

CHAPTER V
GORKHALAND MOVEMENT: GROWTH AND
DEVELOPMENT

Gorkhaland Movement is a movement led by the Gorkhas living in and around Darjeeling and the Dooars for a separate state to be carved out of West Bengal namely 'Gorkhaland'. Darjeeling and its areas was part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim till 1835. In 1706 the Bhutanese took what is now the Kalimpong subdivision of the District from the Raja of Sikkim. The Rajas' of Sikkim later became engaged in unsuccessful struggles with the Gorkhas who had seized power in Nepal and invaded Sikkim in 1780. During the next 30 years the Gorkhas ruled the District. Owing to a disagreement over the frontier policy of the Gorkhas, war was declared towards the end of 1813 by the British in which the British Army led by General Ochterlony defeated the Gorkhas. By the Treaty signed at Segoulie at the end of 1816 the Gorkhas ceded Darjeeling to the British, which in turn by a Treaty signed at Titaliya on February 10th, 1817, handed over the region to the Raja of Sikkim. However, in 1935 Darjeeling was "granted" away by the Raja of Sikkim to the British as per a "deed of agreement" between the British and the Raja of Sikkim dated 1st February 1835. The present Siliguri subdivision was annexed by the British in 1850 rather forcefully, as a punitive measure for having got Campbell and Hooker imprisoned by Namgyal Dewan, the brother-in-law of the then Raja of Sikkim. And the Kalimpong subdivision was finally annexed on November 11, 1885 following the Indo-Bhutanese War of 1864 and included in Darjeeling district in 1866. It may be remembered here that the Dooars, which too was swept by the Gorkhaland Movement, was a part of Sikkim conquered by Bhutan in 1706 and annexed to the British India in 1865. Thus it was only in 1866 that the present district of Darjeeling took its full shape and size. The district of Darjeeling and the adjoining areas became a part of West Bengal after India achieved independence in 1947. Geographically Darjeeling is different from West Bengal as it is mainly composed of hills and is connected with the plains of West Bengal by a *terai* (plain) area called Siliguri. It is mainly dominated by the Nepali population and is ethnically distinct from the rest of

West Bengal.¹ Consequently, the region has persistently witnessed autonomy demands an account of which is as follows:

HILLMEN ASSOCIATION

In the second quarter of the twentieth century a nucleus of English educated intelligentsia developed within the Gorkha urban population with the expansion of western education by the Christian missionaries in the hill areas. They looked for professional services, which were already captured by the Bengali *Baboos*. These emerging middle class who were working as the contractors, petty traders and timber merchants wanted a share of the economy of the hill areas which was already captured by the Marwaris and Biharis who migrated to Darjeeling once the East India Company opened up the Darjeeling Hills to the outside world in order to make it marketable.² The emerging middle class soon became the “leaders of the hill people”. The “hill people” here referred to the Lepchas, Bhutias, and the Nepalis. To fulfill their aspirations they submitted the first ever memorandum to the British in 1907 demanding a separate administrative unit.

The memorandum of 1907, however, was just a spark. More systematic and articulate demand for either a special status or autonomy from Bengal appeared with the formation of Hillmen Association under the leadership of Laden La in 1917. The Association maintained that ‘the intimate connection with the plains of Bengal is of recent origin’; otherwise, historically this tract of land was connected with Sikkim and Bhutan. The hilly terrain is the natural habitat of Mongoloid people quite distinct from the rest of Bengal. A memorial submitted to the Government of Bengal by representatives of the Darjeeling District stressed: “that in laying down plans for the future, the Government should aim at the creation of separate unit comprising the present Darjeeling District with the portion of Jalpaiguri district which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865.” It also

¹ See T.B.Subba, **‘Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling District, West Bengal’**, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1999, pp.30-33.

² See Ananda Gopal Ghosh, *‘Growth of Professional Class in the Hill Areas of Darjeeling District: Emergence of Elite Conflict’*, **Special Lecture**, Center for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, 1988

aired the concept of North East Frontier Province on grounds of both racial as well as military expediency: “It is possible, indeed that the Government might consider it wise to create a still North Eastern Frontier Province, in addition to this District, the Assam, Dooars and hill territories which lie to the East of Bhutan and whose people have affinities with our people.”

The memorandum of the Hillmen Association dated August 06, 1934 had two dimensions: on one hand, the claim was for a special status with preferential treatment within the administrative jurisdiction of Bengal. On the other, suggestion for formation of autonomous unit or a full-fledged province was offered in the event of the permanent safe – guards not been granted. However, under section 92 of the Government of India Act, 1935 the district of Darjeeling was made a “partially excluded area” and ‘independent administrative unit’, and a demand by this Association was not granted.³ The Hillmen’s Association lost its soul after the death of Laden La in late 1936.⁴

ALL INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE

All India Gorkha League (AIGL) formed on 15th May 1943 took the cudgel from the Hillmen’s Association. For the first time a political organization exclusively for hill people under the banner ‘Gorkha’ was formed under the leadership of Dambar Singh Gurung.⁵ The objectives of AIGL were:

- (1) To get the Gorkhas recognized as a separate minority community;
- (2) To get them represented in the provincial legislatures wherever they are settled;
- (3) To get them represented in the interim Government; and
- (4) To free all Gorkhas held as political prisoners by the British Govt.

However, Dambar Singh Gurung’s premature death on April 07, 1938 came as a big blow to the AIGL. With the independence of India, the special position of Darjeeling as a partially excluded area came to an end, and Darjeeling became the general district of the newly constituted West Bengal. By that time, the AIGL

³ See Dyutish Chakraborty, ‘*Gorkhaland: Evolution of Politics of Segregation*’, Special lecture, **Centre for Himalayan Studies**, University of North Bengal, April, 1988

⁴ T.B.Subba, op.cit.no.1, pp.29

⁵ Dyutish Chakraborty, op.cit.no.3

under leadership of Randhir Subba claimed itself to be the sole champion of the cause of Gorkha minority in West Bengal. AIGL in its memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru dated 29th April 1952 suggested three alternative solutions to the problem of Darjeeling:

- (1) That the district be a separate Administrative Unit directly administered by the Centre.
- (2) That a separate Province be set up comprising the district of Darjeeling and the neighboring areas.
- (3) That the district of Darjeeling with a section of Jalpaiguri be included in Assam.

GORKHA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

The large scale eviction of the Nepalis from Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram in the context of anti-foreigners agitation was mainly responsible for the massive violent unrest that engulfed Darjeeling and the surrounding areas during the period of 1980-1988. The unrest was further triggered when 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. It was under such circumstances, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) came into being on 30th July, 1980 that for the first time raised strongly the ever burning issue of the identity crisis of the Gorkhas. GNLF led by Subash Ghising gave a vociferous call to the Gorkhas to unify under the banner of GNLF and demand a separate state of Gorkhaland covering an area of about 2,256 sq. miles of territory covering the present Darjeeling district and the Dooars belt. Within no time, GNLF emerged as the most popular platform of the Gorkhas to once again unanimously voice their age-old demand of a separate state.

Subash Ghising mainly appealed to the sense of lost identity of the Gorkhas in India. Referring to the expulsion of the Nepalis in Meghalaya, he emphasized the significance of a separate state of Gorkhaland as the only means for the Gorkhas to live with dignity. He compared the political position of the Bengalis of West Bengal with that of the Nepalis. He asserted that a separate state of West Bengal enables the Bengalis to affirm their Indian identity as distinct from the identity of the people of Bangladesh who too are Bengalis. But the Indian Nepalis in the

absence of a separate state of Gorkhaland are constantly confused with the Nepalese of Nepal and as such, have to live under the stigma of being citizens of a foreign country residing in India out of courtesy.

