Neoliberal Policies and New Social Movement: A Case Study of Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of International Relations, Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

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Submitted by

Deepika Pradhan

Department of International Relations

School of Social Sciences

Sikkim University

Gangtok-737102

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **"Neoliberal Policies and New Social Movement: A Case Study of Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)"** submitted to Sikkim University for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy,** is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

Deepika Pradhan

ROLL NUMBER: 12PDIR02

The Department recommends that this thesis be placed before the examiner for evaluation

Head
Dr. Manish International Relations/Politcs
School of Global Studies
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY
HOD 6th Mile, Tadong, 737102 Gangtok-Sikkim

Mr. Ph. Newton Singh

SUPERVISOR

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Neoliberal Policies and New Social Movement: A Case Study of Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)"** submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in International Relations,** embodies the results of bona fide research work carried out by Miss. Deepika Pradhan under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship, fellowship. All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

Mr. Ph. Newton Singh
Supervisor
Department of International Relations
Narmada Pahunri Bloc
6th Mile, Samdur, Tadong
Gangtok-737102

Place: Gangtok

Date: 10th July, 2014

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dedication with hope...for emerging Sikkimese civil society ......

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) is an organization of the Sikkimese citizens which was formed in 2005 against the implementation of numerous mega hydro-electric power projects in one go which pose a threat to the Biodiversity Hotspot (Kanchendzonga Biosphere Reserve), endangering the demographic profile of the indigenous primitive Lepcha tribes and the right to live in one's homeland with dignity and security. The emergence of ACT and their struggle was the first major political expression against the prevalent developmental discourse in Sikkim. The Lepchas, one of the major indigenous communities in Sikkim, being gradually turned into a minority over the years challenged a brute political majority through mobilization of genuine voices of the concerned- the affected and the marginalised- in a peaceful non-violent manner.

The voice of the indigenous people have been either passively ignored or actively silenced for the most of the last five hundred years due to colonization, imperialism. Indigenous lands and resources have been repeatedly stolen and the people themselves exploited under some of the worst labour conditions. The repercussion resulted in a long history of fierce resistance and recurrent rebellion. Similarly the constructions of dams in Lepcha Reserve of Dzongu against the rights of the indigenous Lepcha as a violation of Article 371F as guaranteed to Sikkim by Constitution of India upon the merger of Sikkim in India in 1975 produced resistance in the form of ACT. Once considered docile, the Lepchas of Sikkim protested adopting Gandhian Satyagrah and non-violence.

ACT represented, expressed and led the struggle for the economic, political, social and cultural rights of the indigenous people of Sikkim and gave shape to their assertion in challenging the unilateral and coercive governance by the state government. Dams over Teesta thus became a major political issue in Sikkim. A group of resolute Lepchas, Lachenpas civil society groups and local people have been resisting the mindless construction of the dams. They consider it as a threat not only to the environment, but also to their traditions, cultufe and livelihood. They fear that the river's disappearance into a series of tunnels will be accompanied by their own marginalisation in long run. Sadly development has been imposed upon them in complete violation of the environment protection legislation. Fact finding research tells us that this "development" has heaped nothing but misery upon the lives of farmers. Most farmers have faced threats and intimidation by the government. They have been told that the government can acquire

their lands without their consent, perhaps in the name of large public purpose. Most have been coerced into accepting minimalist compensatory amounts of money in lieu of precious ancestral lands. Thus this movement in Sikkim can be analysed within the frame of New Social Movement which is the consequence of neoliberal ideas of privatization, open market, deregulation etc.

Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism is understood as the return and spread of one specific aspect of the liberal tradition, namely economic liberalism. Economic liberalism is basically the belief that state ought to abstain from intervening in the economy, and instead leave as much as possible to individuals participating in free and self-regulating markets. Neo-liberalism believes that freely adopted market mechanism is the optimal way of organising all exchanges of goods and services. Free market and free trade will set free the creative potential and the entrepreneurial spirit which is built into the spontaneous order of any human society, and thereby lead to more individual liberty and well-being, and a more efficient allocation of resources. The implementation of neoliberal policies came into full force during the eighties under Thatcher and Reagan.

Although the proponents of neo-liberalism magnifies the virtues of free markets, free trade, private enterprise, and consumer choice, the effects of neoliberal policies is quite the opposite. Robert Mc Chesney (The Thistle:2000) says that Neo-liberalism "refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interest are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximise their personal benefits". The major beneficiaries of neo-liberalism are large trans-national corporations and profit wealthy investors. Today the principles of neo-liberalism are widely held with near religious fervour by most political parties in the US and Britain and are gaining acceptance by those holding power elsewhere. (The Thistle: 2000)

According to The Thistle (2000) these policies typically result in very protectionist market dominated by a few transnational corporations with a major theme of neoliberal policies is deregulation and removal of government interference in the economy. Consistently, such policies are applied in a one sided way, and always in the manner that benefits large trans-national corporations, the most influential entities in policy making. Another component of neo-liberalism is the dismantling of the welfare state. Again, in practice, this policy is applied to the majority of the population, who have to accept cut backs in unemployment benefits and health care, while large corporations continue to receive massive subsidies and tax breaks (The Thistle 2000).

The effects of neoliberal policies on people everywhere has been devastating. During the last two to three decades, wealth disparity has increased manifold within countries as well as between

countries. Neo-liberalism has been a disaster for the environment as well. Despite the growing awareness in the late eighties that the rate of fossil fuel consumption at that time would cause global warming and many other forms of unpredictable and dangerous environmental changes, energy consumption has continued to increase at an alarming rate (The Thistle 2000).

As early as 1984, the dismantling of the welfare state, stabilization and adjustment policies, the major components of neo-liberalism, and evidence of their negative impact on growth, income distribution, incidence of poverty and the well-being of children in a large number of countries was published in the state of world's children report. The policies of privatization, liberalization, deregulation, restrictive budget cutting and tightening of monetary policy shared a large part of the responsibility for the 'lost decade' of 1980s (Harvey 2005). They led to stagnation of GDP growth, an increase in unemployment, a drop in wages, reduction in public expenditure on social services, and an aggravation of poverty. Moreover, for several consecutive years, the heavily indebted middle-income countries experienced negative resource flows (Harvey 2005). Liberalization and adjustment programmes in developing countries put social expenditure under strong pressure. So the neoliberal globalization and the imperialist exploitation have given rise to the resistance and various kinds of New Social Movements (Harvey 2005). Neo-liberalism is in the first instance, a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money (Harvey 2005). It must also set up those military, defence, police and the legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if market does not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, healthcare, social security or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary (Harvey 2005). But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals and because powerful interest group will inevitably distort and bias state interventions for their own benefit. (Harvey 2005:11)

People everywhere have to face violence or destruction as the outcome of neoliberal policies. During the last two to three decades there has been enormous increase in the gap between the rich and the poor within countries and between countries. In the US, inflation adjusted median wages are lower today than they were in 1973 while the wealth of the top 1% of society has risen (Harvey 2005). One out of every 5 children lives in a state of poverty characterised by continual

hunger, insecurity and lack of adequate health care. For the poorest people in the world, the situation has become even worse (Harvey 2005).

New Social Movements

The term New Social Movement is a theory of social movements which tries to explain the plethora of new movements which have come up in various western societies since mid 1960s which are claimed to depart significantly from the conventional or old social movement paradigm (Pichardo1997). New Social Movements (NSMs) are described by a theory regarding social movements which posits that the advent of the post-industrial economy resulted in a new wave of social movements distinct from those social movements arising during the industrial economy. In these new social movements, more importance is attached to social and cultural concerns, rather than economic or political considerations. Actors in NSMs are from a new middle class instead of from the lower classes, as was typical of social movements of the industrial economy (Pichardo 1997). NSMs consist of informal, loosely organized social networks of supporters rather than members and tend to be locally-based. NSMs act as a platform for collective action in civil society or in the cultural domain, rather than as an instrumental tool for the state. As such, new movements are often considered to be anti-authoritarian. NSMs are normally centred on a single issue, or a limited range of issues which are related to a broader theme, such as the environment. The concept of new politics can be exemplified in gay liberation, the focus of which transcends the political issue of gay rights to address the need for a social and cultural acceptance of homosexuality. Hence, new social movements are understood as "new," because they are first and foremost social, unlike older movements which mostly have an economic basis.

According to Castells (2004) New social movements also emphasize the role of post-material values in contemporary and post-industrial society, as opposed to conflicts over material resources. According to Melucci, one of the leading new social movement theorists, these movements arise not from relations of production and distribution of resources, but within the sphere of reproduction and the life world. Consequently, the concern has shifted from the production of economic resources as a means of survival or for reproduction to cultural production of social relations, symbols, and identities (Castells 2004). In other words, the contemporary social movements reject the materialistic orientation of consumerism in capitalist societies by questioning the modern idea that links the pursuit of happiness and success closely to growth, progress, and increased productivity and by instead promoting alternative values and understandings in relation to the social world (Castells 2004). As an example, the environmental movement that has appeared since the late 1960s throughout the world, with its strong points in

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the United States and Northern Europe, has significantly brought about a "dramatic reversal" in the ways we consider the relationship between economy, society, and nature (Castells 2004).

Further, new social movements are located in civil society or the cultural sphere as a major arena for collective action rather than instrumental action in the state, which Claus Offe characterizes as "bypass[ing] the state (Scott 1990)." Moreover, since new social movements are not normally concerned with directly challenging the state, they are regarded as anti-authoritarian and as resisting incorporation at the institutional level. According to Scott (1990) they tend to focus on a single issue, or a limited range of issues connected to a single broad theme, such as peace or the environment. New social movements concentrate on the grassroots level with the aim to represent the interests of marginal or excluded groups. Therefore, new collective actions are locally based, centered on small social groups and loosely held together by personal or informational networks such as radios, newspapers, and posters. This "local- and issue-centered" characteristic implies that new movements do not necessarily require a strong ideology or agreement to meet their objectives (Scott 1990).

Additionally, if old social movements, namely the worker's movement, presupposed a working class base and ideology, the new social movements are presumed to draw from a different social class base, i.e., "the new class." This is a complex contemporary class structure that Claus Offe identifies as "threefold" in its composition: the new middle class, elements of the old middle class, and peripheral groups outside the labour market (Buechler 1995). As stated by Offe, the new middle class has evolved in association with the old one in the new social movements because of its high levels of education and its access to information and resources (Charles 2000). The groups of people that are marginal in the labour market, such as students, housewives, and the unemployed participate in the collective actions as a consequence of their higher levels of free time, their position of being at the receiving end of bureaucratic control and their inability to be fully engaged in society specifically in terms of employment and consumption (Charles 2000).

Literature Review

New Social movements in the last two to three decades have acquired new dimensions to the study and approach of social movements in the developed and developing world. The New Social Movement is distinct from class based social movement of the post industrial state. The plethora of social movements on diverse issues like identity, autonomy, ethnicity, ecology has had tremendous impact in the way social movement is analyzed.

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The technological innovations in the form of print media, electronic media, internet blogs professed by globalization has indeed made a global village. The happenings of indigenous locale in the form of rural peasant struggle in many parts of the developing world has been the result of flow in transnational capital after liberalization of economies in most of the world in the post cold world order. The US imperialism and hegemony in the form of neoliberalism and its policies have created markets all over the world displacing people of the host region. This has created a huge gap between the state and the people who are otherwise left helpless by privatization of the public. The academic discourse around the theme neoliberalism brings into picture the creation of new social movements by neoliberal policies. The neoliberal policies and social movement is intrinsically linked with one other as evident in the form of Social Movements in Latin America. In the 1990s series of Latin American countries came under the wrath of neoliberal policies of US imperialism. This resulted in dislocation of people in terms of livelihood, sustainability, unemployment, land grabbing by private players. The majority of the peoples were indigenous peoples and rural peasants who were directly affected by policies of the host government and its US counterparts. The white minority governments in Latin America have for long exploited resources in the region creating drainage of wealth in the West where majority of white Creole Latin American venture for education and livelihood never to return to the land of their birth. The majority of new social movements in Latin America have been as a result of neoliberal policies in Latin America. For Example NAFTA which declared Mexico as its trading partner destroyed Mexico's indigenous economy by pumping US goods including agri-goods. The Mexican peasants couldn't compete with advanced US farmers etc and Mexican agri products remained unproductive to the markets. In the mean time Mexican governments altered and amended the constitution of Mexico to allow US capital to acquire indigenous lands in Mexico. This form of land grabbing by private players in association with state has left people homeless and landless. The people have been stolen of their property and livelihood creating loss of traditional system of farming. This type of story of the form of indigenous struggle in Latin America is common. The only differences being the nature of indigenous policies in Latin America. In Brazil it came in the form of major urbanization drive resulting in deforestation of natural landscape like Amazon for necessitating physical infrastructure like highways, roads, airports for transportation etc. The academic discourse around the theme neoliberalism has largely been Western and Euro-centric approach to the study of third world social movements. The works of James

Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Social Movements in Latin America: Neoliberalism and Popular Resistance*, James Petras' *The New Development Politics: the Age of Empire Building and New Social Movements*, Hank Johnston and Paul Almedia's *Latin American Social Movements: Globalization, Democratization and Transnational Networks* and Sonia E. Alvarez and et al *Culture of Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements* deal with Latin American social movements in Latin America. What can be said of Latin American social movements is that the region marked by long colonial rule has been subjected to another form of imperialism in the form of US led neoliberalism resulting in dispossession of natives on a huge scale. This form of dispossession in Latin America forms the basis of studying social movements in Third World despite the fact that social movement in Latin America is as old as the advent of Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the region. The present discourse by above stated authors only distinctively analyze from the perspectives of neoliberalism and New Social Movements despite the fact that the nature, significance and intensity of New Social movements and Neoliberalism in Latin America varies and is multi dimensional. As a region which received the first ever neoliberal polices of the Western governments it has served as the basis to the study and approach to social movements and neoliberalism in the western and Euro-centric manner.

The work of Su H. Lee, '*Debating New Social movements: Culture, Identity and Social Fragmentation*' deals with social movements which are seen distinctly 'new' in its character. This book is a straightforward exposition of the social-theoretical fields and problematic issues relating to contemporary social movements and identities. The issues important to "new social movements" (identity, culture, diversity, power, and local activism) are examined by providing intelligible connections between the contrasting perspectives of critical theory and postmodern thought. Professor Su H. Lee analyzes the affinity between poststructuralist theories and new social movements in light of cultural multiplicity and social fragmentation, while questioning the political and ethical implications that arise from the political emblem of identity and difference. The overarching approach of *Debating New Social Movements* is both synthetic and analytic. It bridges disconnected themes under contrasting theoretical frameworks, and takes a stance from critical theory to expose significant shortfalls in the postmodern political and cultural thoughts on identity and social movements.

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The social movements in the 1990s rapidly proliferated after opening of markets by many third world countries following balance of payment crisis. The social movements in the global south have come in different light and vein but with a single objective of creating markets. The works of Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvalt Nilsen, *The Social movements in the Global South: Dispossession, Development and Resistance* deals with wide ranging issues of dispossession following neoliberal hegemony. The resistance offered by the people reinforces our understanding on collective action and mobilization to thwart incoming dominance in the form of neoliberalism. Although it is a large body of literature to deal with third world realties it is purely Euro-centric in its approach. The third world realties and western theories make all the more difficult for scholars working in new social movements in regions like Eastern Himalayas. The book also discusses popular classes of the global South are up in arms. From Soweto to Buenos Aires to Bhopal, social movements are making demands for social justice and human dignity against the multiple processes of dispossession that are the hallmark of neoliberalism. Through practices of resistance, these movements transform the direction and meaning of postcolonial development. Popular struggles in the global South suggest the need for the development of new and politically enabling categories of analysis as well as new ways of understanding contemporary social movements in the global South. This book brings together theoretically informed and empirically grounded contributions that interrogate the ways in which social movements in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East politicize development in an age of neoliberal hegemony. Popular struggles in the global south suggest the need for the development of new and politically enabling categories of analysis, and new ways of understanding contemporary social movements. This book shows how social movements in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East politicize development in an age of neoliberal hegemony.

Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai's *Global Social Movements* discusses social movement in light of mass mobilization through creation of civil society activism on a world wide scale. Globalization has more than one face. Global cultural and economic forces, particularly through the dynamics of huge corporations, shape the picture from above, but · a new global consciousness, through the activities of social movements, is emerging from below. While states remain important power containers, the development of these global social movements demonstrates that we are entering a post-national phase, with political action becoming more unconventional, open, participatory, direct and focused. The book

provides a very broad and systematic analysis of social movements in a globalizing world, integrating case material from a range of fields. Human rights, women's, peace, labour, religious and green movements are all discussed.

Peter M. Haas and John A. Hird's Controversies in Globalization solves major issues by inviting 17 scholars and practitioners to write specifically for the volume, directly addressing current and relevant questions in international relations through concise "yes" and "no" pieces on topics related to security, political economy, the environment, public health, democracy, demography, and social issues like gender and ethnicity. At the request of reviewers, new to this edition are three chapters covering the financial crisis, maritime security, and international conflict. Providing students with necessary context, the editors offer introductions that effectively frame the debate and make clear what is at stake, both from a theoretical as well as from a practical perspective. Concluding discussion questions in each chapter encourage critical thinking and analysis.

Kean Birch and Vlad Mykhnenko bring together the work of distinguished scholars and dedicated activists in the form of a book, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*. The book presents critical perspectives of neoliberal policies, questions the ideas underpinning neoliberalism, and explores diverse responses to it from around the world. Since the 1970s, the politics of 'neoliberalism,' based on the purported concern to minimize state interference in the economy and thus to unleash 'free' markets, have been mobilized at various sites and scales across the world economy. This book provides useful intellectual tools for deciphering the ideological, social and institutional foundations of neoliberalism and its wide-ranging implications for the still ongoing regulatory reorganization of capitalism.'

'This is an outstanding book not only because of the sophisticated critiques offered by some of the most highly regarded thinkers on the topic of the destruction and misery wrought through neoliberal capitalism, but also because its forward looking emphasis on a more egalitarian and hopeful future offers insights about the work that needs to be done by activists and scholars alike. Moreover, this book helps us recognize that the emergence of any talk of a post-neoliberal era is premature beyond helping to construct a road map for ways citizens of the world can collectively, and deliberately, move forward.' This timely and wide ranging book traces the changing contours of neoliberalism, demonstrating how market-oriented policies gave rise to a globally hegemonic political-

economic project. The emphasis is on identifying the different forms neoliberalism takes and the diverse responses to it. At a juncture when this political-economic project is under increasing scrutiny from supporters and opponents alike, the book challenges existing conceptions of neoliberalism and makes an important contribution to the reinvigorated search for political alternatives.'

Rick Rowden's book *The Deadly Ideas of Neoliberalism* explores the history and current collision between two of the major global phenomena that have characterized the last 30 years: the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases of poverty and the ascendancy of neoliberal economic ideas. The book explains not only how IMF policies of restrictive spending have exacerbated public health problems in developing countries, in particular the HIV/AIDS crisis, but also how such issues cannot be resolved under these economic policies. It also suggests how mounting global frustration about this inability to adequately address HIV/AIDS will ultimately lead to challenges to the dominant neoliberal ideas, as other more effective economic ideas for increasing public spending are sought. In stark, powerful terms, Rowden offers a unique and in-depth critique of development economics, the political economy dynamics of global foreign aid and health institutions, and how these seemingly abstract factors play out in the real world - from the highest levels of global institutions to African finance and health ministries to rural health outposts in the countryside of developing nations, and back again."

Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood's *Social Movements 1768-2008* expanded second edition brings analytical history of social movements fully up to date. Tilly and Wood cover such recent topics as immigrants' rights, new media technologies, anti-Olympic organizing in China, new mobilizations against the Iraq War, and the role of bloggers and Facebook in social movement activities. Coverage of these and other recent events serve to expand further the book's seminal theorizing and conceptualization of how social movements grew from eighteenth-century Europe to eventually fuel popular movements all over the world. However, Charles Tilly's major thrust on social movements is sociological.

The movement in Sikkim launched by ACT represents a similar indigenous struggle as in the case of other third world countries. The movement in Sikkim varies in the manner and nature of neoliberal policies in the form of construction of mega dams. The flow of capital in Sikkim for construction of dams is accompanied by wide ranging legislative

orders of the state to speed up land acquisition in Sikkim violating provisions of Article 371 F guaranteed to every Sikkimese by the Constitution of India. In Sikkim, the neoliberal policy planners identified perennial sources of Himalayan waters to tap hydro power in the name of green and clean energy. India's energy has doubled in the decades with the pressure to perform as a major economy in the world. The construction of mega dams in the ecologically fragile areas and ethnically diverse region of the world has fundamentally contradicted against local ethos and beliefs. The people have been displaced by construction of roads and dams without proper rehabilitation process by the state and the power developers. At the height of the movement, the ACT struggle was widely reported in the newspapers and the media as a form of ethnic movement in Sikkim. The academic writings on this issue has been grim and largely confined on the issues of ecology, environment and along geological lines. The present dissertation offers to link the ACT movement with neoliberal polices and new social movement. So far the literature on ACT movement in Sikkim is largely a reflection of journalistic account of how the movement evolved and subsided. The study undertaken analyzes the evolution of development discourse in Sikkim from neoliberal points of views and the ACT struggle as the form of New Social Movements.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to understand resistance offered by Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) over construction of mega-hydel projects in Sikkim and Dzongu in particular. The research will dwell on how mobilization by ACT can be investigated, understood and studied from the realm of New Social Movement as a reaction to Neo- Liberal policies like mega hydel projects in Sikkim. In addressing this issue, the research also discusses the collective action of the people under ACT as an umbrella organization. The study will focus on how collective action has undergone a paradigm shift from mass behaviour to political process. In the state of Sikkim, since 1990s, people have been protesting against hydel projects. People from various parts of North Sikkim protested against the mega dams in a peaceful manner. The ACT youth organisation and its members from Dzongu, North Sikkim sat on a fast unto death for nine hundred and fifteen days (915) to protest against the construction of Hydel Power Project in North Sikkim. The seed of ACT was sown towards the end of 2003 by two local Lepcha' youths named Dawa and Pemzang. An ad hoc body was formed in August 2004. Finally in 2005 August, the ACT was formed formally at a meeting in Dzongu. The protest also received support from individuals, NGOs and the media not only from Sikkim but also nationally and internationally.

