

A SOCIO POLITICAL STUDY OF THE DEMAND FOR GORKHALAND: CHALLENGE TO FEDERALISM IN INDIA

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Abstract

Different dynamics have been involved in states' reorganization on the basis of language since passing of States Reorganization Act in 1956. While Administrative convenience, unity and integrity were the main interests in 1950s and 1960s, reorganization of northeastern states in 1980s was mainly due to security concerns.¹ However, the government has never expressly stated any basis or principle for formation of states. The demand for redrawing boundaries has been accepted in some cases and denied in others. This has laid down a ground for pressure politics as it has been observed that if a group can put the requisite amount of pressure on the government, its demand is conceded.² So when the central government acceded the demand for Telangana, the call for Gorkhaland gained ground. In a scenario where various ethno-linguistic communities are demanding statehood, it is essential to understand and analyze the impact secessionist movements have on federalism in India. This paper attempts to critically analyze the demand for statehood by a linguistic minority, understand its implications on the populace of a state and evaluate the interplay of state and central politics in shaping and then suppressing this demand.

The Gorkha leaders propose to declare Darjeeling hills and the adjoining areas of northwest Bengal as Gorkhaland, a separate union state. The alienation of Gorkhas in economic development and administration procedures of the state of West Bengal is the prima facie reason behind the uproar for creation of Gorkhaland. But the demand has cultural, historical and political reasons that are examined in the first part of this research paper to understand how regional estrangement of a community became an issue of national importance. The response of the central and the state governments to the movement is also highlighted to examine whether the agitation could be ascribed to the attitudes and actions of the governments in power. The second part presents the other side of the debate with respect to the Gorkhaland agitation. Subsequently, an attempt has been made to understand the significance of federalism in India and the impact which such separatist movements have on the unity of the country. The paper concludes with some recommendations on developing uniform and fixed criteria for reorganization of boundaries of states and some measures that could appease the gorkhas without dividing Indian landmass.

Keywords: states' reorganization, federalism, gorkhaland, alienation, linguistic minority.

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¹ Chadda, Maya, 'Integration through Internal Reorganization: Containing Ethnic Conflict in India', [2002], The Global Review of Ethnopolitics, vol 2, 44–61

² Partha Chatterjee, *A Possible India* (Oxford University Press 1997) 149

WHY GORKHALAND?

i) Emergence of the Demand

Darjeeling comprises of three hill sub divisions- Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong and a subdivision in plains called Siliguri. The area was gifted by Sikkimputtee Rajah to the East India Company in 1835.³ The region had been a part of Nepal before being annexed by the rulers of Sikkim in 1817.⁴ Multiple tea, coffee and cinchona plantations were developed in Darjeeling as East India Company realized the enormous economic potential of such plantations. In order to increase productivity, the Britishers encouraged the immigration of Nepalis who generally took up plantation work in the hills as they were hardworking and could easily adjust to working at high altitude plantations.⁵ Immigrant Nepalis were also heavily recruited in the Gorkha battalions in the British Army.⁶ Nepali speaking recruits in the British army were known as gorkhas and Darjeeling was called the Old Gurkha station.⁷ Thus, it was the colonial encounter that shaped the idea of a nepali speaker in the region being a gorkha.

Demands for autonomy by the gorkhas emerged as early as 1907 when a memorandum was presented to the colonial government. The Hillmen's Association (formed in 1917 under the leadership of Nepali elite) submitted another memorandum demanding exclusion of Darjeeling from Bengal when Act of 1935 was passed. Realization and need for representation led to formation of All India Gorkha League (AIGL) in 1943. After independence, AIGL demanded regional autonomy and unification of Darjeeling with Assam and not Bengal.⁸ The death of AIGL head Deo Prakash Rai in 1983 paved the way for formation of Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a more militant group, under the control of Subhash Ghising.⁹

Estrangement and quest for establishing an Indian identity has been the centripetal force behind the Gorkhaland movement. Nepali speaking people have resided in West Bengal for centuries now but their status as Indian citizens has never been recognized by the Indian state.¹⁰ Article 7 of Indo Nepal treaty gives the Nepalis a right to move and trade in both countries.¹¹ By virtue of the treaty, gorkhas are recognized as 'reciprocal Nepalis' and regarded as foreigners in their native land. The extent of this belief can be gauged from former PM Morarji Desai's statement, "if you want Nepali, go to Nepal."¹² Even Vallabhai