THREE FOLD DEMAND OF GNLF

In addition to the foremost demand of 'Gorkhaland', GNLF made three more associated demands:

- (1) Abrogation of Clause VII of the Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950) which provides for two-way migration of the nationals of both India and Nepal on 'reciprocal' basis;
- (2) Recruitment of Indian Gorkhas in the Gorkha regiments of Indian army;
- (3) Inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution;

Abrogation of Clause VII of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty was demanded by GNLF mainly for the protection of Nepali identity by recognizing them as Indian nationals and not as citizens of Nepal. The other two demands of recognition of Nepali language and recruitment of Indian Gorkhas in Indian army also, according to GNLF, were integrally related to the issue of identity. The language demand concentrated on inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule. It was a long-standing demand and language-identity relationship though complex is widely acknowledged. The recruitment issue, however, is more complex and transnational in character. It involves India, Nepal and the Great Britain. The Gorkha regiments were divided into India and Britain on the basis of a tripartite agreement between the countries in 1947 on the eve of India's independence. The Governments of India and the United Kingdom agreed to pay a royalty to the king of Nepal in exchange of the services of Gorkha troops. The GNLF leadership felt that by virtue of this agreement even the Indian Nepalis who are serving in various Gorkha regiments of Indian army may one day be treated as "hired army" and thus non-Indians.⁶ Thus, GNLF from the very onset of its agitation emphasized the issue of identity and citizenship.

⁶ Dyutish Chakraborty, op.cit.no.3

ACTIVITIES OF THE GNLF

One of the first acts of the GNLF was to put up posters in Darjeeling town that said: “We are stateless. We are constitutionally tortured all over India. We want our own administration; return our land from Bengal. Our future is in great danger. It is better to die than live as a slave. All are requested to fight for Gorkhaland.” Setting out the views of the GNLF was the memorandum submitted to the king of Nepal, dated 23rd December 1983, copies of which were circulated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Governments of the following countries: United States, USSR, France, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China and Great Britain.⁷ Ghising in the memorandum, out rightly condemned the Clause VII of the 1950 Treaty as a historical crime that revived exactly the Clause V of the past imperialist treaty of 1923 between British India and Nepal without any correction and consent of the whole Indian Gorkhas. He pointed out that such a serious blunder violated the very principle of right of self-determination proclaimed by Woodrow Wilson on 8th January, 1918 as well as the essence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December, 1948. Accordingly, he urged the abrogation of the Treaty of 1950 and adopt fresh treaties for permanent political settlement of the Indian Gorkhas as per the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.⁸

By July 1985 the youth and student wings of GNLF had been formed, and by August 1985 cassettes of a speech made by Ghising at Kurseong on 2nd June 1985 were put into circulation. On 10th August 1985, about fifty members of the youth wing of GNLF took oath at Mahakaldara⁹, Darjeeling that they would fight until the realization of their demand for Gorkhaland. This was the beginning of a series of such oath-taking ceremonies, which were supposed to bind forever the

⁷ See ‘*The GNLF-The Political-Ideological Basis*’, **Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Govt. of West Bengal, Sept., 1987, pp.8

⁸See Mahendra P. Lama, ‘*Memorandum*’ (23rd Dec.1983), **Gorkhaland Movement: Quest for an Identity**, Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, 1996, pp.18-20.

⁹Mahakaldara is a place of worship highly revered by the people in Darjeeling District.

Nepalis to the cause of Gorkhaland. On that day, for the first time, they took out a procession in Darjeeling where they displayed naked *Khukuris*. Commitment to their cause thus became inextricably mixed with commitment to violent means to achieve their end, as symbolized by the naked *khukuri*.¹⁰

On 13th March 1986, in a meeting held at Ghoom, at the hall of Bharat Dong, GNLFF decided on the following eleven-point programme of action:

1. To observe a 'Black Flag Day' on 13th April 1986 in protest against alleged atrocities and discrimination perpetrated on the Indian Nepalis.
2. To give a 72-hour 'Bandh' call from 12th to 14th May, 1986 to highlight the constitutional and just demand for "Gorkhaland".
3. In 1955, the States Re-organization Committee had increased the area of West Bengal allegedly by unconstitutionally merging the areas of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Mirik, Siliguri and Dooars, which have different cultures and languages. The party will burn the said report of the States Re-organization Committee.
4. According to the party, Article VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 has relegated the Indian Nepalis to the status of immigrants. The party will burn Article VII of the said Treaty.
5. The party will launch a movement against the indiscriminate felling of the trees of the hill areas by the Forest Corporation for sending them to the plains.
6. The party will continue vote boycott movement with the slogan "We will not stay in the other people's state of West Bengal".
7. The party will boycott all MLAs, Ministers and parties, who are against the demand for "Gorkhaland".
8. Over the demand for "Gorkhaland" and in protest against the policies of the Central Government the party will launch a movement by way of stopping all vehicles taking the valuable boulders of Dudhia towards the plains.

¹⁰See 'The GNLFF-The Political-Ideological Basis', **The Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Government of West Bengal, September, 1987, pp.10.

9. To launch a “Do or Die” movement in protest against the alleged treatment of the Gorkhas as foreigners.
10. The Gorkhas of Darjeeling and the plains will not observe or celebrate Republic Day, Independence Day, Gandhi Jayanti, Netaji Jayanti and other National Celebrations until and unless the government of India concedes the demand for Gorkhaland.
11. In protest against the alleged colonial attitude towards the Gorkhas by the Government of India, the party decided to organize a movement for non-payment of taxes and loans.

In accordance with this programme a meeting was held in Kalimpong stadium on 29th March 1986, where the supporters of GNLF displayed *khukuri*, and then on 13th April another public meeting was called in Darjeeling, where about 3,500 people attended. In both the meetings Ghising made speeches more or less on the line of the eleven- point programme outlined above, he tried to rouse ethnic passion and hinted at the adoption of violent means to achieve their end. On 4th May 1986, about thirty supporters of GNLF drew blood from their thumbs with *khukuri* to write a poster in blood demanding Gorkhaland.¹¹

This was followed by a three-day *bandh* observed at the call of GNLF from 12th May to 14th May 1986. The *bandh* was accompanied by a road blockade to halt the traffic. In several places nails were placed on the road, or the surface was covered with mobil oil to immobilize the traffic. The *bandh* was also marked by violence and bloodshed. Normal life was disrupted, one person being killed in police firing, police post was attacked and a CPM youth leader and his bodyguard were abducted.¹² Ghising exhorted his supporters to boycott the next official Independence Day function and instead to wear black badges and put up black flags on houses, shop and lampposts. He also threatened to organize a *bandh* lasting several days and to block the movement of timber.¹³

¹¹‘*The Gorkhaland Agitation*’, **Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Government of West Bengal, September, 1987, pp.12-13.

¹²‘*Dangerous Portents*’ (May 19, 1986), **Times of India**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.32

¹³‘*Dangerous Movement*’ (July 29, 1986), **Times of India**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp. 45

The next serious incident happened in Kurseong, on 25th May 1986 when about six hundred people came to Motor Stand in six trucks from Tindharia and Mahanadi area in Darjeeling district, demanding release of persons arrested following roadblocks. When tear-gas and *lathi*-charge failed to disperse the crowd, the Sub Divisional Officer ordered firing, which led to five deaths and injured two others. This was followed by the imposition of curfew for the first time in the hills of Darjeeling in its whole history and an undeclared *bandh* in the three hill sub-divisions of the districts was declared on the following three-days. The Government arranged for the evacuation of three thousand stranded tourists from Darjeeling.

