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The Role of Youth Activism in the Struggle for Gorkha Identity

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ABSTRACT

In a culturally varied nation such as India, identity-based movements have significantly influenced regional politics and social awareness. The Gorkha community's enduring quest for recognition and the desire for a distinct state of Gorkhaland is a notable socio-political movement. The movement historically grounded on marginalization, misrepresentation, and exclusion, has developed to mirror shifting political realities and community goals. Recently, youth activism has been a potent and impactful force in this movement, with young Gorkhas prominently engaging in public mobilization, orchestrating protests, revitalizing traditional narratives, and utilizing digital channels to affirm their identity. The research aims to investigate the significance of youth involvement in the Gorkha identity movement by analyzing the motivations, techniques, and effects of youth-led initiatives. The paper examines how youth engagement has transformed the dialogue over Gorkha identity and evaluates its impact on the community and broader policy-making frameworks. The findings indicate that youth activists have been instrumental in sustaining the movement, particularly through the innovative application of digital media, cultural revitalization efforts, and grassroots mobilization. Their endeavors have amplified the prominence of the Gorkha identity struggle, cultivated a sense of solidarity among Gorkha youth, and contested prevailing narratives that marginalize the community. Nonetheless, obstacles such as political fragmentation, insufficient institutional support, and generational disparities persist as impediments to enduring impact.

INTRODUCTION

Youth activism has played a crucial role in the Gorkha identity struggle, influencing the direction and intensity of the Gorkhaland movement from its beginnings to the present (Tamang, 2021). The quest for a unique Gorkha identity dates back to 1907, when the inaugural formal petition for a separate administrative entity was presented to the Morley-Minto Reforms committee (Sarkar, 2014). The pursuit escalated during the 1920s and 1930s, as Gorkha students, traders, and labourers in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Assam, and Shillong engaged in Gandhi-led Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements, orchestrating hartals and boycotts, and founding youth organizations that established a foundation for subsequent mobilizations (Tamang, 2020; Phipon, 2018). The establishment of the All India Gorkha League in 1943 by Damber Singh Gurung, together with subsequent advocacy by leaders such as Jung Bahadur Rai, reinforced youth participation in the political mainstream (Rana, 2019).

The 1980s signified a pivotal moment with the emergence of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) led by Subhas Ghising, whose leadership inspired young students and intellectuals with an 11-point program unveiled in Ghum in 1986 (Chakraborty, 2022). The movement, occurring in three distinct periods from 1986 to 1988, saw extensive youth engagement, characterized by enormous protests and direct action, culminating in over 1,200 fatalities and considerable violence (Rana, 2019). Survey data highlights significant youth engagement, with 73.2% of respondents in a recent research reporting political marginalization in West Bengal and 70.4% recognizing cultural identity as pivotal to the desire for statehood (Tamang, 2021). The unrest resulted in the establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988, however the quest for complete independence persisted unsolved (Sarkar, 2014).

The revival of the movement in 2007, spearheaded by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) under Bimal Gurung, once more positioned youth at the forefront (Tamang, 2020). The GJM, employing both peaceful and assertive strategies, advocated for widespread civil disobedience, including tax non-payment and organized strikes, utilizing digital media and grassroots mobilization to maintain momentum (Phipon, 2018). The 2017 agitation, enduring for more than three months, witnessed unparalleled young involvement, particularly from the GJM, underscoring the generational continuity of activism (Rana, 2019). The result indicates that 40.8% of questioned Gorkhas endorse full statehood as the most feasible solution, whereas 26.8% favor administrative autonomy (Chakraborty, 2022). Notwithstanding political obstacles, youth action has sustained the Gorkhaland movement as a vigorous entity, maintaining the issues of recognition, autonomy, and dignity at the forefront of the Gorkha community's demands (Tamang, 2021).

