

Disparity And Conflict: A Case of The Gorkhas in Darjeeling

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Disparity is one of the main causes of conflict within the Indian states. Just after India got independence the country witness conflicts that have repeatedly shook the country again and again. There are tremendous disparities between peoples, areas and regions. Why the region lacks development and causes disparity in spite of being rich in natural resources? This paper would undertake deep analysis of the causes of disparity and how it could lead to conflict. The paper will sustain this argument by looking at the cases of the Gorkhas movement in the District of Darjeeling. The demand for a separate state or autonomy by the Gorkhas is a long history. There was a demand for a separate administrative set up in the hills of Darjeeling since 1907. The demand has been flagged off by various parties which continued even till today. The conflicts were turned more violent with the coming up of Gorkha National Liberation Front. The Gorkha National Liberation Front demanded a separate "Gorkhaland" for the Gorkhas in India. The movement took violent from the year 1986 to 1988 which later led to the signing of an agreement between the Government and Gorkha National Liberation Front known as the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. Thus, the paper will discuss on how granting autonomy is not always the solution if it is not associated with socio-political and economic developments. The developmental initiatives should be to rebuild and restore the very basic foundation of the societies that is affected by prolong conflicts. The Government should be careful in framing its policies or plan which is based on community responses that is sustainable and participatory so that it can prevent the growth of further conflicts.

Keywords: Conflicts, Disparity, Development and Conflict

Introduction

The term disparity comes from the Latin word ‘disparitas’, which means divided. Dictionary defined disparity as ‘inequality or difference’. The existence of disparities in the India society is so self-evident. In India, various regions and states have considerable differences in basic natural endowments- such as land, water, minerals, forests etc. Most development projects and plans have not taken note of these disparities and due to tremendous differences there is conflict and violence occurring. The rumblings of regional disparities have been felt in most of the Indian states. It further led to violence and conflicts between states and different ethnic groups for competing against the use of these resources. There is dissatisfaction and discontentment among the less privileged communities against the unequal growth and developments. Addressing at the All India Conferences of DGS and IGPs, Rajnath Singh the Home Minister said that, “Socio-Economic disparities are the root cause of conflicts in north-eastern states. And disparities existed due to lack of development in the region.” (The Indian Express, 22 August 2015) Thus, disparities could lead to conflict and can cause tremendous damages if it is not taken seriously. A report by the former UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, entitled (2004) “Progress in Taking Africa’s Conflicts”, indicates that among other factors, conflict is caused by limited natural resources, poverty, weak governments and unemployment.

Materials and Methodology

The focus of the present study is to determine the level of disparities in the borderland of the eastern region of India. Socio-Economic conditions of Darjeeling districts and the State of West Bengal is taken for comparisons. The entire analysis is based on data collected from secondary sources that includes related Government published documents, books, articles and various research works conducted by others and sources.

History of Darjeeling District

Before 1780, Darjeeling was under the rule of the Raja of Sikkim. During this time Gorkhas from Nepal tried to capture and on 1780 it came under the Gorkhas rule. A war broke out in between Nepal and the East India Company in 1814 because the East India Company were busy

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in expanding its colonial power and at the same time King Prithvi Narayan Shah from Nepal also tries to expand his Kingdom. It is also known as the Anglo- Gorkha war and in this war the Gorkha were defeated. This has led to the signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1815.¹ According to the Treaty of Sugauli, Nepal has to give back all the Territories acquired from Sikkim. The whole country between the Mechi and Tista, over 4000 sq. miles was given back to the Raja of Sikkim and a Treaty known as Titalaya was signed in 1817 between the Raja of Sikkim and the East India Company.² According to this Titalaya Treaty, the Company assumed the position of the paramount power in Sikkim.³ When the Governor General Lyod visited in 1829 he was impressed with the cool climate of Darjeeling for a health resort as well as its location for carrying out trade because it is an entrance into Nepal and Bhutan.⁴ After negotiation with the Raja of Sikkim, Darjeeling was acquired by the East India Company in 1835, Kalimpong was annexed from Bhutan in 1865, the East India Company also annexed the Terai region which included Siliguri from Sikkim in 1850.⁵ This is how the present district of Darjeeling is formed. Today, Darjeeling district consist of three hill sub-divisions-Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri which is in the Terai region.⁶ Darjeeling is a mosaic of different community comprising of different ethnic groups. The ethnic groups were mostly belonging to Mongoloid origin of various Nepalese castes, Lepchas, Bhutias and Tibetans. Darjeeling was known as the queen of the hills. But, due to various reasons the district has underwent various changed due to violent and conflict occurring for many decades. After the Hillmen's Association demanded a separate politico administrative set up for the Nepalese in 1907 the demand got rejected by the British Government. The All India Gorkha League after six years of its inception in 1949 started demanding the creation of a separate provincial legislature called "Uttarakhand" consisting of Darjeeling district and its surrounding areas. The All India Gorkha League was not successful in its demand. Another party known as the Communist Party of India on 6 April 1947 submitted a memorandum to the Government of India for the creation of "free Gorkhasthan in