However, the measures adopted by the West Bengal Government to contain the Movement only added fuel to the fire. The Movement turned aggressive with Ghising making appeals to the Gorkha soldiers to quit the army and join the Gorkhaland Movement. GNLF receipts, charging rupees eleven per head were issued so as to collect funds for the movement. In addition, cassettes of speeches by Ghising and Gorkhaland calendars were also sold to mobilize funds. The atmosphere of violence and terror led the district authorities to enforce Section 144CrPC in major towns, while GNLF declared a four-point programme for July and August:

1. To burn copies of the Indo-Nepal treaty on 27th July 1986.
2. To boycott the Independence Day on 15th August 1986 and hoist black flag.
3. To declare a 108-hour *bandh* in hill areas.
4. To launch a *rasta-roko* agitation from 23rd August 1986 to stop forest products in reaching the plains.

The next major incident took place on 27th July, 1986,¹⁴ when Kalimpong *Mela* Ground became a virtual battleground, as the West Bengal Government armed policemen stood with the rifles to stop the peaceful crowd of Gorkhaland demonstrators, who were heading for the public playground in order to burn a paper containing Clause VII of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950. This was being done in pursuance with the point four of the 11 point Action Programme of the

¹⁴See '*The Gorkhaland Agitation*', **Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Government of West Bengal, September, 1987, pp.12-14.

GNLF, formulated by it in March 1986¹⁵. The Central Reserve Police Force took position on the housetops and fired from there on the crowd. It was a brutal massacre, most people being shot above the waist. At least 13 people died. While the numbers of injured were innumerable, the army had to be called out and night curfew was imposed on Kalimpong, the main scene of the disturbances. To the people of Kalimpong, July 27 remains as the blackest day in their memory when their peaceful protest of burning copies of a part of treaty was turned into a bloody massacre by a bureaucratic administration.¹⁶

However, Subash Ghising undeterred by the massacre launched the third point of his four point programme that is 108-hour *bandh* in hill areas. The West Bengal Government, on the other hand, deployed seven companies of the Central Reserve Police Force, six companies of the State Armed Police, two companies of the BSF and even the Army to maintain peace in the hill sub-division of the district.¹⁷ After Ghising's visit to Delhi the programme of boycotting the National Day celebration and hoisting black flag, was postponed and all the agitations were suspended for a month. Ghising claimed that the leaders of some "Non-Congress Non-Communist Parties" who assured him help advised this act to him.¹⁸

On 16th August 1986, Ghising submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. The memorandum stated that every community with different cultural and linguistic background has the inherent right to determine itself as a state. It explained the provisions of Article 3 of the Indian Constitution that led to the formation of new states on linguistic and cultural basis. It cited the examples of Nagaland and Meghalaya which were carved out of Assam under the State of Nagaland Act of 1962 and North East Area (Re-organization) Act of 1966, Bombay which was earlier divided into Gujarat and Maharashtra was formed under the Bombay (Re-organization) Act of 1971. It, thus, justified the

¹⁵'*The Gorkhaland Movement and Violence-Whose Violence*' (August, 1986), op.cit.no.8, pp.63

¹⁶'*APDR Demands Judicial Enquiry*' (August 30, 1986), **Frontline**, Vol.19, No.3, Calcutta, pp.66

¹⁷ '*A Dangerous Demand*' (August 1, 1986), **The Hindu**, Madras, op.cit.no.8, pp.46

¹⁸'*The Gorkhaland Agitation*', **Gorkhaland Agitation: The Issues, Information Document I**, Government of West Bengal, September, 1987, pp.15

demand of Gorkhaland as an expression of the belief in the democratic tradition that the right to state within the Indian Union is an inalienable right. The memorandum criticized the Darjeeling Hill Areas Development Council for the lack of development in the hills. It pointed out that the Council has neither a planning body nor any executive authority. That it is only an eyewash and gives false impression that the hill people are involved in the planning process on the basis of the needs felt by them. Under such circumstances, the memorandum appealed to the Prime Minister to study the case and respond favourably to the demand of the Gorkhas.¹⁹

On 15th September 1986 Ghising addressed a letter to the Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh. Here he tried to prove the allegations of the CPI (M) that the Gorkhas are anti-national for they sought reprisal of their grievances through UN Secretary General and the King of Nepal as baseless and politically motivated. Ghising justified the memorandum submitted to the king of Nepal on December 23, 1983 on the ground that Nepal was a signatory to the 1950 Treaty with India and thus, mainly responsible for the plight of Gorkhas. The memorandum to the United Nations was explained by him as an act of “agony and frustration” because of non-response from Nepal and India; and was further defended on the ground that other ethnic groups and organizations had in the past sent similar memorandums to the United Nations “on their grievances”. He also affirmed the loyalty of the Gorkhas towards India pointing out that his decision to suspend the agitation on Independence Day was a token of their total commitment to the Indian nation and was also taken to avoid any untoward incident on Independence Day.²⁰

Ghising declared that by February 1987 Gorkhaland would be a reality and if the demand is not conceded by that time, the situation in Darjeeling would be out of control. He rejected the possibility of accepting the status of a Union Territory and regional autonomy for the Gorkhas on the ground that they were not tribal. He also denied the alternative of the merger of the proposed Gorkhaland with Sikkim. He asserted that if Sikkim can be viable state with a small population,

¹⁹ ‘*Memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi*’ (August 16, 1986), op.cit.no.8, pp.58-61

²⁰ ‘*Memorandum to Buta Singh*’ (September 15, 1986), op.cit.no.8, pp.71-72

then Gorkhaland too would be viable state with a population of more than double that of Sikkim. He also refuted the connection of Gorkhaland demand with the demand of *Birhat* Nepal (Greater Nepal) and viewed such allegations as the brainchild of the undivided CPI. No celebrations were allowed during Dusshera and Diwali, except for children. From the day of Dusshera that is October 9, 1986, for 10 days black flags were hanged and the Gorkhas in Darjeeling wore black badges.²¹

GNLF RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL FOR DARJEELING HILL COUNCIL

The next major development following the July meeting was the all-party meeting convened by the West Bengal Chief Minister on September 18, 1987. It came out with a unanimous package of proposals which provided for, among other things, the constitution of Darjeeling Hill Council which would exercise its jurisdiction over three sub-divisions of Kalimpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling in all matters except law and order, justice, tea-gardens, management of reserve forests and electricity. The Council was to have forty-two members, one-third of them nominated by the State Government and comprising officials as well as legislators. The rest were to be elected on the basis of adult franchise. The all-party meeting also promised a further dialogue on the formation of an Indian Gorkha regiment in the Indian army, and the inclusion of Nepali (Gorkhali) in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.²²

On 24th November 1987, GNLF and the Union Home Minister met at Delhi to discuss the burning questions of the Gorkhas of Darjeeling, Dooars and Siliguri areas. The discussion lasted for approximately seventy-five minutes on the subject of the proposed Darjeeling Hill Council and on the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland. A second round of talk was also held between the GNLF and the Union Home Secretary, Shri C.G. Somiah at North Block on 25th November 1987 in order to immediately find out a peaceful and permanent solution to the problems of the Gorkhas of Darjeeling, Dooars and Siliguri areas within the

