

## CHAPTER 3

# LEADERSHIP AND THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT

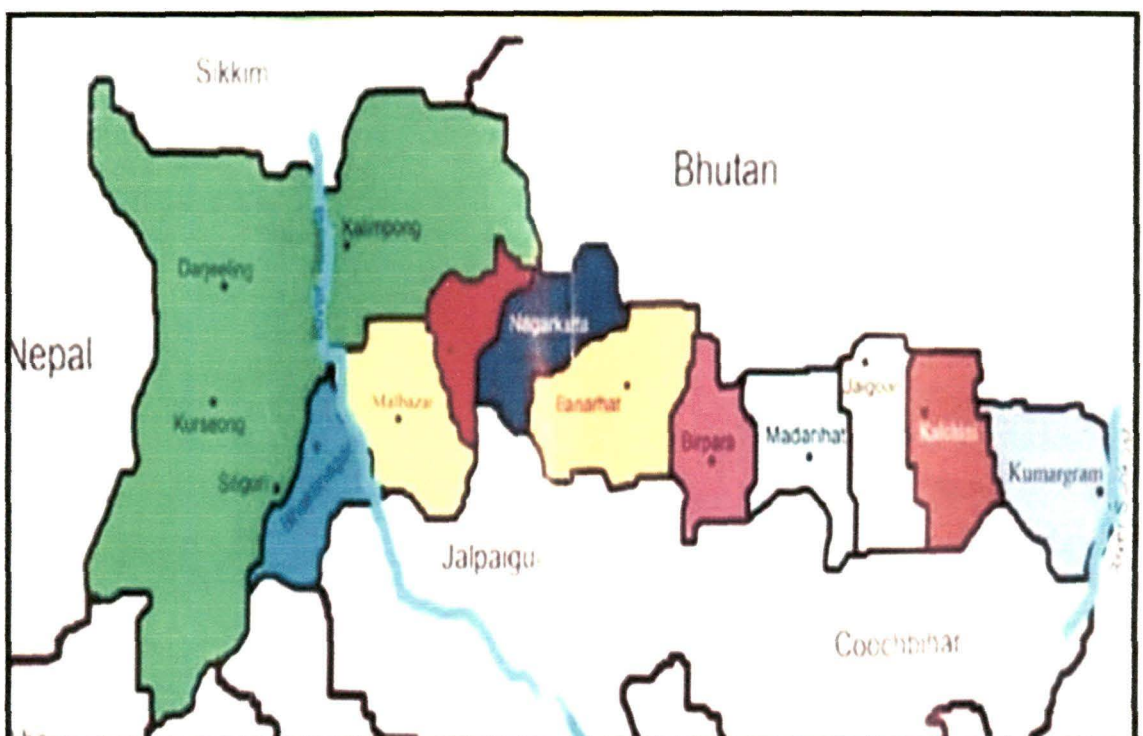
### 1. INTRODUCTION

Protest movements have a life-course; they emerge, evolve, grow, mature and in this process, change and transform in terms of its components. Padam Nepal (2009a and 2009b) contends that the components of movements are not *apriori* and *static*. They are rather dynamic and get changed and transformed in the course of the movement. For instance, sometimes the objectives of the movements emerge on a narrow, particular local issue, which, in course of time, evolve to broad aims for social transformation and vice versa. Ideologies of the protest movements also undergo change, providing direction for the evolution of new strategies and programmes. Actors, and for that matter, the leadership which initiates or emerges in the course of the growth of the movement plays a crucial role in articulating ideologies and objectives, and also in determining the nature and type of the movement organization. Competition among movement members in general and leaders in particular for social, economic, political and psychological rewards, the ideological differences amongst the movement participants in general and leadership in particular lead to the development of factions and compel new recruitments to broaden the support base of the movement and give it its dynamism. For this reason, the protest movements can at best be comprehended by way of locating and analyzing the dynamism and transformations of the movements produced

by the dialectical interaction of the various components and parameters of the movement over a span of time. However, for the present purpose, we shall dwell on the role of leadership in producing movement dynamics, with special reference to the Gorkhaland Movement, one of the prominent autonomy movements in the North Bengal region of West Bengal, India.

## 2. PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The total area of the proposed state of Gorkhaland state comprising the Darjeeling district and the contiguous area of Dooars in the Jalpaiguri district is approximately 6450 square kilometers. It includes 1060 mouzas out of which 718 are in Darjeeling district and 342 in the areas of Dooars (Jana 2010). It includes 21 police stations out of which 13 lie in Darjeeling district and 8 in the Dooars area. The following map is suggestive of the proposed Gorkhaland state.



The total population of the proposed Gorkhaland state is approximately 30 lakhs as per 2001 census. The majority of population in the proposed state consists of Gorkhas, besides; there are Lepchas, Bhutias, Biharis, Marwaris, Bengalis and others consisting the total population. The three sub-division of Darjeeling district, i.e., Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong are the areas in the hilly areas whereas Siliguri sub-division is in the plains. The district lies between 26° 31" and 27° 13" North latitude and between 87° 89" and 88° 53" East longitude (Bomjan, 2008). The contiguous areas of Dooars fall in the Terai.

Tea Gardens constitute a major industry in the Darjeeling hills and have survived more than 150 years. This industry was established by the British in the 1850s and produces the World's best tea, the best of qualities fetching prices as high as Rs.25, 000 per kg. Tea can be called the 'Brand Ambassador' of the Darjeeling hills. Presently, there are 87 functioning tea gardens encompassing an area of 17,500 hectares and producing world class tea amounting to 10 – 12 million kilograms of tea per annum. It is roughly estimated that 15 – 20% of the total population residing in the tea garden areas are employed in the tea industry. Approximately 45,000 people are involved in the tea industry and around 200,000 people dependent (i.e. around 30 -35% people) on it. Of the total workforce, nearly 60% are women.

