

**Colonialism and the making of Nepali identity: A sociological
study of a community formation in the early 20th century
Darjeeling**

A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment of the

Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In

SOCIOLOGY

By

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October 2022

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that dissertation titled "Colonialism and the making of Nepali Identity: A sociological study of a community formation in the early 20th century Darjeeling" submitted by Chawang Dorjay Bomzon bearing registration number-20SSHL05 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master in Philosophy in Sociology is a bona fide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or any other university or institution to award any degree or diploma.


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Declaration

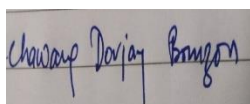
I, Chawang Dorjay Bomzon, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled. “**Colonialism and the making of Nepali identity: A sociological study of a community formation in the early 20th century Darjeeling**”, submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. R. Thirunavukkarasu is a bona fide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or an institution to award any degree or diploma.

Date: 22nd of December 2022

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A handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Chawang Dorjay Bomzon".

Signature of the Student

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. R Thirunavukkarasu whose support and guidance shaped the research into a better form and led it to the successful completion of the dissertation. I am highly grateful for his patience and encouragement, which has been a for my work.

I would like to thank my research committee member, Dr. M.N. Rajesh, Department of History, University of Hyderabad. His knowledge on the Himalayas, suggestions and criticisms for my topic have significantly helped to shape my dissertation.

I would like to thank the faculty members from the Department of sociology, University of Hyderabad. I am grateful to Professor Sasheej Hegde for always being kind and welcoming toward me.

I thank my friend Upama Alley for painfully scanning documents, books and sending them to me; I will always be indebted to Atisha Sunar, Sonam Diki Lama, Debaditya Dutta for guiding me academically and always making me feel at home. I thank Sanderstar Temsen and Kumoni Kaje for always being there during my time in Hyderabad. I also thank Jigme Yeshe Lama for welcoming me to his place and those long insightful conversations during my stay in Kolkata. I thank Vishnu Prasad, Sanjay Singh, Diksha Hijam, Tarushi Mohan, Harvey Newton, Vilas Ghogre, Ajay Kumar, Sanakki Munna, Akhankya Panigrahi, Erram Naveen, Srintija Roy, Soso Tei and Redya Naik. My friends from University of Hyderabad for their presence in my life.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and my family for educating me. Their support, encouragement and sacrifice is the reason that I could become a research scholar.

For, My Father.

CONTENTS.

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	18
Chapter 3 Society in Eastern Nepal: Implications of Gorkha Conquest	34
Chapter-4 The Colonial Effect: Making of a Nepali community	52
Conclusion	71
Bibliography	80

DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENT

Certificate.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Contents.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.....	18
Society in Eastern Nepal: The implications of Gorkha Conquest.....	34
The Colonial Effect: Making of a community in Darjeeling.....	52
Conclusion.....	71
Bibliography.....	80
Certificate of Paper Presentation.....	84
Originality report.....	86

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

This study is about Darjeeling and the Nepali community, in contemporary times or the post-colonial period Darjeeling has seen many upheavals mainly with the contestations of identity which culminated into two different violent sets of social movements for a separate statehood. The movements of Gorkhaland taking place during the later decades of 20th century in 1986 and early decades of 21st century taking place in 2013. During this movements the notion of being a Nepali had transcended to a point which saw Nepali as an identity being contested by the people. The demand for Gorkhaland works within the framework of we Nepalis of India, while disregarding the state of Nepal, resulting in cutting of all ties with the country, which is historically and culturally linked to them. Demands for a separate state comes from the notion of indigeneity where the people, its history established originally from the region. Apart from the issue of indigeneity, contestations of identity, recently there has been an ethnicization of politics where the arguments now have come from the ethnic dimensions for opportunities in political space among the Nepalis of Darjeeling. Nepali community generally thought and perceived as one distinct group is in a danger of fragmenting on the lines of ethnic dimensions, while idea of Gorkhaland too is in a danger of becoming a fragment of memory or an historical event among the members of the community where they agitated for a common cause. Since history provides a point to refer and locate certain realities faced by the society as a whole or in a finer way the groups which make up the society. Similarly, there is a need to locate the history and to

look at the way, how the idea of Nepali was appropriated among the people of Darjeeling. This study tries to locate certain historical events in the context of Nepalis in Darjeeling that they have undertaken, the aim is to see how the notion of Nepali came into being. In this case revisiting the history of Darjeeling becomes an important dimension to locate the notion of being a Nepali which will provide clarity in understanding these post-colonial predicaments among the Nepali community.

History demands a way to analyse the societies that have already passed. There are multiple ways in which we tackle this question. Every historical argument revolves around the question of the priority of causes.¹ There is a tangible way of looking into the history and comparing it with the present. Analysing society from specific points in history, the concept of causality provides an entry point to generate clarifications and understand the society at hand. Hence the question comes up how did society transform? What were the agents of the transformation?

Any form of society, whether traditional or modern, is made up of a structure and constitutes society as a whole. The change process must be organic, undergoing specific tweaks and adjustments. Society does not transform radically. Instead, it changes within these spheres of society. The structural elements within society's economic, political and social generate momentum to facilitate the transformation. They can provide a way to look at the structure of the said society in the past. What were the causal factors that are external and internal, that facilitated the transformation of the society?

Colonialism, as a period in history, is considered a causal factor that has changed the dynamics of a colonized society. From a nationalist stand-point, Partha Chatterjee, has depicted the formation of nationalist sentiments among the colonized society that was

¹ E.H Carr, 1990. What is History?. Penguin Books, London. p90

predominantly to identify oneself against the colonial rulers.² Quijano also argues that the colonial world system during the 19th century has indeed implicated the colonized societies in the Latin American spaces that range from knowledge production to societal and economic exploitation. He famously coins the term "coloniality" to express the European hegemony on the non-European spaces.³ Primarily, the implications of colonialism have focused on the economic realm. These implications are present in other aspects of society. More importantly, it has also dislocated the individual from their very being.⁴ Under colonialism, the individual is more than a colonized subject, relegated to labour, a servant and colonized.

During the colonial period, towns and cities grew over the colonized nations mainly for economic, security, and bureaucratic purposes. In India Ootacamund, Shimla, Darjeeling were established as hill-stations. Darjeeling and Ootacamund were established mainly centred around tea gardens. Unlike Ootacamund, Darjeeling becoming a part of India has political conditions coming up from Nepal's interaction with British. during Anglo-Gorkha War against Nepal and British East India Company culminated into signing the treaty of Segauli in 4th march 1816. As a result of this war Nepal lost a lot of region in its western parts of Garwhal and Darjeeling in the eastern parts. Hence, with this treaty Darjeeling became a part of Colonial India, turning a waste land of Darjeeling mainly inhabited by Lepchas in to a hill-stations.

The primary motive of these hill-stations was recreation for the British employees of the crown, to treat the sick soldiers of the army as cantonments.⁵ The idea of a hill

² Partha Chatterjee, 1994. *Nation and its Fragments Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*. Oxford University Press. New Delhi. p5

³ Annibal Quijano, 2000: *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America*. Neplanta, Views from South, Volume 1, Issue 3. Pp (533-580).

⁴ Franz Fanon, 1977. *Wretched Of The Earth*. Penguin Books England. p36

⁵ Queeny Pradhan, 2017: *Empire in the Hills- Shimla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund and Mount Abu, 1820-1920*. Ch- The indigenous vision. Oxford Scholarship Online.

station appealed to the British as a home away from home. However, establishing hill stations also created employment opportunities among groups and adjoining spaces. Hill stations also created a pull factor for the groups in and around them, especially in Darjeeling the number of migrant workers increased yearly. The migrant workers were employed for the construction of the town, railways, tea gardens, and servants for the British officers and later in the British army. The economic and social pull factors created a condition for a movement of the groups and individuals towards the region as it catered for a utopian dream away from the social and economic conditions they previously went through. This movement led to a settlement of groups in the areas for the groups and individuals from the lower segment of society's economic and social segments. It was ideal for them to move out and venture into new spaces which promised social and economic mobility.

Historical analysis of any event cannot be limited to one particular causal factor. The events in history are multiple. People must be warned off by every possible means from considering the action of everyone because without taking account of the others whose effects are commingled with⁶. Limiting oneself to just one cause that gives rise to a social condition can lead to misconceptions. The context of Darjeeling has been the same, and there are interpretations while the society in the area has led to conclusions that the society was formed due to the conditions created by colonialism. Most of the scholarly work at that time neglected the social conditions in Nepal and facilitated the groups movement towards Darjeeling along with the colonial presence. The conquest of the Shah dynasty helped shape modern Nepal, consolidating many principalities into one and creating the state of Nepal.⁷ The character of the society in Nepal has been

⁶ E.H Carr, 1990: What is History?. Penguin Books, London. p89

⁷ Ludwig F Stiller, 1973: The Rise of the House of Gorkha- A Study in the unification of Nepal 1768-1816. Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi.

multicultural and multi-ethnic in a historical sense. Nepal as a space is regarded as a meeting point of cultures, along with settlements of various groups. It was due to the unification of Nepal under Prithivi Narayan Shah, Nepal as a nation was formed. It had its own underlying implication to society in forms of social configuration. Implementation of Mulki Ain in 1853 by then prime minister of Nepal Jung Bahadur Rana of the Shah dynasty could bring in the Nepali society into one specific frame of caste system, which was an interpretation of tithibandaj issued by various kings of the past.

The character of society in Nepal was modified mainly through legal recourses throughout the state after the unification of the state, creating a hierarchy-based society where the system of representation and structural configuration of society was modified concerning Hindu norms. The Hindu groups were placed at the top of the hierarchy, and the non-Hindu groups especially were placed in a lower position. Writings on contemporary social reality of Nepal can be seen in the writings of Gopal Gurung⁸ who rebukes the notion of caste system in Nepal, his arguments can be taken up trying to dislodge the general narrative and welcoming the ethnicization of politics in Nepal, concerning the ethnic groups who's social context has been heavily influenced by the unification of Nepal, Mulki Ain that were the primary factors for the exploitation and marginalisation of the ethnic groups living in Nepal.

Colonial setup and unification of Nepal can be conceptualized as the primary causal factors that brought out conditions ideal for migration and settlement of the groups from the eastern part of Nepal towards Darjeeling. The primary motive of this study is to take these two historical incidents as causal factors that created necessary conditions that facilitated community formation in Darjeeling. Appropriating the causal factor as

⁸ Gopal Gurung, 2006. *Mongolism-Bahunism-Maoism In Nepalese Politics*. B.Rai(trans, Third ed) Kathmandu Province 3. Nepal: Mongol National Organisation.

Colonialism and Conquest of Nepal, identity, colonialism, migration, ethnic groups do play a central role in this study. Their relationship is as such that they are interlinked to each other. In the context of identity we try to see how Nepali as an identity was constructed among the Nepalis of Darjeeling, the question comes up what was the need for an identity among them. During the times of dislocation from their original space to a new one there has always been a need for identity, mainly in the domain of political space or for the use of resources. Predominantly seen during the colonisation of the world by Europeans in spaces all over the world. Darjeeling also fits into the same frame, which saw a lot of groups migrating from Nepal after a settlement there was a need of representation which can be seen with the formation of a Nepali community. Identity can only be appropriated among the individual or social groups with a sense of belonging to a space and with an act of social cohesion members of the community are originally fragmented as in the case of Nepalis from Darjeeling. historically based in the Himalayan region of Nepal and fragmented due to the geographical settings these groups have been identified as ethnic group, there might be counterarguments towards identifying these groups in the study as ethnic groups. In a simplistic way looking at the groups characteristics, mainly in the customs, language and tradition. Where each group has its own specific markers. This gives a basis to using the term ethnic group in the study.

In terms of the question of community formation in Darjeeling among the migrants from Nepal, an inquiry about the means and mechanisms taken up by the migrated groups in forming a cohesive community since the character of the social conditions in the previous setup was segmented and divisive? During the process of making a new community, how were the lines of divisions of society interpreted with respect to Mulki Ain becoming the main framework for the society in Nepal to categorise the society on

the basis of caste system but how was it different in Darjeeling, a new space for these migrants to negotiate this systems of divisions were they central in the social division of the society or did it undergo an reinvention in the space of Darjeeling. These are the basic questions this study intends to look into.

Review of Literature.

After the conquest of eastern Nepal by the Gorkhas, the Kirats, Sunuwars, Tamangs, and the lower caste Newars were all, as groups, the ceremonial status as Shudras(K.Pradhan:2002). Kumar Pradhan highlights the consequences of the Gorkha conquest on the ethnic groups from the eastern part of Nepal, the result of which the division among the ethnic groups transformed into a horizontal from a vertical shape.

The complex nature of ethnic boundaries and the overlapping nature of these diverse groups' kinship ties posed a tremendous challenge for colonial administrators. Thus, the early reports on ethnic groups of Darjeeling are shrouded in ambivalence; great discrepancies are evident in the census of 1872, where groups similar is Khambus are enumerated many times under different ethnonyms, such as Rai, Jamadar, and Khamba, such as the case of Mangars. Given such anomalies, only Lepchas and Bhutia were depicted as the indigenous groups of the hills. (Chettri:2017) Nilamber Chettri shows that the colonial forms of categorizing the society in Darjeeling were flawed, resulting in a series of ambiguities concerning the framing of identities and their implication in a post-colonial society.

People of all castes and ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups were inclusive parts of it. The basis for the gradation of high and low was embedded in the Hindu ideology of pure and impure ritual notions (A. Hofer:2004).

The following castes and 'tribes' are, however, generally accepted as Nepali groups: Bahun, Thakuri, Chhetri, Newar, Rai, Limbu, Yaksha, Sunuwar, Tamang, Mangar, Gurung, Jogi, Bhujel, Thami, Yolmu, Sherpa, Sunar, Kami, Sarki, and Damai. Most of these groups have their dialects, which are fast becoming obsolete. Their traditional social and cultural practices still vary, and they profess different religious faiths and represent different races worldwide. Their traditional occupations were different, and their habitats were exclusive (Subba:1992).

In his book *Ethnicity, State and Development: A case study of the Gorkhaland movement* (1992), Subba presents the characteristics of the Nepali society in the hills and the arguments based on indigeneity for the people of the hills.

Bidhan Golay(2006) highlights the problems of the discourse of Gorkha identity inscribed by the British Colonisers to the people coming into the region. He argues that the Gorkhas are ambivalent about colonial interaction. He also critically discusses the gaps related to the production of knowledge regarding the area, where more emphasis is needed on the period of colonial presence in Darjeeling.

In her book, *Contested Landscape: the story of Darjeeling* (2007), Aditi Chatterjee gives us a detailed account of the formation of Darjeeling as a hill-station and the nature of society, followed by the period of instability in the hills with the Gorkhaland agitation of the late 20th century..

The creation of space by the colonial authority in Darjeeling led to a formation of a subaltern category of masses in Darjeeling, argues Jayatee Sharma(2016) from an orientalist interpretation. Objectification of the people as an ideal instrument of war and as laborers and workers for the British. Sharma stresses that due to the colonial presence in the hills and for development purposes, the massive influx of individuals settling in the area created a new proletarian mass in the Hills.

Sarah Shneiderman, in her study of Thangmi migrants in Darjeeling, draws out the subjectivities of these migrants. She has looked into the migratory pattern among the Thangmis and its reasons. Her historical study provides a way to analyse the notion of belonging with factors such as the coming of new nation-states in the Himalayan region and the adaptation of this group to sustain itself within the social configuration of Nepal and Darjeeling, where mechanisms to adapt are different with respective spaces.

