

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION DURING THE TRANSITION OF GORKHALAND MOVEMENT FROM 1986- 2017

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### **Abstract:**

Education is the most important element in modern society. Education is a word that helps in the sustainable development of an individual. As defined by UNESCO 2014 “Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future”. Sustainance of education in Darjeeling hills has been a major issue especially as there has been regular political turmoil in the hills for want of separate statehood. Education has been the most talked-about issue in the hills, as seen that each political turmoil has affected the education of the students. It’s seen that due to the frequent shutdown of the hills its impact has been greatly felt in the educational field. The frequent change in the political parties has been a major concern in the hills. With each new political setup in the hills there arises the same age-old demand for statehood and the regular strikes or shutdown of the entire hills. There has been the practice regularly that hampers the educational, social, and economic development in the hills. Thus it becomes necessary to find various methods for the sustenance of education so that the students do not have to suffer due to political turmoil.

**Key words:** Education, Sustainable education during turmoil, education in Darjeeling hills, impact on education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is such a need of every individual that nobody can remain aloof from it. It is the means through which an individual can survive and move up in society. Education is the means and the way through which an individual molds their way of life and of society. The education system has to change from time to time according to the need of the hour. The history of education in the Darjeeling district helps one to understand the role of education in the social progress of the region. Hundreds of years ago the people of the hills were in a deep sleep and their awakening started with the advent of the Europeans in the hills. The people of the hills were living in a primitive age where they were unaware of what was happening in the world around them and education was something which they were hardly concerned. It was the enlightened people from the west who brought education to the hills. The progress that the hill region has made since then is because of the varied educational activities brought by the officials of the European government and the Christian missionaries who were allured to come here because of the cool climate and scenic beauty. These people brought and propagated western education in Darjeeling on the verge of suppressing the indigenous system of education.

The contributions of Christian missionaries in the education of the people are also commendable in the History of education in the Darjeeling hills. They were the pioneers of modern education in the hills. The Christian missionaries came to Darjeeling for proselytizing and charitable activities but their contributions towards

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the spread of modern education in the Darjeeling hills is of more importance and worth mentioning than other activities. The system of education that was brought by the Europeans and the missionaries were mainly responsible for the gradual development that was brought about and the present status achieved in the field of education by the people of Darjeeling hills.

Education in the present scenario has improved a lot as there are many progressive works that have been undertaken by the government. Many new schools and colleges have come up for the education of the region. There are many colleges established in the three regions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Kalimpong. Apart from that, there are some vocational colleges in the region. At present, there are 52 primary schools, 67 high schools affiliated to ICSE, CBSE, or WBBSE boards, and 5 colleges in town that are either government or private. The three districts of Darjeeling are known as the educational hub where some of the famous personalities of Asia have either studied here or visited the schools and colleges. In the present, there are a lot of students who have been successful in all the fields whether it is education, social, medical, music, etc. though due to the recent political turmoil/ Gorkhaland movement there were some disturbances in the education of the children even then the children of the three districts are excelling in their studies. The political turmoil in the hills has been a major issue in the hills as a regular revival of political turmoil has had an impact on education.



Map 1: Gorkhaland Movement related with geographical location.

Source: <https://www.quora.com/If-approved-what-would-the-map-of-Gorkhaland-look-like>

### **EDUCATION SCENARIO IN THE FIRST PHASE OF POLITICAL TURMOIL (1986):**

The first political turmoil started in the '80s to establish the identity of the Gorkhas. There was a strong movement under the leadership of Mr. Subash Ghising where around 1200 people lost their lives. Schools were shut down during the protest period which caused a great loss to the children. The students and the teachers also took an

active part in the movement which hampered their education. The progress of the students was at stake as they were not able to concentrate on the studies and some of them even left their studies to take an active part in the Gorkhaland movement which resulted in the wastage of their educational career. People were found to be more interested in the movement rather than in their studies. Mainly the adolescent children were more attracted by the movement. Due to the political turmoil taking violent courses male students were not able to attend school or college fearing the police atrocities. DGHC had tried its level best to bring about development in the hills in all the fields, schools, and colleges were established in the hills. But due to some negligence of people holding the chair and corruption creeping in the administration the development work was not carried out as expected. There were many loopholes in the administrative work due to which the expectations of the people were not fulfilled. People's expectations were much more than the work done thus there was seen the beginning of a new era in the history of Darjeeling.

#### EDUCATION SCENARIO IN THE SECOND PHASE OF POLITICAL TURMOIL (2007- 2013):

The second phase of the movement for a separate state within the Indian Union had been revived in 2007, more intensely by the Gorkha leader Mr. BimalGurung, under the newly formed party known as GorkhaJanmuktiMorcha. People were more in need of a new system of governance in the hills. They wanted to bring about change in the system of administration so that they could bring development in the hills. People were expecting that the new party would be able to fulfill their expectations of jobs for all, the revival of the education system with better infrastructure facilities, and better opportunities for the hill people.

