

**DAMS AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONFLICT:  
A CASE STUDY OF DZONGU RESERVE IN SIKKIM**

*Dissertation Submitted to Sikkim University in Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**SUBMITTED BY**

**RESHMA LEPCHA**



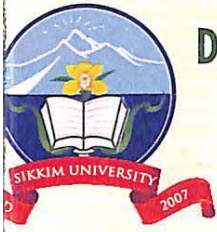
**DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES AND MANAGEMENT**

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DEPARTMENT OF PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES & MANAGEMENT  
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Date: 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2014

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Dams and Developmental Conflict: A Case Study of Dzongu Reserve in Sikkim**” submitted to Sikkim University for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Dams and Developmental Conflict: A Case Study of Dzongu Reserve in Sikkim**” submitted to the **SIKKIM UNIVERSITY** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Studies and Management**, embodies the result of *bona fide* research work carried out by Miss Reshma Lepcha 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.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| ACT      | : | Affected Citizen of Teesta  |
| ASESE&UA | : | All Sikkim Educated, Self Employed and Unemployed Association       |
| SIBLAC   | : | Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee                                 |
| HEP      | : | Hydel Electric Project  |
| MOEF     | : | Ministry of Environmental Forest                                    |
| NBWL     | : | National Board for Wildlife   |
| SPCB     | : | State Pollution Control Board                                       |
| EIA      | : | Environment Impact Assessment                                       |
| EMP      | : | Environment Management Plan   |
| NEAA     | : | National Environmental Appellate Authority                          |
| SPDC     | : | Sikkim Power Development Corporation                                |
| CISMHE   | : | Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Mountain & Hill Environment |
| CLOS     | : | Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim   |
| SOD      | : | Sangha of Dzongu  |
| HPCP     | : | High Powered Committee on Power                                     |
| CFS      | : | Citizens Forum of Sikkim  |
| SAE      | : | Sikkimese Association for Environment                               |
| NHPC     | : | National Hydropower Commission                                      |
| RMRT     | : | Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum                                       |
| RMOS     | : | Renjong Mutanchi Rong Ong Shezum                                    |
| MLAS     | : | Mutanchi Lom Aal Shemzum  |
| LSA      | : | Lepcha Students Association   |

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Many tribes reside in once a small kingdom of Eastern Himalaya. Lepcha or Rong as they like to call themselves are the indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim long before outsiders namely Tibetans, Nepalese came to the land. Sikkim merged with the Indian Union in later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, May 16<sup>th</sup> 1975 to be precise. Sikkim has a four district and population of Sikkim people is 6, 07,688 out of total population around 7000 Lepcha population reside on reserve area of Dzongu which is located in north-east district of Sikkim. Unlike other ethnic groups, Lepcha claim themselves as an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim.

Nature worshiper basically treats a natural phenomenon like tree, mountain, rock and river etc. as sanctity to be worshiped. Lepcha they like to called themselves indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and they are nature worshiper or animism. A land in Dzongu is treated as sanctity by Lepcha people but today the same land has been used for other purposes. Major effect of the hydel project can be divided into four sub sections namely, local, state, national, and the impact at the international level. As we all know that Dzongu is a reserve area for Lepcha people. However, the initiation of mega hydel project passed by Government had infringed its own declaration of Dzongu as reserve area. Simultaneously, the impact of modernization agents on Dzongu is bigger and also a complicated issue which led to the debate between insider and outsider in one hand and Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT) verses state government in the other hand.

This research study is organised under five chapters including introduction and conclusion. Chapter one dealt with that from the very beginning during the times of Chogyal and later under the democratic set up, Lepchas was allotted Dzongu or Mayel Lyang in North Sikkim to be their reserve. So this chapter will explore the historical overview of Lepcha community in Sikkim.

Chapter two dealt with the historical overview of Lepcha community and the impact of modernization on Lepcha identity. In a contemporary Sikkim, Lepcha has been facing a huge problem on the issue of Identity. As in Sikkim, Lepcha people are basically divided into different religious' adherence that is Buddhist, Christian and animism. Hence, in this pursuit the chapter will explore the actual impact of modernization on Lepcha of Sikkim society.



Chapter three deals with the Hydel project has often been embodied as the modernization process, but this modernization process in Dzongu has brought huge challenges in the life of Lepcha people. Hence, this chapter explore the impact of mega hydel power project on nature worshiper of Sikkim society.

Chapter four dealt with the impact of modernization on Dzongu reserve of Sikkim and the active role of affected citizen of Teesta (ACT) which staged numerous rallies and hunger strike. Hence, this chapter examine the impact of mega hydel project on Lepcha community of Sikkim by taking case study of Dzongu reserve.

The fifth chapter dealt with concluding part illustrating the hidden facts about the conflict between nature worshiper and global forces in a concise form along with the suggestions to cope with it.

The findings of the research are summarized via its following chapters, the Lepcha were a nature worshiper and they had a particular reserve and Holy land i.e. Dzongu in north Sikkim. But, after the initiation of Mega Hydro Project the reserve and Holy land faced huge challenges. That challenge later came to be known as a non-violent conflict between modernization and nature worshiper.

The second chapter of this study revealed the impact of modernization on Lepcha community of Sikkim. Lepcha claim that they were an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and their origin, culture, religion, scriptures, languages, political and economic sphere had an emotional attachment with natural elements. But, after 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century both Buddhist and Christianity have their influences in Sikkim particularly on the Lepcha community. Which ultimately led to a drastic an impact on Lepcha cultural, belief system and they adopted other culture value system. Therefore, in Sikkim Lepcha community divided into three religions and the major reason behind the crisis of Lepcha's identity was lack of traditional and cultural practices among the Lepcha community.

In the third chapter, the study revealed the conflict between nature worshiper and modernization. The chapter also revealed the impact of the developmental project which led to the transition of peaceful homogenous community into heterogeneity society. Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepcha community but nowadays, that reserve land used in developmental project. Eventually, the conflict arose between the

developmental project and resident of Dzongu which spread from a local level to state level, state level to national level, and national level to international level.

The fourth chapter of this study revealed the impact of modernization on environment and the natural disaster on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011 in Dzongu reserve of Sikkim. After initiation of developmental project, Lepcha of Dzongu became more concern and conscious towards their traditional culture practices. Nowadays, to preserve their reserve land and to maintain their beliefs system Lepcha of Dzongu established Homestay which motive is to protect and preserve their reserve land.

The fifth chapter exposed the overall conclusion of dissertation and to protect the reserve land on Dzongu, Lepcha people organised ACT, CLOS, SOD and MoE to preserve their traditional way of life and lepcha of Dzongu protest the mega hydro project through non-violent. Nowadays, ACT protest known as silent protest by establishing Homestay and cultivate organic plantation on their remaining field.



**Chapter 1**  
**Introduction**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background

Sikkim is the second smallest state in India and many tribes reside in once a small kingdom of Eastern Himalaya. Lepcha or Rong as they like to call themselves are the indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim long before outsiders namely, Tibetans and Nepalese came to the land. Sikkim merged with the Indian Union in later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, May 16<sup>th</sup> 1975. No one, not even the king or the government were to infringe with the sanctity of the region. Lepchas were the first inhabitants of the lands along the Himalayan mountain seam that connects north-east India, Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal (Little; 2010).

According to the Lepcha myth, the first Lepcha was created from snow this is why they tend to relate themselves to these peaks (Doma; 2010). It is a fact that Lepchas everywhere consider the Dzongu – ‘Mayel Lyang’ - their holy land and the birthplace of the first Lepchas. Their ways of life is so much attuned to the mountains that they observe their traditional nature-worshipping festivals such as the festival of Tendong Lho-Rum-Faat: whereby Lepchas pay obeisance to the Tendong Hill which saved their tribe from annihilation in the great flood, and Chu Rum Faat, an offering to the Himalayas.” The Lepchas believe their souls go to Dzongu when they die (Little; 2008).

Sikkim has three main ethnic groups, the Lepchas, the Bhutia and the Nepalese. The Majority of the Lepchas live in "Dzongu" which is considered the Cradle of Lepcha civilization. It is a region protected by various traditional and enacted laws to safeguard the indigenous aborigines from exploitation and other hazards. The culture, customs and traditions of the Lepchas are inextricably linked to their deep bond with nature, but changing times and modern developments have started disturbing the delicate eco-system with which they have lived so closely over centuries.

Dzongu was recognised by the kings before Sikkim became a part of India and it was exclusively reserved for the Lepcha tribes. It has been able to preserve its sanctity even when the whole world has been grasped by the forces of Globalization.



It is to be kept in mind that Lepchas were the original inhabitant of Sikkim way before forces from Tibet took a hold of the land. Lepchas are peace loving and shy by nature, and they are scattered all over the state but it is in Dzongu where one will find them in the majority. In order to meet the Lepchas who live closest to a traditional life, one must travel to the Dzongu, the Lepcha Reservation in remote North Sikkim (Little; 2008)

The Lepchas people of Sikkim are a cultural people, with their own particular knowledge system, world view and oral history. Despite the underlying similarity of tribal ethos they share with the numerous tribal of northeast India, their cultural and religious beliefs have a distinctive character. Notably the oldest surviving name of various mountains, hills, gorges, rivers, lake and caves in Sikkim are Lepcha in origin (Jha &Ajeya Jha; 2011).

The village situated at the base of the Kanchenjunga and include in the Kanchenjunga National Park, is almost triangular in shape, having approximately forty miles on each side. Dzongu must have been so named, because it was made to look like a fort or jail from the outside, since Dzongu usually indicate fort or jail in Bhutanese territory. Not outsiders were allowed to visit this Dzongu area of Sikkim except with the specific permission of the Durbar and there was total restriction on the transfer of land to outsider (Tamlong; 2008). Still today outsider has to make official permission if they want to visit out there, because that land is a reserve for Lepchas community.

Lepchas of Sikkim they like to call themselves indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and by Religion they were Animism. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan red hat followers migrated over Sikkim and permanently settle in the valley of Sikkim (Ehrhard;2003), as a result their culture, custom and religious practices dominated over established community. It was the East India Company that, in 1817, with the treaty of Titaiya (*see Appendix-1.I*), put on end to the devastating raids. Through this treaty the British Government gained a permanent foothold in Sikkim (Hiltz; 2003). Form 19<sup>th</sup> century again Christianity influence over animism culture and translated Christian religious book into Lepcha language which create huge diminishing identity among Lepcha of Sikkim.



Therefore, indigenous inhabitant converted their animism religion into Buddhism and Christianity which is a root cause of diminishing identity of Lepcha community from Sikkim. Sikkim merge with Indian union on 16<sup>th</sup> may 1975 and again indigenous people had to face new challenges towards their identity. After Sikkim merge with Indian union new dimension have been going ahead on Sikkim like transportation, industrialization, education, urbanization and in another term it is known as modernization. Modernization it is a process of changes from traditional to agrarian society and created new system over established system.

When new cultural system ruled over established system than this clash of cultural system create conflict which plays its fundamental role in society. Dzongu is a homogenous society and it is a reserve land for Lepchas where only Lepcha language, Lepcha custom and culture have been practised through generation to generation. Most of the important authenticity is that Lepchas of Dzongu is nature worshipers and they love to live close with it. But when Lepchas of Dzongu faced new established system or modernization process through the mega hydel project it's create conflict. Lepcha they like to call themselves indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim but during 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century indigenous people had to face abundant challenges in cultural value system. Due to the influence of Buddhism and Christianity that Animism society converted into other religion and had been cross out from vanishing tribe. But later on when Sikkim merge with Indian union again multidimensional opportunity come over and invention new transportation, industrialization, education and health sector.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the traditional modern dichotomy in itself has only a heuristic function, designating an ideal typical destination, in so far as it can serve as the basis of a dynamic approach, this is only by the banal means of depicting modernization as a process in which modern elements accumulate and traditional elements are displaced (Bernstein; 2002).

Modernization is a process of transition from traditional to agrarian society and due to the modernization Sikkimese people i.e. Lepchas, Bhutia and Nepalese changeover from their traditional society to modern society. Therefore, the lack of practices their own custom and culture nowadays westernized society dominant in Sikkim. Most of the important note is that Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepchas but



their also developmental project infringed their sanctity and to preserve their natural environment the Lepchas of Dzongu protest the project. Therefore, homogenous society protests the modernization project under the banner of Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT) mostly to protect their reserve land.

The government has now finalised a proposal for executing hydel project in the catchment areas of the river Teesta, which includes considerable areas under Dzongu, under the National Hydel Power Corporation, this is causing great concern to the people who are facing the horns of dilemma (Tamlong; 2008). There are 6 mega dams envisioned out of which at least two are functional with numerous labour inflow from the Indian mainland. The Lepchas on the other hand have stood against the project under the banner of (ACT) as it would undermine the homogeneity of the reserve. ACT has staged numerous rallies and hunger strike to put forth their demand to stop such a project in their reserve. It has led to the debate between insider and outsider on one hand and the ACT and the state government in the other. It could in the future lead to a more radical turn which at the present moment is peaceful.

However, a contemporary story has emerged, that is of an imminent threat to the Lepchas' landscape that will be devastating to their language and culture: the construction of six mega-hydro electric projects in the Dzongu Lepcha Reserve in North Sikkim. They are firm and committed at opposing – change to their culture and identity (Little; 2008). With the announcement of the projects on the Teesta River in 2004, a group of Lepcha youth opposed to the dams formed a 17 member group called Affected Citizens of Teesta, known as ACT. The Lepcha activists –staged a major retaliation over the policies of the state and the Indian government. It proved to be formidable representatives for the land of their birth (Little; 2010).

Thus, the movement first started in 2003 when Lepchas opposing the Dzongu projects started holding small meetings in the villages. They formalized these meetings in July 2004, when they formed, (ACT). Their aim at that time was to fight the large Teesta River hydro-electric projects slated for Dzongu and to bring awareness to the Lepcha community of what they considered to be the harmful effects of the projects. In January 2006, when the state government commenced a land survey with a view to acquiring land, the group held a major protest meeting in Mangan, the capital of North Sikkim (Little; 2010). On the 20th June 2007 Dawa Lepcha along



with his friend, 22 year old Graduate student Tenzing Lepcha sat in front of BL House and started an indefinite hunger strike that gripped Sikkim for 63 days and spread news of the protest beyond Sikkim's borders. This action of the activist was met by a positive response as it was able to garner further support from across the border.

However the hunger strike was carried on the line of non-violent protest movements. The second hunger strike in turn served to re-mobilize the movement and gave new impetus to it. It injected renewed energy and belief in the hearts of young men and women who worked for the movement (Little; 2010). Some of the observation made by the member of ACT explains that the land which they have in their possession is their ancestral land tied with their culture and history and the multipurpose hydel project would lead to obliteration of the history, the ethos, the folklore of Sikkim as it is inherently related with the holy Teesta (Little; 2008).

However, with the initiation of mega Hydel project by the government of India from its north eastern region the purity of the area stands infringed. The first thing a Lepcha of Dzongu would do is identify them with this sacred land. They consider that nature's gifts give them life in the form of food, medicine and prayer and many of their festivals and prayers pay homage to nature. Lepchas everywhere consider the Dzongu to be their holy land and that their race was created in Dzongu by Mother Nature and that Mount Kanchenjunga is their mother mountain (Little; 2008). Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu had an emotional attachment with their nature and worshiped them.

The Dzongu is our heartbeat. They have sliced away every other part of us but our heart remains. This small heart is what keeps us alive (Little; 2008). From the above statement we came to know that the love and honour of Lepchas people towards their motherland. Lepcha so love their holy land and after the initiation of mega hydro project Lepcha of Dzongu protest under the banner of affected citizen of Teesta.

Therefore, due to the Dams and Development project on reserve land conflict has been arise into four level that is from local level, state level, national level and international level. The clash of modernization project with Homogenous society create huge challenges in front of local people on the issues of employment and due to this reason insider and outsider conflict appear on a local level. So, that conflict had



been on Non-violent protest and through the help of social web-log indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim has a well-known environmental protect community around the world.

