

Land question and ethnicity...

Sociology



Journal of Rural Social Sciences, 25(2), 2010, pp. 81—121. Copyright © by the Southern Rural Sociological Association

THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS SWATAHSIDDHA SARKAR UN IVERSIT Y OF N ORT H BEN GAL ABSTRACT

Although economic factors are often considered as essential for augmenting ethnic movements, the analytic relationship between economic issues and ethnicity is far from being clear cut. In an attempt to address the problem of ethnicity in a non-Marxist theoretical plane, most of the studies on ethnic problems inadvertently indulge such logical inconsistencies. Such a critical reading led us to conceptualize ethnicity as a lived-in category — much like the concepts of class or caste — where both the material and cultural domain of routine life congregates. With the help of a case study of the Gorkhaland movement in the Darjeeling Hills (India) and the input of a particular field of material predisposition — namely, the issues related with land and agrarian social formation, this paper attempts to argue that ethnic movements are a dynamic podium wherein the encoded meanings of material and/or economic issues/grievances are decoded in cultural idioms. Even if the discussions on ethnicity have an inbuilt tendency to develop a theoretical plane that criticizes Marxian class analysis and demands an autonomous conceptual frame duly encouraged by post-Marxist and poststructuralist/postmodernist theoretical renditions, literatures on ethnicity for the most part have stressed economic factors, in some way or the other. Hence, finding available studies, which have made considerable advances in understanding the problem of Gorkha ethnicity, that have concentrated their focus on economic factors as the root cause of ethnic antagonism and conflict in the Darjeeling Hills (West Bengal, India) is common. 'Economic stagnation' (Dasgupta 1988), 'uneven

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implementation of development policies' (Chakrabarty 1988), ' economic deprivation and negligence' (Bura Magar 1994; Lama 1988; McHenry Jr. 2007; Nanda 1987), ' petty-bourgeoisie aggrandisements against the dominance of monopoly capitalists of the Centre and the State' (Sarkar 1988), ' economic negligence, exploitation, and unavailability of white-collar jobs' (Chadha 2005), ' growing unemployment and step motherly attitude of the state regarding the overall development of the hill areas' (Timsina 1992), ' uneven development' (Dasgupta 1999; Datta 1991), ' endemic poverty, underdevelopment, and the perception of being " malgoverned"' (Ganguly 2005), are some such factors many scholars put as the root cause of the Gorkhaland movement in the Darjeeling Hills. However, none of these studies have made it abundantly clear how economic conditions — the domain of the material — are linked to the desires of ethnic separatism, which conceptually remained under the rubric of culture — the non-material. Again, if the economic factors remarkably remained so significant, as the studies show, then why ultimately the cultural warpath (i. e., 81 82 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES ethnic conflict) and not an economic one (i. e., class conflict) appeared as a suitable remedial strategy? One obvious question arises thus: how the ' material' is transposed into ' cultural'? The present paper is an attempt to answer such questions by analyzing the case of the Gorkha ethnicity and movement as it emerged out of the people's grievances experienced through their quotidian life processes cloaked in their relative positions within the structural inequality. In fact, ethnic identity much like the issues of class or caste is a lived-in category that emerges out of the perception of reality and receives constant reformulation, since the reality is itself dynamic. In our treatment ethnic identification — much like all <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

other identifications — is overall rooted in the larger canvas of social experience, which determines the processes of framing contending relationships between and among groups based on their varying capacity of possessing the valued and scarce resources available in the society. Instead of pinpointing the causes of the movement, our analysis attempts to show that the assertion of Gorkha ethnic identity has had payoffs with respect to resource access and utilization and that the protracted struggle of the Gorkhas for separate statehood is that trajectory wherein both the cultural and material aspects of routine life coalesce. Sometimes this happens even without an immediate ethnic 'other'. This is particularly the case, as the study shows, with the hill agrarian sector. It thus becomes imperative that the problem should be studied in a historical plane putting utmost emphasis on the social formation of the Darjeeling Hills, which would help us focus the pattern of resource distribution on an ethnic plane vis-à-vis the question of structural inequality. The importance of treating the issue of Gorkhaland movement as a historical phenomenon can hardly be ignored, especially when one finds that the Darjeeling Hills has experienced a century long historicity of protest — sometimes accommodative, sometimes violent — to achieve a separate politico-administrative arrangement for self rule. Moreover, the historical perspective is needed to show the fundamental changes that have taken place within the social formation of the region since the colonial days and had corresponding effects for furthering the cause of the movement in the post-colonial period. Therefore, a proper historical analysis of ethnicity can help us understand how the grievances of the masses were articulated and were translated into the courses of violent action, how new equations came up because of state intervention and how

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the overall dynamics of the movement kept on rolling, putting ethnicity at the center stage. THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 83 SOCIAL FORMATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS Indeed, there can never be a single cause of an ethnic movement that stretched over a century. 1 However, our concern regarding the causes of Gorkhaland movement is not about degree but of kind, by which we mean that Gorkha ethnicity, or for that matter the Gorkhaland movement, is embedded in the social formation of the Darjeeling Hills. It is neither entirely the product of primordial sentiments nor even the result of elite manipulation, but had been the outcome of a dynamic social formation that reproduced its productive forces, relations of production, as well as the relations of subjugation and exploitation meted out by its incumbents. The onus of social formation in augmenting the cause of social movement has been stressed by most of the major theoretical paradigms in some form or the other. For example, functionalism, though lately emerging from its erstwhile position of bracketing social movements as pathological social behavior, became increasingly concerned with the analysis of social movement as a variety of (normal) collective action and showed the necessity of framing a general hypothesis on the social system while analyzing social movements as a collective phenomenon of some sort. Likewise, symbolic interactionism and resource mobilization theory, in their attempts to analyze social movement, put stress on the relational structures and on the complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging, respectively. The Marxist tradition, perhaps, has given utmost emphasis on the necessity to view social movements in relation to structural arrangements available in the social formation. Each social formation is rooted in a particular structure