¹ Treaty of Sugauli in 1815.

² Treaty of Titalaya in 1817

³ Malley, L.S.S.O. (1907) Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, *Government of West Bengal*, Department of Higher Education, Calcutta, p.24

⁴ Ibid. p.26

⁵ Bagchi, Rohmit (2012), *Gorkhaland: Crisis for Statehood*, New Delhi: Sage Publication India, p.9

⁶ Malley, L.S.S.O. (1907), Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, *Government of West Bengal*, Department of Higher Education, Calcutta, p.4

free India.” The idea of “Gorkhasthan” was dropped by the Communist Party of India after the partition of India on 1947. They started demanding autonomy but this too failed in its demand. The Pranta Parishad formed in April 1980 started demanding “Gorkhaland” based on the Nepalese identity but was not successful in its demand. The Gorkha National Liberation Front started demanding a separate state and it led to the creation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council on 22 August 1988. But this does not stop the demand for “Gorkhaland” as the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha and its supporter resurfaces the demand for the creation of “Gorkhaland” and negotiated again with Gorkha Territorial Agreement on 18 July 2011. The demand for “Gorkhaland” based on the distinct ethnic identity did not stop and continues to resurfaces time and again.

Some of the various factors that have led to conflict in Darjeeling district are:-

SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF DARJEELING HILLS:

After Darjeeling came under the British rule there was an increase in population. In 1835 it was reported that there were 100 populations.⁷ The Social composition of Darjeeling district changes as a result of immigration. There was an increase in population since 1872. Eventually, the Nepalese were conscious of their identity and demanded a separate administration since 1907.

It is not only the issue of identity or citizenship that is the thriving force for the movement of autonomy in Darjeeling hills. In West Bengal State, the Bengali groups were the main dominant since they were the majority. The minority group who considers themselves as deprived by the majority group started demanding autonomy so as to develop themselves. It is not only the minority groups who felt insecure but the negative attitude of the dominant Bengali institutionalized the emergence of the “Gorkhaland.”⁸ Even the Chief Minister of West Bengal order an issued to the Darjeeling District to treat the Nepali who supported the movement for autonomy as anti- social and on 27 August 1985, a Nepali student seeking admission in Darjeeling Government College was asked by a Bengali teacher to go to Nepal and this spread like wild fire where the Nepali sentiment was badly hurt by the remarks.⁹ For the development of Siliguri a huge amount were spent by the West Bengal government where majority were Bengali

⁷ Malley, L.S.S.O. (1907) Bengal District Gazetters: Darjeeling, *Government of West Bengal*, Department of Higher Education, Calcutta, p.43

⁸ Mitra, Amit (1988), “Ethnicity and the minorities: The case of the Gurkhas,” Lecture delivered on *Seminar on problems and strategies of Development in the Eastern Himalayas*, March, 1988, p.18-19,

⁹Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1992), *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.204

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and the same amount was not spent for Darjeeling hills and the attitude of the Bengalis were mostly exposed when the Gorkha National Liberation Front started agitation, various criticisms were made by some Bengalis in Calcutta and Siliguri.¹⁰

The all round development in Sikkim around 1975 also created a sense of jealousy among the Nepalese in Darjeeling hills because in Sikkim the Nepalese had dominated the people of Sikkim culturally and educationally for over hundred years.¹¹ In the Bulletin of the Study of Darjeeling hills it is written that, “Our greatest sorrow is that, like in all other spheres, we the people of the Hills have no say what so ever in policy matters and are deliberately and conveniently debarred from participation in any decision making process even when the issues revolve around resources that are basically ours.”¹² This shows that it is due to the lesser population or being minority that the people of the Darjeeling hills were in a disadvantage position.