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are to investigate the historical and socio-political context of the Gorkha identity movement and the rise of youth activism within it, analyze the methods, strategies, and platforms employed by youth activists in promoting Gorkha identity and rights, evaluate the influence of youth activism on public discourse, political mobilization, and policy responses concerning the Gorkha identity struggle, and examine the motivations, challenges, and perceptions of youth engaged in the Gorkha identity movement.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The assertion of ethnic and cultural identity has frequently been at the core of regional and community-based movements in a country as diverse and multiethnic as India. The Indian Gorkha community's continuous fight for political rights, socio-cultural inclusion, and acknowledgement of their unique identity is one such important movement. The declaration of Gorkha identity and the call for a separate Gorkhaland have endured for decades, rooted in a history of marginalization and stereotyping. The active participation of Gorkha youth, who use both traditional and digital platforms to express their concerns, rally support, and shape public and political debate, has marked a significant change in this movement in recent years. The movement has gained fresh vitality and viewpoints from youth action, which has taken the form of student movements, online campaigns, cultural events, and



protests. Nevertheless, little is known about how this youth-led action is impacting the Gorkha identity movement as a whole, despite their growing involvement. The issue is the lack of targeted studies on the precise roles, driving forces, and efficacy of youth activism in determining the course, prominence, and results of the Gorkha conflict. Without this knowledge, youth's contributions are still not given enough credit in academic research and policy discussions, which restricts the ability to use their efforts to create inclusive and positive identities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the Gorkha identity movement and youth activism within it. Primary data was collected through group discussions with youth activists, community leaders, and political figures engaged in the movement. The secondary data includes academic articles, books, government reports, news articles, and historical records were utilized to provide context and support the analysis. The combination of primary and secondary sources enabled a comprehensive exploration of the movement's historical, socio-political dimensions, and the role of youth activism in shaping its trajectory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study's theoretical framework is based on the New Social Movement Theory (NSMT), specifically as it was established by Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci, and Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979). The motivations and behaviours of Gorkha youth in their agitation for identity recognition can be fully understood by combining these theories. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), people's affiliation with particular social groups shapes a large portion of their self-concept. Members of such groups feel compelled to assert their uniqueness on a psychological level when they are marginalized when their individuality is not sufficiently acknowledged. Young people in the Gorkha community have a strong sense of in-group identity as a result of past neglect, stereotyping, and political under-representation. The motivation behind their activity is to promote community pride, combat marginalization, and validate the identity of their group. SIT aids in comprehending the psychological and emotional factors that motivate them, such as the need for respect, approval, and a favorable view of oneself. Social action cannot be explained solely by materialism or class-based theories, according to New Social Movement Theory. It emphasizes movements that have their roots in culture, identity, and symbolic expression. When examining Gorkha youth activism, which encompasses cultural assertion, linguistic pride, and attempts to recover history through music, art, rallies, and digital campaigns in addition to calls for a distinct state or political authority, this is especially pertinent. In post-industrial societies, movements are frequently about protecting autonomy and generating meaning rather than pursuing financial gain, according to Melucci, a prominent NSMT theorist. The theoretical framework is ideally suited to Gorkha youth activism, which is motivated by a desire for recognition in the community and identity. The visible manifestations of this identity through symbolic, cultural, and digital activism are explained by NSMT, SIT aids in comprehending the inner motives of young activists, such as identity building, group loyalty, and emotional attachment to their community. By including both ideas, the study is able to investigate youth activism as a socio-political phenomenon as well as a psychological process. Given that the Gorkha identity movement is influenced by both individual experiences of exclusion and more general socio-cultural manifestations of resistance, this dual lens is crucial to capturing its complexity. Therefore, the integration of Social Identity Theory and New Social Movement Theory offers a strong foundation for examining how young people are involved in the Gorkha identity conflict. It makes it possible to comprehend young Gorkhas' identity perceptions, the motivations behind their activity, and how their work shapes the movement's collective identity and future course.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

GORKHA IDENTITY MOVEMENT'S HISTORY AND YOUTH ACTIVISM

The movement for Gorkha identity based in the Darjeeling hills, Kalimpong, and the Dooars area of West Bengal has been a one-hundred-year-old struggle to be recognized and self-governing (Sarkar, 2015). The first official plea for a Nepali-speaking Gorkha territorial unit was in 1907 with the