Gopal Gurung in *Mongolism, Bahunism and Maoism* (2006) brings an argument highlighting the state of Nepali politics. His arguments trace the historical aspects of Caste system in Nepal and its implication in the present day Nepali politics, with reference to the unification of Nepal that was instrumental in subjugating the indigenous groups of the region.

Richard Burghart (1984) from a historical point of view in *Formation of the concept of Nepal as a nation-state*, portrays the process in which Nepal as a Nation was perceived by the members of the state. Unification of Nepal being the starting point in its history which brought the whole region under one particular frame. In the first phase of identifying Nepal as a nation, interaction with British was one aspect where there was a need to identify Nepal as a nation. The uniqueness of Nepal was portrayed from taking up Hinduism as a religion of the state. Indoctrination of Nepali as a national language the demarcation of political boundaries and a distinct cultural appropriation were the stages that were instrumental in Nepal's formation as a nation state.

Sangay Tamang and Hoineilhing Sitlhou (2018) show the ethnic revivalism among the Nepalis in Darjeeling. It looks into how ethnic identities have generated pace primarily as a result of the demand for Gorkhaland taking place in Darjeeling during 1980s and 2013.

Scholarly works done on Nepali community of Darjeeling is located around the post-colonial conditions of Darjeeling and is elusive on the notion of community formation that took place during the colonial period. Scholars have taken diverse vantage points to look at the conditions of society in Darjeeling. Kumar Pradhan in his analysis of unification of Nepal a result of the conquest of Gorkha dynasty under Prithivi Narayan Shah shows the process in which Nepal as a country was assimilated into one along with the implications of the conquest for the ethnic groups of Eastern Nepal. His study slightly touches the issues of Nepali community in Darjeeling during that particular time frame especially on the lines of migration, it primarily shows the nature and consequences of Gorkha Conquest looking into the social, political and economic implications for the ethnic groups of Eastern Nepal. Nilambar Chettri's work revolves around the problems of Nepali community, which can be seen as the ideas of Janajati coming up in the hills among the groups, one of the offshoots of Gorkhaland movement that provided an impetus to the fragmentation of Nepali politics on the lines of ethnicity/Sangay Tamang and Hoineilhing Sitlhou's work also tries to locate the same problematics of ethnic revivalism. Chettri however brings out the issue of identification on the basis of colonial categorisation of these groups which was the part of census data taken by the Colonial authorities in Darjeeling becoming a pre-requisite for the basis of self-identification among the groups.

Andreas Hofer provides an entry point to understand the caste system in Nepal, his work studies the legal code of Nepal, The Muluki Ain. The legal setup incorporated by the state to control the individual's daily life and segregate the society purely incorporated under the Hindu law where the power rest on the idea of a state. It was instrumental in framing the caste identities which shaped the Nepalese society in the current context. Hofers study is limited to the implication of legal code of Nepal, it does

not highlight the transformation of caste relations where the same groups underwent an interaction with the colonial situation mainly in Darjeeling, which saw an influx of groups migrating from Nepal.

Aditi Chatterjee provides an detailed description of Darjeeling as an hill-station during the Colonial period, depicts how colonial presence could transform Darjeeling as a space into a hill-station, she argues on the lines of urbanism and how urbanism could provide a basis for migration of Nepalis in Darjeeling. Her work does not focus mainly on the process on which community was formed and the social, economic and political factors that were the causes in the transformation of the ethnic groups into a Nepali community. Her study extends to the contestations on basis of Identity among the Nepali community. Gorkhaland movement becomes a central theme in understanding the contestations of the Nepali community for the demand of a separate state during the social movement of 1986 in Darjeeling hills.

Bidhan Golay's work focuses on the subjectivities of the Nepali community towards colonialism. It can be said that colonialism has provided by certain categories to Nepali community. Identifying Nepali community on the lines of Martial race can be seen as how colonial authorities have used these notions and have been internalised by the community as an identity. He provides a way into looking into the colonial categorisation of Nepali community and implications that come up with it

Jayatee Sharma focuses on how process of proletarianization among migrant population in Darjeeling took place, from an economic stand point she points out it was mainly due to the colonial presence in hills were primary cause for the migration of the workers in the hills. While Sarah Shneiderman's work also focuses on the aspect of migration of workers who come to Darjeeling looking for prospects of work, her work primarily

looks into the subjectivities of the workers and their entanglements with Darjeeling and their home in Nepal.

Tanka Bahadur Subba has focused primarily on the issue of first Gorkhaland movement taking place during 1986 in Darjeeling and areas around it, he tries to locate the realities of the social movement and on what aspects did it function. His study gives little emphasis to the historical process taking place during late 19th century and early 20th century where mobilisation to frame a Nepali community was taking place. He proposes an alternative way to look into subjectivities of Nepali community in hills. Subba also looks into the ethnic dimensions of the Nepalis of Darjeeling, he invokes the notion of indigeneity among the members of Nepali community. His work does not dwell into the colonial period nor the ethnic dimensions of the groups of Darjeeling, this has to be an integral point while looking into the social realities of this area.

Richard Burgharts provides an idea on how Nepal as a nation-state was perceived by its citizens. In his analysis he looks into three stages appropriated by state to put in the idea of Nepal among its citizens. The cultural, political, religion and linguistic aspects became a modes of identifying Nepal as a nation-state among its members. These elements become primary modes of propagating the idea of Nation-state.

Gopal Gurung's work primarily is located around the social and political spheres of the Nepal, extending to Sikkim and Darjeeling where Nepali speaking population is high in number compared to the rest of India. He looks into the caste based mechanisms operating in the politics questioning the caste relations in Nepal which has implicated violence towards the ethnic group as he terms them the indigenous population of the country. His work can be regarded as highly polemical in nature, which calls for ethnicization of politics among the Nepalis.

Scholarly work on Darjeeling and its realities have focused mainly on the post-colonial condition which are primarily related to the social movements, how it operated and its implications. There has been less to little emphasis on the colonial realities that were the part of the society. Thus, Colonialism of India that was instrumental in annexing Darjeeling as a part of India along with conquest of Gorkha Dynasty that created Nepal as a nation that was historically diverse and fragmented. Unification of Nepal created a scenario that was exploitative and led to the marginalisation of groups that were part of eastern Nepal. An absence of emphasis on two historical events which has been given little emphasis provides a way to look into the conditions during that particular time-frame. The community formation of Nepalis in Darjeeling has to be taken as a base to understand the social along with political realities of Darjeeling as history provides an entry point to look into how society functioned. This study tries to fill the gap that has been overlooked by previous work done on the region and Nepali community of Darjeeling. It takes the early 20th century as a period in history of the area that saw a community formation among the migrant population in Darjeeling and identifying themselves as Nepalis.

Research questions.

The research questions of this study are the following.

- What role did the political, economic, and social conditions in Nepal for the ethnic groups create a need to migrate towards Darjeeling?
- What were the changes in social relations among the migrated ethnic groups in Darjeeling?
- How were the mechanisms appropriated to identify themselves as a community in a new space?

Statement of the problem

Previous scholarly work Darjeeling's social conditions are centred around the area's social movement, the social structure based on caste-tribe relations, labour relations, and the crisis and contestations on the identity among people in hills. Darjeeling during the colonial period has only been looked at as a reference point with little importance. This research will focus on the demands created for the groups from eastern Nepal under colonialism in Darjeeling and look into political, economic, and social conditions in both the spaces of Eastern Nepal and Darjeeling. focusing on the mechanisms incorporated by migrant groups to identify themselves as Nepalis of Darjeeling.

Research Methods

This study is based on qualitative research methods. It is rooted in the historical method which looks into events taking place primarily in the context of Darjeeling. The primary data for the study has been gathered from archival sources, drawing data from the colonial reports mainly census and statistical data concerning tea gardens collected by the British officials during the period and textual sources of Mulki Ain the legal code of Nepal in coming to use since 1853. The secondary sources are gathered from books, articles, and historical narratives from individuals.

Chapters

The study is divided into five chapters that deal with the topic of the study. Colonialism and the making of a Nepali Identity: A sociological study of Community Formation in the early 20th century Darjeeling. First chapter titled Introduction, provides an overview of the study. It emphasises on Darjeeling as a space and the way in which this study

operates looking into historical aspects of the region since this study is based on historical sociology it comes up from the idea of cause and effect. Looking at the two historical events concerning the region of Darjeeling and Eastern Nepal in this case the Colonial presence in Darjeeling and The unification of Nepal primarily focusing on the region of Eastern part of Nepal. highlighting the previous research works done concerning the region and Nepali speaking population of Darjeeling, certain research works from Nepal also have been looked into as Nepal and Darjeeling intersect each other on various levels. This chapter also tries to locate research gaps found in previous studies looking into the space of Darjeeling mainly concerning social, political and economic aspects. Following the literature review, research questions are proposed that come out with regard to the gaps found with respect to pervious literature regarding the space and the community. it tries to fill the gaps present with regard to work done in Darjeeling along with the statement of problem which highlights the aspects that have been located and needs to be thoroughly studied. Lastly the chapter also gives an insight about the research methodology undertaken in the study and modes of data collection required to substantiate the claims presented in the study.

The second chapter titled Conceptual and Theoretical Framework, dealing mainly with concept and theories deemed central to the study providing a base to generate answers for the questions posed in the study. These concepts and theoretical framework are mainly taken up from scholarly work concerning the realities of western societies and Indian society. Cases of nationalism, identity, modernity, coloniality and ethnic groups are universal in analysing societies. These terms have significance to the study as they have been regarded to play a role in making of any community.

Third chapter titled Society in Eastern Nepal: The implication of Gorkha Conquest deals primarily with the political, social and economic aspects of society in Eastern

Nepal. This chapter is divided into four parts including a conclusion to the chapter. core idea behind the chapter is to locate an historical event and provide a sociological understanding about society in eastern Nepal concerning the ethnic groups of this region. An emphasis is given to Gorkha conquest of Nepal, resulting into its unification as a nation. The unification of Nepal bringing in structural changes in the dimension of political, social and economic aspects that are deemed to be exploitative in nature for the ethnic groups of this region. This chapter dwells into looking at the factors put forth by the unification, it becomes a base to look into the community formation among the Nepalis in Darjeeling, as core idea behind this is to generate answers behind the questions posed in terms of migration among ethnic groups from this region.

The fourth chapter, The Colonial Effect: Making of a Nepali Community in Darjeeling. this chapter deals specifically with the colonial presence in Darjeeling. Taking Colonialism as another causal event in history provides an insight on the community formation taking place in Darjeeling. This chapter is divided into four parts along with conclusion looking into ideas and British interpretation with regard to Darjeeling transforming into a hill-station. It also looks upon the economic determinants which Darjeeling as a space provided for the British and also looking into the process undertaken by the ethnic groups to form a community in the hills. Pushed by determinants of economy and modernity injected by colonialism mainly through education among these groups. There is a process of amalgamation among them while language being the basis for an identity. Linking with arguments provided in third chapter, this chapter looks into the conditions provided by colonial presence for the movement of ethnic groups from Eastern Nepal towards Darjeeling and colonial presence bringing out its forms of modernity for these ethnic groups. The process of community formation can be seen with an amalgamation of these ethnic groups coming

together and framing a distinct community on the basis mainly coming from language and affinity to the place. A new Nepali identity framed by these groups were also based on while disregarding their traditional markers are the main arguments of this chapter. Lastly, the fifth chapter Conclusion provides the answers to the questions posed in the study and what this study has to offer. It states what the study has appropriated and ideas central to the arguments posed in this study. The main premise of the study being the community formation which is a pre-requisite for a contestations based on identity in any community. This study has tried to show the importance of interrelations of history and sociology in an analysis of an understanding the realities of a community.

Chapter-2

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework.

2.1 Introduction.

The study undertaken is situated on the premise of Historical Sociology. Understanding the process and the factors taking place at a particular point in history has demanded incorporating certain concepts and frameworks in the study. It provided an avenue to look at the realities of a period in forming a community that created a distinct identity among the people of Darjeeling.

The concepts of colonialism, ethnicity, public sphere, and identity are taken along with theoretical frameworks that are required to understand the process of community formation among groups. Benedict Anderson's imagined community has been a pivotal part of framing arguments in the study on the lines of identity.

The study has its roots in history; the notion of cause and effect is considered. Historian E.H Carr has provided the theoretical framework of Causality to look into the primary factors of cause in history. Theoretical framework on colonialism, ways to look into it, and its assessments are provided by the ideas of George Balandier.

Community formation is also an act of social cohesion among the groups in society. In the Durkheimian sense, Gellner has provided a framework on how social cohesion occurs and operations undertaken to form cohesion among social groups. Apart from Gellner, Anthony Smith invokes the idea of Nationalism looking at the western societies.

Foucault based his theory of governmentality on how the state as an entity has functioned. The notion of governmentality gives an insight into how the state uses its position to create specific codes. The state itself legalizes the nature of these codes, giving rise to specific social conditions among the subjects of the state.

The concept of coloniality takes us to consider the implications of colonialism from a point where capitalism had provided an agency for colonialism to spread and establish itself as a universal phenomenon all over the globe. The implications of colonialism shown by Quijano assert the distortion of social relations and identities. It takes us to different ways to think and theorize about colonialism and capitalism as objects of inquiry in history.

Modernity is an event in history that involves the progress of society. Modernity as an event could be something organic, coming from society or external agents, such as modernity as an effect of colonialism, Colonial modernity. Walter D Mignolo, in this case, argues along the lines of how modernity is impactful for the colonized societies but has also resulted in the distortion of local histories, languages, and traditions while coming in contact with the colonizers.

Ethnicity as a concept used in the study and the ethnic groups under study has been broken into the original identification rather than clubbing them as one distinct group as its demand for clarity. Brath's study on Ethnic groups has been appropriated in the study as his approach has broken down to what defines an ethnic group.

Bauman argues that identity and belongingness provide a framework to examine how identities are framed with the notion of belongingness to a space. Historically dislocation of groups has been a common phenomenon in every form of society. Bauman's analysis provides us with how to look at identity formation among social groups with the notion of belongingness.

The public sphere has been an integral part of modern society, moving from Habermas and appropriating Taylor's analysis of the Public sphere concerning space as it demands a sense of imagination among the people and the groups to locate themselves within a particular space.

2.2 Concepts and Theoretical framework.

George Balandier gives us a theoretical approach to looking into colonialism. He describes colonialism as a periodic episode in totality and discusses ways to deal with it. The colonial situation he puts is used to understand the current realities rather than for a reconstitution of the historical process. He says that a psychoanalyst will look at the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, understanding the terms and the relationship. As he puts it, the process of developing knowledge and problematizing the colonial situation is based on the scholar's orientation to understand the colonial situation. Based on these orientations, results can be multiple. Conditions brought forward by the colonial situation and the approach taken by academia to comprehend the realities of the social world, whether cultural, economic, or political. Instead of taking them as a whole.⁹ Balandier brings forth the idea that dissecting layers and understanding them will contribute to constructing knowledge concerning studying colonized societies regarding the colonial situation.

