 2005:05).

Brahmin was contesting in the election but there was no formal labour organization to bring the working class into one fold. However, it was evident that workers were fighting for their cause against the garden authorities in their own capacities and organizational power. By that time intellectuals and dedicated leaders like Bhadra Bahadur Hamal and Ganeshlala Subba also came forward for the labour cause. In order to give proper organizational structure to the working class movement the Darjeeling Zilla Chai Kaman Mazdoor Union was formed on 15th December 1945. Since its inception the communist party as whole was targeted by the owners with the help of government. They were restricted from entering into the garden of the constituency for campaign. Ratanlal was targeted by the police on false allegations. Eventually they received huge support from his constituency which resulted in its victory in 1946 election.

The attitude of the government did not change much even in the post independent India. On 26th March 1948 the CPI(M) was banned and declared illegal in some parts of the country. Ratanlal Brahmin, Ganeshlal Subba, Badrinarayan Pradhan, Ramashankar Prasad, Sushil Chatterjee and other activists were arrested.

The registration of Darjeeling Zilla Chai Mazdoor Union was also cancelled by the government which caused the major setback in the plantation movement for two years. Most of the arrested leaders were released from jail in 1950 and they continued with the same activities among the tea garden workers. Since registration of the Darjeeling Zilla Chai Mazdoor Union was cancelled they came up with another union called Chai Kaman Mazdoor Union in 1951 (Pradhan 2005: 1-4). R.B Rai (2004) gives detailed accounts of how tea garden labourer even in this dark period kept on fighting without any trade union or any organization. The major demands that were made by them in different tea gardens were eradication of hatta bahira, good quality and quantity of ration, construction of toilet and drinking water tap, tin roof house, electricity connection, four day leave in a month, primary schools and bonus, maternity allowances etc.

3.3.3 Women's Participation in Margaret's Hope Uprising of 1955

Although the major uprising of the tea plantation working class took place in Margaret's Hope on 25th June 1955, it is deeply rooted in socio-economic and political exclusion and age old exploitation of the working class in the region. The trade union had its genesis in 1940s but in Margaret's Hope tea garden there was no trade union but soon after independence a Bengali doctor, Aviranjana Talapatra started organizing the people of tea garden with the help of Harilal Sardar, Mohan Singh and others. He was a doctor by profession and communist by ideology. However, they were soon hatta bahira by the garden authority along with some other activists.

Chai Kaman Mazdoor Union received huge support not only from the common people but also from Congress and Gorkha League. In due time many of the tea gardens in Darjeeling, Kurseong, Mirik and Kalimpong were able to extend the branches of Mazdoor Union. Workers were fighting for their rights and they were receiving new impetus from the Mazdoor union. In 1952 election, All India Gorkha League became victorious in all of the four legislative assembly seats. Its labour union, Darjeeling Chai Kaman Shramik Sangh was also working for the workers. The Indian legislature passed an act called Plantation Labour Act in 1951 but it was

not implemented till 1954. The neo-colonial form of subjugation continued in the tea gardens.

On 8th May 1955 they submitted 14 point demand to the government jointly by the Mazdoor union and Shramik Sangh. These demands were: (1) eradication of hatta bahira (2) three months wages equal bonus (4) equal wage for Darjeeling at par with Dooars (5) modification of standing committee report (6) salary increment of staff and others (Pradhan 2005: Rai: 2005). No response had come from the owners. As a result of which a meeting was organized jointly by CPI(M) and Gorkha League in the premises of Dukha Niwarakh Sammelan on 5th of June 1955 under the aegis of Nar Bahadur Gurung. In that meeting it was decided that if the authority would not take any action till 22nd then they threatened to launch an agitation. An action committee was formed under the leadership of Ratanlal Brahmin and Deo Prakash Rai of All India Gorkha League. The volunteers were raised almost in every tea garden. There were some steps taken by the authority but it was unsuccessful. As a result, the atrocities from the authority and government started increasing and a very strong movement was launched from the part of the workers. On 20th June most of leaders like Ratanlal Brahmin, Deo Prakash Rai, Bhadra Bahdur Hamal, Manoranjan Ray, Anandha Pathak and LB Lama were arrested.

Since the formation of the Communist Party of India and trade Union in Darjeeling a large number of men, women and children became its active supporters. Due to lack of organizational capacities they may not have taken the formal membership of the communist party. A large number of women joined *Mahila Samiti* of the CPI(M) and took active participation in its plan and programme which mainly centered on the cause of working class. As remembered by Kali Limbuni, the women activist of Margaret's Hope uprising:

“Since the formation of CPI(M) and its trade union people were demanding repeal of the hatta bahira, maternity benefits, wage, bonus etc. among many other minor but important demands. Since 1940s many women leaders came out in support of the trade union. They were very active at the village level. Chamalee Tamang (Singtam), Fistee Limbunee (Soam), Sangya Limbunee

(Liza Hills), Alen Kaminee (Ben Berg) and Meena Shanka (Ghumtee tea garden) were some of the names that I remembered who were very active in the plantation movement and formation of branches of trade union. I also joined my mother with the other members of the *Nari Sangathan* (women's wing of the trade union) in the protest demonstration against the management.”

Margaret's Hope was the centre and plantation workers were gathered from the different places to submit memorandum to the authority. Margaret's Hope uprising was joined by a large number of workers from the neighbouring tea gardens like Maharani, Singtam, Munda which would make Margaret's Hope the birthplace of organized labour movement in the tea landscape of Darjeeling. On 25th of June 1955 it took a violent turn as remembered Kali Dewan as the activist:

“That day was the most remarkable day in the history of trade union movement in Darjeeling. Our *julus* (procession) started from Dokan Dara. Since maharani tea garden was forcefully kept open by the management and we were leading the procession towards maharani to make hartal successful. We were stopped by the police on the way but our determination was so strong even Police had to fire tear gas on the protesters. There was the lathi charge by the police on the protesters. There was stone pelting from the protesters and we noticed sudden firing by the police. I saw Kali Limbu falling down from the tree like a flying bird. He was shot death by the police bullet. We all felt nervous and ran rampantly here and there. Later on we heard that thousands of people were injured. Six people died but at last we won the battle.”

The authority did everything possible to terrorize the protesters but they failed. The protest movement reached its climax on 25th June 1955. Thousands of working class gathered from different places at Margaret's Hope to place their 14 point demands. However, the police indiscriminately fired on the unarmed plantation workers and killed six of them. They were Amrita Maya Kamini (18 years), Mouli Sova Raini (23 years, pregnant lady), Kancha Sunuwar (22 years), Padam Bahadur Kami (25 years), Kale Limbu (14 years) and Jitman Tamang (45 years) (Sharma 2003: 140-144). Gupta Maya Rainee was one of the activists who was arrested and

taken to Kurseong jail. Due to lack of proper medicine and care she lost her two year old daughter (Rai 2004).

On 26th June, the administration of Darjeeling declared promulgation of section 144 under Cr. P.C but thousands of people came out in the street to pay last homage to the deceased souls. Only after that incident demand of the workers like minimum wage, maternity leave, casual leave sick leave etc. were sanctioned and hatta-bahira was abandoned. In independent India also working class in the entire tea garden of the region have remained under the neo-colonial form of subjugation. The contemporary plantation economy had to witness the various problems like frequent closing down of tea garden, malnutrition and other. One can see the gendering of work in plantation hierarchy because all the managerial post are occupied by men and in rare cases they are raised up to the post of *chaprasi* and *baidar*. The plantation movement of 1955 has been cherished by the people in Darjeeling Hills. Many of the workers like Mrs. Subba who participated in the movement still cherish the victory of the working class as:

“Do you know? Whatever the facilities that workers are getting today that was brought by us. There was no *sutkery bhatta* (maternity allowance). Ratanlal and few Bengali gentlemen were very active. They worked for organizing the laborer. My father sometime used to carry them in *doko* on his forehead. You know people from the plains cannot walk for long time in the Hills. My mother used to cook food for them. Even I used to participate in the rallies but without much understanding what it was all about. I was around 20 years old. There were many chokra-lokras and use to work in Kaman. It was a great victory of the workers” (Subba 2016).

The plantation movement of 1955 was one of the most important movements in the history of plantation working class movement. It was joined by thousands of women and children apart from men. Similar movement of the plantation workers continue even today for the basic rights like minimum wage and proper implementation of the Plantation Labour Act (PIL).

3.4 Nepali Language Movement and the Participation of Women in Darjeeling Hills

Language is not only a medium of communication but it is a vehicle through which transmission of culture takes place from one generation to next. It is an inherited part of the community's culture and identity. It is being said that language is the pillar of a culture and culture is the pillar of a nation. For many communities in South Asia language politics appeared as the basis of social protest. It has often taken the shape of an emotional issue and something eternal to the community; that is why, the slogan, 'Vasa Amader Pran' (language is our life) has been pertinent among the Bengalis during the language movement in East Pakistan.

The language issue was not new in the context of India because India had to face the confrontation of several language problems in both pre and post independence periods. The official language problem, recognition of linguistic states and problem of the linguistic minorities were the major problems in both pre and post independent India. Language as the basis of community identity has been gaining its prominence in identity politics and regionalism in India. Similar instances and problems were encountered by the Nepalis/Gorkhas in India since first decades of the twentieth century.

Nepali language movement shares one of the important chapters in the history of social movement among the Nepalis/Gorkhas in India in general and Darjeeling in particular. The development of Nepali language and literature in the twentieth century Darjeeling immensely contributed in shaping Nepali/Gorkha identity in the country. The Nepali language has its own rich cultural heritage not only in Darjeeling but in the other parts of India where Nepalis constitute a majority. However, since independence, the Nepali speaking people had to face the confrontation of the linguistic problem both at the national and regional levels [Darjeeling Hills] which has often taken the shape of ethnic movement in the region. In the context of language Swatahsiddha Sarkar remarks as:

“On many occasions Gorkha ethnic conflict did project the recognition of Nepali language as a bond of contention. History suggests that Nepali language in Darjeeling Hills has appeared as the marker of ethnic identity, a vehicle for

expressing cultural distinctiveness, a source of national cohesion, and most importantly an instrument for building up a political community” (2013: 52).

Such movements are remarkable for the emergence of women in large numbers and their leadership qualities as already driven by their participation in the freedom struggle. Thus, in the present section, we will try to look into the historical background and development of Nepali language in India which largely contributed in the formation of Nepali/Gorkha identity which gave rise to the movement for the ‘politics of belonging’ among the Indian Nepalis. Secondly, it is necessary to analyze the emergence of women in literary activities because their participation in literary activities provided space for public political participation in the movement for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language. Thirdly, their participation in two language movements in India: (I) movement for the recognition of Nepali as an official language for Darjeeling Hills, (II) movement for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language under 8th schedule of the Indian constitution for 36 years.

3.4.1 Women and Vernacular Writings: A Silent Revolution

It has been witnessed that development of Nepali language and literature in India has a long history. It is significant in shaping the ethnic identity of the Nepalis/Gorkhas in India. In the beginning there was no activity of the women because it was considered as the male domain. However, during the decades of 1940s large number of women appeared in the literary activities which have been discussed in the next section.

Participation of women in the context of Nepali language movement has its own historical significance in the region. Their contribution in social movements in pre and post-independent India too maintained a long history of its own. The society was patriarchal and public arenas were largely considered as the male domain but they were able to make their presence felt in the form of vernacular writing and other form of literary activities in their own capacities. It may be considered as the silent revolution among the women because without much formal education and as house wives they were writing against the patriarchal attitudes of the Nepali society. On the other hand they were also concerned about the well being of their society as a whole.

The first half of nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of important Nepali literary institutions like Gorkha Jan Pustakalaya (1919) and Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924) in Darjeeling Hills. It has been found that these institutions had done so much of activities in spreading Nepali literature but there was no record of single woman activist in its early decades. However, at the same time as early as 1926 a vernacular called ‘Gorkha Sansar Patrika’ brought out from Dehra Dune did make their presence felt. Bidhyadevi Naha in the volume published a poem ‘Chora Chori Kun Hunna’ and probably it was the first published literary work written by an Indian Nepali woman (Sundas 1993). In her poem she highlighted a kind of gender consciousness and urged for the equal education for the girl child without any discrimination in the society. The two more creative writings appeared in the same volume written by Phulmani Pradhan and Vidhya Devi Acharya (Sharma and Singh 2007: 70).