Let us see the profile of Darjeeling hills from 1971 to till present. Here the year from 1971 is selected because the movement for autonomy is at its peak:

TABLE NO.1

Decennial growth of population¹³

YEAR		WEST BENGAL	DARJEELING
1971-1981	TOTAL	23.17	31.02
	RURAL	20.36	23.36
	URBAN	31.73	56.57
1981-1991	TOTAL	24.73	26.91
	RURAL	23.01	21.79

¹⁰Ganguly, Rajat (2012),“Poverty, Malgovernance and Ethnopolitical mobilization: Gorkha Nationalism and the Gotkhaland Agitation in India”, *Nationalism and Ethic Politics*, p. 497

¹¹Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1989), *Dynamics of a Hill Society: The Nepalis in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas*, New Delhi: K. M. Mittal, p. 113- 114

¹² Bulletin No.3, Study forum Darjeeling, “*Study on Gorkhaland: Review No.1, on the information document of Government of West Bengal*”, January.1987,p.4

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__ Sachanandan Sau, “Database for planning and development in West Bengal”, *Volume 1*, (Districts of West Bengal, Kolkatta, 2009)

¹³ Census of India 1981 Series 23, Part XIII- B, *Darjeeling Census Handbook*, Darjeeling District

__Census of India 1991, Series 26, Part XII- A, *Village and town Darjeeling District*

__Census of India 2001, Provisional

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	URBAN	29.49	40.37
1991-2001	TOTAL	17.84	23.54
	RURAL	16.94	20.04
	URBAN	20.2	31.51
2001- 2011 (PROVISIONAL)	TOTAL	13.93	14.47
	RURAL		
	URBAN		

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001, Darjeeling Census Handbook, Darjeeling District

In terms of population size in 2001, among the 19 district of West Bengal, Darjeeling District ranked 18 positions. It is almost one of the least populated Districts after Dakshin Dinajpur. But, the growth rate of Darjeeling is very high; it is above the State growth rate. The reasons for the unnatural growth of population are due:-

1. Tea Industry created job opportunity and people started moving into Darjeeling hills.
2. Opening up of railways line between Siliguri and Darjeeling
3. Construction of hydro- electric power plant
4. Opening up of schools for the Anglo- Indians as well as for the Europeans has led to migration.
5. Utilization of forest resources attracts the nearby town.
6. Continuation of immigration after Independence due the permission for settlement and hold properties in India.¹⁴

The increase in population is disadvantages in one sense because with the increase in population there is an increase for the needs of wants or material resources.

TABLE NO.2

Percentage of rural and urban population of Darjeeling district with respect to West Bengal¹⁵

YEAR		WEST BENGAL	DARJEELING
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¹⁴ Chaklader, Snemahoy(2004), Sub- Regional Movement in India: With reference to Bodoland and Gorkhaland, Kolkatta: K.P.Bagchi and Company, p. 78

¹⁵ Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009

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1971-1981	RURAL	73.5	72.5
	URBAN	26.5	27.6
1981- 1991	RURAL	72.5	69.5
	URBAN	27.5	30.5
1991-2001	RURAL	72.0	67.6
	URBAN	28.0	32.4
2001- 2011	RURAL	68.13	60.58
	URBAN	31.87	39.42

Source: Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009

The rural population is higher than the urban population in Darjeeling as well as in the whole West Bengal State. Comparing the rural population of Darjeeling district and the State total rural population, Darjeeling district population is lower than the State total rural population and it decreases every decade. But the urban population of Darjeeling district is higher as compared to the State total urban population as seen above in the Table no.2