E.H Car brings out the importance of the idea of Causality. Laws of Causality have been central in historical studies, Questions of what was the cause and what were results of these causes. There are laws governing the concept of cause in historical events. These historical events helped shape society in the current context. Although other laws govern the idea of Causality, the centrality of human action cannot be

⁹ George Balandier, 2009: *The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach*. 1st Ed Stephen Howe, *The Imperial Histories Reader*. Routledge. Pp 23-38

overlooked since the actions and motives of individuals shape society and, in turn, the historical aspects of society. The humanistic tendency in studying historical societies cannot be passed away but has to be given due importance. Human action, as argued, gives shape to the idea of causes. Carr further emphasizes the hierarchy of causes signifying a reductionist way to look into the idea of cause, as they can be multiple. Categorizing causes and putting them into a particular structure would help point out the actual causes. This categorical application leads the historian to get clarity in conceptualizing the roots of the transformation of society as a whole. Pointing out the characters at play, whether economic, as classical Marxists would emphasize, or political scientists would point out the political causes. The concept of cause and the laws governing them have to be central in history as it would enhance clarity regarding the fundamental causes that turned society in a different direction.¹⁰

Social cohesion is derived from the classical school of thought, mainly through the Durkheimian understanding of society. The units in society and the factors that bring people together form groups. Cohesion means coming together as individuals and forming a group. In the larger context, the groups come together and form a larger unit in society. Gellner theorizes that the idea of cohesion, organic and mechanical solidarity brought forth by Durkheim throws light on the character of society, while in an organic society, as Durkheim states, the nature of cohesion and integration in the society has been interdependent among the actors mainly due to the division of labour. In the stage of mechanical solidarity, interdependence and integration among actors in the society become tighter in the society with the advanced division of labour. Simple observation in a larger context, cohesion can be coming of different clans or tribes to

¹⁰ E.H Carr, 1990: *What is History?*. Penguin Books, London. p90-109

form a distinct group, incorporating standard belief systems, mainly religion.¹¹ Anthony Smith also brings out theoretical perspective on Nationalism, he looks into the formation of National movements in the western societies. Provoking the notion of territory, he argues that without territory any social group cannot invoke fraternity and solidarity which is central to the national ideals. Territory becomes a category that brings the sense of kinship among the members of society and brotherhood and providing a basis for the basis of homeland among the people. History also becomes a significant point giving credibility to their claims when it comes to demanding their rights in the political domain.¹²

Charles Taylor uses the term 'Public Sphere' to highlight the nature of modern society. Habermas had previously coined the term 'Public Sphere' to denote societal changes with the rise of new strata of society called the bourgeoisie. Taylor argues that the sphere of the public is a shared space for men to bring out their opinions, but it cannot exist without imagination and common cultural understanding. He brings up the concept of local and non-local common spaces, topical and meta-topical. These spaces are constituted with an understanding between the actors, and these spaces bind them together. Spaces generate a social imagination among the actors, and the public sphere is the area of contention mainly for attaining a common goal.¹³

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson brings forth the idea that the roots of nationalism in the European centres came up with the rise of print capitalism. Print capitalism, as Anderson argues, brought people together to imagine themselves within a space to mobilize themselves and bring up a common goal. The effect of print - capitalism is such that it could generate a feeling of togetherness. The togetherness,

¹¹ E. Gellner, 1987. Culture Identity and Politics. Cambridge university Press. Ch-1

¹²Anthony D Smith,1979: Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. Australian University Press, Canberra.p2

¹³ Charles Taylor,2004. Modern social imaginaries, Duke University Press. Ch-6

according to Anderson, was an imagined one since it was not a concrete and prescribed unit like family but an imagined concept that the state or a group inducted mainly to identify themselves in the larger framework of the nation-state through the medium of language and print-capitalism. The goal is to identify themselves as similar to the members of a politically demarcated society. His theory of imagined communities can be applied while studying colonial societies. Print capitalism has been central in framing identities that make individuals imagine themselves to be distinct from other groups.¹⁴

Identity as a concept has been an elusive one. It is one of the most argued concepts in modern times. Zygmunt Bauman argues that the term identity mainly focuses on belongingness. Identity generates questions about who we are and where we locate ourselves in the social world. How do we have that sense of affinity with the members of the social world. These questions are answered along the lines of identity, and it can be of multiple as identity is a concept that is layered into distinct societal spheres. An individual has multiple markers of identity, and in the process of interacting in the social world, these markers are taken up and used by the individual in society. Identity in the larger framework concerning groups is used to contest or negotiate with other groups and the nation-state. Identity generates the feeling of them and us in contestation and access to resources. The contestations are on the lines of indigeneity and belonging to a space. The main argument of Bauman is based on the idea of belongingness, how we locate our identity based on belonging as identity is never static and is multi-layered and human society has always experienced displacement with regard to space. Displacements among the members of certain groups from their original space to a new

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, 1983: *Imagined Communities- Reflections on origin and spread of Nationalism*, Verso.

space led them to negotiate their identity and undergo a process to create a new identity.¹⁵

Michel Foucault argues that the state uses specific, nuanced mechanisms to control the masses, and the relation among them changes with every stage the society passes on. He points out that with every stage, the system of governance has its unique character. Population living within the demarcated areas of the state are characterized as subjects that are totally under the purview of the state. The state, in turn, brings in specific codes that the subjects have to comply with, and these codes function mainly to control and regulate the subjects of the state. Foucault has conceptualized this act of state as governmentality.¹⁶ Which will be thoroughly problematized in Chapter 3 regarding the legal code of Nepal, Mulki Ain.

Frederick Barth's approach to is grounded on empirical and theoretical points. How does the ethnic feeling among the individuals and the groups come up? He claims that they are the manifestations of the actors to identify themselves with a particular group. The units of representation, according to Barth, are race, language, and culture. These units create boundaries among the groups that help them identify them amongst the other groups in society, mainly for interaction and contestations. Three units of representations of race, language and culture as unique markers are sometimes shredded, and these facts can only be analysed upon taking up empirical evidence. It helps us look precisely at the dichotomy among the ethnic groups and the factors that bring them apart. Besides race, language, and culture, the territory is an important marker of ethnic affinity, as territory encloses a particular ethnic group and turns it into a homogenous unit. Barth's analysis also extends to the polyethnic social systems where different ethnic groups accommodate themselves mainly in colonial society. In such

¹⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, 2004. *Identity, Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Polity Press, Cambridge. UK

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, 2009. *Security, Territory and Population: Lectures At The College De France*. Ed Michel Senhart, Trans Graham Burchell. Pp 87-130

circumstances, how do they bring out dichotomy within a social setup such as a colonial one? Barth suggests a categorical differentiation among the ethnic groups through empirical means and looks at the cultural distinctions among them, each category having its specific values.¹⁷

According to Walter D Mignolo, looking at modernity as a concept while dealing with the colonized society does not bring out the answers. Instead, they are veiled by the Eurocentric approach in looking at the colonized societies. His argument is framed that modernity is seen as a phenomenon that can emancipate the colonized societies after exposure to the western form of society. He brings forth a different way of looking at the colonized societies that demand looking thoroughly not at modernity but at the implications colonialism has brought for the colonized societies. These arguments are primarily on the epistemic dominance of European knowledge¹⁸. However, certain ruptures in his analysis bring us to look at the local histories of the colonized societies, mainly the migrated groups that were either forced or moved voluntarily to new spaces. The local histories of these groups had to be redefined and reconstructed with the prevailing circumstances as they demanded an affinity to a place.

The concept of coloniality, by Annibal Quijano, presses on the implications of colonialism on Latin American societies. The European colonialism of the world had brought most of the regions under it, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Making colonialism a universal phenomenon, the concept of coloniality brought out by Quijano shows a rise of capitalism along with colonialism going hand in hand. The latter supported the former for its rise and establishment globally. The rise of capitalism as a primary factor and its need for labour to produce commodities gave rise to slavery

¹⁷ Frederick Barth, 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston Massachusetts. Pp9-39

¹⁸ Walter D Mignolo. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs, Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge and Border thinking*. Princeton University Press, Oxford. UK p49-90

among African communities and the exploitation of societies in the East, mainly in India. Coloniality also prescribes the idea of the change of subjectivity among the colonized groups.¹⁹ The context of Nepali identity, its inception, and subjectivity have rooted within the colonial interpretation that is translated to a racist distribution of labour as Quijano formulates with the concept of coloniality of power.

2.3 Society in Eastern Nepal- The implications of the Gorkha conquest

The society in eastern Nepal is a primary focus of this study, owing to the distinct nature of the society in Nepal. The study has limited it to the areas of Eastern Nepal as the majority of the migrant population in Darjeeling during the colonial period were from these areas. This concerned chapter is divided into three parts. It focuses mainly on the Conquest of Nepal under Prithivi Narayan Shah, the social aspect arising with the implementation of Mulki Ain in unified Nepal, and the economic implications as a result of the reformation of land in Eastern Nepal.

Theoretical framework situated on the idea of Causality helps in describing a specific incident in a region's history, primarily its eastern regions. Kumar Pradhan() describes the annexation of Nepal as an ambition of Prithivi Narayan Shah. Owing to the fragmented character and the lack of leadership in the region due to its geographical features, as a Himalayan region, the area of Eastern Nepal was diverse as a region, politically and socially. Describing the region's society, the concept of an ethnic group is a new area of debate, and a recent one is incorporated into the chapter. The development of identity has added stimulus to the study of ethnicity. While one group constantly identifies itself against the other with markers of ethnicity such as language and tradition. The studies previously conducted have not examined contestations on

¹⁹ Annibal Quijano, 2000: Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. *Neplanta*, Views from South, Volume 1, Issue 3. Pp 533-580.

identity since there was no mobilization of these groups along the lines of identity in the context of ethnicity. The purpose of identifying these groups as ethnic groups was to categorize them as ethnic groups to generate a sense of clarity. Recent studies on Nepal by Gerard Toffin has debated the concept of ethnicity, focusing mainly on the post-1950s Nepalese society.²⁰ Presently these ethnic debates do indeed have political inclinations. Barth's analysis of ethnicity provides a conceptualization of society in Eastern Nepal had ethnic groups present, and their markers of identity were mainly race, language, traditions, and distinct economic practices.

Schendel characterizes the regions of the Himalayas and South East Asia regions in his concept of Zomia as peculiar characteristics to the rest of the world. The shared idea about language, trade, religious and cultural affinities these regions have sustained, under cultural affinities. he describes this area as an ethnic scatter zone, each having its unique kinship system.²¹ This observation can be validated by the fragmentation of political leadership in Nepal before the annexation of Nepal since the kingdom of Gorkha was located in the western part, and certain parts of eastern Nepal were under the Sena kingdom. In comparison, the rest of these regions had their political setup under their Chieftains.

The political, social, and economic factors arising from the annexation of Nepal by Prithivi Narayan Shah were instrumental in shaping the society in Nepal. In any society that changes in the political process, the social conditions are modified to benefit the ruling class. In the words of Hobsbawm, these instances can be considered inventing

²⁰ Gerard Toffin, 2014: Autochthony and Indigeneity in Nepal and the Himalayas. The Politics of Ethnicity In India, Nepal and China. Ed Marine Carrin, Pralay Kanungo, Gerard Toffin. Indian Council of Social Science Research, Primus Books. Pp 55-77

²¹ Williem Van Schendel, 2002. Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia. Environment And Planning D: Society and Space 2002, Volume 20, p8

traditions²². Over time, these practices are incorporated into society along with tradition. Injecting such practices into society normalizes over time, becoming traditions central to any society.

Gorkha Conquest, as a causal factor, can be seen to disrupt the social, political, and economic aspects of the society in Eastern Nepal. The changes in the realm of the society result from the implementation of Mulki Ain, a legal code formulated by Jung Bahadur Rana, prime minister of the newly annexed kingdom of Nepal. Michelle Foucault's analysis of the state's functions and a systematic categorization of the subjects of the state. The state as an entity develops specific standards or definitions on who fits as the subjects of the state.²³

The development of codes modern form of state has an element of legality to it. After annexing Nepal and implementing Mulki Ain as a legal code in Nepal as a state, it brought society into a singular framework of the caste system. Developing a systematic categorization of the society and subjects of the Nepali kingdom, defining *groups* as Taghadhari and Matwali. Ethnic groups from the eastern parts of Nepal were brought under the category of the caste system. Mulki Ain became a domain of governing subjects of the state. High and low status in society were ascribed to different groups. Groups following the Hindu belief system were located at the higher order, and non-Hindu groups were located at the lower order of society owing to their non-Hindu belief system.

Another aspect of the social domain in Eastern Nepal owing to Mulki Ain was changes in social contacts among these groups. The notion of purity and pollution was given primacy among the members of Nepali society. Interaction among these groups was

²² Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, 1983. *Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. pp1-14

²³ Michel Foucault, 2009. *Security, Territory and Population: Lectures At The College De France*. Ed Michel Senhart, Trans Graham Burchell

usually laid under the directions of this legal code²⁴, extending itself to the domain of an individual's private life. It can be regarded as a monumental change, governing society and structuring society which positioned the state as the supreme and the members of certain groups in the social order.

Economic aspects after the annexation turned out to be an act of economic hegemony over the ethnic groups of Eastern Nepal. The practice of Kipat in these areas symbolized the cultural and political artifacts of the ethnic groups from the regions²⁵. Rai and Limbus were the majority of the land-owning groups. The economic practice was communal, implying that these lands generally belonged to these groups and were shared among them. Each group had a leader who oversaw this practice, and sometimes his role also alleviated to a chieftain.

Kipat as an institution came under modification when eastern Nepal saw an influx of Hindu population in the region. It was mainly state-sponsored due to their affinity to the state leadership and an outcome of political favors to them. Ludwig Stiller observes a change in the dynamics of the social organization in Eastern Nepal in his study of Indreni village in Illam, a district in Eastern Nepal. Redistribution of land across the regions in the form of Raikar, Birta, and Jagir was implemented. However, land coming under Kipat was non-alienable, which meant that any outsider could not own land belonging to Rai's and Limbus. The idea behind Kipat was to safeguard these ethnic groups from outsiders occupying their land. Settlements of Brahmin, Chettri's and Jaishi's changed the land-owning pattern or structure since the influx was higher as compared to the original settlements, as noted in Stiller's study, around 51% of the household was comprised of Hindu groups, and Rail, Limbu and Tamang households

²⁴ Andras Hofer, 2004: The Caste Hierarchy and the state In Nepal- A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Himal Books. Lalitpur, Nepal.

²⁵ Ann Ambretht Forbes, 1996: The Discourse and Practice of Kipat. Kailash- A Journal of Himalayan Studies. Vol-xviii NO. 1-2 p39-80

were merely 10%²⁶. The disruption in social organization in Illam is an example of hegemony by Hindu groups over ethnic groups post-Gorkha conquest.

2.3 The Colonial Effect- Making of a Nepali Community in Darjeeling.

The process of a Nepali community formation in Darjeeling owes much to the causal factors. Previously the Gorkha conquest and now followed by the colonialism of India resulted in the establishment of Darjeeling as a hill station. Darjeeling as a space became an avenue for ethnic groups of eastern Nepal to escape political, economic, and social deprivation. They resulted in a formation of a Nepali community in the early 20th century. The process of community formation has been influenced by colonial interaction. In other words, the colonial forms of modernity awakened the need for community feeling among the migrated population to this space. The result can be seen in a rise of a small number of middle-class individuals owing to the economic and social opportunities provided by the colonial presence. This segment of the chapter is divided into three parts. Focusing primarily on establishing Darjeeling as a hill station, the economic aspect of Darjeeling, and the process undertaken to form a Nepali community centred around language.