In the context of Darjeeling it was Rup Narayan Sinha inspired by the progressive call of ‘Khoji’ encouraged women to overcome the threshold of domesticity during 1940s. It was also the result of the growing intensity of women’s education in Darjeeling Hills. Many women writers emerged in this magazine published by Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan. The publication of a magazine called Siksha by Sunkeshi Pradhan in 1949 from Kalimpong influenced and encouraged a large number of women to take active participation in the literary activities in the entire region. Within a span of short time a large number of women appeared in the field of literary activities and many of them became the editors of esteemed magazines and journals published from the region like Bharti, Hamro Sanket, Purnima, Nava Prabhat, Diyalo and others. Chief among them were Deo Kumari Thapa, Amrita Chettri, Radhika Raya, Bishnumati Ghatraj, Man Kumari Chettri, Chandrakala Gurung, Radhika Raya, Mayawati Chettri, Prabhavati Raya and others. These activities have historical significance among the Nepali women as noted by Sharma and Singh 2007: 70:

“Stories and poem published at that time are examples of protest against conservative attitudes of society towards women. Since women writers were rare, professional writing was assumed to be male activity. So they found it difficult to imagine and therefore, depict women as activists. Consequently

they were conveniently passed off as ‘invisible’. This attitude has persisted right through the twentieth century and it expressed itself in the kind of disregard for and undermining of women writers”.

Another significant event at the same point of time in Darjeeling Hills which immensely provided space to women was the emergence of Hasta-Likhit Patrika (hand written magazine). It was started in the mid 1943 due to scarcity of papers and government restriction on printing and publication. The publication of hand written magazine reached even in the remote corners of entire Darjeeling Hills. Many schools in the Hills and premium literary institutions like Gorkha Jana Pustakalaya and Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sangha (GDNS) organised art and exhibition programmes. Most of the literary persons participated in such activities. Forerunners among the women were Venu Kumari Singh, Shanta Khaling, Dev Kumari Thapa, Ganga Pakhrin, Laki Devi Sundas and Madhur Archana Sangboo. It was considered as an important event as noted by Sharma and Singh 2007: 71:

“These women had no professional experiences, the way we understand it today but they were handling the magazines quite professionally. This is the surprising bit that most of them had full time domestic identities and unknowingly they had entered into man’s domain. These were women who actually swam against the current and found their shores in the Hasta Likhit Patrika”.

The content of their writings shows that they were conscious of their identity both as Indian Gorkhas/Nepalis and as Nepali/Gorkha women. As women they were critical about the educational backwardness of Nepali women and drew attention to the urgency of women’s education in the region. It has been witnessed from their writings that they felt the need for social reforms in Nepali society. They had a great deal of concern for the creation of alcohol free society. Their writings revealed a great deal of concern about discrimination faced by the hill people in other parts of the country. They were also critical about the patriarchal attributes of the Nepali society. The content of their writings shows the level of women’s consciousness but for them education is important for the wellbeing of the whole family. Their involvements in such literary activities have important

significance in the contemporary Nepali literature, society and culture. Their participation in the literary activities in many ways transformed their participation in the Nepali language movement.

3.4.2 Participation of Women in Nepali Vasa Andolan (Language Movement)

In post independent India two major significant events took place related to language policy which touched upon the Nepali sentiment at large. Firstly, the Indian constituent assembly recognized 14 languages as the major Indian Languages in the year 1951. Secondly, West Bengal government declared Bengali as the official language of the state including Darjeeling district in 1961. However, Nepali was neither recognized as the major Indian Language under the 8th schedule of the constitution nor as the official language of the Darjeeling district. Various organizations were formed for the recognition of Nepali as an official language for Darjeeling Hills and also for its inclusion under 8th schedule of the Indian constitution. In the following we will try to understand their participation in the language movement.

3.4.2.1 Vasa Manyata Samiti and the Role of Women

The situation of uncertainty around the language issue produced insecurity in the Nepali speaking region of West Bengal. Many termed it as linguistic imperialism. In such context, *Vasa Manyata Samiti* (Darjeeling District Hill People's Language Implementation Committee) was formed with a single agenda to launch a movement for the recognition of Nepali language as the official language of Darjeeling district. It was formed on 31st of March 1961. On the under-current a small conscious section of Darjeeling Hills was also uniting for the recognition of Nepali under 8th schedule of the Indian constitution. It has been evident from 4th volume of the 'Navapravath' its editor and acclaimed women writer Sanumati Rai from Kalimpong wrote in its editorial column as:

“..... Indian constitution also does not recognize Nepali language. In this context, no strong voice has been raised so far, this proved our nonchalance and defunctness (cited, Sotang 2017: 23).

The rationale behind the implementation of Bengali language as an official language in Darjeeling district was the census report of 1951 where Nepali speakers of the district constituted only 19 percent as stated by the government. It was reacted by the civil society of Darjeeling and its neighbouring areas because the 1941 census shows 59 percent Nepali speakers in the district. It was because the sub-groups of the Nepali community like Rai, Mangar, Gurung, Tamang, Newar, Sunwar and Thami were not enumerated as 'Nepali'. There were only five sub-groups like Kami, Damai, Sarki, Chhetri and Bahun were enumerated as Nepali speakers in the census report of 1951. The people were very depressed because the State Reorganization Commission (SRC) of 1953 laid down its principle stating that if 70 per cent or more of the total population of a district consists of a minority group then language of minority would be the official language of the district (Sarkar 2013, Subba 1992).

Vasa Manyata Samiti (Darjeeling District Hill People's Language Implementation Committee) was formed and led by the leading intellectuals of Darjeeling like Indra Bahadur Rai, Ganeshlal Subba and others. Various peaceful plans and programmes were organised in the name 'Vasa Sapatha' by the Vasa premis (lovers of the language). The MLAs from Darjeeling Hills constantly raised the issues of language in the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly.

At that juncture the women leaders like Mayadevi Chhetry, Laki Devi Sundas played a significant role for the recognition of Nepali language both at the national and regional levels. Maya Devi was the Member of Parliament to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal. She organised a meeting of the congress district committee at Kalimpong and also wrote official and non-official letters to the higher authority. On 10th April 1961, many organizations of Darjeeling including Nepali Sahitya Sammelan placed a deputation to the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru who was on his visit to Darjeeling. As the Member of Parliament from Darjeeling and president of the district committee of congress, Maya Devi Chhetry led a twenty six member delegation of Darjeeling District Congress and submitted a deputation in support of the recognition of Nepali as the official language of Darjeeling (Sotang 2017: 31).

Nepali Speakers in Darjeeling District in Various Censuses

Census Year	1941	1951	1961
Percentage of Nepali-speakers	67.07	19.98	59.09

Source: Information derived from Subba (1992) and Sarkar (2013).

1951 census of Darjeeling District

Sl. no.	Language	Population
1	Nepali	88,958
2	Rai	64,730
3	Tamang	49,780
4	Limboo	20,092
5	Mangar	19,374
6	Gurung	17,841
7	Newar	14,813
8	Sunwar	4,782
9	Thami	457
10	Total	2,80,8,27

Source, Suman Raj Timsina (*Nepali Community in India*), 1992, PP. 33

Maya Devi Chhetry actively participated and provided leadership in the freedom movement and several other movements in the region. Her love and concern for the Nepali language may be evident from the letter written by her to M.R. Datar, Ministry of Home Affairs on 9th of March 1956 regarding the recognition of Nepali language as one of the major Indian languages. She was very vocal in the parliament regarding the status of

Nepali language in India. She tried to justify importance of recognizing Nepali as an official language in West Bengal. She also disseminated the fact regarding the development and status of Nepali language in India in the Indian Parliament as:

“....Nepali has been recognised as a medium of instruction to matriculation standard and vernacular in the Calcutta University, Banaras and Allahabad Universities. The Gorkhas who are settled in India and who are born as Indian citizens are in millions and are scattered all over the country. Even during the British regime Nepali was a recognised Indian language. So, naturally it is quite an injustice to exclude from the list of Indian languages and considered as a foreign language” (Giri 2010: 102).

In the same year, Nepali was recognized as the official language of the hill region of Darjeeling district (WBA XXIV). The most important aspect of this movement was the participation of all political and civil society of Darjeeling. Most importantly people belonging to various political outfits came together for the common cause. In both Indian Parliament and State Legislative Assembly representatives of Darjeeling irrespective of their political affiliation heavily reacted on the language policy on the one hand and politics behind the 1951 census on the other. Though there were several contradictions and opposition from Bengal government, politicians and Scholars, finally Nepali was recognized as an official language of three subdivisions of Darjeeling Hills under the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961. The census of 1961 also included all the groups within the Nepalis like Rai, Mangar, Gurung, Chhetri, Bahun, Kami, Damai, Sarki, Thami, Tamang and Thami as Nepali speakers. It was a great victory for the People of Darjeeling because the aspiration and hope of the people got recognised. It provided aspiration, hope and new impetus for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language as one of the major Indian language.

3.4.2.2 Nepali Vasa Samiti and the Role of Women

The demand for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language rose along the demand for the official language of the district from 1961. However, for the first time it were the editors of the Jargrath Gorkha of Dehradun, Anandsingh Thapa along with Birsingh

Bhandari and Narsing Rana who submitted a memorandum for the recognition of Nepali language as an Indian language to the then Prime Minister of India in 1956. It has been witnessed that no other language in India had to struggle for such a long time because after 36 years of struggle it got its recognition in 1992. The constant struggle of the Nepali literary institutions, non-Nepali literates, linguists, political parties and various institutions and associations has been praiseworthy (Rai 2012). At the ground reality of the language movement both Nepali and non-Nepali women played significant role and contributed in large measures. The most important and vibrant women leaders were Maya Devi Chhetry, Laki Devi Sundas, Sanumati Rai, Kamala sankrityayan, Dr. Maitreyee Bose and others (Niroula 2015).

The most important contribution was made by Dr. Maitreyee Bose, Congress MP from Darjeeling with the support of All India Gorkha League in 1967. Dr. Bose tried to bring a private member's bill in Parliament seeking the inclusion of Nepali in the 8th Schedule. She was asked whether Nepali had a grammar and a lexicon, proving beyond doubt that the questioners as well as the people at large were ignorant about Nepali and its merits as a national language. However, her private bill did not receive much attention. In this context her press release was published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 14.09.68 as:

“As an elected representative of the district, I have tried hard to convince the honourable fellow members of the Lok Sabha of the earnest desire of Indian Nepali about recognition of their language by the constitution and government of India but unfortunately I have not succeeded so far..... I appealed to all friends who are interested in this question to take an active part and try their best for success of the bill already introduced by me in the Lok Sabha.”

Chitta Basu, Forward Block MP from West Bengal, was a dear champion of the cause in Parliament. Goaded by Dr Bose and others, and himself convinced of the genuineness of the demand, Basu introduced a private member's bill in the Rajya Sabha in 1969 for Nepali's inclusion in the Constitution. Unless supported by a majority, a private member's bill usually fails to be passed. Basu's bill too was lost in the maze and died a natural death when Parliament was dissolved in 1971. CPI (M) stalwart Ratanlal Brahmin, popular in Darjeeling as Maila Bajey, was elected to the Lok Sabha in the elections that

followed. In Parliament, whenever he stood to make a statement he used Nepali as he claimed he did not know any other tongue. The Speaker of the House allowed him to speak in Nepali. The text was translated and distributed to MPs the following day. This inspired Maila Bajey to restart the stalled language recognition initiative (Rai 2012: 04).

In order to fulfil the institutional or organizational base/support for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language, an organization called '*Nepali Vasa Samiti*' was formed on 3rd January, 1972 by Prem Kumar Alay, Bal Chhetri, Bhuwan Singh Chhetri and others in Darjeeling. Before its formation various literary journals and magazines were actively producing consciousness and need for the recognition of Nepali. This organization soon took the shape of a big organization having membership from Nepali living in the different states of India. Soon it was renamed as Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti.

3.4.2.3 Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti (ABNVS) and the Role of Women

Laki Devi Sundas, one of the influential literary personalities and academician was actively involved in language movement. She actively participated and gave leadership to Nepali Vasa Samiti which was later renamed as '*Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti*' when it received whole hearted support of the Nepali community from other parts of the country. This organization organised a solidarity march from the different political and non-political organizations across Darjeeling on 23rd February, 1972. She tirelessly worked with the organization to seek solidarity from various civil societies of Darjeeling like *Marwari Samaj*, *Bengali Samaj*, *Hindi Vasi Samaj*, *Muslim Samaj* and others. The well known personalities of Darjeeling; Mr. Swar Aggrawal, Mr. Amal Banerjee, Mr. Sam Murti on behalf of their organisation supported the cause of Nepali language. Accordingly, Bhadra Bahadur Hamal (CPI), Jagat Chhetri (AIGL), Sangopal Lepcha (CPI(M)), Madan Thapa (Indian Congress) expressed their solidarity on behalf of their political parties. Indra Bahadur Rai on behalf of *Nepali Sahitya Parishad* organised a mass rally which expressed their support for the Nepali language on 23rd February, 1972. She herself represented as the member of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (Sundas 1993, Dahal 2003). Laki Devi Sundas was one of members of a 32 memberd delegations of the ABNVS to meet the then Prime Minister of the country. After hearing the necessary requisitions to get recognition she

along with I.B Rai of Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Prem Kumar Alay of Nepali Vasa Samiti tirelessly worked to get recognition of Sahitya Academy, New Delhi.