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of relationship and movement is not the cause but the outcome of the differentially arranged social order in which privileges and rewards are more in possession of some minority groups compared with the majority others. Even the post-Marxist or for that matter the New Social Movement (NSM) perspective in their zeal to study the identity-based movements as manifestations of post-material claims hardly denied the importance of social formation while understanding the so-called post-material claims of the NSMs. In outlining the principles for the analysis of collective action, Melucci (1996: 24) — a prominent figure of NSM school — points out that the analytical field of the NSMs depends on the systems of relationships within which such action takes place and toward which it is directed. 1 The recorded history of the Gorkhaland movement suggests that the first spurt of the movement can be marked out in the year 1907 when the hill people submitted a memorandum — for the first time — to the colonial government urging separation from the then Bengal and the need to formulate a separate administrative arrangement for the Darjeeling Hills. 84 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES ALTHUSSER, SOCIAL FORMATION, AND THE DYNAMICS OF RURAL DARJEELING Taking a cue from the centrality of social formation in the study of social movement as analyzed above, an attempt has been made to focus on the social formation of the Darjeeling Hills² and its contribution to the development of a protracted ethnic movement in the region. Our treatment of the concept of social formation is Althusserian in inspiration and is viewed as a complex whole composed of concrete economic, political and ideological relations that provide the pretext upon which the consolidation of selfhood of the individual or the group within a given social space becomes feasible. It is worth mentioning here instead of <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

using such terms like 'social system', 'social order' or for that matter 'society,' Althusser (1997) preferred the use of 'social formation'. Since he believed while terms like 'social system' and 'social order' presupposes a structure that reduces the form of all its emanations, 'society' as a concept is loaded with pre-Marxist humanist conception that treats social life as ultimately the product of individual human beings. Althusser has used the concept of social formation with some broader theoretical appeal. He problematized the so-called base-superstructure module by bringing together the notions of social system, order, and society closer to his postMarxist formulation of social formation. Social formation, for Althusser, is constituted of a complex of concrete economic, political, and ideological relations, bound together and given their particular character as capitalist, feudal or whatever by the fact that economic relations, is the 'determinant in the last instance.' Conceived in this manner the concept of social formation presupposes that under this model social reality is neither determined, nor to be explained by a single causal variable but always by the whole structure (a notion that he labels as 'overdetermination'), which remains amenable to the economic determinant only in the last instance. The uniqueness in Althusser's concept of social formation lies in the fact that it problematizes the 'base-superstructure' relationship (that remains central, almost invariably, to the whole realm of post-Marxist scholarship) to that extreme of 2 Darjeeling has been one of the prominent hill stations developed by the British in colonial India. The term Darjeeling Hills, used in the present text, denotes the three hill subdivisions namely Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, and Kalimpong, unless otherwise mentioned. Kurseong and Kalimpong are also hill stations but are lesser known than Darjeeling. British

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preferred Darjeeling most perhaps due to its high altitude and favorable climatic conditions. It deserves mention that Darjeeling was started in 1835 and at present is a District of the State of West Bengal, India

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discarding the mono-causal analysis involved in its typical Marxist formulation and accepting simultaneously the autonomous existence of the superstructural elements (like political and ideological aspects, which however, happened to be the elementary component of his concept of social formation). There is every possibility that in place of economic instances the political or the ideological instances may become determinant and dominant in a mode of production; this happens particularly when the primary producers own the means of production and the surplus is extracted either through the state (the political) or through the religious institutions (the ideological). This is why Althusser (1997: 202) has conceived of social formation as a structure articulated in dominance, and whether economic, political or ideological in instance, the enjoyment of that position of dominance is neither prefixed nor predetermined. It is at this moment he emphasizes the autonomous existence of the principal modes of dominance, which are highly complex and closely related to each other. In the Althusserian conception, each instance of the social formation moves through time having its own rhythm, unevenly developing relative to the other instances, with which it nevertheless is interrelated into an organic whole (Peet 1978: 150). This also becomes vividly clear when he upholds that the economy is the determinant 'only in the last instance'. If economy is the determinant 'only in the last instance,' this obviously implies that becoming dominant at any other instance is possible for other structure(s), albeit for economic reasons.

Althusser has gone to that extreme in claiming that: " From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the ' last instance' never comes" (1997: 113). Applying these meanings involved in the concept of social formation in establishing the link between the land question and ethnicity in the Darjeeling Hills, utmost care has been paid to pinpoint the dominant structures that remained operative in both cases of pre- and post-colonial agrarian social structure. Attempts have also been made to unmask how the cultural/ideological factors have shaped in many respects the social formation of the Darjeeling Hills, particularly during the colonial period. Again during the post-colonial phase the dominance of the political structure and processes and their complex linkages with the agrarian crisis have been taken into analytic consideration. The present essay is a preliminary attempt to show how in different historical epochs of history different structures (economic, political or ideological) have remained dominant in executing and maintaining the complex social whole that made up the agrarian social formation of the Darjeeling Hills. 86 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES

Along with tea plantations, agriculture constitutes one of the major productive systems of the Darjeeling Hills, which helped maintain a sizeable section of the population's livelihood. In fact, the real significance of agriculture in the Darjeeling Hills lies not merely in its capacity of being the life support system of most of the population, but for being a resilient subsystem grounded in historically circumscribed factors and forces that has affected the micro practices of everyday life of the hill people at large. Hence, any attempt to examine the causes of a century-long political movement in the region without having a reference to the agrarian history, or for that matter the evolution of agrarian social structure in the Darjeeling

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Hills, would surely be an incomplete one. Unlike the previous studies, an endeavor has been made here to trace out the ' genealogies of subjectification' within the domain of the changing structure of production relations, which underlie issues that have impinged upon the changing forms of politics and political processes of the region over the years, issues such as forms of landed property, forms of tenancy and revenue arrangements, forms and nature of labor, forms of appropriation of surplus from agricultural produce and the like. In the following sections the analysis will center on these issues and their arrangements as they occurred in the colonial and post-colonial agrarian social formation of the Darjeeling Hills.