²¹ '*Nothing less than Statehood*', **Onlooker** (October 1-15, 1986), New Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.76-78

²²'*Blue Print For Hills*' (September 23, 1987), **Economic Times**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.172

framework of the Indian Constitution. The discussion lasted for nearly three hours.²³ After some initial hesitation, Mr. Subash Ghising more or less accepted the idea of the Autonomous Hill Council for Darjeeling.²⁴

However, after his return to the hills Ghising expressed his dissatisfaction and unwillingness to expedite the process of implementing the Hill Council proposal. He made fresh demands to the Centre and State Governments on Hill Council. He proposed that the Council be fully elective and the Siliguri and Dooars subdivisions of the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts respectively be put under the jurisdiction of the proposed Council. He also did not approve the name of the Council as proposed by the West Bengal Government and preferred it to be called Gorkha Hill Council or the Gorkhaland Council.²⁵ He further insisted that the West Bengal should not retain powers that would enable it to dissolve the Council in an emergency.²⁶ In order to fulfil their economic aspirations, he demanded the right to exercise control over tea gardens that were kept outside the framework of the Council.²⁷ Ghising further threatened to revive his confrontationist approach if the Central and the State Government did not fulfil the demands.

Ghising's new demands stemmed mainly from his inability to "sell" the general agreement to the extremist sections of the GNLFF who made allegations of betrayal on Ghising.²⁸ Being guilty of having raised the demand for a separate state to a feverish emotional pitch Mr. Ghising needed to flaunt a substantial carrot to committed followers to convince them to settle for Hill Council within West Bengal instead of a separate statehood.²⁹ As a result, he reiterated his demands that were rejected both by the Center and the State Government. The rejection sparked renewed violence in the Hills. Attacks on police parties by GNLFF militants using guerrilla tactics became more frequent. On 7th December

²³*The Voice Of Gorkhaland* (November 25, 1987), **GNLFF Bulletin**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.189

²⁴*Towards A Solution* (September 25, 1987), **Statesman**, Calcutta, op.cit.no.8, pp.175

²⁵*Prospects In Darjeeling* (September 25, 1987), **Statesmen**, Calcutta, op.cit.no.8, pp.176

²⁶*Hide And Seek By GNLFF* (November 30, 1987), **Times of India**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp. 191

²⁷*Difference In Objectives* (October 16, 1987), **Times of India**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.180

²⁸*Long Road To Peace* (January 3-7, 1987), **Sunday Mail**, op.cit.no.8, pp.196

²⁹*Unfortunate Obduracy* (October 3, 1987), **Statesman**, Calcutta, op.cit.no.8, pp.182

1987, the GNLF militants injured Mr. R.K. Handa, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Darjeeling range, and a BSF *jawan*. A police party escorting an Inspector-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), GNLF militants near Sukhiapokhri police station in Darjeeling district attacked Mr. B.K. Saha, and police officers of Darjeeling district.³⁰ The death of four GNLF activists including Mr. Nabin Tamang, one of its general secretaries in an encounter with the police led to an immediate call for a forty day *bandh* in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong sub-divisions by Subash Ghising from February 10, 1988.³¹

During the forty-day *bandh*, nightmarish violence gripped the Darjeeling hills and Dooars. In April, Ghising revived his earlier demand for a separate statehood and threatened to start the 'do or die' programme for its attainment. He even rejected the Centre's invitation for fresh talks.³² May and almost the whole of June, 1988 passed with the usual raids, ambushes and clashes. It was only on June 29, 1988 that Ghising and Basu agreed in the presence of Buta Singh that they would try for a peaceful solution to the problem. Following this, Basu ordered the release of many GNLF leaders while Ghising suspended the Gorkhaland "stir" temporarily. Eleven GNLF women leaders and five militants arrested under the Anti-Terrorist Act were released on July 5, and fifty-two activists including eight women arrested under the same Act, were released on July 9, 1988.³³

On July 10, 1988, 148 delegates from various sister organizations of the GNLF voted in favour of the Council. But once again, there was a hurdle, as Ghising wanted an interim hill council to be entirely run by the GNLF for at least six months. Basu rejected the demand straight away. This was followed by large-scale violence in Darjeeling hills. The final agreement was reached on July 25 at a tripartite meeting held in New Delhi, which decided to form 'Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council' and hold the next meeting in Calcutta at a later date. But even after that there were differences between the state and the GNLF over the exact

³⁰ 'Troubled Darjeeling' (December 18, 1987), **Indian Express**, Delhi, op.cit.no.3, pp.193.

³¹ 'Grim Situation' (January, 22, 1988), **Indian Express**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.210.

³² 'Serious Setback' (February, 13, 1988), **Indian Express**, Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.217.

³³ 'A Settlement In Sight' (July 4, 1988), **The Hindu**, Madras op.cit.no.3, pp.236.

geographical area under the Council. Such differences were mutually sorted out on August 5, 1988 at New Delhi with Ghising agreeing to keep the Dooars out of the DGHC's jurisdiction and Jyoti Basu agreeing to include the word 'Gorkha' in the DGHC's nomenclature. Ghising also dropped the demand for inclusion of Gorkha language in the 8th Schedule and formation of an exclusive Indian Gorkha Regiment on the ground that he was more anxious about citizenship and its gazette notification.

SIGNING OF GORKHA HILL ACCORD

The Gorkha Hill Accord was finally signed in Calcutta on August 22, 1988. The three signatories to the Accord were Subash Ghising, C.G. Somiah and R.N. Sengupta, the Chief Secretary of West Bengal. The then Home Minister, Buta Singh, and West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu was also present. The next day another pact of citizenship was signed in New Delhi between Somiah and Ghising in the presence of Buta Singh.

Soon after signing the accord Ghising urged prominent Nepali organizations such as the All-India Nepali Bhasa Samiti, Nepali Sahitya Sanmelan and Nepali Tamang Buddhist Association to replace their Nepali titles by the term Gorkha. Even the Sahitya Academy in Delhi was requested to replace Nepali with Gorkhali in the list of Indian languages recognized by it. The GNLF also planned to bring about radical changes in the religious or cultural traditions of the Gorkhas. Accordingly, the GNLF's Kalimpong Unit President, C.K. Pradhan urged the Gorkhas to do away with the practice of worshipping the King of Nepal during Dusshera. Mr. Pradhan said, "The sole purpose of this change is to establish ourselves as true Indians". Ghising enumerated that the Hill Council would first give priority to the roads and traffic followed by the tourism sector.³⁴

While the people in the Darjeeling hills were in a joyous mood after the DGHC accord, there was tension in the Dooars areas. The sentiment for a separate Gorkha state was quite strong in the Eastern Dooars. The Nepali-speaking people who lived there had supported the GNLF during the Gorkhaland agitation, but became deeply disillusioned when Ghising settled for a Hill Council and the

³⁴ *'People Should Not Be Too Euphoric about the Agreement'* (September 1, 1988), **Himalaya Today**, New Delhi, op.cit.no.8, pp.247-251

Eastern Dooars was excluded from its jurisdiction.³⁵ However, the reaction to the establishment of the DGHC was: in Darjeeling, the local people believed that their fortunes were about to change quickly; in Kolkata, the West Bengal Government breathed a sigh of relief that the division of the state had been averted; and in New Delhi, the Indian Government, too, was optimistic that a formula for resolving the grievances of disgruntled ethnic minorities had been found and, indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the Gorkha Accord, the Indian Government made several proposals modelled on the DGHC to resolve similar problems afflicting several North eastern states.³⁶