The constitutional recognition of Sindhi in the year 1966, gave new hope to the Nepalis. The reason behind the constitutional recognition of Sindhi was to bring them into mainstream India because it was learned that the Sindhi community felt alienated in India after Sindh was included as the geographical territory of Pakistan. In the same line of arguments a new movement was launched by the Nepali under the banner of *Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Vasa Sangharsha Samiti*. A memorandum was sent to the prime minister. They argued along the same lines for the inclusion of Nepali in the 8th Schedule (Rai 2012: 04). The cause of the Nepali language was supported by the great Indian linguist Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee. Since the beginning of the Nepali language movement he recommended Nepali along with Sindhi and Konkani.

These were some of the initial activities of ABNVS in Darjeeling; but soon it received huge support from Nepalis living in the different parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Dooars, Delhi, Dehradun, Dharmasala and Sikkim and various programmes were organised in different parts of the country in support of constitutional recognition of Nepali language. 7th February 1984 was the most remarkable day in the history of Nepali language movement because for the first time on this day a long march (*padh yatra*) was organized at the national level. It started from Gorkha Sudhar Sabha, Dehradun to Delhi (Niroula 2015, Sotang 2016, Sundas 1993).

The long march in support of language was started with 36 people but it received huge support from the people and when it reached Delhi there were 150 members. They travelled total distance of 273 kilometers in 12 days. The long march was represented by the members of '*Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti*' from the various parts of the country. The most notable women participants were 67 year old Vaidhnedhi Brahmin of Bijanbari, Chandramith Waiba, Puspa Yanzon, Sabitri Aley, Kumari Bishnu Gurung and many others (Niroula 2015, Sotang 2016).

3.4.2.4 Bharitya Nepali Rastrya Parishad (BNRP) and the Role of Women

During the 1980s the Nepali language movement took a different shape because of the separate statehood movement led by the GNLFF. Since the beginning of the movement there was no opposition and confrontation on the issue of Nepali language. However, the GNLFF since its formation demanded for the inclusion of Gorkha Bhasha in the Indian constitution. According to its supremo Subash Ghising the nomenclature of the language should be Gorkha Bhasha which give distinct identity to the Nepali speaking Gorkhas in India. The movement also suffered a setback because of the violent movement during 1986 to 1988. The people of Darjeeling divided on the line of Nepali vs. Gorkha. The supporter of Gorkha bhasha also formed All India Gorkha Bhasha Samiti and demanded for the inclusion of the Gorkha Bhasha in the Indian constitution under the 8th schedule. On the other hand the Nepali intellectuals, literary laureates and others supported Nepali. In such situation of confrontation Nepali Rastrya Parishad was formed on 12th June 1990, under the guidance of Sri. Nar Bahadur Bhandari the then chief minister of Sikkim (Rai 2012).

The BNRP was a national level organization formed for the language cause and constituted by the large number of members at the national level. It was supported by the large number of women leaders. Mantita Pradhan and Shanti Chhetri were the Members of Legislative Assembly from Sikkim who were active since first day of its formation. Soon a committee was formed for the preparation of documents to be submitted to the ministers and MPs for the cause of Nepali language. In this committee Asarani Rai (Manipur), Shanti Pradhan (Jaigoan), Bimala Subba (Dooars), Puspa Pradhan and Manita Pradhan (Sikkim), Laki Devi Sundas (Darjeeling) took active participation. On 6th August 1992, Dil Kumar Bhandari, lok Sabha MP from Sikkim introduced a private bill in the parliament and finally it got its recognition on 20th August 1992.

The Nepali language movement had to struggle for a long period of time. Since its inception various organizations were formed for the cause of Nepali language. In its long journey different political and non-political parties and civil society and organizations have played significant roles. The movement for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language was actively participated by the large number of women. This movement took a

pan-Indian character among the Indian Nepalis and it received the participation of women from the different region of the country. Their participation was diverse in the language movement. They provided leadership in the shaping of the various organizations. Some of the important leaders were Laki Devi Sundas, Kamala Shankritayan, Chandramit Lopshng and many others. In Manipur Asharani Rai took the leading role. She was popularly known as '*Bhasha Sangrami*' due to her immense contribution in the Nepali language movement. Since the beginning she had been a part of various organizations and actively took part in various plans and programmes. She was remembered by the people of Darjeeling as 'Manipuri Dedi'. Gita Upadhyay was an assistant professor at Sivsagar Mahavidhyalaya. She took active participation in the language movement and was the president of Nepali Sahitya Parishad which had a great role to play in the movement.

There were many women who have contributed to the language movement by participating in the rallies and giving motivational speeches and writings in various popular newspapers and magazines. Khiroda Kharka of Darjeeling was one of them, Dew Kumari Siwakoti, Harin Shrestha (Kalimpong), Bimala Subba, Shanti Pradhan (jaigoan), Dr. Shanti Chettri, Gita Sharma, Manita Pradhan, Puspa Sharma (Sikkim), Bijaya Kumari Thapa, Kusum lata Gurung, Mamta Chhetri and Lal Maya Subba (Dehradun), Goma Sharma and Maina Thapa 'Asha' (Guwahati), Chandrakala Newar(Assam), Dr. Shanti Thapa (academic awardees writer), Jayamati Devi, Kamla Sharma, Hira Chettri, Munni Sapkota (Manipur). All of them were some way or the other related to Darjeeling because it was the epicenter of the Nepali language movement (Niroula 2015, Sotang 2016, Rai 2012).

Women's participation in Nepali language movement which often took the shape of politics of belonging has been very diverse. Since the inception of the Nepali language movement women have participated as leaders, participants, writers and active supporters both at the regional and national level.

3.5. Summing up

The present chapter shows the participation of women of Darjeeling Hills in the different types of movements that have erupted in the region. The participation of women in movements in Darjeeling Hills has not come up in an abrupt manner but is the culmination

of long historical realities. Starting with the independence movement the women of Darjeeling Hills constituted an important part of every social movement. They experienced the heterogeneity of their experiences as movement participants in the region. Such activities of public domain challenged the conventional stereotypes of their society as they were facing colonial and plantation patriarchy on the one hand and indigenous patriarchy on the other.

Their participation and contribution in the making of the social movement in the region has been relatively overlooked by scholars and activists. Their contribution has always been put behind the curtain in both academic and non-academic endeavours. The present chapter touched upon several important issues in social movements with special emphasis on the participation and role of women. Since independence movement to the contemporary movements they constitute the most important actors in all the movements. Darjeeling was kept under the strict surveillance of the government but natives of the region including women and children made noteworthy contribution both at the national and regional levels. Though few in numbers these women freedom fighters of the region had the heterogeneity of their experiences in the context of their participation in nationalist discourse and the family support received by them.

Their contribution in the tea plantation trade union movement was equally important. The movement against the plantation started during 1940s but there were several stances of organised movement of the working class in smaller form since 1920s. Women in the tea gardens were actively involved in the movement under the banner of Mahila Samiti of CPI(M). If we see the history of trade union movement we find that women not only gave the leadership in the movement but also sacrificed their lives as evident from the Margaret's Hope uprising of 1955. These movements provided them opportunities to come out of their house in the public-political domain.

It has been evident that soon after independence the country was busy in settling down the regional issues like reorganization of state, official language, etc. Darjeeling was not free from such policies of the government. During this phase the issues became narrow i.e. from national to regional. Soon after independence the language movement started in Darjeeling both at the regional and national level. Firstly, for movement for the recognition

of Nepali as an official language of Darjeeling district. Secondly, for the recognition of Nepali as a national language under 8th schedule of the Indian constitution. Several organizations were formed where women played the most important role. Their role ranges from simple participants to the Member of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly and dignitaries of local and national level organizations for the language cause.

The above discussed issues are very important in order to understand the present context of social movement in Darjeeling Hills in general and the participation of women in particular. It has been evident that their participation in the freedom struggle of the country led to the growth of Indian nationalism among them. The issues raised in the present context of ethnic movement in Darjeeling Hills relates to nationalism, citizenship and language. Tea gardens have been the important segment of the hill society of Darjeeling and the contemporary movement in Darjeeling Hills raised issues related to tea in the region where women have actively participated at the various levels. Their participation in the contemporary movement will be discussed in the next chapter.

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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 GNLF 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 GNLF 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 GNLF 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 GNLf. 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 GNLf. During the GNLf 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 GNLf 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 GNLf 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 till 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

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 GNLF 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 GNLF 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 GNLF 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 GNLf. 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 GNLf. During the GNLf 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 GNLf 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 GNLf 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 till 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 GNLFF 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 GNLFF 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 GNLFF launched the Gorkhaland movement in 1986. The ideological basis of CPI(M) is ‘class politics’ so they did not support GNLFF. According to them the members of the CPI(M) had to face many problems. There was the division of people between CPI(M) and GNLFF. The women and children were the worst victims during that period of time. The members of CPI(M) were given ultimatum to join GNLFF otherwise they would face problems created by the GNLFF. 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 Ghishing 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 Ghishing 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 phallogentric 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.

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Chapter V

Summary and Conclusion

The present thesis entitled ‘Participation of Women in Social Movements: A Sociological Study of the Hill Region of Darjeeling District’ was intended to bring out the participation of women in social movements in the hill region of Darjeeling district. The rationale behind the present endeavour was to fulfil the research gap in the context of social movements in the region. Darjeeling Hills attracted a large number of international, national and local scholars but it seems that they failed to realise women as an analytical category in the social movements. These scholars made serious interventions from different dimensions and perspectives in social movements and produced ample literature in the context. However, gender/women’s perspectives have been largely ignored. The relative invisibility of women in the pioneering works in the region is not a coincidence but it is one of the many ways in which perspective remains gendered. It has been argued by the feminist scholars that there exist androcentrism and male-centric bias in the study of social movements. Such attitudes devalue their presence in the movement. Against this backdrop, the present thesis carefully examined the emergence and participation of women in social movements that have erupted in the hill region of Darjeeling district. It shows the public political participation of hill women of Darjeeling in various arenas of hill society and social movements in general and nature and dimension of their participation in the Gorkhaland movement in particular.

I

The present study was carried out in Darjeeling Hills because it has been considered as *Kipat* of the Gorkhas and became the epicentre of several movements based on Nepali/Gorkha ethnicity and identity. Darjeeling district lies in the Northern part of West Bengal and it was established by the British as one of the famous hill stations. Darjeeling mainly developed as a colonial frontier in the Eastern Himalayas with the successful establishment of the sanatorium, plantation economy, and place to rest for the Indian and European elites. Historically the present-day Darjeeling district belonged to the Kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan and for a short period, it remained with Gorkhas as well. It was

annexed to British India by following the deeds of grants with Sikkim kingdom and the treaty of Sinchula with Bhutan. The major developmental activities had taken place during the British Raj. It received huge colonial migration from the kingdom of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and other parts of India during the colonial period. Many schools were established by the Christian missionaries which greatly enhanced the socio-cultural and educational development of the hill people. It was kept under the strict surveillance of the British government by the various administrative mechanisms like Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Act. Nepali nationalism in Darjeeling developed as a result of the development of Nepali literary associations and other social organizations and the development of print media in the colonial and post-colonial era. Participation of Nepalis/Gorkhas in freedom struggle is also another factor that produced the feeling of Indian nationalism among them. Since the first half of the twentieth century, Darjeeling became the epicentre of several movements. However, there is no such movement that had erupted in the region which could be categorized as the women's movement in the region. On the other hand, whatever may be the movement women constituted the major actors and role players.

II

The history of social movements in the region shows that the contribution of women in the making of social movements in the region is not a new phenomenon. What is new is to rediscover their participation and rewrite their contribution in the making of history, society, and culture of Darjeeling Hills. However, their participation, roles, and contributions have been mostly put behind the curtain in both academic and non-academic writings. On the other hand, there is little work available in vernacular language regarding the women activists and their participation in various movements in the form of memorial, newspaper article, biography, family history and few research articles. However, there is not even a single comprehensive work available in the context of women's participation in social movements in Darjeeling Hills. In the recent past women in Darjeeling Hills became the part and parcel of the nationalist movement, plantation trade union movement and identity movements (Nepali language movement and Gorkhaland movement). The emergence and participation of women of Darjeeling Hills in the contemporary movement

in the name of Gorkhaland is not new because they actively participated in the various types of social movements that erupted in the region. The nature and dimension of these movements were different from one another but historically women have been playing active roles in their own capacities.