Studies on the also Himalayas prescribe an idea mainly around the region's cultural practices, social organization, and political and economic aspects. One would question the reason why Darjeeling and its spaces were ideal for establishing a hill station. Previous studies have focused on social organization, the importance of a hill station as a sanatorium, and comparing different hill stations in India. However, historians have provided us with an opportunity to know about other reasons for establishing Darjeeling as a hill station. The theoretical aspects of coloniality brought by Quijano

²⁶ Lionel Chaplan, 1966: Land and Social Change in East Nepal. Phd Dissertation. University of London. p43

deliver on the idea of capitalism and colonialism developing together,²⁷ Darjeeling and its periphery as space was ideal for trade with Tibet owing to its location in the Himalayas. The trading opportunity provided by Darjeeling was believed to be ideal for creating trade routes from Nepal or bypassing Nepal as an entry point toward Tibet. British official and Botanist, Joseph Dalton Hooker and Brian Hodgson's survey of the area provided a detailed analysis which led to an understanding among the officials that Darjeeling was not only an ideal place for a sanatorium but also a space that would provide ample economic opportunities to other locations in Tibet and Central Asia for trade.²⁸

The development of a hill station concerning urbanization resulting in a new social organization can be seen in the work of Anthony D King.²⁹ The transformation of a space into a new hub concerning health, leisure, and economy led to new social relations. The demand for labour was created as they needed workers for developing the space, in terms of labour for the construction of buildings, roads, railways, servants for British officers, and the health, leisure, and economic aspects of labour. Darjeeling's vicinity to the kingdom of Nepal, Sikkim, and Tibet was a strategic location. It demanded that the British government establish an army cantonment. These demands for labour and army personnel were delivered by the population residing in the regions of Eastern Nepal.

The development of Darjeeling as a hill station saw the coming of modernity in the hills, the establishment of many institutions, primary schools, factories, technical schools, and hotels. This establishment catered to the European and migrant settlers in

²⁷ Annibal Quijano, 2000. Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. *Neplanta*, Views from South, Volume 1, Issue 3. P (533-580).

²⁸ David Arnold, 2006. *Tropics and the Travelling Gaze. India Landscape and Science, 1800-1856.* university of Washington Press.

²⁹ Anthony D King, 1976, *Colonial Urban Development. Culture, social power and environment.* Routledge & Keegan Paul, London. UK

the hills. The nature of these establishments was capitalist as they were to educate the migrants and create a workforce for the technical aspects required for the jobs in the factory setup. The coloniality/modernity debate by Mignolo proves modernity cannot be limited to a sense of enlightenment as interpreted from the Eurocentric way of looking at modernity among colonized³⁰. Colonial modernity has created a sense of knowing the reality experienced by the colonized. However, the mobilization of colonized society in terms of economic and social aspects has a darker side of modernity. It has to be interpreted as coloniality, where colonizers had a capitalistic interest in educating and employing the colonized. This aspect of theorizing hill stations has yet to be noticed by scholars working on this region.

The process of making a community in Darjeeling spurts out from colonial presence in the hills, with employment and access to primary education to the migrant population, there was a vibrant formation of an economically mobilized population. Apart from the social conditions in Nepal, the hierarchical division in the society concerning Mulki Ain had minimal effect in Darjeeling since most migrants came from the lower segments of the society in Nepal prescribed from Mulki Ain. A formation of a community arises mainly with an affinity to a space. Interpretation of a group with regard to a space familiar to a group becomes a sphere where they can create a space where they have a common understanding. Taylor argues that space cannot exist without imagination³¹. Darjeeling as a space provided an imagination and an affinity with regard to a space which was one of the basis for imagining they belonged to the area. Framing a public sphere was an integral part of community formation among the migrant population, which can be seen with the idea of Gorkhastan in 1907.

³⁰ Walter D Mignolo, 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs, Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge and Border thinking*. Princeton University Press, Oxford.

³¹ Charles Taylor, 2004: *Modern social imaginaries*, Duke University Press. Ch-6

The coming of different communities in the hills put forward the idea of Gorkhastan. They identified themselves as Nebula incorporation of Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepcha communities. In the process of the demand and identification as a distinct population identified with Darjeeling, the process can be seen as what Gellner formulates as a social group undergoing certain tweaks in the cultural and social domain for a distinctive social cohesion. In order to successfully operationalize social cohesion among the migrated population. The idea that language became a medium to imagine itself as a community is what Anderson has argued about language as a basis of an imagined community. With the rise of an educated class among the new Nepali population which started bringing all the communities together and identifying themselves as Nepalis while shredding their ethnic identities as they were not necessary as a distinct Nepali identity among the population in Darjeeling

Chapter-3

Society in Eastern Nepal: The Implications of Gorkha

Conquest.

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

The inherent nature of a society is that it never remains static. There are social, political and economic forces that change the face of any society—a common feature in every corner of the world. We can derive examples from spaces worldwide; there has not been any instance in any society that has not changed. The changes undergo on a structural level; in an economic aspect, society went under a makeover when it experienced the forces of capitalism. We could see the makeover of human society in every sphere through capitalism. The political too had the same effects in different spaces and led to the modification of society, mainly the creation of national identities among the members of the state.

The case of Nepal is similar in that it foresaw various societal transformations during the 18th century under the rule of Gorkhas. They were successful in creating the nation of Nepal and it was this period that saw various changes in the political, economic, and social aspects of Nepalese society. The making of Nepal as a nation also had unintentional effects, mainly concerning the alterations within the economic and social structure after the unification. These alterations created an avenue for an increase in

exploitation and inequality among the people, mainly from the eastern part of Nepal, which was generally localized and fragmented.³²

Parallelly the consolidation of power by the British in India and its creation of Hill stations created a demand for labor workers for the development of this region. One such place in proximity to Eastern Nepal was Darjeeling.

Darjeeling, as a space, became a hub for employment opportunities for the people and groups undergoing social exploitation under the Shah rule in Eastern Nepal. This chapter will argue on reasons in the context of the society in Eastern Nepal, the factors leading to the migration of the population towards a new space of Darjeeling under colonial rule.

3.2 The Gorkha Conquest of Prithvi Narayan Shah

The state of Nepal as we see it now was historically fragmented primarily owing to the geographical factor of the Himalayas, divided into many principalities under kings and chiefdoms. The fragmented nature of the area created such dynamics that there was no sense of nationhood among the people living but primarily focused on self-sufficiency. It was a space with economic and social contacts among groups from the southern part of India and the northern space of Tibet. Until the rise of the house of Gorkha, Nepal was never a unified nation. The unification of Nepal during the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah was a turning point in the history of Nepal. Stiller asserts that the creation of Nepal as a nation was the start of a modern period.³³

³² Ludwig F Stiller, (1973): The Rise of The House of Gorkha:- A study in the unification of Nepal 1768-1816. pp:7

³³ Ludwig F Stiller, (1973): The Rise of The House of Gorkha:- A study in the unification of Nepal 1768-1816. Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi. p: xiii

Stiller shows the process of Gorkhas establishing themselves as a powerful house in Nepal.³⁴ According to him, the answer lies in the gap in leadership and the ambitions of Prithvi Narayan Shah when he succeeded as the ruler of the state of Gorkha. He also points out the reasons behind the political fragmentation other than the geographical settings. Before the unification of Nepal, the region was divided mainly into two distinct zones, the western and the eastern, dominated by the princely states of Khasas, Senas and Malla kingdom. The house of Gorkhas was located in the western part of Nepal. The eastern part of Nepal was referred to as Kirats. These areas were further divided into Majh Kirant and Pallo Kirants. Mainly divisions among the family disputes in succession and migration and separation. The kingdom of Makhwanpur disintegrated due to the kingdom's division among the king's family members. The case of the Malla kingdom in Kathmandu had a similar fate after the death of King Yaksha Malla, as it created a power struggle between his heirs.

The migration of Rajputs towards the western part of Nepal after the consolidation of power by the Mughals in India contributed to the change in the political scenario in the region, especially in the Malla kingdom of Jumla. Their expertise in warfare and aristocracy helped consolidate their status in the region. The Rajput factor also contributed to the Hinduisation of the society in western areas of Nepal. The Hinduisation of the society in Western Nepal and the areas around Kathmandu can be taken as a point of reference to compare the society in Eastern Nepal as its structure was distinct from the Hindu belief system and governance.

The difference between the rulers before Prithvi Narayan Shah was that they lacked nationalistic feelings His contemporaries were focused on maintaining their boundaries and the conflict among them was barely minimal. His army consisted mainly of

³⁴ Ludwig F Stiller, (1973): *The Rise of The House of Gorkha:- A study in the unification of Nepal 1768-1816*. Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi. p32-67

Brahmin, Khas, Magar and Thakuri.³⁵ The relationship between the ruler and the ruled too was passive. They mainly concentrated on generating income with less concern about their subjects. Under his leadership, he was successful in uniting the regions overcoming obstacles that were physically conquering the regions under his opposition. His actions were based on the economic aspect, as annexing the regions would also consolidate the economic power of the house, mainly in the eastern areas that were the zones of trade, providing an entry point towards Tibet and the kingdom of Sikkim.

The conquest of annexing eastern Nepal under the Senas was mainly possible with the defection of Brahmins and Chhetris from the region, these groups were predominantly powerful in the region owing to the economic and political superiority compared to the groups that inhabited the area. The resistance in Eastern Nepal was minimal as there was no central kingdom but small kingdoms and smaller areas under various chiefs of the area that could not match the force in resisting the armies of Gorkhas. Further, treaties benefitted the people with power in these regions. Prithvi Narayan Shah had successfully annexed the region bordering the kingdom of Sikkim and carved out a new nation of Nepal. In turn, it changed the face of the region. Under the rule of the house of Gorkha, Nepal went through a series of radical transformations in terms of political, social, and economic aspects that will be discussed in the following chapter sections.

3.2 Dynamics of society in Eastern Nepal after Unification.

Across time and space in human history, wars and conflicts are found in every period. They present a way to look into the society at that particular period and are instrumental since each ruler has their ways and methods to govern his subjects. It gives us a clear picture of the nature of society under each rule. Policies and techniques of rule can be

³⁵ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p-96-97

exploitative or emancipatory, especially for the new subjects of the state. In this section, the newly annexed region of Eastern Nepal will be analysed, mainly focusing on the dynamics of the society, the social structure of the society and the structural changes brought by the unification concerning the groups living there.

Eastern Nepal was mainly located in the Himalayan ranges, a primary factor that shaped the society in this region, ethnic groups living here were located within closed spaces owing to the physical feature of the Himalayas. The rugged nature of the terrain ensured that the contacts among the groups living here were practically minimal, and the fragmented nature of settlements created a demand for these ethnic groups to have their form of economic specialization. However, primarily the economic practice was centred around basic agriculture practices of any traditional group for survival. The social structure of these groups was as such that they were an amalgamation of different clans and kindred groups. The contact among them was purely economic. Sherpas can be a point of reference in highlighting the economic practices as the area Solu Khumbu was a hub for trade between areas around Eastern Nepal and Tibet.

However, the scenario in the eastern part is unique as different ethnic groups lived there, mainly Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Lepcha, Sunuwar, and Sherpa. The settlement of these groups is a result of migration from various places, and scholars debate the genealogy of their migration.³⁶ Tamangs are regarded as groups that mainly indulge in trading horses. Apart from that, it has also been regarded as comprising the cavalry in the armies. However, these are chronicles and legends surrounding the narrative about the genealogy of these groups and how they came to these areas.

The area's social structure was endogamous, with every group amalgam of various clans coming up together. Tamang's consist of twelve clans and subclans, Rai's were

³⁶ S. K. Chatterjee, 1950: Kirata-Jana Kriti, Asiatic Society, Calcutta

categorized as Khasi gotra and Lasha gotra according to the place of their origin and there were seventy-one clans with numerous sub-clans grouped under the Rai's. Kumar Pradhan notes that they are not a homogenous group but a congeries of tribes and clans. Sunuwar has inhabited the areas near Kirat and comprises twelve thars after coming under Brahmanical influence. Sherpas, in turn, are made up of eighteen clans.³⁷ However, Pradhan asserts that they are more in number. Limbus is another group inhabiting the Limbuan region of Eastern Nepal, along with Rai's, consisting of most of the population in this area. They are not composed of a strict clan organization but are divided into various kindred groups.³⁸

Among the groups discussed, Rai, Tamang, Limbu, Sherpa, Lepchas, and Sunuwar, one common element is religious beliefs and practices. Their practice and belief make a categorical distinction from the society in western Nepal, which has a more substantial influence of Hinduism. Some groups follow Buddhism in the region, but they are mainly Newars. Gurungs have their belief system and Magars show an influence of traditional Hindu groups. Newar, as a group, is divided into Buddhist and Hindu sects. Further, they are divided into four varnas and sixty-four castes according to the nature of work and their genealogy³⁹. Newari's system of representation was complex owing to the significant number of groups and their divisions, and later they were divided according to occupation, heredity and tradition. Pradhan argues that they were the first group that formed into a group with caste divisions due to outside influence.⁴⁰ Gurungs were divided into four castes and sixteen sub-caste. They mainly followed the Bon

³⁷ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal* with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p64

³⁸ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal* with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p54

³⁹ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal* with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p 29

⁴⁰ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal* with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p23

tradition, having a lesser influence of Hinduism on them. They had their system of beliefs and primarily, they practiced Shamanism.

On the other hand, Magar's followed the Hindu belief system and were divided among seven clans.⁴¹ Compared to the former two groups, there has been an extensive Hindu influence on this group. They were a few of the first groups to come into contact with the Rajputs after their migration. As a group, they contributed workforce mainly to the armies of the Sena kingdom and later the Gorkha Kingdom. Besides these groups, there were Brahmans and Chettris in the western region of Nepal. Migrated from the far western part, they are generally referred to as Prabate Brahmins, assert their position at the top strata of society. Chatteris claim their descent from the Rajputs and other Kshatriya groups in India, following Hindu religious beliefs. The Khasa were mainly located in the hill regions of Garwal, and their language Khas-Kura has been developed and is the official language in modern-day Nepal and regions in India.⁴²

In the context of religion and its practices in Eastern Nepal, each group resembled its system of beliefs. The influence of Buddhism can be seen among the Tamangs. During any religious occasion, Tamangs use the Lamaist tradition that has its roots in Tibet. Limbus was animistic.

Shamans had no contact with Buddhism or Hinduism during any occasion related to birth or death. Similarly, Rai's, an agriculturist group, were naturalist and their form of worship was mainly rooted in the land. Sherpas, located in the upper regions of the land, were closer to Tibet, and they had more affinity towards Tibet in the context of religion. However, it has also been recorded that they were inclined towards

⁴¹ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Himal Books. p34-35

⁴² Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Himal Books. p49

Shamanism⁴³. Lepchas also follow the lines of shamanistic traditions and are closer to the influence of Tibet and its form of Buddhism. These religious practices and their beliefs are distinct from each other and do not coincide. Each group has its system of belief, structure and belief. The only overlapping factor among them is the region they come from.

The Kingdom of Gorkha had its roots in Hindu traditions. It is common among any ruling class of society with their policies and systems of government to co-inside with their values and ways of life. They try to integrate with the population of the society that they govern. After the unification, similar instances could be seen mainly in the social structure of the society. Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be interpreted in this context. He conceptualizes that certain groups of individuals in a social condition gain access to the means of production. They can regulate the masses since they have economic and social superiority.⁴⁴ In this case, the king had power to rule over the masses, through his actions, social conditions could be made according to his point of view. During the conquest, Prithvi Narayan Shah successfully generated support from many regional elites, mainly Brahmin and Chettri. It was instrumental in his conquest of Nepal. In return, they were given positions in the Kingdom of Gorkha. The ethnic groups living in the eastern regions of Nepal came under the direct control of the Shah dynasty. In other words, they came in contact with the Hindu ways of living.