After the tea industry, the Directorate of Cinchona and Other Medicinal Plants is the major plantation industry in the Darjeeling hills covering an

area of 26,000 acres of land and employing more than 6000 workforce including labourers, officers and other staff. This industry was established by the British in 1865. The Directorate of Cinchona & Other Medicinal Plants, West Bengal which has its headquarters at Mungpoo, Darjeeling, is virtually the only concern in the whole of India, producing the essential Medicinal compounds – Quinine, Emetine and Diosgenin on a large scale i.e. commercially. Apart from the above mentioned medicinal plants, Aromatic plants as well as subsidiary crops of great commercial value are grown in the plantations. It has four major plantations under it at Mungpoo (10023 acres), Munsong (9600 acres), Rongo (4222 acres) and Latpanchar (2440 acres). An experimental plantation is at Ambootia (177 acres). The main plantations are for Cinchona, Ipecac and Dioscorea. The plantation also grows rubber, mushrooms and other Medicinal & Aromatic plants like Lemongrass, Rawolfia serpentina etc.

The district contains valuable mineral deposits. The coal bearing rocks were reported for the first time by Sir J.D. Hooker in 1849 from Pankhabari and Gorubathan (Dalimkot). During 1896-1900 A.D. a total of 7231 tonnes of coal was raised from Gorubathan until the enterprise was closed (Banerjee 1980).

Among the minerals, copper occurs in Kalimpong Peshok, Mirik and Gorubathan, Graphite occurs as embedded in mica schist along Darjeeling-Peshok ridge, Ghaiyabari, Mungpoo, Rakti valley, lower Singalila range and Labha. Iron ores varying from strong ferruginous clay to an impure hematite are reported from Samalbong and Seokbir

(Kalimpong) and Lohagarh (Kurseong Terai). Three Iron ores varying from strong ferruginous clay to an impure hematite are reported from Samalbong and Seokbir (Kalimpong) and Lohagarh (Kurseong Terai). Three sources of lime viz. Dolomite, limestone buds and calcareous tufa have been reported from numerous zones, chiefly the junctions of Gondwana and Tertiary. Senchale ridges, Pankhabari, Yangmakum and Great Rangit are important among these. The positive indications of occurrence of uranium have been traced by the Geological Survey of India in 1980-82, from Yangmakum-Tik ridge.

Darjeeling has rich resources of Tourism as it is known as the "Queen of Hills", a tourist paradise. It has the potential of power generation as some of the perennial rivers flows from the region like the Rangit, the Balasan, the Teesta, Jaldhaka, Neora Nala and the Mahananda. Darjeeling is strategically located in the North East corner of the country sharing international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. Dooars, which is contiguous to Darjeeling areas, is in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas bordering Bhutan.

### **3. THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT: CHARACTER, CONTENT AND COURSE**

Darjeeling, a small Hill Station in the lap of Kanchenjunga and inhabited by Gorkhas has a contested history. Gorkha as a nation had been demanding a homeland within India for last hundred years or so, and the demand for the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland within the framework of Indian federation has its history ever since India's

independence. The Hills saw a bloody agitation for separation from West Bengal and for the creation of a separate Gorkhaland state within the federal structure of India in the 1980's after which a Hill council was formed as a separate development agency for the Darjeeling Hills (Ganguly, 2005). The developmental benefits, however, seem to have failed to percolate down to the people even after twenty years of anxious wait, creating in the minds of the nation a sense of deprivation and of being marginalized. Second wave of protest movement has begun since 2007, albeit with the same demand of the creation of Gorkhaland. However, both in the 1980s and in the second wave of the movement, use of popular music to mobilize for the movement has been popular and a deluge of songs of protests and expressions of nationalism have flooded the Hills. Hence, the chapter describes how party politics has appropriated performances of popular art to create and entrench oppressive political culture in Darjeeling. Performances of popular culture were already used during the struggle for Indian independence, and such practice is in wide use even today, in the struggle of the ethnic Nepalis in Darjeeling Hills. Songs of protest conveying nationalist sympathies have been common in the Gorkhaland movement. However, a proper analysis of the role of songs in the movement can be understood only with a prior contextualization of the movement under study. Therefore, we begin with a short introduction on the Gorkhaland movement itself. However, we shall just give a brief overview of the movement because the movement itself does not form the part of the present study.

Golay (2006) contends that the '*life-world*' of the Gorkhas in India is located both literally and figuratively on the margins of the imagined nation. This 'marginality' is not merely a location but a byword for the oppressed and dispossessed. It is characterised by the dispossession of narratives, the cannibalistic appropriation and the continuing colonisation of their epistemological grid. For the most part, it occupies a peripheral location in relation to the metropolitan academic research. The process of formation of a strong cultural identity in the shape of Nepali identity was again unsettled as it was relocated within the matrix of the national culture and identity of the Indian nation. The Gorkha identity has been treading a difficult path in which it has tried to strike a fine balance between its cultural identity and the demands of citizenship and national culture of India. Hence, the lexical juggleries like Indian–Nepali, Bharatiya-Gorkhali or Bhargoli.etc. Ultimately it boiled down to the Gorkhaland agitation in the mid 1980s.

The Gorkha agitation for separate status within the Indian federation has a long and chequered history. However, as an organized and serious political movement that called for separate statehood and was willing to indulge in violent agitations, it only emerged in the 1980s under the astute leadership of Subhas Ghising and his Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) The GNLF-led agitation for the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland took place at a time when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was firmly in power in the state of West Bengal. Given the CPI (M)'s pro-poor ideology, stellar achievements in land reforms, rural

development, and community empowerment in West Bengal, and prior public commitments to grant autonomy to the Gorkhas, it was surprising that sentiments for a separate Gorkhaland grew steadily in the Darjeeling district. On 13 March 1986, in a meeting held in Ghoom, the GNLF kicked off its agitation for Gorkhaland by deciding on the following 11-point program of action