³ Prabhat Datta, 'The Gorkhaland Agitation in West Bengal' [1991] The Indian Journal of Political Science, vol 52, 225

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Ibid.* at p 226

⁶ Atis Dasgupta, 'Ethnic Problems and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling' [1999] Social Scientist, vol 27, 54

⁷ *Ibid.* at p 49, 51

⁸ *Supra* note 3 at p 226-227

⁹ *Supra* note 6 at p 63

¹⁰ *Supra* note 2 at p 154

¹¹ *Supra* note 3 at p 228

¹² Anjan Ghosh, 'Gorkhaland Redux' [2009] EPW vol 44, 10

Patel had written to Jawahar Lal Nehru on 7th November 1950: “the people inhabiting this portion have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-Mongoloid prejudices.” Such irresponsible and uncalled for statements by political leaders have been alienating the Gorkhas since independence.

GNLF took advantage of the situation when Nepalis were branded as foreigners and ousted from Meghalaya, under the pretext that they did not possess restricted entry passes.¹³ Ghising propagated the belief that Nepalis were no longer safe in West Bengal as the state government had refused to shelter thousands of Nepalis who had been evicted from Meghalaya.¹⁴ Posters were put up with messages like “Our future is in danger”, “We are stateless. We are constitutionally tortured” and “All are required to fight for Gorkhaland”.¹⁵ Abrogation of Article 7 of the Indo Nepal treaty was also demanded. It is important to note that all Nepalis were not in agreement with this demand. Such an abrogation would result in setting 1950 as the cut off year for according citizenship to Nepalis in India. The status of Nepalis in Assam and Mizoram, who became a part of the Indian Union subsequent to 1950, would become uncertain and so, abrogation has always been a contested issue.¹⁶

The primary occupation of the gorkhas as tea planters was also in jeopardy due to low productivity and shrinking tea gardens.¹⁷ Thus, when Ghising began perpetuating ideas of self-determination, the gorkhas were drawn to it because of their insecurity and disregard for a government that failed to protect their livelihood. GNLF worked both within and outside the democratic procedure by petitioning ministers and simultaneously fighting the police for their cause. From 1986-87, GNLF organized bandhs for 200 days. Its two-pronged strategy included non-cooperation and violence. To achieve their goals, GNLF’s leaders incited people to not pay taxes and refund all government loans. Between 1986-88, 200 people lost their lives in agitations and more than 400 got injured.¹⁸

ii) State’s Response

Unwilling to recognize the extent of alienation among the Gorkhas, the CPI (M) government in West Bengal termed the movement as anti-national and a law and order problem.¹⁹ Its accusation was based on the grounds that the GNLF boycotted national celebrations like Independence Day, Republic Day and contacted foreign countries for support. This was in response to a Memorandum that Ghising wrote to the King of Nepal, with copies sent to the UN and eight foreign governments.²⁰ CPI (M) also labeled the movement as imperialistic and a RAW manipulated conspiracy.²¹ CPI (M) argued that all linguistic minorities couldn’t form

¹³ *Supra* note 3 at p 228

¹⁴ *Ibid.* at p 229

¹⁵ *Ibid.* at p 228

¹⁶ GNLF Talks, ‘Basic Issues Untouched’ [1987] EPW vol 22, 158

¹⁷ *Supra* note 3 at p 229

¹⁸ *Supra* note 3 at p 230

¹⁹ ‘Short-Sighted in Darjeeling’ [1987] EPW 1097

²⁰ ‘Gorkhas’ Concern’, [1986] EPW vol 21, 1768-69

²¹ Ajit Roy, ‘Darjeeling: Hopeful Turn and Remaining Obstacles’ [1988] EPW vol 23, 1511

separate states, as this would divide the country into thousands of microstates. Regardless of the stern view taken by the party, the Darjeeling district of CPI (M) still supported the agitation.²²

In juxtaposition to the state government, the union government led by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi took a radically different view of the matter. Rajiv Gandhi didn't consider the movement as anti-national.²³ It is believed that he encouraged the Gorkhaland agitators for his own political gains. The common Nepali speaking people were not aware of the procedure for grant of statehood. So, demand for statehood that should have been raised against the union government got aimed at the state government. Rajiv Gandhi was however severely criticized for helping Subhash Ghising project himself as the spokesperson of 15 lakh gorkhas in the region and capitalize on this power tussle between the centre and the state.²⁴