POST- ACCORD DEVELOPMENTS IN DARJEELING

The DGHC had to run as per the provision of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act 1988 that was enacted by the West Bengal Assembly. However in running and administering the DGHC, its Chairman Subash Ghising did not take into account the provisions of the Act. Instead Ghising interpreted the provisions of the DGHC Act as per his convenience formulating it in a manner that strengthened his foothold in Darjeeling and the adjoining areas. There were one hundred and twelve Gram Panchayats in the entire Darjeeling Hill areas and they were in operation even after the expiry of their tenure. The Government of West Bengal had not taken any initiative for holding Panchayat Election on account of the abhorrence of Subash Ghising towards Panchayat in Darjeeling hill as he was critically intolerant to the existence of any statutory authority except the DGHC. Similarly the School Service Commission (SSC) is a body formed as per the Act passed by West Bengal Assembly for each district. And the SSC for DGHC area also was formed but due to the opposition from the GNLF, the body has been made defunct. Thus the writ of GNLF was allowed to prevail against the Act passed by the West Bengal Assembly. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan programme is being carried out in India as an expedition for providing a facility of schooling to the children. The same programme of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan programme was

³⁵ See Rajat Ganguly, *Poverty, Malgovernance and Ethnopolitical Mobilization: Gorkha Nationalism and the Gorkhaland Agitation in India*, **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Routledge Publications, 2005, pp.492.

³⁶*ibid*

taken up by the DGHC in Darjeeling Hill Areas. And in taking up the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan programme by the DGHC, the misuse and misappropriation of Rupees five crore fourteen lakhs and fifty thousand came to the notice of the general mass. Moreover when the election for the fourth term of DGHC was due in 2005, the President of GNLF and the Chairman of DGHC, was again appointment as the Care-taker-Chairmanship of the DGHC. Since 2004 the renewal of Caretaker Chairmanship was made a normal feature for running the affairs of DGHC.³⁷

PROPOSAL FOR SIXTH SCHEDULE STATUS FOR DARJEELING

Subash Ghising was seen to have made an agreement on 6th December 2005 to give the status of Sixth Schedule to the existing DGHC. While executing the agreement for the Sixth Schedule status to the existing DGHC a clause stating “in principle Memorandum of Settlement is the full and final settlement of the Darjeeling Hill Areas issue and no further demands in this regard would be entertained” was inserted. Thus the agreement was aimed and purported for sealing the political aspirations of the people of Darjeeling by the Governments through Subash Ghising. Five days after the signing of agreement with the Governments of West Bengal and India for the Sixth Schedule status to the DGHC, the GNLF had organized a public meeting at Chowk Bazar, Darjeeling on 11th December 2005 purportedly to explain before the people the details of the Agreement. While addressing the public meeting Subash Ghising, the Care taker Chairman of DGHC, brazenly tried to silence the media and the political parties. Mentioning the names of the leaders of Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists, Subash Ghising issued threat of dire consequences, in case they indulge in the criticism of the GNLF and the Sixth Schedule.

The threat, intimidation and domination by Subash Ghising in that public meeting was telecast in the night of 11th December 2005 by a local channel of Darjeeling

³⁷ D.S.Bomjan, **Darjeeling-Dooars People and Place under Bengal’s Neo-Colonial Rule**, Bikash Jana Sahitya Kendra Publication, Darjeeling, 2008.

and the local newspapers of 12th December 2005 printed his speech. As a response to the threat and intimidations of Subash Ghising, Darjeeling Press Guild sent a complaint to the then President of India, Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam on 12th December, 2005 evening. The Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists also organized a massive rally and public meeting on 15th December 2005 at Chowk Bazar, Darjeeling town to condemn the threatening statements of Subash Ghising. The political parties operating in the region while taking into account the different aspects of the issue subsequently came forward and made outright rejection of the Sixth Schedule status for Darjeeling and expressed the strong desire of not accepting anything less than the separate state. There was pervasive of distaste and dislike for the role of Subash Ghising not only from the informed circle but from within GNLF as well.³⁸

On 1st October 2007 Priya Ranjan Dasmuni, however, made an announcement of the “Cabinet Nod to Sixth Schedule for Darjeeling.” The cabinet approval of the Sixth Schedule status to the DGHC caused euphoria in the infirmed GNLF. But other political parties, intelligentsia, writers as well as a large section of people that counted more than ninety percent of the total population of Darjeeling Hills were against the proposed Sixth Schedule. The dubious role of the GNLF in accepting the Sixth Schedule and an attempt to enforce the same, as an alternative as well as to sabotage the demand of separate state of Gorkhaland was vehemently opposed by Bimal Gurung one of the heavyweights of GNLF. In order to silence the protest against the proposed Sixth Schedule from the rank and file of the party, Bimal Gurung was expelled from GNLF on 3rd October, 2007.³⁹ While Subhash Ghising as the President of the Gorkha National Liberation Front continued to press the Government to provide constitutional protection to the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council under Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ See Annexure No. I

GORKHA JANMUKTI MORCHA

The attempt of imposing the terms and conditions of the Sixth Schedule status for DGHC took the shape of a central issue of politics in Darjeeling. And gradually the political parties and the informed layers of society started analyzing the pros and cons of the Agreement held among the Governments of India, West Bengal and Subash Ghising for the conferment of the Sixth Schedule status to the DGHC. On 6th January 2007 the Trade Union of Hill Employees Association under the leadership of Amar Rai held a seminar on the proposed Sixth Schedule in Darjeeling. In the seminar the lone speaker Dr. Mahendra P Lama, the former Chairman of the Centre for South East Asian and South West Pacific Studies of JNU's School of International Studies, Delhi, explicitly highlighted the drawbacks and ineffectiveness of the proposed Sixth Schedule as per the terms and condition of the Agreement made on 6th December, 2005. Later on he drafted the requisite amendments showing the flaw in the Agreement made by Subash Ghising with the Governments of India and West Bengal for the conferment of the Sixth Schedule status to the DGHC. Several new items related to finance, planning and administration were also incorporated in the draft proposal made by him. The draft amendment named as Janta Bill was published by local dailies, put on the Internet and its copies were circulated to the political parties and other organizations.

The unrest that sparked among the Gorkhas in response to the proposal for Sixth Schedule was given a unified direction by Bimal Gurung. He together with the support of regional parties opposed to GNLF, viz. All Gorkha Student's Union, and Bhartiya Gorkha Bhutpurva Sainik Morcha, formed the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJMM) on 7th October, 2007 in a meeting attended by a large number of people at Chowk Bazaar, Darjeeling. GJMM criticized Ghising for not keeping his promise of Gorkhaland and accused him of mishandling the funds of DGHC that it claimed had become a mouthpiece of the Central Government. On 10th March 2008 Ghising's regime finally came to an end as he tendered resignation on being told by the Chief Minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee who was

pressurized for removal of Ghising by GJMM led by Bimal Gurung.⁴¹ Thus with the support of regional parties opposed to GNLF, the newly formed GJMM gave a renewed call for a separate state of Gorkhaland.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GORKHA JANMUKTI

MORCHA

The primary objective of the GJMM is the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland for the Gorkhas covering Darjeeling, Siliguri Terai and Dooars areas within Indian Union. In addition to this it aims to preserve and promote the customs and traditional practices of the Gorkhas and to fight for their political, social and economic rights within the framework of the Indian Constitution; to uphold the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and ensure communal harmony among various communities living in Darjeeling and adjoining areas; to work towards providing the Gorkha martyrs and the Gorkhas in general recognition and honour as Indian nationals; to bring about the social and economic upliftment of the poorer and backward sections living in and around Darjeeling and to fight against injustice in the form of discrimination on ground of caste, creed, colour, religion and gender.⁴²

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF GORKHA JANMUKTI

MORCHA

The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) is composed of the following committees:

Central Committee

Central Committee is the highest body of the GJMM. It is the vanguard of GJMM as it plays a major role in formulating all-important policies with regard to the functioning of GJMM. It consists of President (1), Vice President (2), General Secretary (1), Assistant General Secretary (4), Press and Publicity Secretary (1), Assistant Press and Publicity Secretary (1), Treasurer (1), Assistant Treasurer (2) and executive members (38). The members of the Sub-Divisional Committee or the President of the Central Committee elect the office bearers of the Central

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² **Constitution of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha**, <http://www.gorkha-janmukti-morcha.org>.