In light of the existing literature the present thesis not only carefully examines the visibility of women in different types of movements in Darjeeling Hills but it brings forth their agencies apart from the victimhood agents in the movements. It argues that women in the movement and post-movement situations are not always the passive victimhood agents but at the same time they possess strong agency of their own. Women in the gender integrative social movements like that of the present case (Gorkhaland movement, Nepali language movement and plantation movement in Darjeeling Hills) have a greater role to play both in the private and public domain as they constitute a larger part of the same society. However, the present work argues that their participation may not be the same as that of men because of the social construction of the public and private sphere of the Gorkha society. The participants in the movement in general cannot be categorised as homogeneous because they seek their own expression, inclusion and redress from the authority within and outside the movement situations. They have their own choices and preferences and their perceptions and actions differ according to their class, caste, educational qualification etc. Thus, the present work in the light of the existing works of literature tried to fulfil the research gap and rewrites their narratives of public-political protests in the making of social movements in the hill region of Darjeeling district.

III

The present thesis has been divided into five chapters including introduction and conclusion. It tries to fulfil the following four broad objectives: firstly, an attempt has been made to trace out the historical emergence and participation of women in social movements in Darjeeling Hills. It argues that the participation of women in contemporary ethnic movement in Darjeeling Hills is not new. They historically maintained a rich heritage of public-political participation in the region. Secondly, it studied the nature and dimension of women's participation in separate statehood movement in the name of Gorkhaland movement. It brings out how their participation differed based on their gender

identities and how their gender roles transgressed in movement and aftermath of the movement. Thirdly, it aims to cultivate women's invisible role and their agency both in the public and private domains of the Gorkhaland movement. Fourthly, the present study analyses the gender discourse in the movement in Darjeeling Hills in general and Gorkhaland in particular. It tries to seek how women had been placed in the overall context of social movements in Darjeeling Hills in general and Gorkhaland in particular.

The present thesis tries to seek the answers to these research questions to fulfil the objectives: I. What is the nature and what are the causes of women's participation in social protest/movement in Darjeeling Hills? II. What is the genesis of Women's collective identity that contributed to the mobilization process in the movement? III. What are the gender discourses underlying the movement in Darjeeling Hills? IV. What is the nature of the political socialization of the Hill/Gorkha Women? V. How are women placed in the overall context of social movements? VI. What is the nature of gendered power distribution in the organization of a movement? VII. What is the impact of movement on the everyday life experiences of women?

As a movement study, it is basically a qualitative research based on both primary and secondary data. The field was purposefully chosen and field work was carried out at Margaret's Hope tea garden in Kurseong sub-division, one revenue village (Upper Neoang Mairung) in Kalimpong and urban center (Singmari) in Darjeeling. Initially, the data was collected through intensive field work for one month each in the year 2015-17. However, no complete and intensive data were received from the respondents for which another set of field work was carried out following the snow ball sampling during 2018-19. This method greatly enhanced the present work. Meeting and informal communication with the different sets of people; young, old, students, local vendors etc. had been one of the methods that has been used in the field work. The field work was started with semi-structured questions but quite often the respondent felt uneasy with the method of interviewing. So, the informal interview was carried out with the movement activists and members of the civil society, general participants and counter movement activists.

It used the various concepts and theories from feminist/women's perspectives and methodology. From the theoretical and a conceptual parlance, the present research is a part

of the feminist way of looking at critical research. The feminist scholarship argues that the mainstream theories on social movements do not consider women as a separate analytical category. There exist androcentrism or male-centric bias in the study of social movements which devalue their presence in the movement. The conceptual framework had been drawn from third world feminists like Chandra Talapadha Mohanaray, Kumari Jayawardane, Rita Manchanda, Judith Butler, Kimberle Crenshaw and several others. Their concepts had been used as a conceptual lens in the light of existing theoretical tradition on social movements.

IV

The present thesis broadly looks into the historical emergence and women's contribution in the making of social movements in the region to argue that the participation of women in the contemporary movement is not sudden. On the other hand, the participation of women in the contemporary movement in the name of Gorkhaland has been discussed in one chapter. The third chapter is a descriptive study on the participation of women in various types of movements. Since inception of social movement in the region i.e., nationalist movement, women were at the forefront although few. It is unjustifiable to argue that the emergence of women in the public political domain in the hill society of Darjeeling is a recent phenomenon. Several women leaders emerged in the nationalist movement in Darjeeling, the most notable among them were Halen Lepcha (Sabetri Devi) who became the symbol of a nationalist leader in Bihar, UP and North Bengal. Putalimaya Devi Tamang (Poddar) was widely known for her participation in the national movement in Darjeeling Hills. She opened up Night school, Harijan Samaj and women's organization to bring consistency in the nationalist movement. Maya Devi Chhetry was another influential leader of the nationalist movement who became the president of the Kurseong branch of INC. On the other hand few women also actively participated in Jhanshiki Rani Regiment under the Indian National Army.

The most remarkable contribution of women was their participation in the trade union plantation movement since the 1940s. The formation of Darjeeling district CPI(M) did tremendous work to bring class consciousness among the tea garden labourers. They brought out many demands concerning working class by forming Darjeeling Chai Kaman

Mazdoor Union as a common platform. They demanded the eradication of *hatta bahar* (forceful eviction of workers from garden/colony), *sutkari bhatta* (maternity leave and benefits) and equal pay for both men and women and others. A large number of women came out of their private domain to participate in the movement because even after independence colonial laws were enforced in tea gardens of Darjeeling and Dooars. The working class struggled for a long time under the leadership of the Communists and later was joined by All India Gorkha League as a result of which an uprising took place in Margaret's Hope tea garden in the year 1955. Six movement activists were killed by the police among them two were women. In this movement, a large number of women leaders emerged in different gardens of Darjeeling and made notable contributions.

In terms of ethnic movement, the women of Darjeeling Hills made notable contributions in two important movements. These were the Nepali language movement and Gorkhaland movement both at the national and regional levels. There were two types of Nepali language movements which emerged in India. Firstly, demand for the recognition of Nepali language as an official language for Darjeeling district during the 1950s. When the West Bengal Official Language Act was passed Nepali language was not recognized as an official language of the district. The intellectuals of Darjeeling launched a movement for the recognition of the official language of the district because according to the principal of the state reorganization commission 'if 75% of the total population of a district speaks the same language then that would be considered as the official language of the district'. It was accepted as the official language of the three sub-divisions of Darjeeling Hills in the 1960s where many prominent women leaders played important roles. The second was the movement for recognition of Nepali as the national language of India under the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution. Various organizations had been formed since the 1960s like Bhasa Manyata Samiti, Nepali Bhasa Samiti, Akhil Bharitya Nepali Vasa Samiti (ABNVS), and Bharitya Nepali Rastrya Parishad (BNRP). All these organizations had a good number of women representatives, leaders, and participants. The Nepali language got its recognition in 1992 where the women played the most important role. Many women have contributed to the language movement by participating in the rallies, giving motivational speeches and writing in various popular newspapers and magazines. On the

other hand, there were women MPs and MLAs from Darjeeling and Sikkim who tirelessly worked for the cause of the Nepali language in India.

The participation of women in the nationalist movement, trade union movement, and Nepali language movement has been very important to understand the contemporary relevance of the ethnic movement in Darjeeling Hills. It has been evident that their participation in the freedom struggle of the country led to the growth of Indian nationalism among them. The issues raised in the present context of ethnic movement in Darjeeling Hills relate to nationalism, citizenship, and language. Tea gardens also have been the important segment of the hill society of Darjeeling and the contemporary movement in Darjeeling Hills raised the issues related to tea in a region where women have been the active participants at the various levels.

V

Like all other movements that had erupted in Darjeeling Hills; women have significantly contributed to the separate statehood movement in the name of Gorkhaland. The most important feature of the Gorkhaland movement after the 1980s was the emergence of women and children and their active participation in various dimensions for the ethnic collectivity. Their visibility as leaders, participants, opponents, and supporters of the movement show that they were the major building force of the movement. However, their participation did not receive much academic or non-academic attention among hill people of Darjeeling. It was not only the political parties that influenced or motivated the women activists but a larger part of the civil society without any political affiliation also actively participated in both the phases of the movement. The individual women activists, poets, writers, musicians, columnists, had their ways of supporting the movements. However, the women activists affiliated to GNLF during 1980s and GJMM in post-2007 led the movement at the structural and organizational domain. The women wing of CPRM after 1997 strongly supported the statehood movement from their perspectives. The nature and extent of participation of the women activists varies in both the phases of the movement.

The participants in general and women participants in particular in Gorkhaland movement can be categorized into different types depending on their social locale. They

belong to the different intersection of society. Different types of participants and their perception on Gorkhaland movement had been witnessed during field work. The present work does not consider women participants in social movements in Darjeeling Hills in general and Gorkhaland movement in particular as a homogeneous category as 'women' drawing from the third world feminism and field work. The identity, positionality and everyday life experiences/practices of the movement participants in Gorkhaland movement differed based on their class, caste, social structure, ideology, educational background, etc.

The 'role performance' and 'gender relation' and 'Motherist frame' are the most helpful concepts that have been drawn from the feminist methodology used in the present context. The men and women activists in the Gorkhaland movement can be differentiated based on their role performance. The role performance of women activists in a movement is largely based on the gender relation of the private domain of Nepali/Gorkha society. Gender relations of the Gorkha society largely impacted their public-political participation as well as most of the movement. The women activists have been deeply motivated by the role of caring and protecting mother, motherhood and maternal identities of the private domain. Their participation in the various form of movement mobilization like hunger strikes, rallies, protest marches, gherao etc were based on the strong sense of belongingness of 'hami Gorkhay nari', 'gorkhay ama'. It reflects a collective sense of Gorkhay womanhood in the public political domain. Such collective identity in the public domain based on caring and protecting the mother of the private domain challenged the state patriarchy and also provided the opportunity to speak against the anti-social elements from the structure of the movement itself like anti alcohol and anti Ram Rahim mobilization. However, they are relatively silent on the burning women's issues of contemporary Darjeeling like women trafficking, missing cases of women, domestic problems concerning women.

The women activists in both the phases of movement had played the dominant role which often transgressed their gender roles and identities in the public and private domain of the movement. Most importantly they were the bearer of painful aftermaths as a result of the movement. During the 1980s the ethnic movement took a violent turn that caused sacrifice of lives of hundreds of people belonging to both pro and anti-Gorkhaland outfits.

Thousands of people became homeless and several were arrested by the police. The same situation was witnessed in the second phase of the Gorkhaland movement as well. In such a situation the responsibilities of taking care and protecting the family rest on the shoulders of women. Such situations of transforming gender roles in the absence of male members had been witnessed by the women. In many places the funeral pyres were lit by women themselves during the 1980s in the absence of male members. Such activities had challenged the basic private-public dichotomy of the Nepali/Gorkha society in Darjeeling Hills. Despite their collective participation in the entire course of the movement with their male-counterparts, the Gorkha women are yet to be free from patriarchy both at private and public domains.

The women participants have participated and contributed in diverse roles in the Gorkhaland movement. Their participation in the public-political domain is not well known or acknowledged. There have been the private domains in the movement where the contribution of the women is greater than the men.

The Gorkhaland movement gave ample opportunities to both men and women to be leaders but their significant contributions can be found in the private domain of the movement. Such roles are called movement housewifery and domestic roles. The women activists in the Gorkhaland movement since the 1980s have been playing an important role from the private domain of the movement particularly from their personal network which remains invisible in the eyes of the general participants. Such activities and roles include informing about the upcoming meetings and preparing a 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. Women activists were also involved in the collection of membership fees, taking care of party office, selling party flags, taking minutes, preparing food during meetings, etc. 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. Such women's leadership at the private domain remains invisible to the larger part of the hill society.

VI

The emergence of women in Gorkhaland movement was largely a result of rising self-consciousness among them; although the historical gender consciousness has been missing on them. It has to be understood that women were actively participating in the Gorkhaland movement since beginning but the formation of women's wing brought them under one umbrella. 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 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 phallogocentric 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 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.

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' and they are particularly excluded from the 'public political and nationalist discourse' (Yuval-Davis 1997). The role assigned to the participants in the movement situation has been based on the 'public-private dichotomy' of the Gorkha society. 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. The men have been always placed in a position higher than that of women in an official leadership position. Such

attitude relegates most of the women to mere supportive roles in both the phases of Gorkhaland movement.

