

## **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 be 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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