

ABSTRACT

MULTICULTURALISM AND IDENTITY POLITICS: A STUDY OF GORKHALAND AND KAMTAPUR MOVEMENTS IN WEST BENGAL

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A. TITLE:

Multiculturalism and Identity Politics: A Study of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements in West Bengal.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In a cosmopolitan age of globalization where inter-mixing of different cultures is on rise; there are groups who at the same time are struggling to maintain their ethnic individuality and solidarity. Contrary to the general belief, community identities have not dissolved or replaced by a cosmopolitan identity in market economies or liberal democracies. Collective group identities continue to be of relevance to its members. While resource competition is an important source of ethnic struggle between two groups the fear of losing identity due to influence from outside culture is paramount. Consequently ethno-cultural conflicts have resulted into a hiatus between the majority and the minorities resulting into ethnic identity based autonomy movements even in liberal democracies. The present study as such examines the ethno-identity based demands of the Gorkhas and Koch Rajbangsi for a separate state of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur respectively within the framework of Multiculturalism. Their relationship with the dominant community as well as their rights as a minority groups is studied with the insight provided by various multicultural theorists.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature Review is broadly divided into the following sub-division; **first**, Literature Review on Multiculturalism; **second**, Literature Review on Gorkhaland Movement, **third**, Literature Review on Kamtapur Movement and; **fourth**, Summation of the Literature Review.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON MULTICULTURALISM

Democracy, Difference and Social Justice (Gurpreet Mahajan, 1998)¹ is a compilation of various essays dealing mainly with the concept of difference and equality. It discusses how differences can be a source of discrimination even in a democracy. It examines the demands for equality by the minority groups together with the idea of group rights as a mechanism to accommodate their demands. It further analyses the politics of non-discrimination involving policies of protective discrimination to ensure equal opportunity to the marginalized section of the population as adopted in India. It discusses strategies through which social justice could be established in a democracy and a social difference no longer forms the basis of

¹ Mahajan Gurpreet, edited **Democracy, Difference and Social Justice**, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

exclusion from the political domain. It thus centers on the values of homogeneity and difference in a democratic society and challenges to social integration.

The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy (Gurpreet Mahajan, 2002)² provides a conceptual analysis of Multiculturalism as distinguished from pluralism. It links Multiculturalism to democracy and insists on equal status of different cultures in private as well as public domain. It criticizes policies of homogenization promoting cultural diversity and the idea of differentiated citizenship. It further analyses the feminist and liberal critique of Multiculturalism and responds to the criticism by providing mechanisms to promote intra-group and inter-group equality. It draws upon the case of India insisting that the source of cultural discrimination is not the homogenizing policies of the nation-state but also the actions of other groups in a society. It insists that Multiculturalism must reinvent itself to dismantle structures of cultural discrimination by differentiating rights based on different claims to group rights.

The Politics of Identity (Michael Kenny, 2004)³ deals with the idea of politics based on group identity. It examines various arguments leveled against liberal philosophy as being incompatible to the idea of group rights mainly by the Multiculturalists that advocate recognition of group difference. It also deals with the contemporary liberal theories that view politics of identity as a challenge to a liberal democratic society. It emphasizes the increasing demand for the recognition of identity in the private as well as public domain. Accordingly it puts forward that politics of identity reflects a trend wherein citizens form alignments on the basis of shared culture and are no longer confined to individual interest or ideological debate. It comes across as a 'new politics' that is challenging established ideologies and political boundaries by communities asserting their distinct identity and making demands for recognition and equal rights. These groups often demand redress of past injustices inflicted on their group for which they make demands premised on liberal ethos of democratic inclusion, non-discrimination and equality. It thus deals with the debate between Liberalism that values autonomy or individuality and the Multiculturalism that asserts difference and recognition. It is in the light of this debate that it attempts to theorize the emerging phenomenon of identity politics.

² Gurpreet Mahajan, **The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy**, Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 2002.

³ Kenny Michael, **The Politics of Identity**, Polity Press, USA, 2004.

Negotiating Cultural Diversity and Minority Rights in India (Gurpreet Mahajan, 2005)⁴ observes that the linguistic reorganization of regional state boundaries has been a major instrument for protecting and nurturing linguistic diversity. The creation of linguistic identity based units, each with political rights to govern itself within the framework of the federal system, meant that a specific linguistic community became a majority within a region. Its language became the official language of that state and the medium of instruction, public examination, communication and media networks. As a consequence, the language of the regional majority grew and flourished. On the other hand, the creation of linguistically defined federal units provided opportunities to regional linguistic elites which might otherwise have remained marginalized in the national level. It brought in more and more people into the political process, giving them opportunities to participate actively and debate the issues that concerned them immediately. The growth of regional languages has not only been an asset for the local elites and the regional population; it has also benefited speakers of that language living in other parts of the country. They now have access to literature and information in their own language, and it is so much easier for them to pass on this cultural capital to their children. Today the constitution recognizes languages as official languages of the Union state in addition to Hindi and English, which enjoy the status of national languages. Recognition for specific languages has not always been easy. It has come after strong popular movements, but what has become evident is that, despite liberal apprehensions, the creation of linguistic identity-based states has not weakened the nation state. If anything, it has strengthened democracy, made it more inclusive, and given opportunities to previously excluded groups to share in the political decision-making process. This has strengthened India and minimized discontent against the Union.

Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights (Will Kymlicka: 1995)⁵ mainly deals with the theory of Multiculturalism. Here Kymlicka argues that minority rights are a legitimate component of the liberal tradition. He distinguishes between national minorities and ethnic minorities on the ground that the latter are immigrants that do not occupy homelands. He further distinguishes three kinds of minority or group differentiated rights that are to be assured to ethnic and national groups: self-government rights, poly-ethnic

⁴ Gurpreet Mahajan, '*Negotiating Cultural Diversity and Minority Rights in India*', **Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Further Readings**, Volume 2, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Sweden, 2005.

⁵ Will Kymlicka, **Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights**, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995.

rights and special representation rights. According to Kymlicka the terminology ‘collective rights’ often used both by the proponents and critics to describe the various forms of group-differentiated citizenship can be misleading. The term ‘collective rights’ refers to rights exercised by collectivities and is assumed to be opposed to rights exercised by individuals. However many forms of group-differentiated citizenship are in fact exercised by individuals. For example, a minority language right is a right accorded to and exercised by individuals. So describing group-differentiated citizenship in the language of collective rights is misleading. Kymlicka also explains that minority rights are not only consistent with individual freedom, but can actually promote it.

Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship (Will Kymlicka, 2001)⁶ insists that the idea of minority rights are debates within liberalism and not just a subset of the traditional liberalism-vs.-communitarian debate. It holds that ‘liberal multiculturalism’ is a viable alternative which guarantees the individual civil and political rights together with various group-specific rights intended to accommodate different identities and needs of ethnocultural groups. It insists that the state even though ensures individual rights to its citizens can still be a source of cultural discrimination with regard to its settlement policies, language policies and decisions about the boundaries and powers of political subunits. Accordingly it outlines a form of ‘multination federalism’ so as to ensure power-sharing among different cultural groups and establishing justice in a liberal democracy. It further examines the specific forms of injustice towards the indigenous minorities resulting from the economic development and settlement policies of the nation-state and challenges the perception of ‘multicultural’ model of immigrant integration to be a threat to individual rights.

Liberalism, Community, and Culture (Will Kymlicka, 2002)⁷ is concerned with the view of Liberalism on individual rights and state neutrality. It defends Liberalism from the communitarian attack as being insensitive to minority rights. Instead it attempts to account Liberalism as a political philosophy that is sensitive to the individual’s membership in a cultural community and does not promote individualism at the expense of value an individual holds to their shared community and culture. It however also insists that Liberalism value of

⁶ Will Kymlicka, **Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.

⁷ Will Kymlicka, **Liberalism, Community, and Culture**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.

cultural community is premised on the way each individual understands and evaluates a cultural community.

Multiculturalism in Asia (Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, 2005)⁸ studies Multiculturalism in Asian countries of China, Lao, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Sri Lanka, Burma and India. It examines the western models of Liberal Multiculturalism as practiced in Asia. It attempts to analyse the steady growth of homogenizing nation-states into a multicultural one in the post colonialisation era. It analyses the various policies adopted by the South and East Asian countries for the peaceful co-existence of different ethnic and religious groups. It however reveals that the western model of Multiculturalism is not fully adopted in Asia that has a colonial legacy as well as tradition relatively different from the West. Accordingly the multicultural model as adopted in the Asian countries reflect the value of tolerance imbibed from their religious traditions as practiced in the region varying from Confucian and Buddhism in China, Myanmar, Japan to Islam in Bangladesh and Hinduism in India. It thus explores various theoretical perspectives that shape the discourse of Multiculturalism in Asia.

Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity (Will Kymlicka, 2007)⁹ deals with the global diffusion of the idea of Multiculturalism and its codification by various international inter-governmental organizations. The intense mobilization of the minorities cultures in a number of countries have led to the refutation of the older models of assimilationist and adoption of Multiculturalism as a new model in various liberal democracies. There has been an increasing trend towards cultural and religious accommodations of immigrant groups, of the acceptance of demands for territorial autonomy and language rights of the national minorities and self-government rights of the indigenous minorities. It examines the internalization of the issue of minority's rights in the convention of international organizations like UNO, UNESCO and ILO whereby each declares that the rights of minorities are an inseparable part of a larger human rights framework and national legal system is to operate within the limits of this framework. Thus there is a shift from the earlier trend of homogenizing nation-states to a multicultural state and of citizenship. It further studies about Liberal Multiculturalism, its origin, sources, forms and thereby evaluates the paradoxes in its practice. It also examines the challenges to adopt Multiculturalism in a

⁸ Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, in edited **Multiculturalism in Asia**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.

⁹ Will Kymlicka, **Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007.

global context in view of state elites unwilling to share their powers with the minorities. He also provides tentative suggestions to reconcile the conflicting forces so as to successfully diffuse the idea of Multiculturalism globally.

The Rights of Minority Cultures (Will Kymlicka, 2009)¹⁰ is a compilation of various articles broadly divided into six units that deal mainly with cultural membership, cultural pluralism, individual rights versus group rights, minority cultures and so on. Jeremy Waldron put forwards the idea of cosmopolitan alternative that does not deny the importance of culture in constituting human life but questions the idea of strict demarcation of cultural boundaries as we live in a mixed up world imbibing the cultural values and ethos of variant culture from around the world. Allen Buchanan attempts to establish a community's moral right to secede on the grounds that cultural boundaries must coincide with the political boundaries. Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz provide moral justification for national self-determination and thereby attempt to identify those features that qualify a group for the right to self-determination. Nathan Glazer analyses the debate of individual rights against group rights in a multiethnic nation. Glazer takes into account various issues to identify policies that would overcome discrimination and yet satisfy all the groups of a multiethnic society maintaining mutual harmony among them. Michael Walzer analyses the idea of Pluralism. It examines how the idea of 'one people one state' is shadowed by movements of secession in multicultural nation-state. He however cites the example of American Exceptionalism which despite being a land of immigrants did not experience secessionist demands as such. Leslie Green analyses the internal pluralism of a minority group which consists within itself minorities termed as 'internal minorities'. Green analyses the rights of these minorities which are ethnic, cultural, religious, or sexual minorities within a minority cultural community to safeguard them against persecution from their own cultural community at large. Chandran Kukathas argues in defence of liberalism emphasizing that liberalism is not averse to the minorities concern. In fact liberalism values individual rights and liberty to restrict the power of majority over the minorities. Arendt Lijphart puts forward the concept of consociational democracy which refers to a power-sharing democracy as a solution to the problems of a plural society.

Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory (Bhikhu Parekh, 2006)¹¹ discusses multicultural perspective to be based on the harmonious relationship between

¹⁰ Will Kymlicka, Op.cit.no.1

¹¹ Bhikhu Parekh, **Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory**, Palgrave Macmillan, United Kingdom, 2006.

unity and diversity. Here Bikhu Parekh put forward the theory which is dialogically constituted. He asserted that since every political doctrine is structurally embedded to a particular cultural perspective a broad and impartial framework to conceptualize other cultures is marked with partiality. In this context, he rejects liberalism to endorse a particular vision of good life. Instead he put forwards the idea of cultural diversity based on inter cultural dialogue. It stresses the centrality of a dialogue between cultures in both the political and non-political areas of life as the unifying focus and principles of society. The dialogue is to come up with principles, institutions and policies that are collectively acceptable to all the communities in a multicultural society marked with cultural diversity. It insists on the creation of a climate in which effective dialogue can be carried out stretching the boundaries of the prevailing forms of thought. This he suggested was possible through the existence of certain institutional preconditions such as freedom of expression, agreed procedures and basic ethical norms, participatory public spaces, equal rights, a responsive and popularly accountable structure of authority, and empowerment of citizens. He further insists that the guiding norm in a multicultural democratic polity is not to be cultural diversity but the principle of non-discrimination. Democracy, to Parekh is to commit to the ideal of non-discrimination which requires that no individuals and groups are excluded or accorded subordinate position from the political domain owing to their social or ascribed identity. The value promoted by Parekh is that of 'non-conformist membership' for the cultural communities in a multicultural democratic polity that which insists on special group rights that is structured taking into cognizance the changeable nature of the cultures.