EVOLUTION OF THE AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE DARJEELING HILLS

Though the district of Darjeeling made a late entry into the colonial body-polity of Bengal, the colonial interests over the field of agriculture (i. e., to maximize the income of the government from the agricultural sector mainly in the forms of revenues) of both the Bengal and Darjeeling districts remained the same. However, the experience of the different administrative policy measures prescribed for the district throughout the colonial period had resulted in the maintenance of a unique approach, which exempted the Darjeeling district from the purview of the revenue administration of Bengal, at the one hand, and kept intact the sustainability of revenue returns appropriated from the agrarian sectors of the region, on the other. In place of the pan-Indian policy of expanded colonial appropriation in the agrarian sector maintained chiefly through the initiation of forceful production of commercial

3 According to 2001 census data, almost one-third of the working population of the hill region of the District is represented by only such categories like cultivators and agricultural workers, among others.

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LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 87 crops, the agrarian sector in the Darjeeling Hills had experienced the development of a small peasant subsistence economy that remained undisturbed for a very long time. The social history of the area suggests that the district of Darjeeling was made up of those territories that earlier belonged to Sikkim (the entire geographical space of the two hill subdivisions Darjeeling Sadar and Kurseong and the Terai region) and Bhutan (the Kalimpong subdivision and parts of Dooars). Both the regions and their people had experienced different patterns of land ownership, production processes, taxation policy, etc. because of the historically circumscribed forces of a seemingly feudal social order upheld by the two independent countries of the Eastern Himalayas before colonization. A succinct review of the agrarian situations of these regions thus becomes obligatory to comprehend why and how the British had thought of a separate revenue administration and different tenancy measures for the Darjeeling Hills, which deviated largely from the rest of Bengal. That is to say in other words that agrarian social formation in the Darjeeling Hills has been conditioned in the main by historical factors and forces. By the time the Sikkimese territory was incorporated into British India in 1835 and again in 1850, which covered almost the entire tract located westward to the river Tista, Sikkim had maintained several laws and regulations related with the management of its agrarian sector. Land ownership measures in the then Sikkim had allowed its subjects only the usufructory right over a piece of land and the ownership right was vested with the hereditary institution of the Chogyal (Raja of Sikkim) (Namgyal 1966: 46). In the agrarian hierarchy of Sikkim the Kajis (the noblemen) are the real aristocrats who enjoyed a position of tremendous socioeconomic

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significance and historically played a much valued role in the body polity of Sikkim hereditarily, although they did not also possess the right to property over land. However, Kajis had often received pieces of land from the Chogyal as rewards for the service they had rendered to the state. The unlimited power of the Kajis had also capacitated them to compel the raiyats (tenants) to engage in forced systems of labor like Zharlangi and Kuruwa⁴. It needs to be pointed out that the Lepchas, the autochthonous community of Sikkim and also supposedly ⁴ Under the Zharlangi system, the raiyats had to carry loads within the country for the tourists and officers without any payment. The incoming tourists and officers came into Gelkhola by train, where they were picked up by coolies. Coolies in groups would be waiting for the loads to come at different places like Gangtok, Singtam, Gelkhola, Melli and Rangpo. They — the Kuruwas as they were called — had to wait in such stations, with their own arrangement of food and clothes, for at least 15 days after which another batch of villagers would come and replace them (Subba 1986: 2-3). 88 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES the first settler of that portion of land that ceded to the British in 1835, were not accustomed with settled agricultural practices. They practiced jhum (shifting) cultivation without any sophisticated method that resulted in a small amount of production that helped maintain their livelihood. This perhaps explains why the Sikkim Government in earlier days had not adopted a regularized system of revenue administration. It is interesting that the entire territory westward to the river Tista (covering an area of 138 sq. mile) at the time of cession during 1835 was entirely under forest and practically uninhabitable, although a reference of a few Lepchas — probably 100 souls in total — who came there perhaps due to their habit of jhum cultivation, can be located in early

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historical documents on the region (Dash 1947: 49; Pearson 1839: 16). Later, in 1850 when a larger area (covering an area of 640 sq. mile, which amounts to be the entire geographical space of the district, excepting the Kalimpong Subdivision) located westward to the river Tista came under the British the entire tract was also found no better than the earlier 138 sq. mile.

Habitations were almost nonexistent as the agricultural potent of the region was yet to be realized. It deserves mention here that the realization of the agricultural potentiality of the Darjeeling Hills had been solely an indigenous affair. Unlike the case of tea plantations, agriculture in the initial years had not received any special treatment either from the part of the colonial rulers or from the side of the European entrepreneurs who remained busy with setting up tea estates one after another. This is revealed in the very first attempt made by the government to formulate a set of rules for the grant of lands on 4th September, 1839. These rules made all the lands of prominent locations, which might have been otherwise suitable for agriculture, reserved either as building locations or as bazaar (market) spaces. Interestingly enough, the Rule of 1839 declared those lands as suitable for farming leases, which remained unsuitable either as building site or as bazaar locations.

Provisions were also made under the same rule to lease out no less than 10 acres of land as farming leases for a term of 30 years. If the land were not cleared, it was also proposed that the land should be held rent free for the initial five years and for the remaining period the payable rate of rent was fixed at Rs. 2 (rupees) per acre. Despite these provisions, the Rule of 1839 failed to attract the native cultivators and during 1839 — 50, not one plot was leased out. Dr. Campbell also pointed out in a report of 1850 that up to 1849 he had not found it practical to appropriate any revenue from the

aboriginal inhabitants of the old Darjeeling Territory (O'Malley 1999: 150-1). Since 1850 he had attempted to settle the native cultivators as lease holders and become successful only marginally in this regard, although much of the THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 89 land by that time was brought under tea plantation. However, neither the agricultural potentiality of this entire tract located westward to the river Tista was fully realized nor was the revenue administration for the agrarian sector of this part of the district formalized until the incorporation of Kalimpong Region, a fertile land in the eastern side of the river Tista, in the District Terai Region. On the other hand, from the time of annexation in 1850, the areas located below Pankhabari and ranging from Naxalbari to Siliguri, including Phansidewa, had experienced formal land revenue administrative measures. The Kalimpong area located eastward to the river Tista was annexed under the Sinchula Treaty with Bhutan concluded in November 11, 1865. It needs to be remembered that the tract located eastward of the river Tista, which earlier was also known as Dalingkot, had contained a sizable amount of population who had practiced cultivation and fell under the administration of the Bhutanese Government before its occupation by the British. During its annexation the Kalimpong tract was populated entirely by the Bhutias, numbered 3, 530 souls in total⁵, who paid a poll tax in lieu of land revenue. The amount of this tax in 1865 was Rs. 640 (£64), which sum was collected by nineteen mandals (village headmen), who seem to have held a similar position under the Bhutan Government (Hunter 1974: 121). The area covering the whole tract lying eastward to the river Tista under the district was composed of 401 sq. miles, which was subdivided into a Government Estate covering 178 sq. miles, tea estates covering only 10 sq.