Amidst the political power play, the then CM of Bengal, Jyoti Basu gave Gorkhas another reason for disgruntlement when he projected the issue as Bengali versus Nepalis. He said that the Gorkhaland agitators must remember that there were more Nepalis in the plains than there were Bengalis in the hills of Darjeeling.²⁵ These astonishing remarks clearly point out the threatening and insensitive manner in which the state sought to deal with the issue. The movement was violently repressed and even acts like burning of the 'sacrosanct' Indo Nepal Treaty were brutally suppressed by the police²⁶ and paramilitary forces. All this happened when it was ironically claimed about seven times in the state government's 'Information document' on the Gorkhaland movement that West Bengal is the only state in the country where minorities feel safe.²⁷

The Congress government at the centre was also displaying double standards. Mahendra Lama rightly said, "Historically, the role of the Congress has been one of unfulfilled promises and betrayal in the hills."²⁸ In view of Congress's sympathetic reaction to the movement, it was surprising that Rajeev Gandhi rejected the state government's proposal to grant gorkhas some regional autonomy, as provided to Mizos and other tribals in the region. Congress did not even accept the demand for inclusion of Nepalese in the eighth schedule of the Constitution. Thus, whichever the party, aspirations and needs of the gorkhas were measured on the scale of pressure they could exert on the people in the hills and any graveness in the matter was taken for a toss.

iii) A Compromise Reached

When faced with repeated protests, the state government, in order to pacify the GNLF supporters, requested for grant of Rs 30 crore for the hill areas of Darjeeling. It also allocated

²² 'Demands for Statehood' [1996] EPW vol 31, 3092-93

²³ *Supra* note 3 at p 231

²⁴ *India Today*, Editorial, (15 October 1986)

²⁵ 'Dangerous Twist' [1986] EPW vol 21, 1912-13

²⁶ 'Wrong Response' [1986] EPW vol 21 1331-32

²⁷ *Supra* note 25 at p 1912-13

²⁸ M. Lama, 'Unquiet Hills', *The Statesman*, (Calcutta, 20 April 1988)

9.2 crore for implementation of incomplete projects in the region.²⁹ In July 1988, a memorandum of understanding was signed between GNLFF, the union government and the state government which stated, "In the overall national interest and in response to the prime minister's call, the GNLFF agreed to drop the demand for separate state of Gorkhaland. For the social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the people of the hill areas of the Darjeeling district, it was agreed to have an autonomous Council to be set up under the state act."³⁰ Subsequently, a Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) Bill was passed by the state legislature. The basic task of the council was to formulate and implement development plans and schemes.³¹ The powers are wide ranging and include allotment or setting aside of land for agricultural or non-agricultural purposes, management of forests, collection of fees and rates, supervision of panchayats, provision of education et cetera. This compromise formula was severely criticized by the militants campaigning for Gorkhaland. They saw it as abandoning the call for a separate state by Ghising. Some also argued that regional autonomy had been achieved to some extent but, other significant matters like citizenship, language and the desire for self-determination remained unresolved.

A lot of hopes were pinned on this proto federal innovation, which was formulated to appease an ethnic group aspiring for separation. It was heralded as an example for all Indian states because it was devised when separatist forces were trying to threaten the unity of the nation.³² Contrary to the high expectations placed on DGHC, the council disappointed the gorkhas, people of West Bengal and Indians at large. The working of the Hill Council was dominated by GNLFF and Ghising was its chairman for four years. It did provide some self-sufficiency to the Gorkhas, but allegations of corruption and nepotism, failure to steer economic and social development or significantly improve the status of Gorkhas, water crisis, problems in education, health and sanitation marred its existence. There were accusations against Ghising in financial matters. He neither gave any statement of expenditure of the money that he received for the council from the state government, nor conducted proper elections or auditing.³³ It was alleged that Ghising did not follow proper procedure for calling tenders and awarding contracts, which were even given to activists in the movement.³⁴

iv) Revival of the demand

By 1991, there was growing resentment among the people against GNLFF and Subhash Ghising. To maintain his political supremacy and divert attention from ground issues and unmet promises, Ghising wrote a letter to the Prime Minister in January, 1992 in which he enquired about the legal status of Darjeeling.³⁵ In 1999, Ghising approached the International Court of Justice for arbitration on the issue. Seeing that such measures failed to break ice with the public, Ghising went to Delhi with new demands of recognition of gorkhas as a