Rationale

New social movements are affected not only by local and national-level factors, but also by factors that operate at the global level. The factors that operate at the global level emanates from what practitioners both at the academia and public policy level term it as Neo- Liberalism or to be precise Neo-Liberal policies. Neo-liberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Neo-Liberalism is an approach to an economic and social studies in which control of economic factors is shifted from the public sector to the private sector. Neo-Liberalism suggests that government reduce deficit spending, limit subsidies, reform tax law to broaden the tax base, remove fixed exchange rates, open up market to trade by limiting protectionism, private state-run businesses, allow private property and back deregulation.

The role of the state under neo-liberalism is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets.

Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit. Proponents of neoliberal ideology argue that "open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development" Yet, while neoliberal ideology criticizes state intervention, actual neoliberal policies and practices involve "coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose market rule upon all aspects of social life" Such policies and practices are complex, contradictory, and contested, and operate at multiple levels of governance.

In 2001, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) did a preliminary ranking study of the hydroelectric potential of various river basins in the country. The Brahmaputra basin was given the highest 'marks' and 168 projects with a total installed capacity of 63,328 MW were identified. The tag of being the country's 'future powerhouse' has been proactively used for the region since

the Northeast Business Summit in Mumbai in July 2002. The 50,000 MW Hydro initiative launched by the Ministry of Power in 2003 also has a major focus on the Northeast. The 'Pasighat Proclamation on Power' adopted in January 2007 at the North East Council's Sectoral Summit on the Power Sector identifies the region's hydropower potential as one of the priority areas to contribute to the country's energy security. The push for large hydropower projects in the Northeast was primarily a process driven by the Central Government till the gradual liberalisation of hydropower policies allowed states to invite private players. While Sikkim kick-started this process in the Northeast in 2001-2, the process gathered momentum across the region in 2005. Although states such as Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim are at the forefront in the initiative to sign multiple Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement (MoU/MoA) with power developers, other states such as Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland have seen some action too.

Scope

India is competing in global market with other countries and India has to maintain its economic growth rate at a sustained level depends on factors like continuous supply of electricity for industrial production. Thus this has come in the form of Hydro power generation programme in an ecologically fragile and high seismic Zone V region of Himalayas including Sikkim much against the advices of geologists and environmentalists. It came from the cities of New Delhi and the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok, in the form of the Indian Government's fifty thousand Mega Watt of clean hydroelectric initiative

Thus the catalyst for protest was primarily construction of Dams in Lepcha Reserve of Dzongu over River Teesta, considered sacred to Lepchas. With the announcement of the projects on the Teesta River, in Dzongu in North Sikkim in 2004, a group of youths opposed to the dams formed a 17 member group called Affected Citizens of Teesta, known as ACT. The state responded with limited patronage by creating institutional framework like Land Acquisition Act and legal structures including anti-national like terms on the people participating in the movement. The government on the other hand has reiterated that hydro power generation would generate huge revenue thereby making Sikkim self reliant but fact of the matter is state interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum including the state share of resources which stands at twelve percent. The state thus in the age of neo liberalism has fallen prey to global factors. The government and the power developers signed series after series of MoUs without assessing its implications. This kind of process of signing MoUs, where monetary advances are paid up front, greatly compromises the manner in which subsequent clearances take place as such projects are considered as a *fait accompli* by both the developer and the state government. This

has left no room for an assessment of options for development planning in areas where these projects are coming up. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, the supreme audit institution in the country, has, in a performance audit for 2008 – 9 for the state of Sikkim, highlighted serious concerns about the manner in which projects have been handed out to some private hydropower players. Despite the concern raised by a Union minister about the 'MoU virus', the Central Government has proactively granted various clearances to these projects ignoring important concerns. At least two dozen large hydroelectric projects have got final environmental clearance in the Northeast. While pre-construction clearances do not necessarily translate into final clearances, existing experience shows that the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) grants final environmental clearance to over 95% of all projects which it appraises for their environmental and social impacts. The government and the proponents of large dams in the region paint a win-win picture: exploiting the country's largest perennial water system to produce plentiful power for the nation; economic benefits for North eastern state governments through export of power to other parts of the country including employment generation.

The rapid processes in which MoUs have been signed reflect the interplay of stakeholders involved in power projects. The stake holders in this power generation other than the state and central government are cement industry, iron and steel industry, automobile industry, labour market etc. This pattern of development initiation in Sikkim has triggered resistance from the indigenous people which has culminated in the awakening of Social Movement. The movement in Sikkim can be understood as new social movement because it is first and foremost social. New Social Movement is a theory of social movement which attempts to explain the new movements that have come up in various western societies since the mid 1960s which are claimed to depart significantly from the conventional social movement paradigm. There are two central claims of new social movement theory. First, that the rise of the post-industrial economy is responsible for a new wave of social movement and second, that those movements are significantly different from previous social movements of the industrial economy. The primary difference is in their goals, as the new movements focus not on issue of materialistic qualities such as economic wellbeing, but on issues related to human rights. The new movement instead of pushing for specific changes in public policy emphasize social change in identity, lifestyle and culture. Thus the social aspect is seen by the New Social Movement as more important than the economic or political aspects. The most noticeable feature of new social movements is that they are primarily social and cultural and only secondarily, if any, political. Departing from the workers movement, which was central to the political aim of gaining access to the working class with the extension of citizenship and representation, new social movements such as youth culture movement concentrate on bringing about social mobilization through cultural innovations, development of new life-style and

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transformation of identities. It is clearly elaborated by Habermas that new social movements are the 'new politics' which is about quality of life, individual self-realisation and human rights whereas the 'old politics' focus on economic, political, and military security. They tend to focus on single issue, or a limited range of issues connected to a single broad theme such as peace and environment. Without the attempt to develop total politics under a single focus new social movement set their stress on grass-root in the aim of representing the interests of marginal or excluded groups. Paralleled with this ideology, the organisation form of new collective actions is also locally based, centred on small social groups and loosely held by personal or informational networks such as radios, newspapers and posters. This 'local-and issue-centred' characteristics which does not necessarily require a high agreed ideology or agreement on ultimate ends makes this new movements distinctive from 'old' labour movement with a high degree of tolerance of political and ideological difference appealing to broader sections of population. Its effect on Sikkim on ecological, environmental and socio-religious and cultural ground has been the real thrust of the ACT although in the later stages of the movement it had political features. The marginalization had socio-economic and political dimensions. The social awakening in the form of movements is capable to draw the attention of the state as well as the trans-national actors. They chose to "opt out" of the state system to create their own for example they underwent hunger strike. Dedicated to self-development, they went for village tourism and home stay programmes. Article 371 of the Indian Constitution does not allow for the privatization of private land to others thus compulsory Land Acquisition Act was passed by the government.

The movement in Sikkim was located within cultural sphere and within civil society wherein the activists invoked social relations, symbols and identities through social media activism. . Their focus on grass roots with the aim to represent the interests of the marginalized or excluded groups resulted in forming a mass behaviour with the spirit of collective actions held by personal and information networks such as newspaper, internet, blogs, graphiti etc.

Research Questions

The study proposes to study the following:

(a)   What are the characteristics of New Social Movement and how can it be seen as an outcome of neoliberal policies?

(b)   How can the movement launched by ACT be studied within the realm of New Social Movement?

(c)   What is the nature of institutional responses to the ACT movement?

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Methodology and Scheme of Chapterisation

The study is a qualitative study. The study is an attempt to understand the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) movement from the perspective of new social movement. The study looks at the narratives of the movement, the values associated with the movement, the mode of operation, it's base and network through the use of qualitative research techniques like in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with leaders and members of community level organizations, local self-government bodies and political parties, government officials etc. Visits to several dam affected places in Sikkim were conducted to study the implementation part of the projects and their consequences like displacement and other related social problems. The study also used, besides various texts on neoliberalism and new social movement, primary sources like state legislatives acts, reports etc. to understand the state responses to this movement.

The proposed study is divided into five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. The introduction includes a brief introduction of the entire chapter followed by the main objectives of the study, literature review, scope, chapterisation, methodology and research questions. The second chapter 'Neoliberalism and New Social Movement' deals with theoretical understanding as what are the characteristics of Neoliberalism and New Social Movement and how is New Social Movement a consequence of Neoliberal Policies and what are the features of New Social Movement and how is it different from old Social Movement. The neoliberal globalisation and imperialist exploitation have given rise to the resistance. Neoliberal globalisation and development are different modalities or forms of imperialism, projects first implemented in the early 1980s to advance the process of capitalist development. The effects of neoliberal policies on people everywhere has been devastating. During the last two to three decades, wealth disparity has increased manifold within countries as well as between countries. Neoliberalism has been a disaster for the environment as well. Despite the growing awareness in the late eighties that the rate of fossil fuel consumption at that time would cause global warming and many other forms of unpredictable and dangerous environmental changes, energy consumption has continued to increase at an alarming rate. There are different forms taken by the forces of resistance to Neoliberalism, and the revolutionary dynamics of these forces. There are two basic types of strategic response to capitalist development and the imperialist exploitation. One is to adjust or adapt, taking them as given and seeking to survive or cope with the conditions that they generate- "everyday resistance" as Scott (1985) views it. This type of response for the most part involves and is based on decisions taken by individuals, each seeking to improve their situation under the available conditions. The other is to resist the forces of capitalist development and imperialist exploitation through collective action, primarily in the form of social movements,

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organisations formed to mobilise the forces of radical social change. The primary difference between the old and the new social movement is about their goals, as the new movements focus not on issue of materialistic qualities such as economic wellbeing, but on issues related to human rights. The new movement instead of pushing for specific changes in public policy emphasize social change in identity, lifestyle and culture. Thus the social aspect is seen by the New Social Movement as more important than the economic or political aspects

Chapter 3 'ACT as New Social Movement' describes as how Affected Citizens of Teesta as an organisation can be described as a New Social Movement Development initiation in Sikkim has triggered resistance from the indigenous people which has culminated in the awakening of Social Movement. The movement in Sikkim can be understood as new social movement because it is first and foremost social. New Social Movement is a theory of social movement which attempts to explain the new movements that have come up in various western societies since the mid 1960s which are claimed to depart significantly from the conventional social movement paradigm. There are two central claims of new social movement theory. First, that the rise of the post-industrial economy is responsible for a new wave of social movement and second, that those movements are significantly different from previous social movements of the industrial economy. The fourth chapter 'ACT and Institutional Responses' discusses how the movement in Sikkim was located within cultural sphere and within civil society wherein the activists invoked social relations, symbols and identities through social media activism. . Their focus on grass roots with the aim to represent the interests of the marginalized or excluded groups resulted in forming a mass behaviour with the spirit of collective actions held by personal and information networks such as newspaper, internet, blogs, graphiti etc. The social awakening in the form of movements is capable to draw the attention of the state as well as the trans-national actors. This movement got huge support internationally. The study concludes by addressing the objectives and research questions with the general findings of the study.

Chapter II

Chapter II

NEO-LIBERALISM AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The imposition of neoliberal imperial order in the early 1980s polarised society and sharpened the contradictions between regions, classes and ethnic groups. The dynamic growth of social movements that organised to recover political space and reverse the regressive market-friendly capitalist "reforms" imposed from above with the blessing and backing of Washington. The revival and build-up of new class based movements and the ensuing class and ethnic struggles that culminated in the new millennium in the overthrow of client neoliberal regimes. From the smoke of residues and the ashes of Washington consensus, there emerged a new more pragmatic neoliberal order based on a perceived need to retreat from an unregulated form of free market capitalism and established a more inclusive form of development.(Petras and Veltmeyer; 2001:79)

The neoliberal agenda of "structural reform" in macroeconomic policy was widely implemented in the 1980s through the agency of World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as extensions of the imperial state system, in the context of a new world order, region-wide debt crisis, and the defeat and destruction of both urban-centered labour movements and the rural movements for land reform and national liberation. However, these neoliberal policies in their turn generated forces of resistance. (Petras and Veltmeyer; 2001:79)

At the time the state was in partial retreat, having shed its responsibilities for social welfare and economic development, turning it over to the "private sector" (the multinational corporations and the financial institutions of global capital) and civil society in alliance with the overseas development association formed under the umbrella of international cooperation. As for the popular movement for national liberation and social change, in the dual form of organised labour and the land struggle, for the most part they have been defeated, decapitated, or brought to ground in the process of integrated rural development and the deployment of the repressive apparatus of the client states, backed up by imperial power. In response to the forces and policies that generated these condition a variety of new

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social movements were organised. Some of them were class-based, focused on the concern with issues of land reform and the rights of labour. But others were focused on issues that were not directly connected to the class struggle, giving rise to all sorts of postmodernist misconceptions.(Petras and Veltmeyer; 2001:80)

In the working class barrio movements were formed to defend members of the community from the ravages of free market capitalist development (soup kitchens, self-defence organisations etc.) to demand an end to military rule and to protest the new wave of neoliberal policies (Petras and Leiva, with Veltmeyer 1994). This movement, as well as growing cycle of spontaneous protest against "IMF reforms" that culminated in the Caracozo of 1989 were class-based. However the attention and concern of many academics at the time, armed with a postmodernist political "imaginary" and settled in their offices, was with the wave of "new social movements" formed in conditions of an emerging "civil society" composed of a myriad of social organisations rooted in the urban middle class. These organisations, and the associated "new social movements" were concerned with issues such as protection of human rights and the environment and the advancement of gender and other forms of social equality, issues that to a new generation of postmodernist scholars attuned to cyberspace rather than the real world appeared to have no class basis or any connection with the workings of capitalism.(.(Petras and Veltmeyer; 2001:80)

As for the neoliberal policies imposed on the governments in the region under these conditions, opposition and resistance was marked by sporadic protest- IMF riots, as they were termed, with reference to the perceived agency behind neoliberal policies. But at the time there was little organised resistance to these policies-only sporadic outbreaks of protest, allowing a new generation of postmodern intellectuals to advance their theory of "new [non-class] social movements". But with the emergence of new socio-political movements mounted by rural landless workers, peasants and in some contexts, indigenous communities, this would change soon enough. This class-based movement would come to dominate the political landscape in the 1990s, rendering irrelevant the postmodernist theory of "new," non-class social movement. (Petras and Veltmeyer; 2001:80-81

The neoliberal globalisation and imperialist exploitation have given rise to the resistance. Neoliberal globalisation and development are different modalities or forms of imperialism,

projects first implemented in the early 1980s to advance the process of capitalist development. There are different forms taken by the forces of resistance to Neoliberalism, and the revolutionary dynamics of these forces. There are two basic types of strategic response to capitalist development and the imperialist exploitation. One is to adjust or adapt, taking them as given and seeking to survive or cope with the conditions that they generate- "everyday resistance" as Scott (1985) views it. This type of response for the most part involves and is based on decisions taken by individuals, each seeking to improve their situation under the available conditions. The other is to resist the forces of capitalist development and imperialist exploitation through collective action, primarily in the form of social movements, organisations formed to mobilise the forces of radical social change. The process of the productive and social transformation at the centre of the capitalist development process- development of the forces of production within the capitalist system. It takes as its point of departure, and subjects to relentless criticism, the conception of this process found in the world Banks' 2008 World Development Report. From the Bank's perspective, the forces of structural (productive and social) transformation are immutable, driven forward by forces that are difficult to manage and impossible to control.

Social Movement and New Social Movement: Their Differences

New social movement theory is rooted in continental European traditions of social theory and political philosophy (Cohen 1985; Klandermans 1991; Klandermans and Tarrow 1988; Laran, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994:; cited in Buechler 1995:441). This approach emerged as a reply to lack of classical Marxism for analysing collective action. For new social movement theories two types of reductionism prevented classical Marxism from adequately grasping contemporary forms of collective action first, Marxism's economic reductionism presumed that all politically significant social action will derive from the fundamental economic logic of capital production and that all other social logics are secondary at best in shaping such action. Second Marxism's class reductionism presumed that the most significant social actors will be defined by class relationships rooted in the process of production and that all other social identities are secondary at best in constituting collective actors (Canel 1992 cited in Buechler 1995:442). These premises led Marxist to privilege proletarian revolution rooted in the sphere of production and to marginalize any other forms

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of social protest. New social movement theorist, by contrast, have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity. The term "new social movement" thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism. Even though new social movement theory is a critical reaction to classical Marxism, some new social movement theories seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions while others seek to displace and transcend them. (Buechler 1995:442).

Regardless of common usage of the term "new social movement theory", it is inaccurate or misleading if it implies widespread agreement among a range of theorist on a number of core arguments. It would be more accurate to speak of "new social movement theories", with the implication that there are many variations on a very general approach to something called new social movements. Most strands of new social movement theory underscore symbolic action in civil society or the cultural sphere as the major arena for collective action alongside instrumental action in the state or political sphere (Cehen 1985; Melucci 1989; cited in Buechler 1995:442). New social movement theories stress the importance of processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of strategies for maximizing influence and power (Habermas 1984-1987; Rucht 1988 cited in Buechler 1995:442). Some of the new social movement theorist emphasize the role of postmaterialist values as opposed to conflicts over material resources (Inglehart 1990; Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin 1990 cited in (Buechler 1995:442).

New social movement theories tend to problematise the often fragile process of constructing collective identities and identifying group interests, instead of assuming that conflict groups and their interest are structurally determined. This theory also stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology, rather than assuming that they can be deduced from a group's structural location and this theory also recognises a variety of submerged, latent, and temporary networks that often undergird collective action, rather than assuming that centralised organisational forms are prerequisites for successful mobilization. Many of these themes signify a divergence from both classical Marxism and

resource mobilization theory as well as some points of convergence with social constructionism. But once again various new social movement theorist give different emphases to these themes and have diverse relation with alternative traditions, thereby warranting a language that speaks of new social movement theories in the plural. (Buechler 1995:442)

All versions of new social movement theory operate with some model of a societal totality that provides the context for the emergence of collective action. Different theories operate within different models (referring variously to postindustrial society, an information society, advanced capitalist ect.), but the attempt to theorise a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action is perhaps the most distinctive feature of new social movement theories.

Some Major Theories of New Social Movement

Four theorists symbolize the range of new social movement theories in the context of their own intellectual tradition. Manuel Castells (Spain), Alain Touraine (France), Alberto Melucci (Italy), and Jurgen Habermas (Germany). Castell focuses on the impact of capitalist .dynamics on the transformation of urban space and the role of urban social movement in this process. He argues that urban issues have become important because of the growing importance of collective consumption and the necessity of the state to intervene to promote the production of nonprofitable but vitally needed public goods. It is in this context that Castells see the rise of urban social movements in a dialectical contest with the state and other political forces seeking to reorganise urban social life. He thus approaches the city as a social product that is the result of conflicting social interests and values. On the one hand, socially dominant interest seek to define urban space in keeping with the goals of capitalist commodification and bureaucratic domination; on the other hand grassroots mobilisation and urban social movement tries to defend popular interests, established political autonomy, and maintain cultural identity. Class relations are important but however Castells says that along with that other identities also exists and sources of change, including the state as well as group identities based on gender, ethnicity, nationality and citizenship.(Buechler 1995:443)

Castell's analysis of urban social movement symbolise several new social movement themes and also by bringing a distinctive framing to these themes. The emphasis on cultural identity, the recognition of non-class based constituencies, the theme of autonomous self management, and the image of resistance to a systemic logic of commodification and bureaucratization all serve to illustrate dominant strains in new social movement theories.