Previously away from contact with the western parts, the groups in Eastern Nepal were now totally under them. There were implications about the social structure as they were now framed under the Hindu system of social structure; Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa and Lepchas in the far east were all categorized under the Hindu caste systems. Society in Eastern Nepal can be argued to have a horizontal shape. After the unification, it was

⁴³ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Himal Books. p63-67

⁴⁴ Steve Jone, 2006. *Antonio Gramsci (Critical thinkers)*. Routledge. New York. USA. p45-48

shaped vertically where Brahmins and Kshatriyas who migrated to these regions were higher due to the structural configuration of the Hindu caste system. The transformation of these groups can be highlighted as one of the main implications of the Unification of Nepal. Kumar Pradhan notes that after the conquest of Eastern Nepal by Gorkha, the Kirats, Sunuwars Tamangs and the lower caste Newars were all given the ceremonial status of Shudras.⁴⁵ The degradation of these groups' social status led to their societal exploitation, where they were looked upon and regarded as untouchables. The dynamics of the society in Eastern Nepal transformed with the unification of Nepal and the establishment of Hindu systems as it gave more power and dominance to the Hindu groups that came to this region.

3.4 The Legal Code- Mulki Ain.

Foucault describes the state as an entity whose sole purpose is to govern and regulate the population. The state develops specific modes of governance in the form of codes and legitimizes primarily on the lines of disciplining its subjects. These codes are formulated in the lines sanctioned by the law. These laws are generally followed all over the state, and they penetrate deep inside the realm of the individual regulating their daily life⁴⁶. Mulki Ain is such a case in the context of Nepal that brought not only groups but individuals under its purview. This section will highlight the implications on society by focusing on the ethnic groups of Eastern Nepal and how they successfully created hierarchies and divisions in the heterogeneous society.

⁴⁵ Kumar Pradhan, 2009. *The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Himal Books. p177

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, 2009. *Security, Territory and Population: Lectures At The College De France*. Ed Michel Senhart, Trans Graham Burchell.

After the unification of Nepal, the influence of Hinduism gathered momentum, and the state functioned on these lines. Gorkha's conquest had successfully brought the whole region under its rule resulting in the formation of a new nation-state of Nepal. However, the power of the house of Gorkhas started to dwindle after the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah. With that, Jung Bahadur Rana, the state's prime minister, could gather enough support to come into power. He was instrumental in formulating the legal code of Nepal. Mulki Ain as a legal code was compiled in 1853 and operationalized in 1854.⁴⁷ The main aim of this legal code was to bring the whole of society into one singular mode of governance.

The grading of society was based on the notion of purity and pollution. Louis Dumont theorized the Indian caste system along these lines. The notion of purity and pollution implies the division in society through the hierarchy in the social order put in by Dumont. The idea of purity and impure is a primary characteristic of the caste system in Indian society. The higher a person is located in the structure of social order, they are conceptualized to be pure or twice-born. The location of an individual in the social order is prescribed by the nature of the work an individual is indulged in. The primary function of a brahmin was to indulge in religious practices. Among the members of society, religious practices and the people who perform such acts were regarded to be pure, and these groups were successful in crystalizing their position in the social order, with the notion of purity and impurity being mainly grounded under the idea of hygiene.⁴⁸ Purity was one concrete idea, but in the case of impurity, there were several interpretations and rules. These interpretations were based on the day-to-day occasions of birth and death. The notion of purity was present in society nuancedly, mainly

⁴⁷ John Welterton: *Kings Soldiers and Priest: Nepalese Politics and The rise of Jang Bahadur Rana, 1830-1857* p 38-56

⁴⁸ Louis Dumont, 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and its Implications.*, University of Chicago Press. Chicago. p-47

regulating an individual's life in the public and private realms. The concept of purity and pollution can be brought under the social facts that Durkheim theorized, as an external entity in a social organization, certain institutions in human society impose themselves on the individual. Although they are external to the individual and are located in the structural elements of the social organization, they can be recognized by the power of external coercion, which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals. The presence of this power may be recognized in its turn either by the existence of some specific sanction or by the resistance offered against every individual effort that tends to violate it. Durkheim(1895)⁴⁹.

Incorporating the notion of purity and pollution under social facts clarifies how Mulki Ain, as a legal code, functioned. Andreas Hofer's study of Mulki Ain gives us substantial knowledge about the implementation and its operation as a legal code. Mulki Ain further highlights the primary governance mode as a modern rule technique. Walters projects the idea that governmentality explores the conditions of the possibility of the modern state.⁵⁰ This definition can be interpreted as the techniques of governance framed by the state incorporating a framework to conduct human behaviour that projects the idea of the state not as an abstract but as a concrete object present for the subjects. The core idea of the code was regulating the subjects as an aim of the state would function around these grounds. As a result, groups from the regions of eastern Nepal were incorporated into the framework put forward by the code. The effects of implementing the code were monumental in structuring Nepalese society.

Functioning on the notion of purity and pollution was instrumental in creating hierarchies. Located in the higher strata of the Hindu social order, the Brahmins, along with the Kshatriyas, could dictate the social organization as the Ain legitimized their

⁴⁹ Emile Durkheim, 1964. Rules of sociological method. Eight Edition, translated Sarah A Solovay and John H. Mueller, The Free Press. Macmillian Publishing. New York. p10

⁵⁰ William Walters, 2012. Governmentality critical encounters. Oxon, Routledge. p12

social position according to the law. In turn, the groups previously not in the Hindu form of social order were incorporated and given lower social status. According to the code, they were divided into the lines of Tagadhari, the bearers of the holy cord, and Matwali. Among the matwalis, they were distinguished as Non- enslavable Alcohol drinkers and Enslavable alcoholic drinkers. The lowest position in the social hierarchy was given to the traditional Hindu impure but touchable caste and impure and untouchable caste, translated as *pani na chalne Choi chuto halnuparnya*.⁵¹ The former non-alcohol-drinking groups were comprised of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The latter alcohol-drinking groups were Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Lepchas and the untouchable castes comprised of Damai, Kami and Sarkis in the Nepalese society.

The notion of commensality is based on eating with people from the same group, on maintaining their purity. The practice of commensality is highlighted in the Ain, where the Matwali groups have sharply defined distinctions for commensality.⁵² The demarcation of lines can be seen while sharing food and drinking water. The practice of sharing food and drinking water has to be followed strictly according to the code. The criminalization of these habits following the code demands the individual to follow the rules strictly. Kumar Pradhan and Prayag Raj Sharma have highlighted this practice among the groups in Nepal. They have noted that among the groups in eastern Nepal, such practices were to be seen after the unification. One of the consequences of Muluki Ain is the emulation of these groups as caste groups. Arguing on the notion of Sanskritization, M.N Srinivas notes that the groups located on the lower strata of the society try to emulate the habits and practices of the groups from the higher strata of the social order. However, Pradhan's analysis is strictly focused on the consequences of the

⁵¹ Andras Hofer, 2004: The Caste Hierarchy and the state In Nepal- A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Himal Books. Lalitpur, Nepal. p17- 34

⁵² Andras Hofer, 2004: The Caste Hierarchy and the state In Nepal- A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Himal Books. Lalitpur, Nepal. p17- 34

unification of Nepal and Sharma highlights the nature and the process of Sanskritization followed by the introduction of the legal code.⁵³

The legal code was instrumental in regulating marriage among groups making up the society in Nepal, and there were provisions giving more prominence to groups located in the higher segments. The society primarily endogamous previously was made much more stringent and rigid, a Tagadhari in under no circumstances could marry a Matwali woman, and the laws on this matter were highly controlled; however, a matwali man could marry a tagadhari woman, but certain implications to it were lenient compared to the punishment that would be carried on the matwali than the tagadhari.⁵⁴ Rules concerning marriage highlight a higher level of difference and inequality in its operation among conventional Hindus and the non- Hindus.

Mulki Ain also denoted a category apart from the Tagadhari and Matwali. Within the category of Matwali, certain groups were identified as non-enslaveable alcoholic drinkers and enslavable alcoholic drinkers. The groups brought into the category of the enslavable alcoholic drinkers were mostly the Bhotyas, awaliyas, and the kiratas, the categorization of these groups as enslavable alcoholic drinkers was a result of the pressing need for recruits in the army during the wars between the British and Tibet.⁵⁵ In this case, Mulki Ain was incorporated with the demands created according to policies of the state, there were also instances where there were changes in the identification of these groups, Hofer also notes that in the context of Limbus, their identification of an enslavable alcoholic drinker was abolished as a result of their contribution during the war against Tibet. The provisions for enslaved persons were

⁵³ Prayag Raj Sharma, 1977: Caste Social Mobility and Sanskritization: A study of Nepal's Old Legal Code. Kailash. Vol.5(4),p277-299.

⁵⁴ Andras Hofer, 2004: The Caste Hierarchy and the state In Nepal- A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Himal Books. Lalitpur, Nepal. p35-59

⁵⁵ Kumar Pradhan, 2009. The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books p209

limited as they were under the legal and administrative control of the state. The aristocracy and political elite mainly came from the upper section of the hierarchy comprising the Thakuri, Brahmins and Chettri castes. The power yielded by the political elite and the aristocracy led to the further impoverishment of these groups socially, controlling the social mobility among these groups.

Hofer's case study of Tamang and rules on the use of hookah can be used to showcase the operation of Mulki Ain.⁵⁶ While sharing hookah among Tamang, the tube is shared mouth to mouth. In rare cases mouthpiece is wiped by hand. Sharing hookah with members from other caste groups Gurung, Ghale and Magars, the mouthpiece and the tube are removed even by Tamang women married to these groups. While sharing a hookah with Brahmin, Thakuri, Chettri and Newars from the hills, purity is maintained at a higher level. They only accept the water bowl and smoke by forming a tube with their hands, they do this by connecting the neck of the bowl by their hands. Further they use a leaf around the hand to keep bodily contact minimal. Contacts with the lower caste and untouchables are refrained by Tamangs. The case of Tamang depicts the idea of Sanskritization among them and how purity as a notion works. Due to unification and later Mulki Ain, they were forced into the caste structure in Nepal, putting them in the lower rungs of social order. This new social order forced them to adapt and identify themselves as a group demarcating rigid boundaries against groups located beneath them that were previously absent before unification and Mulki Ain.

3.5 Reformation of land after unification.

A new system of land ownership appropriated by the state, framing a new relationship among the ruling elite, land owners, peasants and land itself. The state was the ultimate

⁵⁶ Andras Hofer, 2004: The Caste Hierarchy and the state In Nepal- A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854. Himal Books. Lalitpur, Nepal. pp199-202

owner and brought in new forms and laws for the land. Apart from the unification and the legal code, the reformation of land led to economic depriving the groups in Eastern Nepal.

A new system of land reformation and ownership was incorporated under the kingdom of Gorkha. They were Raikar, Birta, Guthi, Jagir, Rakam and the system of Kipat in the Eastern regions.⁵⁷ This system of land ownership as a result of the policy of the state, under the system of Raikar any individual could own and cultivate the land, the state would grant a portion of land to an individual or certain religious institutions. The other form of land ownership was the offshoots of the Raikar system. Birta can be interpreted as a donation from the state to individuals and particular institutions as a means of livelihood. It was mainly given to religious institutions, nobility symbolizing the individual's higher social and economic status. Guthi is another form of the Birta system, but with institutional approval, the state had the power to nullify Birta grants. Guthi was only meant for religious and charitable institutions; hence this kind of land ownership was permanent, and the state did not revoke it either. Jagir was given mainly as compensation for their duty to the state, limited to those working for the government. They were the ultimate owner of the land having peasants working under them. Rakam, as a form of land ownership, came under all these three categories. It was not a donation by the government but by an individual owning the land in the form of Raikar, Guthi or Birta. The individual was merely a cultivator who had gained the right to cultivate the land under this system. They were required to pay a certain amount of their produce to the government in cash or kind. It was contrasting to these systems of land ownership. The owners under these four systems of land ownership were

⁵⁷ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, 1976: Land ownership in Nepal. University of California, Berkeley. p16

individuals Hindu elites from the Nepalese society, the system of kipat is, however, contrasting to them.

One of the main features of the society in Eastern Nepal is land ownership. A unique feature of the system among the groups in Eastern Nepal was the system of Kipat, the communal ownership of land. The land is the primary means of production in any society based on the agrarian system. Under the system of Kipat, the land was shared among the group members. the practice of Kipat was primarily common among the Rai and Limbu. It has also been argued to be a cultural and political artefact for these groups,⁵⁸ unlike the previous land-owning systems, Kipat was non-alienable and could not be bought by the members of other groups. The use of land was communal and in certain cases, it was hereditary. It was supposed to protect the rights of these ethnic groups. Apart from cultivating areas, Kipat also meant ownership of wastelands and forests by these ethnic groups. Under the kit system in Eastern Nepal, most of the land was under the ethnic groups, mainly Limbus and Rai.

Kirat land was generally brought under the jurisdiction of a Gorkha officer Although there were provisions regarding the Kipat land ownership, Gorkha rulers ensured sending their officers to regulate these areas.⁵⁹ The unexplored space of Eastern Nepal oversaw the movement of Hindu groups from the western parts, and the contact between them and the hierarchy created by the legal code weakened their social and economic status. Pradhan notes that these factors gradually decreased the ownership of Kipat lands and transformed them into Raikar lands.⁶⁰ Regmi shows that the loss of land was also related to the practice of moneylending among the groups with the

⁵⁸ Ann Ambretht Forbes, 1996: The Discourse and Practice of Kipat. Kailash- A Journal of Himalayan Studies. Vol-xviii NO. 1-2 p39-80

⁵⁹ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p191

⁶⁰ Kumar Pradhan, 2009: The Gorkha Conquest: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books. p197-209

moneylending class among the Brahmins. The land was mortgaged for the loan taken, and in cases of the unfulfillment of payment, the land was confiscated and turned into raikar land.⁶¹ There were instances among the Kiratas to ensure mobility in terms of social status. The Kirats donated kipat lands to get privileges from the state, ensuring the loss of land held by the kirats to the state.

After the unification, the reformation of land ownership led to economic deprivation among the ethnic groups, mainly the Rais and Limbus. They were the land-holding groups in Kirants. The economic impoverishment resulted from shrewd transactions between the elite brahmins and the Kirats, along with the state policies and actions that ensured its dominance along with its elite nobility. Loss of land meant deprivation of opportunities for economic activities and sustaining oneself, an ideal scenario for any individual or a group to migrate towards new spaces.

3.6 Conclusion

The conquest of Prithvi Narayan Shah was successful in forging a nation, bringing regions under the house of Gorkha and cementing it as a powerful house. Unification had its own set of implications for the ethnic groups in Eastern Nepal, along with the consolidation of the political elite in the area displaced the traditional power dynamics. While they were never grouped in any way together and had autonomy in their way of life and rule, unification turned them into lower caste groups with continuous change in the structural configuration of the society, with the domination of Hindu groups leading to the degradation of their status in society. Finally, the loss of the land previously held and controlled by the ethnic groups further degraded their condition in the economic

⁶¹ Mahesh Chandra Regmi, 1976: Land ownership in Nepal. University of California, Berkeley. p95

aspects. The degradation of social, political and economic conditions for the ethnic groups of Eastern Nepal was the main reason for them to migrate to Darjeeling.