²⁹ *Supra* note 19

³⁰ *Supra* note 3 at p 237

³¹ *Ibid.* at p 238

³² *The Statesman*, (Calcutta, 22 December 1990)

³³ *Supra* note 22 at p 3093

³⁴ *Supra* note 3 at p 239- 240

³⁵ *Ibid.* at p 235

scheduled tribe and inclusion of DGHC under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, in order to establish a local self-government in the region. All these desperate attempts by Ghising were in vain as discontent had proliferated among gorkhas.

Bimal Gurung had been a lieutenant in the Gorkha National Volunteer Force under Ghising who had been his mentor. Due to differences of opinion with Ghising, Gurung kept himself apart from the DGHC's working. He rose to popularity in 2007 when he campaigned for Prashant Tamang who was an Indian Idol contestant and also a native of the region. He founded Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) soon after that in October 2007. Its main agenda was a separate state for the gorkhas and the first movement that Gurung initiated was to oppose the demand raised by GNLf, that is, inclusion of the hill council under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.³⁶ GJMM also called for numerous peaceful bandhs and hunger strikes in May-June, 2008. Things turned sour when a GNLf activist allegedly killed a GJMM supporter during a procession. Public anger brusquely drove Ghising out of Darjeeling in July 2008. Thus, the stage was set for the new leader, albeit with the same objectives and demands.

Meanwhile, the state government had remained elusive to the creation of a separate state, but it principally agreed to grant Schedule Six status and more regional autonomy to the gorkhas. However, with a new government being formed in Bengal under Trinamool Congress, a new hope arose for the issue reaching an amicable solution.

A tripartite agreement was signed between GJMM, government of West Bengal and central government on 18 July, 2011 for the creation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) as replacement for DGHC. Mamata Bannerjee proclaimed this pact to be the end of demand for Gorkhaland.³⁷ Bimal justified his stance by saying that GTA was imperative to create employment, empower the youth and develop infrastructure during the agitation, so that the proposed Gorkhaland does not become an underdeveloped area and deprive the younger generation of its rights. He asserted his intention of pressurizing the Central government for statehood while developing the region through GTA.³⁸

When the central government acceded the demand for Telangana while gerrymandering in 2013, the call for Gorkhaland again gained ground.³⁹ Bimal Gurung even resigned from his post of chief executive officer of the GTA as part of the revived agitation for Gorkhaland.⁴⁰ However, he resumed office after five months and with the softening stand of GJMM, skepticism remains about his commitment to give the Gorkhas a state of their own.⁴¹ Gurung met Narendra Modi recently and reminded him about the electoral promise Modi made in

³⁶ *Supra* note 6 at p 12

³⁷ Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, 'Gorkhaland struggle may not end with Mamata's deal' (*First Post*, 20 July 2011) <<http://www.firstpost.com/blogs/politics-blogs/gorkhaland-struggle-may-not-end-with-mamatas-deal-44913.html>>

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, 'Echo in other States', *Frontline* (23 January 2013) 1

⁴⁰ Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, 'Helsman Bimal Gurung', *Frontline* (24 January 2014) 4

⁴¹ *Id.*

Siliguri while campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections to sympathetically examine the demand for Gorkhaland. He had said that Gorkhas' dream is my dream and this gave a lot of hope to the people in the region⁴² but nothing has been done yet to respect their aspiration.