Alain Touraine argues that with the passing of metasocial guarantees of social order, more and more of society comes to be seen as the product of reflective social action. The growing capacity of social actors to construct both a system of knowledge and the technical tools that allow them to intervene in their own functioning- a capacity Touraine calls historicity makes possible the increasing self production of society, which becomes the defining hallmark of postindustrial or programmed society. The control of historicity is the object of an ongoing struggle between classes defined by relations of domination. Such classes take the form of social movement as they enter into this struggle. In post industrial society, the major social classes consist of consumers/clients in the role of the popular class and managers/technocrats in the role of dominant class. The main area of conflict for these classes is culture, and the central contest involves who will control society's growing capacity for self management. In a recent formulation Touraine (1992) locates new social movements between two logics: that of a system seeking to maximise production, money, power and information, and that of subjects seeking to defend and expand their individuality. He sees contemporary social movements as evidence of displacement of protest from the economic to cultural realm, accompanied by the privatization of social problems. The typical result is an anxious search for identity and an individualism that may exclude collective action (1985). In another context, Touraine (1985) suggests that movement based on difference, specificity, or identity may too easily dismiss the analysis of social relation and the denunciation of power, and in still another work he (1988) suggests that appeals to identity are purely defensive unless they are linked with a counteroffensive that is directly political and that appeals to self- determination.(Buechler 1995:444)

Jurgen Habermas (1984-1987) proposes the most elaborate theory of modern society by distinguishing between a politico-economic system governed by generalised media of

power and money and a lifeword still governed by normative consensus. Whereas the system follows an instrumental logic that detaches media like money and power from any responsibility and accountability, the lifeworld follows a communicative rationality requiring that norms be justifiable through discussion and debate. The problem for Habermas is that in modern society, system imperatives and logic intrude on the lifeworld in the form of colonization, resulting in the media of money and power coming to regulate not only economic and political transactions but also those concerning identity formation, normative regulation, and other forms of symbolic reproduction traditionally associated with the lifeworld. Habermas suggest that relationship of the clients to the welfare state is a model case for this colonization of the lifeworld, in that the welfare state monetarises and bureaucratizes lifeworld relationships as it controls the extent and kind of spending on welfare policy to fit the imperatives of money and power. More generally Habermas argues that the process of colonization alerts each of basic roles that arise from intersection of the politico-economic system and public and private lifeworld: employ, consumer, client and citizen. In each case these dynamics locate more and more decision making power in the hands of experts and administrative structures, which operate according to the system logic of money and power and whose decisions are correspondingly removed from context of justification and accountability within the lifeworld. (Buechler 1995:445)

By giving such conception of social structure, Habermas locates new social movement at the seams between system and lifeworld. This location leads him to identify two features of this movement that have shaped further debates with social movement theory. First Habermas seems to imply that new social movement will have a purely defensive character: they can defend the lifeworld against the colonizing intrusion of the system and sustain the role of normative consensus rooted in commutative rationality that has been evolving within this sphere throughout the process of societal modernisation. But Habermas offers little evidence that new social movements can contribute to any broader social transformation, particularly concerning the dominance of system over lifeworld and the dominance of generalized media of exchange like money and power in the system world. No one sees new social movement as bringing out complete societal transformation, many of its theories envision a more extensive and progressive role for movements than simply defending the lifeworld. For Habermas the conflict in which new social movement engages

are less about material reproduction and more about cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation. The new movements bring with them a new politics concerned with quality of life, projects of self-realization, and goals of participation and identity formation. Many of these movements are united around the critique of growth as a central ideological foundation, with ecology and peace movements playing central roles. Because these are not traditional distributional structures, Habermas implies that they cannot be channelled by political parties or allayed by material compensation. The implication is that under some circumstance, the conflicts associated with new social movements may contribute to the lager legitimating crisis that Habermas (1975; 1984-1987) associates with advance capitalism. .(Buechler 1995:445 446)

Alberto Melucci argues that the postmodern world brings new forms of social control, conformity pressures, and information processing to which new social movements responds. Mellucci would thus concur with Touraine that the political status of new social movements is unclear, but he less troubled by this fact than Touraine. In a society increasingly shaped by information and signs, social movements plays an important role as messages that express oppositional tendencies and modalities. Perhaps the most important systematic effect of new social movements is to render visible the peculiarly modern form of power that resides behind the rationality of administrative procedures; in this way, collective action emphasizes the socially constructed nature of the world and the possibility of alternative arrangements. Melucci's positive view of this movements and their message underscores the importance of free spaces between the level of political power and everyday life in which actors can consolidate collective identities through both representation and participation.

His work also helps to define some of the central issues of new social movement theory. One such issue concerns the role of identity in modern collective action. Melucci's starting premise is that in modern society, the pace of change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of messages all combine to weaken traditional points of references and sources of identity, thereby creating a homelessness of personality. This means that people's propensity to become involved in collective action is tied to their capacity to define collective identity is both a major prerequisite and major accomplishment of the social

movements .Melucci is insistent that new social movements be seen as ongoing social construction rather than as unitary empirical objects, given or essences,or historical personages acting on a stage. On another level, Melucci steers attention away from formal organisation by stressing that much collective action is nested in networks of submerged groups that occasionally coalesce into self referential forms of organization for struggle but often on a temporary basis. He thereby suggest that we speak in less terms of movement and more in terms of movement networks or movements areas to capture the transitory nature of much contemporary mobilization. (Buechler 1995:446)

Neo-Liberalism and New Social Movement in the Global South

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed wide scale popular resistance particularly in the form of the movement of the indigenous peoples in the global south. Since the 1970s neoliberalism has transformed the economics and politics of global capitalism. Neoliberalism first became hegemonic in the global North and later became dominant on a global scale (Harvey, 2005). Following balance of payment crisis these periods also coincided with Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) and Liberalization of economies in major part of the world including China and India. In Latin America, national governments willingly acquiesced the new strictures of the international financial institutions in exchange for being "bailed out" of their severe domestic economic crises, which in large part stemmed from the astronomic loans borrowed from these institutions by previous authoritarian regimes and as the military government started to buckle, the market-based polices were meant to impart a measure of economic and social discipline to the new governments and the newly freed masses (Ballve 2006:27). However, in the mean time Latin America quickly became the premier economic and social laboratory of neoliberalism wherein this model has been expansively and rigidly implemented and in no other region has the rejection of this model been so clear and so loud (Ballve 2006:27). There appeared to be a lopsided policy implications including dispossession of indigenous rights by a troika of capitalists based within the country and overseas. In other words and according to Harvey (2005) it restored the power of capitalist elites over working classes and other subaltern groups. It marked the triumph of Neoliberal hegemony supposedly embarking on an assumed role of reviving stagnant economies. It was faced with resistance with major

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fallout in many of social development indicators including high rise of unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth between the rich and poor both at the global and local levels. Neoliberalism has been a class project, masked by a lot of neo-liberal rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility, privatization, and the free market, towards the restoration and consolidation of class power (Harvey 2009). Hence the rich capitalists from the west were successful in creating a nexus with their counterparts in the global south in exploiting the natural resources which had remained in state control. Thus, the 'main substantive achievement of neoliberalization ...has been to redistribute rather than to generate wealth' (Harvey 2005:159) and this redistribution has been effected through 'accumulation by dispossession' – that is, a set of mechanisms centred on the conversion of non- or decommodified assets, practices and institutions into sources of profit for capital, such as privatization, financialization, crisis management and manipulation and state redistribution through regressive tax codes and cutbacks in the social wage (Harvey 2005:160–4). In this process of neoliberalization land grabbing or dispossession has been a common practice that was affected by capitalist forces through legislatives procedures rendering the indigenous peoples and the peasants homeless. One major feature of this structural change is the dubious role of the state often assumed to be secondary in nature but its use of force and state response including legislations of important bills pertaining to land grabbing suggests otherwise. For emerging market, neoliberalism in the guise of a received ideology and policy would restructure 'the social, state and transnational balance of power (Rodan, Hewison and Robinson 2001:26) around which developmental processes and social conflicts they generate took place (Teik 2010:04). According to Teik (2010) the state played crucial roles in initiating this restructuring by controlling its scope, depth and pace which in principle was an issue as much of intent as compulsion with some states favouring neoliberal agendas, while others forced to accept them. In reality according to Teik (2010) state's position was shaped by such factors as the state's developmental goals and capacities, ideological stances, and the interfaces it facilitated between the domestic economy and the global economy.

Dubbed as 'the Washington Consensus' by the liberal economist, John Williamson, the United States of America (USA) championed the cause of hope about the victory of neoliberal hegemony to address the issues of development projects in third world or global

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south. The expansion of this form of hegemony throughout the periods 1990s coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and major economies of Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia crumbled. In this process former satellite states of Soviet bloc and Russia were laid open to shock therapy (Gowan, 1995; Bullard et al., 1998; Chibber, 2003; Klein, 2007). In Latin America this form of hegemony was invoked by ruling elites in Mexico particularly in its immediate neighbourhood countryside of Mexican highlands of Chiapas. This resulted in the violent uprising of Zapatista in Chiapas in 1994. The uprising of the indigenous nationalities is and still remains crucial indicator that social forces were crystallizing in opposition to neoliberal hegemony, and that the locus of this process was the global South (Motta and Nilsen 2011:01).

It was infact Latin America within the vicinity of US, that, neoliberal agendas were experimented in the global south and the post colonial societies. According to Motta and Nilsen Latin America was undoubtedly a physical site where popular challenges to neoliberalism were most visibly articulated and periods of the 1990s witnessed the rise of a plethora of social movements seeking to move beyond developmentalism and neoliberalism in the region, and by the first decade of the 2000s, Latin America had become engulfed in the so-called 'Pink Tide' – the electoral success of political parties of different leftist hues, from Venezuela, via Bolivia and Ecuador, to Nicaragua (Motta and Nilsen 2011:01). These movements serve as the point of departure in analyzing neoliberal hegemony in world politics. These movements swept across the region of Latin America and started to garner transnational support through mobilization of people. The movements in many ways were similar to Latin American freedom struggle against the Spanish and Portuguese colonies which witnessed drainage of Latin American resources to Europe. After independence second spate of imperialism in the form of neoliberal policies in the early 1990s resulted in anti systemic upheavals and spread throughout the region and even other parts of the global south. Similar to Latin America's nineteenth-century independence movements against colonial rule, the anti-systemic upheaval was first seen by elites-foreign and domestic –as a case of isolated events, as aberrations from the dominant system to which Margaret Thatcher famously declared, "There is no alternative" (Ballve 2006:27). According to Ballve (2006) Such was the case with February 1989 popular revolt in Venezuela, known as the Caracazo (named after the nation's capital where the uprising was fiercest) was filled

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with protestors decrying the government's neoliberal structural adjustment polices. The same dismissive attitude was leveled against the 1994 armed uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (ELZN) and the trigger of violent struggle was following the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which like other "free trade" agreement solidifies the neoliberal model into a binding international treaty, the Zapatista revolt was ridiculed by critics as "utopian" and "antiquated" (Ballve 2006:28). There was intense pressure on the Mexican government by its international partners to eliminate the movement because of its gaining popularity and its feasibility of similar movements elsewhere where neoliberalism had started taking roots. The social movements that erupted in parts of the Latin America was one of the first in the fight against American imperialism in the global south and this force has forever changed the history of global south in general and Latin America in particular. Social movements in this part of the world were not the first of its kind as there had been mobilizations earlier with its history in the anti-colonial struggles. However, the impositions of neoliberalism emboldened older movements and created new ones that have resulted in stiff country wide resistance resulting in toppling of governments, ejected rapacious corporations, and have brought the unpopular policies of the government and the international financial institutions to a halt (Ballve 2006:28). In sum total these movements have managed not only to erode the legitimacy of neoliberalism, but also to realign social and political forces in the region (Renique 2006: 38). The strength of these movements lied in its capacity to mobilize masses in crippling the national life of nation states by means of strikes, non cooperation movement resulting in violent insurrection. Strikes and mobilizations in Peru (2000), a popular insurrection in Argentina (2001) and most notably, rebellions with prominent indigenous participation in Ecuador (1997, 2000, 2005) and Bolivia (2003, 2005) have overthrown corrupt, repressive and pro- US regimes and this popular mobilizations of what can be described as a "social left" that has made possible the elections of progressive or left wing governments in Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil and Uruguay (Renique 2006:38). US's strongest ally—Colombia also fell victim to anti neoliberal movements in the new millennium. This has fundamentally affected state's approach in formulating its foreign policies which at times have posed serious challenge to US unilateralism. The end of the century signaled a new beginning for such forms of movements in other parts of the world

including Eastern Himalayas which had remained remote from the sway of neoliberal policies.

The social movements that have emerged in the global South – mobilizing a wide range of subaltern groups, such as indigenous peoples, women, peasants, retrenched workers and shantytown dwellers – have in large part been a response to, and a rejection of, the extreme forms of dispossession, poverty and inequality that have flowed from the shift to neoliberalism in the region since the early 1980s (Motta and Nilsen 2011:02). These movements, however, have not only rejected neoliberalism, but have in many cases also proceeded to envision and construct alternative forms of development and politics. Hence the neoliberal hegemony have affected both urban and rural sectors of the global south. Within urban settings this has led in the erosion of the economic and political underpinnings of organized labour and the middle classes of the global South, whose experience is increasingly one of unemployment, job insecurity and processes of declassing (Motta and Nilsen 2011:15). The other associated problems inherent in this neoliberal enterprise is the increasing commodification of social reproduction, the access of subaltern communities to health, education and housing has been radically eroded (see Williams et al., 1994; Gill and Bakker, 2003; Hart, 2006; Ong, 2006; Roberts, 2008). Among the most affected were women whose roles as homemakers, wives and mothers were forced to take up insecure employment in the informal sector and this resultantly has intensified gender inequalities.

Within the rural setting it has generally been small and marginal peasants and indigenous subsistence peasants that have borne the brunt of accumulation by dispossession (Motta and Nilsen 2011:16). Liberalization policies have ended key subsidies, reduced public investment in rural development infrastructure, extension services and agricultural credit, and eliminated protectionist measures that enabled small and marginal peasants to sustain themselves through petty commodity production (Bernstein, 1994, 2001; McMichael and Raynolds, 1994; Bryceson, 2000). According to Harvey (2005) the rural populace exposed to the onslaught of global market forces are poorly equipped to withstand, they are slowly being forced off their land in a process where 'various forms of property rights' are being converted into 'exclusive private property rights' (Harvey, 2005: 159) affected by means of

legislative procedures and acts to make fundamental amendments to the text of the Constitution and make way for neoliberal capitalists to promote agribusiness by means of indigenous land grabbing. Agri-business is one of the major initiatives that have the support of transnational capital leading to dispossession of indigenous land. Among others especially in India, dispossession has been caused by construction of river valley projects, illegal mining, housing etc in a manner to sustain its economic growth and urbanization worries. This very process of land grabbing in global south involves wide participation of state elites and acts accordingly to the tunes of their counterparts based elsewhere. In this context Morton (2007) has rightly remarked that it would be erroneous to assume that this process signals the quiet 'death of the peasantry'. Rather, peasant groups across the global South have challenged their dispossession vigorously through movements and networks that seek to reclaim land rights and reorient agriculture towards the imperatives of food security and ecological sustainability (Moyo and Yeros, 2005; McMichael 2006). The onslaught of neoliberal development paradigm in many parts of the third world greatly differs in terms of magnitude of stakes involved when significantly compared to developmentalism- development in firm state control. This forms major differences between policies in India in the periods pre-1990s and post-1990s.

One of the major feature of post 1990s global capitalism in relation to the global South, states are disciplined by international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and are required to reduce their role in the delivery of public goods and service their debts to the wealthy North. The role envisaged for the state is as the guarantor of a legal and regulatory framework essential for capital accumulation (Cammack 2002). The devastating impact of neoliberalism has been evident with the rapid collapse of incomes in the global South since the early 1980s, with sub-Saharan Africa being the worst hit of all the regions of the global South (Boden 2011:88). As a fall out of this implications Sates in the third world have been forced to give up their developmental efforts and settle – more or less grudgingly – for a subordinate position in the global hierarchy of wealth' (Arrighi 1991: 52).

According to Boden, Neoliberalism has been the most significant factor behind the crisis of state-led developmentalism, but it has not been the only challenge to the developmental

state and also coinciding with the impact of neoliberalism, significant social movements in the global South and their intellectual supporters have moved against the state, converging albeit from a very different perspective from neoliberalism (Boden 2011:88). Hence social forces of different hues and ideologies have challenged the role of the state for a number of reasons.

The first and most obvious is that the state is regarded by social movements as an apparatus dominated by ruling elites, which are opposed to the interests of the majority. This is particularly significant throughout the global South as the state and ruling class are often fused to form a 'state-class' that rests on various forms of clientelism and exclusion.

The second reason, closely related to the first, is the failure of previous state developmentalism to deliver with the mass of the population paying the high social costs of development while receiving little in the way of increased living standards and a decline in inequality. This failure combined with the weakening or abandonment of the states' role in the provision of welfare and the steering of economic development has created a vacuum that has been filled by non-governmental organizations, aid agencies, new social movements and other non-state actors.

The third reason relates to the world-historical significance of the collapse of communism as a world power. The failure of the communist experiment discredited state intervention and boosted the ideological strength of neoliberalism, which stridently echoed Margaret Thatcher's argument that There Is No Alternative (TINA) to neoliberalism. Perhaps as important, the collapse of communism left anti-systemic movements in a state of crisis and disorientation, the impact of which is still difficult to adequately judge nearly two decades on (Boden 2011:88).

According to Petras and Veltmeyer (2011) the neoliberal agenda of "structural reform" in macroeconomic policy was widely implemented in the 1980s via the agency of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as extensions of the imperial state system, in the context of a call for a new world order, a region- wide debt crisis, and the defeat and destruction of both urban- centered labor movements and the rural movements for land reform and national liberation. However, these neoliberal policies in their turn generated

forces of resistance (Petras and Veltmeyer 2011: 79). The political left was playing a significant role in many countries in the global south especially in Latin America. The so-called 'Pink Tide' – the electoral success of political parties of different leftist hues within Latin America were crucial in transforming new social movements in Latin America. In Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Central America, and Paraguay, peasant and indigenous movements were involved in either overthrowing neoliberal regimes, building powerful regional movements with impacts on national policy, helping to elect center- left presidents and/or, in a few cases, providing mass support for guerrilla movements (Petras and Veltmeyer 2011: 157). These social movements were effective in shaping political debates and serving as inputs in the making of national policies by the lawmakers. The political left allied with these movements to counteract the patronage politics of right- wing agro-mineral elites (Petras and Veltmeyer 2011: 157). The elevated fortune of these social movements was short lived following internal crisis within the movement. The leaders of the indigenous movement were divided on many of the important issues related to the movement. The most visible mark of these movements remain external manipulations in the form of funds, jobs initiated by NGOs, projects which in turn are funded and administered by international financial institutions (IFIs) and international banks. These IFIs have been pillars of neo-liberal hegemony in the global world order. The fall out of these shortcomings were visible in the form of left parties changing fortunes by allying with rightist by initiating neoliberal agendas by abandoning promise of reforms aimed at strengthening the movement. The result was a visible loss of political initiative, internal divisions, and mass defections and, in some cases, the transformation of the movements into transmission belts of official policies leading to partial demobilization and the loss of "street power" (Petras and Veltmeyer 2011: 157).

The new social movement in the third world or the global south has many dimension of neoliberal offensive. It is not just at the level of finance, production and dispossession but also in the ecological foundations of the capitalist system. Neoliberal globalization have no doubt created wide spread conditions of poverty and hunger through policies and dispossession of peasants but have also jeopardized dependence of peasants of their

livelihood by degradation of the environment and eco-systems. The economic activity of the peasants and indigenous communities and ecology are intertwined in the value patterns of indigenous beliefs system. The friction was inevitable in most of the third world. This has also caused and led to wide-spread and growing movements of resistance to the latest incursions of capital and neoliberal policies not just in Latin America but many parts of Asia including the Himalayas. In this context the movement towards more clearly neoliberal policies emerged throughout the 1990s in many parts of Asia following structural adjustment programme which initially came in the way by devaluing the currency of the host state followed by privatization and FDIs. In as much as social movements are formed by or represent the dispossessed, marginalized, powerless, and victimized, they tend to be adversarial towards the state that was complicit in expropriation, exploitation, discrimination, and so on (Teik 2010: 11). Such movements also tend to oppose neoliberal agendas and their expressions in specific projects, even if some statement of movement goals- for example, 'a society marked by openness, transparency, fairness, rights and participation' (Pasuk and Baker 1997: 35). This in turn cannot be distinguished from neoliberal 'good governance rhetoric (Teik 2010: 11).

New Social Movements: Mobilizing the Resistance

As indicated above social movements in Latin America is not the first of kind. There has been a long history of social movements in Latin America rooted in its anti colonial struggle against colonial powers. The present spate of social movements in the region represents its struggle against neoliberal imperial policies of US and the host regimes. These social movements in Latin America have in many ways restored people's government by over throwing repressive and authoritarian governments backed by US interests. The region has been successfully returning to democratic governance after years of authoritarianism and military rule supported by US. The resurgence of these forms of new social movements during the periods after 1990s and thereafter have resurfaced strong emphasis on liberating themselves from the neoliberal economic and social model of growth.

These emergences of social movements have also had adverse impacts on the functional capability of the movements as there were strong and concerted efforts by the ruling

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regimes and corporate sectors to co-opt the leaders and members of the movements to prevent from posing a challenge to their hegemony. There was also significant pressure on the movement to suspend their movements by means of state repression. In many ways states managed to prevent these movements from posing a real threats to their policies either by means of repression or co-option by international funding etc. These forms of social movements in Latin America have successfully challenged neoliberal hegemony that nowhere in the world has witnessed. The social movements in Latin America is also important precisely because of wide spread mobilizations of indigenous peoples of the region and the struggle continues even today. In the last two decades particularly between 1989 and 2002 there has emerged several new social movements pitched against neoliberal hegemony in Latin America including Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Throughout these countries wide sections of the people took to streets defying government's prohibitory orders. The protestors rioted by blocking important access including highways and roads, crippled entire transportation system and commerce. The mobilization was so successful that peoples from the interior and rural areas poured to the capita and laid siege of the capital. The upsurge of the movement resulted in forceful occupation and eviction of government offices and buildings and also offices of the transnational corporations. The state response often violent in conduct resulted in ferocious battle leading to several casualties in civilian deaths blew the strength of the movement out of its proportion. The military and the police too were reluctant to perform their duty especially in cracking down the movement through the use of force.

According to Silva (2009) these events were not just anomic outbursts of rage. In most cases, from inauspicious beginnings in the 1980s and early 1990s, participants patiently built organizational and coalitional capacity and used it for political purposes. This process involved the formation of new social movement organizations (composed of indigenous peoples, the unemployed, pensioners, and neighborhood associations, among others), new unions, and new political parties. These existed alongside traditional union and middle-class movements and political parties, sometimes in competition and sometimes in cooperation. Over time, mobilization became increasingly coordinated and powerful as

organizations rooted in cultural, identity, and class politics linked together and reached out to new political parties and, on occasion, to dissident military factions (Silva 2009:01).