Chapter 4

The Colonial effect- Making of a Nepali Community in Darjeeling.

INTRODUCTION.

The present scenario among colonized societies is to comprehend through access points provided by multiple theoretical avenues. Analysing the post-colonial society brings us to one particular understanding. It makes us believe and think that the colonial situation cannot be overlooked. The colonial situation was a stand-alone phase in colonization, where they interacted, negotiated and protested against the colonial authority for their identity. The colonial effect, as we say, has culminated in the formations of the nation-state, communalism, and forced migration resulting in the dislocation of a large number of individuals, making the middle class a new segment in the colonial society, instances as such have led to the realities experienced by the post-colonial society. Apart from these concepts, identity as a category also has culminated into the mainstream of society, formerly coming in the form of the anti-colonial movement, identifying colonized society against the colonizers. It has, in turn, moved into a different realm of society where different groups identify themselves as distinct. The nationalist discourse gave birth to the idea of India could only be imagined through the concept of the otherness against colonial rulers, in the form of culture and political otherness.⁶² Identity can only be crystallized when a group has successfully built a cohesive character within its members.

⁶² Sudipta Kaviraj, 2010: The imaginary institution of India- Politics and Ideas. Colombia University Press. Ch-5 p167-68.

Along with identifying oneself as a member of a nation-state, regional identity came into the foray. The process of identifying as an individual having their roots from a region as a Bengali or being an Assamese was constructed at regional levels. Constructing a distinct set of identities among the regions was accomplished through writing histories, narrations, and constructing a public sphere.

Constructing an identity through these means could not have been possible without the conditions of modernity impinged upon the colonized society. The form of modernity experienced in this particular location of the world was dissimilar to the one experienced in Europe, with events in their history being ideal for generating conditions appropriate for the movement of the European society into a different stage of modernity. In India, the domain of western education, the new forms of technology used in the production of goods and materials, domain of medicine were a few of the practices that characterized the modern way of life during colonial rule. These instances can be argued to characterize making way for the Indian form of modernity as its roots are within the colonial situation.

In the physical domain of the colonial effect, hill stations are one of the main areas that epitomize the nature of colonial rule. These spaces were primarily built as nostalgic homes for British government servants due to the climate in hill stations being similar to Europe, and the other factor was an escape from the tropical climate of the plains. The hill stations depicted the grandiose English way of life, inhabited by the colonial administrators and their servants, primarily Indians. Hill stations as spaces can look like a space that saw crude forms of colonial exploitation of the natives, dislocating their belief systems.⁶³ These spaces were transformed into production and processing materials that eventually contributed to increased profits for the colonial rulers. The

⁶³ Queeny Pradhan, 2017: *Empire in the Hills- Shimla, Darjeeling, Ooctamund and Mount Abu, 1820-1920*. Oxford Scholarship Online Ch- The indigenous vision.

establishment of tea plantations and the timber industry was enhanced with the connectivity of railways. The development of these hill stations, along with the tea industries, catered to employment opportunities for populations around hill stations. Darjeeling's establishment created a demand for workers for the railways, construction of roads, workers for the tea gardens and servants for the British officers. The people indulging as workers were the migrants who came to Darjeeling from Nepal. As discussed in the previous chapter, the social conditions in their native places played a role in the migration of these groups towards Darjeeling where they were exposed to the British way of life along with the western forms of education. The newly formed working class could mobilize, asserting group cohesiveness and forming a community. Hill stations can be seen as spaces for social changes and contentions among the societies of this hill station, later culminating in post-colonial demands for a separate state in Darjeeling can be argued to have its roots in colonial society.

4.2 The making of a Hill Station.

The colonial authorities mainly observed Indian society from an Orientalist view of the Indian society by the colonizers can be argued coming out from a racist conception and an idea of white man's supremacy. The towns and cities during the colonial period were densely populated as they were the main commercial hubs in the country. The hot and humid temperature and diseases added further to the dislike of the plains by the British. In order to escape the perils of the plains, they started looking for other avenues similar to climatic conditions at home and away from the Indians of the plains. Surveying and traveling across the country, which Cohn puts in the form of construction of knowledge, were a few of the modalities used by the colonial authorities to understand

the social and natural aspects of India.⁶⁴ Britishers could find certain specific locations that were similar to the climate of England and sparsely habituated. These spaces were untouched by human settlements and were rich in natural aspects along with the aesthetics of land. The Hill-stations were divided into regions. Each area of administrative and commercial importance had a hill station in its vicinity. Delhi had Shimla, along with Landor, Mussoorie and Almira, Bombay had Mahabaleshwar, Poona, and Madras developed Ootacamund in Nilgiris.⁶⁵

Hill stations were constructed and developed with extensive surveys undertaken in every aspect, from the scientific approach to understanding the climate, environment, and geographical features of the area and its surroundings. The establishment of Darjeeling came quite later during the later parts of 1830. Calcutta, an essential hub for commerce and trade for the East India Company, had no hills around it. The political conditions between Sikkim and Nepal had a role for acquiring the tract of Darjeeling by the British, they were summoned by the Rajah of Sikkim to act as a mediator to end the border dispute between Sikkim and Nepal, in return the British officers wanted the area around Darjeeling as a gift.⁶⁶ After acquiring the area, surveys were conducted, and government officers were sent to survey the area of Darjeeling and gather knowledge related to the region. These interpretations of the colonizers also contribute to the production of knowledge of the land and its society. Arnold's description of Hooker's exploration to understand the natural elements of the area, Hooker's study of the area contributed to the production of knowledge concerning the natural characteristics of the region. Col. Llyod and Dr. Chapman were sent to the region for a detailed analysis of the climatic conditions of the region. The contribution of individuals like Hooker and

⁶⁴ Bernard Cohn, 1996: Colonialism and its forms of knowledge. The British in India. Princeton University Press. p6-8

⁶⁵ Fred Pinn, 1986: The Road of Destiny Darjeeling Letters. Oxford university Press. p1

⁶⁶ Fred Pinn, 1986: The Road of Destiny Darjeeling Letters. Oxford university Press. p-2

Hodgson has created a rich literature to understand the region, and according to it, the British government could act and establish a Hill-station of Darjeeling.

Coming of the British and establishing Darjeeling as a hill station was instrumental in changing the dynamics of the society and the space itself. In 1835, purchased with an amount of 3000 rupees, Darjeeling was passed on to Britishers by the Rajah of Sikkim. Events unfolding during the handover of Darjeeling by the Raja of Sikkim are riddled with bureaucratic and political confusion between the two camps.⁶⁷ Overcoming all these adversities, the establishment of Darjeeling as a hill station took place with a steady pace by the end of 1838. Construction of a road connecting Darjeeling to the plains and completed in 1842.⁶⁸ The frequency of the progression gathered much stimulus when the area was connected by railways. The latter half of the 19th century saw rapid progress with regard to the connectivity of Darjeeling with the rest of the areas till Calcutta. Railway connectivity meant the swift transport of goods and people from the plains to Darjeeling and vice versa. The completion of roads leading to Darjeeling made it easier for the Britishers to travel from Calcutta and its adjoining areas.

This scarcely populated area was steadily converted into a resort by 1839. Darjeeling Family hotel was started by David Wilson. Advertisements could be seen appearing in the newspapers in Calcutta, and the number of hotels steadily increased to 12 in Darjeeling and 1 and 2 in the sister towns of Ghum and Kurseong.⁶⁹ Urbanisation of the town led to the construction of many buildings and spaces of importance that not only contributed towards the administrative work of the region but also to the aesthetics of the area since it was supposed to emulate British landscape the ideas behind the main

⁶⁷ Fred Pinn, 1986: *The Road of Destiny*. Darjeeling letters 1839. Oxford university press, p119-29

⁶⁸ E.C. Dozey, 1922 : *A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete iternary of tours in Sikkim and the district*. p4

⁶⁹ E.C. Dozey, 1922 : *A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete iternary of tours in Sikkim and the district*. p29-30

buildings were mainly European. Churches were built for the Britishers. The first of them was St Andrews Church, finished in 1844 and The Church of Immaculate Conception, built by 1893.⁷⁰ Government houses The Kutchery, The Bengal Secretariat building was constructed for the administrative work of the government. For recreational purposes, the planters club was founded in 1868, primarily for British officers and planters. The early years of the 20th century saw the transformation of Darjeeling as a colonial hill station with many institutions established, from hospitals to race tracks. The area was fully functioning within a colonial set-up catering to the demands of the Britishers.

Apart from being a holiday resort and a sanitorium for the British, it also became a center for capitalist expansion. Connected to the rest of the country with railways and roads, practically effortless to produce and transport the finished products to the rest of the country, mainly the European centers. Darjeeling saw the formation of the Dorjiling Garden and Plantation society in 1839, primarily focusing on growing plants that cannot be grown in the plains.⁷¹ Dorjiling Garden and planters society overlooked the ways and means for better production and the quality of the fruits produced in the area. 1841 was monumental for the dynamics of Darjeeling. The first batch of tea seeds and plants was brought to Darjeeling along with the Chinese instructors to help and teach the planters to plan the tea gardens about the process of Tea planting. Tea plantations generated income for the planters and were a source of employment for workers from areas near Darjeeling. 1914 had around 156 plantations in Darjeeling and surrounding areas, generating employment for 42,308 individuals⁷²

⁷⁰ E.C. Dozey, 1922 : A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete itenary of tours in Sikkim and the district. p74-75

⁷¹ Fred Pinn, 1986: The Road of Destiny Darjeeling Letters. Oxford university Press. p201-206

⁷² E.C. Dozey, 1922 : A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete itenary of tours in Sikkim and the district.p199

Schools were established initially by missionaries coming to the area, 1846 saw the first convent school targeting children of non-European families. Later with the increase in the population of British in Darjeeling and its surrounding areas, Anglo-vernacular schools were established mainly for children from European families. Training and industrial schools were established to educate students for Orphans and children of planters.⁷³ Educational institutes were vital for the English-speaking population in their need for employment in the British government. However, they were instrumental in the upward mobilization of the working class. From a natives point of view, the primary motive of the colonizers was to train and educate individuals in order to meet the demands of labor created by the establishment of factories for producing tea products along with the technical necessities of the railways and other industries coming up as it was a cheaper form of labor for the British government.

According to travelogues and interactions of government officers amongst themselves, Arnold bases an argument on the location of Darjeeling as a hill-station. Joseph Dalton Hooker and Brian Hodgson officers of the British government shared a common belief, Darjeeling was not only suitable for a sanatorium for invalids of Calcutta and the plains, the purpose for which it was acquired from the rajah of Sikkim but might also form one of the several upland locations where Europeans could settle permanently, supporting themselves through farming and trade and constituting military reserve in the event of a Russian invasion or Indian insurrection(Arnold:212).⁷⁴ With the strategic location of Darjeeling. In order to meet the demands for a need of facilities catering to sick soldiers and protecting Europeans in Darjeeling, military cantonments were constructed in places in and around Darjeeling. Jalapahar Convalescent Depot was completed in 1848.

⁷³E.C. Dozey, 1922 : A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete iternary of tours in Sikkim and the district. p103-110

⁷⁴ David Arnold, 2006 : Tropics and the Travelling Gaze. India Landscape and Science, 1800-1856. Uuniversity of Washington Press,. p212

The others were in Katapahar, Takdah Lebong.⁷⁵ Cantonments provided service for the colonized society. They were required as workers for construction and were recruited into the army. Also recruited as servants in the quarters of the British Officers, it provided a source of employment for them, apart from jobs in the plantations and railways.

Europeans have looked at hill stations as a home away from home, a sanatorium, these spaces located in the Himalayan region had considerable potential for economic purposes compared to other hill stations in India. Historians and scholars of the Himalayas provide another reason why the Himalayan region as space was ideal for establishing hill stations. This region has historically engaged in trade relations with Tibet and numerous parts of central Asia and was an entry point for traders and merchants from India to sell and acquire commodities. William van Spengen draws an analysis of zones in the Himalayas engaged in trade relations not only with areas around but it transcended to other parts of the world to Europe.⁷⁶ Wool, as a commodity for making shawls and a status symbol for Europeans was produced in regions of Tibet and exported to Europe from the western Himalayas.⁷⁷ Tibet as a region had a demand for commodities such as tea rubies, demands for Tibet in terms of tea were made by China. Other commodities were brought from the western part of Ladakh, Kashmir, and Nepal. Further, Deyell looks into the nature of trade in medieval Bengal, where Crowie shells were used as a medium exchange for commodities before the use of coins going all the way to southern parts of India and South East Asia, through Calcutta in

⁷⁵ E.C. Dozey, 1922 : A Concise History of the Darjeeling district since 1835 with a complete iternary of tours in Sikkim and the district.p151-153

⁷⁶ Wim van Spengen,1995: The Tibet Journal , Summer 1995, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer 1995), Library of Tibetan Works and Archives p. 18-63

⁷⁷ Michelle Maskiell, 2002:Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000. Journal of World History , Spring, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), p. 27-65

Bengal.⁷⁸ Use of Yak Tails and medicinal plants in Hindu and Buddhist religions also contributed in trade relation with Tibet in Bengal along with horse trade integral part of trade between India and Tibet.⁷⁹ In terms of the establishment of Darjeeling owing to these factors and located in a region which was located near to Calcutta, Tibet, Nepal. It promised a spread of economic activities for the Britishers, as they could sell and buy commodities by passing the Kingdom of Nepal and Sikkim, further due to its closeness to Calcutta and its ease of connectivity through railways contributed as another factor for Darjeeling to be identified as a region to establish a hill-station.

Darjeeling, as a hill station coming into completion, not only functioned as a sanatorium or an initial resort idea behind making a hill station. It also became a location for commercial activities with tea gardens and trade and a location of strategic importance for the British military. The development of the hill station progressed in two ways. The modernizing aspects pushed into the colonized society mainly through education and mobilization of colonized society in the economic realm employing many sectors the Britishers had created. They were turning the face of Darjeeling from a scarcely populated area into a full-blown colonial hill station.

4.2 Foundations of colonial economy in hills.

The colonial enterprise expanded on two realms, economy and space, Indian scenario was transformed into a capitalist set-up to cater to the demands created in England. Tea plantations exemplified the nature of the economic set-up in the hills due to the

⁷⁸ John Deyell, 2020: Hard money and Cashless Economies. Medieval Bengal and The Greater Asian World. ed John Deyell & Rila Mukherjee. From Mountain Fastness to Coastal Kingdoms: Hard money and Cashless Economies. Medieval Bengal and The Greater Asian World. Routledge, New York. p175-222.

⁷⁹ M.N Rajesh, 2020: Tibet and Bengal. Trade Routes and Long Distance Exchanges with Reference to Silver. ed John Deyell & Rila Mukherjee. From Mountain Fastness to Coastal Kingdoms: Hard money and Cashless Economies. Medieval Bengal and The Greater Asian World. Routledge p139-152

construction of knowledge about the space through scientific means adopted by the colonizers. Space and climate were adequate for the production of Tea in Darjeeling.

Tea plantations started around 1856 in Darjeeling and areas around it. Within 1866 to 1874, the number of Tea gardens increased from 39 to 113. The area under cultivation in the initial phases was merely 10,392, going up to 18,888 acres.⁸⁰ The workers hired were mainly Nepali immigrants. Wage distribution among them was Rs 3 for children, 6 for men and 4 for women. The number of workers increased from 8347 to 19,424.⁸¹ Since workers were immigrants, they were encouraged to settle permanently by the company providing basic housing facilities; this also means that the company had enough workforce all the time for their requirements.