Committee for a term of 5 years. All the meetings of the Central Committee is convened and presided over by the President of the Party and in his absence by the Vice-President. The Central Committee meets at-least once in a month. But in case of emergency the President or Vice President convenes meeting of the Central Committee at any point of time giving only 24 hours notice to each member. The required quorum of the Central Committee meeting is two-third of the total number of members of the Central Committee. All questions are decided by simple majority of votes and in case of a tie, the President shall have the casting vote with which to decide.

Disciplinary Committee

All the members of the Central Committee are the members of the Disciplinary Committee of the GJMM. The primary task of the Disciplinary Committee is to maintain discipline in the party and thereby ensure its smooth functioning. Thus if any member/members of the organization are found indulgent in any anti-party activities the disciplinary committee takes appropriate measures as per the law/rules prescribed by the Central Committee.

Parliamentary /Legislative Board

The President of the GJMM has the power to constitute the Party's Parliamentary /Legislative Board having a total of nine members, including the President himself who is the head. All decision taken by the Parliamentary Board in the matter of the Party and in the interest of the Party is final and binding. The President exercises all power in matters of inducting or removing any member/members from the said Board.

Advisory Board

Advisory Board consists of senior politicians, stalwarts and retired bureaucrats appointed by the president of GJMM. Such a body or a board of advisors is manned with 7 to 15 members and functions as part and parcel of the Party to advice and counsel the President in all matters related to the Party. The Board of Advisors however, under no circumstances, seeks to impose their view on the President. The President often acts upon the advice of the Advisory Board.

Legal Cell

A Legal Cell is constituted to look after all aspects of legal matters pertaining to the Party. The President of the Party appoints the Secretary of Legal Cell, who should be a qualified lawyer. The President thus occupies a pivotal position in GJMM. He possesses the power to remove or suspend any office bearer or bearers of the Central Committee or of Sub-Division Committees to safeguard the interest of the Party. Yet he cannot arbitrarily exercise his powers as the GJMM Front Committee may remove him from office by tabling no-confidence motion by two third members of the Central and Sub-Divisions Committee present at the voting.

Sub-Division Committees

There are Sub-Division Committees for each sub-division comprising of President (1), Vice President (2), General Secretary (1), Joint Secretary (4), Publicity Secretary (1), Treasurer (1) and executive members (11). The Office Bearers of the Sub-Division Committees are appointed/nominated by the President of the GJMM in consultation with the Central Committee. The members of the Sub-Division Committee hold office for a period of 5 years. It looks after and manages the affairs of the GJMM within its local jurisdiction. It further carries out the orders and directives of the Central Working Committee without fail. It maintains the membership register of the Party and meets at least once in two months. Sub-Division Committee in consultation with the Central Working Committee can constitute within its respective District various Committees such as Block Level Committee for every block, Constituency Committee (Council) Level for every Constituency, Ward Committee in Municipal or Urban area, Village Committee in Village level both in Panchayat area and Urban area, in all three hill sub-division of Darjeeling, Siliguri Terai and Dooars areas. These Committees remain in office for a period of 5 years unless dissolved prematurely by the Sub-Divisional Committee for valid reasons.

In addition to these Committees the GJMM has Frontal Organizations with a view to widening the scope of mass participation. These Frontal Organizations serve to represent women, the students, the farmers, the labourers and workers who live far below the poverty line. The Central Working Committee determines

the power and functions of all Frontal Organizations from time to time. The President of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha has the power to dissolve any Frontal Organization.⁴³

ACTIVITIES OF GORKHA JANMUKTI MORCHA

The winter session of Parliament was scheduled to begin from 15th November, 2007 and it was publicized through press statement by the CPM and its Urban Development Minister Asok Bhattacharjee and Rajya Sabha M.P. Suraj Pathak that the Sixth Schedule bill will be placed and passed in that very session of Parliament. The GJMM under the leadership of Bimal Gurung announced a programme of burning the copies of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) made between Governments of India, West Bengal and the Care Taker Administrator of DGHC, Subash Ghising appointed by West Bengal, for the conferment of Sixth Schedule status of DGHC. The burning of the copies as announced took place on 15th November 2007 throughout the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council areas as a joint programme of the newly formed GJMM and the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM). It was seen that the burning of the Memorandum was carried with much enthusiasm and commitment reflected in the participation of the general public. But, the copies of the bill of the proposed Sixth Schedule were distributed to the members of the Lok Sabha on 20th November 2007 with an object of holding discussion on the Bill on 4th December 2007 for its approval.

The people from all walks of life from Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars region started sending representations to Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the Chairperson, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Home Affairs, New Delhi with requests of rejecting the proposed Sixth Schedule for Darjeeling. The Lawyers of Darjeeling District Court also formed a Legal Awareness Forum chaired by Amar Lama and opposed the proposed Sixth Schedule. On 20th December, 2007 The Parliamentary Standing Committee, Home Affairs formally invited Gorkha National Liberation Front, All India Gorkha League, Communists Party of Revolutionary Marxists, Gorkha Janamukti Morcha and Gorkha Rastriya Congress to place their points before the Committee in Delhi. All the invited

⁴³ Op.cit.no.41

parties except GNLF, who had done everything possible to impose the Sixth Schedule Bill, went to Delhi with the requisite papers and documents for opposing the imposition of the proposed Sixth Schedule. The parties submitted a joint memorandum and also individual representation to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs against the proposed Sixth Schedule on 20th December 2007. Dawa Narbula, the Congress M.P. from Darjeeling also made verbal submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee against the proposed Sixth Schedule and apprised the committee, that the formation of a separate state would be the only political solution to the Darjeeling's political problem.

