

GORKHALAND MOVEMENT

March 19, 2019

Manifest Pedagogy

Gorkhaland movement is not an issue of this year. It has been pestering over a last few years. Upsc has been showing interest in topics of previous years these days. Keeping this in mind this topic has been chosen.

In news

Demand for separate Gorkhaland

Placing it in the syllabus

Indian Society –

1. Diversity of India
2. Regionalism

Static dimensions

- History of Gorkhas and their settlement.
- Timeline of the demand for Gorkhaland
- Historical reasons for Gorkhaland movement

Current dimensions

- Recent causes for Gorkhaland movement

Content

History of Gorkhas and their settlement

The Gurkhas or Gorkhas with endonym Gorkhali are solidiers native to the Indian subcontinent of Nepalese nationality and ethnic Nepalis of Indian Inbdian nationality recruited for the

British Army, Nepalese Army, Indian Army, Gurkha Contingent Singapore, Gurkha Reserve Unit Brunei, UN peacekeeping force and war zones around the world.

Historically, the terms “Gurkha” and “Gorkhali” were synonymous with “Nepali”, which originates from the hill principality **Gorkha Kingdom**, from which the Kingdom of Nepal expanded under Prithivi Narayan Shah. The name may be traced to the medieval Hindu warrior-saint Guru Gorakhnath who has a historic shrine in Gorkha.

The issue of Gorkhaland

Gorkhaland consists of Nepali-speaking people of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and other hilly districts of West-Bengal. The people belonging to these areas have ethical, cultural and language differences with the Bengali community of West-Bengal.

The Gorkhaland Movement is a movement mainly focused in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, which demands the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

The area covers Duars and Terai region of West Bengal. And is famous for its tea and beauty, which are the main sources of its income.

History of Gorkhaland movement

- **1907-** The first demand for Gorkhaland was submitted to **Morley-Minto Reforms panel**. After that on several occasions demands were made to the British government and then government of Independent India for separation from Bengal.
- **1952-** The All India Gorkha League submits a memorandum to then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru **demanding separation from the state of Bengal**.
- **1955-** Daulat Das Bokhim, the President of District Shamik Sangh submits a memorandum to the chairman, State

Reorganisation Committee **demanding the creation of separate state consisting of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar district.**

- **1977- 81:** The **West Bengal government** passes a unanimous resolution **supporting the creation of an autonomous district council consisting Darjeeling and related areas.** In 1981, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi receives a memorandum from Pranta Parishad, demanding a separate state.

Policies under British rule and impact

- Darjeeling was part of the Kingdom of Sikkim and was inhabited by the local tribes viz. **Lepachas, Limbus** etc. In 1780s, Sikkim was attacked by Gorkha armies and most of its territories were annexed in Nepal. The conflict between Nepal and British led to the Anglo-Nepalese War (aka Anglo-Gurkha war) from 1814 to 1816. This war ended with defeat of Nepalese and they had to sign the Treaty of Sugauli, dictated by British. Under this treaty, Nepal lost all Sikkim (including Darjeeling), the territories of Kumaon and Garhwal and regions of western terai. Nepal also lost the area between Mechi and Teesta Rivers.
- In February 1817, the British returned the land belonging to Sikkim earlier to Sikkimese Chogyal under the Treaty of Titalia. In 1829, a border dispute arose between Nepal and Sikkim. At that time, the Governor General of India **William Bentinck** send two officers Captain Lloyd and JW Grant to help resolve the crisis. These two officers stayed at Dorje Ling for around a week and liked the place so much that thought of possibilities to make it a station for respite from tropical climate of India. This area was already deserted by the original inhabitants during war and suppression by the Raja of Sikkim.
- Captain Lloyd and JW Grant recommended the Governor

General to acquire Darjeeling from Sikkim. The Governor General negotiated with the **Chogyals** and Chogyals gave the area to British in an unconditional cessation of a **worthless uninhabited mountain**. However, British later decided to pay some compensation to Chogyals.

- British started developing the infrastructure in the area immediately. By 1839, they developed a road connecting Darjeeling with the plains. In 1841, Dr. Campbell brought Chinese tea seeds from Kumaon and started growing it there on experimental basis. These successful experiments led to development of several **commercially viable tea estates in the region**.
- Soon, what was considered to be worthless uninhabited mountain by Chogyals, started to prosper. The prosperity of the tea estates attracted people from Sikkim and Nepal to rapidly immigrate to Darjeeling and settle there as British subjects. Obviously this made Chogyals jealous and they now resorted to get back Darjeeling migrants forcibly. **The relations between Chogyals and British deteriorated to the extent of capturing East India Company officers and putting them behind bars in 1849 by Chogyals**. This necessitated the East India Company to send troops to Sikkim but by the time troops reached there, hostilities ended. Darjeeling became a part of British Empire.
- **The British government had accorded the status of Non-regulated area to Darjeeling in 1860s and 70s**, which meant that the laws of British did not automatically apply to this region, unless specifically extended. In 1874, this term was changed to **“Scheduled District”** and in 1919, it was called **“Backward Tracts”**, which remained so till 1947.

Gorkhaland movement from 1980s and government responses

- **1980-90:** The demand for Gorkhaland was intensified in the 1980s under the leadership of Gorkha National

Liberation Front supremo Subhas Ghising. The movement turns **violent** during the period of 1986-88. After a two-year long protest, the **Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC)** is finally **formed in 1988.**

- **2007-** At the last phase of left front's regime, **the mass movement for Gorkhaland takes place under the leadership of Gorkha Janmurti Morcha (GJM) supremo Bimal Gurung.** The 2007 Gorkha uprising intensifies, following the 2005 Centre and state government initiative for a permanent solution of this region by bringing it to the **sixth schedule** of the constitution giving some degree of autonomy to a predominantly tribal area. But the **Gorkhas opposed this sixth schedule and demand statehood gains pace.** The four-year long movement comes to an end after new CM Mamata Banerjee's declaration of **Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)** and Gurung is made its leader.
- **In 2011** the memorandum of agreement for the formation of a **Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)**, a semi-autonomous administrative body for the Darjeeling, passed by West Bengal legislative assembly to calm the GJM.
- **In 2013**, the demand for separation rose high again due to the division of Andhra Pradesh. The movement was peaceful under the leadership of GJM. GJM adopted the innovative method of protest called "**Janta Bandh**".

Reasons for recent movement and solutions

- The West Bengal government's decision to impose Bengali language in all the schools from Class I-IX in June 2017, has sparked a violent protest in the Gorkha-led Darjeeling. This was an affront to the overwhelmingly Nepali (or Gorkhali) speaking population of the hills. The GJM reacted by demanding full statehood for the northern hill areas of Bengal, including Terai and Dooars regions, with the capital in Darjeeling.

A system based on the real spirit of Cooperative Federalism and Sub Federalism is the need of the hour.