- Observe a *Black Flag* day on 13 April 1986 in protest against atrocities and discrimination perpetrated on Indian Nepalis;
- Organize a 72-hour *bandh* from 12th to 14<sup>th</sup> May 1986 to highlight the constitutional and just demand for Gorkhaland;
- Burn the States Reorganization Commission Report of 1955, which had increased the area of West Bengal by unconstitutionally annexing the areas of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Mirik, Siliguri and the Dooars that have different culture and language;
- Burn Article 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 as it has relegated the Indian Nepalis to the status of immigrants;
- Launch a movement against the indiscriminate felling of trees in the hill areas and their transshipment to the plains by the West Bengal Forest Corporation;
- Boycott elections.
- Boycott MLAs, ministers and parties who opposed the demand for Gorkhaland;
- Launch a movement to stop all vehicles taking boulders from Dudhia to the plains;

- Launch a *Do or Die* movement in protest against Gorkhas being treated as domiciles;
- Not observe or celebrate important national celebrations such as Independence Day, Republic Day, Gandhi Jayanti, Netaji Jayanti, etc., until and unless the Government of India concedes the demand for Gorkhaland; and
- Launch a movement to convince people not to pay their taxes and loans to protest against the colonial attitude towards the Gorkhas by the Indian and West Bengal governments.

In September 1987 serious discussions were held in Delhi between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Union Home Minister Buta Singh, West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu and the GNLFF President Subhas Ghising. The contours of a political solution seemed to emerge out of these discussions when all sides accepted in principle that Darjeeling should be granted autonomous status and agreed to hold further discussions to work out the exact nature of that autonomy. Subsequently, the Left Front unanimously approved the setting up of a Hill Council for Darjeeling to resolve the Gorkhaland problem. The Hill Council plan also received the support of the West Bengal Congress (I) party. Finally, on 10 July 1988, the GNLFF officially accepted the proposed Hill Council plan for Darjeeling and authorized Ghising to enter into final negotiations with the West Bengal government and the Centre in order to resolve a few issues on which the parties still disagreed. The GNLFF also agreed to keep its agitation suspended as long as the discussions proceeded forward. On

25 July 1988, a tripartite agreement was finally signed between the GNLF, the West Bengal state government, and the Indian government on 22 August 1988. Under this agreement, the GNLF agreed to drop the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland. In return, for the social, economic, educational, and cultural advancement of the Gorkha people residing in the hill areas of the Darjeeling district, the West Bengal government and the Indian government agreed to set up an autonomous Hill Council under a West Bengal State Legislative Act. The Hill Council was to be called the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC).

The developmental benefits, however, seem to have failed to percolate down to the people even after twenty years of anxious wait after the formation of the DGHC, creating in the minds of the nation a sense of deprivation and of being marginalized. Second wave of protest movement has begun since 2007, albeit with the same demand of the creation of Gorkhaland under the leadership of Bimal Gurung, who developed differences with Ghising as a GNLF leader.

#### **4. ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN GORKHALAND MOVEMENT**

Historically, the Gorkhaland movement can be traced to have its origin to 1907. Since then, it has been led by various political parties and organisations. In 1907, under the leadership of Sonam Wangel Ladenla, the Hill people demanded a separate administrative unit for Darjeeling. In 1917 the Hillmen's Association came into being and petitioned for the administrative separation of Darjeeling in 1917 and again in 1928 and

1942. In 1943 the All India Gorkha League was formed in the lines of the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League, which was formed earlier in 1928 in Dehradun. The trend continued. During the 1940s, the Communist Party of India (CPI) organized Gorkha tea workers. In presentations to the States Reorganisation Commission in 1954, the CPI favoured regional autonomy for Darjeeling within West Bengal, with recognition of Nepali as a Scheduled Language. The All India Gorkha League preferred making the area a union territory under the Central government. However, the movement became active and radical in the second half of the 1980s. Therefore, our present study shall focus primarily on the leadership of Subhash Ghising and Bimal Gurung in the two phases of the movement, that is, 1980s and 2000s respectively, however, with cursory references to the Gorkha League leadership in a historical perspective as the League was responsible for providing opposition during these phases in the Hill politics..

#### **4.1. The All India Gorkha League and Its Leadership in Relation to the Status of Darjeeling: A Pre-Independence Scenario**

The AIGL came into existence in the 1940s as the first political party in the Darjeeling hills. It was Damber Singh Gurung who formed it in 1943. The AIGL was established in the hills of Darjeeling after a series of meetings and conferences held at different places of Darjeeling in the 1940s. It was represented by the leading residents of Darjeeling then, like Damber Singh Gurung, Rupnarayan Sinha, Shib Kumar Rai, Randhir Subba, Ari Bahadur Gurung, and others, who unanimously consented to

name the association of the hill people as All India Gorkha League. Damber Singh and Randhir Subba were chosen as the President and General Secretary of the party respectively.

The objective behind the formation of AIGL was basically to address the issues and problems of the people of Darjeeling and to protect their rights. At the initial stage of its inception, the AIGL was concerned with the recognition and consolidation of the scattered Gorkhas throughout India, preservation of the civilization, tradition and culture of the Gorkhas, development of Nepali language, establishment of political rights of the Gorkhas in India, etc.

#### **4.2. AIGL Leadership and the Status of Darjeeling: Between Independence to the Emergence of GNLFF**

It was at the dawn of independence that the AIGL, under the leadership of Damber Singh Gurung, enunciated the idea of merger of Dajeeling with Assam. Rupnarayan Sinha, the then President of Hillmens Association, put forward the idea of making Darjeeling a Chief Commissioners' Province outside Bengal. Damber Singh Gurung opposed the idea of Chief Commisioners' Province and instead offered an alternative to it, i.e., the inclusion of Darjeeling with that of Assam popularizing the slogan "Assam Chalo". During this period, Damber Singh could expand the activities of AIGL to Assam and Shilong taking up the issues and problems of the Gorkhas living in the region. Soon it was able to establish its branches in different parts of Assam and Shilong. N.B.Gurung took

over as the President of the League after the demise of D.S.Gurung in 1948. He submitted a memorandum to the then prime Minister, Jawaharla Nehru on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1949, regarding the abolition of the system of nomination of members of District Boards<sup>1</sup> (Subba, 1955) and municipalities in the district of Darjeeling. The AIGL raised the demand of Uttarakhand Pradesh in 1949 under Randhir Subba, demanding the formation of Uttarkhand Pradesh consisting of Darjeeling district and Sikkim, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. A meeting was held on 30.11.1949, in Darjeeling attended by delegates from Darjeeling hills,(namely, Rupnarayan Sinha, Shib Kumar Rai, Ari Bahadur Gurung,Randhir Subba); Sikkim, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar. The support base of AIGL was reflected when in 1951 it could capture all three seats from Darjeeling districts with Dalbahadur Singh Gahatraj, Shib Kumar Rai and George Mahabert Subba winning over the election to the Assembly of West Bengal. The AIGL submitted a petition to Nehru when he visited Darjeeling in 1952 for a separate homeland for the Gorkhas outside Bengal. However, it failed to register its presence to the State Reorganisation Commission when it had visited Darjeeling.