With the creation of Telangana, the leaders were also in the mood to revive the movement once again. There were series of strikes called from 29th July 2013, the strike called for three days from 3rd August 2013 there was an indefinite strike called which lasted for 9 days. In these, the entire hill area was declared bandh which included the shops, entire educational institutions. The students had to bear the burden of the strike as they had a disturbance in their regular classes. Most of the students had to do self-study as they could not get help from the schools due to the closure. This had hampered those students who had to give an admission test for schools. In all these movements the people were extending their support for the cause but that was creating a void in the education process. The students were now more interested in the movement than in studies. As they did not attend school they were at a loss as they could not get proper guidance from their teacher. As students had to study on their own thus the students from the rural areas had to suffer much more than in the urban areas as they had little help in their areas. The parents were not able to hire extra help them nor could they keep their children in the hostels or paying guests due to the regular disturbances in the region.

#### EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO IN THE LAST PHASE OF POLITICAL TURMOIL (2017):

The third phase of the movement was again revived in 2017 under the leadership of BimalGurung. The recent agitation was ignited by West Bengal's government decision to impose the Bengali language in all the schools from class one to class ten.

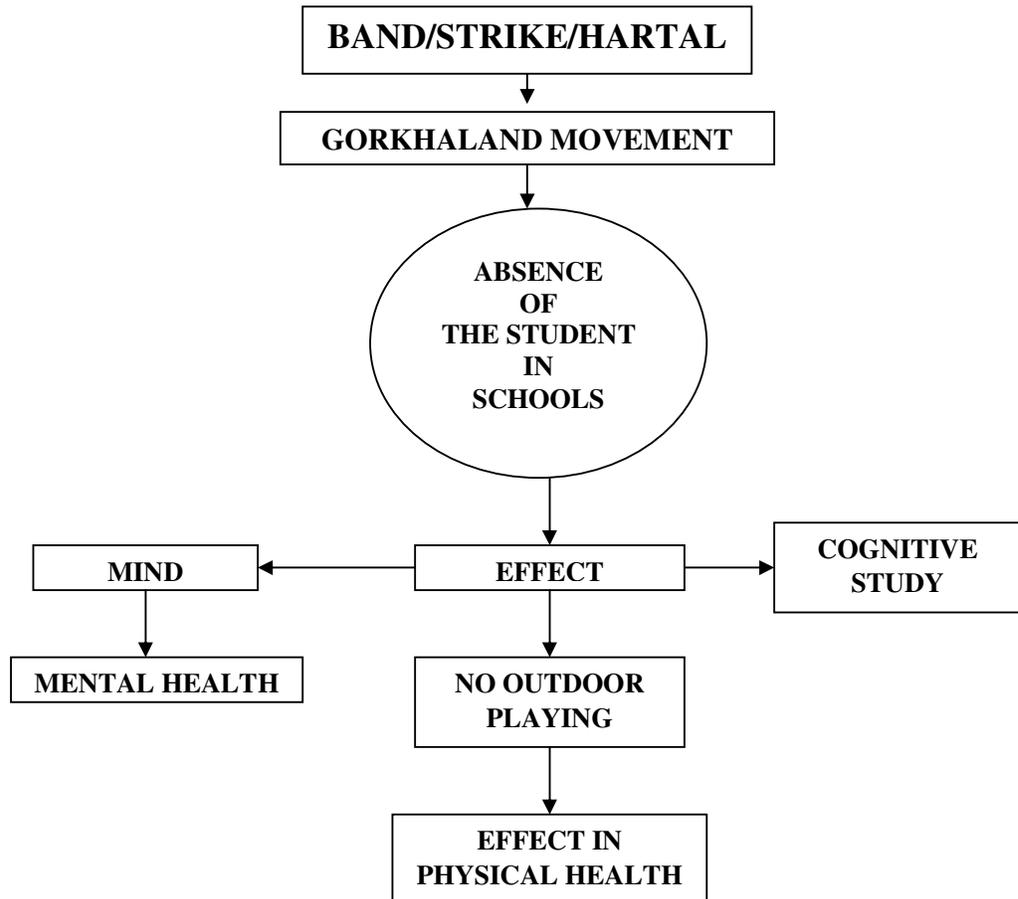
The people especially the teaching community were against this decision taken by the West Bengal Government to impose Bengali as a compulsory language in all schools of Bengal. They felt that this was an imposition on them as Bengali was not spoken nor understood by most of the hill people. They thought that these should not be made compulsory in the hills and for this BimalGurung urged the hill people to organize protest rallies from 2nd to 8th June 2017 and declared that there would be the closure of the schools for two days in this regard. The teaching faculty had come to the streets in connection to this issue and later after the meeting press conference was given by Chief Minister Ms. Mamta Banerjee that the Bengali language would not be made compulsory in the hills but would be kept as an optional subject for the hill schools. The political turmoil this time turned into a violent one with 104 days of strike the longest in the history of the Gorkhaland movement with the shutting down of the schools and the internet facility. During the course of shutdown the people of the hills had to face a lot of hardship as all the shops, business, communication was shut down along with the educational institutions. The students had to suffer because of the shutting down of internet facilities and the schools. They were not able to apply anywhere for further studies especially the children of rural areas. However, along with this long tenure of the struggle for statehood, scholars have been successful in bringing to academic attention the historical aspects of the Gorkhaland Movement. One of the most talked-about impacts of the movement by the local people was on education. The movement has a great deal of effect on the lives of the people and education as schools were shut, the strike was called on and many lives lost during the political turmoil. It has been seen that any movement takes the development back instead of moving forward. We have seen in history be it the world war or any disturbance in the country it takes time to recover from those movements. In the hills, the situation has been the same as education has been the most affected in the movements that have been revived time and again. Students were more interested in the movement and thus they left their studies to join politics. There are very few people who hold higher administrative posts like IFS, IAS, and IPS from the hills. Due to a lack of proper guidance for higher education, we find that the students have to either opt for business or self-employment. Students who migrated from the hills have done well but the students from rural areas who could not migrate due to the financial condition of their parents were the ones to have to suffer.