Composite Culture and Multicultural Society (Bhikhu Parekh, 2007) ¹² provides a theoretical study of multicultural society as one with a plurality of cultures. However it emphasizes that multicultural society should not be confused with 'plural societies'. Plural societies emphasize plurality but not the equality of cultures while Multiculturalism deals with the equal participation in the collective affairs of the state. Accordingly it insists that a constitutional society is better suited to a multicultural society which gives its citizens a share in the conduct of collective affairs together with a sense of dignity and empowerment. It argues against the view that a society needs a singular, unified and homogeneous culture. Rather it asserts that a multicultural society provides for a 'composite' culture which is internally diversified and multiculturally constituted. It is marked with a shared culture

¹² Bhikhu Parekh, '*Composite Culture and Multicultural Society*', in edited **Composite Culture in a Multicultural Society**, Bipan Chandra, Sucheta Mahajan, Pearson Longman Education, South Asia, 2007.

premised on interaction between different cultural communities that compose a multicultural society. A multicultural society allows diversity wherein identities are shaped through constant intercultural interaction.

Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication(Dipankar Sinha:1999)¹³ discusses how the gulf between the process of enumeration and that of implementation widens to a dangerous level if the state, amidst ritualistic tributes to democracy, effectively caters to the interests of the few at the cost of many. Being armed with the legitimating rationale of ‘nation-building’ which ironically is “a polite term for cultural and ideological homogenisation” the state (more specifically, those who wield its power) feels little need to reach out to the people ‘down below’ by way of a valid and extensive process of communication which would induce involvement of people and develop their empathy for the activities of the state. The state’s communicative dynamics – constitutive of its voice and feedback in the form of the voice of the people – remain half-formed, with the majority of people remaining silent and inactive in the business of governance. This blocks consolidation of democracy and prevents its organic integration with society.

Case of Multiculturalism in India(Amir Ali, 2000)¹⁴ discusses how the Indian state place more emphasis on protecting the private domain of religious and community practices and overlooks the need for equal recognition to minority groups in the public sector. It places greater emphasis on public sphere so as to ensure greater participation and inclusion of marginalized and beleaguered minorities and hence the greater democratization of the public sphere. The Indian polity’s efforts at ensuring minority protection have had perverse effects resulting in the strengthening of patriarchal tendencies within communities. This is mainly because unlike the West where religion and the church have ceased to be parallel sources of authority to the state; in India the hold of the religion continues to be strong obstructing greater democratization within communities. It thereby suggests that Indian Multiculturalism should shift its emphasis from the private to the public domain, wherein accessibility to the public sphere is ensured by making it more conducive to the expression of minority cultures.

¹³Dipankar Sinha, ‘*Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 34 Number 32, August 7, 1999.

¹⁴ Amir Ali, ‘*Case of Multiculturalism in India*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 35 Number 28-29, July 15, 2000.

Multiculturalism in Twentieth-Century India: Ambiguity and Ambivalence (T.K. Oommen, 2007)¹⁵ examines the policy and practice of Multiculturalism in independent India. It emphasizes that India although recognizes cultural differences providing conducive conditions for Multiculturalism to flourish yet there are certain constitutional provisions which conflicts with the spirit of Multiculturalism. It views secularism as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution as dampen by the state that rarely intervenes to curb the activities of religious organizations intimidating minority religious community. Besides the policy of ‘reservation’ for the depressed class violates the Article 15 which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of caste among others. The failure of the Indian state to establish Uniform Civil Court firmly in the legal structure and the imposition of Hindi as the national language (Article 343) inspire of twenty-two languages guaranteed official language status clearly exhibit the gap between the theory and practice of Multiculturalism in India. It further suggests four plausible approaches to Multiculturalism in India namely pluralist, individualist, strategic and cosmopolitan.

The Incompleteness of the Multiculturalist Agenda: Overlooking the Need for a Shared Identity (Sushila Ramaswamy: 2007)¹⁶ deals mainly with the theories on Multiculturalism. It discusses Will Kymlicka’s theory of Multiculturalism, Charles Taylor theory of recognition and non-liberal critique of liberal Multiculturalism. It also put forwards the objection raised to the aforesaid formulations on Multiculturalism on the grounds that aboriginal peoples, on whose behalf multiculturalists speak, see Multiculturalism as facilitating further marginalisation of their communities and culture in a modern state which is more attuned to the needs of migrants than to the aborigines. Besides in pleading for special rights for cultural groups or religious communities, it may permit these groups to continue with practices that are sexist and highly disadvantageous, if not harmful to women.

The Dialogue of Cultures from Paranoia to Metanoia (Rudolf Cheredia: 2007)¹⁷ discusses the identity formation of individuals and groups. It holds that identity formation is never an entirely passive process. One’s identity is never developed in isolation but in interaction with significant

¹⁵ T.K.Oommen, ‘*Multiculturalism in Twentieth-Century and Multicultural Society*’, in edited **Composite Culture in a Multicultural Society**, Bipan Chandra, Sucheta Mahajan, Pearson Longman Education, South Asia, 2007.

¹⁶ Sushila Ramaswamy, ‘*The Incompleteness of the Multiculturalist Agenda: Overlooking the Need for a Shared Identity*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 42 Number 37, September 15, 2007.

¹⁷ Rudolf Cheredia, ‘*The Dialogue of Cultures from Paranoia to Metanoia*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, May 26, 2007 (<http://www.epw.in>)

others. “Who I am” is always reflected off, and refracted through others. The denial of recognition and affirmation amounts to a negation of one’s human identity. In a world increasingly characterised by anxiety, uncertainty and disorder, there is an urgent need for the reassurance of security, trust and a sense of solidarity in a collective identity. The only way of being human is to be in constructive and creative interrelationships with others, not in isolation from them. Accordingly one must be tolerant and in dialogue. Multicultural exchange and inter-religious sharing can bring about shared interests and deepen common concerns. Only thus can one genuinely be authentic selves, true believers and truly human.

Crisis of Australian Multiculturalism (Vibhanshu Shekhar: 2009)¹⁸ examines the factors responsible for the erosion of Multiculturalism in Australia in face of the attack on Asian immigrants in Australia recently. Multiculturalism was a consensus principle of Australia till the late 1980s. However with the large scale of Asian immigration and their support for the Labour Party prompted the Liberal Party under the leadership of John Howard to widen its social base by drawing within its fold the Anglo-Celtic constituencies consisting approximately 75-80% of the country’s population. Accordingly the Liberal Party began the anti-Multiculturalism campaign giving fillip to the racial politics in the country and widened the socio-political divide between the Anglo-Celtic and immigrant population of Australia. Thus the anti-immigrant campaigns of the Liberal political elite delegitimize the principle of Multiculturalism which was once the consensus motto of Australia.

Reorganisation of States in India (Mahendra Prasad Singh: 2008)¹⁹ discusses how the federalism as a political mechanism has been more successful in protecting the identity and interest of major national minorities that happen to be state or provincial majorities (e g, Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir, Sikhs in Punjab, Nagas in Nagaland, etc) than of internal minorities and “discrepant” majorities that happens to be a provincial minority in some states. These sub-regional identity assumes further importance when inter- regional disparities and discrimination surface. It is within this explanation that it enumerates the demand of Andhra Pradesh (Telugu-speaking), Tamil Nadu (Tamil-speaking), Karnataka (Kannada-speaking), Gujarat (Gujarati-speaking), Maharashtra (Marathi-speaking), Punjab which was trifurcated into Punjab (Punjabi-speaking with a Sikh majority), Haryana (Hindi-speaking with Hindu majority), and Himachal Pradesh (Hindi-speaking with Hindu majority) in the 1950s and 1960s, the

¹⁸ Vibhanshu Shekhar, ‘*Crisis of Australian Multiculturalism*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume XLIV Number 52, December 26, 2009

¹⁹ Mahendra Prasad Singh, ‘*Reorganisation of States in India*’, **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 43 Number 11, 15 March, 2008.

bifurcation of Nagaland out of Assam (1962), Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Such Sub-state movements based on tribal or ethnic identities have persisted in varying degrees in several states in the 1980s such as Gorkha National Liberation Front in the Darjeeling hill district of West Bengal, Bodoland agitation in Assam and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in the Chhota Nagpur region mainly in Bihar but marginally also in the adjoining states of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. It suggests a “the cosmopolitan model of democracy” that envisages a global and regional order comprising multiple and overlapping networks of political, economic, and social power and clusters of individual autonomy and rights “within and across each network of power” spanning states, civil societies, and regional and global organisations. These developments would give birth to “an empowering legal order – a ‘democratic international law’”. The emergent legal principles would “delimit the form and scope of individual and collective action within the organizations and associations of state and civil society. Certain standards are specified for the treatment of all, which no political regime or civil association can legitimately violate”. Accordingly this cosmopolitan model of democracy alone can ensure simultaneous pursuit of democracy and development and an escape from the vicious cycle of war and poverty.

Understanding Indian Multiculturalism (Saumyajit Ray: 2009)²⁰ mainly deals with Multiculturalism in India. It views that since liberal Multiculturalism is a product of immigrant societies, there is a danger that India may not fit into the Western liberal multicultural scheme. It analyses the policies necessitated by the Indian Constitution to safeguard minority interests. It further discusses the problem faced by the Indian Constitution in establishing Multiculturalism in India. It observes that the Indian Constitution and the government stand for equal respect, equal rights, and equal opportunities for both individuals and groups in India. It is not difficult to secure equal rights and equal opportunities: they can be constitutionally granted. The problem is with equal respect; that can come about only if there was mutual respect between communities. This has made India a cultural pantheon: equal legal standing of cultural communities minus equal respect. As a result the demand for a separate state arises out of a sense of discrimination felt by the minority community’s distinct cultural tradition.

²⁰ Saumyajit Ray, ‘*Understanding Indian Multiculturalism*’, in edited **Multiculturalism: Public Policy and Problem Areas in Canada and India**, Christopher Raj, Marie Mc Andrews, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2009.

Multiculturalism, Autonomy for Ethno-National Groups and the Unity of India (Harihar Bhattacharyya: 2009)²¹ views that Multiculturalism, autonomy and national unity do not go well together. It holds that many ethno-national groups demanding autonomy, or inter self determination, would not pass Kymlicka's liberal test because the internal societies of such groups may lack in liberal ingredients. In many cases, such autonomy, as so often granted, is used as a shield against some liberal encroachment upon some customs and practices of ethno-national groups, or to jealously protect them against radical reforms. Liberal multiculturalist autonomy is thus deeply individualistic, and does not adequately cover the whole scope of autonomy for ethno-national groups particularly those territorially concentrated.

North-East: Crisis of Identity, Security and Underdevelopment (Jayanta Madhab, 1999)²² responsible for ethnic turmoil in north east region. It holds that even after the creation of seven states to satisfy the ethnic aspirations of the local people, further balkanisation is being demanded due to the failure of the Indian state to meet the basic needs of the people. The regional disparity between the north-east and the other states has widened due to the uneven development accompanied with the corruption. Accordingly in view of the failure of the existing policies it suggests various measures to be adopted by the Government to end ethnic crisis in northeast, for instance, Encouragement to free, frank and open debate on the issues of the north-east within and outside the region; letting the population understand the issues in their perspectives and in totality, willingness on the part of the government of India to discuss unconditionally with all major insurgent groups, sincere efforts on the part of the central and state governments to strengthen the functioning of tertiary level institutions like panchayats, autonomous districts/village councils, reassessment of the foreigners issue in view of the current situation, identity and security which are such emotional issues in the north-east to be assured through various means which need to be explored.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON GORKHALAND MOVEMENT

Behind Gorkhaland Agitation (B P Mishra, 1986)²³ mainly accounts the causes that led to the violent uprising during the period 1985-88 by the GNLF with regard to its demand for the

²¹ Harihar Bhattacharyya, '*Multiculturalism, Autonomy for Ethno-National Groups and the Unity of India*', in edited **Multiculturalism: Public Policy and Problem Areas in Canada and India**, Christopher Raj, Marie Mc Andrews, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2009.

²² Jayanta Madhab, '*North-East: Crisis of Identity, Security and Underdevelopment*', **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 34 Number 1, February 6, 1999.