The AIGL had started losing its grounds before Deo Prakash Rai emerged as a young leader representing new generation, outcasting other leaders in the hills. However, the death of Deo Prakash Rai in 1981 led to the decline of AIGL as his successor could not hold the members

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<sup>1</sup> The then Dr. P.C.Ghosh Government in West Bengal had continued the system of 'nominated membership' in the District Board of Darjeeling whereas the system of election to these sort of District Boards had been introduced in other parts of West Bengal immediately after independence.

and supporters together. The emergence of Pranta Parishad in the 1980s also contributed to the decline of the party as the members started joining the Parishad as because of the moderate and compromising attitude of the party then. Pranta Parishad, advocating that nothing short of full fledged statehood for Drajeeling hills is acceptable, could sustain only for short period of time owing to its leadership crisis and moreover, the marginalisation by the emergence of GNLFF under Subash Ghising. The AIGL, the oldest political party in the hills and the symbol of Gorkha unity in the country, was outlived by the emergence of GNLFF under the leadership of Subash Ghising. Renulina Subba, the only representative of AIGL in the west Bengal Assembly, had to resign on the call by the GNLFF. However, the AIGL associated itself with the GNLFF for some time for the cause of a separate state of Gorkhaland outside Bengal. It (AIGL) also submitted a memorandum to the then President, Zia Singh demanding for a separate state for the Gorkhas and appealed to the different political parties to come together for the formation of Gorkhaland.

#### **4.3. GNLFF under the Leadership of Ghising (1980s) and Movement Dynamics**

With the emergence of Shri Subhash Ghising as a young, aggressive and radical leader of the Gorkhas, in 1986 the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front under Ghising's leadership demanded a separate state of Gorkhaland. Ideologically and strategically, Ghising represented radicalism. This probably owes to the fact that Ghising had the

background of being a military soldier. The violent and radical method of protest and armed struggle proposed by Ghising, a legacy that he owed to the similar movements in Northeast India during his service there, reined the Hills into a cauldron of violence. However, the justification of the use of violence in the movement of the 1980s is worth noting. In his speech delivered at Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong on September 1986, Ghising held that:

*"...this movement have reached to a climax because of the 'Blood' sacrificed by our people. Gorkhaland is a Temple, a Church and a Monastery. ---Everyone around us says, 'our well wishes are there', but I answer them saying that well wishes nowadays are meant only for the newly married couples, not for the revolutionaries. What do we do with your well wishes when the Police and the CRP uses guns on us? A well wish does no work....."*<sup>2</sup> (Gorkha, 1996).

After two years of fighting and the loss of at least 200 lives, the government of West Bengal and the central government finally agreed on an autonomous hill district. In July 1988, the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front gave up the demand for a separate state, and in August the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council came into being with Ghising as chairman.

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<sup>2</sup> The text is researcher's own free translation from the speeches of Subash Ghising in Nepali language compiled by Nagendra Gorkha, in his, *Mato, Jati ra Rashtriya Chinariko Prashnama Subash Ghisingka Aitihāsik Baktavyaharu*.

Ghising's leadership was effective initially for a plurality of reasons. First, his ability to bring Darjeeling area for the first time to national and international attention in the mid 1980s; secondly, leaders need knowledge of local idioms, values, and practices, the components of the cultural arena, to connect with a mass base (Barker, Johnson, and Lavalette 2001). Subhash Ghising, then a budding literary figure, had the knowledge of the cultural arena of Darjeeling. Thirdly, to galvanize aggrieved populations, leaders need deep understanding of their community's circumstances and experiences, 'localized cultural capital'. Ghising had this capital with him as he was the first to articulate the suppressed feelings of Indian Nepalis; Moreover, they need media skills, persuasive rhetorical abilities and strategic savvy to identify opportunities and overcome obstacles in the political arenas where they operate. Ghising being a mastermind in manipulating public sentiment fulfilled this criterion as well and claimed the status of an undisputed leader of the Gorkhas in India. Thus, the Gorkhaland leadership under Ghising came to a situation of perceiving Ghising as Gorkhaland and vice-versa. Thus the movement got personified in its leader. This has led to identifying the movement to a single leadership and therefore, has eclipsed the role played by other leaders occupying a peripheral position in the party.

The personification of the movement to the leadership of Ghising provided a structure whereby Ghising as a leader got an edge to manipulate political institutions and processes to his advantage. The trend exposed the possibility of marginalization of the leadership in the

second rung immediately below Ghising in terms of economic, political, social, and psychological rewards. Reciprocally, Ghising too felt the smell of possible power competition from young and aspiring leadership from within his political loyalists. The situation apparently produced leadership conflicts within the undisputed GNLF.