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miles, and a forest area covering a larger area of 213 sq. miles. The Government Estate during the last settlement (1901-1903) was subdivided into 48 blocks each under the charge of a mandal. However, Kalimpong town, which also formed a separate block, fell under the Government Estate of 178 sq. mile but was not given under the charge of any mandal and was managed directly by the Khasmahal Office (Bell 1905: 1). The allocation of land lying within the Kalimpong tract clearly indicates that the colonial rulers had put less emphasis, unlike the territories lied west to the river Tista, on the cultivation of tea and encouraged the development of cultivation within the tract. Perhaps, two major considerations might have led the colonial rulers to adopt such a policy that favored the cultivation and not tea plantations in the region located eastward to Tista. The first consideration might be the result of 5 This estimation is available in O'Malleys Gazetteer (O'Malley 1999: 36) although T. B. Subba has mentioned, without citing the source, that the number of the persons settled there in Kalimpong during annexation was 3536 (Subba 1985: 2). 90 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES late entry of the Kalimpong region into British territory. That is to say, by the time Kalimpong was annexed in 1865, tea plantations on the other side of the river Tista had exposed fully the business potential, if not it reached its optimal level of growth. This perhaps made the tea planters less interested to promote the industry any further. Apart from this reason, the poor communication system was another factor that discouraged the further deployment of colonial capital in the Kalimpong tract for plantation. The natural barrier between Kalimpong and the rest of the district was provided by the river Tista itself. Except for a few suspension bridges, there were no other arrangements available until 1933 when the first concrete bridge,

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known as Anderson Bridge, was constructed (that replaced the earlier suspension bridge known as the Tista bridge), which linked Kalimpong with the mainland of the district and also with the outside world. The point is that, much like the historical factor the ecological factor was no less significant in determining the differential patterns of land use, productive organization and the overall agrarian structure of the hills. All these explain why agriculture instead of tea plantations has remained the economic mainstay of the region located eastward to the river Tista in the district. Hence, the analysis of hill agrarian social formation would take into account the evolution of agrarian social structure in the Kalimpong tract, along with the other areas in the eastern part of the river Tista. During the two decades after the first settlement — effected in 1882 — the population of Kalimpong tract almost trebled from 12, 683 in 1881 to 26, 631 in 1891 and 36, 164 in 1901. The rapid increase of population within this tract decreased the average size of per-capita holdings. During the 1892 Settlement the average holding size was 13 acres, but at the time of third settlement (1901-1903) the average size of holding per-raiyat was 9. 70 acres (Bell 1905: 7, 9). These changes indicate not merely a shift in the ' material density' (a la Durkheim) but also in its corresponding effect upon the ' moral density' of the concerned society. By moral density we mean the changes that took place within the realm of relationships between different communities in respect to the process of cultivation on the one hand and in relation to the availability of ecological resources⁶ on the other. ⁶ The experience of a rapid increase of population of this tract clearly suggests that the reclamation of waste lands and of forest areas would have been the possible ways to absorb the growing population. By the time of the completion of the Third Settlement (1901-

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1903) there appeared an acute deficiency of grazing land since most of such areas had already been occupied by the new settlers. The problem was so alarming that it led C. A. Bell, the Chief Settlement Officer in-charge of the Third Settlement, to comment that the need for reserving village grazing grounds (owing to THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 91 Subsequently, the questions of rayotari (tenancy) rights, land alienation, and relations of subinfeudation cropped up for the first time in the hill agrarian scenario. The colonial rulers did not lose sight of these propensities and they chalked out the revenue administrative measures accordingly, but failed to control the emerging social processes on all counts. THE LAND TENURE ARRANGEMENT AND THE EMERGING HILL AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE Instead of adopting policies at par with the then Bengal revenue administration, the colonial rulers had paid appropriate attention toward the local factors and forces of significance. The whole issue of revenue administration for the Darjeeling District was based on the premise of 'agrarian peace,' which, it was hoped, in turn would stabilize the revenue returns and rule out the possibility of any disgruntlement against the alien rulers who controlled not only the agrarian sector but also the entire political economy of the Darjeeling Hills. The consideration of agrarian peace might have led the colonial rulers to not initiate any fundamental agrarian restructuring measure toward the existing 'traditional farm management' system to suit the economic interests of the 'master race'. This explains why the British had straightway accepted the mandal system that prevailed in Bhutan or why the poll-tax arrangement, instead of revenue or rent, had been maintained for a very long time until the last settlement was affected in Kalimpong. Besides, in the later phase, the colonial rulers had also endorsed <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

the local categories as the accepted forms of the rayotari arrangement. Furthermore, the foresightedness of the colonial rulers led them to arrange for the local religious organizations too. The British Government provided liberal land grants to the lamas and monasteries on the pretext of their readings regarding the local history of the region⁷ that made them the great increase of cultivation and cattle since 1882) in the Kalimpong tract is now much more insisted than it was before (Bell 1905: 11). ⁷ The competent British officials made the Colonial Government aware about the fact that Darjeeling and Kalimpong tract before their annexation by the British remained under the direct supervision of the Buddhist monasteries. This is clearly upheld in a note prepared by Mr. Edgar who instructed Mr. Ritchie, when the latter was deputed to make the preliminary settlement enquiries for Kalimpong during 1878, in the following words: " In making proposals for any settlement, the position and claims of the Lamas of Monasteries — Kalimpong, Phydong, and Chumilam — should be considered. These people now hold their lands without paying capitation tax and it is a question whether their exemption should not be continued when the lands are settled. In deciding this question, I think the feelings of the people as well as customs of Bhutan government should have 92 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES believe that the lamas had great personal influence in the locality and may play a very significant role in settling the disputes, if any, among the natives. Before detailing the land tenure arrangements it is necessary to have an idea regarding the population character of the tract without which the dynamics of agrarian relationship in the Darjeeling Hills could hardly be comprehended completely. As said earlier, the tract lying east of the river Tista soon after its cession had upheld agriculture and not tea plantation as <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