Hillmen's Association, which campaigned to bring disparate groups together using the slogan "Nepali, Bhutia, Lapche hami sabai Gorkhali" (Shneiderman & Turin, 2006). The All India Gorkha League (AIGL) was established in 1943 and was the first political organization in the area and a driving force behind post-independence campaigns for statehood, such as the 'Assam Chalo' movement and petitions to national leaders in memorandums (Bhattacharyya, 2014). The call for Gorkhaland gained momentum in the 1980s, with that of Subhash Ghisingh leading the movement by establishing the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in 1980 (Chakraborty, 2022). The movement gained momentum between 1986 and 1988, and there were violent clashes, more than 1,200 deaths, and the destruction of government assets (Brown, 2015). The movement's initial major political victory was the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988, which offered partial autonomy but did not fulfill the central demand for statehood (Whelpton, 2012).

The youths' activism was a compelling engine in all the stages of the Gorkha identity movement, especially at the most disturbed stages (Rai, 2018). The top leadership in the 1980s of Subhash Ghisingh successfully coaxed youths into action with youth students and intellectuals, seen best exemplified with the GNLF's 11-point program stated in Ghum in 1986 that stimulated the youth leading to large scale mobilizations and strikes (Sharma, 2021). The initial phase of the movement (April–October 1986) witnessed extensive intra-party and inter-party conflict, whereas the second phase (November 1986–April 1987) was characterized by CPI(M)-led counter-movements and ferocious confrontations with state-armed police forces, leading to additional casualties and displacement (Chakraborty & Saha, 2024). The youth not only served as foot soldiers but as organizers and ideologues as well, defining the narrative of the movement and taking it to global forums, such as memorandums addressed to the United Nations and foreign governments (Singh & Patel, 2021). The DGHC era (1988–2011) experienced a temporary pause, but frustration with restricted autonomy maintained the activist spirit in the younger generation (Bhattacharyya, 2014).

The resurgence of the movement in the 21st century was characterized by the emergence of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) headed by Bimal Gurung in 2007, which brought youth to center stage once again (Chakraborty, 2022). The GJM rejected the Sixth Schedule status mooted by the Centre and state government in 2005 as not doing justice to the aspirations of the Gorkha people, and instead re-fueled the demand for full statehood (Sarkar, 2015). The years 2007–2011 saw huge youth-driven protests, demonstrations, and online movements, culminating in the establishment of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 with Bimal Gurung as its initial chief executive (Rai, 2018). But the GTA was perceived as yet another half-measure, and the movement went on, particularly after Telangana was formed in 2013 and revived hopes for statehood (Chakraborty & Saha, 2024). Significantly, youth leaders like Madan Tamang of the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL), killed in 2010, were realized as sacrificial and resistant symbols, further galvanizing the youth support base (Brown, 2015).

Demographically, the suggested Gorkhaland area spans more than 7,500 sq km and has a population of approximately four million, with Gorkhas making up about 35% of the population (Whelpton, 2012). During the 2011 West Bengal Assembly elections, GJM candidates, riding on youth support, won all three Darjeeling hill seats, proving the long-term power of youth activism (Sharma, 2021). Academic research and surveys consistently point out that young Gorkhas experience a strong sense of exclusion and marginalization, motivating their activism on the issues of statehood, constitutional recognition, and the Nepali language in official spheres (Chakraborty, 2022). Youth groups have also formed coalitions with other marginalized communities, expanding the social base of the movement and ensuring its ongoing relevance (Singh & Patel, 2021).

Youth activism has formed the cornerstone of the Gorkha identity movement, from the early movements of the Hillmen's Association to the modern-day campaigns pioneered by the GJM and other organizations (Rai, 2018). By spearheading protests, utilizing online platforms, and participating in political negotiations, young Gorkhas have sustained the struggle for identity, dignity, and self-determination (Sarkar, 2015). Their resilience and flexibility have helped to ensure the movement remains alive and vibrant, in spite of repeated repression and state efforts (Chakraborty & Saha, 2024). As the call for Gorkhaland remains a challenge to India's federal system and a test case for regional