TABLE NO.3

Sex ratio (Number of females per 1000 males)¹⁶

YEAR	WEST BENGAL	DARJEELING
1971-1981	911	888
1981-1991	917	914
1991-2001	934	943
2001-2011	947	971

¹⁶ Census of India 1981 Series 23, Part XIII- B, *Darjeeling Census Handbook*, Darjeeling District

__Census of India 1991, Series 26, Part XII- A, *Village and town Darjeeling District*

__Census of India 2001, Provisional

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Source: Census of India 2011; Provisional population Totals for West Bengal, Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001, Darjeeling Census Handbook, Darjeeling District, Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009

Sex ratio gives us an idea of what a Society or a State is? It gives us an information of how developed as well as it shows the human development index. It is also an indicator of the health and social status of women in that particular society, and also and has a direct and immediate bearing on other key indicators like child mortality. Out of the 17 Districts presented in the provisional population of 2001, Darjeeling district occupied the 12th position and it is one of the lowest sex- ratio among the District after the district of North twenty four Parganas, Bardhaman, Haora and Kolkata. Out of the number of females per 1000 male, Darjeeling has only 937 female in 2001.

TABLE NO.4

Literacy rate¹⁷

YEAR		WEST BENGAL	DARJEELING
1971- 1981	TOTAL	40.94	42.47
	MALE	50.67	51.89
	FEMALE	30.25	31.85
1981- 1991	TOTAL	57.70	58.00
	MALE	67.81	67.10
	FEMALE	46.56	47.80
1991- 2001	TOTAL	68.64	71.79
	MALE	82.67	81.30
	FEMALE	71.16	63.90
2001- 2011	TOTAL		
	MALE	77.08	79.92
	FEMALE		

¹⁷ Source: Census of India 2011; Provisional population Totals for West Bengal, Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001, Darjeeling Census Handbook, Darjeeling District, Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009

Source: Census of India 2011; Provisional population Totals for West Bengal, Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001, Darjeeling Census Handbook, Darjeeling District, Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009

Literacy rate is a very important indicator of a society which is also links to the socio-economic progress and development. Among the 19 district of West Bengal, Darjeeling District in terms of education in 2011 and 2001 ranked 6th position excluding the age group between 0-6years. Darjeeling District occupied a very high position among the Districts of West Bengal.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF DARJEELING HILLS

Economic deprivation is one of the main reasons for the movement of autonomy. When there is economic stagnation over a long period, the solution against this blockade is to organize for political movement.¹⁸ Darjeeling hills is one of the examples and Subash Ghising leaders of the Gorkha National Liberation Front raise an important question whether there is an involvement of economic issue or not but, Jyoti Basu, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal argued that there are no linkages between economic issues and the movement for autonomy in Darjeeling hills. He pointed out that per- capita expenditure and per capita income of Darjeeling is the highest among The economy of any State or any Country is also best known by the number of work participation. Work participation shows the number of employed and unemployed status within a particular area. It helps in a better understanding of the overall employment status. Table 5 shows the work participation rate in the districts of West Bengal and Darjeeling districts in terms of gender as well as in the rural and urban area.

TABLE NO.5

Work participation rate in districts of West Bengal, 2001¹⁹

Districts	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female	DISTRICTS	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
Darjeeling	47.9	47.1	25.7	10.7	North 24 Parganas	54.1	12	53.8	10.8

¹⁸Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1992), *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.197

¹⁹ Database for planning and development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Resources in Districts of West Bengal, 2009, p.166 -167

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Jalpaiguri	52.2	49.7	26.2	8.8	South 14 Parganas	51.6	12.4	53.1	8.8
Coochbeha	55.1	23.3	52.7	11.6	Hoogly	57.7	18.9	54.1	10.5
Uttar Dinajpur	52.1	25.5	50.2	11.1	Bankura	57	33.5	53	13.4
Dakshin Dinajpur	56.6	26.9	48.8	13.8	Purulia	52.9	39.2	46.8	9
Maldah	52.7	29.6	50.8	11.6	Paschim Medinipur	55.0	24.3	50.6	10.1
Murshidabad	51.3	14.7	50.2	27.7	Purba Medinipur	55.0	24.3	50.6	10.1
Birbhum	54.5	20.3	51.8	12.2	Howrah	55.5	10.3	56.2	8
Burdwan	56.5	20	48.6	9.1	Kolkata	0	0	58.1	12.8
Nadia	55.1	13.2	54.6	17.4					

Source: Database for Planning and Development in West Bengal, Volume 1: Districts of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2009.