That's why Meda Patkar the respected social activist of the Narvada Bachao Aandolan visited at gangtok to meet with hunger striker. Conflict creates solidarity among the homogenous community and on this conflict not only Sikkimese Lepcha protest the project under the banner of (ACT) but Lepchas from Darjeeling and Kalimpong District of West Bengal also take initiative to protect Holy land or reserve land.

## 1.2. Survey of Literature

Various researchers have made significant contributions to study the Lepcha Language, Script, and folklore and Literature in Sikkim in a number of articles, books, reports and research paper. Among the available literature related to Dams and Developent in Dzongu and conflict between modernization and nature worshippers, some of the important books and articles have been reviewed and presented below.

The book, wrritten by Anna Balikci-Denjongpa (eds.) (2007), *Bulliten of Tibetology*, explores the different books review on Lepchas community which is also provides a complete understanding studies on Lepcha. This book also provides a deeper thoughtful study on Lepchas and their hydel protest.

The book written by Tamlong D. T (2008), *Mayel Lyang & the Lepchas*, provides very details study on historical background of Lepcha community like origin of Lepcha, advent of Tibetans & blood brotherhood treaty and Dzongu & the Lepchas etc. These books explore the religion of the Lepchas, Lepcha influences in Sikkim and it also helpful to develop the comprehensive understanding of Lepcha community and its relation with nature worshippers.

This article written by Little, Kerry (2008), *Lepcha Narratives of their Threatened Sacred Landscape*, provides deeper studies that how mega hydel project impact on homogenous society that is Lepcha of Dzongu. This paper explores the impact of hydel project on local, state, national and international level. The article, "From the Villages to the Cities: The Battlegrounds for Lepcha Protests" written by Little, Kerry (2010), explore the different concept of dams and developmental conflict



in the form of affected citizen of Teesta (ACT), State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), NGO and BBC world online.

A study on Lepcha community by C. DE Beauvoir Stock (1925), *Flock Lore and Custom of the Lepcha of Sikkim* revealed that this primitive religion of Lepcha is nature worshiper and with the help of the Bong thing that might be called a shaman, a medicine man they worshiper the nature. These book also explore the Lepcha believe system by taking various religious folklore and observe the solidarity of indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim. The article written by Vibha Arora (2007) *Unheard Voices of Protest in Sikkim Economic and Political Weekly*, examine that the conflict between Lepcha reserve verses panel hydel project in Dzongu is an indefinite Satyagraha. This article provides that how traditional indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim fights back with agrarian modernization.

The book written by A.R Forning (1987), *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe*, explores the history and culture of the Sikkimese Lepcha tribe people. The book point out the impact of modernization or study that Buddhism and Christianity is a root causes for the vanishing of Lepcha identity in Sikkim and provides a complete account of cultural exploitation.

The article, *Sikkim Teesta Hydro project of NHPC: Craving a path to Disaster*, written by Dhakal Tara (2007) explore the impact of National Hydropower Commission (NHPC) on local people' livelihood and provides complete account of displacement and resettlement. This paper also examines the advantage and disadvantages of NHPC and also study on environmental issues.

This book written by Yishey Doma (2010), *Legend of the Lepcha*, offer many understanding impression on Lepcha community and explore the relation of Lepcha animism with natural phenomenon through the help of Lepcha folklore and myth tale. This book provides numerous understanding account of Lepcha culture, religion, festivals with the help of legend.

The book written by Veena Bhasin (1987) *Ecology, Culture and Change: Tribals of Sikkim Himalayas*, study about the Tribals of Sikkim and look for the depth connection with environmental and cultural system. It also explores the impact of modernization changes on traditional cultural structure.



The book written by, Geoffrey Gorer (1996) *The Lepchas of Sikkim* studies the historical background of the Lepchas of Sikkim with inclusive investigation. This book looks at the relation of Lepcha community with Dzongu reserve and observes the exact reason behind the extinction of Lepcha identity.

Durga P Chetteri (2010), *Sikkim chronicle*, explores the historical background of Sikkim documentation and study on the geographical, political transformation and the state socio-economic record. The book written by, Anil Rajimwale (2006), *what is Marxism*, provides the Marxism works on origin and development of society, concept of Religion and laws of society and of social change which has been play important role under the study.

The book written by Pema Wangchuk and Mita Zulca (2007), *Kanchenjunga Sacred Smmi*, focused on the life of indigenous community pf Lepcha and scope by exploring the mountains historical, religious, political and cultural connections of Sikkim. Study on the close connection of Lepchas with the holy land and reason behind the diminishing of the indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim.

The article written by, Charisma K. Lepcha (2007), *When Nurkit Returns*, explore the struggle of Lepcha youth with their identity and provides relevant advices to the primitive society to preserve their identity in own motherland. The article written by, Jenny Bentley (2006), *Vanishing Lepcha Change and Cultural Revival in Mountain Community of Sikkim*, explore the notion of vanishing Lepcha and the changes the community have experienced in recent decades, particularly in relation to relation, education and migrant labour. The fear of their culture vanishing has inspired the formation of the number of Lepcha associations that aim to protect and promote Lepcha culture. It explores the spread of these Association and associated movement of culture revival.

There are many related reports, Apart fom the above articles and books, on the theme i.e. magazine of North East India, meta Zulca (2009), *Indigenous Lepchas Protest to Save their Land in Sikkim, in A Developmental*, Talk Sikkim, Hidden Treasures mayal Iyang homestay, Sikkim express, *Some Pondering on the Hydro Projects, Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) - Striving to Protect Sikkim Tseten Lepcha* (2013) are some of the important reports which has been used under study since they

provides information on various aspects of dams and developmental conflict in Dzongu Reserve of Sikkim.

The literature available in the field of Dam and Developmental issues in Dzongu reserve of Sikkim indicate that despite availability of numbers of writings on the subject it fall short in highlighting the reason an outcome of the conflict between Development and nature worshipers in Dzongu region of Sikkim.

Therefore, this proposed research work is an endeavour to fill these gaps and seeks to analyse various reasons and outcome of the conflict between development and nature worshipers in Dzongu region and impact of modernization on Lepcha community in Sikkim.

### **1.3. Rationale and Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on conflict between nature worshiper and global forces by taking case study of Dzongu. Nature worshiper basically treats a natural phenomenon like tree, mountain, rock and river etc as sanctity to be worshiped. Lepcha of Dzongu in Sikkim are usually referred as animism as they believe that Dzongu is a holy land. But, due to initiation of mega hydel project in Dzongu this holy land of Lepcha are at the prone of destruction. As mentioned above, Lepcha in Dzongu has religious affinity with the nature or natural phenomenon like land. A land in Dzongu is treated as sanctity by Lepcha people but today the same land has been used for other purposes. Hydel project has often been embodied as the modernization process, but this modernization process in Dzongu has brought huge challenges in the life of Lepcha residing in Sikkim. Since, Modernization has often been described as a process which brings a new dimension to already existed phenomena. Nonetheless, Lepcha in Dzongu view this modernization process as a threat to their ancestor practice of praying the land and other natural phenomena, as a result they protest against this modernisation process under the banner of (ACT).

Lepchas everywhere consider the Dzongu to be their holy land and that their race was created in Dzongu by Mother Nature and that Mount Kanchenjunga is their mother mountain. The Lepchas believe that the Dzongu is sacred is not wholly related to religion for Lepchas are Buddhist, Christian and to a lesser extent Hindu. The belief predates the colonisation of the Lepchas and relates to their traditional culture



which they describe as nature-worship and which they practiced before taking up the religion of others. The Lepchas in the Dzongu are mainly Buddhist; however their traditional nature worship rituals and beliefs sit comfortably alongside the Buddhist doctrine. They consider that nature's gifts give them life in the form of food, medicine and prayer and many of their festivals and prayers pay homage to nature.. From the very beginning during the times of Chogyal and later under the democratic set up, Lepchas were allotted Dzongu to be their area reserve. But with the initiation of mega Hydel project by the government of India from its north eastern region the purity of the area stands infringed.

Therefore, my paper will find out the truth that may help the people to know the reality. The Lepcha of Dzongu are not badly affected as much as my knowledge is concerned. But many of them got jobs in that very project as well as money when they sold their land. That's why mega hydel project divided State into two groups one favouring the construction of the dams and in turn inclined towards the State government and the one who opposes it labelling them anti development.

#### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

These are the following major objectives of the research work:

- To examine the conflict between the cultural ethos of the Lepchas and the developmental aspiration of Sikkim.
- To explored the cultural practices of the community participation and the enduring traditions and beliefs vis-a-vis the role of development.
- To trace the cultural and religious changes which ushered with the advent of modernizing forces in Sikkim

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

- At what level, will the agents of modernization affect the identity of the Lepcha community of Dzongu?
- Does the clash between the two have the tendency to divide the homogenous society of the Lepchas?
- What are the responses of the Lepcha community to the forces of Globalizing agents?

## **1.6. Hypotheses**

- Lepcha Protest against modernizing agents in Sikkim is a struggle to protect their Lepcha Identity.
- Conflict regarding Dzongu Reserve is a conflict between the Nature Worshipers and the Global Forces of Development.

## **1.7. Methodology**

The study has been included both the primary and secondary data. Extensive field study with in-depth interview has been carried out, with the help of questionnaire in the region and outside. Further the raw data would be analyzed using quantitative method and finally would be represented with the help of statistical tools.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Modernization and its Impact on Lepcha Community of Sikkim**

## CHAPTER 2

### MODERNIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON LEPCHA COMMUNITY IN SIKKIM

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the major concepts – historical overview of Lepcha and their origin, religion, culture, language, scriptures, economy and political background and Dzongu the reserve of Lepcha community. It aims to explore the connection between these community concepts to understand the relationship of modernization impacts on Lepcha community in Sikkim. This chapter also discusses positive and negative concepts of modernization have been given particular attention to explore its impact on Lepcha community. Unlike other ethnic groups, Lepcha claim themselves as an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim. But in a contemporary Sikkim, Lepcha has been facing a huge problem on the issue of Identity. As in Sikkim, Lepcha people are basically divided into different religious' adherence that is Buddhist, Christian and animism. Hence, in this pursuit the chapter will explore the actual impact of modernization on Lepcha of Sikkim society.

#### 2.2. Lepcha and their Origin

The Lepchas are the mongoloid people living in the Himalayas on the southern and eastern slopes of mount Kanchenjunga. It seems certain that they were originally the only inhabitants of this large tract of mountainous land, but during the last three centuries, or possibly longer, their land has been taken from them by conquering invaders, the Tibetans, the Nepali, and finally the English (Gorer; 1996). From the above perspective that Lepcha was an originally inhabitant of Sikkim long before outsider and they were basically belong from Mongolian descendent. But after 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century they had faced huge challenges towards their identity because, due to the influences of Buddhism and Christianity the inhabitant of Sikkim converted their animism religion into Buddhism and Christianity.

The Lepchas, who live in the middle region of Sikkim, are the best known indigenous people of the area. They share with Tibetan peoples a number of cultural features, most notably their religion. However, they have some un Tibetan practices



which they share with the Southeast Asian hill peoples to the east, especially slash-and-burn agriculture, use of bamboo, mats and thatch in house construction (combined with use of stone, the characteristic material of the Himalayas to the west and in Tibet), and raising of pigs and chickens for food.' Peoples similar to the Lepchas are probably to be found in interior Bhutan (Berreman; 1963).

In the beginning Itbu-moo created everything upon earth and heavens. After that, Itbu-moo mother creator created the first man known as Fundongthing but she was not quite satisfied. At last she taking out a little bit of narrow or bones from fudongthing to created Nazong Nyu and gave her to him as a companion and helpmate (Forning; 1987). According to the Bible i.e. book of Genesis 2:22 Lord God made a woman from the rib, he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

According to the Lepcha myth Itbu-moo mother creator taking a ball of fresh snow from the summit of Kongchen kongchlo and created the first man, Fundongthing the most powerful one. Mother creator remained unsatisfied. She decided to give Fundongthing, her pet creation, a companion. So she took a bit of a-yong from fudongthing's bones and created the first women, Nazong Nyu, the ever fortunate one, as her sister. Later, both became chief deities of the Rongs or Lepchas (Doma; 2010). According to the Lepchas myth mother nature create Lepcha chief deities (fudongthing and nazongnyu) from fresh snow ball and according to the Christian Holy Bible, book of Genesis 2:19 Lord God create Adam and Eve from dust. Through that similarity between the creation of human beings in Lepcha myth and in bible, people said that Lepcha easily converted into Christianity.

The Lepchas are considered the original inhabitants of the state. The Lepchas call themselves Rong which means ravine folk or mutanchi; they were animists and believed in many gods and spirits of land, water and trees, the natural outcome of their surroundings. Environmental played a great role in sharing their culture and society (Bhasin; 1989). The Lepchas call themselves Rongkup Rumkup which means the son of the snowy peak or the son of god and mutanchi rongkup means mother' loved ones.

The original inhabitants Sikkim are said to be the Lepchas. It has not yet been established from where the Lepchas originally came to Sikkim. There are some



theories which indicate that the Lepchas came from the border of Assam and Burma. Other theories speak of the Lepchas having migrated to Sikkim from southern Tibet. No matter from where they have original roots, the fact is that clearly established is that they are of Mongolia descent. The Lepchas are now predominantly Buddhists but many of them are also Christians having been converted to this faith by missionaries (Verma; 2002).

From the above proclamation about Lepcha's origin different scholar had a different views and verdict outcome. Some said that they were belonging from Indo-Tibetan, China, Naga and other said that they came from Nepal, Assam, and Burma and Mongolia descent. According to the Lepcha folktale or Myth that Itbu-moo mother creator create first human from fresh snow ball that is from Mount Kanchenjunga and after their death they believed that the soul will be reside on Kanchenjunga. That 'why Lepcha people lived closed with nature and they worshiped the nature, which is also known as Animism. They worshipped the rock, tree, river, and land believed on power of spirit. Lepchas they like to call themselves indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim.

### **2.3. Religion of the Lepchas**

Religion is very old. Its roots go back to the remote antiquity in the primitive society. As pointed out earlier, the primitive people imagined active forces and life in every object of nature, even in inanimate ones like rocks. This view led to the emergence of numerous gods and goddesses (Anand and Shamin; 2010).

Pleasing and pampering mungs or devils were the way of life of the Lepchas. Many people still fear touching sacred and secret things kept in Lepcha homes or treading on the Lepcha ginger field or fruits and vegetables garden, as sometimes their hands get immobilized due to certain invisible powers which only the Lepcha head of the family can cure. It is also said that similar experience will be faced when going; in backyard garden of rais or limbus, which in Nepali is called "Dewa Lagyo", meaning 'affected by god' (Tamlong; 2008). According to the above statement about the fear touching secret thing has been still practised and people had believe on that and without owner permission no one touched their secret things which is kept in home or at field.



Animism is the belief that everything has a soul or spirit, an anima in Latin, including animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, and stars. Animists believe each anima is a powerful spirit that can help or hurt them and are to be worshipped or feared or in some way attended to. Animism is a primitive religion whose adherents have for thousands of years deified animals, stars, and idols of any kind, and practiced spiritism, witchcraft, divination and astrology. They use magic, spells, enchantments, superstitions, amulets, talismans, charms, or anything that they believe will help to protect them from the evil spirits and placate the good spirits that are found everywhere in everything.

Animism means the beliefs in spirits. Edward B.Tylor believes this to be the earliest form of religion. He argues that animism derives from man's attempts to answer two questions-“what is it that makes that difference between a living body and a dead one” and “ what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and vision?” to makes sense of these events, early philosophers invented the idea of the soul. The soul is a spirit which leaves the body temporarily during dreams and visions and permanently on death. Tylor argues that religion, in the form of animism, originated to satisfy man's intellectual nature to meet his need to make sense of death, dreams and vision (Anand and Shamin; 2009).