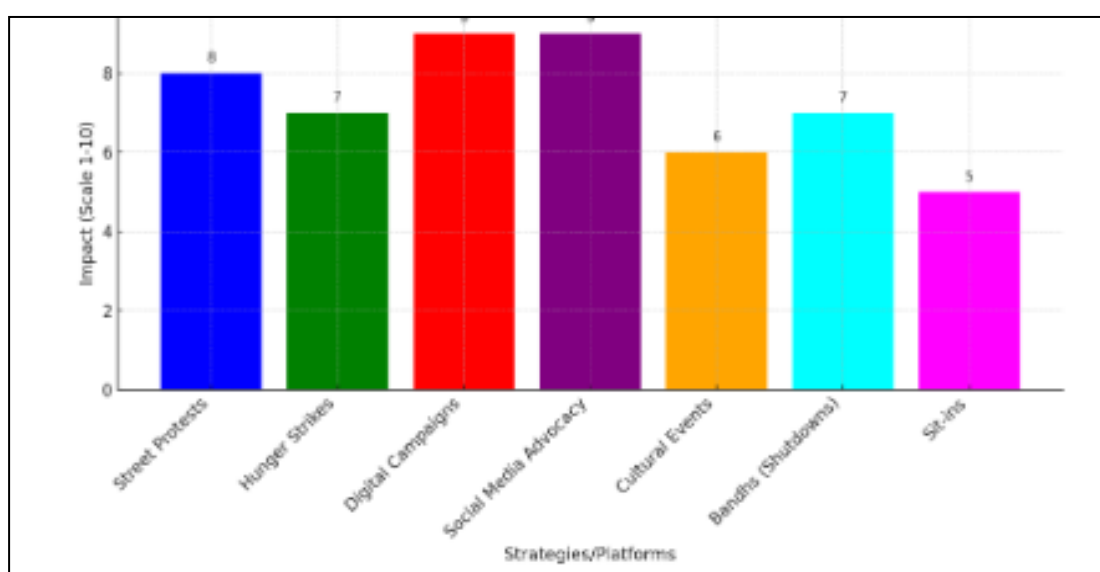
autonomy, the activist role of youth shines through as both catalyst and emblem of the people's ongoing aspirations (Shneiderman & Turin, 2006).

STRATEGIES AND PLATFORMS USED BY YOUTH ACTIVISTS FOR GORKHA RIGHTS.

Youth activism within the Gorkha identity movement has assumed varied forms, from classical street demonstrations and hunger strikes to contemporary online campaigns (Brown et al., 2016). Traditionally, young activists have been at the forefront of mass rallies, black flag protests, and strikes—techniques dating back to the 1980s in the GNLF-led agitation under Subhash Ghisingh, when youth were mobilized to join through emotive orations and direct action (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2015). These types of activism tended to involve clashes with authorities, the mobilization of bandhs (shutdowns), and hunger strikes, like the high-profile Gurkha Satyagraha hunger strike in the UK in 2021, which mobilized large numbers of youth and caught the attention of the public (Brown et al., 2020).

Young activists have taken a mix of street mobilization and calculated online mobilization. At the grassroots level, these involve planning protest marches, sit-ins, and symbolic actions such as the black flag protest, as well as mobilizing cultural events to stake out Gorkha identity (Brown et al., 2016). During the 2017 Gorkhaland agitation, youth movements like the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) organized bandhs, hunger strikes, and non-cooperation movements, which led the state authorities to negotiate (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2015). Infographics, posters, and synchronized dates for events announced via social media have been characteristic of recent youth movements, which allow for quick mobilization and increased participation within the younger population (Brown et al., 2020).

Graph 1.1 representing the strategies and platforms used by youth activists for Gorkha rights



The advent of online activism has changed the face of Gorkha youth activism (Middleton & Shneiderman, 2018). Social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook are crucial arenas for mobilization, education, and organizing supporters (Mandal, 2020). For instance, the Instagram account @gurkhaequalrights was central to the 2021 Gurkha Justice Campaign, posting details, rally dates, and infographics emphasizing pension inequalities and past injustices (Chhetri, 2021). These online sites democratize information access, allow for sharing personal stories, and promote geographically dispersed community solidarity (Middleton, 2013). Offline, youth groups like the Gorkha Youth and Students' Association (GYASA) in Delhi offer apolitical youth spaces for participation, networking, and advocacy (Chhetry, 2018). Digital and offline sites are employed side by side, with online activism frequently leading to on-ground protests and vice versa (Mandal, 2020).

