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Authors Affiliation
Associate Professor, Harisingh Gour
Central University, Sagar, MP.

Reprints Requests
Anupma Kaushik, Associate
Professor in Political Science
Dr Hari Singh Gour
University, Sagar, Madhya
Pradesh 470003, India.
E-mail:
kaushikanupma@yahoo.co.in

Reorganisation of States in India: The Case of Gorkhaland

Anupma Kaushik

Anupma Kaushik

Abstract

India is a multi ethnic country with a federal polity. There are 29 States which are again multi ethnic in nature. The State of West Bengal is predominantly ethnic 'Bengali' however its famous Darjeeling hill station is populated by ethnic Nepalese. As a result the ethnic Bengalis effectively control the political, economic and social fabric of the State of West Bengal. This has caused lot resentment amongst the ethnic Nepalese, resulting in a very violent agitation in the early eighties, led by the G.N.L.F. The Nepalese demanded a separate State of Gorkhaland consisting of the Darjeeling hills. This would have resulted in bifurcation of the State of West Bengal which was vehemently opposed by the Government and the ethnic Bengali population of the State of West Bengal. After a lot of negotiations involving the Government of India, the Government of the State of West Bengal and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (G.N.L.F.), a tripartite agreement was signed in 1985 and the Gorkha Hill Development Council (G.H.D.C.) was created. The G.H.D.C., an elective body, satisfied the urge of autonomy and self determination amongst the ethnic Nepalese of Darjeeling hills. It also satisfied the stand of the Government of West Bengal of non-bifurcation of their State. Since its inception in 1985 the G.H.D.C. has ensured peace in the Darjeeling hills of the State of West Bengal. Elections for the D.G.H.C. have been held periodically and its powers have increased with time due to repeated negotiations between the G.H.D.C. and the Governments of West Bengal and the Government of India. However, the hopes of development of the area have not become a reality due to non-performance of hill council. And movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland was revived. The government now offered GTA with more autonomy to the Gorkhas but things have not improved on the ground for the common Gorkhas. In a way the DGHC and GTA has been a victim of the same disease that affects the whole of Indian polity and administration i.e. autocratic and corrupt politicians and officials who are more interested in self-aggrandizement than welfare of the masses that they profess to represent and serve.

Keywords: India; Reorganizations; States; Gorkhaland; Gorkha; DGHC; GNLFF.

Introduction

Formation of States In India

Prior to 1947 the British Indian Empire, was organised into two types of territories: the provinces of British India, which were governed directly by British officials responsible to the Governor-General of India and princely states under the rule of local

hereditary rulers who recognized British suzerainty in return for local autonomy, in most cases as established by treaty. Most of the British provinces had elected legislatures as well as governors, although some of the smaller provinces were governed by a chief commissioner appointed by the Governor-General. In 1930s, British also recognized the principle of federalism.