²³ B.P. Misra, '*Behind Gorkhaland Agitation*', **Mainstream**, Volume.25, No.7, Nov. 1, 1986.

separate state of Gorkhaland. According to the article such violent uprising was basically a case of transferred anger over the expulsion of the Nepali people from Meghalaya. It gives a complete detail of how large numbers of domiciled Nepalis were evicted from Meghalaya which was precursor to the similar eviction of the Nepalis from Assam as part of their anti-foreigners agitation. The article further criticized the Clause VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty (1950) that allowed huge migration of the Nepalese nationals to India. It viewed the treaty as the main cause of the identity crisis of the Nepalis of the Indian origin.

Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, an Information Document I (Government of West Bengal, 1987)²⁴ was published by the Government of West Bengal in September, 1986 in view of Gorkhaland Movement led by the GNLFF in the Darjeeling district and the adjoining areas of West Bengal. The booklet gives description of the socio-economic profile of the Darjeeling district depicting the region as developed in comparison to the other parts of the West Bengal States. Giving a historical outline of the Migratory Movements in Darjeeling, it claimed that the area was originally inhabited by the Lepchas and that the Nepalis and the Bengalis came to this region as migrants. It also gives a brief account of the programmes, actions and demands of the GNLFF with regard to the ‘Gorkhaland’ Agitation. Finally, the document put forwards the standpoint of the Government of West Bengal that refutes the allegations of the GNLFF on it as illogical and half –truth and termed the GNLFF agitation as ‘secessionist’ and ‘anti-national’.

Gorkhaland Movement: Quest for Identity(Mahendra P Lama, 1996)²⁵ mainly deals with the GNLFF phase of the Gorkhaland Movement .It consists of articles published in various newspapers such as Hindustan Times, Indian Express, The Times of India, Economic Times, Business Standard, Patriot, Statesman, Hindu and Telegraph between 1986-89.It has interviews given by Ghising during the hey days of the Gorkhaland Movement led by GNLFF to different weekly magazines like The Sunday Observer, The Week, Himalaya Today, Frontline and The Illustrated Weekly of India. It also includes memorandums submitted by Hillmen’s Association, All India Gorkha League and GNLFF with regard to the demand for exclusion of the Darjeeling district from West Bengal. Finally, it consists of agreements concluded between GNLFF Chief Subash Ghising and the Government of India dealing with

²⁴ **Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Government of West Bengal, Sept, 1987.

²⁵ Mahendra P. Lama, **Gorkhaland Movement: Quest for an Identity**, Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, 1996.

the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in the year 1988. All this is systematically compiled by Mahendra P. Lama in a chronological order.

Gorkhaland: Evolution of the Politics of Segregation (Dyutish Chakraborty, 1998)²⁶ mainly deals with the political cause of the “Gorkhaland” movement spearheaded by the GNLF during the 1980s. Unlike other literatures on Gorkhaland Agitation that discussed mostly its socio-economic causes, the article discovered the root cause of the Gorkhaland demand in the British administrative policy of Preferential space treatment. It viewed that having tasted the benefits of the special status in the form of ‘excluded area’ or as ‘partially excluded’ area under the colonial regime, the Nepalis felt insecure once the protection was uprooted in the post-independence era. As a result, they demanded a separate state so as to fulfill their political as well as economic aspirations. Refuting the claim of the GNLF that the Movement has no economic aspiration, the article put forwards that the demand of the GNLF for a separate Gorkha Regiment involves the question of employment which is definitely economic in nature. Additionally, the article regarded the issue of identity and citizenship equally responsible for the outbreak of the Gorkhaland Movement. It viewed that the decision of the Indian Government to reorganize the Indian states on linguistic basis was primarily responsible for the growth of ‘Gorkha identity’ as various hill groups in Darjeeling in a drive for a separate state of Gorkhaland gave up their distinct dialect to be recognized as ‘Gorkhali’. The language demand as such further intensified the Gorkhaland Movement. It thus explores the various causes that fomented the Gorkhaland Movement in the past.

Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling (T.B. Subba: 1999)²⁷ deals with the political, ethnic and economic history of the Darjeeling district. Dealing with the political history, it shows how the British through wars and subsequent treaties incorporated Darjeeling and the adjoining areas into the political map of colonial India. In the ethnic history, it showcases how the various hill tribes and groups in Darjeeling amalgamated to form a common “Nepali” identity. While in the economic history it gives an account of the development of agriculture, tea, trade, and forest and tourism sector in Darjeeling. Most importantly it deals with the history of the demands for a “Separate Administrative Set-Up” in Darjeeling from the colonial period till the Gorkhaland Agitation headed by the GNLF Chief Subash Ghising. It gives a detailed description of the violence

²⁶Dyutish Chakraborty, ‘*Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation*’, **Special Lecture**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, April, 1988.

²⁷T.B. Subba, **Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling**, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

encountered during the GNLF agitation for a separate state of Gorkhaland. It also explains the circumstances that led to the signing of the Darjeeling Accord on 24th August, 1988 as well as the aftermath of the Gorkhaland Movement on economy, ethnic relations, education, cultural activities of the Darjeeling district and on the interstate and international relations.

Ethnic separatist movement in Darjeeling (A K Samanta, 2001) ²⁸ provides a detailed analysis of the historical background of the ethnic separatist movement in Darjeeling led by the Gorkhas who claim to be the original inhabitants of the region. It begins with the history of Darjeeling dating around 1788-90 when it was annexed to Nepal through military conquest from Sikkim and Bhutan. It then analyses how the British annexed Darjeeling to British India and brought about the planned migration of the Nepalis into Darjeeling as a part of its frontier policy. It gives anthropological references about the Lepchas being the aboriginals of the Darjeeling but later swamped by the Nepalis who steadily constructed a Nepali lingua franca accommodating several ethnic tribes within its manifold. It examines the development of the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland made by Hillmen's Association (1917) and later by Gorkha National Liberation Front (1985). It further examined the earlier stance of the Indian communists particularly in West Bengal that extended support to the ethnic separatist movement in Darjeeling and demanded autonomy for the district and its neighbouring area as early as in 1942.

The Nepalis in Northeast India: Community in Search of Indian Identity (A C Sinha and T B Subba, 2002) ²⁹ encompasses articles written by various scholars dealing with the struggle of the Nepalis in the NER to establish their Indian identity. It traces the evolution and growth of the Nepali community in the NER giving detailed description of the marriage alliances contracted between the royal families of both India and Nepal since time immemorial. It explains the migration of the Nepalis to India during the colonial period as a sponsored migration by the British as part of their colonial strategy. It also narrates the incidents of violence meted out against the Nepalis particularly in Assam that targeted them as foreigners from Nepal rather than Indian citizens and how the Assam Nepalis assimilated to resurrect their distinctive identity as the Nepalis of the Indian origin.

²⁸ A K Samanta, '*Ethnic separatist movement in Darjeeling*', **Journal of Anthropological Survey of India**, Volume 50 Number 1 and 2, 2001.

²⁹ A.C.Sinha and T.B.Subba, in edited **The Nepalis in Northeast India: A community in search of Indian Identity**, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002.

Poverty, Malgovernance and Ethno political Mobilization: Gorkha Nationalism and the Gorkhaland Agitation in India(Rajat Ganguly, 2005)³⁰ deals with the failure of the States Re-Organization Commission to accommodate the aspirations of the various ethno-linguistic groups within its framework. The article holds the sense of socio-economic deprivation of the ethnic minorities as mainly responsible for the separatist tendency. According to the article, the ethnic minorities feel entrapped in a state which is mainly ruled by the ethnic community who are in majority and wield maximum socio-economic and administrative power in the state machinery. As a result, the ethnic minorities demand autonomy so as to ensure rapid reprisal of their socio-economic and political grievances. It is in this context that the article discusses the plight of the Gorkhas as an ethnic minority in the West Bengal state of Indian Union which is mostly dominated by the Bengalis. It expresses apprehension that the failure of the administration to bring about the socio-economic development in Darjeeling might lead to the resurgence of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse, Hegemony, and History (Bidhan Golay, 2006)³¹ discusses the construction of the Gorkha identity as a martial race by the British colonial administration when it encountered the martial qualities of the Gorkhas during the Anglo-Nepal war. It holds that that the Gorkha are still mainly viewed as a “martial race” as established by the British which seals all other possible self-identity of the Gorkhas. It studies the planned migration and settlement of the Gorkhas in India by the British colonial administration and attempts to trace the trajectory of the formation of the identity of the Gorkhas as an indigenous ethnic community in India. It attempts to explain how the identity of the Gorkhs as constructed by the British administration conflicts with the emerging cultural identity of the Gorkhas for which demands for autonomy have been made by the Gorkhas in India from time to time. It insists that since identities are constantly evolving the Gorkha identity too should be viewed as a post-national or a South Asian identity as Gorkhas are spread all over the world and thus hybridised by the local traditions, languages, and culture.

³⁰Rajat Ganguly, *Poverty, Malgovernance and Ethnopolitical Mobilization: Gorkha Nationalism and the Gorkhaland Agitation in India*, **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Routledge Publications, 2005.

³¹ Bidhan Golay, *Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside The Imperium Of Discourse, Hegemony, And History*, **Peace and Democracy in South Asia**, Volume 2, No 1 - 2, 2006.

Darjeeling-Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule

(D.S.Bomjan:2008)³² examines the causes of the ongoing Gorkhaland Agitation led by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) Chief Bimal Gurung. It gives an account of the corruption and poor administration of the DGHC under the chairmanship of Subash Ghising. It discusses in detail the provisions of the Sixth Schedule and criticized it as a deliberate attempt on the part of the Central and State Governments to permanently seal the fate of the demand of the separate state of Gorkhaland in Darjeeling. In fact, it viewed Ghising's approval to the Sixth Schedule as his biggest administrative blunder that led to his downfall, and the resurrection of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling in the present decade. It showcases the rise of Bimal Gurung as the linchpin of the ongoing Gorkhaland Movement and gives details of the activities of the GJMM in the Darjeeling and the adjoining areas with regard to its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland.

Through the Mists of Time: The Story of Darjeeling, the Land of Indian Gorkhas

(Basant B Lama, 2008)³³ deals with the socio-economic as well as the geographical profile of the Darjeeling district. It gives details of the various Anglo-Nepal War and Treaties that led to the amalgamation of the Darjeeling and the adjoining areas into India. It discusses the history of the demand of the Gorkhas for "separate status". It also deals with the demise of the uninterrupted rule of the GNLF Chief Subash Ghising as the caretaker of the DGHC and the political implication of the victory of Prashant Tamang in the "Indian Idol" television show aired on the Sony Channel that acted as a spark that ignited the ongoing movement for a separate state of 'Gorkhaland'

Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives (T.B. Subba, A.C. Sinha, 2009)³⁴ is composed of various articles written by scholars who deal mainly with issues revolving around identity crisis of the Indian Nepalis. It traces the history of Nepali settlement in NER and the formation of a common Nepali identity in India. It explains how the Indian Nepalis are mistaken as Nepali nationals by virtue of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty (1950) that promotes large scale migration of Nepalese nationals to India. It showcases incidence of discrimination and violence against the Indian Nepalis as a result of the mistaken identity. It

³²D.S.Bomjan, **Darjeeling-Dooars People and Place under Bengal's Neo-Colonial Rule**, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra Publication, Darjeeling, 2008.

³³Basant B.Lama, **Through the Mists of Time: the Story of Darjeeling, the land of Indian Gorkhas**, Bhavani Offset Printing and Publication, Kurseong, 2008.

³⁴T.B. Subba, A.C. Sinha, G.S. Nepal and D.R. Nepal, in edited **Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives**, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009.

further explains how this problem of identity crisis of the Indian Nepalis has led to the outbreak of demand for autonomy by the Indian Nepalis in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal.

Why Gorkhaland? (Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, 2009)³⁵ is a document published Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJMM). It gives an account of history of the Darjeeling district and the adjoining Dooars area under the Jalpaiguri district showcasing that these areas historically did not form a part of the present West Bengal state. It insists that the Darjeeling and Dooars were parts of kingdom of Sikkim and Bhutan which were annexed by British to India. It further claimed that Darjeeling and Dooars were administered separately by the British colonial rule and were kept outside the purview of the Provincial Government of Bengal. It attempts to explain that the identity of the Gorkha's as a distinct community is in jeopardy as long as it exists within West Bengal. It particularly insists that the Gorkha as a cultural community is entirely different in its language, customs, culture and practices from the dominant culture of West Bengal and so its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland is justified. It also highlights economic neglect of the region by the West Bengal government and the failure of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council set up in 1988 to meet the aspirations of the Gorkha's in West Bengal. It thus attempts to explain why the formation of Gorkhaland is justified and a demand which need immediate resolution.