the economic basis of the region, which attracted the hill cultivators rather than the educated Bengali middle class people. Hence, another course of hill migration started in which fresh batches of Nepali cultivators began coming up from the deteriorating agrarian state of affairs of Eastern Nepal to the virgin lands of Kalimpong. The incoming of the Nepalis in greater numbers than any other community is an event of historical significance since they trained the autochthonous communities of the hills in the art of settled cultivation. It is needless to mention that for the British the economic potentiality of Kalimpong lay in cultivation and not in tea plantation and for making cultivation economically meaningful they needed settled cultivators. The expertise of Nepalis as settled cultivators had become well known throughout the Eastern Himalayas. Quite expectedly, the colonial government had favored the 'colonisation of the tract by the Nepalis' even in full knowledge that their increasing presence might encroach upon the interests of the indigenous population of the region represented by the Lepchas and the Bhutias⁸. In later decades however, some arrangements were made to safeguard the interests of the autochthones but not at the cost of the Nepalis. Along with the Nepalis some plainsmen, mainly the Marwaris (who were locally known as Kanyas or sometimes as Kayas) and Beharis, had also arrived who mainly served as money lenders or as petty-businessmen. The role of the Marwaris as money lenders great weight allowed them" (Edgar's Letter dated 21st November, 1878). The government accordingly recognized the lama's claims and in laying down the main lines of settlement, ordered that each gumpa should have assigned to it a grant of land, proportioned to size, rent free and in no way subordinate to the mandal within whose local limits it might fall. It was also suggested that the lamas in

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return would be bound to arrange for the maintenance of a school and to perform all religious and monastic duties required. All these explain why and how the lama's right to hold land was recognized by the British from the very beginning. 8 To no one's surprise Hunter, even before the first settlement of Kalimpong (1882), had pointed out in his Account such propensities of inter-ethnic conflict between the Nepalis and the Lepcha - Bhutia communities in respect of the question of land occupation. However, he ultimately favored such possessions of land made by the Nepalis as healthy for the colonial government (Hunter 1974: 122). THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 93 provided them the opportunity to share a position in the agrarian social structure of the Darjeeling Hills, and in some exceptional cases they also become able to hold lands, mainly by engaging in matrimonial bonds with hill ladies (Bell 1905: 13). However, except in the Terai⁹, the Marwaris had never enjoyed the status of being a jotedar (land lord) throughout the hills. Conspicuously enough Bell's (1905) Survey and Settlement Report has no mention regarding the Bengalis. The Bengali middle class people came much later to Kalimpong, perhaps with the initiation of white-collar job opportunities in the town. Still, today the presence of the Bengalis in the predominantly agrarian belts of the Darjeeling Hills is abysmally low, if not nil. The point is that the Bengalis as a community neither had their strong presence in the agrarian social structure of the hills nor did there exist any possibility (for the agrarian sector) — unlike the tea plantations — which would have given birth to an anti-Bengali psyche among the hill people. The historical evolution of agrarian relations in the Darjeeling Hills and its distinctiveness was upheld by the provision that the government remained the sole proprietor of all estates within the tract

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and there existed practically none between the government and the raiyat, the actual tiller of the soil. The Bengal Tenancy Act had also not been promulgated here. Hence the questions of Zamindars or for that matter the Zamindari system did not arise in the hills. The raiyats since the first settlement were not permitted to sublet their lands, which they received for ten years lease based on payment of rent. Only local hill-men such as Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalis were eligible to become raiyats. Above the raiyats existed another category of people who were called as mandals and were entrusted with the responsibility to collect the rent from the raiyats, according to the rent rolls and remit them to the manager, who remained responsible to the deputy commissioner. Apart from this, the mandals also had the responsibility to arrange for the free labor needed for the construction of roads and they played the role of the intermediary between the government and the raiyats. Besides all these duties they were also entrusted with such responsibilities (like protection of the forest and grazing lands, preservation of agrarian peace and public order etc.) which led them to enjoy the position of an informal leader or the headman of the community. Four provisions were made as measures to remunerate the mandals: i) a commission of 10 percent on the rents he collected (except cardamom for which he received nothing), ii) any rent that they could realize during the currency of 9 See Mitra's Settlement Report for a detailed account on the issue that clearly shows the emergence of the Marwaris as Jotedars in the Terai Khas Mahals of the district of Darjeeling (Mitra 1927: 14). 94 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES settlement from new raiyats settled by them on khas lands (at the expiry of the settlement such lands were settled by the government direct with the tenants), iii) permission to hold the whole of their

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land rent free, and iv) a free permit for the grazing of their own private cattle in the Government reserved forests (Bell 1902)¹⁰. Although the mandals in other parts of the district had rendered similar services, they had received dissimilar privileges. In the West Tista Khas Mahals and in Sadar Hills Khas Mahals the mandals received neither the rent-free grant nor the free grazing lands. As far as the community background of the mandals is concerned, they invariably belonged to the Nepali community. Although occasionally some Lepchas or Bhutias rose to the status of being the mandals but the British, overall, preferred the Nepalis as best suited for the said position, perhaps due to their industrious character, at the one hand and their ability to speak Khaskura on the other¹¹. Both in their income and power in the local society, the mandals had historically enjoyed a superior position in the agrarian social structure in the hills. Between the decades 1880-1900 (i. e., the period ranging between the enactment of First to Third Settlement) the mandals had exerted a tremendous amount of power and coercion upon the raiyats, overall, and the new coming settlers, in particular, through their capacity to settle the new raiyats and to realize the rent whatsoever being charged against such new settlements (although this provision was dropped in the Third Settlement). The point is that before the 1903 the mandals had remained the sole arbiters on the issues like who would settle where, and most important, how much these new settlers would pay. It could be well-surmised what these issues would be. However, since the Third settlement (1901-1903) the remuneration of the mandals was cut down to size accordingly. In the third Settlement Report of Kalimpong it is pointed out that the mandals would now onwards receive: i) 10 percent on his collection of rents (except cardamom rents) and ii) a rent-free grant. As regards new