This was coupled with the fact that, even after over 20 years of the formation of the DGHC under GNLF nothing seemed to have changed for good in Darjeeling. Frustration with the DGHC's inability to work as a full fledged governing body for the Hills has grown from all sides. Moreover, Ghising's attempt to register a Sixth Schedule status for Darjeeling and shelve aside the original demand for a separate state for Indian Nepalis was seen by the masses as divisive of the society and weakening of the pan Gorkha identity. To this effect, the opposition bodies claimed that Ghising is a paranoid and corrupt megalomaniac. At this juncture, movement witnessed a few implications. First, it sensed a death knell for the movement; second, it opened new vistas for the aspiring leadership to come to the forefront, with a plea to fulfill the promise of a separate homeland for the Gorkhas within the framework of the Indian Constitution once again. The leadership conflict was mature enough to displace Ghising's monopolistic leadership in Hill politics. In the later half of 2007, a new leadership with a new political party emerged in the Hills once again, with a strong promise of realizing the statehood for the people of the Hills.

Ghisingh's leadership affected the Gorkhaland movement in multiple ways. Most of the impacts were positive seen from the perspective of the movement itself. It was under his leadership that the Gorkhaland Movement for the first time emerged as an identity based protest movement, and defined the objectives and goals of the movement. The feeling of nationhood and a sense of galvanized community solidarity first emerged under Ghisingh's leadership. Above all, his commitment to an armed movement suddenly captured the attention of the media both at local and national levels and of the government, thereby establishing firmly of the existence of such a movement in the North Bengal region. It was under his leadership that DGHC was formed as an administrative mechanism to address the issues confronting the Gorkhas in India. In other words, Gorkhaland Movement in the present form is the brainchild of the GNLFF supremo Subhash Ghising. The credit for the consolidation of the movement goes to him. Hence, under his leadership, the movement was formally born and matured. However, Ghisingh's leadership also had negative impacts on the movement. The experience of failed development and malgovernance of the Hills by the DGHC under Ghisingh's GNLFF for over 20 years since the Darjeeling Accord in 1988, the movement under him apparently was dying out. The autocratic attitude and eccentric behaviour of the Supremo and his push for the Sixth Schedule status for the Hills was seen as compromising with the movement for the state of Gorkhaland. Hence, his leadership had mixed impacts on movement dynamics. Whereas initially it was his leadership that gave birth to the movement and reached its zenith; later on it was

again under his leadership that the movement witnessed fissures and fractures in the form of leadership dissensions for having abandoned the demand for separate state in exchange of the Sixth Schedule status for the Hills. The movement deteriorated, and suffered internal contradictions until the new leadership unearthed it from entering its grave.

#### **4.4. Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha under the Leadership of Bimal Gurung and Movement Dynamics**

Darjeeling once again started reeling through the politics of protest since September 2007 by a new political party, Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, under the leadership of Shri Bimal Gurung. The disaffection with the functioning of the DGHC crystallised into the re-emergence of the Gorkhaland demand under the leadership of Bimal Gurung and the Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM). Ghising had started showing signs of eccentricities by the end of 2000s. The hill people were affected by the fast deteriorating quality of life under Ghising's rule as the Chairman of the Council and its rampant corruption. People had started questioning the credibility of Ghising as their leader. It was at this critical juncture that Bimal Gurung emerged as the messiah of the people of the hills.

Gurung had been Ghising's lieutenant during the earlier phase of the movement. Later, when the DGHC was formed he became an elected Council member. However, with the passage of time, Gurung gradually came to be relegated to the backyard in Ghising's political camp. It was the short message service (SMS) campaign in 2007 for Prashant

Tamang, a promising young Gorkha singer from Darjeeling competing for the Indian Idol Session 3 (Reality Show by Sony Television) crown that brought Gurung into the limelight. Unlike Ghisingh who was disdainful of the young lad's efforts, Gurung actively campaigned for Tamang who eventually won. It was this electronic campaign which brought Gurung into the forefront of Gorkha solidarity. The GJMM was formed soon after in October 2007 and took up the cause of a separate Gorkhaland state again.

Subash Ghising and Bimal Gurung fell out in 2007 over the attempt to extend 6th Schedule Status to Darjeeling. Under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution, certain tribal-majority areas are given autonomy in administration. While the GNLf wanted the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule status with enhanced powers for the Hill Council, the GJM desired full statehood. The Centre introduced the 6th Schedule to the Constitution Amendment Bills in Parliament in December 2007 but it was shelved.

There are major turns that the demand for a separate state, under the leadership of Gurung, has taken that distinguishes it from the earlier movement. First, the movement aims to achieve the goal of a separate state through the means of non violence following the Gandhian ideals. Second, the map for the current Gorkhaland envisages not only the three hills subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, but also Siliguri and parts of the Dooars that fall in the Jalpaiguri districts in North Bengal, extending up to the River Sunkosh on the border with Bhutan. While the

GNLF had included Dooars in its programme, it did not push for its inclusion in their map of Gorkhaland as a result of which, when the DGHC was formed, only the hill subdivisions were included in it, leaving out chunks of the plains where large populations of Gorkhas reside. The GJM has managed not only to garner the support of Gorkhas in the plains, but also of the Adivasis, who form a substantial percentage of the population of the Dooars. Secure in the knowledge of people's support in the hills, Gurung turned his attention to the plains, mainly Siliguri town and the areas of Dooars. In order to extend his influence in Siliguri and the adjoining *Dooars* area, protest actions in the form of bandhs, meetings and demonstrations were initiated by GJMM.

The Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, under the leadership of Bimal Gurung, after the formation in 2007, in a very short period of time, turned out to be a massive organization in the hills as well as having expanded its activities in the plains of Siliguri and the Dooars area. Since its inception, Gurung's leadership emphasized on a non-violent method for the achievement of its objective of the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

The immediate objective of GJMM after its formation was protesting the proposed Sixth Schedule by Subash Ghising as the Morcha leadership contended that the sixth schedule status would bring about disintegration amongst the Gorkhas in lines of caste, colours, creeds and religion. It also believed that the major issue confronting the Gorkhas being the

question of identity, only Statehood status for the Gorkhas would address this problem, for which Sixth Schedule status could not be a substitute. The GJMM launched its protests by burning of the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal and Subash Ghising<sup>3</sup>. The Morcha supporters went on an indefinite hunger strike demanding the scrapping of the sixth schedule. The outcome of these protests was that the bill for the amendment of the Constitution to implement the sixth schedule status in the hills was stalled after a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs called for a fresh assessment of the ground realities in the hills.