Why Not Gorkhaland? (Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, 2013)³⁶ is a document published by Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJMM) which attempts to reinforce its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland. It highlights the role of Gorkhas in the freedom struggle of India as a testimony to the nationalist spirit of Gorkhas thereby refuting all the allegations of brewing secessionist aspirations often alleged by the West Bengal government. It makes reference to the Article 3(A) of the Indian Constitution which provides for the provision for the creation and reorganisation of new states within the Indian Union and thus insists that its demand for a separate state is constitutional. It also makes reference to the history of the region claiming that it was never a part of the West Bengal state. It also expresses its displeasure over the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) agreement which allows for the unwarranted interference of the West Bengal government in the functioning of the GTA preventing it from functioning as an independent and autonomous body. It thus views the GTA to be the conspiracy of the West Bengal government to contain the Gorkhaland Movement. The

³⁵ *'Why Gorkhaland?'* Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, Darjeeling, 2009.

³⁶ *'Why Not Gorkhaland?'* Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, Darjeeling, 2013.

document thus strongly put forwards its demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland as the only solution to the socio-economic problems of the Gorkhas in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON KAMTAPUR MOVEMENT

The Koches: Their Racial Affinities and Original Homeland (D Nath, 1986)³⁷ gives a historical account of the Koches as one of the aboriginal tribes of North-east India. He examines the various descriptions given by the British anthropologists about the ethnic origin of the Koches in India. Accordingly it alleges that the Koches are of Mongoloid origin having close affinities with other Bodo tribes like the Meches, Rabhas, Dhimals, Hajongs and Garos. They migrated to India from Tibet and settled first in the north and north-eastern Bengal. They gradually extended towards western part of Assam and then occupied large areas of south and west Bengal where they came into contact with diverse racial elements including the Dravidians. In course of time the Koches formed marital alliance with the Dravidians and a mixed Mongolo-Dravidian race having preponderant Mongoloid characters came into being. However the subject of the origin of the Koches still remains a subject of debate and discussion.

Uttarakhand Movement: A Sociological Analysis (Rajatshubro Mukhopadhyay, 1987)³⁸ analyses the Uttarakhand Movement for a separate state named 'Uttarakhand Pardesh Sangha' the call for which was given by the representatives of Cooch Behar State Praja Congress, along with Darjeeling Gorkha League, Sikkim Praja Sammelan and Jalpaiguri Gorkha League organised a meeting at Darjeeling in 1949. The Uttarkhand movement was mainly an outcome of the discontent with the socio-political conditions of the Rajbangsi in West Bengal. The leaders of the Uttarkhand movement appealed to the ethnic sentiments of the Rajbangsi populace against the established and politically powerful immigrant population who dishonour the Rajbangsi by addressing them as Bahes in the society. The movement was thus an attempt to establish and revive the lost glory of the Rajbangsi identity for which particular emphasis was put on the establishing the Rajbangsi dialect as a distinct language separate from the mainstream Bengali language. Uttarkhand movement was successful in the collective mobilisation of the Rajbangsi and made a significant contribution in bringing about

³⁷ D Nath, '*The Koches: Their racial affinities and original homeland*', **Journal of Indian History**, Volume 64 No. 1-3, 1986.

³⁸ Rajatshubro Mukhopadhyay, '*Uttarakhand Movement: A Sociological Analysis*', **Special Lecture VIII**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 27th February, 1987.

a social change in the structure of the West Bengal society. The Uttarkhand movement can thus be viewed as a social movement.

Integrated Decentralization: A Case of Cooch Behar District in West Bengal (Dilip Kumar Sarkar, 1998) ³⁹examines the administrative system of Cooch Behar prior to its accession to India in 1950. It holds that Cooch Behar was a princely state with a highly centralized administrative structure. It was under the aegis of the western educated liberal Maharaja Nripendra Narayan that the system of administration underwent changes with the enactment of various development oriented Acts such as the *Chaukidari* Act, 1893 which was framed on the model of Bengal Act. Even after the accession of Cooch Behar to the British India, the Act continued in vogue until 1958. Cooch Behar however enjoyed an autonomous status under the British administrative system owing to its distinctive cultural heritage and administrative system.

Kshatriyaization among the Rajbangsi: An Appraisal (Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay, 1999)⁴⁰ gives an account of the movement by the Rajbangsi of north-eastern Bengal to elevate their status in the hierarchical social system based on the *varna* or caste during the nineteenth century. The movement known as the Kshatriya movement was mainly the outcome of the social humiliation faced by the Rajbangsi in north-eastern Bengal by the upper caste Hindu migrants who migrated to North Bengal during the British rule. The Rajbangsi were looked down upon as an inferior caste by the Hindu migrants who completely changed the pattern of the Hindu society in North Bengal. This made the Rajbangsi caste conscious who thereby launched a movement to proclaim themselves as Kshatriyas who were placed only next to Brahmins. Accordingly they adopted sanskritization of their style of life by initiating the usages of other superior castes as such wearing of the sacred thread as the insignia of caste distinction. The Kshatriya Movement however was restricted only to the affluent class of the Rajbangsi community with improved economic and material condition, and educational status and as desire for a higher berth in the social hierarchy. It was not entirely successful as the poor section of the Rajbangsi community kept themselves aloof from the Kshatriya Movement.

³⁹ Dilip Kumar Sarkar, '*Integrated Decentralization: A Case of Cooch Behar District in West Bengal*', **Journal of Indian Anthropology**, Volume XXV No.2, January-December, 1998.

⁴⁰ Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay, '*Kshatriyaization among the Rajbangshi: An appraisal*', **Man in India**, Volume 79 No. 3-4, July-December 1999.

Contradiction and change in social identity of the Rajbangsi (Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay, 1999)⁴¹ examines the contradiction and change in social identity of the Rajbangsi against the background of the Kshatriyaization movement wherein they insisted to be recognised as Kshatriya rather than the tribe ‘Koch’. This was mainly to remove them from the category of ‘Depressed Class’ which were subjected to practices of untouchability prevalent in the Indian social system. The 1911 Census however recognised Rajbangsi to be different from Koch but denied to record them as Kshatriya. With the ‘protective discrimination’ introduced by the British administration to curb anti-British agitations involved reservations in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights. It was first extended to the Muslims and later to the ‘depressed classes’. It was founded that the Kshatriya Samiti, which was founded in 1910 and instrumental in Kshatriya movement, later in order to reap benefits of the ‘protective discrimination’ demanded the status of Scheduled Castes. The demand was successfully as the British government provided recognition to the Rajbangsi as the ‘Depressed Class’. At present, a new demand has been initiated by the Koch-Rajbangsi to be recognised as Schedule Tribe. This is mainly in view of the Rajbangsi in Assam who are recognised as the Other Backward Class resulting into the confused identity of the Rajbangsi in India. Accordingly demand for the tribal status is gaining momentum among the Rajbangsi on the ground that many scholars assert that the Koch-Rajbangsi originally belong to the Indo-Mongolian tribal stock and that the Koch-Rajbangsi of Assam and Bengal cannot have two separate officially ascribed statuses.

Rajbangshis: The Deprived People of North Bengal in the State of West Bengal (Moumita Ghosh Bhattacharyya, 2002)⁴² examines the socio-economic conditions of the Rajbangsi in North Bengal. It views Rajbangsi as the indigenous population of the North Bengal who lost their land to the immigrants mainly the upper caste Bengalis and Marwaris and is now dominated by the later in the politico-economic system. It attempts to trace the origin of Rajbangsi providing references of various British anthropologists of the Rajbangsi ethnic origin. It also examines the societal structure of the Rajbangsi such as marriage, family, dress, food habits and occupation. It studies the economic system of Rajbangsi which is rural and agrarian. It further studies the gradual decline of the *jotedar- adhiari* system prevalent in

⁴¹ Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay, ‘*Contradiction and change in social identity of the Rajbangsis*’, **Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society**, Volume 34 No. 2, July 1999.

⁴² Moumita Ghosh Bhattacharyya, *Rajbangshis: The Deprived People of North Bengal (in the State of West Bengal)*, **International Journal of South Asian Studies**, Volume 2 Number 2, Puducherry, July-December 2002.

North Bengal wherein the Rajbangsi exercised control over their land with the rapid industrialisation and burgeoning tea gardens that attracted immigrants who monopolized the Rajbangsi and possessed control over their lands. The marginalisation of the Rajbangsi in the socio-economic milieu led to assertion of ethnic identity of the Rajbangsi as the indigenous population of North Bengal and demands for the separate state of Kamtapur.

Destination Kamtapur (Anirban Biswas, 2002)⁴³ explains a sense of alienation among the Rajbangsi in North Bengal as the cause of Kamtapur Movement in North Bengal. The Koch-Rajbangsi identity could not merge and develop into Bengali nationality owing to a lack of a shared history. The refusal of the West Bengal government to give the Kamtapuri language an official status as distinct from the Bengali has deepened the feeling of alienation among the Rajbangsi. The assertion of the Bengali linguists that the Kamtapuri language is the sub-language of the Bengali language and that its difference is only dialectical makes the Rajbangsi identity feel shadowed by the dominant Bengali identity. This has resulted into the identity crisis of Rajbangsi in North Bengal who in an attempt to establish their identity as separate from the Bengalis have launched the Kamtapur Movement. In addition to this, the steady flow of immigrants into North-Bengal districts, mainly Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar have led to the dispossession of land and other means of livelihood for the Rajbangsi. The scarcity of resources has further alienated the Rajbangsi who feel isolated, deprived and discriminated thereby viewing a separate state of Kamtapur as the only solution to all their socio-economic problems.

Kamtapur Liberation Organisation: The New Face of Terror (Alok Kumar Gupta and Saswati Chanda, 2003)⁴⁴ examines the activities of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) formed in 1992. It alleges KLO to be the underground armed wing of the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP). KLO like KPP demands a separate state of Kamtapur comprising of Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur, Malda and Goalpara in lower Assam. It was involved in a series of unconstitutional activities like the abduction of the members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). This however resulted in the distancing of the KPP from the KLO. It further discusses about the Operation Kamtapur launched by the West Bengal government in November 2000 to contain the widespread terror caused by the KLO which resulted into the surrendering of KLO militants. It holds the socio-economic

⁴³ Anirban Biswas, 'Destination Kamtapur', **Frontier**, Volume 35 No.20, 2002.

⁴⁴ Alok Kumar Gupta and Saswati Chanda, 'Kamtapur Liberation Organisation: The New Face of Terror', **Third Concept**, Volume XVI No. 191, January 2003.

deprivation of the Rajbangsi and the large influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Bhutan in North Bengal as the root cause of the outbreak of such an armed struggle by KLO having strong regional linkages with ULFA in Assam and international support from similar militant and fundamentalist religious organizations.

A Ruthless Hit Squad (Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, 2004)⁴⁵ discusses the successful attempt of the West Bengal government to contain the unconstitutional activities of the KLO alleged to be the armed wing of the KPP. It analyses the major setback that the KLO suffered with Royal Bhutanese Army (RBA) that assisted the West Bengal government in destroying the camps of KLO in the India-Bhutan border. RBA handed over to the Indian authorities founder-members of the KLO Joydeb Roy and Milton Burman, and other important leaders such as Sanjoy Adhikari, Bhim Dakua and Pabitra Singha. The West Bengal Left Front government led by the CPI (M) in further appealed the militants of the KLO to surrender following which five militants' surrendered who were reported to have given Rs.12, 000 each and the license to start trade in river bed materials.

A History of Cooch Behar (Hiten Nag, 2005)⁴⁶ gives an elaborate historical account of the various royal descendants of the Cooch Behar and socio-economic activities undertaken by them. It attempts to compile not only the social-economic structure of the people in Cooch Behar during the early times incorporating also the folktales, rituals and proverbs associated with the region. It describes the history of Cooch Behar as an integral part of the history of un-divided Bengal, Assam and Bhutan. It further deals with the origin of the word 'Koch' and 'Bihar' and insists that the term 'Cooch Behar' is the outcome of a resolution of the royal court in 1896. It also discusses at length the Cooch Behar Treaty (1773 AD) and the close association of the Cooch Behar with the other royal state Bhutan. Lastly it gives a chronological summary of the important events that occurred in the princely state of Cooch Behar.

Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal Since 1947 (Sailen Debnath, 2007)⁴⁷ is composed of articles mainly dealing with the socio-political issues in the North Bengal. It analyses the historical transition of North Bengal in the wake of various socio-political movements affecting the region that exhibit the failure of the Government to fulfill the

⁴⁵, Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, 'A Ruthless hit squad', **Frontline**, Volume 21 No.1, 2004.

⁴⁶ Hiten Nag, edited **A History of Cooch Behar**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2005.