The convergence of modern digital instruments with conventional activism has furthered the reach and influence of the Gorkha identity movement (Middleton & Shneiderman, 2018). Online



petitions, for instance, that garnered more than 100,000 signatures in the UK have prompted parliamentary debates and raised more media coverage of Gorkha grievances (Chhetri, 2021). Social media activism has also allowed the amplification of marginalized voices—also those of Gurkha women—on specialized pages such as @gurkhawomen, expanding further the inclusivity of the movement (Middleton, 2013). Although online activism has its pitfalls in terms of disinformation and the possibility of "slacktivism," it continues to be an effective weapon for awareness, education, and mobilization, particularly among youths well-schooled in how to maximize these tools for social change (Mandal, 2020). The interplay between street-level activism and online advocacy continues to shape the tactics of young activists in the struggle for Gorkha identity and rights (Chhetry, 2018).

YOUTH ACTIVISM'S IMPACT ON THE GORKHA IDENTITY STRUGGLE

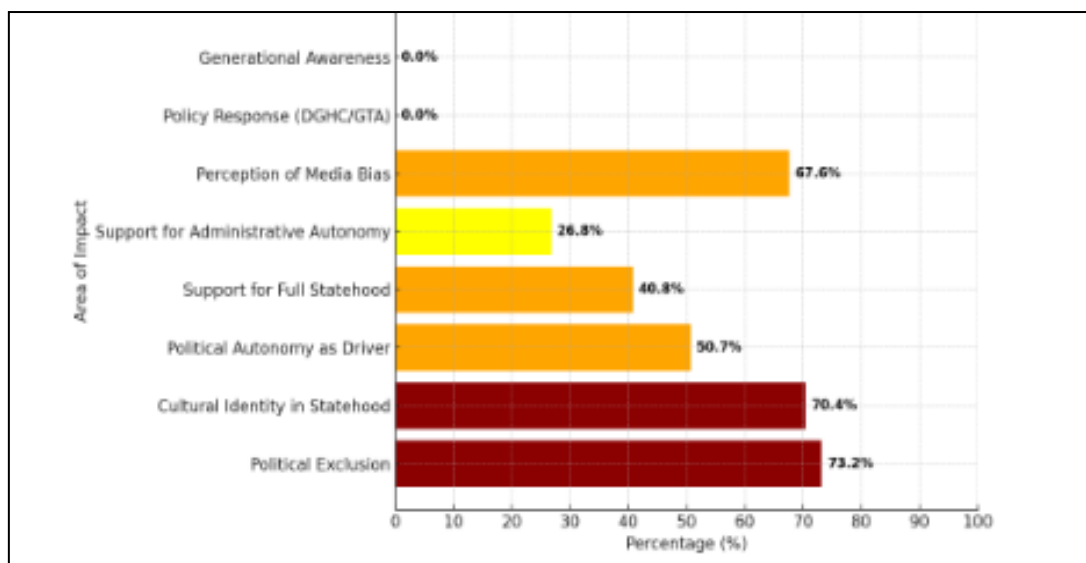
Young activism has deeply shaped the struggle of the Gorkha identity, steering public debate, political action, and policy solutions through determined action and creative techniques (Ray & Chowdhury, 2022). Figures emerging from recent surveys highlight the pervasiveness of political and cultural marginality reported by the Gorkha: 73.2% of respondents identify political exclusion in West Bengal, with 70.4% of respondents claiming that cultural identity captures the heart of the call for statehood (Chettri, 2017). This generation consciousness, particularly among young people, has maintained the movement's currency and dynamism, with younger activists still venting frustration at exclusion and an intense aspiration for self-determination (Singh & Singh, 2024). The leverage of online spaces, grassroots activities, and mass mobilizations has enabled youth to redirect the narrative from simple territorial claims to a more expansive struggle for dignity, recognition, and socio-economic justice (Sarkar, 2012).