The other immediate objective of the Morcha leadership was to remove Subash Ghising from the post of Caretaker Administrator of DGHC. The frontal organizations of Morcha, particularly the Janamukti Asthai Karmachari Sangathan went on an indefinite hunger strike for the regularization of jobs for the adhoc employees of the DGHC. The GJMM protested by calling long strikes in the hills. These protests ultimately led to the resignation from the post of caretaker administrator of DGHC by Subhash Ghising on March 10, 2008.

The most significant difference the Morcha leadership has with that of the previous leadership is its call for a non-violent form of protest that took the form of non co-operation and home rule movement by way of non payment of taxes to the Government including electricity bills, phone bills,

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<sup>3</sup> On November 15, 2007, the copies of the Settlement on the Sixth Schedule Status for Darjeeling Hills were burnt all over the hills of Darjeeling.

vehicle taxes, land taxes, housing taxes, etc. Vehicles in the hills were asked to use GL (Gorkhaland) number plates in place of WB (West Bengal). Shops and other establishments in the hills were asked to write Gorkhaland on their sign boards to mark the home rule in the hills of Darjeeling.

However, the issue of central importance to us here is as to how the new leadership impacted on the movement. First, Gurung's leadership with the emergence

#### **4.5. The Madan Tamang Era of AIGL: Leadership of AIGL as an Opposition in Darjeeling Hills**

The re-emergence of AIGL, however, was visible in the second half of 1990s when some prominent leaders of GNLF, namely, Tsheten Sherpa, N.T.Moktan and others joined the AIGL to revolt against Subash Ghising. It, under the new leadership, tried to regain the lost glory by trying to curtail the influence of the GNLF and Subash Ghising.

Madan Tamang's entry into the AIGL has been a significant development as far as the re-emergence of the party is concerned. Madan Tamang had entered politics in 1969. While still in college he became a close associate of the AIGL leader of the time, Deo Prakash Rai. Through the 1970s, he headed *Tarun Gorkha*, the youth wing of AIGL and became well known for his oratory skills. Eventually, he became the District Secretary of the Gorkha League in 1977, though he resigned in 1980 to

join a new outfit, *Pranta Parishad*, where he worked closely with Subash Ghising for some time till Ghising started GNLF in 1980 and demanded the state of Gorkhaland. Meanwhile, the Pranta Parishad along with organizations like the *Nepali Bhasa Manyata Samiti* started a campaign to include the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, and also turned to be an important rival of Ghising. Between 1986 and 1988, he openly criticized Ghising for corruption and use of violence for which his ancestral house was torched. After lying low for some time, in 1992, Tamang started the Gorkha Democratic Front (GDF) to counter GNLF's opposition of the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Constitution because it wanted Gorkhali instead. In 2001, the GDF merged with AIGL, and Madan Tamang became the president of it.

The activities and campaigns of AIGL could not be materialized before Subash Ghising because Ghising had a mass support base which remained more or less same with minor variations. In 1998, the AIGL, in alliance with other political parties like, Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM), Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), founded the Peoples' Democratic Front (PDF) against the GNLF. Madan Tamang, the President of AIGL was elected as the President of the PDF.

The AIGL, under the leadership of Madan Tamang, had been opposing the so called dictatorial activities of GNLF and Subash Ghising. The most significant attempt that came from the AIGL leadership was that of opposing the sixth schedule proposal initiated by Subash Ghising in

2005. It condemned the proposed sixth schedule on the ground that it cannot meet the aspirations of the people of the hills for a separate state of Gorkhaland. However, the leadership did not offer any alternative to it nor did it any specific programme for the achievement of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

Ghising's attempt to enforce the sixth schedule led to the rift in the GNLF leadership when Bimal Gurung vehemently opposed the proposed sixth schedule which led to the expulsion of Gurung from GNLF. Bimal Gurung founded the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha(GJMM) on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2007 with the objective of rejecting the proposed sixth schedule, removal of Subash Ghising as the caretaker administrator of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), and the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

After the downfall of Subhash Ghisingh and GNLF and the rise of a new party Gorkha Janamukti Morcha under the leadership of Bimal Gurung, Madan Tamang became a vocal opponent of the GJM and leveled corruption charges against Bimal Gurung and other GJM leaders. There had been always a difference between the AIGL and the GJMM since the formation of GJMM as the AIGL, under the leadership of Madan Tamang, was proposing for a collective leadership while, on the other hand, Bimal Gurung and his GJMM was least interested in it.

Madan Tamang blamed the immigration policy of the Government of India for the infiltration of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which

reduced the Gorkhas to an insignificant minority. He also cautioned the GJMM of its friendship with the KPP alleging that the KPP President Atul Roy had submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Ministry in 2005 stating that the Gorkhas were not Indians.

Madan Tamang warned the GJMM that the hills would go up in flames if Bimal Gurung –led GJMM inks an agreement for an interim set up for Darjeeling hill<sup>4</sup> as the process had been initiated then. The AIGL leadership reiterated that the sacrifices of the people of Darjeeling hills are not for any sort of interim set-up but for the state of Gorkhaland. On the initiative of AIGL leadership, on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2010 eight political parties in the hills including the AIGL, CPRM, BJP, GNLF(C), Gorkha Rashtriya Congress and others formed an alliance called Democratic Front to oppose the efforts to set up an interim arrangement for the administration of Darjeeling hills which the State, the Centre and the GJMM was working out with. Madan Tamang, on behalf of Democratic Front appealed to GJMM to withdraw its proposed strikes<sup>5</sup>, as it would hit the tourism industry and the common people. A delegation of the Front met the Governor M.K.Narayanan during his visit to Darjeeling and sought his intervention to end the imbroglio in the Darjeeling hills.

The GJMM had always been indifferent or hostile to Madan Tamang and the AIGL as he had always been levelling corruption charges against the leaders of GJMM, questioning the Gorkha Janamukti's sincerity, through

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<sup>4</sup> Draft proposal for Interim Arrangement for Darjeeling submitted to P. Chidambaram, the Honble Home Minister of India, by Bimal Gurung, President of GJMM.