It seems that despite strong women's agency there has been the neutralization of gender dimension of the Gorkha society and at the individual level women 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 it is because of the societal gender role segregation and structural constraints that women have to face in their everyday life. There is no gender development agenda in both GNLG and GJMM because the issues that have been raised by them are 'gender integrative' where both males and females have the common agenda and objective to achieve i.e. Gorkhaland.

The emergence of Gorkhaland movement in Darjeeling Hills gave opportunities to women to be leaders at the local levels and to search their own voice. On the other hand, the nature of their participation has found many similarities with the nationalist and anti-racist movements 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).

Similarly in the context of Gorkhaland movement also being Gorkha in the Indian nationalist discourse became important where gender based identity became less significant. It is because of the exclusionary nature of the Indian nation-state towards the Gorkhas. The Gorkhas in India have at least 250 years old history and their contribution in various fields but within the Indian nationalist discourse, they are treated as outsiders, foreigners, immigrants. The collective identity as Gorkha became important in the realm of large community interest as a whole. Through ethnic collectively and its manifestations in the movement they wanted to establish their identity of being Indian. In such processes, women's identity as 'Gorkha women' has been historically missing. The Gorkha identity grew along with the masculine narratives of *bir Gorkha* (brave Gorkha) where neutralization of women's identity as submissive has been historically inculcated in their society. They are often being the subject of identity crises based on both community and

gender in mainstream India. In conclusion, it can be said that despite their collective participation in public-political discourses they have a far way to go to attain gender equality on the one hand or to attain the same as a Gorkha subject within the exclusionary nature of the Indian nationalist discourse on the other.

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The Unheard and Unsung Voices: Gorkha Women in the Indian National Movement

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Participation of Indian women in social movements is old as the history of movement itself. Throughout the history they have been a part of the every resistance movements. They made substantial contribution in the freedom movement, Tebhaga uprising, Naxalite movement, Chipko movement and various regional movements in different parts of the country. However their perspectives have been largely ignored although it is being gaining its momentum particularly after 1960s. Women constitute one of the most important segments of every society but their perspectives have been largely ignored by the social scientists and they are particularly excluded from the 'public political' and 'nationalist discourse' (Yuval-Davis 1997). Their public role has been perceived as of secondary importance and it is particularly neglected almost in every sphere of economic, political or social life. Their role is often neglected and restricted to the four walls of domesticity. They work hard towards the fulfilment and maintenance of the needs of the everyday life both in the family and outside but their roles are hardly pronounced and acknowledged.

The anti imperial wave touches upon the every segments of Indian society irrespective of caste, community, religion and gender. Like their brothers and sisters the Gorkhas also contributed selflessly in Indian freedom struggle. The Gorkhas from all over the country played important role in the freedom struggle both as the moderates and extremists. However the participation of Gorkha/hill women of Darjeeling hills and its adjoining regions remain as the unsung and untold reality to the majority of the Indian masses. Despite their successive contributions towards Indian freedom movement they did not received much attention as deserve in the regional and mainstream historiography. Thus, the present study fills up the gap on the participation of Gorkha women in Indian national movement.

Dal Bahadur Giri and awakening of the hill people

No such incidents of the participations of hill people of Darjeeling hills, Dooars and Terai in the nationalist movement have been known before the emergence of Dal Bahadur Giri in the hill politics, although there were minor activities of the intellectual Bengali class in hill towns of Darjeeling district. Even the anti-colonial movement that emerged as a result of the partition of Bengal in 1905, failed to produce much impact among the Gorkhas/hill people of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas because of the several reasons. Firstly, the British Government tried all possible ways to keep Darjeeling undisturbed from the anti colonial activities of the plains by envisaging the policies of isolation through various administrative mechanisms like 'excluded and partly excluded areas' to isolate hill people from the plains. Secondly, despite presence of the national leaders of the country

for several times in Darjeeling, they did not take much initiative to mobilize the hill people of Darjeeling against the British rule. There were several other reasons why British wanted to maintain peace and absolute hegemony in Darjeeling hills like they wanted to preserve Darjeeling as the second home [home away from home], sanatorium, high profit extracted from tea, timber and cinchona etc.

It was Dal Bahadur Giri who laid the foundation of Indian National Congress of Darjeeling district in the year 1921 at Pedong [Kalimpong] and started unifying hill people for the nationalist movement. As a result, a large number of Gorkhas/Nepalis were inspired with the feeling of nationalism and actively participated in the non co-operation movement in the region. The British officer A.J. Dash in the 'Darjeeling District Gazetteer' recorded 'the participation of hill people during non-cooperation movement of 1921-22 as the first political movement in Darjeeling district' (1947: 236-37). Giri was jailed for several times for his involvement in the nationalist movement and anti-imperialist activities. He had to die immature death only at the age of 36 in the year 1924. Mahatma Gandhi was deeply moved by his death and expressed his mourns on the immature death of Giri as 'National loss' in the 'Young India', on dated 13th November 1924 as, "Many readers of Young India know Sjt. Dal Bahadur Giri by name. Some may not have even heard his name yet he was one of the bravest of national workers. As I am writing for Young India I have a wire from Kalimpong advising me of the death of his comparatively known patriot. I tender my condolence to his family. He was a cultural Gurkha and was doing good work among the Gurkhas in and near Darjeeling. During 1921, in common with the thousands, he was also imprisonment. He was discharged only a few months ago he leaves. I understand a large family destitute of means of livelihood. An appeal was published on his behalf on the Bengali press. I hope that the Bengal Provincial Congress will find out all the facts about the late Sjt. Dal Bahadur Giri's family and render such aid may be necessary" (Chaudhuri 1988: 11-15).

Bhagat Bahadur Tamang was another well known Gorkha patriot from Kurseong who played a vital role in spreading the message of Gandhiji among the tea garden labourers and rural masses. He was arrested for several times and breathed his last in Darjeeling district Jail in January, 1924. According to 'Who's who Indian martyrs Vol I' 'he was the first Gorkha martyr of the freedom movement of the country'. The hill people like Jangabir Sapkota (*Gandhi Bajey*), Thakurprasad Kumai, Gaga Tshering Dukpa, Puspa Kumar Ghishing, Agam Singh Giri, Ramachandra Giri, Madan Subba and others immediately came under the influence of Dal Bahadur Giri and actively participated in the non cooperation movement, civil disobedience and quit India movement (Chhetri 2015, Poddar 1996). It was very difficult for them to create anti-colonial activities in Darjeeling hills because as a summer capital and a sanatorium it was kept under the strict surveillance of the British government however, they keep on fighting till independence.

Behind the curtain: The unsung and unheard voices

The hill women equally contributed in the freedom movement. Along with male a small section of hill women during the colonial regime came out of their traditional boundaries to take part in the nationalist movement (Rawath 1996, 242-243; Poddar 1996). It was not an easy task for them because they were not free from the bondage of 'indigenous patriarchy' and had to suffer a lot due to 'colonial patriarchy' as well.

On response to Gandhiji's call during the non-cooperation movement there was openly burning of the foreign goods in Darjeeling town under aegis of Dal Bahdur Giri. The hill women like, Halen Lepcha (name changed by Gandhiji himself to Sabetri Devi), Sanidevi Khati and other

took the leading role (Bhattacharyya 1986:63-70; Poddar: 1996). Sabetri Devi was assigned with the role of travelling to the remote parts of Darjeeling to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh during non-cooperation movement in order to draw consciousness of the rural Indian masses. On 31st January 1922, Sabetri Devi, E Ahmed and many Gorkha volunteers were arrested from Siliguri while leading a procession violating section 144 and they were taken to Darjeeling jail. She was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for several months. After her released from Darjeeling jail she was kept under the house arrest within Kurseong municipality, however, she was continued with her nationalist activities secretly and took the leading role of a secret informer when Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was interned at his residence, Gidday Pahar (Kurseong), Darjeeling in the year 1939 (Sharma 2005:45-51). According to the 'Directory of Indian Women Today', "Sabetri Devi helped Netaji Subhas Bose to escape from imprisonment in Kharsang and migrated to Germany through Kabul. Her areas of activities were Jharia coal field, Bankura, Danapur and Patna" (Roy Sanyal 2010: 14-15, Labar 400-406).

The premature death of Dal Bahadur Giri in 1924 created a vacuum for some time in Darjeeling hills but soon there was the emergence of several patriots both in hills and plains. Contribution of Sarju Prasad is worth mentioning who incidentally reached Kurseong in 1934 to hide himself from Colonial power in Bihar. He along with the few local people like Harish Chhetri, Pratiman Singh Lama, Janaklal Kurmey and others re-establishes the dream of late Dal Bahadur Giri. The numerous organizations like *Dinhin Mazdoor Sangathan*, *Dhobi Sangathan* and *Gariman Sangathan* were already established in order to incorporate people from all walks of life especially from rural areas and tea gardens. Putalimaya Devi Tamang at her student life came under the influence of Sarju Prasad Poddar and laid the establishment of *Harijan Samaj* and *Nari Kalyan Samaj* in an around 1939. The major objective of these groups was to spread the message of freedom among the hill people and to look after the problems faced by local women. They also established a night school at Harijan building and lunched the anti-alcohol movement especially among the Harijans. On 13th August 1942, Putalimaya Devi was arrested from Kurseong while leading a procession against the arrest of Sarju Prasad and she was imprisoned for one and half years in Darjeeling jail (Poddar 1996). Since beginning her family members and colonial agencies were not happy with her activities and after released from the jail her family had to face many problems from the colonial agencies. Sarju Prasad after his released from Darjeeling Jail was advised to get marry with Putalimaya by the congress activists. Finally their activist relationship converted into the marital relationship but it was not accepted by the local people (Pakhrin 2013: 58, Poddar 1996).

Mahila Mandali (Women's Association) was established in Kurseong in 1941 and Maya Devi Chhetry for the first time participated in the out-door activity as the vice-president of the association. The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was established in 1946 and she was the vice-president of the plantation Workers Union of North Bengal. She organized active campaigns and wrote letters to the then Labour minister Jagjivan Ram for the improvement of the working conditions of the tea plantation labourers of North Bengal. Since her early day she was actively participated in the various social activities and became the member of the various social organizations. She hold the various post and positions of her reputes; like, members of the educational Board of the Kurseong Municipality (1938), President of the Gorkha Dukha Niwarakh Sammelan and Nepali Mahila Sammelan (1934), Vice-president of the Mahila Mandali (1941), President of the Indian National Congress of Darjeeling district, vice-president of the Kurseong branch committee (1946) and others. In the year 1941 '*Hindu Kanya Pathshala*' was established at Gorkha Library by her husband Dil Bahadur Chhetri with the purpose of educating Hindu students where she served as the

headmistress for many years. In independent India Maya Devi Chhetry was elected as the Member to the Rajya Sabha [Council of States] from west Bengal in the year 1952 and continued to hold her position for the 12 years, till 1962. She was one of the most influential and dynamic lady and represented India in many international gatherings (Giri 2009).

The feeling of nationalism touched upon the tea garden labourers of Dooars. Despite of many difficulties the people of Dooars contributed selflessly in the independent movement. Workers were subjugated by the owners and they were treated as slaves. Their interaction with the outside world was forbidden and was a punishable offence. The activities of the Congress were initiated much earlier; however it got momentum only after 1942 when Mahatma Gandhi lunched the quit India movement. The working class leaders like Dutta Singh Sanyasi, Kuber Rai, Shanta Pradhan, Birkaji Pradhan, Gyan Bahadur Rasailey and others played important role. Agam Maya Rai, Nina Maya, Shanta Rai and Gita Limbu were few among many invisible women leaders who united working class for freeing India from the hand of British. Many of them were arrested and imprisoned for creating anti British activities among the tea garden workers in 1946. They were released by their party activists- Sunil Sarkar, Daven Sarkar, Diyush Kati Mukherjee and others; however the British official passed an order for expulsion on them from their respective tea garden (Lama 2014: 99-112). After independence they return back to their garden and contributed in the trade union movement against the neo colonial form of subjugation.

