

Topic: Gorkhaland – The land of Gorkha Identity

Topic
Introduction

The Gorkhas have burst out into a roar rather than a cry to withstand any kind of torture but not to give up on their protest in demand of an independent state they proudly call “**The Gorkhaland**”. Not only have they ceased the town **shutting down trade, sales and production**, but they have also erupted into violence and rage. **5 protestors have been arrested** for violent activities and military force along with **Rapid Action Force (RAF)**, has been patrolling the hills to keep the situation under control. **600 paramilitary personnel** have been deployed in the area by the centre. The clashes between the GJM and RAF have gone as far as to burning of a Bus in addition to violent streaks. Although it's not a safe situation to go against the shutdown by GJM, the government officials are ordered to report to the offices everyday and confirm their presence.

The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) initiated the protest on **Wednesday, June 12, 2017** by applying an **indefinite shutdown** on the markets and state offices, including everything that comes under the **Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)**. Cessation of trade in popular places like **Chowbazar and Mall Road** in the hills has heavily impeded the foot fall of tourists; hindered it so much that it has hit the rock bottom and dipped to an all time low of 50% of the normal tourism. GJM believes that the state government is *all bark and no bite* and is only creating a bunch of **non-functional committees** deriving zero results. Despite Chief Minister's 100 plus visits to the Gorkhaland in 73 days, which are more than the cumulative visits of all the ex-CMs in 64 years, Gorkhas don't seem to see any **solid reforms** made in their favour.

What sparked the whole episode was **Mamata Banerjee's** decision to make **Bengali language** a **compulsory** subject in all the schools of West Bengal. This must've felt like an imposition to the Gorkhas as they already have been **struggling to establish their identity** for a long a time. This need to emerge as an independent race is only an outburst to the **age old oppression** that the Gorkhas have been tolerating. They have been victims of **racism and alienation** as they have never felt accepted and we have been calling our different looking Indian siblings as **Nepalis**. How long would it take for us to understand that *different doesn't mean wrong* ? They claim that they don't feel like it's their habitat and that they feel like **inferior outsiders** in their own homeland. The land that they fought for, conquered and inhabited but only to loose it to the Britishers and never have it back. "We who live here need to decide what will happen with our land. How can people sitting in Kolkata or Delhi decide things about our home?" **Anup Chhetri**, a winter-garment-seller in Darjeeling town told Scroll last year.

Yes, **The New York Times** points out that **Darjeeling was never supposed to be a part of West Bengal**. The Gorkhas had captured Sikkim and most parts of the North East including Darjeeling in 1780. But after losing to the British, they surrendered their territories in the Treaty of Segoulee in 1816. While the British had given Darjeeling to Sikkim, they leased it back in 1835 for political reasons.

Darjeeling, according to **The Indian Express**, had also been a part of the Rajshahi division, which is now a part of Bangladesh, and then part of the Bhagalpur division. **Darjeeling was merged with West Bengal after the partition of 1947.**

The **largest protests** for Gorkhaland were seen between **1986 and 1988** when **more than a thousand people died**. Since then, the protests have flared up and died out every few years. A major protest broke out in 2013, **when Telangana was made** a separate state, but **Mamata Banerjee ruled out the proposal** for Gorkhaland once again. Although fresh protests have been sparked in the past weeks and it will be a while before the situation comes under control, the West Bengal government is unlikely to concede to any demand this time too. However, GJM can plea to the courts on the basis of the Telangana case.

State or no state, it is only fair on the part of Gorkhas to vent out their frustration for being casted out as Nepalis, taken as the short end of the stick and being unheard by the state government. In spite of their different looks, culture and style, all they want is **acceptance and recognition** (a good one). Violence surely is not the best way to demand acceptance, hence, the state should not *turn a deaf ear* to the Gorkhas and bring in some substantial changes, so that they think of the hills as their haven and heaven.

Read further:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/darjeeling-stir-mamata-is-playing-with-fire-by-ignoring-the-gorkha-identity-issue/story-wnJC3yHPzCt0Fqs4aQj7LJ.html>

http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/06/12/the-gorkhaland-protests-in-darjeeling-arise-from-an-ancient-sens_a_22137216/

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/news/gorkha-janmukti-morcha-protests-against-mamata-banerjee-in-darjeeling/videoshow/59052873.cms>

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/gorkhaland-darjeeling-gjm-mamata-banerjee-protests/1/976395.html>