<sup>5</sup> The Gorkha Janamukti Morcha had called for an indefinite strike in the hills of Darjeeling.

electronic and print medias, about the Gorkhaland movement and the objective of attaining the statehood. He attempted to hold public meetings several times in the Darjeeling hills, but failed to do so. However, on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2011, Madan Tamang decided to hold a public meeting at Chowk Bazar, Darjeeling, to mark the 68th foundation day of the AIGL. The Janamukti Asthayi Karmachari Sangathan (JAKS) <sup>6</sup>also chose the same venue to hold their meeting. Apprehending a possible collision between his supporters and that of the GJMM, Tamang shifted his venue from Chowk Bazar to Clubside Motor Stand, ~~Gandhi~~ Road. Madan Tamang had earlier postponed the rally to 21<sup>st</sup> May after the GJMM under Bimal Gurung had called a two-day strike ostensibly to oppose the Centre's refusal to include Nepalese-dominated pockets of the Dooars and the Terai in the proposed autonomous interim set-up. Around 9.15 a.m. when Madan Tamang was busy preparing for the meeting, about 150 armed assailants stormed at the venue of the meeting and hacked Madan Tamang with khukuris. Tamang was rushed to the nearby Planters Hospital, but immediately referred to the District Hospital, where he was declared dead (The Times of India, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2010).

The movement for the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland took a different turn, though for a short while, in the aftermath of the death of Madan Tamang. There arose resentment from all quarters against the GJMM and its leadership as it was alleged to have planted the murder of

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<sup>6</sup> Janamukti Asthayi Karmachari Sangathan is a GJMM affiliated organization of the casual/contractual employees of DGHC.

Madan Tamang<sup>7</sup>. The emotions of sorrow and anger among the residents of Darjeeling were exploded through the slogans against the GJMM, tearing apart posters and banners of GJMM and its leaders, etc. Immediately after the incidence, some of the senior leaders of GJMM along with those who constituted the Study Forum of GJMM<sup>8</sup> submitted their resignation from the party. However, most of them withdrew their resignation after few days. The assassination of Madan Tamang was a great setback to the Morcha Leadership because the Tripartite meeting between the Central Government, the State Government and the GJMM was scheduled to be held at that moment and the allegations against the Morcha leadership for the murder of Tamang questioned the position of the leadership therein. The CPI (M) led government had asked for a people's mandate to the GJMM leadership as it believed that the Morcha had lost its hold in the hills pertaining to the murder of Madan Tamang.

The other political parties in the hills, like the GNLF, the CPRM accused the state government of neglecting the incidence alleging that it could have prevented the murder if it had desired so.

However, all the opposition parties in the state of West Bengal, barring their corresponding units in Darjeeling Hills, including the Indian National Congress (INC), Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Bharatiya Janata Party

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<sup>7</sup> Laxman Pradhan, the General Secretary of AIGL, had lodged an FIR against the top leaders of GJMM including Bimal Gurung.

<sup>8</sup> The Study Forum is a body of intellectuals (Doctors, Professors, Former IAS officers, etc.) constituted by GJMM to prepare the draft plan of the Morcha and participate in the meetings with the State and the Central Government.

(BJP) have been united in their opposition to the idea of a separate Gorkhaland as championed by GJMM under Bimal Gurung's leadership. In other words political parties with stakes in the plains were hardly willing to jeopardise their electoral chances by supporting the demand for a separate Gorkhaland state. Here even the BJP which had deputed its senior leader Jaswant Singh to fight the Lok Sabha election from Darjeeling with a promise to the Hill Party to fight for the formation of the State of Gorkhaland if it came to power after the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections, with the support of the GJMM, had engaged in doublespeak<sup>9</sup>. This of course allowed a certain national exposure to GJMM and bore fruit in the elections as Jaswant Singh won the seat with an overwhelming margin of 2,53,000 votes<sup>10</sup>. However, the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) defeat at the national level ultimately plunged the prospect of Gorkhaland into uncertainty.

#### **4.6. State Response to the Gorkhaland Movement and the Movement Dynamics**

Political consciousness of the Indian Gorkhas and their political participation has always suffered a setback owing to its suppression at

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<sup>9</sup> While in the hills, Singh had promised to raise the issue of a separate Gorkhaland in Parliament if elected, his compatriots in the plains had maintained that "the party had not made any commitment to fulfil the demand for Gorkhaland, but only to look into the matter sympathetically" (*The Telegraph*, 17 April 2009). However, some opine that this equivocation suggests the quandary in which the BJP found itself. By fielding Jaswant Singh as the BJP candidate from Darjeeling supported by GJMM, it had found itself isolated in the plains. Consequently it sought to dissociate itself from the promise of a separate Gorkhaland made in the hills, even as the GJMM had welcomed the candidature of Jaswant Singh as an ex-army man and a prospective weighty voice for a separate Gorkhaland in Parliament.

<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the BJP candidate polled only 85,000 votes in the plains, which, however, was 30,000 more votes than in the 2004 elections (*The Times of India*, 18 May 2009).

various levels since the colonial days.<sup>11</sup> The state government's response to the renewed agitation in the hills was predictably majoritarian. It maintained that the demand for a separate Gorkhaland was an attempt to further divide West Bengal, thereby evoking the bogey of partition and its association of loss. Further while the government was willing to accede to demands of greater autonomy and had even proceeded to initiate consultations to include the DGHC under the Sixth Schedule, it was not amenable to suggestions of a separate Gorkhaland. Moreover, it felt that the conflict between Ghising's GNLF and Gurung's GJMM was internecine conflict among the Gorkhas.