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lands they will no longer receive, as formerly, the whole rents from these. Instead of a free grazing permit the number of head of the cattle (cows and bullocks, buffaloes, sheep, goats, etc.) to be introduced for grazing purposes was fixed to 20 (the number of the cattle would be decided by the following proportion: one buffalo was considered equivalent to two cows, bullocks, or ponies; and one cow to two sheep, goats, or pigs) (Bell 1905: 13-14).¹¹ This is revealed in Bell's Settlement Report that maintains: "As a general rule Nepalese are more efficient as mandals than are Lepchas or Bhutias. In future a man should not be appointed as a mandal unless he can read and write Lepcha, Bhutia, or Khaskura. And if possible, one should be obtained (only from among the Nepalis) who can read and write Khaskura, since this is now the common language of the people. But the Bhutias and Lepchas should as far as possible be appointed as mandals in succession to Bhutias and Lepchas respectively" (Bell 1905: 14, parentheses added)

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have meant to the many people who came there in search of livelihood. The possession of large amounts of land and the power of supervision of the entire agrarian belt enabled the mandals to maintain a process of subinfeudation — disregarding the provisions of law — in which the illiterate and ignorant cultivators always remained under their absolute control, as the mandals sometimes offered new leases from their land storage thereby defying the provisions of the patta, which they received from the government. Apart from the anomalies in management, the mandals were often criticized in all the four settlement reports for non-reporting of the actual amount of land the raiyats held, the number of the raiyats and accordingly, the rent they generated. All these actions again show that there remained always a gap between what they

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had showed to the government as collection of rents and what they actually had realized from the raiyats. The mandals also kept many under-raiyats and collected rent from them, which happened to be much higher than the government rent. The point is that according to the provisions of the patta, the raiyats had no power to sublet their lands to anybody and the position of the mandals, though they have been entrusted with different roles, responsibilities and remuneration too by the government in the revenue administration of the hills, stood no better than a raiyat. Thus theoretically, they could not show how much land they possessed (which was tilled by somebody else as subtenant, who remained under the total mercy of the mandals) by any other's name (as raiyat) since it would be considered as illegal. Practically, they paid only a minimum amount of rent and collected a huge amount from the under-raiyats who tilled those lands, most of which the mandals had received as free-land (as parts of their remuneration). However, there remained no legal provision that could have restricted such processes of infeudation or illegal subletting of land to the under-raiyats. Such processes ultimately brought two consequences. First, there appeared sharp polarization within the agrarian hierarchy situating the small groups of the mandals at the top, who single-handedly accumulated considerable amount of wealth (through subletting lands indiscriminately and misrepresenting the actual amount of rent collected therefrom), power and land, and the sizeable section of the raiyats and under-raiyats at the bottom, who remained totally under the control of the mandals. Second, there appeared a process of growing pauperization of the rural mass because of the alienation of lands¹², particularly from the Lepchas and Bhutias ¹² The propensity of land alienation in the Darjeeling Hills and the casualties

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brought by such a process mainly for the Lepchas and (to a lesser extent) the Bhutias was perhaps noticed by the 96 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES to those of the Nepalis and the decreasing size of the holdings (caused by the incoming of the large number of the Nepalis from the adjacent areas). Backed by their relatively well-off economic position, the mandals had turned their attention toward the other secular domains of life. This perhaps explains why mandals in spite of being illiterate sent their wards to schools, colleges, and other vocational courses. 13 Apart from showing a newer cultural outlook, the progenies of the mandals had taken active interest in the socio-political processes of the region. Thus, it is no wonder to see the co-relation between landownership and political power even in the hills. It is pertinent to note in this context that the family of a Mandal of Bhalukop (Kalimpong), namely Dhanabir Gurung, popularly known as Bheriwala Mandal, had produced many well-educated political leaders like Dambar Singh Gurung, Ari Bahadur Gurung, Nar Bahadur Gurung, and Gajendra Gurung, among others. What is worth noting is the fact that the basis of elite formation in Kalimpong was rooted in the agrarian context, overall, and in the Mandal family background, in particular. All these suggest that the questions of political power and leadership in Kalimpong had mingled with the domain of agrarian social structure, which in fact, has added a new dimension in the overall leadership structure of the hills that maintained an archetypical urban middle class orientation over the years. Deputy Commissioner (Mr. Earle) in 1898 when he asked the Manager (Rajah Tendook Pulzar) of the Kalimpong Government Estate to furnish a report regarding whether the Lepchas of Kalimpong were dying out due to their incapability to withstand the Paharia (i. e., the Nepalis) competition for

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land. The report was (prepared by Sri S. C. Bose) sent to the Deputy Commissioner on 20th June 1898, which in clear terms upheld that such alienation is a common phenomenon in Kalimpong in which only the well-to-do Lepchas had persevered against the aggressive Paharias (Deputy Commissioner had forwarded the copy of a letter written to him by Mr. C. U. Bolt dated 16th June, 1898 in which such apprehensions were made. The Memorandum sent by the Deputy Commissioner, bearing No. 465G, Dated 17th June, 1898, the letter of the Manager, Kalimpong Government Estate forwarding the report on the issue prepared by Sri, S. C. Bose, all were collected from the Record Room of District Magistrate's Office, Darjeeling during field work). In 1876, however, Hunter in his account also had provided such trepidations of inter-community conflicts among the Lepchas, and Bhutias against the Nepalis and suggested for a careful attention before a settlement is effected (Hunter 1974: 122). Moreover, both Bell (1905: 15) and Philpot's (1925: 8) Settlement Report have made it clear that the Lepchas had been losing their lands to the more thrifty Nepali communities since the days of First Settlement (that took place in 1882). 13 Bell's settlement report also pointed out this short of a change in the cultural outlook of the mandals (Bell 1905: 30).