Conclusion

The Indian nationalism has always been projected as the masculine endeavor. The mainstream and regional historiography mentions very little about the participation of women in the nationalist movement. The scanty works are available but they are mainly focused on the elite and well known women leaders. However the voice of the marginal remains unheard and unsung. Women all over the country contributed tremendously in the freedom struggle. The issues concerning women was sidelined by the nationalist movement and overlooked their issues as unnecessary by the national leaders (Jayawardana 1987). The social condition of Darjeeling and Dooars during colonial regime was very critical because the whole region was kept under their strict surveillance. Conditions of the tea plantation labourers were very pathetic as there was wage discrimination between *marad* (male), *aurut* (female) and *chokra* (child). Women workers had to work without maternity and casual leave. The workers were not allowed to raise their voices against their owner. They were evicted from the garden in case of such activities by them which were commonly known as the *hatta bahira*. The most striking feature was that the colonial form of oppression and subjugation was not withdrawn from the tea gardens of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri even after independence. It was withdrawn only in the year 1955 when the police open indiscriminate firing on the unarmed workers in Margret's hope tea estate. They were demanding the eradication of colonial laws. In that incident six people died including two women. The neo colonial form of subjugation and exploitation still continues in the tea belts of the region in various forms as a result of which women had to be the ultimate sufferer. In independent India the Gorkha women have to suffer from the indigenous patriarchy in one hand and mainstream Indian masculinity on the other. Indian achieved freedom and women played very important role however the gender equality remains a distant dream even after the seven decades of Indian independence.

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Not all the papers presented at the conference were submitted for publication; some were published in other platforms while others remain unpublished. The conference schedule is provided in the appendix of this volume. The full list of presentations made at the conference can be viewed at www.annualconference.soscbaha.org.

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Gender Dimensions of the Gorkhaland Movement

KUMAR CHHETRI

Context and Background

The Gorkhaland movement is one of the most commonly known ethnic movements in India. It is basically a demand for the separation of Darjeeling hills, Tarai, and Dooars from the domain of West Bengal under the Indian union (Subba 1992; Chakraborty 2005; Chakrabarti 1988). The journey of Gorkha ethnic separatism is more than hundred years old, although it gained its momentum only after 1980s (Sarkar 2011). Demand for the autonomy of region was first placed before the government by the hill people/Gorkhas in 1907 (Subba 1992; Chakraborty 2005; Chakrabarti 1988). The Hillmen's Association, one of the earliest formed organisations of the hill people of the Darjeeling district, continuously placed its petitions one after another to the British government until 1942, calling for the creation of a separate administrative set-up but it did not achieved its objective (Dasgupta 1999). On the 15th of May 1943, a branch of the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) was formed in Darjeeling, which was established by Thakur Chandan Singh in the year 1923 in Dehradun, to look after the Socio-cultural and literary upliftment of the Gorkhas in India. The foremost objectives of the AIGL was to integrate Gorkha society into mainstream India, but it soon emerged as the only dominant political organisation of the Gorkhas in the northern part of West Bengal.

Damber Singh Gurung, the first president of AIGL (Darjeeling), initially came up with the idea of a merger of the Darjeeling hills, Tarai, and Dooars with Assam but later raised the demand for 'Uttarakhand' (Chakraborty 2005; Subba 1992). The decades since the 1940s the history of autonomy movement in the region was marked by the demand for Gorkha Sthaan, comprising Darjeeling, Tarai and some parts of Assam by the communist activists in the Darjeeling district, like Ratanlal Brahmin, Charu Mujumdar and others (Bomzon 2008). Like all other political parties it also failed to

achieved its goal. The most important and crucial phase of the identity movement could be considered as post 1980s, because for the first time the autonomy movement witnessed the massive participation of Gorkhas with a clear vision of a separate state with the name Gorkhaland within the Indian union, they rallied under the banner of the Gorkha National liberation Front (GNLF). The Gorkhaland movement emerged as the '*jati, asmita ra matoko larai*' (movement for Gorkha identity and ethnicity/Gorkha homeland) and turned violent causing hundreds of deaths, the destruction of millions of government properties etc. The GNLF dropped the Gorkhaland movement as a result of the 'Gorkha Accord' and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) came into being in 1988. The demand for Gorkhaland again resurfaced in North Bengal under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) in 2007, and it is still active even after the formation the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011.

The most important feature of this movement after the 1980s was the emergence of women and their active participation in the movement. Their visibility as leaders, participants, opponents, and supporters of the movement show that they were the major building force of the movement. However, their participation did not receive much academic attention. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to explore the gender dimension of the Gorkhaland movement. It attempts to explore the vital sociological areas of inquiry mainly drawing from Kuumba (2003), such as what role does the societal gender division of labour play in fuelling or motivating the protest? To what degree were the gender roles reproduced during the movement's actions? Does structural gender inequalities and stratification place women in subordinate positions relative to men? Are women a 'bridge' or 'invisible' category of leaders who played indispensable roles linking the Gorkhaland movement to the masses? At first the present paper discusses gender construction among the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling hills. This section also briefly talks about the impact of migration, colonial modernity, and Christianity among the Gorkhas. Secondly, it deals with the emergence of GNWO and GJMNM as subsidiary units and women's agency in the movement. It further investigates women's mobilisation and gender power relationship in the organisational and structural hierarchy, mainly drawing from field experience and leads to the final summary and conclusion of the paper.

Gender Dimensions of Gorkha Society

Gender is one of the bases of social inequality in Nepali/Gorkha society; however there are spatial-temporal, class, and caste variations. It is

normally understood as the 'parallel and socially unequal division of femininity and masculinity'. This distinction operates at the various levels of family, caste, class, economy, religion, politics and culture etc. The gender dimension of any movement cannot be understood without understanding the 'institutionalised gender relationship' of a patriarchal social order, as according to Kuumba:

Gender, on both objective and subjective levels, significantly impacts social movement recruitment and mobilization, roles played and activities performed within movements, resistance strategies and organisational structure, and the relevance and impact of movement outcome. (Kuumba 2003, 15)

Colonial Economy, Migration and Modernity

The position of women in the hill society of Darjeeling has been highly contested. This is because of the complex Nepali social structure on one hand and its exposure to the colonial economy, modernity, and Christianity on the other. The discovery of Darjeeling by the colonial power led to the establishment of a sanatorium, tea industry, and Gorkha soldier recruitment centre which paved the way for the heavy migration of both national and international people. 'From a sparsely populated hillock occupied by local Lepcha, Mangar and Limbu villages to one of the famous hill station in India, Darjeeling's origins are steeped in the history of the British Raj' (Chettri 2013, 02). The successful establishment of tea plantations in the Darjeeling hills, particularly after 1856, provided a fertile ground for the European enterprises to invest in Darjeeling (O'Malley 1907). In order to fulfill the labour demands, particularly in plantation industries and other developmental activities, the British encouraged migration from eastern Nepal and also employed *Sardars* to meet the labour shortage. In the successive years, Darjeeling received huge Nepali migration, including women and children, as they were suffering from indebtedness, economic suppression, and other problems in their native place. The new colonial economy provided them with a livelihood in a different social set-up that had a far reaching impact on them. Their traditional dependency was decreased because of their shift from home production to wage employment, in which women had direct control over their income. They were strong and capable and did the same work as their male counterparts; however, the perception of them in the eyes of the European planters was weak, dove and feeble because the British planters were only interested in acquiring cheap labour, which came in the form of women and children.

There was also a feminisation of wages and women and children were paid lower salaries than men (Lama 2012, 202).

The British wanted to preserve Darjeeling like all the other hill stations in India, which reminded them of a 'second home: home away from home (Britain)'. They enforced western machine oriented superior constructs upon the non-western indigenous hill people because they always wanted to maintain their supremacy over the natives. This does not mean that the natives do not have traditional forms of knowledge in various fields. They constructed the traditional knowledge of the natives as inferior and western modernity of the colonisers as superior; which is how they maintained a distance between rulers and subjects/ruled. On the other hand, the Christian missionaries entered the region with their civilisation mission and utilised the 'white man's burden' for evangelical purposes, but they soon realised that without literacy it was impossible to preach the gospel (Chatterjee 1997). Therefore, the primary work of christen missionaries in the field of education was inspired by religion rather than the socio-political upliftment of the general masses. They opened many schools for the common people in order to carry out their evangelical mission and they encouraged education for all (Dewan 1991).

Although initially there was resistance from the hill people, particularly by the high caste Nepalis against Christianity, Christian education, and conversion, it unintentionally sowed the seeds of western English education in the region. Over time, many people received education and partially, but did not fully accept Christianity and western ideals. This had a far reaching impact on the life of the hill people in general and women in particular. The modern English education and Christianity brought empowerment to the lives of hill people, especially women, but it also introduced Victorian patriarchy. Eventually, the liberal tribal groups imitated the sharp division of the 'public-private roles for men and women' of English society. Chatterjee (1997) argues that the reforms brought by the colonial government were defined by the benevolent male patriarchs and women participated little in deciding the course of their own progress to modernity (Sinha Roy 2015, 31). The colonial modernity brought empowerment with new patriarchies. Therefore, women had to witness 'multiple patriarchies' in the colonial settings and multiple forms of marginalisation at household and at work (Chatterjee 1997).

Women in Nepali/Gorkha Tradition

The everyday life practices of gender construction among Gorkhas have been deeply inculcated by Nepali culture. 'Kinship structure and family

structure account for some critical differences among societies in the ways in which they operate'. Nepalis belong to patrilineal descent systems which organise marital, inheritance, and ritual behavior and others to varying degree (Dube 2009, 03). Nepali society is patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal with male domination in all spheres of domestic, social, economic, and political life. The Patriarchal attributes and male hegemony is less visible among the Nepalis but its norms, values, culture, tradition, and social structure supports male hegemony and the subordination to women. Women have an inferior role and position within the family. The father is the head of the family, or in case of his absence, the eldest son has to take the responsibility for the whole family. The matter of sexual hegemony is often controlled by men and not by women. The inheritance of property is patrilineal, where the father's property is distributed equally among the sons. The birth of a son is considered auspicious in as much as it enables the parents to receive a birth in heaven, and it is the duty of a son to perform funeral rites of their parents, and women have no such rights traditionally (Shrestha 1997, 184-185). Nepali women enjoy considerable freedom in terms of match-making, sex, divorce, dress, and sometimes being economically independent, but the forces of patriarchy still play a dominant role in terms of property rights, decision making, and politics.

The influence of caste, Brahmanical religion and new religions particularly among the *matwalis*, has been the important factors which tightened the ideologies of the patriarchal norms. However, this society is not as patriarchal as the pan Indian society where violence against women, dowry deaths, female infanticide, and male preference etc., has been very high, nor are they as liberal as the tribes of North east India. The Brahmanical patriarchal attributes are more acute among the high caste Nepalis, particularly the *Bahun*s, *Chhetris*, *Thakuris* and *Jaishis*. They are locally levelled as the *Tagadhary*, or twice born caste, because they are a class of people who traditionally wore sacred threads and do not drink alcohol. The *matawalis*, such as the Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Tamang, Sherpa, Mangar, Gurung, Thami, Mukhia, Bhujel, Newar, Yalmu, Kami, Damai, Sarki and others are much more liberal in their believes and practices. This is because of the fact that twice born castes are more inclined towards Hinduism and Brahmanical form of religious belief and practices; although one cannot deny the influence of Hinduism and new religions among the *matwalis* at present. The conception of son preference, *kanyadan* and *pindudan* has been an increasing phenomenon recently among the *matwalis*.

Gender Dimensions of the Gorkhaland Movement

Movement Emergence, Mobilisation, and Recruitment

The homeland movement of 1980s touched every section of Gorkha society, including the women and children of Darjeeling hills, Dooars and the Tarai. The GNLf as well as GJMM encouraged women to come out of their traditional private domain to participate in the Gorkhaland movement, which led to the formation of Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO) in 1986 and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GJMNM) in 2007 as the 'subsidiary unit for women'. On the other hand, it was also 'women's agency' that encouraged them to leave the private domain to participate in the ethnic movement. The literature on women's participation throughout the world has often denied women's agency; this may be true to some extent; however, the women themselves are heterogeneous on the basis of ethnicity, class, caste, spatial, and geographical location, and not homogenous group. Women in the gender integrative social movements are often encouraged by men by forming subsidiary units for women; however, one has to be very cautious in understanding women's agency and their active role both in the private and public domain as they constitute a large part of the same society. They are often faced with the same problems and discrimination due to ethnicity and identity than the male members of their society. Most of the studies on women in conflicting situations regard women as in a form of passive victimhood, while discarding their active agency and their different concept of peace. The concept of peace is different for women because they are the actual producers of nations, soldiers etc (Manchanda 2001).