UNDERSTANDING INDIAN FEDERALISM IN THE LIGHT OF GORKHALAND MOVEMENT

i) India's Emergence as a Federal Polity

The term 'federal' is derived from latin 'faeder', which means compact or contract between nations or states that recognize central jurisdiction over common affairs exercised by a federal government 'distinct from the governments of the individual states.'⁴³ Federalism in India has the unique privilege of serving the second largest population in the world, with an unmatched plethora of cultures, religions, languages, and ethnicities. Provisions of Indian federalism were laid down by the Constitution in 1950. The federal design of the Constitution was imbibed from the Government of India Act, 1935.⁴⁴

Indian leaders were also aware of the threats that could be posed by federalism to national unity, in the form of ethnic secession and balkanization of the state. Ambedkar rebutted such concerns when he said in the Constituent assembly, "though India was to be a federation, the federation was not the result of an agreement by the states to join in a federation, and that the federation not being the result of an agreement, no State has the right to secede from it."⁴⁵ Indian federation was formed only for ease of administration and was not intended to jeopardize the national integration in any manner. Accommodation of a variety of ethnic and cultural communities without letting anyone group dominate over others at the state or national level was the main advantage of federalism in India, as envisaged by the Constitution makers. Efficiency of the center in managing conflicts in the states was also envisioned as it was presumed that cultural clashes of one state would remain within that state and not spread to other states, thereby making it easier for the centre to deal with dissensions.⁴⁶

In tune with the expectations of leaders of newly Independent India, federalism has enabled the development of a 'polycentric polity' by devising a way to share and divide sovereignty. Traditionally, Indian constitution and political system was described as 'quasi federal' due to

⁴² 'Demand for Gorkhaland: Gurung meets Modi to resume talks on Statehood' *The Indian Express* (Kolkata, 20 March 2015)

⁴³ *The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English language*, (Delair Publishing Company Inc. 1981)

⁴⁴ RAJEEV DHAVAN and REKHA SAXENA, 'Republic of India' in Katy Le Roy and Cheryl Saunders (eds), *Legislative, Executive and Judicial Governance in Federal Countries*, (Queen's University Press 2006) 165

⁴⁵ Dasgupta, Jyotirindra, 'India's Federal Design and Multicultural National Construction' in Atul Kohli (ed), *The Success of India's Democracy* (Cambridge University Press 2001)

⁴⁶ Hardgrave Jr., Robert L., 'India: The Dilemmas of Diversity' [1993] *Journal of Democracy*, vol 4, 54-68

greater parliamentary politicization.⁴⁷ However gradually, especially since 1990s, India has been moving towards greater federalization.⁴⁸ To ensure that the ‘idea of India’⁴⁹ as a nation does not fall apart, the Constitution gave extensive powers to the Union government, thereby underscoring a degree of supremacy of Union over the state governments. One such power was to entirely rewrite the boundaries of Indian mainland to create new states, including carving them out of existing ones. A bill to alter the boundaries can be introduced in parliament after the state legislature has expressed its views on it. However, such views are not binding on the union legislature.⁵⁰ This power bestowed by Article 3 of the Constitution of India, has been considered as patently unfederal, as the only obligation on the centre is to ‘consult’ the states and not obtain their assent while reorganizing their boundaries.⁵¹

The debate in India over centralization or more federalism reflects strain between two versions of pan-Indianism, one totalistic and the other diverse. Unlike pan-Indian consciousness, the regional consciousness manifests itself as cultural nationalism that seeks to preserve uniqueness and protect homeland vis-à-vis other identities in the nation.⁵² It emerges by virtue of sharing a distinct culture, history, language and territory, within federalized units in the country.

ii) Challenges Posed by separatist movements like Gorkhaland to Federalism

The dilemma confronting the union is whether all ethnic groups that demand separation are acknowledged. If such a demand were given assent, then how would the state control the inevitable domino effect of such accession? Wouldn't the unity of India as a nation be threatened? At the same time, it can be equally perilous to leave such matters at the helm of the state government since they can even lead to balkanization of the union.⁵³ An unresolved ethnic issue like Gorkhaland can be catastrophic as it can endanger India's relations with Nepal and even the Gorkha regiment, which comprises of fifty-sixty thousand of our best fighters.⁵⁴

As Stepan puts it, “in a robust democratic federal political system, the more citizens feel a sense of allegiance to both of the democratically legitimized sovereignties, each with its constitutionally guaranteed scope of action; the more democratically secure the federation.”⁵⁵ The Indian governments, both at the central and state level have failed to inculcate a sense of

⁴⁷ K.C. Wheare, *Federal government* (4th edn, Oxford University Press 1964)

⁴⁸ M.P. Singh, ‘From Hegemony to Multi Level Federalism? India's Parliamentary Federal System’ [1992] *Indian Journal of Social Science*, vol 3