At the grassroots level, youth-led demonstrations, strikes, and hunger strikes have been instrumental in keeping the momentum of the movement going (Behera, 2007). The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), which had strong youth involvement, coordinated mass protests during the 2017 Gorkhaland agitation, which caught national attention and forced state authorities to the negotiating table (Dasgupta, 1999). Survey findings indicate that 50.7% of the people view political autonomy as the leading force behind the movement, followed by 40.8% who favor full statehood as the most reasonable solution, and 26.8% who favor increased administrative autonomy (Ray & Chowdhury, 2022). These figures show how youth activism not only galvanized the community but also brought out clear political aspirations. 67.6% of respondents believe media portrayals of the movement are biased, suggesting that youth-led digital campaigns have been crucial in countering negative narratives and ensuring the movement's perspectives reach a broader audience (Singh & Singh, 2024).

Policy reactions to youth activism have ranged from the establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988 and the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 (Patil & Torgal, 1988). These administrative concessions have, however, been roundly criticized for their narrow scope and failure to address the fundamental grievances of the Gorkha people (Sarkar, 2012). The continuation of youth demonstrations and online activism has pushed the governments to re-open the dialogue, yet the root problems of political representation, cultural recognition, and fair development are still not addressed (Ganguly, 2005). The influence of the movement on government policy is therefore seen in the sporadic administrative reforms, but the absence of meaningful change keeps encouraging more activism and calls for statehood (Chettri, 2017).

The larger implications of young people's activism in the Gorkha movement include questioning India's federal state and initiating multiculturalism and regional autonomy debates (Ray & Chowdhury, 2022). By placing emphasis on identity, autonomy, and justice, youth activists have pressured policymakers to face the challenges of accommodating regional demands within a central framework (Singh & Singh, 2024). They have created an inclusive discourse, established precedents for other regional movements, and made the struggle for Gorkha identity an ongoing issue of Indian politics (Campbell, 1869).