The Bongthing and Muns are the Lepcha Shaman religious priests and the mediators between the God- “Rum” spirits souls and the sole liberators of the Lepcha souls after death. They also disclose divine revelations that one can attain desired objects by the efficacy of prayers, supplications and Invocations. The Lepchas have the abiding faith in prayers, offerings and sacrifices, which they offer through spiritual shamans Bongthings and Muns. The Lepcha Shaman priests (Bongthing and Muns) have no written texts for prayer or worship of nature. They entirely depend on oral traditions- Munthem. The Bongthings and Muns, who both function as shamans, traditionally occupy the central religious roles in the Lepcha community (Subba; 2009).

The Bongthing is traditionally a male Shaman who presides at recurring religious ceremonies and seasonal festivals and may heal acute illness. The Mun often but not necessarily a female shaman is a healer who exercises demons, helps to heal illness and guides souls to the afterlife. They are tutelary spirit possessions of their



departed ancestor's souls (ancestor's divinities). They also use many master spirits to perform the spiritual works during their manifest functions in the society (Subba; 2009).

Actually, Bongthing is also vanishing from our society and here we can find it on animism society where Bongthing can perform their righteous work. On Lepcha term we said the shaman as Bongthing but on Nepali term people said to shaman as Dame /Zakri. It is a hereditary possession work which comes generation after generation and through the help of spirits they do their work as healer and priests.

Before adopting Buddhism and Christianity as their religion, the earliest Lepcha settlers were believers in the bon faith and Mun faith. The faith was basically based on spirits, good and bad. Witchcraft and exorcism were very common. They worshipped spirits of mountains, river and forests which was but natural for a tribe that co-existed so harmoniously with the rich natural surroundings. The well-known deities of the Lepchas are Itbumoo, rom, Itbu Debu Rom, Kongchen Konglo and Tamsang Thing, who is also said to have invented the Lepcha script (Verma; 2002).

As we all know that after influence of Buddhism and Christianity in Sikkim, animism has diminished from Lepcha community. But somehow people still believe in spirits, good and bad. Bongthing perform their ritual work through the help of spirits because their faith is basically based on spirits of natural phenomenon.

According to the Lepcha folklore mother creator created first man Fundongthing and women Nazong Nyu Lepcha's very first ancestors, and they were placed separately in different lakes or in the sacred region where the gods lived. But later, these two disobeyed the command of the mother creator and as a result Nazong Nyu started giving birth to the various mungs the evil spirits, the devil and demons. When mother creator saw this then she created her favourite creation and created a Bongthing who she sent down to earth (Forning; 1987).

The Bongthing came down to earth and summoned these mungs to a conference and Bongthing had a covenant or agreement with mungs that the Bongthing promised to offer animal and bird sacrifice to them, and they in turn promised to leave human beings from sickness, diseases and other troubles which are caused by mungs (Forning; 1987). Therefore, till now when Lepcha family organised any religious service then they invite Bongthing and arrange lots of offerings.



Which Bongthing have to offer as sacrifices to mungs for rescuing people from the troubles. Specially, Lepcha of Dzongu by faithfully and with honour they follow up their actual doctrine according to the myth.

#### **2.4. Culture of the Lepchas**

Lepcha were nature worshiper and behind their each and every cultural practice had some logic like on festival, ceremonies and religious way first Nambun: One major festival of the Lepchas is the Nambun which marks the beginning of the New Year. This occasion celebrated during the month of December and January or it depends on the new moon falls. According to the Lepcha myth that god tashey thing defeat the devils laso mungs and this day organising festival to celebrate the victory over evils. The purification and ritual performance will be doing by Bongthing.

Mayel Lyang or the country the original utopian land of our tribe was fertile, fruitful and prosperous. But the time come when the children started forgetting of Itbu-moo and became negligent in offering sacrifices and prayer. So, the great mother was hurt. The big black shiny pamolbu the very embodiment of evil in the serpent form took that as his cue. This cursed creature true it its evil nature, now went and blocked the flow of the two main rivers rongmit and rong-nyu flowing through the prosperous Mayel country (Forning; 1987).

At last the whole of the prosperous land became a mass of water destroying everything. The flood started abating. Now the few who had followed the partridge also succeeded in reaching the top and they were saved. So, every year during the monsoon season the mount- tendong and the occasion have been declare as a holiday in Sikkim this festival is called Tendong Rum Fat (Forning; 1987).

From the above description we got clear about the background of the Tendong Rum Fat and the value of that culture for the Lepchas community. In Bible book of Genesis 7: 12 Lord God became angry with his own creature, because they started to worship other god and goddesses. Therefore, the floodgates of the heavens were opened and rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. From this statement the relation between Lepcha culture and Christian had an authentic resemblance.

The river Teesta is not merely a source of water, but the very lifeline of Sikkim. Sikkimese folklore is a flush with myths and stories about how civilisation and humans settled along the course of the river and the Lepchas skilfully constructed



cane-bridges across this river. According to an ancient Lepcha myth, an infuriated Teesta caused a deluge when he lost the race to his lover, the sacred river Rangit. In this ancient myth, the rest of Sikkim was flooded and all life perished in that great deluge (Arora; 2007).

On August 8, the Lepchas annually worship Mount Tendong, as this mountain offered sanctuary to human, animal, and other living creatures during the deluge caused by the river Teesta. During these prayers, gods and the spirits of the land are propitiated to ensure the fertility of the land, maintain the environmental balance, and ensure peace and harmony in Sikkim, the Darjeeling Hills and the entire world. This myth of deluge has a renewed ecological relevance in the current context of objections raised to the implementation of the Teesta hydel project in north Bengal and Sikkim. This myth encodes an environmental wisdom that has sustained the Lepchas in this shifting precarious landscape for centuries (Arora; 2007).

Lepchas traditional dress were male wear cap (lepchas wear two types of cap, called thyak tuk in Lepcha thyak from athayk i.e. head and tuk means cover) tago ( male shirt is called tago and it covers the upper body from the hip upwards. From the chest upward it is open and end with stiff high neck) tamu (it is Lepcha trouser which goes up to the calf) and dum-praa (a thick shawl type cloth and is wore over tago and tamu) female wear tago ( a loose shirt made of thin and light cloth material with long sleeves which are folded at the wrists when worn) dum- bun or dum dem or gado (fine and soft cloth materials used for usually made into dum dem) and tago (a head scarf called tago is also worn by the ladies usually) (Tamlong; 2008).

It is only in Dzongu and in one or two small villages outside the reserve that there is a homogeneous Lepcha society, particularly undisturbed by alien influence (Gorer; 1996). According to the Lepcha myth that Lepcha people had been practised their culture as to do nature worshipped. Their each and every culture is emotionally involved with the nature. Lepcha's festival like Tendong Rum fat, Namsoong and when we analysis historical background of this festival than it was directly implicated with nature. However, in Sikkim Lepcha community divided into three parts that is Animism, Buddhist and Christianity. But the cultural practices have been pursuing by only Lepcha Animism and Buddhist. In every culture and custom Lepcha priests who known as Bongthing played his important role through the help of supernatural spirit.



Pang Lhabsol this is annually held on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month of Tibetan calendar and both the Lepcha and the Bhutia community participate in this celebration with the Buddhist Lamas and the Lepchas Bongthing and Muns also taking active part. Another objective of the celebration was to encourage and perpetuate the unification of the Bhutias and Lepchas. In the year fell on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug and nowadays the occasion is considered as a celebration of Unity Day of Lepcha-Bhutia-Nepali (Tamlong; 2008).

## **2.5. The Lepcha Language**

The Lepcha language though said to be 5,000 years old and invented by the Byjo-Menchy Olong and Sayun ( according to the Dhendop lepcha), is hardly spoken today except by the older generation. Nepali has become the lingua franca for the region. But rather beautiful Lepcha scripts exist and a printing press at Kalimpong has the Lepcha types for printing purposes. The Lepcha scripts is said to be related to be Tibetan alphabet. To the naked eye, there appear to be flourishes of the Urdu script as well. The Tibetan script appears nearer to the Sanskrit model (Awasty; 1978).

Father Rey holds that the Lepcha language is Monosyllabic and is a corrupted from of Tibetan. Bhutia too is a form of Tibetan but the Bhutia and Lepcha dialects are unintelligible to each other. The Lepcha script is said to have been intensively studied by General G.C. Mainwaring at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to General Mainwaling, Lepcha was the language spoken by the Adan and Eve and hence older than Sanskrit or Urdu (Awasty; 1978).

Just like the tribe itself, the origin of our language is shrouded in mystery. None can say for certain from where it originated, and how it became the mother tongue of a tribe living right in the lap of the mighty Himalayas unknown and unseen till as late as the seventeenth century. However, according to philologist , one thing is certain that this language comes within the Tibeto- Burma group of language that is spoken by the innumerable tribes inhabiting the stretch of the sub Himalayan region curving down through Patkai- Naga hills in the sub-mountainous regions of Arakan-Pegu Yomas and Tenasserin, down south in Burma and beyond (Forning; 1987).

To speak of the language it can be seen that it is monosyllabic in character, widely comprehensive in nature and possessing on inexhaustible capacity for derivations and affixes. Words and sentences are structurally simple. If one studies the



language in some depth, it will be seen that the language like Hindi, Nepali, Bengali and others which have their origin in Sanskrit compared with some of the languages and dialects spoken in the region, this language has reached a fairly high standard but, unfortunately due to neglect arising out of environmental and other changes coming into the tribe, the language is dying out gradually (Forning; 1987).

The Original Lepcha language was considered unfashionable and inferior and thus the Lepcha language was uprooted and crushed to the very dust, a hatred policy if the then victorious British government upon the vanquished Lepcha victims. Not only this, but the despotic Bhotia kings of Sikkim and their dogmatic lamas forcibly compelled the simple and the innocent Lepcha to adopt Lamaism and disseminated Tibetan language, culture, customs way of life and living etc to the Lepcha (Tamsang; 1983).

The prehistoric writings, religious manuscripts, chronicals, literature, records, documents of past facts and events that could tell the past history of the lepcha were all collected and burned them down at Ayaonggong, near Rapdenchi, the first capital of Sikkim in 1826 and as the testimony to support this true fact, the burnt black and red carbonized large flat stone cracked at the center and at the side by the sereve heat of the burning fire of the huge amount of the lepcha manuscripts can still be seen even today as an evidence(Tamsang;1983).

The then bhotias had burned down the lepcha's manuscripts saying that the lepcha manuscripts prehistoric writing and record contained nothing but superstition, lies and evil, which the lepcha deplored and which obviously wounded them and for which even the patriotic lepcha of the old, led by Athing Rathap rebelled aganist the despotic Bhotia king Chukput Namgal and his domatic lamas in 1826, but unfortunately, the resistance aganist the king was not successful. All these sever harassment, suppression and subjection were made upon the Lepcha, in order to efface out the very existence of the lepcha's nationality as a distinct nation from the soil of their very land of origin and creation, Sikkim and Darjeeling (Tamsang; 1983).Lepcha clams that they are indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and simultaneously, origin of Lepcha language has a misery as in origin of Lepcha people. Like some said that it belongs from Indo-Tibetan language, Nagas language, Adam and Eva language etc.



Origin of Lepcha script that claim the third consecrated rulers Chador Namgyal was the one who invented the Lepcha script which is challenged by another version and that comes from Tibet. But the Tibetan scholars said that it was Lama Lhatsun Nangkha Jigme who gave the script of the language to the Lepchas. When the Buddhist lama came from the Tibet they started to get the Tibetan religious scriptures and translated into Lepcha language. But some scholars said that they collect all the Lepcha books and made a bonfire of it. 'Tashay Namthar' is a holy book written by the lama Ugen Lingpo, and it is like the Christian bible, which had to read once in the morning and at bed time.

## 2.6. Lepcha Scriptures

The origin of the Lepcha script is controversial. Some claim that it was invented by Thekong Mensakong, legendary figure among the tribesmen. He lived towards the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Others say and believe that it was given along with the mountains, rivers and lakes by Itbu-Moo, the mother creator herself. The later of course, may be viewed and dismissed as a fairy tale like the theory itself. As for the invention by thekong mensalong, we can see that it is nothing but just glorifying a legendary hero. Till now, no document or proof of any kind has been found testifying to the validity of this theory (Forning; 1987).

The next ones come from the royal chronicles of the kings of Sikkim, the kings of the Lepchas. There in it is mention that chador Namgyal the third consecrated ruler, was the one who for the benefit of his subjects, invented the Lepcha script. In the absence of any authentic report or finding and proof to the contrary, it will be difficult to contradict this claim. The claim that chador Namgyal was the one who invented the Lepcha script is challenged by any other version and that comes from Tibet. Some Tibetan scholar of repute such as Tsepon Shakabpa say that in a book written by lama Khajan Ngawa, it is mentioned that it was lama Lhatsum Nangkha Jigme, reverently called Lhatsum Clhempo by the Sikkimese who gave the script of the language to the Lepcha (Forning;1987).

In Dzongu literacy is exclusively confined to the reading of the Tibetan scriptures and has no sort of influence or use in everyday life; lamas who can read religious books and write religious formulas are quite incapable of reading or writing



a letter in any language. As will be seen later this factual illiteracy puts the Lepchas at the considerable disadvantage in their commercial transactions (Gorer; 1996).

Some of the lamas of Lingthem read the Tibetan scriptures with ease and even fluency; Tibetan books are printed from wooden blocks in long narrow rectangular pages; to learn to read the pupils gets by heart the contents of one page at a time, only passing on to the next when he has completely mastered and is able to recite the first (Gorer; 1996). As we already know that the Lepchas has a misery towards their history like origin, culture, religion, language and scriptures. Some scholar said that it derives from Tibet and Tibetan scholar Tsepon shakabpa say that Lhatsum Clhempo gave the script of the Lepcha language.

## **2.7. Economy and political background of Lepcha**

The agricultural land in Dzongu land is divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight year. The permanent cultivations of three types, there is the field garden against the house, cardamom fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now a very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern. Cardamom was introduced at the beginning of the country rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago (Gorer; 1996).

Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamom fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire as it were a capital value; this is less true of cardamom, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour (Gorer; 1996).

The present day politico- administrative structure has evolved from a very simple system which existed hundreds of years ago in Sikkim. The political structure which existed then was basically the reflection of a simple and carefree tribal society with tribal chief as their ruler/kings. As mentioned earlier the Lepcha king called "Panu" and the spiritual leaders' Bongthing or Athing used to occupy important position in the political and socio- religious life of the Lepcha community ( Gurung; 2011).



AR Forning though does not support the theory of lepcha rules and contends that the Lepcha do not believe in the system of gradation or ranking a sixteenth century document granting permission to the Tsongs (limboos) to settle in the mayel lyang (Sikkim) however is indicative of the presence of a determinate source of authority whose position in the Lepcha society was undoubtedly superior to others. The Lepcha however lost their authority with the solicitation of legendary brotherhood. Post with the migratory Bhutia patriarch Khye Bumsa. In 1642 Phuntshog Namgyal a Bhutia peasant was called Chogyal (Dharmaraja) of the Tibetan origin at Yoksum in west Sikkim. He was described as the descendent of the brave ancestors of the Kham province in eastern Tibet (Gurung; 2011).

Gyeba Achhyok as last of the Lepcha kings who ruled from 1730. These forts that he built and the battle battles that he fought with the Sikkimese Bhotia king and with the Bhutanese king were not a communal battle. It had been a struggle of a freedom fighter against the aggressors. Though King Gyebu Achyok Pano lost his life, he cherished liberty more than anything else in life 200 years ago (Forning; 1987).