The role of the Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO) (women's wing of the GNLf) was very prominent during the course of the entire movement in the 1980s (Chakraborty 2005). A large number of women emerged from the private domain in order to participate in the Gorkhaland movement under the aegis of Mr. Subash Ghising. The entire region witnessed a violent movement fighting for separate statehood in the name of Gorkhaland, and according to government records, there was a loss of 283 lives and 615 were seriously injured (Dasgupta 1999), but oral accounts estimate the number of dead as more than 1200 people in the Darjeeling hills, Tarai and Dooars (Gorkha 1992). Among the dead, a significant number of women and children also lost their lives fighting against the State led Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF) and other paramilitary forces. The region also witnessed intra-group conflict within the Gorkhas under different political banners. The Gorkhas themselves were divided

into the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the GNLf and there was an ideological clash between the two rival political groups (Subba 1992). In the public domain women actively participated and became part of every violent incident and action in the form of picketing, rallies, social boycotts and so on, and in the private domain they looked after their children, husbands, families and household activities and also took care of those who participated in the movement.

During the 1980s women's roles in protecting men from police atrocities were praiseworthy in the entire course of the 40 day long *bandh* call (strike), which is bitterly remembered by the hill people as '*chayalisko andolane*' (agitation of 1986). Many women were shot to death by CRPF at the Mela ground in Kalimpong on the 27th of July 1987, during a peaceful protest rally organised by the GNLf (Gorkha 1992). Dhan Narayan Pradhan, a 72-year-old GNLf activist, whose 14-year-old daughter was killed by the CRPF in the 1980s, feels that after years of struggle and hardship the Gorkha people were betrayed by their leaders. He said that his daughter's contribution had gone in vain. A similar story was revealed by Ruk Mani Chhetri, who was injured in a shooting and charged with more than 12 crimes; she stated that she was harassed by the state and had experienced immense hardship and suffering even after the peace accord of 1988 just because of her active participation in the Gorkhaland movement. She feels that nothing has been done as promised by the leaders, and their conditions remain the same as before. Numerous rape, murder, and human rights infringements were witnessed by the many people, especially women in the tea estates and rural areas. However, their contribution has never been taken into serious consideration nor has it been praised as deserved.

The demand for a Gorkhaland was resurrected across the entire region under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMNM), which was formed on the 7th of October 2007. The GJMNM, a frontal women's wing of the GJMM was formed on the 18th of October 2007, on the initiative of the party president Bimal Gurung, as a 'subsidiary unit' in the Gorkhaland movement. His wife, Asha Gurung, was elected as its president. The major task of the Nari Morcha, as directed by the central committee, was membership recruitment and women's mobilisation. As a result, almost every woman became a member irrespective of their age, caste, religion, and class and actively participated in public protests for the creation of a separate state. Since its inception, the mobilisation of women was very important, and the GJMNM played a vital role in the on-going movement. From the beginning it adopted the Gandhian methods of peaceful protests in the form of hunger strikes, hartals, picketing, processions, road blockades,

rail rokos, jail bhara andolans, demonstrations at Jantar Mantar (New Delhi), social boycotts etc. Women were always at the forefront everywhere the movement protested.

One of the lady GTA Savashad and activist in the Gorkhaland movement stated that Gorkha/Nepali women are doubly exploited; firstly, as 'women' or a 'second sex' and second as a 'subaltern community'. Her participation in Gorkhaland was very important in organising hunger strikes, rallies, and picketing in the Tarai and Dooars. Despite being a central committee member and Savashad, her presence in the decision making body is not significant. Urmila Ghishing, one of the activists of the GNLF led agitation, ironically hinted at the false assurance and motivation delivered to women by the leaders to participate in the movement. The pathetic condition of women has been narrated in her poem '*ma ansan basdaichu*' (I am sitting for a hunger strike) (Ghishing 2011). Her poem reflects the kind of historical gender consciousness which has been missing in most women's perceptions. As happened with one of the zonal secretaries of Nari Morcha, and among many others during my fieldwork; when I reached her house with prior permission, she asked her husband to respond. She said, 'I am only the participant and I follow the direction of the party's high command'. Her husband, the zonal president of GJMM said, 'Yes... They know little about the Gorkhaland movement. We guide them and they follow us. They have equal position and rights in our party. We are much better than the GNLF'.

On the 8th of August 2013, eight women activists shaved their heads at Chock Bazar in Darjeeling town in support of the Gorkhaland movement. Among the women was Ramayanti Rai, who stated in a local newspaper that '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'. Many of them also sacrificed their lives in the on-going movement. On the 8th of February 2009, three members, in which Bimala Rai and Nita Khawas, member of Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha were shot dead by the West Bengal police (WBP) in Sibchu (Dooars) while participating in a protest rally organised by the GJMM (Chattopadhyay 2011). A large number of women are also serving in a volunteer organisation called Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP), formed by the GJMM. Although it claims to be a peaceful and non-violent movement, violence occurs frequently and they became an integral part of every volatile and violent incident that erupted during the course of the movement. The sacrifice of lives made by women for the sake of 'Gorkhaland' is reflective of their dedication and commitment towards the ongoing ethnic upsurge.

Many people participated in the movement to achieve their 'class

interest through ethnic collectively' that happened in one of the closed tea gardens. Phulmith Rai, zonal president of the Nari Morcha and one of the earliest families to take membership of GJMM into her garden, stated that the main purpose behind taking membership was to re-open their garden which had been closed for 18 years. She and her husband convinced the workers and demanded the re-opening of their garden collectively through a trade union. They went on an indefinite hunger strike for 8 days in front of the District Magistrate office, Darjeeling, and finally the management agreed to re-open on *sukkha roze* (daily wage). Apart from daily wages, the workers do not receive anything which is laid down in the Plantation Labour Act. However, the situation of the nearby functioning garden is not much better. Almost everyone, from both the gardens participated in the Gorkhaland movement led by the GJMM, but only few women leaders have emerged. This is because of the structural gender constraints that have been associated with women, as they have to engage in production and reproduction of the household in the patriarchal social order. In addition, a large number of participants remain submissive to their male leaders.

Movement's Organisation and Structure

The GJMM is a centralised party with a hierarchical structure headed by the party president and its parent body. It is divided into different frontal organisations, like the Gorkha Jana Mukti Youva Morcha (GJMYM), the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GNMNM), the Gorkha Jana Mukti Asthai Karmachari Sangathan (GNMAKS), and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Vidhyarthi Morcha (GNMNM) among others. The central committee is regarded as the apex body headed by the party president with five working committee members, and is further subdivided 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 organised in a similar hierarchical structure 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 the central committee and is further subdivided 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 organisations remain under the subordination of the party supremo and the central committee. The GNLF led movement of the 1980s was also organised in a

similar organisational structure like that of GJMM. The women participants have no voice in the organisational structure and have to follow the direction of the party *suprimo* and central committee.

Post-Movement Arrangements

After a long agitation, a semi-autonomous body within West Bengal called the 'Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council' (DGHC) was formed on the 22nd of August 1988, through the tripartite agreement with the central, state, and representatives of the GNLF. Although their contributions were made rather selflessly, they did not get the attention that they deserved. Their position was denied in the decision making body of the DGHC. There were only three women dignitaries during the first tenure and two dignitaries after the first tenure in the DGHC, out of twenty eight dignitaries (councillors). On July the 18th, 2011, the DGHC was replaced by a newly formed administrative body called the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. This administrative set up was constituted out a general election held for forty eight seats, but only nine tickets (including two nominated by the chief minister) were allotted to women by the GJMM, and they are representing their constituencies in the GTA arrangement. Women's presence in local governing bodies, both in municipalities and *panchayats* is deplorable. However, their representation has been increased successively after the incorporation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment Acts in which the DGHC and GTA had no role (Chakraborty et al 2005; Dural 2009).

Conclusion

The entire population, 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. Therefore, there has been a collective participation of people for the definitive aim of bringing social change to the social order. The participation of women in the Gorkhaland movement is not a sudden or abrupt occurrence, but the culmination of long historical realities. Their emergence in the movement has been largely the raising of their own consciousness; although the historical gender awareness has traditionally been missing. Their public participation has been supported by their male counter-parts by forming 'subsidiary units for women'. As argued by third-world feminists, this has been a common phenomenon across all South Asian countries (Yuval-Davis 1997). Alternatively, there has been strong 'women's agency' that encouraged them to come out of the private domain for Gorkha collectively. They became part of all the

actions across the length and breadth of the movement's mobilisation, but the major decision making activities were dominated by the phallogocentric attributes both in the structural and organisational domain. Since 1986 almost all the negotiation processes and post movement arrangements (bipartite and tripartite talks and agreements held in Kolkata and Delhi) were conducted by and represented the male or few elite women leaders. Many feminist sociologists argue that it is because of societal gender role segregation and structural constraints that women have to face in their everyday lives. There was no Gender development agenda in the DGHC and despite having Women and Child Development provisions in the GTA agreement; nothing has been done for women's development. There is no gender development agenda in both the GNLG and GJMM, because the issues that have been raised by them are 'gender integrative' where both men and women have a common agenda and objectives to achieve i.e. Gorkhaland. Despite their collective participation in the entire course of the agitation alongside their male-counterparts, women continue to suffer under patriarchal norms and rules both at the level of family and outside. In the political domain, women fought collectively for a Gorkha identity, but were also playing a vital (dual) role of looking after their families and domestic affairs in the private domain. Therefore, the Gorkha women have to witness multiple patriarchies with multiple forms of marginalisation at the level of family, household, work, and within identity movement despite their strong agency.

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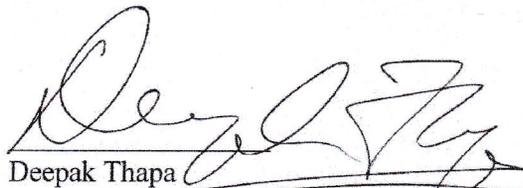
15 August, 2016

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that Kumar Chhetri, Doctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, University of North Bengal, participated in The Fifth Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya organised by Social Science Baha in partnership with Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, Britain-Nepal Academic Council, Centre for Himalayan Studies-CNRS & Nepal Academic Network (Japan) held on 27 - 29 July, 2016 at The Shanker Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Mr Chhetri presented a paper titled "Gender Dimension of the Gorkhaland Movement" presented on the seventh panel, chaired by Lokranjan Parajuli from Martin Chautari, at the conference.

Thank you,


Deepak Thapa
Director, Social Science Baha





5th Annual Conference of the Sociological Association of West Bengal

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Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

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Department of Sociology, North Bengal University &
North Bengal St. Xavier's College

12-13 March 2013

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to Certify that Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms. *Kumar Chhetri*.....

affiliated to *Asst. Lecturer, Gyan Jyoti College*..... attended / participated

in the 5th Annual Conference of SAWB and presented a paper entitled *Women's participation in the Gorkhaland*

movement : Everyday life experiences at public and private space, some preliminary observation

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ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

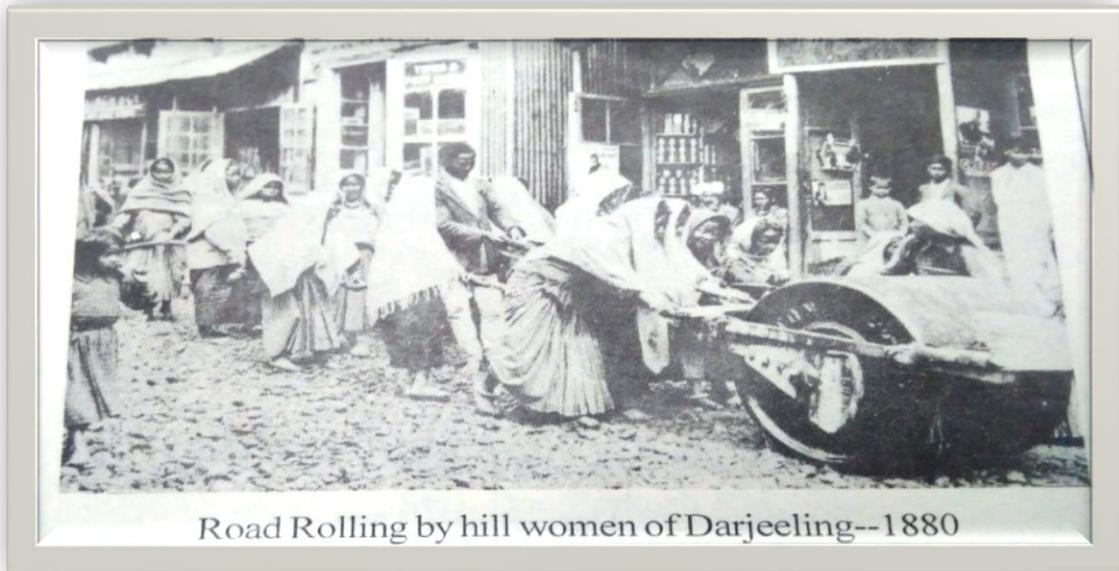
*This is to certify that Prof./Dr./Sri/Smt. Kumar Chhetri.....
of Dept. of Sociology, Raiganj University.....has actively participated in the National
seminar on "Peace, Conflict and Development in the Himalayas: Process, Issues and Initiatives" organised by the
Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal on 15th-16th February, 2018. He/She presented a paper
entitled....."Participation of Women in Gorkhaland Movement".....*

His/Her contribution is appreciated.