### **Gorkhaland Movement and the Sustainable Development Goals:**

The concept of band strike and hartal create and adverse effect on quality education is not related to course and curricular based study rather it is related to the peace and justice to the land like a house. If any geographical place is passing through disturbed political environment then the socio-cultural and educational environment must have happened. As per SDG-4 (Quality Education), the continuous teaching-learning process is important but due to the Gorkhaland movement and related political turmoils, the educational system of the Darjeeling area was adversely affected at different times. Student Psychology, mental, peace, and good health and wellbeing are related to the daily schooling of the students. If a continuous political disturbance presents inland then the interest may be discontinued. The time has come when people have to rethink their lockdown life, United Nations has prepared the agenda 17 different goals for Sustainable Development. So, now the social and political behavior of any political land must be changed due to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. Band and strike are not fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal-3 (Good

Health and well-being) these good health and wellbeing (SDG3) connected with SDG-4 and SDG-16. Gorkhaland movement is the demand of the people but their demand created a big issue for the education of the environment in recent. We have to help in mind that education must not happen at any cost because to gain anything education is the main weapon to achieve that.

Diagram 1 : Connection Between SDGs and Gorkhaland Movement.



**CONCLUSION**

The political turmoil or Gorkhaland movement of Darjeeling hills has always been the most talked-about issue which has been revived again and again in the hills. During the time of the movement right from the 1980s to the recent one in 2017 there has been a movement of the people where all the hills have been affected by it. The most talked about the aftermath of the movement is on education. During the movement, the entire schools of the hills have been shut down right from the primary to the higher level. The students had suffered a lot during these movements due to the bandhs called by the political parties.

The movement had created a lot of inconvenience for the students and especially those appearing for the board exams as their completion of the syllabus was at stake. The stakeholders of education i.e., students, teachers, and the principals of the schools and colleges had to suffer due to the strike called as their future was in turmoil. They all supported the movement but the future of the students was also at

stake. In the later movement, students from prestigious schools were taken down to the plains for their classes which were arranged in some buildings hired for the purpose of completion of the syllabus but the students of mediocre schools had the responsibility of completing the syllabus themselves with little help. Though teachers had the responsibility of completing the syllabus later when school opened. There were many voluntary organizations and volunteers who taught the children in their respective villages to help the students. Apart from the students who suffered due to bandhs the normal people of the hills also had to suffer a lot of hardships as their business was completely put to halt. They had to face hardship to arrange for their meals especially for the lower strata of people. The three hill subdivision Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Kalimpong was the most affected region during this movement.

Thus it becomes the priority of the people in the hills to devise means of sustenance of education for the betterment of future generations. The teaching-learning model should be devised in such an effective manner that the students are able to learn on their own even if they are not able to attend school. The students should be taught to learn through activity method and learning by doing that they become self-dependent and able to continue their education on their own. As the parents are in these days more concerned about the future of their children they should think about the means of sustainability. For instance, the recent pandemic has taught a lesson to humans that they should be prepared for any type of situation that comes and thus devise a way out of scratch. Education is the means that enables an individual to face any type of situation in the future thus it becomes the responsibility of this generation to provide better and sustainable education for the future generation. There may arise any political turmoil or any natural calamity in the future the students should be prepared in such innovative teaching-learning methods that they are able to continue education on their own. People should be more concerned about the development of education as it is the means for sustenance. Education should be the priority of the people in the hills, thus whatever actions they take should be for the betterment and upliftment of education. The political parties should be more concerned about the development of education in the hills. Schools and colleges should be upgraded with better infrastructure and digitalization of each school are necessary. Private schools are far ahead in this field but the government schools should also be upgraded to meet the future needs of the children.

Thus the endnote is that education should be molded in such a way that it makes the students independent, technically advanced, morally strong to face any situations in the future, and more inclined towards education. Their interest in education should be developed in such a way that comes to any circumstance they are able to concentrate on their education and their future and not deviate from their way of receiving education.

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