## **2.8. Dzongu the Lepcha Reserve**

Dzongu, the personal estate of the Maharaja of Sikkim, was made the 'Lepcha Reserve', perhaps in the wake of unchecked entry of more and more outsiders into Sikkim in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was done to ostensibly keep the Lepchas protected, but the prime objective may well be to keep the Lepchas there unaffected by the outside influences so that the palace could have steady supply of docile and loyal servants as and when needed (Tamlong; 2008).

The village, situated at the base of the Kanchenjunga and included in the Kanchenjunga National park, is almost triangular in shape, having approximately forty miles on each side. Dzongu must have been so named, because it was made to look like a fort or jail from the outside, since 'Dzongu' usually indicates fort or jail in Bhutanese territory. No outsiders were allowed to visit this Dzongu area of Sikkim except with the specific permission of the Durbar and was total restriction on the transform of land to outsiders (Tamlong; 2008).

Dzongu has traditionally been a Lepcha stronghold. Its steep ravines must have made it unappealing to the Bhutia community who were essentially herders and



sought out pastures; its remoteness and its terrain made it unfavourable for agriculture which was the specialisation of the Nepalese community. The Limboos, recognised as the autochthons of Sikkim alongside the Lepchas and Bhutias, were concentrated more towards south and west Sikkim, leaving Dzongu free through history for the Lepchas. In the nineteenth century, the king of Sikkim gave the Dzongu tract in dowry to his wife and this ensured even more exclusivity for the region (Wangchuk; 2007).

Eventually, in 1958, the exclusive claim of Dzongu Lepchas on this land was formalised by a royal proclamation. In the north district of Sikkim, of which Dzongu is a part, as per data reflected in the 'state socio-economic census 2006' conducted by the development of economics, statistics, monitoring & evaluation, government of Sikkim, the Lepchas constitute the single largest community, comprising 37.47% [14,370] of the 38,352-strong population of the district. More than half of the Lepchas of North Sikkim reside in Dzongu (Wangchuk; 2007).

The Lepcha reserve in North Sikkim, Dzongu, which borders the Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve, is an emerging eco-tourism destination, supported by the Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS) as a response to concerns for the upcoming younger generation of Dzongu who were keen to explore alternative opportunities for the educated youth who would provide avenues for self-employment within Dzongu. Dzongu is worthy of the eco-tourism description (Little; 2009).

It is a protected area, abundant with eco-narrative tropes: verdant vegetation, a small number of inhabitants (6,000), the birdsong, the roaring rivers, the cleanliness, the godliness, and the mother-mountain, Kanchenjunga, strong, protective, benevolently looking down on her Lepcha children. It is a remote place, most parts being hard to reach and its status as a Lepcha reserve has given it precious breathing space from the flight to modernization afflicting other sacred places, long given up for the greater common good (Little; 2009).

The majority of the Sikkim population consists of Nepalese, Hindu and Tibetan immigrants. In the places where the last-mentioned have intermarried with the local population, their offspring is called Bhutia. The Nepalese are especially numerous, and in order to prevent them from completely taking the Land from the



Lepchas, the Sikkim Government have reserved a particular district by name Jongu in the central and northern part of the country for the Lepchas (Siiger; 1967).

Jongu is the same types as the Navajo Indian Reserve in the United States of America, or the like of the confines of the aborigines of Australia, and other such areas elsewhere. These Reserves were planed and initiated by the very much advanced rulers in their newly acquired territories, rulers mostly coming from the west, from Europe. In the case of Rongfolk, it was the British overlords who, seeing the abject and miserable condition of the native Lepchas, had hit upon this plan during the first half of the Nineteenth century, when they assumed suzerainty over the whole of the kingdom of Sikkim. These reserves are set up particularly for safeguarding the tribe's culture, and preventing its economic exploitation and such other disabilities which can result from the coming in of tribe from outside (Forning; 1987).

From the above statement, we came to know that Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepcha community. According to the Lepcha folklore Itbu-mu mother creator create Lepcha ancestor from the fresh snow ball and they believed that after death their soul will stay behind on this holy snow mountain. Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu community believed that the land of Dzongu is holy for them and they worshipped the nature that is river Teesta, land and mountain etc. During the time of Chogyal Lepcha were allowed that the Dzongu is reserve area and whoever wanted to visit than they have to be taking out permit for it.

## **2.9. Modernization and its impact on Lepcha community**

The impact of modernization shows on cultural practice because they prefer the westernized in their style of living. They have change their food habits and especially about their traditional dress. Nowadays, indigenouse people of Sikkim wear their traditional dress only on occasion or ritual services and due to the lack of language practices the identity were diminishing from society. As for example in Bhutan at home, school, college and every where each citizen has to wear their traditional dress and they have to speak their own language, therefore till now they were success to preserve their tradition way of life. But in Sikkim due to the modernization people influence towards the western lifestyle and forget to practice their own language and traditional dress and nowadays due to the lack of practicing



the traditional way of life indigenous inhabitant has to face diminishing or vanishing identity in own land.

Another development and cause for concern in the villages is that education changes the interests of the younger generation. Education is thought of as being linked to a modern lifestyle and is seen as the opposite of culture and tradition. The children who move out of the village are seen by the villagers as prone to losing themselves and their interest in the Lepcha culture heritage. The children will return home for vacation and help out with numerous tasks, but they will not have the same routine as village children and will also bring in different ideas and interests. The main worry of Lepchas villagers is that essential elements of Lepcha culture eroded, because young people are no longer interest in keeping the Lepcha culture alive (Bentley; 2005).

Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepcha community and they were docile and shy nature but due to the modernization multidimensional opportunity urbanization has been emerged and slow moving tale of a place and its people who were gradually shifting from a traditional life as hunters and cardamom farmers to a modern life. The young generation of Lepchas – the ‘first educated generation’ as they refer to themselves - are studying, working and living outside their Lepcha land. Many live in Gangtok and work in government jobs. Others study in the large Indian cities of New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. Some are eager for a new, faster, contemporary lifestyle. Many are content with the slow-moving pace in the village (Little; 2010).

Surround and submerged from all sides, there has occurred gradual change in the lives of Lepchas and they have had to adjust themselves to aggressive influences of the surrounding. The Tibetans imposed Buddhism on them, the missionaries brought Christianity on them, and the Nepalese spread their culture and language among them. Unlike their neighbouring Nepalese tribes such as the Limbus, rais and magars etc. The Lepchas did not get assimilated into the wider society they could somehow preserve their identity. Some tenets of their old culture and traditions are still retained by the Lepcha Buddhist as well as Lepcha Christians despite their adoption of alien religions (Tamlong; 2003).

According to the Sikkim chronicles that Lepcha is an indigenous inhabitant and they were nature worshiper or animism. But after 17<sup>th</sup> century the impact of



Modernization ruled over Sikkim and Lepcha animism had been influenced by Bhutia and Christian religion. So, due to that transformation of Lepcha identity it's create vanishing Tribe in own land. The animism Lepcha believe on Bounghing for their ritual services but due to the conversion of animism into Buddhism the role of Bounghing remain with animism only. Later on, Buddhist Lepcha prefer lama for their ritual ceremonies. And Christianity totally avoids every animism custom and culture and they adopt new one. So, the impact of modernization brings huge revolution on the culture of Lepcha because it divided into three religions and each has their own customs and culture.

Because of that mixed community nowadays Lepchas has to face the diminishing term in culture, language, socio-economic backward, deprive and exploited tribe. Therefore, the homogenous culture converted into heterogeneity culture and through that revolution Lepcha become vanishing tribe of Sikkim not because of the population but due to the lack of cultural practices. The impact of modernization emerged towards Lepcha of Sikkim when Bhutia and Christian translated their religious books into Lepcha language for the purpose of converting Lepchas into their faith and still today at Gangtok EPCS (evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim) on every Sunday services they sang a Lepcha song and most of the member in church have a Lepchas.

The Lepcha myth and Bible's creation story has a similar way of description and when Christian translated their religious book into Lepcha Language than they easily converted into Christianity. The indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim now became a dominant community by outsider namely Nepalese, Bhutia and Limboo. The modernization was emerging in Sikkim during the Buddhist kingdom and later on when Sikkim merge with Indian union numerous developmental have been come over the established society.

## **2.10. Theoretical framework**

There are Relative Deprivation theory, formulated by Merton and Runciman. The term relative deprivation refers to deprivations experienced when individuals compare themselves with others that is individuals who lack something compare themselves with those who have it, and in so doing have the feeling of deprivation. Thus, relative deprivation not involves comparison; it is also usually defined in

subjective terms. Deprivation is relative. People experience resentment or discontent about their condition not necessarily when they are deprived in an absolute sense, but when they feel deprived relative to some standard of comparison. These are the essential concepts behind the theory of relative deprivation (Anand and Shamin; 2009).

Sikkimese people had a lot of experiences and the feeling of Deprivation for example, "During the period of Maharajah Thutob Namgyal dynasty Sikkim clashed with those of the Indian British Empire and British political officer John Claude White (1853-1918) was a mean, petty and domineering individual who ruled over Sikkim during the two decades in which he dominated the state of Sikkim (McKay; 2003)". From that statement, we came to know that Sikkimese people were deprived in social, political and economic spheres in their own homeland.

Another example, Lepchas of Dzongu believe that Dzongu is a holy land and according to their myth that their mother creator created human beings from the Mount Kanchenjunga and Lepchas were allotted that Dzongu is a reserve land for them. But, due to the mega hydro project that holy land became infringed and outsiders migrated over there for a semi-permanent settlement but most of the important point is that, the land is reserve land for Lepchas. When outsiders started to work out there and local people felt deprived, because of the homogenous society, Lepchas love to live close with each other. Therefore they were deprived in their own land and exploited by the others.

The Lepchas are at a complete disadvantage in dealing with the Kanya. Neither they nor anybody outside the caste can read the peculiar script of the Marwari; but the Lepchas cannot deal with figures and are unable to calculate the prices they should receive or the debts they owe; when they get receipts they cannot read them nor tell if they are correct. Though they have a strong conviction that they are badly cheated by the Kanya they can do nothing about it; intentional dishonesty in any form is so alien to them that they cannot comprehend or deal with it; the puzzle about the sums that the Kanya say they owe; they are convinced that they are too high, but they cannot dispute them and have to pay. Since the Kanya have the cardamom monopoly and collect the selling tax the Lepchas cannot take their produce elsewhere; and it is questionable if it would pay them to do so, for against the higher



prices obtainable in Gangtok and Kalimpong must be set the cost of portorage (Gorer; 1996).

As with many such crops the price is often higher at the end of the season than at the beginning, but the Kanya will not let them wait on the market; at the beginning of the season they send representatives to their debtors claiming immediate payment and threatening court proceedings if the cardamom is not forthwith handed over. If the Kanya could give cash for the surplus crops the Lepchas would be better off; but it is extremely difficult to get ready money, beyond what is needed for tax-paying, out of them. When the cardamom is brought in the Kanya claim that they have no money to hand and force goods, either metal ware, or china, or cloth, on to the sellers. And if during the rest of the year people come into buy goods, rice seed, or cloth, or salt, they refuse to take cash except for quite small sums (say under Rs. 10). The bully and forced and persuade the Lepchas to take goods on credit whether they want them or not (Gorer; 1996).

Thus being cut off the rest of the civilised world, the people there lived in complete innocence and simplicity; they were completely ignorant of the guiles and tricks, the people outside were used to in their daily life and hence they were easy targets of the business fraternity and anybody who happen to have inter action with them. Further, due to lack of education these people could be conveniently exploited by the Marwari and Kainyas of Mangan (Tamlong; 2008).

The extortion and exploitation against these people were the order of the day. The Marwaris knew the Lepchas Language and the moment the Lepcha with their cardamom used to arrive at the market, they were treated in all courtesy serving them chi and food and afterward cost thereof would be realised many times over from the cardamom transaction. Even the biscuit and bakery items vendors, who sometimes used to go to the village, carrying their products in big trunks on the head, used to realise the cost of such food items in costly and precious cardamom (Tamlong; 2008).

A person experiencing either relative gratification or relative deprivation will also experience a feeling that his deprivation status is different from that of his peers. We will call this "fairness," in the sense that it indicates a belief that there is differential treatment in the in group (Davis; 1959).

As we all came to know that Lepcha has been facing abundant challenges to defend their identity. Like, actually Lepcha know as nature worshiper which is also known as animism. But due to the changing era Buddhism and Christianity came over the Sikkim and influenced the Lepcha community. That's why in this contemporary period some of the Lepcha people converted in Buddhism and some of the Lepcha converted in Christianity. Since, from 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Lepcha community has been fighting with the established culture and customs. Lepcha community tried to protect their identity and in reality, Lepcha people call themselves indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and Dzongu is their Reserve land. But, the changing period created unsafe or insecure towards the Lepcha community and they were exploited by outsider and felt deprived people.

### **2.11. Conclusion**

The origin of Lepcha community no one can say from where it originated and how it became the mother tongue of Lepcha tribe. Some said that this language comes from the Tibeto- Burma language and the original of the Lepcha tribe belonged to the clan of the Nagas, Garo, and Khasia Lepcha language spoke in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Nepal and Lepcha call themselves "children of Rong tribe," Because they were peace loving, deeply religious and are children of nature and nature worshiper. The reason behind the extinction of language lies when the Tibetan people migrated in early 17<sup>th</sup> century and occupied land which was not registered by the Lepcha. These Tibetan people migrates from Tibet because of the conflict among the followers of the 'yellow hats' and the 'red hats'. In Sikkim 'red hats' followers converted the Sikkimese "worshippers of nature" to Bhuddhism and they were succeeded in doing this.

This became one of the first reasons for the extinction of Lepcha as their real identity. In modern period the European missionaries translated their religious book into Lepcha language with the purpose of converting Lepcha to Christianity. Lepcha are the backward classes in Sikkim, thus they tried to improve the condition of Lepcha by providing education, medical treatment etc. Many missionaries' co-ed schools are established, hospital, industries and dispensaries are made to improve the condition of Lepcha. The Sikkimese Lepcha who are the worshippers of nature



converted their religion into Buddhism and Christianity followed their new religious value system and is slowly left their original religious practices.

From the very beginning that is 16<sup>th</sup> may 1975 Sikkim had been facing numerous challenges and new dimensions like culture, education, westernization and industrialization. Therefore, modernization slowly influences towards indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim society or from traditional to agrarian society. Thus this proposed study finds that the reason behind the vanishing of Lepcha as a tribe is due to converting their religion into others and not practising their original religion, culture and customs.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Conflict between Modernization and Nature Worshiper**



## CHAPTER 3

### CONFLICT BETWEEN MODERNIZATION AND NATURE WORSHIPER

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore the major concepts of –Nature Worshiper in Sikkim, how modernization impact on traditional society and Conflict between Modernization and nature worshiper. It aims to explore the connection between these three concepts to understand the mutual relationship of the same under this study. The chapter also discusses the existing characteristic with regard to nature worshiper. The chapter also look forward at the various dimensions of the definition of nature worshiper. This chapter explore the positive and negative feature of conflict between modernization and nature worshiper. At last, a linkage between these three majors concepts of conflict, nature worshiper and modernization verses nature worshiper in this context of study.

#### 3.2. The concept of nature worshiper

According to the Sikkim chronicles that there were three tribe people who was originally inhabitant of Sikkim i.e. (Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali) and each tribe had their own custom and culture. Three tribes had been directly or indirectly attached with nature worshiper and they worshiped the natural phenomenon. First, in Sikkim traditionally Lepchas were nature worshippers. They worship all other natural elements like peaks, rivers, lakes, streams, cloud, water, soil, tree, rain, sun etc of the region. Through the help of Lepcha priest they offering sacrifices and offer prayer to their respective ancestors and mount Kanchenjunga. Muk-Zik-Ding-Rum-Faat is the offering to Mother Nature for timely and sufficient rain, mist and good climate for habitation and vegetation. The Faat is observed during March-April i.e. the period of germination (Roy; 2011).