In terms of work participation rate in West Bengal, the work participation rate of Darjeeling district is one of the lowest. The number of rural male work participation rate for Darjeeling district is the lowest where as the rural female work participation rate for Darjeeling district is the Second highest among the various District of West Bengal. Urban male work participation for Darjeeling district is also the lowest where as the Urban female work participation among the various district of West Bengal occupied 8th position. This shows that the number of employment rate is very high in Darjeeling district.

As per the census of India 2001, Darjeeling district registered the lowest number of workers 4.03 lakh male workers and 1.66 lakh female workers. Among the various districts of West Bengal, North Parganas occupied the highest work participation of which 23.03 lakh for male and 3.21 lakh for female.²⁰

FOREST COVER AND TEA PLANTATION IN DARJEELING HILLS

²⁰ Data base for planning and development in West Bengal, p. 162

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Forest and tea industries play a major role for the development of Darjeeling hills. Darjeeling hills faced the problem of deforestation. The traditional form of cultivation is Jhumming in Darjeeling where destruction of forest is a massive by product of human activities. The agriculture development in the modern sense of the term was still limited in the District until 1972- 1974 when the SEDA (Small Farmer's Development Agency) was established.²¹

FOREST COVER

The number of forest cover decreases in a massive scale:-

TABLE NO. 6

Forest area in Darjeeling²²

Year	Total Forest (sq.kms)	Percentage of forest	Per Capita Forest (in hectares)
1901	1554.21	51.54	0.62
1921	1481.81	49.14	0.52
1941	1414.08	45.81	0.37
1961	1432.65	46.07	0.23
1981	1204.00	38.23	0.12

Source: Manas Das Gupta, 1988

Table no.9 shows the decreases in forest coverage areas for the district of Darjeeling. The percentage of forest cover in 1901 was 51.54 but in 1981 it was only 38.23.

The decrease in forest cover causes a serious problem for Darjeeling because the people are totally depending on the products of forest such as timber, tea, agriculture and forest also played an important role for the Tourism industry²³. Some of the main reasons for the causes of deforestation are:-

1. Commercialization of forest. Deforestation cause by due the activities of the West Bengal Government.

²¹Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1985), *The Quiet Hills: A study of Agrarian relations in Hill Darjeeling*, New Delhi: ISPCK, p.18

²²Dasgupta, Manas (1988), "The Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling: Some Political and Economic Dimensions", Lecture delivered on 9 March 1988 at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal: North Bengal, p.21

²³Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1992), *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.197

2. Rapid growth of population.
3. High unemployment within Darjeeling hills and
4. Due to poverty the local people directly depend on forest product like fuel, fodder, timber; and clandestine illegal felling of trees by professional criminals gangs often in connivance with the local politicians, forest department personnel and the police.²⁴

In Darjeeling hills the economy has gradually shifted from self- consumption to market based and in the process of an economy that is monetised, it is the businessmen communities like the Marwaris and the Biharis and some few Nepalese business Caste like the Newars that are benefitting from it.²⁵ Obtaining maximum profit out of forest product was the main motive of any industry. The area of forest coverage changes with the industrialization process because every industry needs raw materials in order to function. For setting up it requires a large amount of land which further led to the destruction of forest. Commercialization of forest product started increasing. Not only hard woods were planted in the forest but softwood started increasing and according to the Government, “it serves the needs of matchwood and plywood industries.”²⁶ This commercialization of forest led to cutting down of trees, especially the hardwood which further led to destruction of land, causes soil erosion, landslides, changes in climatic conditions, destruction of soils. Forests are continuously under attack because the people were mainly dependent on forest products, agriculture were the main source of livelihood, grazing livestock, extraction of trees for firewood, looping of leaf twigs for fodder.²⁷ Gorkha National Liberation Front also involve in trees cutting because they sell woods for their funds and wood was used as a lamp posts to block roads.²⁸