### **Media, Leadership and Movements**

Darjeeling, a favoured destination of the British and its winter headquarters during colonial period had the privilege of being a centre for learning. As a result, history of Darjeeling has to its credit a large number of publications in Nepali, English, Bengali and Tibetan, which owed largely to the contributions made by the British rulers and the missionaries by way of the establishment of schools and other institutions of learning. During the colonial period too, the demand for a separate administrative apparatus for the Gorkhas was in place, and hence,

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<sup>11</sup> The Gandhian Non-Cooperation movement of the 1920s was welcome by the tea plantation workers of Darjeeling Hills. Many workers in the Hills actively participated in the movement. However, the British Tea Planters, in an attempt to curb the movement thought it wise to appeal to the then Prime Minister of Nepal assuming the Nepali tea workers alleged allegiance to him. A representative of the Planters, Mr. Webb wrote to the Prime Minister of Nepal to ask the Nepali tea workers in Darjeeling to refrain from participating in the Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement, which was a part of the Indian National Movement. See Letter of Tea Planters to the Maharaja of Nepal to Suppress the Gandhian Movement in Darjeeling Hills by Mr. G. A. Webb dated 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1921, cited in Joseph, K. J., *British Forest Policy in Darjeeling*, 2010, Appendix XV.

several Gorkha leaders propounded these ideas and propagated them through a huge number of magazines and news letters. Several vernacular publications in the likes of *Gorkha Bharat Jiban* (1886- (Motiram Bhatt), *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* (1901-Ganga Prasad Pradhan) were published from Darjeeling, investigating different aspects of hill society and culture, propagation of the republican ideals and the condemnation of the social evils like child marriage (especially between 1912 and 1939) engaging basically in socio-cultural reform. The publications in Tibetan took place especially after the arrival of the Tibetan refugees to Darjeeling in the later part of the 1950s, and, most of their publications focus on the plight of the refugees, reflections on their religious and cultural traditions, their determination to free Tibet, and so on. Some Nepali novels (like *Noyo*) also focus on the story of the inhuman treatment meted to the Tibetans and the flight of the refugees from Tibet to India etc. As regards the associations, most of them were formed in for the assertion of the cultural and ethnic identity of the people of the hills (for instance, the NEBULA) barring some (like Gorkha Dukkha Niwarak Sammelan- GDNS and Nepali Sahitya Sammelan) which devoted to socio-cultural and literary endeavours. Their aspirations were exposed through these associations. Nepali Sahitya Sammelan published Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika. Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Samity published 'Khoji' by Rupnarayan Sinha to ventilate their thoughts and ideas, to highlight their socio-political and economic demands and problems. The trend continued in the aftermath of the Indian independence and the mobilisation of the print media got further

accelerated for the movement in the 1980s under Subash Ghisingh. Ghising himself was a literary figure. Apart from propagating his political ideas for mass mobilisation through his literary pieces in vernacular, Subash Ghising who led the Gorkhaland movement in the 1980s sent letters regarding the status of Darjeeling and the need for immediate intervention for its resolution to His Majesty, the King of Nepal and also to the International Court of Justice of the United Nations. The copies of the letters were also sent to the Government of India, the President of the USA, Russia and many others. He regards this move as a tactic to pressurise the Indian and Nepali governments and to get recognition to the problems of the hill people. His intention was to draw the attention of the international media so that the movement could not be suppressed. Further, during Ghising's movement, he mobilised the local media like the Himalchuli and made it the mouthpiece of the movement. In the current phase of the Gorkhaland movement under Bimal Gurung, apart from mobilising the traditional print media, electronic media has been mobilised. The GJMM has created its own homepage which provides information on various issues, strategies and developments in the movement. Apart from the leadership spearheading the movement (GJMM), the leaders of the opposition have also resorted to electronic media for mobilisation. For instance, in the aftermath of the death of Madan Tamang, a weblog named Madan Manch has been developed as a virtual space wherein supporters of the ABGL could come together, interact and mobilise popular support by way of mobilising sympathy towards the League leader. Therefore, as evidenced, the Gorkhaland

movement in Darjeeling has experienced leadership's attempt to mobilise media- both print and electronic, in the course of the movement. Such mobilisation has contributed more often than not towards consolidation of the support base and strengthening of the movement.

### **Analysis and Conclusion**

An analysis of the Gorkhaland movement over time reveals the fact that the movement has traversed a long history since its premature beginning in 1907. The Movement was influenced and shaped in its course by the movement leadership belonging to various organisations, starting with the Hillman's Association, to Gorkha League, to the Communist party of India, to Pranta Parishad, then to GNLF and finally under the leadership of the GJMM in 2007. The movement in its century long history witnessed a series of shifts in terms of issues and objectives, strategies and tactics with the change of the leaders spearheading the movement at each point of time. Initially, it began with the issue of separate administrative apparatus for the Darjeeling Hills, under the leadership of the Hillman's Association and the All India Gorkha League. Around the time of Indian Independence, the CPI leaders shifted the focus to the creation of a separate state of 'Gorkhastan' for the region. The Pranta Parishad leaders, and later on, the GNLF, the leadership of which was again mostly drawn from the membership of the Pranta Parishad, kept the issue of the creation of the state of 'Gorkhaland', on the lines of the arguments placed by the CPI leaders prior to Indian independence. However,

recognition of the Nepali language had remained equally important issue for them. Finally, the GJMM led new phase of the Gorkhaland movement under the leadership of Bimal Gurung reiterated the demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland within the Indian federation, however, shelving aside the politics of language but harping on the issue of underdevelopment and unemployment as base arguments for the demand for a separate state. At each phase, the leadership employed different strategies and tactics, transforming the movement in terms of its character and content. Whereas the Hillmen's Association and the AIGL favoured legal constitutional methods of struggle, the CPI with its leftist ideology favoured radical strategy and approach, although nothing significant in terms of a mass protest was witnessed under it. The 1980s saw a radical transformation in strategies under GNLF leadership who advocated violent methods including armed struggle for the protest. Finally, the current phase of the movement under the GJMM is a clear departure from the earlier strategies and tactics, with the movement declaring itself as Gandhian with Satyagraha and passive, peaceful resistance being its prime strategies. Thus, the movement has moved and transformed with the change in leadership. The leadership has change has been central to the movement dynamics in case of the Gorkhaland movement.

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