It is said that in the evening of each Faat there is at least one shower of rain. Chu-Rum-Faat is the offering to Mount Kanchenjunga and other peaks who are the divine deity of the Lepchas. Tendong-Lho-Rum-Faat is the special offering to Tendong peak of Sikkim which is believed to cause deluge in the by gone days. The government of Sikkim has declared 8th of August as state holiday to celebrate the

occasion. Lyaang-Rum-Faat is the offering and prayer to Mother Earth. Mut-Rum-Faat is the offerings to jungle spirit and the Lepchas praise the spirit both before and after hunting (Roy; 2011).

Lepcha were animism and they worshiped mount Kanchenjunga but after 17<sup>th</sup> century Tibet red hat followers migrated in Sikkim and they influence Buddhism towards animism society. But according to their myth they also believe on nature elements wind, water and air. The majority of Lepchas became Buddhists after the migration and settlement of Bhutias into Sikkim. However they continued practicing shamanism, their indigenous relation along with Buddhism.

The eastern Himalaya has always been considered as a distinct phytogeographical region, it stretches over Sikkim, Darjeeling Hills, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. The climate and water system of the eastern Himalaya substantially influence the other north-eastern states, namely, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura, even though they are separated by the mighty Brahmaputra river. In view of geographical contiguity and political reorganisation of the region in India and for purposes of better understanding of the ecological phenomena and several volumes would be needed to tell the entire story of interaction among humans and nature in the eastern Himalaya. It offers an account of wetlands, forests and belief systems, problems arising from modernisation processes and the pace of change. Such knowledge is a crucial step towards formulation of sustainable development programme (Singh; 2001).

Buddhist worships the spirits of land and water for good health, ample rains, excellent harvest and prosperity. The curving for protected against malignant gods, spirits and demons causes the people to pain their faith on charms and amulets and erect tall prayer flags, with string of flag lets, which flutter from house tops, bridge, passes and other places believed to be infested by evil spirits (Bashan; 2009).

On 19<sup>th</sup> century the colonization period or on British period in Sikkim they invented new dimensions like transportation through road and tea plantation and that time outsider migrated over Sikkim they are Nepalese (Rai, Limboos). Rai kirati people believe in their holy book Mundhum and practices their religion according to that Mundhum is an oral tradition, which is passed on from generation to generation. Mundhum teaches the Rai people many things that the earth is our mother and we



have to care for her. We should only take from the earth what is needed and nothing more is truthful and honest at all times. In every type of traditional rituals the performers are mostly Rai kirati people using traditional natural things (Bhadur; 2012).

It also shows that these people are nature worshiper. For example still today in the Rai people's house everybody keeps three stone in separate places for worship. They took these stone as their god suminma and paruhang for that sila (stone) as well as their origin god, universe, ancestors and well-wisher. To respect nature the Rai people worship their god twice a year in the name of the sakela sili festival, wishing for goods crop, good harvesting and good future for all creatures (Bhadur; 2012).

Yuma is the ultimate Goddess of Limboo, they consider her as the Goddess of progenation and believe that she blesses them for their all round development. In the field of learning she is equated with Goddess Saraswati, with Goddess Laxmi in matters of wealth and with Lord Vishnu in matters of providing them with the amenities for comfortable and congenial life, but idol worship of Goddess Yuma and animal sacrifice for her is prohibited. The rituals to worship Yuma are simple. The ceremony is conducted by recognized priests known as Phedangma, Yewa, or Yema but in case of non availability of such priests any elderly person of the tribe can perform and conduct the ceremony, but the service of a Phedangma has to be sought for in case the influence of the evil spirits have to be warded off. Limboos are nature worshippers so the eight steps of their manghim can be compared with the eight aspects of nature such as, earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, brain and pride. The other items of offerings to Yuma such as water trumbles, diyo, handful of corn, incense sticks, teetaypati and flowers are items also enough to indicate their Nature worshipping nature. However, the comparison of the eight steps of manghim with the customary Chaudhalok of Hindu religion cannot be denied altogether (Sigger; 1967).

According to the above declaration about the nature worshipper of Sikkim we came to know that, how profundity Sikkimese people honour and respect the nature and want to live close with nature. In Sikkim, not only Lepcha people worshiped the nature but Bhutia, Rai and Limbo community also had an emotional attachment with the nature and somehow, they also worship the nature elements. Like, their religious activities have been implicated with nature that is Tree, fire, air, sky, river etc. Each



natural elements has an own significance on righteous work and with the help of these nature elements animism community perform their religious activity. Therefore, they so honour and respect the natural elements and worshiped them.

### **3.3. The Concepts of Modernization**

Talcott parsons explain modernization by reference to the onset of the process of structural differentiation, which can be done by changes in either technology or values. As a result of this, the institutions multiply, and the simple structures of traditional societies are transformed into complex ones of modern societies (Brensteint; 2002).Modernization theory is a theory used to explain the process of modernization within societies. Modernization refers to a model of a progressive transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' to a 'modern' society. The theory looks at the internal factors of a country while assuming that, with assistance, "traditional" countries can be brought to development in the same manner more developed countries have.

Modernization theory attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies, and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. Modernization theory is subject to criticism originating among socialist and free-market ideologies, world-systems theorists, globalization theory and dependency theory among others. Modernization theory not only stresses the process of change but also the responses to that change. It also looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies.

Modernization originally referred to the contrast and transition between a traditional to agrarian society and the kind of modern society that is base on trade and industry. Modern and traditional societies differ according to their complexity of organization and their rate of growth of complexity. Modern societies are much complex than traditional societies and are growing ever-more. Traditional societies are simpler and static structure and modernization is dynamic it is more useful to consider modernization as a process than as a state.

In other words, a society's resources had to be freely available to the highest bidder rather than locked into a tribal culture; groups had to identify with the nation rather than the clan, tribe, or ethnic group; social actors had to specialize in specific



roles, like highly specialized occupations, rather than being “farmers” or “craftsmen.” More specifically, in the economic sphere, modernization meant specialization of economic activities and occupational roles and the growth of markets; in terms of socio-spatial organization, modernization meant urbanization, mobility, flexibility, and the spread of education; in the political sphere, modernization meant the spread of democracy and the weakening of traditional elites; in the cultural sphere, modernization meant growing differentiation between the various cultural and value systems (for example, a separation between religion and philosophy), secularization, and the emergence of a new intelligentsia (Richard, Peet Elaine Hadtwick; 2009).

These developments were closely related to the expansion of modern communications media and the consumption of the culture created by centrally placed elites, manifested as changes in attitudes, especially the emergence of an outlook that stressed individual self-advancement (*gesellschaft*). In general, modern societies were able to absorb change and assure their own continuous growth. Such were the sociocultural differences between traditional societies (low on the evolutionary scale) and modern societies (high on the evolutionary scale) (Richard, Peet Elaine Hadtwick; 2009).

### **3.3.1. Effect of Modernization in Sikkim**

In the year 1975, the institution of the chogyal, which had survived in this Himalayan territory for over three hundred years, came to an end. In this year, the political and religious control of a particular ethnic group called the Bhutias was simultaneously abolished and the winds of democracy and development began to blow in the hills and valleys of the region. Of all the development that took place after 1975, the development of infrastructure has received one of the highest priorities and rightly so. The development of industry has also received considerable attention. But due to the peculiar topography, setting up of heavy industries in Sikkim are either of medium or small and cottage level only. Each new or expanded segments of occupation in Sikkim has created enough room for the entry of multiple of ethnic groups including the plainsmen into it (Lama; 1994).

When Sikkim merged with Indian union new dimensions or modernization has been emerged in Sikkim like industrial project, Educational system, social and cultural transformation and people started to move from one place to another.



Modernization process influences on indigenous community like traditional to agrarian society and created new cultural structural headed for the established structure.

The pervasiveness of Indian influence and dominance in Sikkim in further enhanced by the state's heavy dependence upon India for its economic development programs an even for the some regular administrative expenditures. Virtually the entire development budget is met by Indian through direct grants in aid, loans or subsidies. The overwhelming Indian role in the Sikkim economy is also evident in the private sphere (Rose; 1969).

Classical development views nature as a collection of natural resources. In this light, nature, as natural resources, is viewed as an input to production and is value and from an eco-centric perspective, rivers, and nature more generally, have intrinsic value that is independent of human use. From an anthropocentric perspective, rivers have enormous value to those who depend on them for their livelihoods. Yet, the economic analyses underlying large dam projects frequently ignore the value of nature to local people. In particular, difficulties in measuring the informal economy mean that such analyses often do not account for the value nature provides to small-scale economic activities that exist outside of the formal economy. This reinforces the perception that natural resources are underutilized (Smith, Scott W.D Pearse; 2014).

The development effects and modernization brought about multidimensional transformation in Sikkim. The standard of living reflects in terms of per capital income, production of primary as well as secondary goods, and spread of health and education services, widening of the network of communication, generation of power, etc. have all shown significant increase. These transformations brought about great impact on the traditional social systems and culture of Sikkim. With the decline of traditional society, hold of religion over the people is also weakening. The attitude of younger generation towards religion is either indifference or for some blind followers.

On the other hand traditions and culture of a traditional society should be subjected to change and modification according to a need of a situation. They should not remain static but should be dynamic. Than only traditional culture and modernization could be compatible and need not remain poll part of contradictory. Their potential conflict may be diffused through modification and adjustment and



their different roles transformed into complementary one. Through skilful management by the leading figures within society, cultural resources could be trapped to be facilitator of the meaningful modernization and development.

When reviewing the history of Sikkim it quickly becomes apparent that many religious, political, Economic and demographic changes have taken place in the areas inhabited by the Lepcha. The former Buddhist kingdom of Sikkim is now a part of India, the world's biggest democracy and administrative system to Sikkim. Nowadays, roads connect nearly every inhabited corner of the state and most houses have electrical coverage, which brings national and international radio and TV-shows into the rural houses. Further infrastructure and developmental programs are being implemented. Sikkimese people are leaving their mountain state for other places in India and the world, whereas people from other parts are searching for a place to live and work in this lush and fertile region. Even the remote Lepcha villages in North Sikkim are connected to a global economic market, mainly because of their cardamom cash crop (Bentley; 2007).

Nowadays, due to multidimensional modernization process the land of Dzongu (which is a only reserve land for the Lepchas community) used in various developments project and that development project started to convert human mind from traditional society to agrarian society. Thousands of outsiders now became a semi- permanent resident of Dzongu reserve land. Therefore, the local level conflict occurs between insider and outsider and Lepcha of Dzongu protest the development project under the banner of Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT).

The existence of craftsmanship based traditional Sikkimese cottage industries dates back to several centuries. The dexterity and skill the Lepchas showed in bamboo-craft, wood-work, spinning of loom and weaving traditional textures have been well recorded with handsome tribute in contemporary history. On the other hand, the Bhutias excelled in ancient Tibetan practice of carpet and rug weaving with muted shades and brilliant colours of pure vegetable dyes. The Nepal's are celebrated for the craftsmanship of their metalwork, silverware and wood-work. Many of these products are very exclusive, as a result of which they cannot be easily brought to the market place. Governmental patronage helped to sustain these traditional practices in a very important way (Lama; 2001).



The carpets were woven in the Maharaja's factory and two weaving schools at Lachung and Lachen were also set up to support it. The Palden Thondup Institute of Cottage Industries set up at Gangtok in 1957, trained a large number of Sikkimese boys and girls in local handicrafts including carpentry, handmade paper, carpet, doll making and handloom and weaving. This process was consolidated during various plan periods. For a village craftsman, who is essentially a cultivator, this traditional activity was primarily undertaken during the lean season for earning an additional income. But for the town based trainees, these activities were not profitable because they could not produce quality products and hence did not fetch a remunerative price. The most crucial handicap has been the very limited market, in Sikkim, for all these products which were unable to give sufficient stimulus to the industry (Lama; 2001).

Sikkim's population is predominated by those of Nepalese origin. They speak Nepali (Gorkhali) and are mostly Hindus. The Bhutias, Lepchas and Limbos are significant minorities. They speak Tibeto-Burman dialects and practice Mahayana Buddhism with large doses of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion. Since 1985, migrants from the other states of India have increased the Hindu population, while a small number of Christians and Muslims are also there. Different communities intermingle freely in Sikkim, and are seemingly inseparable to the visitor.

Migration is a movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent and semi- permanent settlement. In Sikkim outsider migrated because of the pull factor which means May includes something desirable such as nicer climate, better food supply and peaceful state and another reason is because of economic migration which means due to the development and civilization they search for better livelihood and migrated from one place to another place.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Nepal's migrated in large numbers to British territories throughout northern India to take work in factories and on plantations as well as to reclaim land as colonists at the invitation of Government frontier administrators. Nepalese people start migrated over Assam, Bengal (including Darjeeling District), Bihar and Sikkim (English; 1985). Therefore, till today in Sikkim the majority of Nepalese People increasing high in number and became dominant over indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim.



The planning process in Sikkim dates back to 1945 when the development plan was drawn by then Chogyal Tashi Namgyal. However this plan could not be put into effect for lack of fund and as a result a number of experts of the Indian Planning Commission visited Sikkim during the years 1953-54 and drafted a seven year Developmental Plans for the period of 1954-1961. For the achievement of the plan objective are: the improvement of road communication, the provision of additional education facilities, the reorganisation and expansion of health services, the completion of basic geological and forest surveys, the fostering of cottage and small scale industries, the improvement if Sikkim's agriculture and horticulture and the building of hydro- electric project (Chetteri; 2010).

So, the developmental plans invite new dimensions in Sikkim and actually that was for the betterment and advancement of the people. But side by side development brings new challenges towards Sikkimese people and the recent impact due to the development of mega hydro project which cause conflict between nature worshiper and global forces.

Of all the development that took place after 1975, the development of infrastructure has received one of the highest priorities and rightly so. The development of industry has also received considerable attention. It is also to be said that after 1957 there was a new hierarchy of officials engaged in the agriculture department in Sikkim. After 1975 services sector expanded enormously. Educated unemployment began to enter into Sikkim not only from the neighbouring Darjeeling hills and Doors but also from as far as Kerala in the south, Gujarat in the west and Jammu and Kashmir in the North West (Lama, 1994). After the Rathong Chu project was shelved primarily on environmental and eco-cultural grounds, there have been several development projects that await implementation. Among them are hydro electric power projects, the Teesta III and V (Lama; 2001).

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Teesta III has already been undertaken by evaluating 68 relevant environmental parameters representing various components of the environment, viz. local flora and fauna, environmental pollution (water, air, land and noise), aesthetics and human interest. According to the EIA, the proposed project will result in little or no impact due to: Dust or aerosols. Submergence of about 12 hectares of Chungthang area, which is of minor ecological



or socioeconomic significance. Depletion of vegetation in the Lachen and Lachung Valleys. Destruction of rare and endangered plant species in the area. Yet, the Government has not been able to communicate these findings to the people who remain unaware of the implications of these projects (Lama; 2001).

### **3.4. Conflict between Nature Worshipper and Modernization**

From the above statement what we examine that the three tribe of Sikkim somehow related with nature worshiper and they had close attachment with them. But due to the modern multidimensional opportunity traditional society decline from their cultural practices and they prefer the westernized system. Because traditional society adopt static which means certain custom and culture within society but modern society follow dynamic which bring lots of opportunity toward youngster. Therefore, traditional society faced huge challenges towards their identity and due the lack of traditional practices the indigenous inhabitant identity were diminishing from society. Simultaneously, Lepcha were indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and Lepcha were allowed that Dzongu is a reserve land for them. But due to the modern development project their holy land or reserve land become infringe. That clash of traditional society with development project creates conflict between nature worshiper and modernization. The major effect of the Hydel project can be divided into four sub sections namely, local, state, national, and the impact at the international level.