⁴⁷ Sailen Debnath, edited **Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal (Since 1947)**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2007.

aspirations of the people in the region. It discusses how even during the British rule the region witnessed socio-political movements like 'Tebhaga' movement of the share-croppers against the *zamindari* system that prevailed in the region. It also studies the issue of migration of people from Nepal and Bengal leading into the change in the demographic profile of the region. Consequent of the large cross-border influx has caused identity crisis among the aboriginals in the region culminating into socio-political movements for a separate state like Uttarkhand, Gorkhaland and Kamtapur. It also examines the Naxalite Movement organised by the peasants on the ideology of Mao-Tse-Tung in Naxalbari village of West Bengal. Amidst all these socio-political movements in North Bengal, the role of the West Bengal government is also studied with regard to contain these movements and establishing peace and order in West Bengal.

Social Formation of the Rajbangsi and the Emergence of the Kamtapuri Identity (Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay, 2009) ⁴⁸ analyses the trajectory of social mobility of the Rajbangsi in North Bengal. The Rajbangsi to be elevated in the caste system of the Indian societal order organised the Kshatriya movement whereby they adopted the rituals and practices associated with the upper caste. This was mainly to separate them from the identity of Koch which was recognised as a lower caste and therefore subject to social discrimination. The British government in response to the Kshatriya movement although registered the Rajbangsi as distinct from the Koches but not as the upper caste. The Kshatriya movement being restricted mainly to the landed aristocratic Rajbangsi did not get the support of the poor Rajbangsi who could not relate to the practices of the upper caste. Later however with the introduction of the reservation system by the British government to contain the anti-British sentiments the Rajbangsi made appeals for preferential treatment meant for the category Depressed Classes. Recently a new move has been made by an international forum of the Koch-Rajbangsi that demands a uniform legal status for Rajbangsi as a Scheduled Tribe in India. Thus the assimilation of the Rajbangsi into the Bengali mainstream society is fraught with divisive demands of Rajbangsi for the separate state of Kamtapur. The Rajbangsi from time to time have insisted on having their own ethnic identity independent of the Bengalis of West Bengal.

⁴⁸ Rajatsubhra Mukhopadhyay, '*Social Formation of the Rajbangsi and the Emergence of the Kamtapuri Identity*', in edited **Identity, Cultural Pluralism and the State: South Asia in Perspective**, N K Das and V R Rao, Anthropological Survey of India, Macmillian Press, 2009.

Kamtapur and the Koch Rajbangsi Imagination (Arup Jyoti Das, 2009)⁴⁹ deals with the demand for the separate state of Kamtapur by the Rajbangsi in North Bengal. He asserts that Kamtapur is an imaginary state for the Koch Rajbangsi with no material existence. This imagination is largely based on their belief on the existence of such a state in the ancient history dating back to the 13th century. Accordingly the Koch Rajbangsi does not name their proposed state on the name of their community rather they derive the imagination or the idea of Kamtapur from the history which indicates the Kamtapur was the capital of the Karumpa Kingdom which constituted of the present day Assam together with West Bengal. The Rajbangsi of North Bengal tends to identify themselves to this Kamtapur Kingdom which is a historical reality and not the present West Bengal state of which they now form a part of. Accordingly various organisations like KPP, KLO and Greater Cooch Behar Party have demanded for a separate state for the Koch Rajbangsi to preserve and maintain their distinct identity and a glorious past.

The Dooars in Historical Transition (Sailen Debnath, 2010)⁵⁰ provides a description of the Dooars region in West Bengal on which there is a dearth of academic research. It begins with early history of the Dooars describing the foundation of the Kamtapur, medieval Bengal and the impact of Mughal rule in the Dooars. It provides a detailed description of the Koch Kings in Dooars. It further discusses the socio-cultural origin and identities of various communities in Dooars such as Koch, Bodo, Lepcha, Totos and Ravas. It examines the impact of the Land Revenue Settlements in the Dooars under the British and Bhutanese rule on the Dooars. It analyses the emergence of the autonomy movements like Gorkhaland as well as the Kamtapur both of which demand Dooars to be incorporated in the prospective states respectively. It also examines the strategic importance of the Dooars as the chicken neck connecting the troubled North-east India with the rest of the country and also in view of the persistent Chinese threat of encroachment into the border of India.

Summation of the Literature Review

The above literature review provides an analysis of Multiculturalism as a conceptual framework that values collective community identities as it enables the individual to live a life of dignity. Multiculturalism asserts that community identity should not only be recognised but also respected. It is only when cultural community identity is secure and treated equal that the

⁴⁹ Arup Jyoti Das, **Kamatapur and the Koch Rajbangsi Imagination**, Montage Media Publication, Assam, India, 2009.

⁵⁰ *Sailen Debnath*, **The Dooars in Historical Transition**, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2010.

individual can explore options and make choices. Accordingly Multiculturalism advocated granting the minority culture special community rights so that they can determine their own way of life without discrimination. These rights include the freedom to promote their collectively valued way of life, to live and be governed according to the norms of their culture, and to observe the practices of their cultural community. Most scholars have discussed Multiculturalism in the context of Indian as well as western societies.

Multiculturalism however comes across as a political rhetoric as there is an existence of a gap between its propagation and implementation. They have discussed why the policy of Multiculturalism failed to prevent the outbreak of ethno-autonomy movements in western as well as third countries including India. They have also suggested various mechanisms by which Multiculturalism can be successfully established in different societies. Literatures on Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movement discuss the ethnic crisis in West Bengal with special reference to the separate statehood demands of the Gorkhas and the Koch Rajbangsi. It studies the identity formation of the both the communities and provides a historical account of their movements. The present study is an attempt to understand the ethnic unrest in West Bengal within the framework of various multicultural theories. It examines the separate statehood demands of the Gorkhas and Koch Rajbangsi as distinct ethnic groups with an identity and culture of their own and their claims to the minority group rights in West Bengal.

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

With regard to multiculturalism a large number of theoretical approaches have emerged over the years. The present study has mainly focused on the theories of Multiculturalism as propounded by Will Kymlicka and Bikhu Parekh. Kymlicka identifies two sources of cultural diversity. **First**, the involuntary incorporation of different culture into a single state through invasion or colonisation where one cultural community is invaded and conquered by another, or is ceded from one imperial power to another. Such a state is termed by Kymlicka as 'Multination' states which can also arise voluntary if different cultures mutually agree to form a federation for their mutual benefit. **Second**, when a country accepts immigrant families and individuals from cultures distinct from its own it results into cultural diversity. Kymlicka termed it 'Polyethnic' state which allows the immigrants to maintain their ethnic distinctions and attempts to bring about their institutional integration. A multicultural state can be both multinational and polyethnic. Kymlicka puts forward three group-specific rights so as to accommodate national and ethnic differences in a multicultural state. These rights can overlap as groups can claim more than one kind of right.

(1) Self-government rights: In most multination states, minorities believe their self-determination is not possible within the multination nation state. Thus in order to ensure the full and free development of their cultures they demand political autonomy or territorial jurisdiction and even secession. Self-government right empowers a national minority to make its own decisions without the fear of being outvoted by the majority.

(2) Polyethnic rights: These group-specific rights are usually intended to promote integration of the minorities into larger society. It does not involve self-government but includes public funding of the minority's cultural practices and institutions so that they can express their cultural particularity without the fear of elimination from politico-economic institutions of the dominant culture. Like self-government rights, polyethnic rights are seen as permanent.

(3) Special representative rights: These rights involve process to ensure the representation of the minorities in the institutional structure of the state. It aims to reduce barriers for the greater participation and inclusion of the minorities in institutional structures and processes believed to be controlled by dominant groups. Thus special representative rights involve system of proportional representation, reservation of seats for the disadvantaged minorities in legislature and other governmental agencies.

Bikhu Parekh in his theory of Multiculturalism condemns cultural majoritarianism and assimilation not for its insistence on uniformity but for privileging majoritarian culture and subordinating the minority culture within the polity. Accordingly Parekh put forwards the following general principles to reconcile the demands of unity and diversity in a multicultural society:

(1) Equality of difference

In a multicultural society, visible symbols of cultural identity like dress are deeply valued by the individuals. It however often becomes a source of resentment within a wider society. Attempts should therefore be made to define such objective symbolic symbols of cultural identity in a way that is culturally sensitive and do justice to both the minority and majority ways of life.

(2) Equal treatment

In a multicultural society recognition of cultural differences might entail granting of additional rights to some groups or individuals. These are groups who have been marginalized or suppressed for long and were denied the opportunity to participate in the mainstream society as equals. Accordingly these groups generally lack the confidence and hence there is a need to give them rights not available to others. Such rights include special or disproportionate representation in parliament, the cabinet and other government bodies and

the right to consultation and even a veto over laws relating to them. The aim is to draw the groups into the mainstream of society and give substance to the principle of equal citizenship.

(3) Rectification of past injustices

Cultural diversity in a multicultural state requires it to grant the minorities traumatized in past history rights not available to the majority so as to make them feel culturally secure. The purposes of these rights are to promote social harmony and foster a common sense of belonging. It thus involves reassuring the minorities that they are not under particular threat in the present state. By giving the cultural minorities extra resources and rights a multicultural state enables them to flourish and contribute toward the formation of a rich and plural society. This although clearly favours and privileges the cultural minorities over majority is still justified if it is in the larger interest of society.

(4) Dialogical Multiculturalism

Parekh puts forward a theory which is dialogically constituted keeping in view the challenges posed by the cultural diversity in a multicultural state. The dialogically constituted theory stresses the centrality of a dialogue between cultures in both the political and non-political areas of life as the unifying focus and principles of society. The purpose of such a dialogue is to come up with principles, institutions and policies that are collectively acceptable to all the communities in a multicultural society marked with cultural diversity.

To summarize the theory of Multiculturalism as such departs from the mainstream liberal thought as it views individuals as culturally embedded beings and defines them in communal and non-individualist terms. It also locates their choices and autonomy within a wider and richer framework. It further revises the traditional liberal mode of separating private and public realms. It rejects the conventional liberal concern to abstract the state from society, and reintegrates and establishes a creative partnership between them. It redefines the traditional liberal views on the nature and functions of government, and gives the latter a socially constitutive role. The government is not merely to 'govern' society but also nurture its moral and cultural resources and help it become cohesive and self-regulating.

LESLIE GREEN

The Problem: Minorities within Minorities

According to Leslie Green a liberal state restricts the interference of the state into the private life of the minorities. By doing so, it keeps religion outside the public domain but permits religion to oppress their internal minorities like women or children. Liberals with exception to J. S. Mill have concentrated on political tyranny ignoring the possibility of social tyranny. They are concerned only with the establishment of conditions of freedom within which diverse social

groups can flourish. They do not interfere with the internal constitutions of these social groups which contain within it other minorities such as ethnic, cultural, religious, or sexual minorities termed as 'internal minorities'. Leslie Green criticizes the theory and practice of the liberal state where fundamental principles of political morality are applied only at the molecular level.

Rights and Minority Groups

To Leslie Green, Minority rights, in morality or in law, are based on two sources; **first**, there are rights that are granted to individuals because they are members of a certain minority group like ethnic, cultural, national, or religious communities. These rights are based on collective goods. The right to self government is an example of such rights; **second**, the rights emanate not just from membership in a social group but also individuated interest and goods. A communist or a gay enjoys personal liberty just as any other individual. The communists thus have a right to organize politically and a gay to exercise sexual liberty

Minority rights are defended by multiculturalists like Will Kymlicka on the ground that these are required for the survival of the group. Special group rights including powers, liberties and rights are justified as ex ante compensation for the discrimination meted out on a group for the cultural resources which is an un-chosen circumstance of life. Leslie Green however asserts that minority status does not necessarily correlate to social marginalization and discrimination. Minorities such as rich are powerful whereas women who are in majority are not. The rich in the majoritarian decision procedures such as voting might be outvoted but rarely be outbid. It is thus that groups with least power and resources though not in minority can still be vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization.

The special rights to the minorities are varied which generally includes national self-determination, granting limited autonomy in certain areas (for instance, over education), exemption from certain general obligations (such as military service), giving recognition to their divergent practices (as in marriage), supporting their distinctive institutions, and so on. The right to national self determination is extreme in the sense that it cannot be accorded to all minorities and is to be restricted for the Aborigines. The granting of other lesser forms of protection must take into account that different minorities are in different positions. Accordingly, some minorities are to be entitled to substantial support and other to a minimum which might be so small as to institutionalize it in the legal system.

The Rights of Internal Minorities

Leslie Green asserts that the internal minorities too are minorities and have two different minorities to contend with. Consequently they should be granted not just individual rights but also collective rights as members of internal minority. If cultural membership can ground

special rights of the minority groups; so can membership to sub-culture be a source of special rights to the internal minorities. Here he cites the example of English-speaking Quebecers who, in addition to the individual rights of freedom of association and expression also enjoy a collective right to the resources needed for their cultural and linguistic security.