Work in tea gardens was mainly done under the supervision of an English. Workers mainly indulged in plucking and transporting the products by the coolies. Women, too, made a significant part of the workforce, giving them the jobs of plucking the tea leaves from the plants as well as children, there was a conception among the tea planters that women and children had softer touch compared to men.⁸² Division of the nature of work signifies the appropriation of the planters concerning the work, educated in the capitalist set-up of factory oriented production techniques in west these same methods were adopted in the tea plantations.

In a larger framework, identifying groups and what jobs they had to be given was common in the colonial discourse. Identification of the Martial races highlights the segmentation of groups as martial and non-martial races. On the same lines, it was identified by colonizers who are the groups that could contribute to setting up tea plantations along with the development of hill stations and especially railways, and it

⁸⁰ W.W Hunter, 1876 : A Statistical Account of Darjeeling, Trubner & Co., London. p149

⁸¹ L.L.S O'Malley, 1907: Bengal District Gazetter. P83

⁸² W.W Hunter, 1876 : A Statistical Account of Darjeeling, Trubner & Co., London.p150

has been noted in studies among Queeny Pradhan and Kumar Pradhan and observations among English officials in their notes and data produced. Employment of the workers was based on which groups they belonged to. Among the people in Darjeeling, the workers were identified in terms of what ethnic group they belonged to. Rai, Limbus, and Sunuwars were identified as martial groups preferred for employment as soldiers of the British Army under the Gorkha Regiment. Eden Vansittart argued in favour of taking in individuals from Nepal itself. He discouraged employing people from the region of Darjeeling, pointing out that they had fled from Nepal and were merely working as coolies in tea gardens. It would also affect the plantation owners as they had spent enormous money to train and bring them to plantations for work.⁸³ Individuals working as servants and plantation workers were mainly from these non-martial groups conceptualized by the colonizers. Coming from the region of Nepal, they were identified as Nepalese by the colonial authority. Colonial discourse characterizes them as cheerful, hardworking and easy to work with. there are negative connotations to some groups as well. Lepchas were considered to be unsuitable for work that was created in Darjeeling they were least favoured in any form of employment in the area.⁸⁴ Tea plantations can be argued to create conditions for the migration of ethnic groups from the region of Nepal, benefitting both the planters and the workers. Labour was cheaply available for the planters, and a scope of employment for the workers was generated. As argued in the previous chapter, workers succumbed to a capitalist form of exploitation under the colonizers compared to political and social exploitation under the kingdom of Nepal. under these conditions. Class consciousness was absent among the workers. From a Marxian point of view, the class consciousness among the workers helps them realize the working conditions and the form of exploitation they experience

⁸³ Eden Vansittart, 1980. *The Goorkhas*. Ariana Publication House, New Delhi. India. p86

⁸⁴ L.L.S O'Malley, 1907 : *Bengal District Gazetteer*. p44

in a capitalist set-up. E.P Thompson makes an observation related to the idea of class consciousness. Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared) feel and articulate identity of their interest as between themselves and against other men when interest are different from theirs.⁸⁵ Aligning to the point idea of class doesn't emerge among the workers of the tea plantation instead they were satisfied to be away from the forms of exploitation faced in their homeland. However, the groups bring out the idea of being Nepali by the early 1900s.

4.3 Constructing a Nepali community.

The groups from now living in Darjeeling and areas around it eventually flourished since coming to contact with the British. Changes in the social and economic conditions could be seen as most of the individuals were employed in some form. Mobilization of these groups in terms of social and economic conditions can be seen through the construction of a single community among these groups. The development of these conditions with colonial urbanism and colonial forms of the economy, mainly tea plantations, have provided means and conditions for the migrant population in Darjeeling to create a community of their own.

During the colonial period in the Indian scenario, the concept of community was not only limited to the realm of nationalist movements but is located around the idea of caste and region for the community's interest,⁸⁶ Gyanendra Pandey's argument fits in this analysis, the making of a Nepali community was not a unique phenomenon limited to Darjeeling itself. However, other regions also saw this social phenomenon in the Indian context. As he argues, the making of a community functions along the lines of

⁸⁵ E.P Thompson, 1983: Making of The English Working Class. Penguin Books Ltd Middlesex England.p9

⁸⁶ Gyanendra Pandey, 2012. The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India. Oxford University Press. New Delhi India. p109-156.

the history of a particular group. History is an important and influential means to assert an identity. Among the migrant Nepalis in Darjeeling, history and historical narratives were absent since they were first-generation migrants to the space. Looking into the statistical input gathered from observations of Hunter through the census data collected from colonial authorities.⁸⁷ One cannot overlook the fact that most of the migrants in Darjeeling were middle-aged men, and the number of first-generation migrants was more compared to the individuals born in the region. Prior to the process of making a community by the people of Darjeeling. The history regarding space and people can be observed as ahistorical. The simple factor of settlements in the region was based on the conception of employment. Compared to the realities in other parts of India, the temporalities and the solidarity coming from space were distinct and unique. In the case of Darjeeling, it was primarily due to the social conditions in their homeland and colonial urbanism backed by the capitalist enterprise.

The question arises of how could a group of people with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds could come together, forming a community and inculcating a sense of group solidarity among themselves. The process can be seen in the symbolic aspects of culture and tradition. Gellner's articulation about the coming of nationalism is apt while looking at the period of Darjeeling colonization. There were certain tweaks within the domain of culture itself, especially the language and cultural traits of any group. The adaptive measure taken by a group constructs a new face of a group.⁸⁸ Language is an important symbol that gives an identity to a group. It cannot be unseen and undermined since, coming from a fragmented space divided by the Himalayan region, each group had its own cultural and traditional systems. Under any circumstances, it could be predicted that these groups would fragment into their own social and political units.

⁸⁷ W.W Hunter, 1876 : A Statistical Account of Darjeeling, Trubner & Co., London.

⁸⁸ E. Gellner, 1987: Culture Identity and Politics. Cambridge university Press. New York p6-29

Instances in Darjeeling never saw such scenarios during the period of colonialization. However, they successfully formed a community comprising different ethnic groups into one distinct political unit.

Language is a symbolic and operational medium for the making of this community. The notion of being a Nepali is rooted along the lines of language. It provides an entry point to assert an identity. The groups in Darjeeling could assert the notion of being Nepali through the language itself. Historically, Nepali as a language was spoken among the Khas in Western Nepal.⁸⁹ Each of the ethnic groups in Darjeeling had its own dialect, distinct from the other. New space created a demand for these groups to adopt a singular language for interaction among themselves. Adopting the new language also led to the shredding of their ethnic languages. Hence Nepali as a mother tongue became a medium for cohesiveness among the groups in Darjeeling.

The process of constructing a Nepali community took place during the early 20th century, empowered by the modernist tendency of the colonial project. Elucidating the point of the modernist tendency, we can reduce it to the social mobilization of the groups through education and economic mobilization through employment opportunities presented by the colonialists. The formation of a new working class comprised of the 2nd generation Nepalis in Darjeeling was a prerequisite for bringing the groups together. Fanon provides insight into colonial realities in a similar frame. The newly mobilized groups lend a voice to the masses, a group of individuals higher in the class structure.⁹⁰ These developments led to construction of a public sphere in Darjeeling, structured around language, belongingness to space and the group's cohesiveness. Since it was not hierarchical, each group had equal participation to lend its voice in the process. A new working class can be perceived as the initial stages of

⁸⁹ K. Pardhan, 1984: A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi. p24

⁹⁰ Franz fanon, 1963: The Wretched of the Earth, Penguin Groups.

the community formation of the Nepali community in Darjeeling. The next stage, in particular, was a public sphere that was a ground for each group to meet their demands. These demands were rooted within the realm of space. In a modern conception, the notion of space or territory gives a group a particular belongingness, mainly due to an interaction with the colonial forces and a sense of modernity that it brings among a set of people.⁹¹ The case of Darjeeling can be looked at on similar lines as it was a newly mobilized group of individuals who were a voice of the community presenting an idea for the common masses with the identity of being a Nepali. Following this, they could create a community rearranging the social hierarchy, making what previous researchers and academicians could point out the structure of the society to have an egalitarian character. After relegating the notion of hierarchy and bringing all the groups into a singular frame of Nepali.

Taylor argues that a coherent functioning of a public sphere requires a medium of print to contextualize a social imaginary for the individuals to assert their identity towards a group.⁹² The identification of self as a Nepali or Gorkha was at its prime, to illustrate this point, the Nepali and Gorkha as a representation can be considered in having its roots within the colonial system of representation itself. Individuals mostly identified themselves as Nepalis and military men as Gorkhas since there was a specific regimental unit in the British army comprising Nepali speaking individuals. The appropriation of print capitalism was based on the same lines by the newly formed intelligentsia in Darjeeling. However, the movement of print capitalism and its influence on the public sphere can be perceived to travel from the epicentre of Benaras.⁹³ The development of print capitalism could integrate the feeling of being a

⁹¹ Grahame E Clark, 1995: Blood and territory as the idioms of National identity in Himalayan states, *Kailash-A Journal of Himalayan Studies*. Vol XVII no-3&4.

⁹² Charles Taylor, 2004: *Modern social imaginaries*, Duke University Press. P89.

⁹³ K. Pardhan, 1984: *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi p104

Nepali. Novels, poetry, and fiction written by Nepali intelligentsia could generate feelings among the people. As Anderson has put it, literature could bring "we" feeling among people together. However, they might have never met.⁹⁴ The movement in the literary domain was instrumental in inculcating the masses about the realities they faced, mainly in social contexts.

Similarly, literary institutions such as Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was founded in 1924 were formed to propagate the Nepali language. the movement of the Nepali language is influential in Nepal and spaces in India, especially Darjeeling. The criteria in Nepal had nationalistic tendencies. In Darjeeling, there was a need to create a distinct identity in the Indian context, as it was perceived the notion of Nepali being foreigners. The institutionalization and recognition of language in the public realm meant there was a context into which the drive for an identity could be generated in the public sphere. The establishment of this newly formed intelligentsia could give voice to the masses and portray the social realities and the conditions of the people. Narratives were mainly based on the social upliftment of the people. Nepali as a course was added to Calcutta University's curriculum through initiatives taken mainly by Parasmani Pradhan.⁹⁵ Parasmani Pradhan's role in the movement of the Nepali language can never go unnoticed. His contributions are not only limited to the field of literature, writing poems and establishing a magazine in 1918 Chandrika but also contributed to the recognition of the language itself in the field of pedagogy. Pradhan highlights the importance of Dharanidhar Koirala, a scholar from Nepal who was educated in Benaras and employed in Darjeeling wrote poems primarily based on the lines of social and economic upliftment of the Nepali masses in Darjeeling. He highlighted the economic

⁹⁴Benedict Anderson, 1983: *Imagined Communities- Reflections on origin and spread of Nationalism*, Verso.

⁹⁵ K. Pardhan, 1984: *A History of Nepali Literature*, Sahitya Akademi.p106

exploitations and his poems, Jaga ,Jaga (Awake, Awake), Kina (Why), Guitar, Guhar (Help, Help), Arji (Appeal) were his ways of communicating to the masses.⁹⁶

The literary field was not limited to poems themselves. Short stories were produced centred around the life experiences of an individual. Chalmers note about experiences of Gorkha soldiers in the British army getting accounted, Nepali was used as a medium for instruction and interaction among soldiers and the British officials, the number of individuals enlisting in the British army was gradually increasing, valorisation of life in the military was captured through this writings. Chintamani Pande, a havildar in the army, wrote a history of the 2/9 Gorkha regiment.⁹⁷ In the social context, short stories and novels were written along the lines of experiences, social issues, and upliftment of the masses, contributions to the development of writing is linked with Kathmandu, Darjeeling and Benaras. Periodicals such as Gorkha Bharat Jiwan (1886), and Upanyas Tarangini (1898) were periodicals from Benaras, Sudhsagar (1898) and Gorkhapatra(1901) from Kathmandu, Gorkha Khabar Kagat(1901) from Darjeeling.⁹⁸ These periodicals were essential and a primary contributor to the development of Nepali as a singular language for the people of Darjeeling to imagine belongingness and create a group feeling among the people.

During the stage of community formation after the development of language, many organizations in Darjeeling were formed centered around the idea of representation of Nepalis as a community at the political level. The establishment of multiple organizations during the early 20th century contributed to making and portraying a distinct Nepali community. Hill men's union, an association, formed in 1909, can be considered the first move towards establishing a concrete identity and being recognized

⁹⁶ K. Pardhan: A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Akademi.p107

⁹⁷ Rhoderick Chalmers: We Nepalis. Language Literature and the formation of a Nepali Public Sphere in India, 1914-1940 PHD dissertation p180

⁹⁸ Rhoderick Chalmers: We Nepalis. Language Literature and the formation of a Nepali Public Sphere in India, 1914-1940 PHD dissertation p89

in the pan-Indian framework. The number of organizations steadily grew and operated along the lines of a distinct Nepali identity, culminating in a demand for an independent administrative unit. Organizations such as Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan work towards integrating people from all spheres of life. The formation of NEBULA in Darjeeling exemplifies this process. Coming of different groups of Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas to form a singular unit for the representation of the people in Darjeeling resulted in a demand to recognize Darjeeling as a separate administrative set-up as Darjeeling district was put in 1907.⁹⁹ This organization's main objective was to bring togetherness and limit the fissures within the community. The community's cohesiveness had to be maintained as the community was formed by bringing in ethnic groups in a distinct group. There were tendencies for the Nepali community to break up, which would weaken the basis of representation in the Indian framework since Nepal, a nation, already had its nationalism and forms of representation. In the Indian context, the nation did not give the Nepali identity. However, it was due to the coming together of different ethnic groups and making a community that could derive its own identity.

Conclusion.

The colonial situation is another primary causal factor responsible for the making of a Nepali community in Darjeeling; exposed to the colonial form of modernity, the migrated population in the hills could use it to their advantage. Modernity essentially develops within the community as a result of colonial interaction.

The formation of a working class in the hills and the generations following them could divulge in the public arena with a voice, and a sense of who we are could develop

⁹⁹ Rhoderick Chalmers: *We Nepalis. Language Literature and the formation of a Nepali Public Sphere in India, 1914-1940* PHD dissertation p180

amongst the people. The notions of indigeneity have been in full force, and the Nepali-speaking community members have been demanding a separate administrative system¹⁰⁰. Gerard Toffin comments on the situation of Nepali speaking population in the present context of the hills culminating towards a movement for the demand of Gorkhaland in the post-colonial society occurring between 1986 and 2013, the notion of indigeneity has been appropriated among the masses where their ideology of Gorkhaland operates around the notion of belonging to the space.¹⁰¹ Identified as outsiders, Nepalis or Gorkhas in an Indian context, the Nepalis of Darjeeling were not merely tea plantation workers or army men in Darjeeling. They could develop a sense of belongingness to the space. They were the inhabitants of the space. To have this sense of belongingness in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Conditions required for making a community were met during the colonial period, attachment to the space, language as a cultural symbol and the amalgamation of ethnic groups identifying themselves as one whole Nepali community irrespective of their history, language and cultural symbols. These adaptations, among them, contributed to the construction of the Nepali community in Darjeeling.