#### **3.4.1. Impact of Hydel Projects on Local Level**

The State Government of Sikkim has commenced construction on some of 25 proposed hydel (*see Table-3.1*) in the small, mountainous state. The most contentious hydel, Teesta Stage IV, is slated to be built in the Dzongu Lepcha Reserve. It consists of six projects (plus one other on the border of Dzongu at Dikchu which is near to completion). The Lepchas are protesting the dams on many grounds: that as nature-worshippers their land is sacred and should not be destroyed by development; that the Dzongu is recognized as a reserve<sup>8</sup>, and since only Lepchas who are from there are allowed to enter the reserve it should not be the site for the hydro projects. They also argue that the projects will bring thousands of workers from outside Sikkim into the Dzongu for several years while work is completed and they will outnumber the population of 7,000 Lepchas; and, since the workers have different customs and



beliefs, their dominated presence will soon dilute and destroy Lepcha culture (Little, 2008).

The protest narrative became broader. The UN Charter on Indigenous Rights was cited and the small space in front of BL House was extended to fit more hunger strikers, more banners, and more khadas. 33 The slender bodies of the relay hunger strikers, who took turns sitting out front of BL House, were dwarfed by the rhetoric that surrounded them. Their core messages of religion, tradition, culture, environment, and “ownership” prevailed and while they weren’t as explicit as the Sámi with “we came first,” there were several references to Article 371F (*see Appendix-3.I*) a law that acknowledges the first rights of the Lepcha and Bhutia tribes endeavour to protect their rights and interests (Little; 2009).

Thus, due to the mega hydel project the indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim have been face huge challenge in the matter of employment, culture and custom life and side by side on their identity issues. Because, nowadays indigenous people became minority in number and they were protest the developmental project. The workers have belonged from different background and had their own lifestyles which were different from the Lepcha community. In Dzongu Lepcha people communicate with each other through Lepcha language but after initiation of mega hydro project maximum workers tough in Hindi language. So, the hampers of communication face by local people of Dzongu reserve of Sikkim.

The Lepchas are protesting the dams on many grounds that as nature-worshippers their land is sacred and should not be destroyed by development; that Dzongu is recognised as a reserve and since only Lepchas who are from there are allowed to enter the reserve without a special permit from the government, it should not be the site for the hydro projects. 116 landowners have sold land for the Panan 280 MW project, however not all gave their land voluntarily. Opponents of the projects claim that landowners have been tricked into selling their land. “They made us sign documents which we did not know were for selling our lands,” said Passang Lepcha, a landowner from Sakyong. However other landowners say they sold their land willingly (Little; 2010).

At a meeting of 300 Dzongu residents at Nampridang 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. The Lepcha community in Dzongu is divided in their views on the development and the gap between Lepchas that do or don't oppose the projects has widened over time. Relationships between friends and family members have in some villages fractured (Little; 2010). On reserve land where the homogenous community were settle with their own culture and customs but due to the process of development project homogenous community transition into heterogeneity way.

On June 20, 2007, Lepcha leaders and youth have been on an indefinite satyagraha at Gangtok demanding the closure of the Panam hydel project in Dzongu, the Lepcha reserve. They also wish to pressurise the state government into reviewing many of the 24 hydel projects planned on the river Teesta in Sikkim as well as in north Bengal. Sitting under a white-silken 'khada' covered picture of Mahatma Gandhi and listening to sacred Buddhist chants, surrounded by their supporters, the activists continue undaunted in their struggle (Arora; 2007).

Concerned Lepcha men and women are participating in this indefinite relay Satyagraha while Buddhist lamas and Lepcha shamans are performing rituals at the venue of the hunger strike. Other Lepcha organisations including the Tarzum, the Sikkim Lepcha Bhutia Youth Association, the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Association, and others including the Buddhist sangha and tribal organisations are being propelled to take an explicit position on the hydel project, while some minority factions are getting politicised and splintering due to vested interests (Arora; 2007).

All this in the year 2008, four years since a clutch of concerned citizens of areas to be affected by hydel projects proposed on the Teesta river came together to form an ad hoc committee under the banner of (ACT) on July 18, 2004. At that time, 'the affected citizens' were concerned with hydel projects already announced- the stage III [At chungthang in north Sikkim] and stage IV [further downstream at singhik, near the north district headquarters of mangan] Tēesta Hydel – Electric Projects (HEP). ACT itself was a progression of the joint Action committee formed by the same group to protest Teesta stage v HEP in the year 2002. Stage v was commissioned in May 2008 and temporarily shut down within a month when flash floods on the Teesta and its tributaries sliced away the protection walls of the



reservoir and deposited more silt into the reservoir than was safe for it to contain (Wangchuk; 2007).

### **3.4.2. Impact of Hydel Project on State Level**

National Hydropower Commission (NHPC) has started the Teesta river project for hydro- electric power generation in Sikkim, India that is craving a path to disaster. It has been conceived without adequate participation from the people. Now the construction process has disrupted the lives of many people without just and adequate compensation. The extensive use of dynamite detonation has destroyed people's houses, their land and livelihood. NHPC project have been a disaster to the rural highlands communities whose crop productivity has decreased, agriculture fields damaged and losing water sources due to the project. This has pushed them to the edge in their struggle for survival (Dhakal; 2007).

The authorities adopt a divisive 'anti-national' rhetoric when describing those opposed to the projects. At a public hearing (Sep 18, 2006) conducted by Sikkim's State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) a woman identifies her as the Chairperson appointed by the government to the SBCB shouted in anger that: "Anyone who disturbs his project is not a Sikkimese. He might be born in Sikkim but is a useless person if he opposes such a good project. The hunger strike served many purposes. It galvanised Lepcha youth, and many young Lepchas left their studies and their village duties and moved to BL House to fight against the projects; it increased the supporter base of ACT, for the sacrifice of Dawa and Tenzing as the hunger strike continued brought many people to Gangtok to pay their respects; it very quickly raised the profile of ACT 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).

The Lepchas' hunger strike was the major news story in Gangtok. This created tension in official circles which accelerated to the point where the government demanded ACT stop the hunger strike or that they would use force to remove them from BL House. At various stages of the protest there have been threats and arrests – notably the arrest of several Lepchas who refused to stop a march to Gandhi's statue on the occasion of his birth anniversary. There were also petty harassments an officer



from the Sikkim Intelligence Bureau visited BL House each day and photographed the activists (Little; 2010).

Following the public hearing on the panan hydel project in September, ACT got busy with securing more information, networking with other protest groups and exploring legal options. Meanwhile, those who believed hydel projects would deliver development were getting restive when land acquisition and other matters took longer than anticipated. In fact, on December 3, 2006, a section of the affected land-owners of the Teesta stage III and panan hydel projects, wrote to the chief minister complaining that the hydel developer were 'dragging their feet' on deciding about the demand for negotiated rates for land acquisition (Wangchuk; 2007)

The land had been identified and landowners were willing, but the rates had not been decided yet, they wrote, demanding that this process be completed within the month. This deadline would be missed because the Dzongu hydel debate was moving into a higher gear. A day before the affected land-owners wrote the letter demanding that the hydel projects be expedited, on December 2, a new association was formed – the Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim (CLOS), an association that would play a major role in the hydel protests in the ensuing months (Wangchuk; 2007).

The organisation stated that it was formed after a meeting of 'educated' members of the community realised that important issues faced the community. CLOS announced that it would 'fight against' all ongoing and proposed hydel projects in Lepcha dominated areas, protest the delimitation decided for the Dzongu territorial constituency, 'purify' the 'pollution of the Lepchas from the socio-cultural existence that has been affected due to the wrong policies of the authorities and the so-called Lepcha association/ organisations in Sikkim' and make the people aware about the sanctity of the glorious Kabi-Lungtok convention of the thirteenth century [which marks the blood brotherhood treaty undertaken between the Lepchas and Bhutias in the Sikkim] (Wangchuk; 2007).

The Teesta hydel project protests, this ancient myth further reminds us that a furious Teesta is capable of ecological destruction in the region. Initial talks held on June 23 and June 29, 2007 at Gangtok between the government of Sikkim representatives including D D Bhutia (deputy chief minister) and the activists including the Lepcha ideologue and leader Athup Lepcha, Tseten Lepcha, Sherab



Lepcha, Sonam Paljor (the Sikkimese leader of Rathongchu hydel project movement 1993-97 that forced the government into shelving the hydel project) and other representatives were not successful. As Tseten Lepcha stated, "The activities of ACT will continue as long as the people's wishes are ignored and state sponsored harassment continues to endanger the aborigines and if the future of Sikkim and the country is put at stake for so-called economic betterment by vested elements ( Arora; 2007).

On June 29, 2007, the government representatives finally gave some of the documents demanded by the activists on June 23, 2007, but resolution looks distant until the chief minister Pawan K Chamling returns to the state. Are the indigenous Lepchas-Bhutias and the Buddhist sangha of Sikkim still powerful enough or have they been finally reduced to becoming apowerless minority in their homeland? Although a demographic minority in contemporary Sikkim, the Lepchas and the Bhutias command the cultural mandate to challenge any government. The activists' battle over their rights to their sacred Teesta River is neither ethnic cultural or environmental in nature, although they are being misrepresented as being politically motivated by the regional press. The issues are complex and require a timely resolution (Arora; 2007).

The Lepchas believe their souls go to Dzongu when they die. The soul will go to the confluence of Teesta and Rangyong rivers, the river below Passingdang. The Mun (Priestess) will take the soul through Teesta River and when it arrives at the confluence of Teesta and Rangyong it will follow Rangyong, the holiest river of the Lepchas which flows in the middle of Dzongu. But if the projects proceed, water from the Rangyong River will be diverted into underwater tunnels as part of the 280MW Panam Project. It would be incorrect to say all residents oppose all the Hydel projects (Little; 2008).

It is Stage IV that was singled out in the Carrying Capacity Study of Teesta Basin as being more objectionable to the locals than Stages III and VI. 'The local people in almost all the proposed project sites are aware of the benefits as well as the problems associated with the project. The Lepchas who have long been reduced to a minority in their land fear that the influx of project workers from outside the state will push them further and make them marginalised in their homeland. A section of the



community opines that the project will be problematic for them as it touches the Lepcha reserve of Dzongu in North Sikkim; local people are somewhat sceptical about the proposed project, however the people are to some extent ready to accept the proposed project provided certain conditions are met (Little; 2008).

### **3.4.3. Impact of Hydel Project on National Level**

It brought to Sikkim the well-organised West Bengal Lepchas who, inspired by the hunger strike and with a mandate of cultural revival, joined the fight to save the Lepchas' "motherland". Seven hundred Lepchas from West Bengal cut off Sikkim's lifeline to the rest of India by staging a blockade on the national highway. Dorjee Lepcha from the Kalimpong Lepcha Youth Association in West Bengal was quoted saying: "Dzongu is sacred to us and any attempts to destroy it will have to be stopped." Weeks later 4,000 Lepchas and supporters marched in Darjeeling. They then started their own hunger strikes in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The West Bengal Lepchas had connections in government circles in New Delhi for they have long campaigned for Lepcha language to be officially recognized by the West Bengal state government. During the first hunger strike they held a protest in New Delhi and soon after an 18-member delegation of anti-dam representatives from Sikkim and West Bengal made the first of what have become many meetings, with media, ministers and NGOs in New Delhi (Little; 2010).

ACT has received support from several influential NGOs including Kalpavriksh, an Environmental Action and Research Group in India, and from International Rivers, a global Organization whose mission is to protect rivers and defend the rights of communities that depend on them and from other NGOs which have given their support on the ground in Dzongu. In May 2008, a two day tour to study the impact of hydro-electric projects in North Sikkim was undertaken by a six member team of NGO representatives, under the banner of Independent Committee on Big Hydro Projects of Sikkim. The committee members came from 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 (Little; 2010).



The committee visited project sites at the 510 MW Teesta Stage V Project at Dikchu, the 1200 MW Teesta Stage III Project under construction in Chungthang and the 280 MW Panan Project coming up in Dzongu near Passingdang. The committee's findings were widely reported by the media. The committee asked the government to suspend the Panan for five years and to take up small hydro projects instead; Broadly, we see that the Sikkim government, partly under pressure from the central govt, has hastily committed itself to develop large number (42 on last count) of big hydropower projects, without much consultation with Sikkim citizens, without considering the implications of the projects for the local people, environment, culture, future generations and even return on investment for the state and the people. It has also not seriously assessed the options available for electricity generation or options for development in general. This is evident in the way the Teesta V has been developed, the way Panan HEP MOU has been signed and Teesta III implementation has started (Little; 2010).

On May 16, 2007, the Buddhist Sangha of north Sikkim held a meeting at Gangtok and decided to support the activists fighting against the implementation of the Teesta Project in Dzongu, the Lepcha reserve located in north Sikkim. The *Bras Mo Gshongs Gnas Yig* (the pilgrimage guide to Sikkim), which was written in the 14th century by Jigme Pawo in the Tibetan language reiterates Sikkim's status as a place of refuge for Buddhists and spiritual accomplishment and 'sadhana'. According to the guide, "Bras-mo-gshongs is very rich and fertile. The land possesses mines of several metals such as iron, copper; there are many varieties of fruits and medicines in the forest; and the forest is rich in flora and fauna (Arora; 2007).

The land is also rich and things grow naturally in this fertile valley and cultivation of crops does not require much labour. The landscape of Sikkim has everything to satisfy the needs of both human and other living beings and hence it is expected that they live in peace and harmony." The lamas warn against large-scale perturbations as this may lead to irreparable loss of hidden treasures and sacred texts concealed by the Padmasambhava, a reincarnate of Sakyamuni Buddha, in the eight-century AD during his travels and his conversion of Tibetans into the Buddhist faith (Arora; 2007).



The current performance of the sacred rituals, the gnas-gsol, by the Buddhist sangha of Dzongu at the Bhutia-Lepcha house has a strong potential to galvanise Buddhist sentiments in Sikkim and other parts of India and neighbouring countries of Nepal and Bhutan. It may be recalled that during the Rathongchu agitation similar protests and rallies by Buddhist lamas, tribal men and women, had forced the government to submit to pressure. At the height of the Rathongchu agitations in 1995, the lamas had threatened to burn their sacred scriptures if the project was implemented against their wishes (Arora; 2007).

On the 250<sup>th</sup> day of the hunger strike, ACT announced that Lepchas from Darjeeling and elsewhere would be undertaking a 'pilgrimage march' from melli in west Bengal to Dzongu in north Sikkim. Next came the resumption of the indefinite hunger strike by Dawa and Tenzing Lepcha on March 10. They were joined in by 19-year-old Gaybu Lepcha. The timing was significant again. Sikkim was expecting the Deputy Chairman, National planning commission, who arrive in Gangtok on March 14 to inaugurate the state's much-promoted international Florishow (Wangchuk; 2007).

The planning commission has been a major supporter of Sikkim's hydel aspiration. With the resumption of the indefinite hunger strike, ACT also started issuing a series of press releases explaining reason why Dzongu had a rightful claim as Holy land for the Lepchas. Significantly, the opposing arguments have not contested this claim on record, but have only highlighted that Dzongu has never been introduced as a Holy land in the past. To this, ACT has argues that the need had never arisen since Dzongu had never been under threat in the past (Wangchuk; 2007).

#### **3.4.4. Impact of Hydel Project on international Level**

Sikkimese living outside India posted their support on the blog and supporters in Sydney gathered and were photographed holding 'save the Teesta' banners against the backdrop of the harbour bridge. The photo appeared on the front page of Sikkim daily newspapers, in the magazine Talk Himalaya and the blog. This photo inspired a similar morale boosting photo taken in Melbourne, with Sikkimese and Australian Indigenous elders showing their support for ACT. Information on the blog has informed media articles, academic papers and other blogs. Perhaps the widest coverage received from the blog is a story on the hunger strike and link to the blog on



the front page of the Sikkim chapter in the latest edition of *The Rough Guide to India*. Creating a blog was not part of ACT's protest strategy, nor was it created by ACT, but it has helped to broaden the support base enormously. The blogger is a non-Lepcha Sikkimese youth who is concerned about the hydel policy in Sikkim and views the impact of hydro-electric power projects in the state as a 'Sikkim issue' not a 'Lepcha issue'. His support and work was to be crucial in getting the word out about the movement. The blogger and his friends posted videos of Dawa and Tenzing in hospital on YouTube, a story that was picked up by the influential UK Independent newspaper. BBC World online also ran the story (Little; 2010).