Two Claims

Theory and ideology that deny granting to the internal minorities special group rights draw an analogy between the situation of minority groups and that of their internal minorities. The analogy centers on two claims; **first**, internal minorities have the power to exit a minority group to which they are affiliated as and when they feel discriminated or mistreated by the same. This however is not the case with the minority community at large. Minority groups function within the compulsory state jurisdiction and cannot exit on their own. Even if they are allowed to exit; it is on the terms of the state which is necessarily not in the favour of the minority group that exit. Moreover if a minority group exits a state it seeks admission in another state or inclusive societies that regulate their admission within it even more closely. The situation of the internal minorities is thus different from that of the minorities who are granted special rights. The internal minorities have with them the option to either assimilate with the majority or exit a minority group that compose civil society and are not like states or inclusive societies that deny right to exit or regulate the terms of exit.

Second, the relationship between internal minority and the minority group they belong to is different from that between minority and majority groups with respect to relative power. The minorities are given power because they are relatively weaker than the majority. The aim is to strengthen the minority who are purported as powerless to protect themselves. In contrast, giving special rights to the internal minorities would mean strengthening them against an already weak group which makes for an illogical idea.

These claims if perceived to be correct denies the internal minorities the kind of rights that the minority groups themselves enjoy. It would establish a liberal regime which permits a minority group to mistreat its members in ways that would be condemned if practiced by the larger community against the same minority group. Leslie Green thus raises doubt on the morality of these claims that deny the internal minorities special group rights. According to him, the claim that the internal minority can exit is based on the liberty principle is sound only if internal minorities have a fair chance to exit the group if mistreated.

Legal institutions in liberal state upheld individual rights over group rights on the ground that an individual is free to believe in, and to practice, any religion or tradition, if he chooses to do so. That he cannot be coerced or forced to participate in one by any group purporting to

exercise their collective rights in doing so. His freedoms and rights are thus not subject to the collective rights of the aboriginal nation to which he belongs. In spite of the legal protection individual rights of the internal minorities often suffer violation at the hands of a minority group they are part of. Polygamy for instance violates both liberty and justice of the Mormon women and yet it is kept outside the public domain or the interference by the state. Internal minorities thus find themselves trapped in an institution whose character they cannot change but that structures their lives. Besides, the meaning and costs of departure are practically different. This is because it is risky, wrenching, and disorienting to have to tear oneself from one's religion or culture. The real prospects of leaving a minority group differ from the model of voluntary association. That is the mere existence of an exit does not necessarily make it a reasonable option but a costly one. Green thus view the exit claim to be a poor one and insists that the right of the internal minorities be guaranteed.

Besides the claim based on relative power that the inadequate resources and power entitle the minority group to special rights ignores the fact that the condition of internal minorities is even worse. They are in many ways vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. They suffer from being members of minority groups struggling to defend themselves not only from the majority but also from other members of their own minority. They thus in many ways are doubly vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. A minority group although is relatively weaker than the majority but is not weak in relation to its own internal minorities. Accordingly the claim from relative power is no better than the one of exit. Internal minorities are as entitled to minority rights as the minority groups. The onus to make minority rights real lays not just on the majority but also to the minority groups themselves.⁵¹

JEREMY WALDRAN

Jeremy Waldron is critical of Kymlicka's argument that people cannot choose a conception of the good for themselves in isolation, but that they need a clear sense of an established range of options to choose from. He asserts that although choice takes place in a cultural context, among options that have culturally defined meanings, it does not follow that there must be one cultural framework in which each available option is assigned a meaning. Meaningful options may come to us as item or fragments from a variety of cultural sources. We need cultural meanings, but we do not need homogenous cultural framework. We need to understand our choices in the contexts in which they make sense, but we do not need any single context to structure all our

⁵¹ See Leslie Green, '*Internal Minorities and their Rights*', in Will Kymlicka (ed) **The Rights of Minority Cultures**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.

choices. We need culture, but we do not need cultural integrity. Since none of us needs a homogenous cultural framework or the integrity of a particular set of meanings, none of us needs to be immersed in one of the small-scale communities which, according to Kymlicka are alone capable of securing this integrity and homogeneity.

To Waldron we live in a world formed by technology and trade; by economic, religious, and political imperialism and their offspring; by mass migration and the dispersion of cultural influences. In this context, to immerse one in the traditional cultural influences involves an artificial dislocation from what actually is going on in the world. That it is an artifice is evidenced by the fact that the immersion often requires special subsidization and extraordinary provision by those who live in the real world, where cultures and practices are not so sealed off from one another. Just as individuals need communal structures in order to develop and exercise the capacities that their rights protect, so minority communities need larger political and international structures to protect and to sustain the culture goods that they pursue. So in the modern world particular cultures and national communities have an obligation to recognize their dependence on the wider social, political, international, and civilizational structures that sustain them. They are not entitled to accept the benefits of its protection and subsidization and at the same time disparage and neglect the structures, institutions, and activities that make it possible for indigenous communities to secure the aid, toleration, and forbearance of the large numbers of other citizens and other small communities by which they are surrounded.

Waldron as such puts forward the cosmopolitan view of self. The cosmopolitan view does not deny the role of culture in the constitution of human life, but questions, **first**, the assumption that the social world divides up neatly into particular distinct cultures, one to every community, and **second**, the assumption that what everyone needs is just one of these entities—a single, coherent culture—to give shape and meaning to his life. The cosmopolitan view of self refuses to think of self as defined by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language. The self is a creature of modernity, conscious of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self. It challenges the claims that are made by modern communitarians about the need people have for involvement in the substantive life of a particular community as a source of meaning, integrity, and character. Waldron uses ‘community’ in the sense of ethnic community: a particular people sharing a heritage of custom, ritual, and way of life that is in some real or imagined sense immemorial, being referred back to a shared history and shared provenance or homeland. Accordingly the cosmopolitan alternative undercuts the importance of the preservation of minority cultures. Cultures live and grow, change and sometimes wither away; they amalgamate with other cultures, or they adapt themselves to geographical or demographic

necessity. When we live a cosmopolitan life, we draw our allegiances from here, there, and everywhere. Bits of cultures come into our lives from different sources. The self constituted under the auspices of a multiplicity of cultures has or can have a variety, a multiplicity of different and perhaps disparate communal allegiances. Waldron thus puts forward the vision of cosmopolitanism which provides the basis of an alternative way of thinking—one that embraces the aspects of modernity with which we all have to live and welcomes the diversity and mixture that it brings with it.⁵²

SUMMATION OF THEORETICAL REVIEW

Multiculturalism is more than just a theory of minority rights. It is a conception of democracy in which diverse cultures are represented as equals in the public domain. It emerged as a reaction to the assimilationist theory adopted for long by nation-state to establish itself as unified whole submerging diverse ethnic groups into one large national identity. It questions the idea of universal citizenship premised on the established norms of liberal democracy. Instead it endorses ‘differentiated citizenship’ with group-differentiated rights. It views people not just as citizens but also members of communities possessing multiple loyalties. It is in this framework of ‘differentiated citizenship’ that the special rights for the minorities are discussed and justified. Multiculturalism as a theory thus outlines a new vision of democracy wherein cultural community identities are not both valued as well as protected.

The Multiculturalism theory enunciated in the western democracies although provides a systematic defense of minority rights has its limitations when applied to India having different historical background and circumstances. The rights given to the religious and cultural minorities in India was a product of political consensus reached after much debate and discussion in the Constituent Assembly. However the rights that were granted to specific minorities lacked a theoretical defense. The commitment of the Constitution to the welfare of the minorities was taken for granted as it was looked upon as a compensation meted out against them in the past. A theoretical justification as such was neither demanded nor given. The idea of group equality although received attention but was never theorised.⁵³ The result was a weak multicultural polity with no theoretical foundation that could systematically upheld the principles of multiculturalism. Consequently the Multicultural framework of India has been challenged time and again by ethno cultural conflicts between groups as well as separatist

⁵² See Jeremy Waldron, ‘*The Cosmopolitan Alternative*’, in Will Kymlicka (ed) **The Rights of Minority Cultures**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.

⁵³ See Gurpreet Mahajan, *The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy*, Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 2002.

movements. Moreover the fact that state mechanisms such as grant of huge economic funds, signing of peace accords with the agitating ethnic group and setting up of autonomous council have failed to provide a permanent solution to such conflicts makes the situation even more alarming. The present study examines the ethno-identity based demands of the Gorkhas and Koch Rajbangsi for a separate state of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur respectively within the framework of Multiculturalism. The Koch Rajbangsi and Gorkhas who do not share common culture, tradition and language with the dominant community of the state; the concept of 'we' and 'other' is clearly visible in their interrelationship with the dominant community. Accordingly their relationship with the dominant community as well as their rights as a minority groups is studied with the insight provided by various multicultural theorists.

E. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the process of identity formation of the Gorkhas and the Koch Rajbangshis so as to analyse the complexity of the ongoing identity politics in West Bengal.
2. To understand the factors responsible for the emergence of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements in West Bengal
3. To investigate the nature of both the Movements together with their history and their present status.
4. To analyse the Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements within the Multicultural framework.
5. To analyse the viability of Multiculturalism in view of the regional movements of the Gorkhas and the Koch Rajbangsi in West Bengal.

F. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study is exploratory in nature. Accordingly the study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the factors responsible for the emergence of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur movements in North Bengal?
2. What is the nature of the developments of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements?
3. What is the response of the Government and mainstream political parties to Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements?
4. Can the claims of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements be reconciled with each other?
5. Are Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements ethnocentric in character?

6. Is Multiculturalism a viable alternative to maintain and moderate identity politics in West Bengal?

G. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study being historical, descriptive and analytical in nature, the information for the study have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. Information on Gorkhaland Movement led by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) and that of Kamtapur Movement led by Kamtapur Peoples Party (KPP) has been elicited from GJMM and KPP party members respectively through interviews and schedules. Views of Internal ethnic minorities on Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movement was further studied with the help of the inputs provided by Vice Chairman of Lepcha Development Board, Kalimpong and President, Chamber of Commerce, Kalimpong through interviews and discussions. Telephonic interview was also conducted of the President of Bangla O Bangla Bhasha Banchao Committee to provide access to the views of the majoritarian community on Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements. Books, journals, newspapers related to the research work available in the library of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, North Bengal University, Siliguri and Assam University, Silchar have been consulted. Party publications such as those published by GJMM like ‘Why Gorkhaland?’ and ‘Why not Gorkhaland?’ published in 2009 and 2013 respectively and memorandums submitted to Government by various organisations leading the Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements have also been consulted. Extensive use of Internet materials such as e-journals has also been made.

H. SIGNIFICANCE

Multiculturalism as a concept and practice present a challenge to the policy makers of the country. This is because in a cosmopolitan age of globalization where inter-mixing of different cultures is on rise; there are groups who at the same time are struggling to maintain their ethnic individuality and solidarity. The integration of political and economic spheres has resulted into a competitive rather than harmonious relationship among diverse groups. Enactment of provisions to protect ethnic individuality of the vulnerable ethnic minorities has made many ethnic groups to come out of hibernation and assert their identity to enjoy political and economic privileges accompanying such provisions. While resource competition is an important source of ethnic struggle between two groups the fear of losing identity due to influence from outside culture is paramount. Consequently the validity of the Linguistic Re-organization of the States (1956) has been challenged, time and again, by many ethnic communities demanding further balkanization.

Such demands which are often marked by violence and counter-violence have caused immense human sufferings in the form of displacement, loss of live, molestation and economic setback. The fact that state mechanisms such as grant of huge economic funds, signing of peace accords with the agitating ethnic group and setting up of autonomous council have failed to provide a permanent solution to such movements makes the situation even more alarming. Accommodation of the aspirations of the smaller community in the national framework of policy making while keeping the territorial integrity of the Indian Union intact is a vexed problem. It is particularly so when the identity of a particular ethnic group is disputed like that of the Gorkhas in India. Moreover when two communities sharing same territorial boundaries demand separation from the host community like Koch Rajbanshis and the Gorkhas in North Bengal; clash of interests and demands is obvious. Some rethinking as such is necessary so as to understand the ongoing autonomy movements in North Bengal and thereby suggests measures where by the aspirations of the two minority communities is accommodated in the national framework of policy making without pulverising the territorial integrity of the Indian Union.

I. ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS AND MAJOR FINDINGS:

Chapter I-Introduction

It provides the structure of the present study comprising of the statement of the problem, literature review, objectives, research questions, theoretical review, review of literature, significance and the methodology adopted in conducting the present study.