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AGRARIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS: ASPECTS OF
COERCION AND EXPLOITATION

For analytical clarity, some issues like the relative positions of people belonging to different agrarian categories, land holding patterns, forms of labor, and sources of loans are elaborated very briefly, which may help us have a glimpse of the evolution of agrarian social structure in the Darjeeling Hills and the nature and extent of the agrarian relations and their linkage with the question of movement. As pointed out

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earlier, the provision of agrarian revenue administration during the colonial period was the abode of the raiyats, the real proprietor of all the estates of the tract, who held land as lease hold land for tilling purposes for certain fixed period on payment of regular rents charged by the government. However, among the raiyats, the actual tillers of the land, some were entrusted with special responsibilities of collection of rents (along with certain other duties for which they enjoyed special privileges too), who were called the mandal. Thus in government records the entire agrarian population was categorized generally as raiyats or specifically as two groups of raiyats: one group was represented simply as the assemblage of a group of raiyats who tilled the land, paid rents regularly, and renewed the lease on usual intervals, and the other group was represented by a smaller group of mandal, or a special category of raiyats who had performed other responsibilities entrusted upon them by the government, apart from paying rents, tilling the land, or renewing the lease of the tract they possessed regularly. The phraseology “ Book View” — popularized by Srinivas (2001: 200) — involves the connotation of a critical methodological perspective that puts emphasis on the need to think beyond the gaze of Indological approaches while analyzing Indian social reality, overall and the system of caste or agrarian social structure, in particular. This “ Book View” is being used here to pinpoint a similar process attempted by the Colonial Government machinery, which upheld only the raiyats and the mandals as two such categories that represented the entire gamut of the rural population, ignoring the historical existence of very many categories of subtenants who remained to be an integral part of the agrarian social structure of the region. It is surprising that despite the repeated insistence of <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

Bell and Philpot in their respective Settlement Reports regarding the existence of a variety of subtenancies, the Colonial Government had never taken heed of either these notes or the actual social reality and denied the different subtenant categories any formal standing within the fold of revenue administration. Thus in Colonial Government records one can find only the existence of raiyats, those who held land in varying capacities, but no mention regarding the migrant people who came later and settled 98 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES in the Kalimpong Government Estate and engaged themselves in the agrarian production system mainly by linking with the existing raiyats as their subtenants. The point is that this group of new settlers, whose arrival remained continuous throughout the colonial period and even beyond that, were basically the land less people, although some of them managed some amount of land and became raiyats, but many of them failed to do so. Since the government never recorded in the rent roll any except the raiyats, we find no mention of the existence of the landless agricultural labor in the Darjeeling Hills until 1941, the last census completed under the colonial rule. That is why even after making several painstaking efforts one probably could not glean any authoritative information or any amount of quantitative data (except the succinct accounts of Bell or Philpot regarding this matter, which were also reproduced in different District Gazetteers of Darjeeling) regarding the existential reality of this group of subtenants who remained under the helm of the process of subinfeudation throughout the colonial period. It is in this context that the need to think beyond the " Book View" is suggested. Apart from this " Book View, " which the colonial government had maintained regarding the agrarian social structure of the Darjeeling Hills, the social history of the mandal system

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suggests that it had given birth to three major forms of subtenancies, which remained operational — without the prior approval of the government — since the very beginning of settlement operations in the Darjeeling Hills. The first among these three forms of sub-tenancies was known as adhia and the remaining forms of sub-tenancies were pakuria and kut. In adhia sub-tenancy the raiyat paid the rent; the cost of the seed was deduced from the outrun, and the balance was divided between the raiyat and the subtenant (adhiar). The rice fields were let on the adhia system. A pakuria sub-tenancy was one in which the subtenant paid a fixed money rent to the raiyat. The rent of the pakuria, during the Third Settlement (1901-1903), ranged from two to three times of the revenue occasionally. This clearly suggests that the difference between revenue (paid by the raiyat) and rent (paid by the pakuria) went straightway to the pockets of the raiyats that contributed to the growth of their economic affluence. Pakurias had often also performed, for the raiyat, the coolie work that the raiyat was bound by his patta to render, mainly for the construction of the roads in the locality. Such forms of coerced labor, which was not actually their responsibility to perform, can give us the minuscule idea regarding the underdog position of the pakurias as the most subjugated category within the agrarian hierarchy of the Darjeeling Hills. A kut subtenant paid a fixed produce rent to the raiyat; the raiyat however, paid the revenue and the subtenant paid the cost of seed and all other expenses of THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 99 cultivation. In the makai (maize) fields, during 1901-1903, one-third to one-half of the average production was the common form of bargain based on which the fixed produce rent of the kutdar was often decided. On a field of average fertility the raiyat had gained from Rs. 8 to Rs.

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9, according to the form of contract made (Bell 1902). As far as the terms and conditions of these three forms of sub-tenancies were concerned, it may fairly be deduced that the pakuria system was the most coercive, in which the subtenants neither had the option of bargaining while fixing the rent to be paid in cash by them, which as a rule remained an exorbitant one, nor could they even deny the coolie works needed to be performed by them (as free labor) as a condition of the system that provided them the opportunity to eke out their living. Moreover, there existed several other ways of exploitation too. Apart from paying the rent (in cash) at a much higher rate than the rate of revenue and providing the free unpaid labor, the subtenants often had to depend upon the local traders to whom they had to sell their produce in return for money, which they needed to repay rent to the raiyat. If this process failed to meet the monetary needs, they had no other option left but to engage in another chain of exploitation maintained by the local money lenders, from whom they borrowed money to fulfil the requirement. The point is that there remained every possibility to become exploited and dominated either by the raiyat or by the local traders or even by the local money lenders. Additionally, the contravention of the terms and conditions of the contract guaranteed eviction on the one hand and a further deterioration of the livelihood on the other. Lacking any land or any other alternative source of income, the 'nowhere' people remained always ready to come to terms with such a repressive system like pakuria. The kut and adhia forms of sub-tenancies provided a little bit more space to the kuldars and adhiars since they need not provide either the unpaid free labor or the rent in cash. However, the raiyats, even in these systems, had maintained an upper hand while settling the fixed produce rent (in case of the kut system)