The use of technology to capture an audience beyond the villages and the city of Gangtok, even though not in ACT's initial plans, has 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. Technology has taken the movement global, albeit in a small way, but a small rural activist group could not have captured the attention of so many people without it (Little; 2010). Lepchas of Dzongu believe on nature worshiper and they were docile character and shy by nature but modernization project make them world renowned community through the help of technology and People from outside get to know the conflict between nature worshiper and modernization. Even social activist Meda Patker who known for Narvada valley and she came to gangtok during the second hunger strike and spend time with hunger striker.

Dawa's decision to act against the dams has had an unplanned consequence of bringing young Dzongu Lepchas back to their traditions. Their love for their holy Dzongu is now openly expressed; in stories, in songs and in the protest banners that adorn the walls of BL House. If the movement is successful it will do more than stop the destruction of nature – it may well save a culture that was threatened by the lack of a clear and present danger for the youth were gradually drifting away, influenced by the culture shown on cable television and other more dominant cultures outside Dzongu. The telling of traditional narratives – whether in traditional or 'non-traditional' ways - to and by Lepcha youth is happening as a result of this movement (Little; 2008). Because they were so love the land and try to won their protest with government through the non-violent movement and thought that after they got their land they will return there and start new businesses in organic farming and eco-



tourism; and that they will build good schools so that the next generation will be well educated without having to leave the Dzongu.

The riverside ritual was performed by a Lepcha tribal shaman on the bank of the river Teesta in Sikkim, India to observe the International Day of Action for Rivers on the 14th March. This river is being targeted with series of dams, and this is the last free flowing stretch of the river. The organization (ACT) organized the program and pledged to fight on for the protection of the river Teesta. This action is also part of a Panos South Asia's Relay's campaign to increase media coverage of critical national development issues. Sikkim Located on the flanks of the Eastern Himalayas, Sikkim was a hereditary monarchy till 1975, when it merged with India to become the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the country. The state shares its borders with Nepal in the West, Bhutan in the Southeast and China in the North. Sikkim is a land of dramatic contours with rugged mountains, deep valleys and dense forests consorting with glaciers, raging rivers and lakes and biodiversity hotspot (Lepcha; 2012).

The state has the steepest rise to an altitude over the shortest distance and climate ranges from tropical to temperate to alpine. The culture, customs and traditions of the Lepchas are inextricably linked to their deep bond with nature, but changing times and modern developments have started disturbing the delicate ecosystem with which they have lived so closely over centuries. Apart from these there are many "plainsmen" from different parts of the country settled here as well as a small community of Tibetan exiles (Lepcha; 2012).

Much of the folklores and traditional ways of life 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 biodiversity which includes the cultivation of the state-wide main cash crop, the Cardamom, but is also the very backbone of Sikkim's cultural heritage (Lepcha; 2012).

Affected people, even those supporting the hydel projects, visited the fasting ACT members. Non-Lepcha youth, uninitiated in either in either politics or protests, were so moved by the resolve of Dawa and Tenzing that they hosted and maintained a web-log [[www.weepingsikkim.blogspot.com](http://www.weepingsikkim.blogspot.com)] to keep a cyber- track of their protest. The blogspot became very popular, received several hits and documented extensive feedback from the world over. It was an embarrassing denouncement of the state's



policies and even got branded as a weapon of cyber-war at one time by the powers-that-be. It was pulled off the net by the creators at one time, but was hosted again and continues 'blogging' to this day (Wangchuk; 2007).

### **3.5. Conclusion:**

In Sikkim indigenous inhabitant originally connected with nature and they loved to live close with it. Therefore, In Sikkim indigenous people that is Lepchas, Bhutia, Rai and Limboos directly or indirectly worshipping the nature phenomenon. That's why they so love their environment and always ready to save from harm. But after Sikkim merge with Indian union new dimensions like transportation, industrialization, education and urbanization had been come over the indigenous community. Modernization term is known as changes, changing from traditional to agrarian society or Modernization is a process which brings new cultural system into established system.

Therefore, since from 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in Sikkim because of modernization term Lepchas who had been facing vanishing tribe or they were known as identity crises community. Because of these modernization procedure Animism Lepcha converted into Buddhism and Christianity. Dzongu is a reserve area for Lepchas and they said that is a Holy land for them. But, from 2004 Mega hydel project bring huge transformation on homogenous community of Dzongu. Due to the clash between homogenous societies verses modernization project conflict has been arise into four level that is local level, state level, national level and international level. At local level, Due to the mega hydel project homogenous society has faced huge challenges towards their identity.

Like, Dzongu is a reserve land of Lepchas but that project bring outsider on that holy land and created challenges in front of local youth. At state level, homogenous society started hunger strike under the banner of (ACT) in front of BL House at Gangtok. ACT general secretary Dawa Lepcha and CLOS member Tenzing Lepcha had took a 93 days hunger strike to protect their holy land. At national level, Lepcha not only from Sikkim but from west Bengal Lepcha community abundant support these protest. Meda patker respected social activist of the Narvada Bachao Aandolan came at Gangtok to meet with hunger strike members which bring encourage toward the ACT protest. At international level, Lepcha protest under the

banner of ACT which moves from local to international level with the help of media, newspaper, internet, YouTube, BBC world news and web-log through the help of these technology outsider Lepcha also joined hand by hand with homogenous community.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Impact of Modernization: A Case Study of Dzongu Reserve in Sikkim**

## CHAPTER 4

### IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION: A CASE STUDY ON DZONGU RESERVE OF SIKKIM

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the role of the affected citizen of Teesta (ACT) and Homestay on Dzongu reserve which tries to bring down the ways of impact of modernization by controlling the both pull and push factors that promote the impact of modernization in the region. The organization effectively exposes the major issues related to the impact of modernization such as exploitation, deprivation, and dominant identity. Through its preventive process Lepchas youth Association, CLOS, SOD and ACT organization further actively involves in the efforts to limit the threat towards the impact of modernization. It also tries to maintain the gap between the insider and outsider Lepchas through its banner of the affected citizen of Teesta. It is evident in the discussion of this chapter that ACT, Homestay has work eradicate the Environmental disaster on reserve land and has proved that the banner of affected citizen of Teesta can play a critical role to addressing the issues on impact of modernization project.

#### 4.2. Historical Development

In addition to Dzongu being declared a Reserve for the Lepchas, the Lepchas were acknowledged to be Sikkim's "original indigenous inhabitants" by a Supreme Court verdict on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1993. The State Government also granted the Lepchas the status of a Primitive Tribe Group in November 2006. The Dzongu is located in the district of North Sikkim. As already mentioned the Dzongu is a Lepcha reserve created to preserve the social homogeneity of this small community with its unique religio-cultural practices intricately related to their pristine natural surroundings.

The Dzongu was created as Lepcha reserve in the erstwhile Chogyal era when Monarchy prevailed over this small state. The Dzongu covers approximately 78 sq km of geographical area and extends between 27°28' – 27°38' N lat. and 88°23' – 88°38' E longitude, its altitude ranges from 700 m to 6000 m above msl and is spread on a hilly terrain having dense forests. The Dzongu is roughly triangular in shape, bounded by the river Teesta on the south-east, River Talung on the north-east. Towards the west



lies the southern part of the Himadri (greater Himalayan ranges) where Mt. Kanchenjunga (8,598 m, world's 3rd highest Peak) is located (Subrata; 2013).



Source Google Earth

#### **Map 4.1 Coverage of Geographical Area under Dzongu Reserve of Sikkim**

The geographical position of Dzongu has accentuated its isolation from the rest of Sikkim. The area has a unique picturesque landscape boasting of diverse snow covered mountains intersected with steep and narrow valleys and gorges that are well drained by swift flowing mountainous streams rich in hydro-power potential. Owing to dense forest cover, the area experiences showers almost throughout the year. The area can be divided into three climatic zones viz. sub-tropical zone, temperate and



alpine zones that is extremely rich in bio- diversity. It borders the Kanchenjunga Bio reserve and has some of the ancient Buddhist monasteries and temples (Subrata; 2013).

The Lepchas believe that the First human Lepcha was created by the idbu dey rum in the mountain of Dzongu. It is cradle of Lepcha civilization as all Lepchas of the world are supposed to have originated from there. Since Lepchas are originally nature worshippers, all the lakes, peaks, trees are treated as scared; once the Lepcha dies his soul is taken to the peak in Dzongu region. where he or she is united with the ancestors. Since Lepchas are believed to have originated from Dzongu and then migrated to other places. Each and every Lepchas feels that they actually belong to the Dzongu or Lepcha. The most important factor can be attributed for the following. Modernization: As the populace become more modernized they started to wear western cloths and other form of attire, started to use more of other languages, dance and music also got changed etc. The designs of the houses have changed, food habit have changed Religious conversion: The Lepcha community got converted to two other religions namely Buddhism and Christianity which result into discontinuation of their old practices. Development; in pursuit of development most of the Lepcha land had been taken over by private companies and government agencies.

The Lepchas are poor agriculturists, their labours in this art being confined to the careless growing of rice, India corn, murwa and a few vegetables, of which the bringal, cucumber, and capsicum are the chief. Their habits are incur- ably erratic: they do not form permanent villages, and rarely remain longer than three years in one place, at the expiration of which they move into a new part of the forest, sometimes near, often distant, and there go through the labour of clearing a space for a house, building al new one, and preparing the ground for a crop. The latter operations consist in cutting down the smaller trees, lopping off the branches of the large ones, which are burnt, and scratching the soil with the " ban," after' which, on the falling of a shower of rain, the seed is thrown into the ground. Their houses are built entirely of bamboo, raised about five feet from the ground, and thatched with the same material, but a smaller species, split up. This roofing is peculiar to this part of the country; it is an excellent one, and especially when exposed to smoke; lasts about five years.



This resulted in loss of traditional form of farming and also infusion of people from other area to the Lepcha habitat resulting into mixed demography. The old ways of life was adjusted with the life style of those who came from other areas. Diminishing growth rate of Lepcha's population in comparison to other communities had also contributed significantly in neglecting the usage of Lepcha language in government office and in private; as a result Lepcha people receive less importance in political as well as in government system. Threat on the issue of Lepcha identity has been very serious and persistent. It is almost an irreversible process as all the factors are social, economic and political dynamics which keeps changing. Lepcha language can play an important role in preventing the extinction of its identity.

Table 4.1. presenting the chrenology of events related to Lepcha protest of Hydel power projects in Sikkim during the period between 2003 and 2008.

| <b>4.1. Chronology of events related to Lepcha Protest of Hydel Power (2003 to 2008)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| During the year, 2003  | The first movement started and Lepchas of Dzongu opposing the project by holding small meeting in the villages.  |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> July, 2004  | Lepchas of Dzongu fight back the project under the banner of affected citizen of Teesta (ACT)                    |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> June, 2006   | First hearing for Teesta stage III held at chungthang in north Sikkim.   |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> September, 2006  | ACT seen as an elitist group of educated Lepcha group.   |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> September, 2006   | Joint inspection team set up of survey at passangdang lower Dzongu.  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> December, 2006   | Affected land owner of Teesta stage III wrote a complaining letter to chief minister about the related for land. |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> December, 2006   | A new association was formed i.e. Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim (CLOS).  |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> December, 2006  | ACT announced that stage a protest rally at Gangtok.   |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> May, 2007   | Buddhist Lama formed their group, i.e. Sangha of Dzongu (SOD).   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 20 <sup>th</sup> June, 2007  | Dawa Lepcha and Tenzing Lepcha started hunger strike in front of BL House.   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> July, 2007   | West Bengal Lepcha youth was stage a traffic protest nearly two hours.   |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> July, 2007  | 500 strong delegations from Dzongu came at Gangtok to call chief minister.   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> August, 2007   | All India Lepchas association in a statement issues.   |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> September, 2007  | The state government constituted the review committee.   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> October, 2007  | CLOS AND SOD had a joint rally in front of BL house at Gangtok.  |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> October, 2007   | An official delegation of Dzongu met the chief minister with their demands.  |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> January, 2008   | Four labourers who work on the Dzongu bank of the Teesta were assaulted and three Lepcha youth were booked for the assault and arrested.                                   |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> June, 2008  | Lepcha of Sikkim completed their one year hunger strike.   |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> April, 2008   | 20 pages report of Review committee was tabled and accepted by the state cabinet.  |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> June, 2008  | The secretary, power & Energy Department, wrote to the ACT president informing him that the state Government had decided to scrap four Hydel projects proposed for Dzongu. |
| Source: Pema Wangchuk Article "Lepcha and their hydel protest projects". |  |

### 4.3. Effect of Modernization

Modernizing agents have played a vital role in eroding the Identity of the Lepcha. Which ultimately lead to a conflict between those who believe in sanctity of the place and original habitat of the Lepchas and those who believe that the only way forward is through bringing project? But, Modernization in itself is much need for development of any society including the Lepchas. However, the Lepchas been relatively docile and God fearing people, who have not been able to sustain the impact of various form of modernization. The carrying capacity of the place and the people



are not equipped to face such inroads in their way of life. Moreover there is also the issue of defining modernization in context of the remote areas.

The Modernization project has divided the minuscule Lepcha community. Largely against the agents, but again large numbers being agent of the government will support globalizing even at cost of their own identity. The effort to prevent the Lepcha culture from vanishing is a continuous process with large number of concerned people working tirelessly towards it. It is the ones who for economic reason who disturb such efforts that have caused more harm. The Lepcha of the world mainly from Darjeeling hills, Nepal, Bhutan and all over the world have supported the natural way of life for the Lepcha. Devastating level, as mentioned earlier large tracts of land have been taken away large number of people from other areas will settle down etc. The ACT has provided free information to the people about the pros and cons of mega projects, which will have a serious impact of the lives of the Lepchas in coming future. ACT has succeeded in awakening the consciousness of the people to deal with such a situation

After initiation of mega hydro project on Dzongu reserve of Sikkim Lepcha of Dzongu organised ad hoc committee under the banner of affected citizen of Teesta on July 18, 2004. ACT started to collecting documents and researching hydel prospects and threats. On December 2, a new associations was formed the Concerned Lepchas of Sikkim (CLOS), an associations that would play major role in the hydel protests in the ensuing months. Just as CLOS was formed ahead of the rally proposed for December 12, on May 10, Buddhist monks representing monasteries in Dzongu gather at Passanding village in upper Dzongu and formed Sangha of Dzongu (SOD). The protest reaches the capital, on June 20, 2007, ACT, supported by CLOS and SOD, began a hunger strike at Bhutia- Lepcha house on Tibet road. ACT general secretary Dawa Lepcha and CLOS member Tenzing Lepcha sat indefinite hunger strike while and their hunger strikes announced that their protest would continue till all the hydel projects proposed for Dzongu were scrapped and others in North Sikkim reviewed (Wangchuk; 2007).

On July 11, 2007, Lepcha youth from Darjeeling district of West Bengal, led the Rong Ong Prongzom (Lepcha Youth Organisation) descended on Sikkim's sole lifeline to the rest of the country – National Highway 31A- and staged a protest there



which held up traffic for nearly two hours. The protest was staged on the west Bengal side of the National Highway just beyond the south Sikkim border. On the 250<sup>th</sup> day of the hunger strike, ACT announced the Lepchas from Darjeeling and elsewhere would be undertaking a pilgrimage march from melli in west Bengal to Dzongu in North Sikkim. Significantly, the opposing arguments have not contested this claim on record, but have only highlighted the Dzongu has never been introduced as a Holy Land in the Past. To this, ACT has argued that the need had never arisen since Dzongu had never been under threats in the past (Wangchuk; 2007).