New Social Movement in India

In many ways organized mobilization of the movement particularly the peasants have protested urban encroachment of rural resources including land, forestry and water resource. These resources remain vital for urban sustainability. Urban expansion in many forms represents development patterns propounded by development theory. Hydro- electric dams today represent a major stake within neoliberal developmental paradigm. The underlying strategy of economic liberalization on the other hand represents systematic exploitation of rural resources on the ground that urban development as primary interests where majority of the industries and polluting factories are located. Under these circumstances, environmentalism, within a 'rapid changing polity' could be connected with broader concerns, including 'control over resources, centralized versus decentralized power, bureaucratic power versus participation, and ultimately of state versus civil society' (Hirsch 1997:193). As a popular movement that has focused worldwide attention on the environmental crisis in the Himalaya, the Chipko Movement forms the point of departure as a dimension of social movement against forest management but not against neoliberal policies. However, the importance of Chipko Movement rely not just on state forestry as the primary threat to the ecological and social stability of the Himalayan region as the region itself had witnessed rapid expansion of commercial and developmental activities. This intensification of resource has been matched almost step by step with a sustained opposition, in which Chipko has played a crucial role, in catalyzing and broadening the social consciousness of the Himalayan peasantry and hence movements against big dams, unregulated mining and the sale of illicit liquor have been organized by all three wings of the Chipko movement (Guha 1999:179). The movement according to Guha (1999) drawing on the experience of years of social activism, the leaders of the different wings of the Chipko movement have put forward their interpretations of local and national processes of environmental degradation. Different leaders of the movement had different perspectives and opinions regarding deteriorating Himalayan environment. Some of the leaders held that

commercial forestry and the close links that exists between contractors and forest officials as responsible for deteriorating Himalayan environment and some had reservations regarding the villagers role in deforestation, stressing, however, that this has been a result of separating the local population from the management of the forest wealth (Bhatt cited in Guha 1999: 180). Further both Forest officials and commercial forestry are merely agents of a development process biased in favour of the urban-industrial complex and against local needs (Guha 1999: 180) and much of dispossession in the name of development in the global south bears such a testimony. Further to quote Chandi Prasad Bhatt, one of the forerunner of Chipko Movement helps in reflecting the patterns of state led development vis a vis neoliberal policies along India's Himalayan region and the rest of the country. He was sharply critical of the growing separation between the state and the people, as clearly manifest in the framing of development schemes by urban-centered technocrats that have little relevance to the realities of rural India (Guha 1999:180). In India, the movements against the Narmada, Tehri, Silent Valley and Koel Karo projects have brought to light the social and ecological costs of large dam and these and other lesser-known movements have addressed the tribulations of local communities and ecological losses, they have also raised pertinent questions about the technical viability, economic feasibility and the long-term sustainability of such projects. While there are visible movements in northeast India to protest against the impacts of large dams such as Pagladiya and Tipaimukh, there are also smaller efforts by individuals and groups to raise their concerns and fears about the impacts of dams (Menon, Vagholikar, Kohli and Fernandes 2003: 06). The post 1990s economic liberalization has further created deep cleavages heightening the role of private players which for most of the times are indiscernible. Ironically the National Planning Commission, Government of India is run and administered by urban centered technocrats who have little regard for geological considerations for the region.

Large Dams as Products of Neoliberal Policy in North East: Sikkim and Resistance

The North East India consisting of the eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, with its unique river system was identified to be a potential future powerhouse of India. India's economic boom and growing competition from China has led to commissioning of large dams on these perennial river

systems of the Himalayas. The Department of Development of the North Eastern Region (DONER) has been accorded importance on this regard. The October 2001 Central Electricity Authority (CEA) 'Preliminary Ranking Study' of the nationwide potential of hydroelectric schemes gave the highest marks to the Brahmaputra river system (Menon, Vagholikar, Kohli and Fernandes 2003: 03). According to Menon and et.al. (2003) the study claims to have examined '10 major aspects, which play a vital role in the development of hydro projects'. The 168 schemes considered by the ranking study have a cumulative installed capacity of 63,328 MW and 149 of these were given ranks A and B, indicating high viability. These identified schemes would be developed by agencies such as the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), the Brahmaputra Board and State Electricity Boards and among others hosts of private power developers backed by international financial institutions. It was observed that a major portion of clean energy would be transported to other parts of the country to meet the energy demands of urban India. Along with these large dams, over 900 mini and micro hydel projects had been identified to meet the local needs of the North-East. Many of the schemes identified in the region will be the largest hydro projects that India has ever seen and are to come up in one of its most ecologically-fragile, biologically and culturally diverse areas of the world. In addition the region is strategically located sharing borders with the rest of South Asia by narrow strip of what is known as Siliguri corridor. It shares borders with East Asia and South Asia and forms a gateway between different civilization and cultures. The proposed dams over the region was contested on number of issues relating to ecology, environment, displacement, rehabilitation, migration and other socio-economic hardships like rise in crime, prostitution and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Over a period of time it has also caused a concern for lower riparian states like Bangladesh. As an official policy the plan has obtained clearances at both national and state level agencies. The manner in which it has obtained clearances put forwards encroaching role of power developers as a primary agent of neo-liberal development paradigm with state receding to a mere second to none. The proposed dams in the region of northeast includes Eastern Himalayas in particular the states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

The thrust of the research however will focus on resistance in Sikkim as a form of social movement against neoliberal policies. It was not just in mid 2000s that Sikkim had

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witnessed resistance from indigenous peoples under an umbrella organization against river valley projects. According to Menon (2003) it was in the early 1990s, plans to construct a hydroelectric power project on Rathung Chu, a tributary of River Teesta in West Sikkim. This created a stir among the indigenous people predominantly Buddhists. A run-of-the-river project, it was first envisaged in 1977. In July 1994, the Association of Buddhist monks of Sikkim submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister during his visits to West Sikkim and by then, the work on the approach roads had begun. The Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (CCS), the Buddhists and the Sangha (a monk body) of Sikkim raised concern that the treasures revered by them were under threat by the Rathong Chu project. Following this, a writ was filed in the High Court against the power department. The CCS demanded that the project be shelved forever, stating that the environmental and social costs were far greater than the promised economic gains, with no surety that they will ever materialise. The struggle included a series of peaceful protests and awareness campaigns, questioning the real benefits of the project and the social, environmental and cultural costs that the people of Sikkim would have to pay (Menon 2003: 33). The struggle against the Rathong Chu project demonstrated the conviction of a few hundred people who placed the sanctity of their land and river above economic development, if it meant destroying these resources (Menon 2003: 33). For this, they were seen as 'superstitious' and 'irrational'. The three groups who filed a petition against the project stated that "the project would grossly infringe upon the religious sentiments and beliefs of the state of Sikkim professing Buddhist faith, would destroy and defile the places of worship, pilgrimage and threaten the existence of very ancient monuments having historical and religious significance to the people of the state of Sikkim..." (Menon 2003:33). The government in 1999 led by new Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling scrapped the project, "to honour the sentiments, religion and culture of the people of Sikkim". Later the same government fell victim to neoliberal policies of the National Planning Commission, Government of India by earmarking as many as 24 dams in Sikkim which is less than 7096Sq Km in area. This was in utter disregard for people's sentiments, ecological and environmental concerns. The Sikkim Himalaya region falls under transnational bio reserve and Kanchendzonga National Park. The Region is ecologically fragile and within the vicinity of mountain ranges. The proposed

dams in North Sikkim are close to the source of the river where it originates and falls under Zone V of Seismic activity.

Dams and the ACT Protest

In Sikkim the catalyst for protest was primarily construction of Dams in Lepcha Reserve of Dzongu over River Teesta, considered sacred to indigenous Lepchas. The neoliberal offensive came from the cities of New Delhi and the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok, with government policy in the form of the Indian Government's 50,000 MW Hydroelectric Initiative. With the announcement of the projects on the Teesta River, the story shifted from New Delhi and Gangtok to the villages in Dzongu in North Sikkim where, in 2004, a group of Lepcha youth opposed to the dams formed a 17 member group called Affected Citizens of Teesta, known as ACT.

Similarly, Lepcha Reserve of Dzongu and construction of Dams in Dzongu against the rights of the indigenous Lepcha as a violation of Article 371 F as guaranteed to Sikkim by Constitution of India upon the merger of Sikkim in India in 1975. Once considered docile, the Lepchas of Sikkim protested adopting Gandhian Satyagraha and non-violence.

The movement in Sikkim acquired the frame of new social movement especially in the context of rising trans-national civil society mobilization to create wide network of civil society activism through the use of technology and media. The protest is also on environmental grounds, the Lepcha activists claiming that the delicate ecology of Dzongu, which is partially inside Mount Kanchenjunga national park and part of the Himalaya biodiversity hotspot, is, like the rest of Sikkim prone to landslides and earthquakes, and will not survive the development. This claim is supported by MK Pandit, director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Mountain and Hill Environment (CISMHE) who warned that many of the hydropower projects on the Teesta River are located in the high-risk zone IVG of the seismic zoning map.

Conclusion

The voices of indigenous people have been either passively ignored or actively silenced for most of the last five hundred years due to colonization, imperialism. The trigger of social movement in the post cold war has been because of neoliberal programmes for example implementation of NAFTA in Mexico which resulted in indigenous lands and resources being repeatedly stolen and the people themselves exploited under some of the worst labor conditions in Latin America. In countries like Mexico the role of the state shrunk as a secondary actor of providing logistical support to the proponents of neo liberal programmes including police and military response and crackdown on protestors. Thus, under neoliberal global order state role has diminished. The state under pressure had to amend constitution to allow indigenous lands to the forces of globalization etc. The indigenous struggles in the form of new social movements have revitalized people's strategy of building local participation in democratic power without waging war on the state. This has galvanized actions and political debate within the emerging "anti-globalization" movement and struggles of the peoples. Peasant and indigenous intervention in politics has long been manifested through everyday acts of resistance, acts of insubordination and open rebellion. But this remained fragmented and localized until the second half of the twentieth century (Renique 2006:46). In many ways movements and struggles everywhere represent subaltern political culture formed in the culture of resistance and docility to hegemonic designs of external manipulation. This is true in Sikkim, Lepchas under the banner of ACT sought to represent citizens affected by damning of River Teesta. It should have been pan Sikkimese movement however like any other social movements it was politically profiled as carrying ethnic baggage and highly politicized resulting in victimization of those associated with the movement. The movement was strong enough to build an alternative way of life, thereby revitalizing the universal struggle for democracy and liberation.

Chapter III

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ACT AS NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The chapter seeks to analyze ACTs mobilization from the perspectives of New Social Movement (NSM). The chapter is divided in several parts. The first section deals with the conceptual orientations of New Social Movements. The second part deals with the characteristics of NSMs as a theory and approach to the study of collective action and mass mobilizations. The movement that made headlines in Sikkim's Lepcha reserve of Dzongu following a decision to construct a mega dam along the river Teesta and its tributaries sprang up series of protests by Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT). The mass mobilization and collective actions of ACT represented a collective form of political expression in the form of movement. The movement will be analyzed from the perspectives of New Social Movement in the sections that follow.

The Making of New Social Movements (NSMs)

The social movements and mass mobilizations are need and issue based. It involves building organizational and coalitional capacity for political purposes. In most cases movements are overtly political and sometimes highly politicized. The political maneuvering is one important aspect of the movement as this ensures its survival and sometimes even its demise. Hence, it involves balancing of its ideals, priorities according to changing social and political landscape of the setting it is formed from within. This process is involved in making and transforming movement into what can be called a new social movement. The new social movement as it is referred can be composed of indigenous peoples, the unemployed, pensioners, and neighborhood associations, new unions, and new political parties.

These can exist along with old class based movements including traditional union and middle-class movements and political parties sometimes in contention and sometimes in close coordination. Within the few last decades' mobilization have become increasingly synchronized and powerful organizations rooted in cultural, identity, and class politics linked together and reached out to new political parties.

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The emergence of NSM is rooted in the belief of decline in leftist class-based mass movements. The NSMs acknowledged a new tendency in which movements are rooted in identity, cultural, ethnic, citizen, livelihood, and environmental concerns in forming resistance against incoming hegemonic policies. New social movements were oriented to autonomy, self-expression, and the critique of postindustrial society. The new social movements are also about sharing perceptions based on dominant stories and narratives. The stories can either be real or imagined but it forms an integral basis of social movements and participants within the movement. Social movement activists are fond of storytelling, whether in front of other activists, to potential allies or for the public. (Christiansen 2011:03) In fact, movement activists and adherents are often told to "tell their story" in an effort to garner public support or sympathy (Leondar-Wright, 2008; Polletta 1998, 2006). An important element of any social movement is the creation of a collective identity for purpose of mobilization. According to Mellucci (1995) "collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals...and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place" (p. 44). In other words, collective action is the way a group of people understands their shared environment and how they should act collectively within that environment and storytelling is one way movements can create this shared sense of meaning and thus, a collective identity (Christiansen 2011:06). Here, it is interesting to note as to how sense of shared meanings sustain overtime keeping in mind the nature of changing societies and need for the movement to evolve with changing times. It is extremely important that social movements like stories need to maintain continuity and sustain and remain popular within people's imagination.

There are several phases of social movements marked by periods of convenience and hardships. There can be several interpretations but Linde (2001) argues that, an organization uses "narrative to create and reproduce its identity by the creation and maintenance of an institutional memory" (p. 1). Social movement organizations and informal groups behave in much the same way (Christiansen 2011:07). For example origin of story is another important aspect of social movements. It helps to build argument about good starting point for analysis of movements. A good example of this is the story of the origins of the civil rights movement (Christiansen 2011:07). Polletta (1998) points out that the American civil rights movement is often described as beginning with Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a city bus, which

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then sparked the Montgomery Bus boycott. Like any other movements social movements have a sense of purpose and responsibility towards a particular society in question. Social movements are, of course, usually interested in changing government policy by mobilizing resistance, dissent, picketing, boycott, economic blocade, strikes and various forms of social protest. Social movement narratives are also seen in this dominion. Leondar-Wright (2008) notes that stories are often used to build sympathy and support for movement causes. Stories are meant to put a human face on the policies that are being discussed. But stories often backfire and policy makers end being better story tellers about development, generating employment and economic prosperity at the cost of individual liberty, freedom and above all livelihoods. However, social movements and narratives too suffer from many strategic limitations and constraints. For example, narratives and stories have dominant form of discourse and exclusionary in many aspects and in multi ethnic societies this can pose a problem in forging collective action. Hence it may not appeal many cross sections of the society to forge collective action. It becomes all the more easier within policy circles to ignore such type of identity formation as it may lead to backlash by so called others not part of the narrative.

The concept "new social movements" is a double-edged sword (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 05) On one side, it has contributed to the knowledge of contemporary movements by focusing attention to the meaning of morphological changes in their structure and action and by relating those changes with structural transformations in society as a whole sword (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 05). These changes are the source of these movements' "novelty" when compared with the model of collective action based in class conflict that prevailed in Europe since the industrial revolution (Melucci 1989). On the other hand, there is an inclination to "ontologize" new social movements (Melucci 1989). This allows the one to use word in general application relating to all new and different forms of collective action. There is also a tendency to give the concept more explanatory power than is empirically warranted, which no doubt derives from its popularization (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06).

There are also differences of opinions regarding the concept of NSM as a theory of social movement but this is highly contentious because theorizing of social movements Eurocentric. However it can refer to an approach rather than a theory; it is not a set of general propositions that have been verified empirically but just an attempt to identify certain common

characteristics in contemporary social movements and develop analytical tools to study them (Melucci 1989; Laraiia 1993b). The bundle of new social movements mentioned earlier was difficult to conceptualize with either the imagery of the ideological movements of the past or the rationally organized interest group (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06).

The analysis of NSMs is not just confined within disciplinary boundary of a particular field or subfields but its conception can be conceived from the perspectives and methodological skills of larger social science discipline. In this context the analysis of new social movements (NSMs) can be advanced by cross-cultural research and by contrasting them with movements of the past that originated in class conflict (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06). There are also dangers of oversimplification in suggesting a movement as a form of NSM. It is important to note that no mobilizations and movement taking place in the world today testifies the characteristics of NSMs, nor can all current movements be designated new and in many cases, their appearance among current movements leads us to conceptualize them along dimensions of differences from earlier cases of collective action and social movements (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06). In order to avoid the danger of oversimplification and over generalizations of a movement as a form of NSMs it is important to state few of its characteristics.

New Social Movements: Basic characteristics

Firstly, like social movements, NSMs also rely on participants and leadership for mobility and appeal but unlike social movements, NSMs do not bear a clear relation to structural roles of the participants (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06) as it is a cross sectional mobilization based on shared experiences and shared meanings with a tendency for the social base of new social movements to transcend class structure. The background of participants find their most frequent structural roots in rather diffuse social statuses such as youth, gender, sexual orientation, or professions that do not correspond with structural explanations (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Initially this has been striking in two especially strong movements: the Green movements in Europe and the ecological movement in America. It is evident also in such other movements as the anti-nuclear energy movement in Europe and America or the animal and children's rights movements in the United States (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06). The frequencies with which movements have been taking place today are unprecedented. As for the grievances and protests are concerned it is multiple starting from autonomy, dispossession,

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displacement, unemployment, gender, identity, environment, livelihood, citizenship and among others related to subaltern issues and groups. Hence, one single social movement seeks to mobilize collective action on many aspects of everyday lives of the people. Those protesting on the issues of unemployment may be co-opted by the state after delivering them with employment opportunities and hence there exists dangers of dying an untimely demise after an unprecedented rise.

Second, the ideological characteristics of NSMs stand in sharp contrast to the working-class movement and to the Marxist conception of ideology as a unifying and totalizing element for collective action (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06-07). The unifying element for collective action in most part remains in the form of a common threat perception from incoming overarching ideologies most notably neoliberal polices of contemporary era. In the developed North where NSMs started gaining momentum especially in Europe but also in the United States, movements were characteristically perceived in accordance with overarching ideologies: conservative or liberal; right or left; capitalist or socialist (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 06-07) and these overarching ideologies have transformed overtime. They exhibit a pluralism of ideas and values, and they tend to have pragmatic orientations and search for institutional reforms that enlarge the systems of members ' participation in decision making (Offe 1985; Cohen 1985; Larana 1992, 1993). These movements have an important political meaning in Western societies: they imply "democratization dynamic" of everyday life and the expansion of civil versus political dimensions of society (Larana 1993). However, NSMs have the tendency to be politicized and co-optation of members by political outfits are a common sight.

Thirdly, NSMs involves in creating new dimensions of identities based on set of beliefs, symbols, values, and meanings related to sentiments of belonging to a differentiated social group; with the members' image of themselves; and with new, socially constructed attributions about the meaning of every day life (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 07). This is especially the case with many of the ethnic and separatist movements within states. The Gorkhaland movements, Bodoland Movement in India are a trend of new identities emerging in the modern world. The grant of the transgender as the third gender in India exemplifies this trend.

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Fourth, the relation between the individual and the collective is blurred. Closely related to the above point, many contemporary movements are "acted out" in individual actions rather than through or among mobilized groups (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 07). The movements have no structural and class base. The gay rights movements and women movements aimed at attaining genuine equality and radical transformation of societal values exemplify this trend of NSMs.

Fifth, NSMs often engage private and intimate facet of human activity wherein movements focusing on gay rights or abortion, health movements such as alternative medicine or antismoking, New Age and self-transformation movements, and the women's movement all include efforts to change sexual and bodily behavior extending into arenas of daily life: what we eat, wear, and enjoy; how we make love, cope with personal problems, or plan or shun careers (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 07). It seeks to change and transform socially constructed moral values and norms by incorporating new values which at times may clash and contradict with the value patterns of the societies one is part of.

Sixth, NSMs exhibit a remarkable feature in mobilizing the mass by conducting tactical exercise in the form of resistance. The form of resistance can vary from social boycott of government policies, creating economic blocades by disrupting the movement of essential commodities by paralyzing transportation and highways, non-cooperation with government, picketing and marching through the streets of capitals from rural and other peripheral regions within the country. The movement thrives on Gandhian strategies of non violence and civil disobedience, dharnas, hunger strikes etc and hence are completely different from what class movement stood for and their tactics for mobilization. Despite the efforts of the movement to maintain peace it has the tendency to be dealt through means of state repression.

Seventh, the proliferations of new social movement organizations are related to decentralization of power for local participation. The call for autonomy and democratic decentralization, creation of cooperative societies have enabled grass root mobilization and local participation in many of the countries where decision making is complicated and monopolized by few. This crisis is a motivational factor for collective action in search of alternative forms of participation and decision making relating to issues of collective interest (Whalen and Flacks 1989; Melucci 1989).

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Finally, NSMs are segmented, disseminated and decentralized which is in sharp contrast to cadre-led and centralized bureaucracies of traditional mass parties (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 08-09). There exists variation among different NSMs but the locus of collective action flow towards autonomy of local communities by challenging the centralized decision making apparatus of state and national governments. For example Zapatista struggle in Chiapas highland of Mexico stood for autonomy and self rule by creating their own style of governance. This has been called the "self- referential element" of the new movements, and it constitutes another sharp distinction with the hierarchical, centralized organization of the working-class movement and the role of the party organization in the Leninist model Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994: 08-09).