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or while determining the cost of the seed to be deducted from the outrun (in case of the adhia system). Moreover, the presence of the local money lenders even in case of kut and adhia systems can largely be expected since in both the cases the under-raiyats had to meet the cost of production for which they often borrowed money, often at an exorbitant rate of interest. It may be argued that the sub-tenancy arrangements in the Darjeeling Hills brought in its trail indebtedness as a regular phenomenon and made the local money lenders an important category within the agrarian social system. The importance of money lenders as an important category in the analysis of agrarian social structure of the Darjeeling Hills cannot simply be brushed aside 100 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES only since they do not participate in the agrarian production process, the way the peasants do participate. Although in most occasions the money lenders did not belong to a land owning class, 14 they played no less an exploitative role (mainly by providing commercial capital to those who were in dire need of the same — the under-raiyats or the subtenants) than the mandals and other big raiyats in the overall agricultural production system of the hills. The existence of the kanyas from the very beginning of Darjeeling's agrarian history may be treated as an indication of indebtedness as a usual agrarian practice in the hills. Again, taking a cue from Bell's settlement report that upholds that the Nepalis borrowed the most, and invariably from the kanyas, while the Bhutias and Lepchas preferred the local mahajans belonging to the Bhutia community and the Lepchas borrowed the least (Bell 1905: 18), we may logically (the logic is based on the finding that sub-tenancy arrangements in the past necessitated substantial amount of borrowing) deduce that very few of the Lepchas (perhaps none), followed by the Bhutias and the Nepalis (the <https://assignbuster.com/land-question-and-ethnicity/>

late comer migrants in particular, whose arrival remained a continuous process until the recent past) had acted as under-raiyats. Apart from these examples, the revenue administrative provisions made it mandatory that only the local people (Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas) could become the raiyats. What is suggested here is the fact that the entire rural social structure of the Darjeeling Hills had and (as we will show) still has been composed exclusively out of the hill communities and the kanyas (Marwaris) to some extent. In no situation the plainsmen/Bengalis were allowed to or had shown any interest in highland tilling.

AGRARIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS: PROCESSES OF COOPERATION AND MUTUALITY It is pertinent here to comment that no social arrangement — how stratified it may be — can ever sustain for a longer period without being a just one. Here by the term just social arrangement we mean the existence of enough space for the reproduction/regeneration of cultural aspects of life of the individuals or that

it 14 However, occasionally some money lenders did possess sizable amounts of land and often their money lending capacity was the result of the increasing wealth that they accumulated by subletting their lands (mainly the kut and pakuria systems of sub-tenancy are the cases in point) or by selling the agricultural produce (mainly cardamom) in the market or by providing agricultural implements and cattle (usurious capital) on hire. These factors and forces had enabled the Nepalis and Bhutias, in particular among others, to emerge as indigenous money lenders who held both land and usurious capital unlike the Marwaris (kanyas) who only held commercial capital but possibly no fixed capital (land) which they could use.

THE LAND QUESTION AND ETHNICITY IN THE DARJEELING HILLS 101 allows their differentiated bodies of constituents to spend their mundane life with mutual

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respect and cooperation for each other. The point is that while analyzing any social arrangement the overemphasis upon the class analysis or putting stress only on the relations of domination and exploitation may lose sight of another crucial domain of social relationship that maintained multiple spheres of mutual deference and cooperation among the different categories of population who might have shared contradictory class positions. Since sociology remains to be a discipline of studying relationships, how could one deny the coexistence of cooperation and conflict in any social system that existed for a pretty long time. Keeping in view such analytical proclivities, attempts have been made to comprehend the rural inequality situation in the Darjeeling Hills, which not only maintained classes and the relations of domination and exploitation, but also accommodated the different groups and communities who kept up relations of mutual respect and cooperation among themselves. Without analyzing the sphere of mutual responsibility sharing or of cooperation, one cannot answer such crucial questions like: why such structural arrangements had sustained even in the post-independent phase or that why a so-called exploitative structural arrangement had contributed toward the formation of ethnic movement that theoretically negates the ideas of class and class conflict? In fact, social life in agrarian societies as opposed to their industrial counterpart is governed to a greater extent by personal ties and loyalties than by impersonal rules. Srinivas and B eteille have well-reminded us that social networks in agrarian societies are usually close-knit and have a multiplex character so that one's partner in work is also related to oneself in several other ways (Srinivas and B eteille 1964). The concern for agrarian social structure as a system incorporating the relations of cooperation and loyalties can help us

understand other crucial processes of social significance, which often intermingle the realm of culture with that of political economy and vice-versa. The social history of the agrarian social structure of the hills sheds enough light on all these issues and processes and perhaps the systems of cooperation or the mutuality domain of the system explains why despite being an utterly exploitative arrangement, the agrarian hierarchy in the post-independent Darjeeling Hills maintained almost the same categories having almost similar connotations. While taking into consideration the hill agrarian situation it was observed that among the various structural units, which provided the basis for the kind of mutual role-relationship and cooperation that existed historically, the structural bases of kinship, locality (in the sense of char chhimeki or neighborhood), and forms of exchanging labor had reinforced each other. 102 JOURNAL OF RURAL SOCIAL SCIENCES Apart from its usual significance in the rural society, a particular form of kinship structure occurring in the hills deserves special mention. There prevails a system of indulging in fictive kinship bonds — both in male and female lines — among the Nepalis of the Darjeeling Hills. Although the origin of this spontaneous arrangement of ritual brotherhood and sisterhood had its roots in Nepal, in the Darjeeling Hills this system obviously had provided the new comers an opportunity to become socially entrenched, which involved establishing ceremonial relationship of brotherhood (mit) or sisterhood (mitni) with the members of those already settled households with whom they do not share any kinship ties. The field experience revealed that although the efficacy of mit-mitni relationship is almost non-existent among the younger generation — some even hardly heard about this arrangement — many senior informants, mainly belonging to matwali group, confirmed its

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existence in their lifetime. Often the urban informants had pointed out that they had their mit (ritual brother), mit ba (mit father) and mit ama (mit mother) in the village who looked after their ancestral property. An interesting case study also disclosed the fact in which a Bhutanese refugee had not secured a job, a ration card, and social recognition in Darjeeling town until he established a mit relationship with a young chap of his age and became his ritual brother. It is undoubtedly true that the significance of mit-mitni relationship in the Darjeeling Hills has waned with the passage of time but wherever such relationships still exist they uniformly maintain its traditional moorings like, a Hindu religious root, continuance of incest barrier for generations, and no legal obligations (i. e., inheritance of property) whatsoever. The implication of ceremonial kinship in relation to the rural social structure, particularly in yesteryears, can be well assumed if we take into account the responses of t