¹⁰⁰ Aditi Chatterjee, 2007: *Contested Landscape: The story of Darjeeling*. The Indian national trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) p109

¹⁰¹ Gerard Toffin, 2014: *Autochthony and Indigeneity in Nepal and the Himalayas*. The Politics of Ethnicity In India, Nepal and China. Ed Marine Carrin, Pralay Kanungo, Gerard Toffin. Indian Council of Social Science Research, Primus Books. Pp 55-77

Chapter-5

Conclusion.

The study has looked into the making of a Nepali community in Darjeeling under conditions that proved instrumental and causal. Two core chapters in this study look into causal factors identified as Gorkha conquest of Nepal and Colonialism concerning India. Darjeeling, a contested space among the kingdoms of Sikkim, Nepal, was passed on to the British Government in 1835 and has shared its border with the modern state of Nepal after the annexation of Prithvi Narayan Shah, which was pivotal in making Nepal a nation/state that we see now in the present context. The discovery of Darjeeling and its initial development as a hill station during the colonial period pulled in a significant population from the areas of Eastern Nepal initially as workers in various sectors during the colonial rule.

The causal factors problematized in this study presented new conditions in society integral to changing dynamics of the society in Eastern Nepal along with modifications of age-old interrelations among groups. New developments in the realm of political, social and economic are the main focus which was the primary effect of the causal factor of the Gorkha conquest in Nepal as identified in the study. Political changes coming with the conquest of Prithivi Narayan Shah led to the formation of Nepal as a nation-state, and a modern state of Nepal came into existence. A result of political changes can be seen as the polarity between the ruler and the ruled. Any conquest comes with certain advantages to groups that support a cause.

Similarly, in the context of Nepal, support was generated from the Hindu groups from the western part of the region, and they were able to get positions in the Government

dictating policies for the state. They were also sent to various regions as officials generating grants under their name—the political mobilization of the Hindu groups, along with their migration towards the eastern side of Nepal. Ethnic groups politically were historically the earliest settlers in this region.

Implementing policies by the state, such as the new legal code in Nepal in the 19th century, was yet another aspect producing changes in Nepalese society. Implemented under the house of Gorkha, this state policy was instrumental in changing the society's structural configuration in Nepal. Indoctrinating groups into rigid categories of the caste system and placing groups into distinct and unique social categories became a means of new social relations among the subjects of the state in Nepal. The main aim of categorizing the subjects can be considered to have to govern masses as it penetrated even to the private realm of an individual, regulating even the minute of actions of an individual.

The legal code of Nepal Mulki Ain functioned on the lines of commensality. It interpreted the things common to a particular group, primarily on the lines of purity and pollution theorized by Dumont. It structured the Nepali society on a vertical line resulting in untouchability among the Hindu and non-Hindu groups. Purity thus became a symbolic aspect of Nepali society which was the basis for inequality among the groups. Society of Eastern Nepal interrelations was not prescribed on such lines. This development is practically a new phenomenon for the groups of eastern Nepal. Historically these groups were fragmented owing to the physical features of the space, contacts among them mainly on economic terms. Mulki Ain, conceptualized as an invented tradition, was a primary force that oversaw the consolidation of social relations among Hindu and non-Hindu groups in Nepal that was new. Therefore it was normalized as an essential criterion to identify groups and regulate interaction among

them, which was primarily beneficial for the Hindu groups as they were located at a higher position than non-Hindu groups.

Apart from the new-social relations from Mulki Ain, one of the significant implications on the society of eastern Nepal can be seen as the identification of certain caste groups under this legal code legitimized enslavement of certain groups from the region. Mulki Ain was structured to identify groups within its structural configuration that could be enslaved. These became a sphere of exploitation of non-Hindu groups with regard to their position in the caste hierarchy. Upper caste or the twice-born castes were never brought under the purview of enslavement. It was these ethnic groups and lower caste groups from the Hindu fold itself who could be enslaved. Appropriated from the legal code, the enslavement of the lower caste Hindus and ethnic groups from the Eastern Himalayas foresaw the highest level of exploitation in social terms. In terms of social factors keeping Mulki Ain, the legal code of Nepal in the midst, it heightened the social gap between higher caste Hindu groups and non-Hindu groups from eastern Nepal.

The economic realm is another factor leading to the impoverishment of the ethnic groups from eastern Nepal. Apart from the political and social inequality, the significant forces for dislocating ethnic groups from Eastern Nepal. Inequalities in economic aspects, too, played their part. Political developments in the region presuppose economic inequality. Appointments as state officers took place as a form of political appeasement. Individuals who had helped during the conquest were given elite positions and grants. They comprised individuals from the Hindus of the western part of Nepal, where the house of Gorkha was located. Grants were in the form of land, as Jagir. It was a form of payment to the individual who had an officer rank in the Gorkha army to consolidate its power in the eastern part of Nepal. Vast strips of land were given to such individuals and religious institutions, and lands under this category were

taxed minimally. Land previously under the ethnic groups from eastern Nepal was passed onto these individuals who had helped the state during the Gorkha conquest, Kipat as an institution was meant to be sacred for the ethnic groups as it symbolised their identities and culture, it went under serious revisions as they were now less in number shown in the study done by Ludwig stiller, the changes in landownership came with a severe form of inequality for this ethnic groups as they were alienated from their own land which meant that they had to work under newly migrated Hindu population who now owned their land, as a result they were series of exploitation by the new elites in the area, the people who were the original inhabitants were transformed merely into lower caste groups through the regulations of Mulki Ain and landless groups with no political voice in the region, this was the first episode in history of these ethnic groups of eastern Nepal, conquest of Nepal being a causal factor for their movement towards the western part of Himalayas in Darjeeling.

The second episode in history was India's colonization, which led to Darjeeling's establishment as a hill station. The colonization of Darjeeling provided an avenue for groups from eastern Nepal to settle around Darjeeling. The migration of these groups facilitated by colonialism also brought them under the frame of colonialism. They were also among the colonized groups, similar to numerous communities colonized in India. In turn, community formation has taken place among most colonized societies, and the processes undertaken have been similar due to a product of colonialism, mainly colonial modernity. Colonial modernity provided an agency for colonized to understand and articulate how they are distinguished from the colonizers, and the colonized have been adopted by the colonized. Within this frame, they have built on the narrative of being distinct from the colonizers based on language, culture, and race. Indian National movements taking place in Colonial Bengal are one such example. The narratives were

built on the lines of "we" being culturally, traditionally and linguistically distinct from the colonizers, placing under the context of enlightenment provided under colonial experience. These resulted from colonial modernity that induced an altercation between the colonizers and colonized.

In Darjeeling, a movement towards the idea of "we" mobilized during the early 20th century incorporating similar language, cultural and traditional patterns. However, distinct from what happened across the Indian sub-continent, the process of community formation in Darjeeling does not come from the framework of the anti-colonial movement occurring throughout mainland India. Nepali community formation resulted from an affinity to space and a dire need for representation. Community formation during the colonial period provided a base for social movements during the later stages of the 20th century. Conditions provided by the colonial situation for the new Nepali-speaking population in the hills can be observed as the base where a need for Gorkhaland as an ideology was getting propagated among the masses in the region. The crisis of representation among Nepalis can be seen through narratives and contestations in the public sphere through print capitalism during the late 20th-century social movement.

The commotion around the need of community men and women look for groups to which they belong, certainly and forever in a world in which all else is moving and shifting.¹⁰² Bauman's argument is based on the nature of modernity in modern capitalist society, the concept of community itself being amplified and generating different meanings. Darjeeling, there was a dire need to form a community to get a sense of identity for the groups. Predicaments of the colonial situation are exemplified while observing society in Darjeeling. A vacuum in the context of representation and identity

¹⁰² Zygmunt Bauman, 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Polity Press. UK p169

had to be filled. The movements taking place during the early stages of being Nepali can be seen with the coming of an intelligentsia among these groups, facilitated by the products of colonial modernity.

The concept of coloniality applied in the study has helped look at the developments in colonial realities. Coloniality forces us not only to look at the social realities from the viewpoints generated through modernity but to take the other side of modernity centrally based on exploitation through the growth of capitalism. Distortion of local histories and distribution of labour among the colonized as we can see while studying the colonial experiences of the migrant groups in Darjeeling. Modernity-coloniality fits in the analysis of the realities in Darjeeling, while through modernity, they came out from the clutches of upper caste exploitation in Nepal to the mobilization of groups in social and economic conditions. Coloniality gives us the perspective to look into the underside of colonialism.

K.Pradhan has pointed out that the population in the hills, although through colonialism, could escape the harsh realities of the caste system in Nepal, they were transformed into a proletarian working class exploited under the system of capitalism. It provided conditions for the ethnic groups to negotiate to form a group. The negotiation distorted their histories and narratives and made up a history that could adjust to the realities presented by the colonial situation. Representation of the groups from Darjeeling has its roots in the colonial understanding that can be translated and put in the frame of coloniality.

Identifying the communities as Gorkhas or Nepalis has its roots within colonial representations. Regimental identity persists among the community, the interplay between identifying between Gorkha and a Nepali has been going on, and not much has been debated or contested by the people on these lines. Golay brings out an issue of

how realities in Darjeeling have been problematized among academics and society on ideas the issue of representation. The contribution has never been much on moving away from representations.¹⁰³

It can be said that the colonial hill stations were emancipatory for the ethnic groups in these areas. The mobilization of these groups in terms of social and economic aspects can be observed, which provided a path for political mobilization for the community. Pradhan also notes that Nepali nationalism functioned without a middle class. It can be said to be true compared to the regional nationalism taking place in the other regions, interaction with the colonial system was also a factor that exposed the Nepali population to the western form of education, print culture and employment opportunities primarily based on the western forms. The emancipatory nature, as discussed, is the understanding of people to have a community of their own, a community detached from the previous space of Nepal and its exploitation under the new ruling classes. The idea of belonging that Bauman propagated with his own experiences as a Polish in England¹⁰⁴. As a Polish, where does his identity lie? Is he an immigrant from Poland or a citizen of England? A notion of belongingness to a particular space in his context he formulates belongingness to a space that was emancipatory for him.

Similarly, for the migrant Nepalis in India, the realities brought forward by the colonial situation were perceived to be emancipatory compared to the lived experiences at home. Identity, as a notion, defines who we are and where we come from. Bauman's experience has a sociological understanding. Identifying a self as a Nepali also comes from resting within the representation of the community itself. The group solidarity and

¹⁰³ Zygmunt Bauman, 2004. *Identity*, Conversations with Benedetto Vicci. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK. p9-15

¹⁰⁴ Bidhan Golay, 2006. *Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of discourse, Hegemony and History*. Peace and Democracy in South Asia, Volume 2, Numbers 1 & 2, 2006.

the nature of cohesiveness that functions within a particular set of understanding and the symbols accepted by the group to define who they are. For Nepalis, in a crude form, representations of Darjeeling as home, Gorkhas as a martial race and India as a country this was to relegate the idea of attaching their identity away from the country of Nepal, where they share their customs, traditions and having their roots in the country.

Cause and effect as a base for the framework in this study have provided much-needed clarity to understand how particular phenomena come up and operate in society. The nature of society has constantly been altering and adjusting to the primary conditions put forward to it either through conflict or cohesion. Adapting tendency of society makes it possible to sustain itself with the new realities it faces. Gorkha conquest and the colonization of India are the points through which this study has operated to understand the reasons for the need for a community. On another level, the study has tried to bring out the ways and means adopted for community formation. The formation of a community is unique, as argued in the study. The factors facilitating it were external to it. The research questions posed in the study looks into are dealt in third and fourth chapters, they in core ideas dealing with community formation in Darjeeling. The ways in which caste relations in Darjeeling was reinterpreted among the migrated population in Darjeeling. It saw a coming together of different ethnic groups identifying themselves as Nepali, undergoing a process of change in their traditional modes of life, idea of Territoriality brought up by Smith brings validity to the point as they based their affinity to the place.¹⁰⁵ Language became another marker which provided a basis on the lines of representation among the new Nepalis. For the basis of identity the demands are catered by religion, language, culture and space. Community formation becomes a

¹⁰⁵ Anthony D Smith, 1979: Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. Australian University Press, Canberra. p2

prerequisite fulfilling demands put forward by identity, through a community an individual locate themselves in the framework working at nation-state level. Darjeeling has shown a phenomenon of such nature that oversaw the coming together of different ethnic groups in-order to frame a distinct community based on the idea of language, this process oversaw them adapting to certain demands of identity, while the inherent nature of the social configuration was heterogeneous in nature with their own language, culture and traditional means of representation. Under colonialism it homogenised coming as one group as Nepalis, leading to a shredding of their language, traditions and culture. This can be seen as a product of colonialism as it provided opportunities for them to adapt and come together forming a community which became the basis for their identity and the area of contestations in the post-colonial phase.

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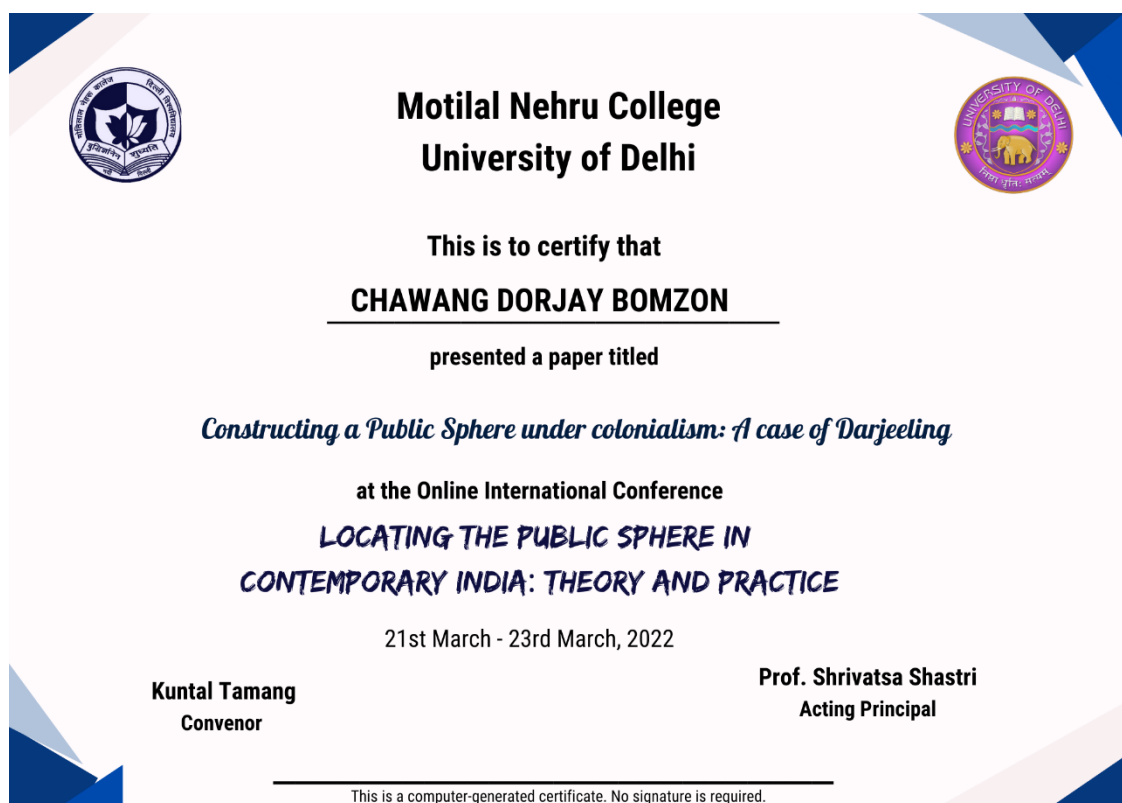
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