The voice against the proposed Sixth Schedule was also carried from the Parliamentary Standing Committee to the Jantar Mantar Ground of Delhi, where the Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh organized a day's *Dharna* on 21st December 2007 for pressing the Government of India for the creation of separate state of Gorkhaland. In that one-day *Dharna*, the participants and delegates were from twenty-two states of India and the delegation of the Parties from Darjeeling also joined in. Thus, in the political history of Nepali speaking Gorkhas of India, the *Dharna* was first of its kind, in making the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland, as per the provision of the Indian Constitution. And in order to bolster the demand, two days programmes comprising of a seminar and convention was held in Delhi on 22nd and 23rd December 2007, in the Constitution Assembly Hall, Delhi. The leaders of Telengana Rashtriya Congress, renowned journalists, academicians, retired army personnel, leaders of the Forum for the Formation of Smaller States and bureaucrats' addressed the seminar lending their support for the cause of a separate state for Indian Gorkhas. On 6th January 2008 the GJMM organized the biggest rally at Lebung in the history of Public Rallies in Darjeeling. The Central Leaders of GJMM were made to swear in public as a confirmation of their allegiance to the Party and programme to be pursued by it for achieving Gorkhaland. While addressing the historic crowd the President of GJMM, Bimal Gurung, announced a series of agitation programme against the proposed Sixth Schedule and in favour of separate state of Gorkhaland for the following three months. The CPRM also

organized a public meeting on 12th January 2008 at historic Gitangay Dara, Darjeeling and announced full support to the programme to be commenced by GJMM from 14th January 2008. The GJMM as announced on 14th January 2008 to carry and implement the Non-Co-operation Programme closed the Government offices in the entire Darjeeling till 18th January 2008. The Darjeeling Municipality, after the demise of Bal Dewan was scheduled to elect a new Chairman on 14th January, 2008 by ignoring the Non-Co-operation Programme of GJMM. But a large number of people kept the entire Municipality Office Complex *gheraoed* till the evening by breaking section 144 imposed by the District Administration to facilitate the election. This resulted into the postponement of notified election and the closing of the government offices for five days had unprecedented success.

Meanwhile the scheduled visit of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs to Darjeeling on 6th and 7th February 2008 for assessing the ground reality in regard to the proposed Sixth Schedule was cancelled. The populace of Darjeeling who were quite euphoric taking the visit perceived the cancellation as a conspiracy of the West Bengal Government to deprive them of their right to express their disapproval of the Sixth Schedule to the Committee. Consequently GJMM announced a series of agitation to ensure the visit of the Parliamentary Standing Committee to Darjeeling. As a measure of exerting pressure a group of twenty-five each from Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Kurseong started Fast-Unto-Death from 7th February 2008. GJMM further declared closure of Central, State and DGHC offices from 12th February, 08 for an indefinite period that resulted into the standstill of the District Administration.⁴⁴ The indefinite *bandh* paralyzed the normal life in hills as the GJMM activists blocked not only the railway tracks but also the National Highway. The region suffered huge economic setback as government offices were shut down and a large number of tourists evacuated the hills. However, GJMM made sure that the tourists unwilling to leave were given fifty percent discount in their hotel expenses and were treated as guests. It also arranged vehicles for those who desired to leave the hills. While the teachers unit of GJMM Youth Wing distributed food grains to the labourers surviving on daily

⁴⁴ Ibid

wages, GJMM announced that there would be no strikes and disruption during *Puja* vacation.⁴⁵

On 13th February 2008 the Left Front Government invited GJMM to Kolkata for negotiation. A delegation comprising Roshan Giri, Anmol Prasad, Alok Kanta Thulung, Tilak Chandra Roka, Madhukar Thapa and Bimal Darjee led by Kaman Singh Ramudamu, the Vice-President of GJMM reached Kolkata and attended the meeting with Chief-Secretary Amit Kiran Deb, Home Secretary Prasad Ranjan Roy, the Divisional Commissioner B.L. Meena and the Darjeeling District Magistrate Rajesh Panday. The meeting facilitated the withdrawal of Fast-unto-Death in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. However, two days after the meeting the Chief Secretary Amit Kiran Deb through media cleared the non-acceptance of the demands of the GJMM, following which the GJMM resumed its Fast-unto-Death movement from 17th February, 08 in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. On the same day Subash Ghising after lobbying in Delhi arrived at Siliguri Pintail village and told the media that there was every possibility of passing the Sixth Schedule Bill by the Parliament in the Budget Session that was scheduled to begin from 21st February 2008. On hearing the arrival and press-meet of Subash Ghising, the supporters of GJMM and CPRM started pouring down to Siliguri from early morning, demanding the cancellation of the proposed Sixth Schedule for Darjeeling. But large contingent of Police Forces with arms obstructed the masses at several places not allowing them to reach Pintail Village where Subash Ghising was lodging.

The GJMM in order to mount further pressure on Government declared indefinite strike from 20th February 2008. The GJMM also decided to organize Fast-unto-Death programme at the premises of the Sub-divisional Office at Siliguri from 21st February, 08. A group of people left from Darjeeling for taking part in the hunger strike at Siliguri. The news spread like a wildfire and the people from Darjeeling hills and periphery of Siliguri started going to the proposed site of hunger strike for extending their moral support to the participants of hunger strike. But the police began to barricade and blocked the different points of roads connecting Siliguri and arrested forty-six people. The reason for not permitting

⁴⁵ <http://www.darjeelingtimes.com>

the programme of Fast-unto-Death to be held at the premises of the Sub-divisional Office, Siliguri was mentioned by the Municipality and Local Self Government Minister Asok Bhattacharjee that the protestors Gorkhas were outsiders in Siliguri. The arrested people, however, started Fast-unto-Death inside the police station at Hazat.

Under such circumstances the administration took the decision of holding negotiation with GJMM that ultimately led to the release of the arrested people and allowed them for sitting in Fast-unto-Death at Dagapur, three kilometres away from the earlier proposed site. In Darjeeling the Hill Employees' Union, formed with the employees working in different Government and Semi-Government Departments, also decided in their meeting to resign in mass from their respective posts in case of imposition of Sixth Schedule by the Governments. The retired army personnel from the ranks of Brigadier to the soldier held a meeting in Darjeeling Gymkhana Club where they decided to lend their moral and physical support to the movement led by GJMM. The meeting further resolved to push forward the demand of a homeland for Indian Gorkhas. Accordingly, the ex-servicemen organized meeting, *dharna* and rallies in Darjeeling, Siliguri and Delhi making a demand of a homeland for the Indian Gorkhas as per the provision of the Indian Constitution.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, as part of non-cooperation with the West Bengal Government, vehicles except those of the District Magistrates, sub-divisional officers, the judiciary and police were seen sporting "GL"(Gorkhaland) number plates instead of "WB"(West Bengal) number plates. This was in response to GJMM call of non-cooperation with the West Bengal Government. It gave the charge to Alok Mani Thulung, the President of Gorkha Janmukti Yuva Morcha to oversee the shift from "WB" TO "GL" number plates. Not only this, the shops in Darjeeling have also started sporting 'Gorkhaland' on their signboards after the plea to do the same from the GJMM Chief Bimal Gurung.⁴⁷ On 13th June 2008 candles were

⁴⁶ D.S.Bomjan, op.cit.no.37, pp.141-145.

⁴⁷ <http://www.darjeelingtimes.com>

ignited by the local population at Chowrasta in Darjeeling to express their unity and solidarity to the demand of Gorkhaland.⁴⁸

The Fast-unto-Death embraced a greater dimension, as it spread to the premises of the eight Developmental Blocks of entire Darjeeling hills.⁴⁹ On 26th June, 2008 the Gorkha Janvidyarthi Morcha (GJVM) which is the student's wing of GJMM launched relay hunger strikes in front of the District Magistrate's Office in Darjeeling, sub-divisional offices of Kurseong, Kalimpong and various areas in Siliguri despite West Bengal Government's imposition of Section 144 of CrPC and a ban on the assembly of more than four persons in Siliguri, Dooars and Terai areas. A group of about six hundred people also marched on foot from Siliguri to Darjeeling requesting GJMM not to leave the Siliguri area; six hundred and eighty *padyatris* from Bhaktinagar in Jalpaiguri District also expressed their willingness to be a part of the Gorkhaland state once achieved. Consequently, the Fast-unto-Death, indefinite strike and holding of massive rallies in different parts of Darjeeling followed by snowballing of the support to the movement from the entire region compelled the UPA government to freeze the proposed Sixth Schedule for Darjeeling.