Chapter II- Multiculturalism and Identity Politics

This chapter mainly examines Multiculturalism as a conceptual framework. It holds that Multiculturalism as an approach deals with collective identity of the groups and tries to accommodate diverse groups within the manifold of peaceful co-existence. A Multicultural polity values diversity of cultures and aims to devise a system of special rights by which this diversity can grow and flourish. The setting of Multiculturalism is challenged by identity politics which is assertive of the distinct group identity. Identities not only define who we are; they also operate as objects that are open to manipulation and instrumental use. Identities can be mobilized to secure access to valued social and economic goods. When identities are mobilized, it is necessary to address concerns of recognition. Ignoring the latter often alienates a community resulting into identity based political movements.⁵⁴ Both

⁵⁴ See Saumyajit Ray, 'Understanding Indian Multiculturalism', in (ed) **Multiculturalism- Public Policy and Problem Areas in Canada and India**, Jawaharlal Nehru Publication, New Delhi, 2009.

Multiculturalism and Identity Politics are concerned with assertion of the group identity and its relevance to an individual's existence. However where they fall apart is the approach while the former seeks accommodation the later division. It is in this mise-en-scene, the identity formation of the Gorkhas and Rajbangsi is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III- Identity Formation of the Gorkhas

This chapter discusses the identity formation of the Gorkhas broadly in two phases:

Phase I-Birth of Gorkha Identity during British Colonial period traces the settlement of the Gorkhas in India by the British who encouraged their immigration to North east India post Anglo- Nepal war of 1814-15. They found their Gorkhas not only brave warriors, but also effective in wild, difficult and mountainous tract. Moreover, they found them inexpensive, obedient and efficient even in trying circumstances. So much so that the British recruited the Gorkhas in the British army and provided adequate means of livelihood to them so as to encourage their settlement in places like Shillong, Darjeeling and Dehradun.

In addition to this the pre-British economy required commercial activities like timber extraction and tea plantation which required strong muscle power for jungle clearance. The British, thus, encouraged immigration of the Nepalis from Nepal to work as labourers in British India by giving land on favorable terms to Nepalis, who as soon as knew about it, came freely in. Besides, the British also encouraged the Gorkhas to settle in the vast wastelands of Sikkim and Bhutan so as to avoid the Chinese and Tibetan infiltration. Consequently, the British proved to be a catalyst for an organized migration from the Nepal hills to the Indian Frontiers only to serve their own motives.

Phase II - Emergence of Gorkha identity in post- Independence Era took shape with the appointment of Official Language Commission with B.G.Kher as the Chairman in 1955, and that of the States Reorganization Commission in 1953 that led to the intensification of the language demand. As a result, during the 1961 census various tribal populations who were by then functionally bilingual recorded themselves as Nepali – speaking. The language demand as such brought the various hill groups and tribes closure and accelerated the pace of integration of hill people and growth of 'Gorkha Identity'.⁵⁵ Repercussions of the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam and other states of Northeast India caused the Nepalis, although long domiciled, suffer from violence and indiscriminate eviction. Even where they were declared as a domiciled community, such as in Mizoram, they were targets of attacks by local

⁵⁵ Dyutish Chakraborty, '*Gorkhaland: Evolution of the Politics of Segregation*', **Special Lecture**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, April, 1988.

boys. As a result, the more educated began to reassess their political status and democratic rights in the region. This led to a search for and assertion of Indian Nepali identity in Northeast India.⁵⁶

This identity of Nepalis as Indians further suffered a setback due to the Clause VII of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty (1950) by virtue of which Nepalese from Nepal poured in India in a large scale-giving rise to the problem of mistaken identity of the Gorkhas in India. The recognition of Nepali language as the additional official language for the district of West Bengal and subsequently in the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution also could not provide a permanent solution to the problem of identity crisis of the Indian Nepalis. They are continually treated as encroachers from Nepal and have become victims of humiliation and discrimination in India encouraging the demand of separate statehood by the Gorkhas in India in order to assert their identity as Indian Nationals.

Chapter III- Identity Formation of the Koch Rajbangsi

This chapter deals with the diverse opinions regarding the identity formation of the Koch Rajbangsi. Conflicting views by British ethnographers are expressed over whether the Koch - Rajbangsi is the same race or constitutes two different ethnic stocks. As far as the Koch Rajbangsi ethnic communities is concerned it is found that from 1872, the Rajbangsi of Bengal and parts of Assam demanded recognition as a distinct caste i.e. 'Rajbangsi' for a clear and concrete dissociation from the tribal Koches.⁵⁷ It was under the leadership of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barman that the Rajbangsi organized the Kshatriyaization movement and claimed 'Kshatriyahood' for the social upliftment of the Rajbangsi community. Through Kshatriya Movement the Rajbangsi challenged the lower berth assigned to them in the Hindu caste system.⁵⁸ However the Rajbangsi did not receive any official recognition as Kshatriya. In 1911 Census, while the first demand to separate the tribal Koch and the Rajbangsi identity was conceded, the second one i.e. to include the Rajbangsi within the Kshatriya caste was turned down. Thus all their efforts to get recognized as Kshatriya ultimately failed.

⁵⁶ Nath Lopita, 'Migration, insecurity and identity: The Nepali dairymen in India's Northeast', **Asian Ethnicity**, Volume 7, No. 2, June, 2006.

⁵⁷ Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay, 'Contradiction and Change in Social Identity of the Rajbangsis', **Journal of Indian Anthropological Society**, Volume 34 No.2, July, 1999, North eastern Bengal and Assam, pp. 133-138.

⁵⁸ Moumita Ghosh Bhattacharyya, 'Rajbangsi: The Deprived People of North Bengal', **International Journal of South Asian Studies**, Volume 2 No 2, July-December, 2009, Pondicherry University, India.

The British imperialistic policy of protective discrimination that sought to grant special favour in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights, first to the Muslims and then to the 'depressed classes'⁵⁹ was part of their strategy to curb anti-imperialist movement and to mobilize numerous 'depressed' castes in support of the British rule. Accordingly different castes and communities developed a vested interest in maintaining a separate 'backward' identity. The Rajbangsi also looked at the government for official patronage and in extending them preferential treatment in matters of education, employment and legislators. Accordingly, the Kshatriya Samiti formed during the Kshatriyation Movement started functioning as a political interest group demanding as a Scheduled Caste for the Rajbangsi so as to avail preferential treatment. Ultimately in 1936, the Rajbangsi ethnic community of Bengal was placed in the category of Scheduled Castes in Bengal and the Rajbangsi got a new identity as Scheduled Caste. At present a section of Rajbangsi ethnic community of West Bengal are striving for tribal status retracing to their old ethnic affinity with the tribal Koches. Accordingly contradiction and change in social identity of the Rajbangsi as such is clearly visible. The identity formation of the Rajbangsi thus reflects an erratic trajectory.

Chapter IV- Gorkhaland Movement: Growth and Development

This chapter attempts to study the growth and development of the Gorkhaland Movement. It traces the demand for the separate statehood for the Gorkhas to the Hillmen Association in 1907 that first made the demand for a separate administrative unit for Darjeeling. Since then, the demand took various political turns and twists. However, till mid-twentieth century, the struggle of the Gorkhas was a low-key affair limited only to a few memorandums and some ineffective vote boycott campaigns. It was only towards the end of the twentieth century, that the Gorkhaland Movement took a fierce turn under the leadership of Gorkha National Liberation Front led by Subhash Ghising. The signing of the Darjeeling Hill Accord on 22nd August, 1988 and the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) reduced the intensity of the Movement. However, the demand for Gorkhaland has been revived and has once again emerged as a strong mass movement of the Gorkhas in Darjeeling demanding a separate state of Gorkhaland within the Indian Union. This time the call has been given by

⁵⁹ The Government of India Act of 1919 constituted the new legal category of social stratum, called 'Depressed Classes', which includes the lower and untouchable castes but also the so-called tribes. In some documents (including the Census of 1931) these groups were also referred 'Exterior Castes'. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) of today were until 1935 called as the Depressed Classes. Op.cit.no.3

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha under the leadership of Bimal Gurung. GJMM although claims to uphold the demand for Gorkhaland it agreed to stall the Gorkhaland Movement for the effective execution of the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) agreement with increased power and autonomy compared to DGHC. GJMM views GTA as a step forward to statehood and not a dilution of that demand. It thus claims to uphold its movement for the separate state of Gorkhaland which follows the Gandhian means of protest such as *Dharna*, non-cooperation and candle rally marches. GJMM refrains from adopting violent means to press for its demand of separate statehood like that adopted by the GNLF in the 1980s. Thus while there appears to be a difference in the ideologies and methodologies of the GJMM and GNLF both aimed to achieve for the Gorkhas in India a separate statehood namely Gorkhaland.

Chapter V- Kamtapur Movement: Growth and Development

This chapter attempts to study the growth and development of the Kamtapur Movement. It traces the demand for the separate statehood for the Rajbangsi to Hitasadhani Sabha formed on 19th May, 1947 consisting mainly of rural landlords and Rajbangsi elites. 'Hitasadhani Sabha' with Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed as the President contested election and raised a proposal to keep Cooch Behar under the Central Government of Indian Dominion for the interest of the development of the local people. It thus initiated the process of transforming Cooch Behar into a centrally administered State. Post independence the Hitasadhani Sabha adopted the name 'Cooch Behar State Praja Congress' and called for a demand for a separate state named 'Uttarakhand Pradesh Sangha'. The demand for the establishment of 'Uttarkhand Pradesh Sangha' was raised before the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952 during his visit to Darjeeling. However the demand failed to create a political stir and subsided subsequently. With the decline of the Uttarkhand Dal, an auxiliary organization named "Uttarbanga Tapsili Jati/Upajati Sangathan" (UTJUS) comprising of Rajbangsi became the torch-bearer for the redress of the socio-economic and political grievances of the Rajbangsi. Its primary demand was against the citizenship of the Bengali refugees and immigrants from Bangladesh who migrated after 1971. But the organisation lost its influence after which the Kamtapur Movement was led by Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) constituted in 1992. It was an offshoot of the Kamtapur Gana Parishad formed on the lines of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).⁶⁰ It was formed with the primary objective of a separate state of Kamtapur for the

⁶⁰ See Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyay, '*Uttarkhand Movement: A Sociological Analysis*', **Special Lecture VIII**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 27 February, 1987.

Rajbangsi within the Indian Union. The movement for the separate state of Rajbangsi is also being spearheaded by the 'Greater Cooch Behar People's Association' (GCPA) formed on 9th September 1998 at Kakbari school under the leadership of Bangshi Badan Barman. Like KPP it is also demanding a separate state called 'Greater Cooch Behar' with the areas of present Cooch Behar and parts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Assam. The language of this new state according to GCPA will be Kamtapuri or the Cooch Behari language. They are doing so in reference to the history, cultures and tradition of ancient Cooch Behar.⁶¹ They derived its legacy from the 'Hita Sadhani Sabha'; and the former Cooch Behar state in its pristine form is its *esprit de corps*.

Chapter VII- Nation State versus Ethnic Minorities: Union and State Governments response to Movements for Gorkhaland and Kamtapur

This chapter states that Multiculturalism in order to be successfully established all the constituent cultures must have equal share in the public as well as the private realm. While cultural diversity is often promoted in the private realm it is the public realm in which ethnic minorities lack adequate representation. State represents the public realm as it has the legality to secure justice in society. As such it can play a key role in eliminating feelings of alienation and fostering a sense of common belonging among the ethnic minorities. Accordingly the state of West Bengal appears to adopt the following mechanisms over the years to maintain its Multicultural framework:

Divide and Rule -

Following the lines of British imperialist the West Bengal government to contain separatist demands tend to interplay the internal minorities against the national minorities in Darjeeling. The West Bengal government as such readily formed the Development Boards for the internal minorities like the Lepcha and the Tamang communities in Darjeeling with the autonomy powers to undertake activities to maintain their distinct culture, traditions, language and practices. This is clearly to weaken the ethnic composition of Gorkhas as the Lepcha and the Tamangs earlier constituted part of the larger Gorkha community. This strategy of the Govt. of West Bengal to weaken the separate statehood demands of the Gorkhas has thus proved to be successful as there is an upsurge of demands for Development Boards by ethnic groups who

⁶¹See Arun K. Jana, 'Backwardness and Political Articulation of Backwardness in the North Bengal Region of West Bengal', in Ashutosh Kumar's edited **Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions Within Regions**, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011.

are now highlighting and stressing their cultural distinctiveness to further their demand for a separate Development Board with autonomy and powers to preserve their identity as distinct from Gorkhas.