The characteristics of NSMs are not abstractions of the present worldview but it is well integrated to the social worldview of the yesteryears. The civil rights movement in the USA for equality and justice for Afro- Americans were rooted to the discriminatory institutions of slavery in the past. The NSMs in totality is the expression of old in new form with different form of tactics for mobility. Despite offering many points of view there lingers one issue of what's new within New Social Movements. The social aspects as analyzed by NSM are important indicator for mobilization in comparison to the economic or political aspects. The NSMs focus largely on single issue or a limited range of issues connected to a single broad theme such as peace and environment, rehabilitation etc. It aims at laying their focus on grass roots with the objective of representing the interests of the subaltern agencies. The collective action is locally based and centered on small affected communities. The mass mobilization is catered through personal networking and information networks like radio, newspaper, graffiti and internet blogging. It is absent of overarching ideology or agreement on its objectives makes these new movements different from the old class based movements. According to Offe, the new middle class in association with the old one is evolved in the new social movement because of their high level of education and their access to information and resources that lead to the question of the way society is valued.

Mega Dams in North East India: A catalyst for New Social Movement

The idea of mega dam as the Temple of Modern India is now several decades old but then the existing economic realties were driven by state. The impact of mega dams then and now are similar as well as different in many formats. The role of state has shrunk to the second level with private players being the primary agents of economic developments. Among others the primary roles of states have been to maintain law and order situation and to facilitate necessary logistical and administrative imperatives for private players. By the end of the century the world had witnessed heightened civil society activism against the construction of mega dams for reasons related to people's livelihoods. The publication of the Report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) in 2000, was thought to alter policies of the national governments worldwide on many grounds. The belief that the days of mega dams were over was illusionary and turned out to be speculative. In India massive hydropower development plans in the Northeast was envisioned to fast track India's growing economy. The North East of India, home to perennial Himalayan water system was described as the future powerhouse of India in clean energy water resources development. In 2001, a vision document prepared by the Central Electricity Authority of India (CEA) provided the preliminary ranking studies of about 400 hydropower dams with a total potential of about 107,000 MW. Based on this report the NDA government announced the 50,000 MW Initiative including the "prefeasibility reports" on 162 new projects with an aggregate capacity of 47,930 MW (ADB, 2007: 13; as cited in Baruah 2012). These projects were to be completed by 2017, and were to be followed by another drive to add at least 67,000 MW additional hydropower capacity in the subsequent 10-year period (International Rivers, 2008a: 7; as cited in Baruah 2012). The Himalayan state of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as an upper riparian state proposed hydropower capacity larger than the country itself. According to one estimate, in a ten year period, Arunachal Pradesh alone proposes to add hydropower capacity which "is only a little less than the total hydropower capacity added in the whole country in 60 years of Independence" (Human Rights Law Network, 2008: 3; as cited in Baruah 2012). "This projected pace of dam-building and the scale of India's hydropower development plans is unprecedented – nothing short of an attempt at a Great Leap Forward in hydropower generation" (Baruah, 2012). The region of the Indian Eastern Himalayas including the sovereign state of Bhutan have untapped potential to produce clean energy for energy starved urban India one of the largest growing economy of the world.

According to Joy, Mahanta and Das India's plan to expand its power generation potential – both hydropower and thermal power – is to keep up its high growth trajectory through industrialisation and urbanisation. Hence the critics point out that, the main driver of such large scale hydropower generation in the Northeast is arguably not the development of the region as such, but the export of hydropower to the rest of India to fuel its high growth economy. It amounts to what some civil society activists call "resource colonisation" of the Northeast by the rest of India. This also partially explains why single purpose hydropower projects are being put on a fast track, and not the multipurpose projects which were taken up in the post-independent era. These multipurpose projects could have met some of the critical developmental needs of the particular region, especially if these projects were planned as part of integrated river basin development, including overdue components like flood moderation, drinking water needs and navigation (p-09). The state governments on the other hand have been promised with revenue returns but resource mobilization after commissioning of dams remains technically the responsibility of the power developers for as many as 35 years. As per the MoUs signed between the state government and power developers, state government gets a 12% share of total revenue annually from the developers as royalty. It is hence on the promise of revenue returns hydro power development plan in the North-East have been launched vigorously by the governments. The state of Sikkim measuring 7096sqkm had earmarked as many 24 dams on a single river system and was set to earn in the figure of thousand crores but at the cost of environment and livelihood. The respective state government was of the opinion that hydropower development will catalyse the overall development in this Himalayan state" (Vagholikar, 2013). The private companies including couriers companies in its new role as power developers were driven by profit motives to enter in the newly acquired power market of India.

Other than profit generating aspect of the state and power developers, the policy makers inject a policy related decisions to push the hydropower agenda, as production of hydropower is seen as low-carbon energy as a part of climate mitigation strategy. The energy production by hydro carbon is seen as 'clean and green' energy, making it eligible for funding under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), in return for carbon credits (ADB, 2007). The claim of it being clean and green has been highly contested by environmental assessment forums at different levels. Against this background more than one-fourth of the projects applying for

funding under the CDM are hydropower projects, and most are located in the Himalayas of India and China (Dharmadhikary, 2008) said to be competing against each other as one of the largest growing economies of the world. The hydro power development in the Eastern Himalayas as part of climate change mitigation strategy is flawed as the region itself is prone to natural disasters exacerbated by its location in one of the most fragile areas of the world. The nature of geological concerns such as tectonic plate movements and ever increasing nature of young fold mountains makes the region more vulnerable by damning the flow of rivers. The region falls under Zone V of seismic activity highest ever in the zonal ratings. The impact of tunneling within the river valley for diversion of the course of the river may not adhere to the definition of run of the river projects, as they "involve large dams, which divert the river waters through long tunnels, before the water is dropped back into the river at a downstream location after passing through a powerhouse. The extensive construction of tunnels in Sikkim involving explosion of dynamite have developed a popular psyche in Sikkim which otherwise is most affected movement for autonomy for Darjeeling from West Bengal. The psyche has developed a popular proverbial anecdote that is, *'Khola pari Gorkhaland Khola wari Todkaland'* [(Darjeeling) on the other side of the river is Gorkhaland and on the opposite side is holed-land (land of tunnels)]" The psyche at a level of rhetoric is symbolic of people's attitude towards paralyzing Gorkhaland movement and visible environmental impacts of the construction.

There have been indications at India's rapid initiation of hydro power development in the North East due to geo-strategic rivalry on damning the river Brahmaputra which has its origin in Tibet. India's concern regarding China's plan to divert the Tsangpo will herald another water war in South Asia as both countries are not signatories to the international treaty on river waters that deals with riparian norms. According to Kurien (2013), "China's dam building plans are also serving as the 'strategic reason' for India to not only justify building mega dams on its side but also to establish its first-user rights over the waters. India's hasty decision to expedite mega dams on the sub basin of Siang, Lohit and Subansiri rivers has been interpreted as India's anxiety to institutionalize such a norm. This hasty decision has allowed the government to grant environmental clearances to the upcoming projects without taking recommendations of the environmental and risk assessment. Even the credibility of environmental impact assessments concerning various projects that have been carried out has attracted grave and serious criticism by environmental activists and civil society groups. However, some of the projects that are

being developed in Sikkim do not have its sources in Tibet and hence there is no China angle in Sikkim's river system. It looks more likely that blueprint of Sikkim hydro was charted along with the rivers system that flows out to India from Tibet.

Locating Mega Dams in Sikkim

Hydropower projects in Sikkim are increasingly projected by public and private corporate bodies as generating clean energy to seek carbon credits from Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It social impact has been ignored by the State as well as the power developers. Some of the corporate bodies like National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited, Athena Power Private Limited, Lanco Energy Private Limited, Teesta Urja Limited Delhi, Gati Infrastructure Limited, SEW Constructions Company Limited etc have vigorously projected clean energy policies.

Some of the important projects applied for CDM status as on June 29, 2011 that as many as ten projects came from Sikkim including Teesta III HEP, Teesta VI HEP, Rangit IV HEP, Jorethang Loop HEP, Chuzachen HEP, Ting Ting HEP, Tashiding HEP, Rongnichu HEP, Dikchu HEP. The trigger of resistance can be located within its implementations on the river Teesta which otherwise bears an important significance for the Sikkimese peoples. The river system in Sikkim is unique as there exists one major river system alone. The river Teesta is the major river with Rangit as its main tributary. The other rivers are either tributaries of Teesta or Rangit. The projects in Sikkim have been implemented along the Teesta river system and its major tributaries. The manner in which the projects were implemented in Sikkim testifies callousness of the power developers and the state in violating the right to inform the affected communities within the locality of projects proposed. Especially in Rongli Sub-division in East Sikkim, when Chuzachen hydro power was implemented the people had no clue about the proposal and it was only when the power developers started soil testing of the fields without permission of the tenets people began speculating governments initiatives. The initial anxiety of the people subsided when they were co-opted by the power developers by employing and granting contracts to the people. Hence, it was free from any form of anti dam activism. Whereas, things started taking a different turn as power developers reached Dzongu in North Sikkim. By 2005, it was held that there were plans to construct as many as twenty nine dams

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along the river Teesta and its tributaries in Sikkim roughly measuring only 7096 sq km in length.

The general people were clueless about the number of dams earmarked as per government of India's plan to tap energy from Sikkim rivers. The plan to construct twenty nine dams along the single river system in Sikkim was a mammoth development programme. The adverse effects of such a mammoth project in the Himalayas were overlooked for lucrative returns. The people now have started realizing the socio-cultural and environmental repercussions of the projects. There is a history of public resentment against mega dams dating back to early 1990s, when the proposals for mega hydro-projects were first introduced in Sikkim. The first protest, though not on a large scale, was led by the Salvation Council of Dzongu against projects planned in the Lepcha tribal area, Dzongu which was followed, a few years later, by a successful movement against the Rathong Chu project (70 MW) in West Sikkim by a group led by Buddhist monks called the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (Lepcha 2012: 80). The government was forced to scrap the project. Finally, the end of the decade saw a tepid fight against the Teesta Stage V project (510 MW) in East Sikkim. The impacts of Teesta V are immense affecting people's livelihood. According to Lepcha (2012), leader of the ACT, the most significant and interesting form of resistance was staged by the Lachenpa Bhutias, in North Sikkim. The Lachenpas have successfully resisted hydel threat by uniting unanimously against the projects which has had trickle down effect on the people of their neighboring Bhutia village, the Lachungpas (Lepcha 2012: 80).

Epicenter of the Movement: Dzongu and the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)

Dzongu is a triangular region in North Sikkim. It is bound by the Teesta River in the South-east, Tholung Chu River in the North-east and by mighty mountains in the West. It borders the Kanchendzonga Biosphere Reserve offering panoramic views of Mount Kanchendzonga (8,585m), the third highest peak and considered a guardian deity of Sikkim. Dzongu was declared an official reserve for the Lepcha people, the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim by the Royal Proclamation of August 30, 1956, a law still valid and protected under Article 371F of the Indian Constitution after Sikkim's formal merger with India in 1975. Under this law Lepcha inhabitants qualify for far-reaching protection against interference from outside which is subject

to interpretations. As far as the Lepcha civilization is concerned the region is considered the last bastion of Lepcha culture where one could possibly meet some of the last local shamans referred locally as the 'boongthing' who still practice the ancient animistic rituals. Hence, for Lepchas scattered throughout the Eastern Himalayan regions of Eastern Nepal, Sikkim, West Bengal and Bhutan, Dzongu is technically their holy land. They have strong ties with the nature and have lived here for centuries. An understanding of their culture, customs and language helps to foster an appreciation of the beautiful mountains, deep forests, and the Teesta River. They refer to themselves as *mutanchi rongkup* which means 'children of the snowy peak or children of the gods'. They were hunters and gatherers and lived complete nomadic lives till mid-nineteenth century when they began practicing settled agriculture introduced and influenced by Nepalis. They are originally animists but reverted to Buddhism. For an ordinary Lepcha, Dzongu is a pilgrimage place of superior importance. It is an area to which every Lepcha traces his/her lineage and ancestry. The Lepcha history and culture is intricately woven into its natural environment: the mountains, rivers, lakes and forests, especially those of Dzongu.

Hence, hydro power generation in Dzongu has been interpreted as a sheer disrespect for the cultural and religious heritage of the Lepcha as well as for the proclamation of the 11th Chogyal and the Union laws protecting the biosphere reserve. The government proposal of six hydro power plants in Dzongu was faced with a long and a grim campaign of resistance headed by the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT). The movement first started in 2003 when Lepchas opposing the Dzongu projects started holding small meetings in the villages. They formalised these meetings in July 2004, when they formed, Affected Citizens of Teesta, (ACT). Their aim at that time was to fight the large Teesta River hydro-electric projects slated for Dzongu (The Telegraph 2004) and to bring awareness to the Lepcha community of what they considered to be the harmful effects of the projects (Little 2010: 88). Initially it started with grass root movement mobilizing support at the local level. It was in January 2006, the state government first commenced a land survey with a view to acquiring land which was resisted by ACT in North district headquarters, Mangan. They resorted to picketing and blocade in the entry point of Dzongu preventing government officials from entering the region to conduct surveys. The media reporting of the events were widely carried out by print and electronic media. The media reporting help raise the profile of ACT in giving ACT a pan Sikkimese movement. The people

in Sikkim showed concern as either directly or indirectly all sections of Sikkimese were affected by hydro power development. Even a basic human right of right to consent had been violated by the government and the power developers. As the movement acquired momentum, the ACT undertook longest hunger strike which averted at least four projects. However, clearances and land acquisition for Teesta Stage IV and Panan HEP were not stopped and constructions are underway. Even at the height of the movement, the local residents were divided on the issue which impinged upon the social fabric of society. This difference was played out in the general elections of 2009 to the state legislative assembly with pro dam supporting the government and anti-dam supporting the opposition party. Despite this the movement represented a new form of activism on several grounds – environmental, ethnic, religious and demographic.

ACT: Narratives, Stories

As the resistance against hydro power development in Dzongu acquired momentum in 2005 the protestors formed an organization by forming Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT). It was comprised of educated Lepcha youths of Dzongu, North Sikkim considered the holy land of the Lepchas. The purpose behind its formation as "an organization of the indigenous Sikkimese citizens was to protect the land and the people against the threat of devastation the biodiversity hotspot (Kanchendzonga biosphere reserve), endangering the demographic profile of the indigenous primitive Lepcha tribes and the right to live in one's own homeland in dignity and security in the name of development harbingered by numerous mega hydropower projects at one go (ACT Website).

The protest by ACT was not the first of its kind in Sikkim. The first ever protests reported can be traced back to Rathongchu movement of the 1990s. The agitations were led by Buddhist monks belonging to Bhutia and Lepcha stocks. The legend has it that the two communities were blood brothers since Lepcha chief and the Bhutia immigrant leader signed the Blood Brotherhood Treaty under the guardianship of Mt. Kanchendzonga thereby transforming Sikkim into sacred landscape. However, the validity of the narrative can be contested as an academic history of Sikkim the narratives discard the role of the other autochons of the region, the

Limboos. However, as a dominant narrative it has helped Lepcha and Bhutias to form a common political community and ethnic bloc in Sikkim. The activists belonging to Bhutia and Lepcha communities launched their agitation based on their beliefs of sacred landscape. The government was forced to shelve the Rathong chu project in 1999. Similarly, ACT mobilized theological and emotive narratives to grasp the attention of the movement and was successful in garnering the support of the people. Many of the organizations and individuals associated with the Rathong chu protests extended their support in making the movement a pan Sikkimese movement. The proposed dam in Dzongu was directly in conflict with the theological sentiments of the people as the region contains a number of important sacred sites such as caves where Guru Rinpoche meditated, the Keshong Lake, the Kongsa hot springs, and the Tholung temple that is revered not merely by the Lepchas, but by all the Buddhists of Sikkim. The region also falls under the shadow of Mt Kanchendzonga which is worshipped by the people as the protector and guardian deity of Sikkim. The annual worship of Mt Kanchendzonga performed during Phang Lhasbol, a festival to commemorate blood brother hood treaty testify its symbolic values. Hence the proposed dams in Dzongu were in conflict with the value pattern of the communities shaped by centuries old theological principles.

The Lepchas of Dzongu as practitioners of nature worship have a typical and unique form of affinity toward nature and environment. As a practicing Lamaist Buddhists they do not differ with the Bhutias as they do with Sikkimese Nepalis who are otherwise considered Hindus. However, as nature worshippers their culture and ways of lives closely resembles to that of the Kirata Gorkha communities of Rais and Limboos. The practice of enchanting and invoking deities of particular landscape, rivers, streams, hilltops and ravines forms the basis of everyday Lepcha religion. Rivers are an integral part of the Sikkimese ethos (Bhutia 2012:05). Much of the folklore and traditions of the locals revolve around the mighty Teesta and the Rangeet Rivers. The River Teesta not only sustains the livelihood of the locals by preserving and propagating the rich bio-diversity, but also is the very backbone of Sikkim's cultural heritage. The river's source in the North is regarded by the Lepchas as holy and the "cradle of their civilisation." It is home to diverse ecological systems inhabited by rich and diverse flora and fauna and many protected species of plants and animals.

According to ACT almost every part of Dzongu has a legend behind it. The river Teesta, its tributaries, each hill and rock comes alive with a story that makes it seem like it always was like a human life form but has only now decided to keep silent. The elders narrate these legends believing that there are deities that reside in the rivers, forests, springs, lakes or hills and that they still exist to guide and protect every member of the tribe and would avenge any harm to nature or to the tribe if it ever occurred (Broome and Taraporevala 2010:63). The respondents expressed grave concern about the incoming dangers precipitated by unchecked hydro power development. The people were anxious about the erosion of safeguard guaranteed by Indian constitution to have it protected as an exclusive Lepcha reserve area and implementations of Land Acquisition Act in Sikkim in violation to the Article 371 F of the Indian Constitution.

According to Little (2009) ACT's protest narratives drew heavily on their folklore and mythology to establish their position as protectors of a sacred place. ACT emphasized on the environment, biodiversity, their culture, their traditions, and their "sacred" relationship with their land. The narratives also extend beyond Sikkim himalayas, to elsewhere in India and the wider world. The ACT effectively used the storytelling tools of their generation. Their narratives appeared on websites, blogs, online media, banners, youtube, and television. The stories were also told in the graffiti that marks the main road through Dzongu, and in verse, in songs, and shouted at rallies. It was reflected in the site of relay hunger strikes and on hospital beds (Little 2009:43). According to Peterson (1996) social narratives can help motivate deliberate, often risky action in pursuit of political change. The ACT employed the Lepcha social-protest narratives work in part to shape group identity among young Lepchas. Many youth from Dzongu live at BL House for extended periods where they work for ACT, rallying support, taking it in turns to sit on relay hunger strikes (Little 2009: 50).

ACT: Environment, Ecology and Mobilization

The Lepchas' knowledge of nature is vast and personal, and their connection to their land and everything that comes from it is a deeply held belief. Hence, the slogan, 'we belong to nature and nature does not belong to us' was widely invoked by ACT to garner support for mass mobilization. The slogan gives acute sense of belongingness and dependence on Mother Nature. The dams in the Himalayas and including in Dzongu is intrinsically linked to the

demands of India's energy needs propagated by industrialization and urbanization. Hence, concerns for indigenous beliefs for larger national questions were brushed aside for it involved international capital. One of the private power developers in Sikkim was widely rumoured to have its head office in South East Asia. There are questions pertaining to whether the government should shelve the projects unless environmental and risk assessment is validated according to the geological considerations of the region. Much of all the development activities along the Himalayas have been against the advice of experts for it is ecologically one of the most fragile region of the world with several mountains ranging from six to over eight thousands meters in height.

From the civilizational aspect it is home to diverse culture, religion, languages etc and considered one bio diversity hotspots of the world with rich fauna and fauna. The medicinal herbs, plants and trees have important ecological values to the people. The Kanchendzonga National Park is a trans-boundary initiative of the governments of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, West Bengal for environmental conservation. Dzongu falls under the vicinity of the national park and forms the part of Kanchendzonga bio sphere. According to ACT it was in sheer violation of environmental norms that projects were implemented in areas surrounding the biosphere reserve. The movement of heavy machineries along the region has disturbances to the movement of wild animals and ecologically fragile region. According to M K Pandit, the director of the Centre for Inter disciplinary Studies of Mountain and Hill Environment (CISMHE) under whose supervision a carrying capacity study of the Teesta basin was conducted over nearly six years ad-mitted in December 2007 that stages I-III of the Teesta project are neither environmentally advisable nor feasible (Arora 2008: 28). The region of Dzongu falls under the shadow of Mt Kanchendzonga and as the third highest peak in the world, the Himalayas the youngest fold mountains of the world are growing and falls under Zone V of Seismic activity. Initially Sikkim fell under Zone IV of seismic activity but after the 2011 earthquake Sikkim fell under Zone V which is high risk zone. The occurrences of landslides and tremors were becoming frequent and the people were living under dual threat of man and natural disasters. The people were apprehensive following tunneling of land as it was creating seepage of clean drinking water.

ACT was able to project its movement from logical argumentative ends that livelihood remained most affected. For the protestors its impact on vegetation was immense as important plants and herbs are directly associated with people's cultural habits. For example respondents pointed out that wild nettle leaves have religious values for people and are widely used by shamans to offer prayers during wedding ceremony, for weaving traditional dresses and food. The people also engage in subsistence farming and agriculture. The implementation of controversial land acquisition act of land grabbing by power developers and government were basic violation of human rights. The people were threatened with dispossession notices. It was directly conflictual with people's reliance on jhumming and terraced form of cultivation. The ACT members undertook relay hunger strike and peace marches by adopting Gandhian techniques of peace and non –violence. Their struggle closely resembled with Narmada Bachao Andolan tipped against displacement, dispossession, rehabilitation and it received support by activist Medha Patkar when she visited Gangtok in April 2008 to meet the protestors on relay hunger strike.