However, this peaceful agitation ended on 25th July, 2008 when Subash Ghising and few of his GNLF leaders met at his hill residence in Darjeeling to chalk out plans for the Martyr's Day observed by GNLF for the past two decades in memory of those who sacrificed their lives during the Gorkhaland Movement of the 1980s. Violence once again erupted in the hills, as the meeting was perceived as a conspiracy of Ghising to resuscitate GNLF that by now had been fully overtaken by GJMM. Bricks and stones were thrown at Ghising's residence by GJMM that gave an ultimatum of fifteen days for him to leave. The irate mob also set afire the house of the GNLF leader Dipak Gurung following a bullet fire from inside the house of Dipak Gurung that claimed the life of one GJMM Women's Wing leader Pramila Chhetri on 26th July, 2008. The State Government after finding the mob berserk shifted Ghising to a guest house in Siliguri for his safety in the evening of 26th July, 2008. This pumped fuel to the ire of the mob

⁴⁸ <http://www.darjeelingtimes.com>

⁴⁹ D.S.Bomjan, op cit no.37, pp.145.

that later refused to allow the body of Dhanmaya, wife of Subash Ghising to Darjeeling even for the cremation ceremony after she breathed her last on 16th August, 2008.

On 8th September 2008 the tripartite meeting was carried out between the Union Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta and the Chief Secretary of West Bengal, Mr. Amit Kiran Deb with members comprising of GJMM, CPRM, Congress (I), BJP, ABGL, GNLFF (C), Rastriya Congress and CPI (M). On 29th September, 2008 GJMM decided to relax its ban on the payment of electricity bills adopted by GJMM as part of its home rule movement, following the request from the West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee who in a meeting held at Writers' Building in Kolkata apprised that the total electricity bills dues has accumulated to Rs 9.36 crores and had hit the state exchequer hard. The GJMM, however, decided to uplift the ban only for the months of October, November and December clearing that the outstanding dues accumulated so far will not be paid by the people. It further decided to go ahead with its agenda of switching the number plates of vehicles from "WB" to "GL" as part of its "home rule" movement. It also launched its programme of making the people wear traditional dresses during the festive period of Durga Puja in October. The party decided to go slow on its agitation so as to create a cordial atmosphere ahead of the second tripartite meeting.

However, this accommodative policy of the GJMM did not last long as on 30th November, 2008 it decided to intensify their agitation programme from 7th December, 2009 in view of the delay for the second tripartite talk scheduled for the month of November. But much to the relief of everyone, the second tripartite talk was held on 29th December 2008. While keeping the momentum alive in Darjeeling through milder agitations, the GJMM now focused on the 15th Lok Sabha elections. GJMM supported the BJP candidate Jaswant Singh as the latter promised a fast track approach to the demand for Gorkhaland and exhibited support for the same. On 1st May 2009 the people of Darjeeling turned out in large numbers to cast their votes as the Darjeeling Lok Sabha constituency witnessed 79.99% polling in hill areas. Polling in the plain areas of the Constituency including Siliguri too was good enough which witnessed 71.06%.

On July 21, 2009 normal life in Darjeeling hills was paralyzed once again with the resumption of the indefinite *bandh* declared by GJMM. The *bandh* was mainly to impress upon Centre to convene the third round of tripartite talks at the earliest date possible. Shops, Markets and business establishments were shut down. While, all schools above class IV, tea and cinchona plantation were exempted from the shutdown. The GJMM also allowed vehicles from Sikkim on the National Highway 31A that connects North Bengal to Gangtok. During the *bandh* the GJMM volunteers distributed 5KG of rice and 1litre cooking oil to the people below poverty line who were to suffer more economically due to the *bandh* at the Gymkhana Club, Darjeeling. The GJMM however withdrew its indefinite *bandh* till 17th August 2009 after the Center agreed for the tripartite meeting slated on 11th August 2009. Renewed hopes of settlement were seen in the Darjeeling Hills in view of the third tripartite meeting. On 11th August, 2009 people from diverse communities of Darjeeling Hills formed a human chain in every part of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong to express their solidarity, unity and commitment to the single cause of Gorkhaland. People from every strata of society participated in the formation of the human chain. Prayers at Chowrasta were also performed from August 11-17, 2009 for the success of the tripartite meeting.⁵⁰ Thus unlike the violent agitation of the GNLFF, GJMM decided to follow the Mahatma Gandhi path of non-violence and non-cooperation in the form of indefinite *bandhs* and relay hunger strikes to achieve its goal of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

GORKHA TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION

The inclinations towards attaining some kind of agreement with the government in the form of interim set up came into vogue during the 2010. By September 2010 the GJMM agreed to accept the interim set up but with qualification. The GJMM proposed the name of the new arrangement as Gorkhaland Regional Authority (GRA) and moved further despite oppositions registered by the CPRM and AIGL. The state Government, that time led by the CPI (M), had even finalized a draft proposal for the formation of what it thought as appropriate Gorkhaland Autonomous authority (GAA). It is remarkable to note that the GAA

⁵⁰ <http://www.darjeelingtimes.com>

proposal had provisions for legislative power besides executive, administrative and, financial powers over 54 subjects/ departments/ offices to be handed over to the new body (for details vide Appendix). It may be a matter of mere coincidence but is a fact that the recent GTA arrangement has replaced on several occasions the text of the earlier GAA draft. GJMM did not finally accede to the earlier settlement and waited for the Assembly election results for securing a best deal out of the political bargain crept in with the upcoming political events.

Thus after three years of agitation for the state of Gorkhaland led by GJMM, a bill for the creation of Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) was passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 2 September 2011. According to the agreement the Government of West Bengal repealed the DGHC Act, 1988 and constituted the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) by an Act of the legislature.⁵¹ The Gorkhaland Territorial Administration is an autonomous Body, formed through direct election and exercises jurisdiction over the entire subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong with extended areas of Kurseong. The Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM) and All India Gorkha League (AIGL), the other two significant political platforms from the hills, treated the GTA agreement as ‘betrayal’. Several other regional outfits both from the Siliguri Terai (platforms like *Janchetna*, *Amra Bangali*, *Bangla O Bangla Bhasa Bachao Samiti*) and Jalpaguri Duars region (viz. *Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikash Parihad*) also raised their own reservations on the prospect of the agreement for the region as a whole and they have even called on days long strike just at the eve of signing the ‘historic’ accord and strived to create public opinion for the withdrawal of the agreement. The common people of the hills were, however, non-enthusiastic and bewildered over the new settlement as being better qualified than the earlier experiments and doubted if it really was a substitute to or a stepping stone towards the much awaited Gorkhaland.⁵²

⁵¹ See Annexure No. II

⁵² Swatahsiddha Sarkar, ‘Autonomy, Self Rule and Community in Darjeeling Hills: A Review of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration’, **Occasional Paper VI**, University of North Bengal, 2012.

To sum up, the Hillmen Association in 1907 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 too 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. 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 in the present decade. The Movement 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 Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. GJMM although claims to uphold the demand for Gorkhaland it agreed to stall the Gorkhaland Movement for the effective execution of the GTA agreement. GJMM views GTA as a step forward to statehood and not a dilution of that demand.