Prof. Maitreyee Choudhury
16.02.2018
Prof. Maitreyee Choudhury
Director
CHS, NBU

Dr. Ujjwal Bhui
16/2/18
Dr. Ujjwal Bhui
Seminar Co-ordinator
CHS, NBU

Appendix



Moktan, R. 2004. Sikkim: Darjeeling Compendium of Documents (224/6)

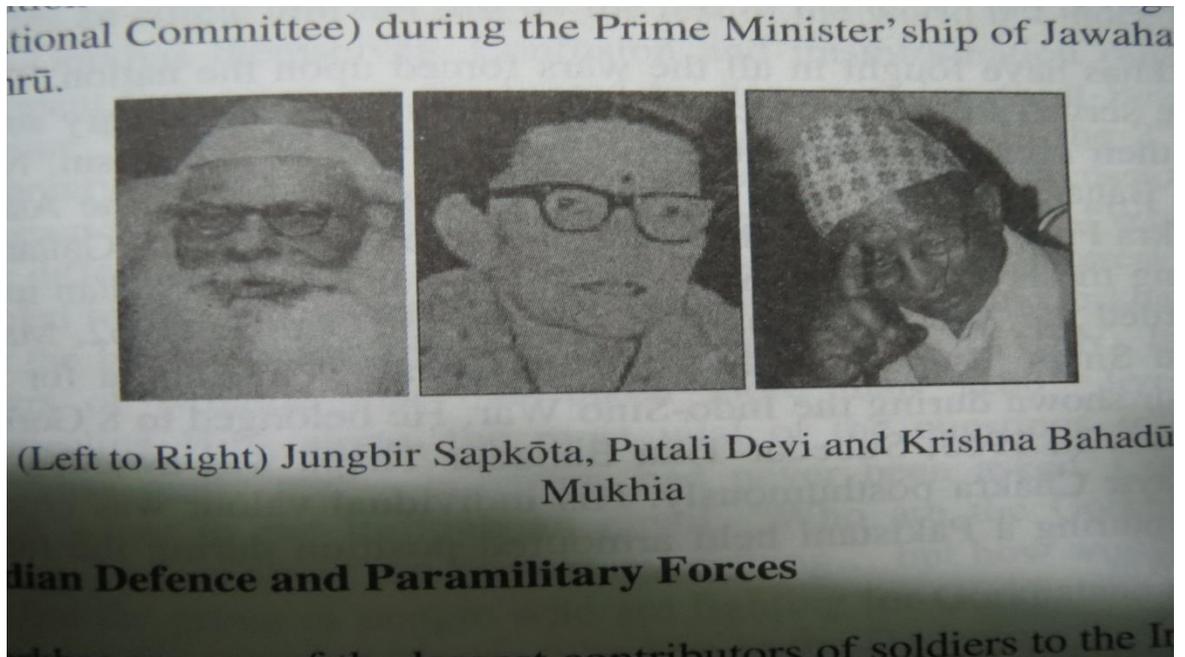


Women in tea industry (old picture)

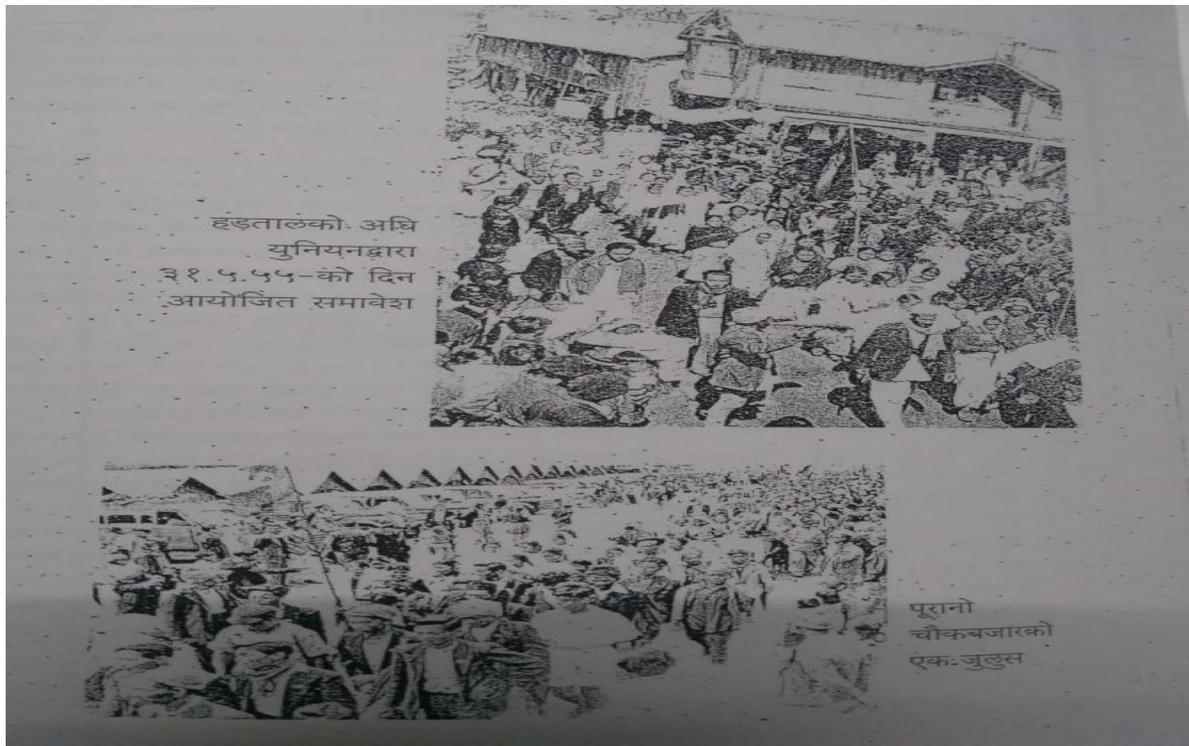
Source: <https://happyearthtea.com/blogs/tea-101/7904251-history-of-darjeeling-tea> (14.03.2020)



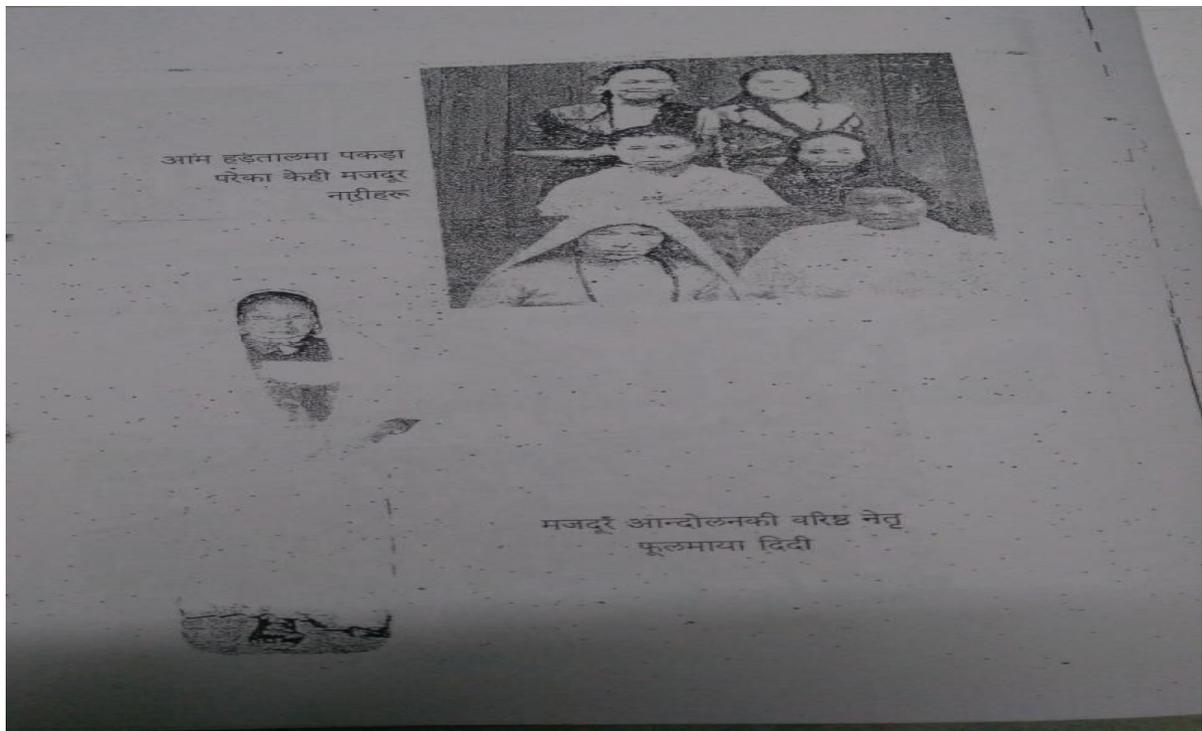
Sabetri Devi with Smt. Indira Gandhi in Darjeeling in 1977



Freedom fighters from Darjeeling Hills (Source: Barun Roy)



Activities of the Mazdoor Union in the year 1955 in Darjeeling town (Source: RB Rai)



Arrested women leaders of Mazdoor Union (Source: RB Rai)



Women participating in 12 days long march to Delhi demanding the inclusion of the Nepali/Gorkha language under the 8th scheduled of Indian constitution (Source: Smt. Chandramith Laksham)



Long march at New Delhi's Boat Club Lawns organized by Vasa Samiti in 1983.



Gorkha Voluntary Cell (GVC) cadres during GNLF led agitation of 1980s (Source: Neeraj Zimba)



Arms surrender by women activists of GNLF in Kalimpong (Source: Neeraj Zimba)



Activities member of Gorkha Welfare Organization (GWO) (Source: Nagendra Gorkha)



Activities of the Gorkha Women's Organization Organization (GNWO) (Source: Roshan Golay)

सम्पूर्ण सहीदहरूलाई नमन छ।



समदर्शी सरिता

5 hrs •

चियाको मुना टिपी हेर
पसिना हाम्रो सिञ्चित छ
माटोको मूल्य सस्तो छैन
सहिदको रगत मिश्रित छ।

सहिद गङ्गामाया बेदी
सिन्देबुङ, कालेबुङ।

यी वृद्दालाई नमन छ जसले घाँस काट्ने हँसियाले दुश्मनलाई
मारेर आफु पनि सहिद बनेकी थिइन। यिनको नाममा
दार्जिलिङमा गङ्गामाया पार्क बनिएको छ जुन पार्कबाट
सरकारले कति आय गर्दो हो थाहा छैन तर गाउँमा यिनलाई
पुज्ने एकमात्र यहि सानो बेदी छ जहाँ कहिलेकाहीँ
असामाजिक तत्वहरूले उपद्रो समेत गर्ने गर्छन्। जे नै होस
यिनी उर्जा हुन् गाउँको निम्ति र नै आज पनि कुनै पुस्ताभेद
बिना श्रद्धाञ्जली अर्पण गरिन्छ यिनलाई।

सम्पूर्ण सहीदहरूलाई नमन छ।

Gangamaya, who was killed by the CRPF during 1980s (Source: Sarita Samadarshi)



हाम्रो कपाल फर्काई दे...

Activities of the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (Source: Bebika Khawash)



Tara Mothay's son was among the 1,200 people who were killed between 1985 and 1987(Bikram Sashanker/HT)



Activities of Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (Source: Google photo)



Vicky Lama with bullet hole on his left cheek. Lama was shot at during the Sibchu firing on the 8th of February 2011. © Bishal Khambū Raī



(Left) Bimala Raī with a bullet hole on her brow. Raī fell to the police bullet at Sibchu on the 8th of February 2011. © Bishal Khambū Raī

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Nita Khawas succumbed to her injuries on the 12th of February 2011. She was shot at Sibchu on the 8th of February 2011. Khawas became the third victim of police firing at Sibchu. © Bishal Khambū Raī



GJM women cadres take out a rally in Kurseong condemning the Sibchu firing on the 10th of February 2011. © Bishal Khambū Raī

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Source: Barun Roy



Sahid Bedi at Margaret's Hope in the memory of six activists who were killed by the police (Source: field)



Sahid Bedi at Pedong bazar in the memory of Sangita Pradhan (Source: field)