Even the environmental status of Darjeeling hills is degrading. “Although the Centre provides special financial assistance for the hills, there is no sign of an integrated approach for the development of such areas in Darjeeling (by the Hill Development Council). As in other parts of

²⁴Lama, Mahendra P(1986), “Darjeeling’s Eroding Environment: Cause for concern”, *Patriot*, June 1986, p.4

²⁵ Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1985), *The Quiet Hills: A study of Agrarian relations in Hill Darjeeling*, New Delhi: ISPCK, p.21

²⁶ Dasgupta, Manas (1988), “The Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling: Some Political and Economic Dimensions”, Lecture delivered on 9 March 1988 at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal: North Bengal, p. 20

²⁷ Ibid, p.21

²⁸ Subba, Tanka Bahadur (1992), *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case study of the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing house, p.199

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the Himalayas, the Darjeeling hills have certain peculiar agro- ecological and socio- cultural features which have to be taken into account while formulating developmental programme. But the concept of development without destruction is necessary for the conservation and utilization of resources that has not yet taken root in Darjeeling district. The region, therefore, finds itself in the quandary of dwindling resource base and mounting poverty, a grim situation that affects people in the plains of North Bengal as well. Forests constitute the main source of livelihood in the hills of Darjeeling. They check soil erosion, prevent wildlife and vegetation, regulate precipitation patterns and safeguard the life style and culture of the people. Removal of forest cover has led to considerable denudation through loss of the top soil and land-slides, making several areas in the Darjeeling hills uninhabitable.”²⁹

TEA INDUSTRY

In Darjeeling Hills, Tea industry forms the backbone of the economy. It is the source of income which further generates employment.

TABLE NO.7

Employment of tea gardens in Darjeeling³⁰

YEAR	TOTAL NO.
1951	63042
1961	60979
1971	56990
1976	49192
1981	44052

Source: Manas Das Gupta, 1988

Tea industries generate employment in Darjeeling hills, but the number of people working in tea industry is declining. It is clear that there is a decrease in unemployment due to decrease in tea garden. Apart from declining of tea garden, 60 percent of the total area under tea garden contain tea plants belonging to the uneconomic age group of more than 70 years and further, nearly a

²⁹ Pradhan, B.L. (1984), “Neither wood nor trees” in *The Statesman*, 10 December 1984

³⁰ Dasgupta, Manas (1988), “The Gorkhaland Agitation in Darjeeling: Some Political and Economic Dimensions”, Lecture delivered on 9 March 1988 at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal: North Bengal, p. 18

quarter of the area for tea garden contain plants which are more than 100 years old.³¹ Most of the tea garden in Darjeeling is owned by outsiders such as the Marwari, Bengalis and a few Nepalese. The outsiders who own tea garden have a mindset of profit maximization and also have a feeling that one day they might be forced by the local to leave the area, these private owners rarely ploughed back a substantial share of their profits in their tea estate. The tea industries further suffer from lack of investment.³²

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS:

Thus, we have studied in detail about the profile of Darjeeling hills. It is seen that in terms of literacy rate it is very high as compared to the other Districts of West Bengal. But the area under forest cover is declined due to various factors which further led to unemployment. Countering, the movement for autonomy that the region is backward, in 1987, the West Bengal government published an information document giving certain facts and figures about Darjeeling district. According to the State Government, though the district of Darjeeling is poor but it is not poorer and more backward as compared to the other district of West Bengal.³³ The Nepalese in Darjeeling hills demanded autonomy based on their social deprivation, economic inequality and political instability. In terms of Sex- ratio, work participation rate it is one of the lowest among the districts of West Bengal. The main source of livelihood that is tea industry and forests products is on the declined. There was no proper infrastructure. Roads and transportations system has deteriorated since independence. The social, economic and political status was used as a tool for demanding autonomy for the development of the Nepalese and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed for this in 1988. Presently, the Gorkha Territorial Administration is administering the district of Darjeeling. To prevent the further growth of conflicts in the borderland the state must be aware that Hill Council or Autonomy per se is not going to meet the needs and desire of the people, development with inclusive growth, equality and accountability can only satisfy the people.

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³³ "Gorkhaland Agitation: Facts and Issues", *Information Document- II*, Government of West Bengal, January 1987, p.38.

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