Graph 1.2 Impact Level of Youth Activism in the Gorkha Identity Movement

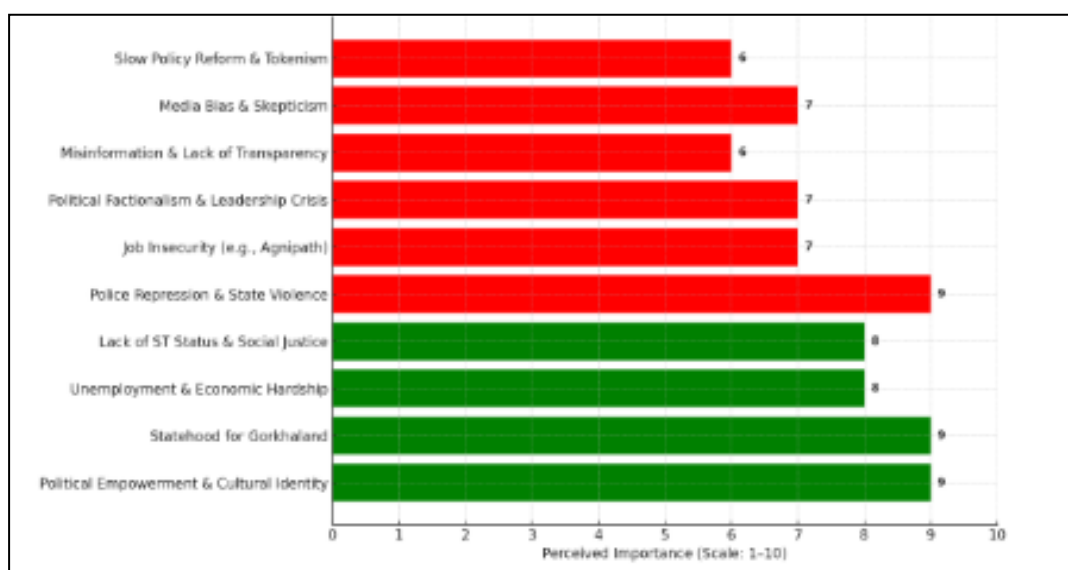


MOTIVATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF YOUTH IN THE GORKHA IDENTITY MOVEMENT

The forces behind youth engagement in the Gorkha identity movement are diverse, based both on cultural pride and socio-economic imperatives (Chhetri, 2022; Singh & Singh, 2024). The foremost reason is the pursuit of political empowerment and cultural independence, as Gorkhas have historically sought constitutional safeguards for their language, tradition, and separate ethnic identity (Chhetri et al., 2017). The call for an independent state of Gorkhaland that covers Darjeeling, Terai, and Dooars is still at the core, with young people considering statehood to be a path to gaining political representation, more effective governance, and administrative autonomy (Chhetri, 2012). Economic issues are also involved: extremely high unemployment levels in Nepal (well above 11%) and lack of jobs within the Darjeeling hills have caused large numbers of young Gorkhas to seek alternative incomes, such as serving in foreign armies or seeking employment abroad (Kaushik, 2009). Lack of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for various Gorkha groups also gives further impetus to the yearning for social justice and eligibility for affirmative action benefits, seen by youth as essential for vertical mobility and communal progress (Mukhia, 2024; Chhetri, 2018).

Gorkha movement youth activists are confronted with a challenging array of both external and internal problems. Externally, state repression is ever-present threat—protests are frequently met with police brutality, arrest, and even death, as with the violent 2017 agitations when many young protestors were killed (Newar & Singh, 2017; Sarkar, 2014). The launch of programmes such as Agnipath, which provide brief military careers with no guarantee of long-term security, has also increased concerns about employment stability and is considered to be an assault on age-old understandings that previously assured permanent service and pensions (Singh & Singh, 2024). Domestically, the movement suffers from political factionalism, leadership crises, and the disavowal of alternative voices, resulting in disaffection among young people (Chhetri, 2022). The dilatory fulfillment of promises like ST status and land rights, in spite of repeated promises, has further weakened the trust in local as well as national leadership (Chhetri et al., 2017). Misinformation—particularly about land allotment and government policies—is also an ongoing issue, so much so that youth organizations like the Gorkha Youth Activist Network (GYAN) have resorted to using RTI (Right to Information) applications in order to establish facts and seek transparency (Mukhia, 2024).

Graph 1.3 representing the motivations (in green) and challenges (in red) faced by youth in the Gorkha Identity Movement



Youth participating in the Gorkha identity movement are influenced by a sense of responsibility across generations and anger at continued marginalization (Sarkar, 2015; Singh & Patel, 2021). Most young activists feel they are bearers of a heritage, eager to ensure a dignified future for their people (Rai, 2018). Skepticism regarding mainstream media exists among most youths, with 67.6% of polled youth believing media reporting on the movement is biased or uninformed (Chakraborty & Saha, 2024). Youth also express disappointment with the glacial pace of policy reforms and perceived tokenism of administrative institutions such as the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), which have not been able to bring about substantive change (Bhattacharyya, 2014). In spite of these failures, there is persisting optimism and dedication among youth, who continue to stage mass rallies, online campaigns, and grassroots studies to keep the movement dynamic and vibrant (Singh & Patel, 2021). Their activism grows more intersectional, targeting not merely ethnic identity but land rights for tea garden laborers, gender equality, and wider causes of social justice (Whelpton, 2012). Youth activism within the Gorkha identity movement is motivated by the demands for recognition, justice, and opportunity, yet is constantly thwarted by political, economic, and informational challenges. Despite these challenges, Gorkha youth remain at the forefront, shaping the movement's direction and sustaining its momentum (Sarkar, 2015; Rai, 2018).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

1. Youth activism has changed the way people talk about the Gorkha identity in a big way. It's no longer just about territorial claims; it's also about dignity, socioeconomic justice, and cultural recognition. This has kept the movement going strong and important in both local and global settings.
2. Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram have made information more accessible to everyone. This means that young activists can plan rallies, fight against biased media stories, and build unity across national and international borders. This makes online activism an important addition to traditional street protests.
3. Even though some administrative concessions have been made by groups like the DGHC and GTA, the Gorkha identity movement's main goals of full statehood and meaningful political representation continue at the centre of ongoing youth-led activism.
4. Young activists use intersectional approaches that combine calls for racial recognition with larger social justice issues like workers' rights to land in tea gardens and equal rights for men and women. This makes the movement more open to everyone and has a bigger social effect.