ACT: Displacement, Dispossession and Mobilization

The Lepchas wandered across the physical landscape of what constitutes Eastern Himalayas including parts of Darjeeling, eastern Nepal, western Bhutan and Sikkim. The region of Dzongu is referred as Mayel Lyang by the Lepchas, meaning hidden paradise. According to Little (2008) the Lepchas were once alone in Mayel Lyang until the arrival of Tibetans immigrants about six to seven hundred years ago. They introduced Buddhism and became sovereign rulers of the land. The English and Christian influence made inroads first in Darjeeling then into Sikkim. The English influence brought in another wave of migrant Nepalis to the hills followed by plainsmen Indian's after British withdrawal from India in 1947. It was opened for tourism and once revered Mountain peaks were conquered by explorers. With these developments they realized that every aspect of faith and demography were at odds with their ways of lives. And one day, the Lepchas came out of the forest and realized they were the smallest tribe in the land (Little 2008: 238). The threat of displacement forms the basis of Lepcha cultural narratives. Ever since the publication of A.R. Foning's 'Lepcha: My Vanishing Tribe', in the 1980s the word "vanishing" has become inseparable with descriptions of the tribe. Equally aware of their dwindling identity, Lepchas from across the Himalayan countries, especially India, Bhutan and

Nepal have become more and more vociferous about the need to protect their ethnicity and culture (Broome and Taraporevala 2010: 64). It is evident in demographic representations in Sikkim and Darjeeling hills of which they are indigenous. Hence the fear of displacement and dispossession forms the part of their narrative much ever before the projects were announced in Dzongu. Sensing this danger Dzongu was declared an exclusive Reserve for the Lepchas in 1957 by the Chogyal. In addition they were also acknowledged to be Sikkim's "original indigenous inhabitants" by a Supreme Court verdict on 10 February 1993. According to Wangchuk it is perhaps the only place which contains the last relics of the Lepcha identity: including traditional houses, bamboo bridges ("made from long sections of split bamboo, a ingenious feat of grass root engineering"), the bongthing (the Lepcha shaman) and the mun (the female counterpart of the same) - bridges between the human, the natural and the supernatural worlds- revered monasteries, trees, lakes, hot springs, forests, caves, hills, mountains and the rivers worshiped and propitiated regularly through elaborate ceremonies.

The two of the large projects the Panan and Teesta IV hydel project was announced on the Rongyong chu and on the river Teesta within the Lepcha Reserve of Dzongu. The large component of Teesta Stage III also falls within the Dzongu Reserve. The other four projects Rangyong, Ringpi, Lingzya and Rukel projects were also said to affect the Kanchendzonga biosphere. The ACT voiced its concern regarding land acquisition and dispossession of land for settlement of labourers. However, it would be incorrect and misleading to suggest that people supported ACT wholly because there were sizeable amount of people who supported the power projects in Dzongu. The people were of the opinion that its benefits are much bigger than those of hardships. The certain groups of people were skeptical about influx of outsiders into Dzongu violating the privileges and norms guaranteed under Article 371 F of the Indian constitution. Despite concerns there existed few people who were to some extent ready to accept the proposed project provided certain conditions are met. According to Choudhary, the recommendations for Stage IV (inside the Dzongu) however, were quite different that 'The people of the Dzongu, irrespective of their social or occupational status, unanimously and vehemently oppose Teesta Stage-IV. Under such circumstances it is recommended that the sentiments of the indigenous tribes be reckoned with before reaching any decision (Choudhary 2002:137).

There were clear divide between the people of Dzongu about the prospects and dangers of the proposed projects. The concern of ACT was particularly on the manner and nature of displacement and dispossession of tribal land followed by acquisition. From a pragmatic point of view Dzongu is huge area divided into upper and lower Dzongu and is sparsely populated. Unlike other tribal heartlands in central India, Lepchas did not face mass displacement because the power developers had to adhere to the specification of height of the dams on the river it is being built. With heights not measuring fifty meters it was expected that Dzongu would not be submerged by an artificial reservoir. The lands were not entirely being acquiesced in Dzongu and according to Little (2008) land acquisition is voluntary. Those people supporting the ACT claimed that landowners had been tricked into selling their land by making people sign unspecified documents. On the other hand there were people who claimed that they sold their lands on their own and voluntarily.

The English daily, NOW reporting of the 9th July, 2007 brings fore the divide between the ACT and other residents that At a meeting of 300 Dzongu residents at Namprikdang in the Dzongu (8 Jul 07), landowners 'stressed that none of them had been forced into parting with their lands and added that even they were concerned about the environment and culture and had ensured adequate safeguards to protect them (Sharma 2007:1). The issues regarding rehabilitation were secondary for them. But the manner in which rehabilitation was envisioned was faulty and questionable. According to Bhutia (2012) the road leading to the R&R (Resettlement & Rehabilitation) Colony at Dhudhey Dara is extremely steep and isolated from the rest of Sikkim. It is so steep that it is hard to imagine how pregnant ladies, elderly or disabled persons can ever traverse it, especially at night when there are no lamp-posts illuminating the way, or during the monsoon season when the concrete road turns dangerously slippery (Bhutia 2012: 49). This isolation came at the cost of selling their terraced agricultural fields and protected by Article 371 F of the Indian Constitution. There were no sign of returns in terms of livelihood. As a goodwill gesture a male member of the family was assured of employment as labourer in the construction site. The salary ranged somewhere from Rs. 8000-10,000 per month (Bhutia 2012:49). The Dzongu residents although known to be peasants are famous in the world as large cardamom cultivators in the world. Sikkim was one of the highest producers of large cardamom in the world along with Bhutan and Nepal. This is a huge source of income for average rural

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Sikkimese people. The displacement and dispossession caused by land acquisition left negative impacts on the society. The community felt completely isolated and uprooted from their ancestral lands protected by royal legislations, loss of identity, displacement of their siblings and loosing traditional knowledge of farming. It was on this core and real issues ACT sought to represent affected people in Dzongu. Despite this, affected people did not lead the movement against the power developers and the government. There was a fear of a backlash in the form of loss of poorly paid job which remained the only source of livelihood of the people at the cost of their ancestral property the source of identity, livelihood and citizenship. The government and the power developers left policy gaps for ACT to identify on issues related to access to school education under the flagship Right to Education programme and health centres while R&R facilities were being conceived in Dudhey Dara.

In all aspects ACT was projecting their movement from cultural, ethnic and human rights points of views. The ACT also reiterated that socio- cultural implications of the influx of labour from the plains would reduce them to a minority even within the Reserve. There were debates on serious health concerns that were raised not only because of the ecological impact of the dams but also because of the labour migration within the reserve (Broome and Taraporevala 2010: 68). The Dikchu reservoir which is operational and commissioned by NHPC partially falls under Dzongu reserve. This had huge socio-cultural impact on adjoining areas including displacement caused by mud slide, sinking zones caused by damning of the river, displacement; cracks have developed in the houses of the people and even reports of illegal activities. The influx of labour migration had led to reports of sexually transmitted diseases in the region. The ACT strongly voiced their concerns from these perspectives.

ACT: The Making of a Trans National Movement

The ACT was formed in 2004. The ACT initially started the movement as a localized and personalized driven awareness campaign about possible dangers related to their livelihoods against incoming threats. They mobilized people by campaigning and interacting with the villagers. It was aimed at capitalizing on the grass roots where culture lay embedded within. Their aim at that time was to fight the large Teesta River hydro-electric projects slated for Dzongu (The Telegraph 2004) and to bring awareness to the Lepcha community of what they

considered to be the harmful effects of the projects. It was led by educated group of people who were aware of eroding Lepcha culture and was based in cities and towns. As the government initiated projects after projects in Sikkim the movement ballooned out of control raising questions about the manner and nature of its application in Sikkim for mere exchange of revenues. For Lepchas, ethnic as well as linguistic minority and its reputation for timidity the movement represented a 'David and Goliath' battle (Little 2010:85-6) against the might of state. The movement did not have an external funding and solely relied on voluntarism.

As the movement unfolded the ACT started giving meanings to the movement from a local Lepcha context of ethnicity, identity, Article 371 F, Dzongu as a cradle of Lepcha civilization, increasing threats to the society, affinity to the natural ecology and environment. The aspects of invocation based on narratives and shared meanings attracted the attention of Lepchas based elsewhere in, Darjeeling hills, Nepal, Bhutan and abroad. The movement first reached cities of Gangtok and other Indian metropolis. The protest narratives local in context had wide appeal especially on the minds of the people, civil society and the media which further exacerbated the movement from Dzongu to the rest of the world. In the words of Baviskar (1997), the Lepchas' protest narrative draws on the pre-capitalist village community as an ideal of social and ecological harmony, and criticized the advance of capitalism at the cost of their land and culture. (Baviskar1997:43). Right from the beginning the ACT had stressed and maintained that their movement was not against mega hydel projects and that it was feasible to initiate small hydel power projects which do not affect the environment and the local people on a huge scale." (Statesman 2006). This version of ACT's stand and position continued throughout the movement that they would welcome small hydro projects that would support local and community needs.

As the movement progressed in to a second year, the ACT had sped its mobilization. By 2006, the ACT started to mobilize from Gangtok. The Bhutia-Lepcha House (BL) became the epicenter of the movement where major decisions were taken on the future of the movement. They stayed in touch with their members and counterparts in Dzongu on regular basis. The shift to Gangtok did not greatly increase ACT's support base of directly affected Dzongu Lepchas but brought the movement into the geography where policies are made about the projects by the government (Little 2010:95). It also increased ACT's access to the world of media both print

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and electronic. The ACT successfully coerced the government to change their policy stance with the threat of protest march in the city by the people but was averted following the promise by the government that review of "every aspect" of North Sikkim hydro-electric projects and also expressed "deep concern'" for the people of North Sikkim "...that culture, tradition and identity would never be compromised for the sake of economic development alone (Rai 2006:1). Despite this the government failed to review their policy postures in favour of ACT. The movement took another stage when ACT's resistance transformed in to an indefinite hunger strike on June, 2007. The relay hunger strike was emulated in the spirit of Gandhian non violent principle. For ACT it signified peace, tranquility and liberation against domination of repression. The government faced the brunt of the hunger strike as the movement received adequate reporting from the print media, local, regional and national.

The movement captured the imagination of the Sikkimese people throughout the period of the movement. The young and old from Sikkimese society joined the movement by making a courtesy visit to the site of relay hunger strike and the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital in Gangtok. This galvanized the youths to mobilize and increased the support base of the ACT. The support base of ACT also raised the profile of ACT beyond that of a small, village-based group of dissent to an inclusive powerful group with a clear charter and message. The movement was overtly politicized by the political parties. This created a space for activists to be diverted from the core issue. The fear of cooptation loomed large over the horizon. The government also bowed to the pressure of the ACT as on 21st August, 2007 and promised to review the projects. The government turned deaf as they failed to implement the review proposal. The ACT sensing government inadequacy launched another round of relay hunger strike on March, 2008.

ACT, Media, Internet and Language: Mobilizing the Resistance

The second spate of hunger strike remobilized the movement. The media coverage by the mainstream national media houses found a voice within the history of social movement in India. The movement was nationally covered by the media and its outreach of protests beyond Sikkimese boundaries attracted the attention of the leaders of the social movement affected by development discourse in other parts of India. The ACT found voice in the leadership of Medha

Patkar, leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. She visited Gangtok to meet the ACT leadership and protestors staging relay hunger strikes at BL house. Soon after her visit, she invited ACT to join a Dharna [protest] being held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to protest the "Displacement & Un-Democratic, Unjust, Anti-People & Pro-Corporate 'Land Acquisition (Amendment) Act, 2007' and 'Resettlement and Rehabilitation Bill, 2007'' (Little 2010:103). This initiative of ACT caught attention of the Lepchas in other parts of India. The ACT found support amongst its brethren in adjoining West Bengal hills. The Lepchas of West Bengal mobilized themselves in support of ACT's stand and cut off Sikkim's lifeline by staging a blockade on the national highway 31 A, the only life line of Sikkim with the rest of India. The Lepchas also staged a protest march in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. This created the shift of ACT's humble origin from Dzongu to other parts of urban India. The media played an important role and was a major driving force in forming ACT's external support base. The similar kinds of protest were conducted in Delhi by Lepchas of West Bengal who for a very long time had been camping for the recognition of Lepcha language.

The ACT was aware of the capacity of internet to internationalize the issue. The ACT found voice among the educated youths of Sikkim. These educated non-Lepcha youths supported the movement by creating a blog weepingsikkim.blogspot.com to discuss issues related to hydro power generation in Sikkim. This in the end helped ACT to interact with international support advocacy and of their struggle in Sikkim. The expatriate Sikkimese people outside India found a voice to interact with ACT by posting on the blog. The supporters in Sydney gathered holding placards of 'save the Teesta' on the backdrop of Sydney Harbour Bridge. The media in Sikkim covered the international story with the photographs of 'save the Teesta' on the front page of the dailies. It also appeared on the front cover of Talk Himalaya magazine and on the blog created by ACT. The movement then spread from Sydney to Melbourne where Sikkimese expatriates and Australian indigenous elders gathered to show their support for ACT. According to Little (2010) creating a blog was not part of ACT's protest strategy, nor was it created by ACT, but it helped to broaden the support base enormously. This created a pan Sikkimese face of the movement for many within the government and civil society saw it as an exclusively Lepcha movement.

They also exploited their knowledge of English language to interact with wider audience and Nepali to interact at the regional level. This created a wide base of support networks by independent environmental advocacy and human rights consortiums. They sought to undertake independent study to assess the impact of hydro power in Dzongu. The findings of the study were made public by the ACT through media, internet blogs and through press briefings. According to Little (2010) blog posted relay hunger strikes on YouTube. The story was picked up by the influential UK Independent newspaper and the BBC World also ran the story of the ACT to the western world. Hence, the use of technology to mobilize and capture an audience beyond the villages and the city of Gangtok was critical to ACT's mass mobilization even though it was not in ACT's initial plans. But for them it served the movement well. ACT members have developed the skills to update the blog and YouTube with films about the protest which have also been posted on International Rivers' and other NGO websites (Little 2010: 104). Thus the use of English language, internet and media helped the movement to cross the frontiers of rural voice to a larger city based audience. The ACT's struggle received impetus from technological advancements of the times although it was not in their agenda to use technology. The technology played a huge role in exacerbating the movement of ACT struggling to safeguard their tradition against incoming threats of modernity and its enterprise.

Conclusion

The formation of ACT in 2004 was a response in the wake of governments' proposal to implement as many seven projects in Dzongu and its adjoining areas at the behest of power developers and the central government's initiative to generate energy for power starved India. The emergence of the ACT and its continued struggle represents one of the first major political expressions against the prevalent development discourse in Sikkim. It represents a social movement different from class based movements where different background of people supported the movement. This particular policy posture was taken and implemented without assessing the impact and implications of such mega hydro-projects on the river Teesta basin. The movement led by ACT actually represents the struggle of the communities whose livelihood depends on the source of the waters of the river Teesta. There exist many riverine townships and markets in Sikkim directly affected by damning the flow of the river. The basic right of right to consent was violated as there were no consultation with the civil society, NGOs

or the communities who were going to be affected by such projects whatsoever. Those who tried to mobilize against the dams were politically victimized with anti-national rhetoric. The rhetoric caused injury to the character of the individuals within the society. The ACT stressed their movement based on fragile ecology, geological vulnerabilities and high seismic activities that were brushed aside as rubbish and illogical in exchange of revenue generation, local employment opportunities. The 6.9 Richter scale earthquake which rocked Sikkim in September, 2011 brought back the memories of ACT's stand on seismic activity in Sikkim. The epicenter of the quake happened to be North Sikkim, the site of mega dams in Sikkim. The death toll in Dzongu was highest in Sikkim in the ensuing devastation caused by the earthquake of September, 2011.

The socio-cultural impact on the community was huge and the community's social fabric was hard hit with relatives and friends divided on the issue of hydro power development in Dzongu. The community was divided along two poles----those supporting the dams and those against dams. The pro and anti camps polarization of one single camp was reflected on social gatherings like funeral and other social functions. The division has created scars on the community and this was also reflected during general elections of 2009 and 2014. The pro-dam rallied support in favour of the ruling party and the anti-dam group rallied support in favour of the opposition party. The ACT's movement also leads one to point states government's focus on environment and ecology through the state Green Mission Plan. The critics were skeptical of state imposing both hegemonic and counter hegemonic programmes as a cover up. At this neo-liberal juncture it would be wrong to invoke Nehru's socialist-economic rhetoric, 'Dams are the Temple of Modern India', and if one is to suffer in the name of National Interests, one should. The pertinent issue here is whose national interests.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV

ACT AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to examine the institutional responses to the ACT movement. The responses to the movement have come from wide sections of the society, state and most importantly the role of civil society in Sikkim. As the movement was rooted within cultural and public domain the movement heralded a new beginning of civil society activism in Sikkim. The impact of the movement was such that even the state government responded to the movement. The chapter seeks to analyze these institutional responses keeping in mind ACT and their mobilization.

The responses that have come from different institutions certainly problematizes the notion of development that the state is harping on for a long time. The state along with private players has both become hegemonic and counter hegemonic actors in professing development paradigm. This has undermined the role of civil society in Sikkim. In many of the democracies civil society has been very active in professing environmental movement against the state and its policies. The development paradigm in question is interplay of conflicting notions of developments. The trajectory of the decision making process of development projects like large dams and the various actors involved in the process in one hand and the green politics on the other makes it interesting an observation. This leaves little for civil society to perform its civil functions amidst increasing encroachment by political society. If state plays an activist against its own development programs it leaves nothing for civil society to mobilize. However, this has happened in Sikkim on a mass scale.

An Overview of the Decision Making on Dam Planning

Dam planning and decision-making

The role of the governments both the state and the central in developmental programs is vital to our understanding of why do people mobilize or why social movements occur. The

catalyst for social movements is closely associated with the manner in which policies are envisioned and implemented at the local level. In the post liberalization phase in India, state governments have become increasingly important in boosting economy by encouraging foreign direct investments in states. The state governments on their individual capacities have been able to lure investments into states and central governments only regulated foreign economic relations. The hydro power development too has been the responsibility of the respective states in India. The central states too have retained their roles as a decision and policy maker. The state and the central government interact through a multi layered process in initiating hydro power developments in the states. At the state level the decision making rests with the Chief Ministers office and at the central level the PMO in consultation with other regulatory bodies and state agencies draft the planning process in to reality. The decision making happens in several phases with (i) the initial planning process, which is a state responsibility; (ii) statutory clearances, a central responsibility and (iii) the post-clearance construction phase. The decision-making process for dams begins with the preparation of preliminary feasibility report (PFR) designed to identify suitable locations (Choudhary 2010). The important actor in this venture is the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and the feasibility report and others reports are drawn up by CEA. The state governments solely rely on the report filed by CEA and it is on this report the state government in question signs a contract with the executing agency on the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR).

The projects are sent for environmental clearances both at the state and the central level. The environmental clearances are given by the department and the Ministry concerned with Environment and Forestry. The Chief Ministers and the Prime Minister in consultation with a minister concerned form the committee to assess environmental concerns. The environmental clearances are processed to state planning commission and national planning commission, which undertake the techno-economic analysis before sanctioning any financial allocations (Choudhary, 2010). According to Mandal, the Planning Commission then sends the DPR to the CEA and the Central Water Commission (CWC), for techno-economic analysis. Once the report is cleared, it is forwarded for investment clearance and once cleared the state government signs an implementation agreement (viz. MoU) with project developer(s) to enable construction to proceed. The entire dam decision-making process prior to the 1994

EIA notification was an Inter-departmental affair. However, since the EIA Notification, 1994, the environmental clearance process included public hearings, the only form of public participation in the dams' decision making process (Mandal 05).

Environmental Impact Assessment

The prerequisite for enhancing infrastructural projects in India in the form of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory for stakeholders for measuring impacts that it likely to cause. The assessment of impacts both in terms of positive and negative on the environment, society and on the local economic aspects is necessary. It necessitates an understanding between the government, project developers and the local communities. Without EIA assessment, the government cannot undertake activities related for clearances.

To give EIA a transparent and people friendly outlook, government in 1994 passed a notification in the form of Public Consultation especially for initiating mega dams where people are likely to be affected by hosts of problems related with power projects. Prior to the passing of 1994 notification EIA was modeled on the line of administrative procedure with bureaucracy involved in getting the assessment passed. Post-1994 the concerns of the affected local communities forms one of the important basis of impact assessments made by the stakeholders. It is widely held among policy circles that the notification has allowed people and local communities to involve themselves in the decision making process as an important stakeholder of the development project. According to Chaudhary (2010) the new EIA Notification (Amendment) of 2006 broke up the environmental clearance process into 'screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal' (cited in Mandal). This was a positive change in the sense that the scoping phase would then define the project developer's terms of reference, ensuring better structuring of the report, comprehensive environmental and social information (Chaudhary 2010 cited in Mandal). However, this contention remains highly debateable as anti-dam movement reveals grave concerns of EIA violations of critical environmental concerns.