Sixth Schedule -

The Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) dated 06.1.2005 to grant the Sixth Schedule status to the Darjeeling hills was another diplomatic strategy adopted by the Union Government and the West Bengal Government as a final solution to the autonomy movement in Darjeeling. However the proposal met with resistance spearheaded by the GJMM that demanded scrapping of the tripartite MoS with regard to Sixth Schedule. GJMM regarded Sixth Schedule to be a divisive policy dividing different castes as it focussed only on tribal giving to them Land Acquisition Rights and failing to cater to the needs of the General Castes who equally comprised an important part of the collective 'Gorkha' identity. The GJMM criticised Sixth Schedule as an endeavour by the West Bengal state to keep the region under West Bengal.

Autonomous Council-

The Govt. of West Bengal however has also adopted diplomacy to contain the Gorkhaland Movement. Instead of a fully fledged state of Gorkhaland the political aspirations of the Gorkhas have been attended to by granting them autonomous administrative agency in the form of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) and Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA). The Nepali language was also included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1992. However, such diplomacy on the part of the Govt. of West Bengal although was successful to simmer down the Gorkhaland Movement but failed to restrain it completely.

Symbolic recognition to Minority history-

Attempts have been made by the Govt. of West Bengal to give equal recognition to the contribution of the ethnic minorities to the history and cultural richness of the West Bengal. by the Govt. of West Bengal exemplifies its attempts to accommodate cultural diversity in the national symbols of the state through the maintenance of archaeological sites of the ethnic minorities and the naming of streets, town squares after the legends of the ethnic minorities.

Chapter VIII- Quest for Identity: A Multicultural Perspective of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements

This chapter attempts to study the Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements within the Multicultural framework as enunciated by various theorists like Will Kymlicka and Bikhu

Parekh. According to Multiculturalism ethno cultural differences can be remedied by minority rights. Will Kymlicka as such propagate three group-specific rights namely self-government rights, poly ethnic rights and special representation rights so as to accommodate the demands of the minorities emanating in a culturally diverse society. Self-government rights have been granted by the West Bengal state in the form of autonomous council like DGHC and GTA in order to accommodate the demands for political autonomy or territorial jurisdiction by the Gorkhas in Darjeeling. The poly ethnic rights have also been granted together with the self-government rights as the Gorkhas enjoy the freedom to express and celebrate their culture and tradition. Both these rights however have been denied to Rajbangsi ethnic communities in Coochbehar as they are neither given any self government power nor their culture or language has been recognised as distinct from that of the majoritarian culture in West. Special representative rights in the form of proportional representation have been granted to both the Gorkhas as well as the Rajbangsi. It however falls short to provide adequate representation of these ethnic communities in the legislature and governmental agencies as ethnic minorities’.

Kymlicka clearly underlines that the self government rights is meant for the national minorities while poly ethnic rights are for the ethnic minorities. Kymlicka distinguishes between national minorities and the ethnic minorities on the ground that the while the former are indigenous people occupying homelands the latter are immigrants that do not occupy homelands. However categorising minorities into indigenous peoples, national minorities, and immigrant groups on the lines of Western models of Multiculturalism and minority rights have limitation when applied to the case of minorities in West Bengal. For instance, the settlement of Gorkhas in India can raise question as to which category they fit in. This is because their settlement in India was partly a result of voluntary immigration during the British colonial rule and partly due to the realignment of boundaries upon conquest and resultant treaties whereby the Gorkha population involuntarily found themselves part of India. Similar complexities may arise in the case of Rajbangsi as well. While the Rajbangsi clearly fit in the category of national minorities, the self government right as suggested by Kymlicka involving federalism require that the boundaries of the federal subunits be redrawn to ensure that the national minority forms a majority in one of the subunits. If this is effected this may empower Rajbangsi to make its own decisions without the fear of being outvoted by the majority. However redrawing of the boundaries of the federal subunits has the potential to unravel the territorial integrity of not just West Bengal but also Assam as the Rajbangsi form a majority not only in the

Coochbehar district of West Bengal but also in the neighbouring districts of Assam. This chapter further highlights the complexity in the Multicultural set up of the West Bengal. The concept of the dialogically constituted theory premised on the centrality of a dialogue between cultures as propagated by Bikhu Parekh is limited in the context of West Bengal as the majoritarian community organisations like BOBBC and Amra Bengali clearly detest any form of dialogue to reach an amicable solution. Internal minorities too pose a problem as with the state patronage they are more conscious and vocal of their ethnic identity and interests. However in spite of the limitations of the Western Models of Multiculturalism in the West Bengal context, the absence of any other well articulated theories or models of the democratic management of diversity makes the intellectual vacuum to be filled by Western models.

Chapter IX: Conclusion

The final Chapter discusses the major findings of the present study. It holds that central to the issue of identity politics is a sense of alienation caused by some external force, which triggers autonomy movement by an ethnic community at the receiving end. These external forces may be a dominant ethnic group in the region, migrants from across the border or the Government reflecting the majoritarian biases unwilling to succumb to the demands of autonomy so as to maintain its zone of authority. In the case of Gorkhas and Rajbangsi in West Bengal it was all the above external forces that posed threat to their distinct ethnic identity.

The identity of the Indian Nepalis/Gorkhas has been diluted mainly due to the large immigration of Nepalese from Nepal post Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty, 1950. Due to similarity in their cultures and facial features it is often difficult to recognize the difference between the two. Consequently the Indian Nepalis are looked upon as foreigners and thereby suffer ethno-identity based discrimination questioning their Indian nationality. The eviction as seen during the time of anti-foreigners movement in Assam and other North-eastern states by the dominant ethnic group in those regions clearly illustrates such discrimination. The Gorkha populace as such feels isolated in the mainstream Indian society and deprived of their identity as Indian nationals. Thus in order to assert their ethnic identity against the Nepalese from Nepal, the Gorkhas launched the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling and the adjoining areas. To the Gorkhas, a separate state Gorkhaland would give them recognition as Indian Nationals and they would no longer be treated as foreigners amidst the immigrants from the neighbouring country. In addition to this, the Gorkhas as a distinct ethnic community would be able to maintain their distinctive ethnic identity outside the dogma of the dominant Bengali culture in West Bengal.

Kamtapur Movement on the same lines is marked by the desire to establish the identity of the Rajbangsi as a separate ethnic community distinctive from the majoritarian culture of the Bengalis in West Bengal. The fear of assimilation into the majoritarian culture and losing their distinctive ethnic identity is foremost among the Rajbangsi as they hold immense pride and conviction in their rich unique history, traditions, language and practices. They detest any claim made by the majoritarian Bengali ethnic community that Rajbangsi form a part of the larger Bengali ethnic culture. Instead they trace the history of the Rajbangsi settlement to ancient Kamta Kingdom in 16th century. They insist that the culture of the Rajbangsi is much older than the dominant culture of Bengalis in West Bengal and that the Bengali as a language emerged from the ancient Kamtapuri language. The inspiration for the present Kamtapur movement thus has been drawn from the historical Kamtapur or Kamta Kingdom, which became a princely state of British India in the 18th century and later merged into West Bengal as a district post-independence. In addition to this, the fear that the Bangladeshis patronized by various political parties for the sake of vote bank will reduce the Rajbangsi into a minority ethnic group in their own land endangering their distinct ethnic identity has further deepened the feelings of ethnic unrest among the Rajbangsi. Accordingly the Gorkhas and the Rajbangsi view the separate state of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur as the only solution to their identity crisis respectively. Gorkhaland and the Kamtapur Movements are thus ethnocentric in character.

One however cannot ignore the instrumental aspects of the Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements. The socio-economic factors are also responsible for the emergence of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements. The much needed development of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar has come to a standstill as no effective attempts to further enhance or even maintain its infrastructural facilities were made. This has largely affected the local population in Darjeeling and Cooch Behar as tea and cinchona plantation which are income generating units suffered a setback due to low productivity, marketing mismanagement, inadequate technical training to the workers and bankruptcy. This has led to the closure of many such plantations rendering the workers jobless. Thus the West Bengal Government and the mechanism of self governance such as DGHC failed to harness the economic potentialities of the region which is rich in biodiversity and geographical features. The administration failed to provide even the basic amenities like proper roads and adequate water supply to the people in Darjeeling as well as Cooch Behar. Thus in the absence of an effective implementation of a viable economic strategy a sense of socio-economic deprivation started brewing in the

Darjeeling hills and the plains of Cooch Behar erupting into the renewed movement for separate statehood.

Politically too, the administration proved to be inefficient as the West Bengal Government kept itself aloof from the political developments in the hills of Darjeeling as well as plains of Cooch Behar. Gorkhaland and Kamtapur movements as such emerged out of the desire for self governance. The desire to have the power to frame their own policies has led to the movement for separate statehood in West Bengal. The right to governance is viewed as the political right by the ethnic minorities like the Gorkhas and the Rajbangsi who want to get out of the Bengal political dominance so as to frame all the policies for a region with different culture, history, language and tradition. Moreover, apathy of Government with regard to the history, cultural practices and language of the Gorkha and Rajbangsi ethnic minorities further deepened feelings of alienation among them. Morarji Desai on 30th May, 1979 called Nepali a foreign language before a delegation of All India Nepali Bhasha Samiti (AINBS) and representatives of political parties. While Rajiv Gandhi at the height of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) Movement for Gorkhaland opined, “If the Nepalese of Darjeeling wanted Indian citizenship, there was no harm if they write to their King”. Such statements by political leaders clearly indicate their perception with regard to the ethnic identity of the Gorkhas. Likewise the ethnic culture and language of the Rajbangsi is refuted by the Government to be distinct from the larger Bengali culture in West Bengal. It is largely seen to be the very part of the Bengali culture with no ethnic individuality whatsoever. Rajbangsi culture as such has been denied recognition as even their language continues to be bereft of Eighth Schedule status. Consequently such ignorance of Gorkha and Rajbangsi ethnic history and culture on the part of political leaders largely contributed towards the feelings of alienation among them culminating into demands for separate statehood in West Bengal.

Another important dimension of the present study is to examine the reconciliation between the Gorkhaland and the Kamtapur Movements so as to analyse the prospects of Multiculturalism in West Bengal. Both the Gorkhas and Rajbangsi ethnic minorities are demanding a separate statehood to be carved out of West Bengal. However the same areas of Dooars and Siliguri are demanded by both the Gorkhas and Rajbangsi communities for their proposed states of Kamtapur and Gorkhaland respectively. GJMM claims that the Siliguri is a part of Darjeeling and so should be within the jurisdiction of the proposed Gorkhaland state. GJMM however accepts Rajbangsi to be the aboriginals of the Cooch Behar. KPP too opined

that the settlement of the Gorkhas in Darjeeling is of more than 100 years old and are the citizens of India. The possibility of a mutual agreement with regard to sharing of the territory was further accepted by both the GJMM and KPP leaders. The Gorkhaland and Kamtapur Movements as of now appear to reconcile their differences over common territories bringing together two seemingly opposing communities thereby ushering unity and solidarity between both the communities.

While the territorial boundary issue between Gorkhas and Rajbangsi over their demands for the same areas of Dooars and Siliguri seems to be subsided for a while one cannot overlook the possibilities of boundary dispute between the two if either of one is granted the separate statehood. Moreover the presence of internal ethnic minorities in the areas demanded by the Gorkhas and Rajbangsi further contributes to the dynamics of cultural diversity in West Bengal. The granting of autonomous bodies like Lepcha Development Board by the state has also resulted into increased sense of political consciousness among the internal minorities in these regions who are now assertive of their rights and ethnic identity. The majoritarian Bengali community on the other hand through organizations like Amra Bengali and Bangla O Bangla Bhasha Banchao Committee has time and again expressed their protest against any dialogue or discussion between the Government and the ethnic minorities on their demand for separate statehood. They have openly condemned the idea of the further partition of Bengal as a means to accommodate the demands of the ethnic minorities in West Bengal. Accordingly accommodation of the interests of the ethnic as well as the internal minorities against those of the majoritarian community is no less a challenge to the vibrant Multicultural set up in West Bengal. Thus in view of such complexities Multiculturalism is a viable alternative to maintain and moderate identity politics in West Bengal as it encourages cultural diversity and facilitates intercultural interaction.

The West Bengal state as such has made strides to establish Multiculturalism by providing symbolic recognition to the ethnic minority culture in its national heritage. However mere symbolic recognition in the form of naming of street or building of statues of heroes of ethnic minorities falls short to eliminate feelings of alienation among the ethnic minorities. This is mainly because the territorially-rooted ethnic minorities desire respectful recognition and acceptance of their unique identity through the means of decentralization of power and autonomy to decide their own affairs. This in turn is possible only when they have an adequate share in the decision making process. Accordingly the Gorkhas and the Rajbangsi ethnic minorities demand not merely the symbolic representation of their ethnic culture. Instead they

demand separate state of Gorkhaland and Kamtapur to be carved out of West Bengal respectively for the protection of ethnic identity as well as development.