5. The Gorkha youth face long-lasting problems like political division, government repression, and bias in the media, which make it hard to work together and get support from institutions. But their strength and ability to change are what make the movement dynamic and forward-looking.
6. The results show that a large portion of Gorkha youth sees political exclusion and cultural identity suppression as main reasons for their activity. This highlights the psychological and socio-political factors that keep them involved.
7. Combining old-fashioned ways of organizing like mass protests and strikes with modern digital campaigns is a big step forward in young activism. It makes activism more effective and reaches more people during important times like the 2017 Gorkhaland agitation.
8. The result found that young people are involved in the movement shows a strong sense of shared identity formed by social identity theory and new social movement theory, which puts more emphasis on cultural expression and personal freedom than just economic needs.
9. Youth-led campaigns successfully challenge negative stereotypes and stereotypical media representation, allowing the Gorkha movement to dictate its own agenda and win wider public sympathy within India and overseas.
10. Chronic unemployment and denial of Scheduled Tribe status generate economic and social grievances that mobilize youth participation, connecting claims of identity with hopes for affirmative action and social mobility.
11. Use of Right to Information (RTI) applications by youth organizations reflects their deliberate approach towards addressing transparency and governance concerns, correcting misinformation and pushing for accountability among state institutions.
12. Legacy of previous mobilizations by young people during the 1980s still energizes present-day activists, illustrating a consistent generationally rooted allegiance that marries historical awareness with contemporary forms of activism.
13. Youth activism has broadened the scope of the Gorkha movement by adding cultural festivals and symbolic activities, enhancing ethnic pride and ensuring the visibility of the movement across various social arenas.

CONCLUSION

The Gorkha identity movement, which has its roots in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal, is a strong expression of the long-standing pursuit of recognition, autonomy, and justice by the Gorkha people. Historically marginalized and culturally different, the Gorkhas have traditionally struggled with the problem of asserting their distinct identity within a pluralistic but frequently exclusionary Indian federal system. This movement, fashioned by years of political negotiation, administrative give-and-take, and occasional mobilization, represents the wider processes of identity politics and regional aspiration in India. The emergence and continued engagement of youth have introduced new dynamism, approaches, and attitudes to this struggle and have made them indispensable as agents of change and continuity.

Youth activism in the Gorkha movement has gone from classic street demonstrations and hunger strikes to technologically advanced social media campaigns and grass roots mobilization. The social media outlets, including Facebook and Instagram, have been particularly used by youth activists to send messages, arrange rallies, and oppose dominant discourse. These websites have democratized access to information and promoted solidarity across geographies, as with the Gurkha Justice Campaign in the UK, where online activism was translated into real political participation and global advocacy. On the streets, youth organizations have mobilized mass rallies, cultural festivals, and symbolic actions that keep the movement alive and visible, and simultaneously tackle intersecting issues such as gender equality and labor rights.

The influence of youth activism is seen in the changing shape of public debate, increased political mobilization, and sporadic policy interventions. Though administrative institutions such as the DGHC and GTA have made partial concessions, Gorkha youth's sustained activism has ensured that the central demands for statehood and meaningful representation remain on the agenda. Their motivations-grounded in cultural pride, economic ambition, and social justice-will be matched by major challenges such as state repression, political factionalism, and media prejudice. The resilience and



adaptability of the Gorkha youth have made the movement dynamic, inclusive, and forward-looking. Gorkha identity movement is a paradigm of the multifaceted interplay between history, identity, and youth-led activism. It underscores the need for authentic political representation, balanced development, and acknowledgment of regional identities in India's democratic process. As the movement advances, the energy, imagination, and resolve of its youth will continue to be at the heart of pushing the agenda of the Gorkha community and defining the larger conversation on multiculturalism and federalism in India.

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