Regulations for Resettlement and Rehabilitation

The Nehruvian path launched as part of India's socialist development path envisioned in the form of the five year plans was tasked with the process of nation building. The planned

development process after India's independence was led by and controlled by the State. One of the important focus PM Nehru lay upon were on technology-driven industrialisation, (Guha 2007), symbolised in the form of new factories, large dams, mining, etc (Mohanty, 2005). Though these projects, especially dams, the normative importance of which was high within Indian polity during this era (Klingensmith 2006 cited in Mandal) provided the needed push to the ailing economy, nevertheless, they too have led to forced displacement of millions of people, (Fernandes, 1994; Mohanty, 2005). PM Nehru while addressing displaced people stressed that one should suffer if National Interest warranted for it. Hence, displacement in the name of development has been a major phenomenon in much of India's development process. It is estimated that dams alone have displaced something between 32 and 56 million people in India (Fernandes 2004; Roy 1999 cited in Mandal). It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s when liberalization of economy pushed India towards global interactions created transnational civil society activism in India. This gave bigger scope for civil societies in India to mobilize for a proper resettlement policy in the form of strong legislative law. As a long pursued activism by activists the Ministry of Rural Development put forward the first National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation for Project-Affected Families in 2003, which was notified in 2004. But, intense debate followed between civil society and parts of government machinery, which resulted in the National Rehabilitation & Resettlement Policy (NRRP), 2007 (Chaudhary, 2010 cited in Mandal). As part of protection to affected communities the government has in place several legislations which are mandatory to be fulfilled but the manner in which it is carried out calls for introspection.

In most of the cases the affected communities are tribes and minority groups who are protected by schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Act can be applied on individuals and institutions guilty of violating human rights against these communities. The Indian Constitution provides legislative guarantees that are passed to protect the scheduled tribes, castes minorities, and other socially downward groups. These legislations often confuse people and the government as there appears major contradiction on the government's policies. In Sikkim, Article 371 F gives Sikkimese a wide network of protection and at the same time Land Acquisition Act (1894) has been applied by the

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government to transfer indigenous land to project developers. The Land Acquisition Act (1894) and the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy (2007) stands in contradiction and counter-productive to what the Constitution sets out to achieve as it enacted laws to invoke the State's eminent domain to acquire private lands for public purposes (Sarma, 2011; kurup, 2008 cited in Mandal) .

Independent People's Tribunal (IPT) on Dam Planning

It was against the background of violation of regulatory framework of dam planning and decision making that an Independent People's Tribunal was held for the first time to conduct a fair and credible hearing to the affected communities in Sikkim. The IPT sought to provide a space and voice to the struggle of the affected local communities. It was on IPT's initiative that grave concerns relating to gross violations of human rights in obtaining clearances were brought to light within the realm of the public in Sikkim. The cross sections of the Sikkimese society participated in the public hearing to discuss the issues related to constructing mega dams in Sikkim.

According to IPT report it was held that the projects – identified by CEA, the Prime Minister's 50,000 MW initiatives and in addition to those identified and proposed by the State Government of Sikkim were implemented at random violating all concerns of human rights. The rationale for identifying hydropower potential of the Teesta River Basin was the skewed sense of economic benefits based on national interests. According to IPT report the stakeholders of the hydro power projects had violated all regulatory frameworks of dam planning and decision making in Sikkim.

The Panan project which was commissioned within the reserve was directly in contradiction to their rights as natives of the region for it was violations on several counts. The projects was envisioned to utilize the flow of Tolung Chu, a tributary of the Teesta, to produce 280MW of hydro-power. It was believed to be a run-of-the-river project with a 56m concrete gravity dam and a 9.8 km long head race tunnel cutting through the sacred landscape and forests of the reserve area. In a public hearing conducted after the identification of project in Dzongu, majority of the people attending the Hearing said "'no" to the project 2011: 38).

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The ACT was of the contention that the environmental clearance to Panan was given on the basis of a flawed EIA and EMP. The ACT on several occasions, referred the matter to the expert appraisal Committee (EAC) of the MoEF citing problems with the reports. Despite furnishing available evidences for local concerns, MoEF granted environmental clearance to Panan project in Dzongu. Despite the directives of the MoEF the power developers violated their directives and MoEF failed to monitor the violations and directives it had issued to the developers. The government in the meanwhile issued clearances to the developers on all critical areas. These clearances from the government were violating their own concern for conservation of protected species within the demarcated national parks and sanctuaries. According to Lahiri (2012) the forest clearance was issued to Panan where the proposed project and the related activities were deemed to violate various forest laws such as : the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, the Supreme Court order in the T N Godavarman case (1996), the Sikkim Government notification of 1997 regarding Khangchendzonga national Park (KNP) and the various notifications of the MoEF related to national Parks, Sanctuaries and Biosphere Reserves (Lahiri (2012: 38). The government went in drive of violating its own conservation efforts it sought to bolster. In its petition before the Central Empowered Committee (CEC), challenging the forest clearance, ACT argued accordingly that an array of project related activities – such as Catchment Area Treatment (CAT), check dams, stone-quarrying and afforestation – would be carried out within the core and buffer zones of the KNP and the Biosphere Reserve as detailed in the EMP of the Panan project in violation of the above, subsequently petition was withdrawn. Thus, first of the seven proposed projects in Dzongu were cleared in 2007 in clear violation of the law of the land and the will of the Lepcha community of Dzongu (Lahiri (2012: 38-9).

ACT: Between Pro and Anti Dam

The movement that was launched in Dzongu by ACT did not have members from outside of Dzongu. Hence the movement consisted of Lepchas of Dzongu. As the people started talking and discussing about the power projects many people in Dzongu supported the government decisions to bring projects in Dzongu. They endorsed government's power projects as driving economic force and national interests. Hence, there was a huge divide between the

communities in Dzongu on the issue of hydro-projects. Families were divided and siblings were engaged in litigation related to land compensation. According to (Lahiri (2012)) ruling out the demand for compensation to the tune of Rs 50/sq ft, compensation – for acquired land – was paid according to a government notification and the rates paid were Rs.18/sq ft for agricultural land, Rs.16 for cardamom land and Rs.14 for dry land; land, belonging to many families, was still not mutated in the name of their adult members. Therefore, compensation money created tension within the families since, in many cases, other claimants did not receive the compensation money. It was alleged that land was given away without any authorization of the other claimants (Lahiri (2012) 2011: 37). The people were apprehensive about the influx of outsiders in Dzongu and the decision making solely rested on the public representative of the government. The state resorted to unlawful detention of ACT activists by preventing anti dam sentiments echo the public hearing meetings. Only those who were not regarded as threat to the power projects were allowed to participate in the public hearings conducted by the power developers. The ACT found support among professionals and government employees from Dzongu. They actively participated in the protest movement led by ACT during 2007-08 and many were victimized by the government for taking part in the movement. The community in Dzongu which represents one of the close knit society was left fragmented on the issue of hydro power projects within the protected region. The social fabric remained fragmented for a long time and was aptly reflected in the 2009 and 2014 State Assembly elections. Those supporting the power projects supported the ruling government and those against the power projects supported the opposition parties. The ACT leadership resigned from the membership of ACT and decided to contest the elections from the opposition ticket. The issue of hydro power still continues to be a rhetorical reference for political parties in Sikkim.

ACT: Response of Civil Society

The blanket clearance was issued by central agencies for authorizing projects in the Lepcha reserve area of Dzongu. These clearances were issued despite furnishing concerns by ACT in a systematic and scientific manner. The grant of formal permits to Panan and Teesta stage-III Hydro-power projects – dealt a major blow to the local communities in Dzongu and surrounding areas. The movement launched by ACT was already suffering from deep social

divide and mistrust further underwent a blowback death to the movement. Over all neoliberal power had prevailed over Sikkim's decision making process and every basic rights of the people went unanswered by repeatedly ignoring the common concerns of the people. However, it also had positive impacts on the movement for it strengthened the resolve of the ACT activists and their supporters. It started receiving support from wide network of civil society activism within Sikkim and outside of Sikkim. It received support from Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim (CloS) and Sangha of Dzongu. There were series of mass protests through mobilization of support by demanding the scrapping of hydel projects in Dzongu. They successfully littered streets and markets with rallies, demonstrations and meetings through out the years 2006-07. This movement was one of the most vocal political expressions of the people seeking justice in the name of basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the country. The government under pressure promised assurances which were left unfulfilled.

Ever since the commissioning of power projects in Sikkim in 1999 with the clearance of Teesta V Project, the state government has gone about signing 27 power projects in Sikkim with a short span of five to six years without assessing the impact of a major project. The Teesta River Basin remains a source of livelihood for many riverine urban townships communities in Sikkim. There was no consultation with the civil society, NGOs or the affected communities. This was in basic violation of right to consent as citizens of the state and the country. The government agencies granted environmental clearances based on the project of EIA undertaken by the project developers themselves. In doing so the power developers violated realities of a fragile ecology, geological surprises and consistent seismic activities in favour of generating capital, free power and temporary employment for locals.

The development discourse in Sikkim is a neo liberal agenda created by the planning commission of the Government at both central and state governments. The emergence of the ACT and their mobilization represents the first major political expression in the form of social movement against the prevalent development discourse in Sikkim.

It was in December 2006 two years later after formation of ACT in Dzongu they decided to rally support from the capital city. The shift from Dzongu to Gangtok was a strategic shift as Gangtok was from where decisions and policies were made regarding power projects. The Media and the press had been covering ACT's mass mobilization but the communication and

transportation system between Gangtok and North Sikkim is poor by normal standard that crucial media briefings were not put forward within the public realm. The under graduate students from Dzongu studying in Gangtok provided the man power for the mobilizing student support to the movement. The ACT acquired pan-Sikkimese phenomenon through adequate media attention and ACT circulated the stories of coercion to larger audience and found voice amongst the Sikkimese people. It is from Gangtok they spread their message to larger civil society network in other parts of India and the world. The shift of base from Dzongu to Gangtok transformed the movement to what can be said of trans-national civil society activism. The government inaction that followed after compelled ACT to under take relay hunger strike in Gangtok. The first spate of relay hunger strike commenced on June, 2007 with ACT leadership and the one of the active members participating in an indefinite hunger strike which lasted for record sixty three days and news spread beyond Sikkim's borders. The print media in Sikkim ran daily reports on the progress of the movement by covering stories on hunger strikes. The hunger strikes made new headlines for several weeks. According to Little (2010) the young and old, from all over Sikkim joined the movement, many alternating between BL House and the emergency ward of Gangtok district hospital. The relay hunger strike served many purposes for it galvanized the youths to join the movement thereby increasing the support base and profile of the ACT as an organization beyond that of a small, village-based group of dissenters to a large (for Sikkim), courageous and at some points powerful group with a clear charter and message (Little 2010: 97).

The movement acquired a critical role with positive responses from the old, young joining to support the movement emotionally. As the health started deteriorating, relay hunger strike continued to place pressure on the government to change their policy stance. The relay hunger strike transformed the surrounding environment of Gangtok with prayers service performed by Buddhist monks, Hindu priests, Lepcha shamans and the Lepcha Bishop of Darjeeling district at the site of relay hunger strike in Gangtok. The last of the surviving and powerful Tarang Bongthing (Lepcha Shaman) was brought from his village in Lower Dzongu to Gangtok to perform prayers for Dzongu (Little 2010: 97). Hence, the role of the media, press and civil society was vital for mobilizing ACT's resistance from localized context to a much larger concern associated with livelihood of the entire riverine communities of the Teesta River Basin. The Sikkimese expatriates living abroad also

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mobilized their support in favour of the ACT. They gathered in places like Sydney with the 'save the Teesta' banners and were photographed holding the banner against the backdrop of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The photograph appeared on the front page of Sikkim local dailies and in the front page of the magazine Talk Himalaya. Despite this social division in Dzongu among friends and families have differing views on the future of Dzongu and seriously undermined the social fabric of this community. The respondents found it hard to answer the question relating to social strains as they themselves haven't found a mechanism to bridge the social division caused by differing views of the government. As general election to the state assembly hover around the social strain caused by pro and anti dam gets exemplified explicitly with political rhetoric of development versus anti nationalism. The ACT leadership resigned from ACT to contest from opposition ticket in a bitterly fought election campaigned premised on the rhetoric of power projects in Dzongu.

Finally, ACT broke their hunger strike on 21 August, 2007 on the promise to review the implementation of power projects in Dzongu and surrounding areas. This review committee was, however, formed with a scope for the implementation of the projects, instead of the expected review of the proposal. The activists called for a correct review of the projects as a whole and it bore nothing (Little 2010: 99). So seven months later on March, 2008, ACT initiated a second round of indefinite hunger strike. It was during the second round of hunger strikes which served to re mobilize their movement and struggle. For the first time in the history of social movements in Sikkim, the two mainstream national television news media travelled to Sikkim to cover the protest in their bid to nationalize the issue beyond the borders of Sikkim. The new also brought to Sikkim well organized Lepcha support from neighbouring West Bengal hills to Sikkim. The civil society networks between Sikkim and West Bengal witnessed protests march in many different parts of the region. The Lepcha support from West Bengal was vital to the success and profile of the ACT's mobilization. The mass protests of the ACT made headlines in Delhi as civil society members and NGOs took up the cause of the ACT to government authorities in the government of India. Several NGOs and civil society activists under the banner of Independent Committee on Big Hydro Projects of Sikkim carried out independent study on the impacts of dams in Sikkim was carried out extensively in Sikkim. The committee members affiliated to several organizations including SANDRP (South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People) Delhi, from the

National Forum of Forest People & Forest Workers Delhi, from the Rural Volunteers Centre in Assam, the North Eastern Centre for Environmental Research and Development in Guwahati, Matu Jan Sangathan, Delhi and from Nespon, Siliguri took part in the study tour.

It was based on the report of the committee study the government was advised to suspend the he Panan for five years and to take up mini hydel projects. The activist leader Medha Paktar of the Narmada Bacahao Andolan visited Gangtok to inquire about the progress of the movement in Sikkim. Her presence was a watershed for ACT and the movement for her fame gave the protest legitimacy beyond Sikkim's borders. She also invited ACT to join a Dharna [protest] being held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to protest the "Displacement & Un-Democratic, Unjust, Anti-People & Pro-Corporate 'Land Acquisition (Amendment) Act, 2007' and 'Resettlement and Rehabilitation Bill', 2007 (Little 2010:103). The government also responded by claiming that Patkar's support for ACT was politically motivated and that she stood against the development path of the government. It was not until 500th day anniversary of the first hunger strike, on November 2nd 2008, the ACT informed the media that there would be a change in strategy of their protests. The ACT was embarking on formulating a new mechanism to mobilize against the mega hydroelectric projects. As informed the ACT had succeded in achieving what they aspired for by shifting their base from Dzongu to Gangtok. Four of the six Dzongu projects had been shelved with Letters of Intent between the government and developers withdrawn. This was achieved during the first spate of relay hunger strikes but ACT had further striven to fight to stop the other two Dzongu projects. With this the ACT also returned to Dzongu but their struggle continued with visits to capital and Delhi for litigation purpose and seek advice from its sister networks in Delhi etc.

Elections, Political Parties and the ACT

The Assemble elections of 2009 and 2014 are important from the context of hydro power development in Dzongu. The state and the political parties mindful of social division within Dzongu devised a manifesto based on the reviews of hydro power development in the region. Although at the level of rhetoric people failed to realize. The ruling party as a gesture to people's mandate elevated the MLA, Dzongu Assembly Constituency to the Cabinet with Minister in-charge of the Department of Power and Energy with additional responsibility of

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Culture and Heritage. It was ridiculously symbolic on the part of the state and none realized this gesture. The 2014 election the opposition party leader who happened to be a Minster in the Chamling led government during the ACT strike rallied in support of scrapping the power projects in Dzongu. He was of the opinion that he had been against the power projects since day one when first power projects were announced in Sikkim. However, he did not resign but fought another term in 2009 on the same party ticket. Hence, deprived of ministerial position the legislator started rallying support on these lines and subsequently used language of rhetoric to pull the attention of the crowd. The ACT leadership too led by the rhetoric joined the opposition camp to fight the elections despite knowing that the leader of the party was a member of the planning commission of the Government of Sikkim which signed series of MoUs with private power developers in Sikkim violating all concerns for basic human rights of the people.

The ACT failed to balance their apolitical posturing because opposition political parties seized the protest as their own and used the ACT protest as part of their anti-government narrative (Little 2010: 98). Hence the ruling government claimed the protest against the hydel was a political issue and condescended that 'the innocent Lepchas were being misled by the opposition parties for baking their political bread (Sikkim Times 2007 cited in Little 2010). This enabled the political parties to draw the attention of the people towards a debate about hydro power development programme as a political programme. This also stole ACT's apolitical stance and their mass protests acquired the image of vested interests. The ACT sensing strategic incursions and inroads by political parties within their mobilization tactics released a media statement that ACT stood for apolitical organization. Despite this people started visiting Gangtok to make sense of the movement. The government repeatedly called for the strike to be suspended but ACT felt that government's promise to review the projects has turned deaf ears initially and unless no concrete assurances were served by government relay hunger strikes was continued.

The Sate Responses

The government was alarmed with the response the movement got from the people including the media reports from the national mainstream media houses. Sensing trouble over continued relay hunger strike in Gangtok it created a sense of discomfort for the people

involved in decision making within the government. The state government persuaded the activists to soften their stance from withdrawing from relay hunger strikes in Gangtok. When this did not work the government tried other possible measures of limited coercion. The state government to an extent accelerated their demand to suspend their hunger strike or face eviction notice from the site of relay hunger strike from Gangtok. The government unable to curb the movement termed the protests illegal and unconstitutional by careful construction of anti-national rhetoric. Throughout the course of the movement the ACT activists have dealt with threats of police action and in the mean time many were detained by the police for leading the protest march to offer prayers to Gandhij statute on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. On reaching Mahatma Gandhi Marg the protestors sough to garland Gandhiji's bust but were prevented by strong presence of the police. The state flexed its muscle by mobilizing its police force and its intelligence wing to monitor the movement of the people in Gangtok. This tactics of repression and surveillance formed the basis of the state response amidst growing mobilization of the people.

The ACT activists who found support among government servants and employees were discouraged to limit their involvement in the movement or face consequences. The government employees who found time to visit the ACT activists on hunger strikes were monitored and faced with administrative victimization procedures. This was done on a wide scale to warn people of possible backlash in the form of victimization. The unemployed youths felt threatened to take part in the movement following possible victimization by the state in the run up to the recruitment drive in state government services. The government used all forms of destabilizing tactics to cripple the movement. There were departmental pressures of the state government to suspend the movement. For example Energy and Power Department, Government of Sikkim cut of power arrangements to site of hunger strikes depriving activists of electric current for internet connectivity to connect with larger audience. By suspending electricity many of the important communications with civil society networks outside of Sikkim was not feasible. The internet remained the bridge between ACT and its wide network of support. As the ACT did not pay heed to the government the movement led by ACT was overtly politicized by the ruling government of carrying vested interest of oppositional political forces operating in the state.

Aftereffects of Land Grabbing and Land Acquisition Act

The state both in the colonial and post colonial era has devised mechanism for widespread implementation against the interests of the poor through systematic legislation. In this regard the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 testify to such grand design of the state to uproot livelihood of the poor. The post colonial Indian state particularly after liberalization has maintained the obsolete bill as an effective measure to implement public projects. This has helped state to legitimize forcible displacement of large population in India. The judiciary along with the legislature and executive has executed this statute without considering the concerns of people involved in self sustaining livelihood practices. The manner in which the Act was enacted in 1894 was to further British interests in India subject to fulfillment of certain parameters. Hence, its implementation in Sikkim after a century of its enactment calls for public scrutiny.

The institutions of the colonial state and post colonial world vary differently as times have changed drastically in modern India. The independent government of India has still not found time to amend the obsolete bill. Although Land Acquisition bill has been passed by UPA-II government but implementation rests on the NDA led government. Despite this Land Acquisition Act, 1894 has been implemented in Sikkim vigorously against the provisions of the Article 371 F of the Indian Constitution of India. The revenue order number one of the Article 371 F guarantees the tribals of Sikkim special protection to part with their immoveable asset particularly landed property. Even Sikkimese Nepalis cannot purchase Bhutia-Lepcha land. Similarly Nepali land too cannot be transferred to non Sikkimese Indians. The imposition of this bill in Dzongu particularly calls for deep introspection of government policies. The Lepcha reserve of Dzongu is a highly protected reserve and requires special permit issued by the District Magistrate to visit Dzongu.

Even Lepcha natives from other parts of Sikkim require a special permit issued by the government. Hence, purchasing and selling land in Dzongu was considered a distant dream for other Sikkimese natives until the implementation of power projects in Dzongu. The plainsmen and labourers associated with power projects could enter any time without prior notice. The natives were forced to part with their ancestral land with a throw away price. Though, many in Dzongu claim that they willingly parted with land on the promises of

benefits like employment. The ACT claims that many were tricked in to signing deeds without knowing the consequences of signing it. Hence, many people were deprived of their livelihood and their ancestral property. The Resettlement & Rehabilitation (R&R) programme initiated after formal acquiring land was highly controversial. The terrain of the site chosen for R&R at Dhudhey Dara is as such that it is impossible to earn livelihood. According to Bhutia (2011) few identical model houses were built on top a windy hill top for hundred percent land oustees only and in addition these model houses are so small to accommodate the whole family, irrespective of the size of the family. And further Bhutia states that these house have hardly any land around them and farmers have no cultivable land or livestock and the sources of livelihood, within the colony, are virtually non-existent (Bhutia 2011: 49) making it highly questionable.