⁴⁹ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (Hamish Hamilton 1997)

⁵⁰ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi* (Picador, 2007) 225

⁵¹ Parmanand Parasher, *Public Administration: Indian Perspective* (Sarup & Sons 1997) 168

⁵² Subrat K. Nanda, ‘Cultural Nationalism in a Multi-National Context: The Case of India’ [2006] *Sociological Bulletin*, vol 55, 29

⁵³ Romesh Thapar, ‘Smaller States?’ [1986] *EPW*, vol 21, 2023

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Supra* note 51 at p 11

loyalty and security among the gorkhas and they were never politically integrated into the Congress or the CPI (M).⁵⁶

The dissension between the union and state governments, a characteristic of the Gorkhaland agitation also affected federalism. Centre-state relations had been organized in 1950 in accordance with an equilibrium model in which homogenous states on the one hand and centre on the other acted as countervailing forces.⁵⁷ In the Gorkhaland movement, the union government manipulated ethnic group of gorkhas for its narrow partisan interests. It wasn't really sympathetic to the demands for autonomy raised by the gorkhas. The centre just saw this movement as an opportunity of weakening CPI (M). This led to embitterment of centre-state relations, which is dangerous for a federal polity like India.

From the violent repression of the agitation by the state government in Bengal, it has been observed that the outcome of using coercive authority is disastrous. Over centralization of power aggravates the appeal for autonomy.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as Partha Chatterjee says, all is not yet lost as a new and more flexible federal arrangement to accommodate such separatist tendencies will not weaken the unity of the country, but reinforce it.⁵⁹ Small states can better satisfy ethno-nationalistic aspirations, enhance administrative efficiency and strengthen federalism by participation of stakeholders in provincial development and giving opportunities for good governance.⁶⁰ Hence, grant of statehood may lead to effective management of ethno-linguistic diversity and separatist challenges that lead to violence and conflict and undermine socio-economic development of the country.⁶¹

In this case though, further division of northeast on ethno-linguistic lines is not advisable. Union governments have created 'mini-states' in the region, giving in to populist pressure, only to realize later that it was financially unviable.⁶² These mini states are totally dependent upon the central government for funds, which makes them susceptible to union intervention in their decisions and daily affairs.⁶³ The regional autonomy granted to Darjeeling within the DGHC in 1988 was seen as a clever and unique appeasement strategy. Conferring even more autonomy under the purview of the Sixth Schedule seems to be a viable option with the state government.

There are huge social and economic disparities within and across states, with more and more communities staking a claim for some measure of autonomous governance along linguistic,

⁵⁶ Partha Chatterjee (ed), *State and Politics in India* (Oxford university press 1998) 362

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* at p 250

⁵⁸ *Supra* note 3 at p 235

⁵⁹ *Supra* note 50 at p 149

⁶⁰ Rajat Ganguly, 'Identity Politics and Statehood Movements in India' <<http://cfsindia.org.in/pdf/Identity%20Politics%20Statehood%20Movements%20in%20India.%20Ganguly.%20Draft%201.pdf>>

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² Sachdeva, Gulshan, *Economy of the North-East: Policy, Present Conditions and Future Possibilities*, (Centre for Policy Research 2001) 60-61

⁶³ Sanjib Baruah, 'Nationalizing Space: Cosmetic Federalism and the Politics of Development in Northeast India' [2003] *Development and Change*, vol 34, 925

ethnic, tribal, caste, and community lines, in ways that will continue to alter Indian federalism. Unique propositions like granting regional autonomy can lead to greater satisfaction of ethno-nationalist aspirations, economic and administrative efficiency, democratic deepening and strengthening of federalism, stakeholder participation in local/provincial development, and opportunities for delivering good governance.⁶⁴ C.D. Deshpande has suggested formation of a second reorganization commission to recreate boundaries of states that have been facing separatist movements.⁶⁵ This can also be a viable option to counter the belief that new states have been created in an ad hoc manner and to give a reasonable basis for redrawing boundaries of the Indian mainland. Till an amicable solution is reached, the issue would remain contentious but, the governments at the state and the centre should nonetheless continue with developmental measures in the region so that this phase of protests does not mar Darjeeling with an unprecedented backwardness.

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ C. D. Deshpande, *India: A Regional Interpretation* (Indian Council of Social Science Research 1992)