Also during the fact finding study conducted by Independent People's Tribunal (IPT) that the package of R&R was given to only those farmers whose 100% lands were acquired by the government on behalf of the company at shockingly throw-away prices. Hence, it is easy to see the farmers made to pay the price for sake of so-called 'development' and to protect the interest at the risk of their livelihood and future displacement of their kith and kin (Bhutia 2011: 49). The people who were deprived of their land were completely duped of their ancestral land considered their source of identity and culture. The callous nature of R&R scheme is not accompanied by basic government facilities like access to school education, health facilities, market, and agricultural farms for livelihood practices. The social, cultural, economic and psychological impacts of the displacement are profound (Bhutia 2011: 50). Despite this the people did not complain as they were laid to believe that it was for the sake of local and state interests. The ACT's claims were brushed aside as anti national. Therefore, as Kothari & Patel (2006): 56) have pointed out, "It is an irony of fate that the ones who suffer the most from these development projects are called the beneficiaries of the compensation and rehabilitation packages (Kothari & Patel 2006: 56). These acts of land grabbing had led to series of other problems associated with social life of people in Dzongu with people divided on the issue of power projects in Dzongu.

Hydro Power Generation and Green Mission in Sikkim

The green initiative of the government is in contradiction with developmental policies of the state especially with those of hydro power projects. This environmental imitative has helped cover environmental degradation at the superficial level especially at policy level. Hence, Sikkim has become the destination of choice for domestic and international tourists because of its natural beauty, majestic peaks, forests and excellent climate. Moreover, due to the present state government's numerous initiatives, Sikkim is regarded as a model with significant green policies at work at various levels, one of the most prominent being the state's Green Mission (Banerjee and Sood 2012: 06).

The Green Mission booklet and handout circulated by the Government, especially by the Department of Environment and Forest, states that the Green Mission is a multipronged strategy undertaken to preserve and promote Sikkim's environmental health and biodiversity. The initiative includes planting of trees, preservation and conservation work; record-keeping on the implementation of the National Afforestation Programme in the state (see Government of Sikkim 2011); distribution of car window stickers with Green Mission messages; conception of eco-cities and the eco-state; upkeep of trees along major roads and highways; organic agriculture; ban on forest grazing; ban on chemical fertilizers; and a fairly effective ban on plastic bags in Sikkim (Banerjee and Sood 2012: 06). The government agencies claim that massive green mission project through out the state has helped state to increase its green cover by diverting huge sums of fund. The forest officials claim that it has been extended to be carried out in areas where hydro power projects have been implemented. As part of the green initiative under Green Mission, the power developers have recruited retired forest bureaucrats to the rank and file of power companies. Over and all this only reflects symbolic gesture on the part of power developers to comply with government policies whereas, tunneling and blasting of dynamite have seriously undermined the bio diversity of the region. The seepage of under ground water has had adverse effects on the green vegetation and supply of clean drinking water in Sikkim. Hence, plantation of saplings as against these adverse effects calls for serous introspection on the nature of state driven environmental movement in Sikkim.

The ACT movement which spread across the length and breadth of the country attracted concerns particularly from environmental activists within the country. The state of Sikkim also came under severe criticism from country wide network of civil society. The state was projected as the state harping on violating basic human rights of the indigenous peoples of the state. This in turn hurt Sikkim's ideal tourist destination image among tourists seeking ideal holiday in the clean and green environment of the state. The state had to remodel its image to reorient tourists to visit Sikkim. Under Green Mission state has adopted several eco-tourism initiatives in the state.

Under its environmental initiative the state has been vigorously promoting village and home stay tourism in Sikkim. This however, is not popular as hotel based tourism industry in Sikkim. The Tourism department has been roping rural communities to develop homestays by providing subsidies. The state government led by Department of Environment and Forest have roped various other government agencies to increase awareness campaign with various stakeholders including the tourism industry in Sikkim. Sikkim's border areas which are home to several religious lakes have become important sites for tourist destination within the last few decades. These lakes have been important reference points in state's conservation efforts and the Indian Army has been instrumental in assisting state to implement its policies by providing logistical and human resources at this high altitudes. The people along with Panchayats at the village level have been back bone for implementing green mission project at the local level. The state forest department has been instrumental in highlighting the benefits of Green Mission to the people. The state has also strengthened social monitoring of conservation efforts by constituting Joint Forest Management Committees.

Furthermore, according to Banerjee and Sood (2012) the State now charges a small fee of Indian rupees 20.00 from each tourist at check posts to fund lake preservation initiatives. Initiatives are in place with schools, where funding is provided for eco-clubs, student-led teams and activities for eco-awareness campaigns at secondary and senior secondary levels. The Centre for Science and Environment, in collaboration with various arms of the Sikkim state government, promotes these activities and organizes teacher training (Green Teachers); for example, competitions and prizes earmarked for Green Mission–related awareness by students are hosted frequently (Banerjee and Sood 2012: 06-07). As an indicator of State led

environmental movement in Sikkim it deserves special mention as a remarkable initiative. But no sooner one starts unfolding state's development discourse especially state's initiation of 29 HEP projects along with additional smaller ones on the river Teesta for revenue generation and development, then it becomes imperative to offer critique to state's counter hegemonic role. This counter hegemonic discourse runs startlingly contradictory to its hegemonic development discourse in the state of Sikkim.

Sikkim's Organic Mission Plan

The Sikkim Organic Mission Plan was conceptualized at a time when power projects were being implemented in Sikkim. The state which has thrust its developmental paradigm on neo liberal designs has introduced this ingenious flagship project of Government of Sikkim. The program also received attention of private media houses and was widely covered through 'Satyamev Jayate', a popular talk show hosted by Aamir Khan in 2012. The Organic Mission of Sikkim remains a talking point in the world increasingly concerned about use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in agricultural products. The mission wants to convert Sikkim into a totally Organic State by 2015 whereby any agriculture produce from the State is grown using organic fertilizers and healthy for consumption.

However, Sikkim has always been organic state much before fertilizers were introduced in Sikkim. Sikkim's cultivatable land especially terraced field have been fast disappearing by inviting Pharmaceutical companies and power developers to open their unit in Sikkim at a throw away price. The implementation of Compulsory Land Acquisition Act which has been widely implemented has helped the state to encourage Land Grabbing process by private players. This is fundamental contradiction to Article 371 F of the Indian Constitution that grants Sikkim special status within the Indian Union. The Organic Mission Plan solely relies on the availability of cultivatable land and with the high rate of privatization in Sikkim leaves people with less available land. In totality organic mission plan can be seen as a part of the green initiatives of the state under which Sikkim has been promoted as eco tourism destination in India. The idea of organic mission plan can be seen within the realm of linking village tourism particularly with that of home stays. Given the states' poor track record in implementing power projects in Sikkim it leaves little praise worthy for such a green plan.

Many critics dismiss these initiatives as a cover up to the environmental strains caused by implementation of power projects in Sikkim.

Social Movement: ACT or Lepcha Movement

There are diverse differences and opinions amongst civil society, academia, media, and people on the nomenclature of the movement to a particular ethnic group of Lepchas. The media reporting of the movement was the driver of building opinion on the nature, scope and relevance of the movement. The ethnicization of the movement has many pros and cons and especially at the policy circles this can be a driving force for the state to isolate the movement from rest of the society. The movement can be deprived of a mass support base among wide and cross sections of the society. The movement indeed sought to mobilize Lepchas of Dzongu on several issues and aspects related to their belief. The belief there fore is social construction but many other Sikkim have similar beliefs like the Lepchas. Many ethnic beliefs are inter – woven and have shared meanings and symbolism. Hence protests in Dzongu against the dams were not ethnic Lepcha movement. The Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) rallied support by invoking rights related to livelihood. The power projects in Sikkim have been implemented in all four districts and the nature of destruction has been same as done with Dzongu.

The ACT sought to mobilize Sikkimese aspirations. The Sikkimese people of all caste, language and religion share similar ritual belief. Many of the reports and research articles have focused on Lepcha way of lives but this has limited the scope of ACT's movement as a pan Sikkimese movement. The idea that Lepchas are minority in Sikkim is real but the projects in Sikkim is not Nepali driven by suggesting that Hindu Nepalis are majority in the state of Sikkim. The Sikkim Assembly has twelve Bhutia Lepcha legislators and nowhere have they protested the power projects as saying it is Nepali projects. By suggesting the movement as Lepcha movement dangers of one community as being aggressor is imminent and writings testify this trend. The Nepalis in Sikkim themselves are diverse professing different faith and lingua. Some of the Nepali tribes like Limboos, Yakhas and Rais have similar culture with Lepchas as they have shared the same physical landscape. The word Sikkim itself is derived from Limboo word Sukhim meaning new home. Hence, the

movement was in many ways a pan Sikkimese movement and sought to mobilize Sikkimese people who are beneficiaries of the river Teesta and its tributaries where dams are being built. The ACT leadership since day one of the movement had sought to stand for riverine communities along the river Teesta much beyond the Sikkimese borders. There are several townships along the river banks which are direct beneficiaries of the river system in Sikkim. Hence, ACT invoked the message of their struggle by invoking emotive aspects related to river Teesta and natives as citizens. One of the respondents who happened to be an activist discussed riparian issue during the course of the filed work. Hence, ACT mobilization was well informed on their debates related with power projects so much so Teesta river dispute with Bangladesh is a riparian issue. The Bangladeshis too in their parlance were affected citizens of Teesta.

The ethnicization of the movement by certain sections of media, civil society has however served one powerful purpose for the government. The state carefully crafted their counter tactics by calling it a Lepcha movement. Thus the movement was isolated from rest of the community. Even Lepchas distanced themselves from the movement as evident in Dzongu with division of people on two hostile camps. The Lepchas themselves disagreed on the nature and scope of the movement hence it was a misnomer to label the movement launched by ACT as a Lepcha movement. This has limited their scope for wider participation for wider mass base.

Conclusion

The mobilization by ACT reflects people's dissatisfaction with the existing patterns of relations. Despite Sikkim being part of Indian democracy it has remained semi-feudal in terms of economic, social, cultural and political patterns of relations. The cultural and social value patterns of the Sikkimese society have failed to grasp neo-liberal development paradigm which has come in a big way altering these patterns of relations. The ACT whose responses have been well knit however has had its own shortcomings in the form of politicization of the issue by political opponents of the ruling government. For State, ACT's mobilization was marked by dissents and protests. However what the state failed to realize was that the movement marked with dissent and protests was perfectly within the realm of human relationship and human groups and also between civil and political society. The basis of human organization into a group called ACT with its goal, leadership, degree of motivation and political communication, took the shape of the movement with a collective action to transform and change the status quo. In a democracy such kinds of movement have simply been referred to as social movement and in contemporary times as "New Social Movements". This was explicitly manifested as a counter to the form of domination and discrimination rooted in unjust and unequal order in social, economic, political and cultural form.

Chapter V

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The chapter summarizes the study undertaken in light of the development that has taken place in recent times. The present discourse of development in India led by Government of India testifies India's neo-liberal expansion in all sectors of public domain. The NDA government led by PM Modi has been mulling over the debates on implementing UPA's Land Acquisition Bill with major amendments, Intelligence Bureau's report of Green Peace Movement as a threat to India's National Economic Security, raising the height of Sardar Sarovar Dam along the river Narmada has caught academics, NGO advocacy groups, civil society activists and peasants in a major dilemma. The Modi government's proposal to clear projects within hundred kilometer radius along the Sino-Indian border region including Sikkim reinforces government's neoliberal outreach to several states in the North East of India. The pursuit of these policies by Modi led government will have major repercussion on the way Sikkim envisions to fast track matters related to state managed Green Peace initiatives, scrapping of dams in Dzongu and reducing the height of dams in Dzongu.

The state's perception of social movement as a challenge to its legitimacy of governance is shaped by responses of civil society in Sikkim and outside Sikkim. The state responses are often negative and suppressive depending on the intensity of the movement. The state in most cases uses tactics to diffuse collective action by softening their posture and leniency by involving in dialogue, negotiation, appeasing and co-opting the participants. However, in Sikkim, this was minimal and rather the state co-opted half of the indigenous ethnic Lepchas of Dzongu in favour of the power projects dividing the public opinion within Dzongu. This division of public opinion within Dzongu had a major fallout on the outreach of the movement. It's outreach outside of Dzongu was severely impaired and social fabric of indigenous Lepchas was severely undermined. In this way similar ACT like movement in other affected areas of Sikkim was prevented by the state propelled by violations of human rights in Sikkim as an effort to save the embarrassing image of state. However, the state which has professed development agenda in Sikkim in return for rich output in the form of revenue generation have

not understood the consequences of Neo Liberalism as an ideology to govern world politics. The revenue share of the State is mere twelve percent as against the eighty eight percent share of the power developers for a period of thirty five years. The thirty five years benchmark for transfer of responsibility from power developers to the State itself is controversial as State does not possess human resources to maintain the infrastructure associated with power projects not withstanding the total life of the power projects in question. The overriding question is what happens after thirty five years. Also in question is the benefit that it is likely to empower local youths in the form of employment opportunities that power projects bring in. This is speculative but is a strong reason to validate ACT like struggle in Sikkim in near future.

Throughout the course of the movement nowhere did the protestors, civil society, human rights groups, media, political society have linked the movement with neoliberalism and its policies. The neoliberal policies come in different hues and colours and in different variations with one major similarity in the form of transnational flow of capital. In Sikkim the transnational flow of capital has been earmarked for developing hydro power. The nature in which it was implemented in Sikkim was callous. Although the volume of river water in Sikkim is not diverted for major irrigation related activities the continuous flow of river water is warranted as it is intrinsically related to local ethos. The local ethos and mega dams have contradiction against each other and on the other hand the nature of Sikkim's centrally coordinated decision making has failed to realize this aspect of local significance. The ACT's mobilization heralds a new movement for transformation of the state through the transformation of the civil society through grass root model of mass politics as against parliamentary model of mass politics. The movement posed serious challenge to the role of the centrally coordinated decision making of the state. The movement reinforces ones approach and understanding of decision making of the state towards a more feasible and viable alternative by effecting reforms for a more participative, operating in concert with other centres and institutional spaces of civil society.

Instead of offering a solution in maintaining its autonomy to effectively act as mediator in development induced conflict within the community in Dzongu the role of the state has been highly questionable by promoting partisan policies in Dzongu. The anti-dam and pro-dam posturing of the Lepchas in Dzongu is a case for reference. The role of state in terms of conflict and stresses in civil society within a democratic framework is the hall mark of

functioning democracy. The state of Sikkim exhibited none in these matters concerning breakdown of communitarian spirit of the closely knit indigenous community in Dzongu. During the course of the fieldwork in Dzongu it was brought to light that relatives were no longer in talking terms and saw each other as suspects. Inquired about a possible rejuvenation of relationship the answer came in unison that it would take another generation to heal the wounds of development induced conflict in Dzongu. Taking cue from such social diversions the role of state has been controversial in promoting and generating national security state syndrome through its anti-national rhetoric labeled on the people who were seen as detrimental to the projects.

There are many works related to movements which classify movement into revolt, rebellion, reform and revolution to bring about changes in the existing power relation in the society. It would be wrong to assume that ACT exhibited these characteristics in advocating for change within the power relation in the society. The ACT as an organized association posed a challenge to the state and political authority but also socio-economic structure which sustained the authority of the state. The movement did not seek to replace the structure by an alternative social order nor did it launch an organized struggle to overthrow the established government. The movement was perfectly launched within the framework of democracy. T.K Oommen, a renowned sociologist has rightly marked that social movement provide the stage for confluence between the old and new values and structures. MSA Rao offers typology that movements are reformists, transformatory and revolutionary. There are scholars like David Bayley who theorize social movements by dividing coercive public protests into legal and illegal protests with further sub-division into violent and non-violent protests. In recent times new social movements has been analyzed as grassroots and macro movements, or on the basis of issues around which participants gets mobilized.

The movement in Sikkim has to be seen in light of evolving democratic institutions to manage societal affairs on behalf of the people. The ACT like mobilization and state response is not possible in many states in the world. It is again gaining grounds of democracy in Sikkim such opportunities to express their desire, grievances and problems through periodic elections. Even at the level of political rhetoric people have rallied support around the representatives in crucial general elections. The collective action in the form of mass movement does not always serve

the purpose it intends to. The ACT has been accused by the government of being 'anti-democratic' echoing common concerns offered by scholars that direct collective action in the form of mass protests as anti-democratic. This is precisely because several sections of the civil society associate such movement with unnecessary pressure on the elected representatives and hamper the functioning of the political institutions. This pressure situation has created a situation of pulling the government in different directions and forced to adopt policy postures under pressure rather than on merits of the issues. This in many ways creates populists politics as advocated by opposition parties in Sikkim.

This brings one to analyzing social movement in Sikkim and its intricate relationship with politics. Like in other parts of India, social movement in Sikkim has been a significant part of the people's activities. It has opened up new issues and debates in the academic discourses and will have significant bearing in the nature of policy making in the context of Himalayan states like Sikkim. Whether, the movement can be termed successful or not in their goals and objectives is a matter of further debate. This requires new sets of guidelines to determine and measure the success of the movement. The significance of ACT in Sikkim reinforces changes that have taken place in the social and economic situations in the state and impact of international political economy on erstwhile Sikkimese feudal economy. The ACT's significance in Sikkim and India has to be understood in light of the emergence of large number of social groups in the political and social scene in Sikkim and in the larger Indian context. The ACT mobilization in Sikkim in the wake of the new century in many dimensions share aspects of large number of social groups that are involved in their mobilization. Some of the social movements in the larger Indian context like—Dalit movement, Backward Class movement, Women movement, Peasant movement, Ecological and Green movement etc.

The scholars involved in analyzing social movements use social and political movements interchangeably. The ACT mobilization in Sikkim like many of the social movements was a manifestation of collective action. The ACT mobilization in no way resembles with spontaneous reaction of group of people to a particular policy of the government although in many of the instances state responded in the form of police action and unlawful detention. The ACT mobilization was not an enterprise of mob culture as it was perfectly crafted along democratic principles of collective action and voices of the marginalized people. It was free of

rioting and violence and most importantly it was a deliberate social movement aiming to achieve social change around the issues related to dignity, rights and social justice. The ACT mobilization heralded a new beginning in the history of social movement in Sikkim. The ACT as formal and informal organization with leadership, ideology and programmes followed patterns and strategies of mobilization of the participants in order to effect change in the thinking of policy postures of the government in Sikkim. Its significance in Sikkim is an essential component of democratic processes.

The ACT movement in Sikkim in the academic sense of the movement has many attributes of new social movements as was the case in Europe in the form of peace movement, ecological movement, LGBTs etc. The movements after 1960s are in many ways completely different from the class based movements of the post industrial state. The movements around the issues of identity in India involving dalits, adivasis, women, environment, and linguistics have been interpreted as new social movement. In light of such labeling ACT in Sikkim perfectly fits the theorizing of new social movement as it has raised critical issue of indigenous identity and autonomy related to land rights, livelihood, constitutional guarantees provided by the Indian constitution upon the time of merger with Indian Union in 1975 following massive scale social movement in Sikkim by sections of Sikkimese society. The ACT mobilization as such is not the first social movement related to issues of identity and autonomy in Sikkim. The social movement of the early 1970s which progressed towards anti-monarchy struggle too contained attributes of non class issues of autonomy and identity of Nepali speaking Sikkimese populace. Ironically, the movement of the 1970s took a different and unexpected turn in the form of referendum in favour of India. The movement of 1970s however has not found a place in the academic discourse of social movement in Sikkim. Hence, ACT mobilization away from class based issues was a movement to protect their autonomy. The ACT mobilization which has raised the issues of identity revolving Lepcha indigenous beliefs and folklore suffered from limitations like scholars and journalists emphasizing the movement as ethnic movement as a counter to the Nepali led policies of the government not realizing that there are equal numbers of ethnic Lepcha legislators in the State Legislative Assembly.

Hence, analysis of ACT mobilization from the prism of new social movement is useful in erasing doubts that arise out of it's over emphasized ethnic and communal content. The

movement in Sikkim also concerns with civil society activism. However, critics point out whether civil society in Sikkim really exists or not but this is just another part two of the story. However, what is also true of Sikkimese case is that social space has suffered shrinkage and social of the civil society has been eroded by the controlling ability of the state. The many roles and functions of civil society in Sikkim is performed by the state including green peace and environment movement in the form of Green Mission and green initiatives of the state. At this juncture it is important to note that civil society in Sikkim is no different than political society. This is precisely because people have failed to distinguish two aspects of society precisely because of people's reliance on the state. In turn this has enabled two institutions of state and market to make inroads into all aspects of citizen's life. The ACT struggle is a manifestation of the combined onslaught of the forces of the state and market in which society has been rendered helpless. In a nutshell ACT simply raised the issue about the possibility of determining policies on their own as they have done for centuries.

The new social movements have also been analyzed from the perspectives of issue based movements around which people are mobilized. There have been instances of people's mobilization around number of issues from local and immediate to systemic and long terms goals and objectives. It depends on the nature of contexts in different time and space. These issue based classification of the movement treat different same issues differently. The issues can be conceptualized along theoretical concerns including development, ecological, environmental, livelihood, and displacement, social, cultural, local, regional and national. For example ACT struggle associated around construction of dams in Dzongu revolved around several issues of displacement, rehabilitation, human rights, livelihood etc. Hence, ACT as a new social movement of the dam affected community can be called as a movement for rehabilitation of the people or it can be called anti development movement or movement of human rights activists and so on. It can also be conceived along the lines of forest movement, civil rights, or livelihood movement etc.

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