The appeal by Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) presented here is an effort to notice how a miniscule section of civil society is keeping alive the conscience of the entire state. The general population, and by extension its government, seem to be wallowing in a mire brought on by self aggrandizement. Ecology and environment, culture and ethnicity, which are so wonderfully woven onto the identity of Sikkim, are relegated to provide a vague backdrop to the careless and causal push at exploitation both of resources and statues. And it seems the government is leading the way here (Singh; 2013).

Panan is one of the more disputed projects proposed for Dzongu – an area not only sacred but also falling dangerously close to the Khangchendzonga National Park, an area rich in flora and fauna. Given the physical, topographical nature of so many of Sikkim's holiest places – and the concurrent identification of the Lepcha and Bhutia with those sites – the potential impact of the current development proposals on Dzongu's religious identity and sanctity is what causes such great anxiety among many. In recent months, Sikkim's Buddhist community and clergy have become perhaps the most ardent forces in protesting the construction of the power projects. SIBLAC has forced the Government to abandon two hydropower projects viz. Lithang and Tingting over Rathong chu River on religious ground and another project viz. Tashiding Hydro Power Project over Rathong chu is under the examination of Sikkim High Court. Sikkim High Court has admitted the Writ by Sri Tenzing Bhutia and other challenging the legality of Tashiding Hydro Power Project on the ground of religion and environmental laws (Singh;2013).

Throughout four district of Sikkim, Dzongu which is cones under north district of Sikkim where there are still have a genuine Lepcha who have a more knowledge



about their own culture in terms of oral traditions and ritual practices. Dzongu takes up a special place in the discussion of Lepcha culture and preservation of Lepcha traditional life. Therefore, the initiation of development project brought huge modernization impact on Dzongu reserve land of Sikkim. Modernization impact brought dynamic hamper on local people's way of lifestyles. Because Dzongu is a reserve Land for Lepcha community and the entire resident were Lepcha people and they speak only Lepcha language but due to the development project thousands of outsiders came to that land and mostly they speak Hindi languages.

Therefore, the most and foremost hamper the Lepcha of Dzongu face on conversation with outside people and the changes of in the Lepcha community over the past centuries have left traces on Lepcha culture. Buddhism and Christian religion introduce new values and beliefs, shaking the very foundations of the Lepcha community. Modernization is needed, but the same time feared, because it brings new ideas and values and forces people to leave the villages in search of higher education and employment.

**Table 4.2. Issues and Outcome of the Lepcha Protest of Hydel Power Project in Sikkim.**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Stated objectives | To preserve their holy land, traditional culture or for reserve land. |
| Additional issues | To protect their identity and preserve their identity                 |
| Water related     | Mega Hydro power project  |
| Non-water         | Impact of environment and 18 <sup>th</sup> sep 2011 earthquake        |

#### **4.4. Impact of Hydel Projects in Dzongu Reserve**

According to the Sikkim's history, Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepcha community which in turn restrain a people belonging outside of Dzongu even Sikkimese people not from Dzongu are required to obtain a permit to visit the reserve land. But, over the year a status of being reserved land for Lepcha have often been ignored or overlooked. For instance, the initiation of mega hydro project has brought thousands of outsiders at reserve land and still they were working out there. Lepcha so love and respect the nature but after the initiation of power project the sanctity of that land have been infringed or destroyed by the modernization project.



Lepcha worshiped the natural phenomenon and after having developmental project at Dzongu reserve the genuine reality and purity of environment turned into development process. The Lepcha of Dzongu faced huge challenges and problem after the initiation of hydro project. Therefore, the Lepchas community first faced the environmental impact and second was on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011 disaster of earthquake.

#### **4.4.1. Environmental Impact of Hydel Power Project.**

Lepchas were an animist people and according to their myth that mother creator create human being from fresh snow ball and after their death their soul will be remain on same place i.e. at mount Kanchenjunga. But that land has to face huge challenges due to the establishment of mega hydro project. First major impact would be the loosing of their land, which is their main source of livelihood and once they lose their land they migrate to other areas and adopt relatively new way of life. Once life style is changed the very essence of one's culture, convention, religion also changes. Particularly, Lepchas in Dzongu are still known as the nature worshiper but due to developmental project like the mega hydro project their trees, land, river and sacred places has been completely obliterated. Religious value system of homogenous society also had to undergo through drastic changes due to these new dimensions which surround them.

Presently there are at least 4 hydro electric projects in Sikkim being constructed in violation of the apex court's order; these are being constructed within 10 km of eco sensitive zones around the Khangchendzonga National Park and the Fambonglho wildlife sanctuary without the mandatory approval of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). These are the namely the Teesta stage III by Teesta urja, the Dickhu HEP by sneha kinetic and Tashidhing by shiga energy. The cavalier of both state and the private developers is further elaborated by the fact that none of them have approached NBWL for the necessary clearance. This has been corroborated by NBWL itself of team of which was in Sikkim recently (Singh; 2013).

In addition, the construction process has had extensive negative environmental impacts adding to the already fragile mountain ecosystem. The traditional livelihood of the mountain people are shattered already, their houses are cracking down due to the force of dynamite blasting, which have further weakened road network and its surrounding mountain belts causing massive landslides and soil erosion. Sikkim is an



example of how indifferent and ignorant Government policies could ultimately destroy livelihood of the people (Dhakal; 2007). Miss Sonam Doma, a resident of Sudur village at lower Dzongu said that the development project had a connection with environmental impact on Dzongu. Because Dzongu is a reserve land for Lepcha and they were nature worshiper and their emotional attachment with nature has been vanished through the development project. When their land sold out for the project their natural phenomenon also dissolved under the project of mega hydro project.

Each sacred space has a legend attached to it like the aboriginal 'Dreaming'. These legends are stories that are intrinsically linked to the identity of the Lepchas and characterize their perception towards nature and its components. The necessity to preserve the sanctity of a sacred space leads to conservation of the same. The specific sites mentioned below have not been selected on the basis of any criteria but have been chosen for documentation mainly because of the easy access and availability of information through village elders in the limited time and resources available. There are of course innumerable sacred sites within Dzongu, some of which have been documented extensively; all of which point to the intricate link between the Lepcha identity and his surrounding natural environment, efforts to protect and preserve which are driven by not only the fear of irreparable ecological damage to the fragile ecosystem but also by an ever increasing fear of losing their identity with it forever<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4.4.3. Hydel Power Projects and Earthquake Disaster**

As per the government of Sikkim data the magnitude of 18th Sep 2011 earthquake was 6.8 in Richter scale and with focal depth of 19.7kms, the epicentre being at 27.72 N, 88.06 E, in Sikkim-Nepal border region and the timing was 18.10hrs. The most devastating earthquake struck our state and since the situation at Chungthang the grand zero, and other several affected several affected area like Bey, Sakong- Pentong in Dzongu, Lachen & Lachung is of complete neglect and utter mismanagement, it became necessary for the affected families to dwell upon the reasons due to which the Saga of suffering has continue. Therefore, the argument that there is no linked between the earthquake and Hydro project is completely wrong. It is

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<sup>1</sup> On the Lepcha struggle against the hydropower projects: [www.actsikkim.com](http://www.actsikkim.com)  
[www.savetheteesta.com](http://www.savetheteesta.com)



proven any doubt that the severity of destruction in chungthang and surrounding areas was compounded by the destructive Mega hydroelectric power project<sup>2</sup>.

Incidentally, it is this factor which imparts to the Himalayas a great deal of 'instability'. The frequent earthquakes in the north-eastern and northern parts of the country are the result of the unknown convolutions of nature, deep in the bowels of the earth, a major factor being the constant, unrelenting pressure of the erstwhile Indian plate against the erstwhile Asian plate. This point has very great significance for our approach to many aspects of Indian life and development programmes (Ghosh, 1992).

People are not against the hydel power projects as such. They are against the way these projects are done, the casualness with which the environmental impact assessment is conducted and clearances are given and the way project developers are selected. The location, size and scale of this project, the knowledge and experience of these project developers, the capabilities of project regulating agencies and the way projects have been designed and the technology used have been question all across the fragile Himalayan ecology. Unfortunately, in many cases these issues come up for public discussions only in the aftermath of disasters<sup>3</sup>. So, from the above statement we can see the somehow connection of earthquake with Mega Hydro Project.

The recent earthquake in 2011 further suggests that the Dzongu is not suitable for big hydro power projects which envisage heavy construction for damming and tunnelling the rivers through the fragile mountainous terrain of Sikkim extremely prone to earthquakes. Field investigation to this area suggests that the Lepchas are reeling under the losses incurred in Cardamom cultivation whose productivity has fallen. This is the main cash crop of the Lepchas and the Lepchas are looking for other alternatives in order to curb the disorder created in their socio-economic life by the hydro power projects in their area. Some of the settlements located in the vicinity of the existing power plants of Teesta stage V are experiencing reduction in crop production especially oranges. New landslide scars are appearing in the fragile hill slopes and some of houses in the small Lepcha villages are reporting development of

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<sup>2</sup> Tseten Lepcha working president, affected citizen of Teesta (ACT) [www.actsikkim.com](http://www.actsikkim.com) chungthang, north Sikkim.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mahendra P. Lama on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 in the Hindu, New Delhi.



cracks due to vibration caused by high power blasting associated with the projects, drying up perennial streams, landslides etc have been reported from this area - Bhasin. Due to tunnelling of the river large quantities of muck has been deposited in the river restricting its flow and increasing the threat to downstream area (Subrata; 2013).

The Lepchas feel that the gas used in blasting has adversely affected the productivity of the Cardamom by about 50%. Dust pollution is rampant affecting the flowering and productivity of fruits. The Lepchas residing in the area are aware of the threat associated with the development of hydro-power projects and at present are concerned for their future and their rights. They have formed a committee called the Affected citizen of Teesta (ACT) to seek redressal for the problems faced by them in the Dzongu, protests are on as the Lepchas are aware of their rights as an indigenous people to be protected by the Indian Constitution, the Supreme court and above all the Human right commission which ensures that the small indigenous communities like the Lepchas have the right to control their resources for their own needs and interest (Subrata; 2013).

#### **4.4.4. Displacement and Resettlement**

As we have already discussed above that after the initiation of mega hydro project at Dzongu, people has been facing environmental disaster and the trauma of 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011 earthquake. This developmental project has indeed compelled the resident of Dzongu to leave their land either by willingly (selling their land to Hydel project company) or by forcefully (due to 18<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2011 earthquake and other developmental impact) and had to migrate to other places.

Though, Dzongu has been declared as a reserve land for Lepcha community but the modernization project brought vast changes on homogenous society. Therefore, the term of displacement and resettlement has emerged on homogenous society. This has further been substantiated during my field survey, when I observed that many households in Dzongu sold their land and migrate at Depu Dara near Singtam where they are working in NHPC tunnel.

When mega hydro project established on Dzongu than ACT vice-president (Dawa Lepcha) and Tenzing (Member of CLOS) took initiative to protest the project through Non-violent way. Along with these two Lepcha heroes, the Lepcha youth also joined them and staged a hunger strike in front of BL House of Gangtok. But, the

hunger strike itself poses a great challenge before the organizing committee. Since, most of the Dzongu people are farmer and depend on agricultural production for their livelihood, so in the absence of their male member, these families faced a lot of hardship. This has also resulted into the hindrance of their movement from Dzongu to Gangtok.

Tseten Lepcha says that after 1975, Sikkim made a tremendous progress in the field of the transportation, industrialization and modernization also came in Sikkim which simultaneously brought outsider settler in Sikkim. Therefore, due to the modernization impact the indigenous people of Lepcha especially residing in Dzongu suffer more than others residents in Sikkim.

Lepcha of Dzongu worshiped the nature phenomena but after having development project the event of any defilement of a sacred space, there is no organized mechanism to charge penalty or issue a punishment. It is mostly believed that the local deities (of the respective lake, forest, spring or field) will issue the retribution. Locals cite numerous examples of people falling sick because they polluted a lake or damaged a sacred tree etc. The process of collectively drawing a set of rules and regulations to protect the sacred sites has not taken place presumably because the faith in supernatural retribution is so strong. Therefore, the Lepcha of Dzongu said, that after the initiation of developmental project at holy land their sanctity turn into smog. Due to the push factor some Lepcha of Dzongu migrated over Gangtok and settled for permanently.

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 2009, Homestay                     | Tenzing Lepcha established Homestay at Hee-Gyathang lower Dzongu.                  |
| 2010, Homestay                     | Gyatso Lepcha established Homestay at upper Dzongu                                 |
| 2008, scrap hydro project.         | That is Rangyong, Ringpi, Lingzya and Rukel hydro power projects.                  |
| Organic plantation                 | Cultivate Orange tree and cardamom.  |
| 2006, Lepcha community established | Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum (RMRT).<br>Renjong Mutanchi Rong Ong Shezum (RMROS). |



|                    |        |   |
|--------------------|--------|---|
| some associations. | active | Lepcha Students Associations (LSA) and Mutanchi Lom Aal Shemzum (MLAS). |
|--------------------|--------|---|

#### 4.5. Outcome of the Conflict between Nature Worshiper and Modernization

Lepcha of Dzongu were a docile people and shy by nature. They lived in homogenous society with their own customs and culture. But their homogenous society got fractured through the initiation of Mega hydro project. Lepcha protest developmental project under the banner of Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT) and that homogenous community protest by taking Non-violent movement. Lastly, that movement plays important role into four levels that is from local to state, state to national and national to international level. So, Lepcha people were animism and to protect their identity they fight back with the plan of state government.

During the field visit, one of the respondent Sonamith Lepcha said that their half of the land (which is a reserve land for Lepcha) was sold out for the development purposes and nowadays the remaining land they used on the cultivation of organic plantation. So, from that they want to protect their reserve land and preserve their traditional culture practices. Because Lepcha were a nature worshiper and they had been growing up the emotional attachment with environment. Another respondent, Tseten Lepcha (who is a vice-president of ACT) said that out of six mega hydro project on north Sikkim two projects was scrap through the protest of ACT.

Among the first successes for the new party was the entry of prominent social and environmental activist Dawa Lepcha, who protested against the six proposed hydel power projects in the Dzongu area of North Sikkim, known as Lepcha Reserve. Lepchas, the original inhabitants of Sikkim, believe and treat this area with sanctity and worried about the adverse environmental effects of these projects. Following large-scale protests led by Dawa Lepcha and Tenzing Lepcha who went on hunger strike, the government cancelled five of the six projects. The supports of the social forum, Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT), and Dawa's candidature from Dzongu have given the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) a much-needed toehold in North Sikkim (Gurung; 2014). Most of the Lepcha of Dzongu belong from the farmer background and they were a traditional minded people and through the political

technique Dawa Lepcha would like to promote the environment protest against mega hydro projects.

Out of the total hydro-power projects eight projects are directly or indirectly associated with the Dzongu area where 38 Lepcha villages are located. This area has been assessed to have a capacity of around 2500 MW of electricity. The Teesta stage III, IV, and V projects located in Panam, Rangyong, Rukel, Ringpi and Lingzya are directly or indirectly going to affect the Dzongu. Out of the 38 Lepcha villages located in the Dzongu reserved area the Dzongu village is the holiest place of all which is being directly affected by the Teesta V project ( Subatra; 2013).

The hydro power projects here will take away the holy Teesta from the Lepchas as the projects here are “run of the river” where the river water is diverted through long tunnels before the water is dropped back into the river at downstream location. This leads to most of the river flowing through tunnels and the river disappears from its original course, thus restricting rituals associated with the river (Subrata; 2013).

The outcome of the conflict between modernization and nature worshiper is summarised and presented in *Annex Table 4.3* which is self explanatory.

#### **4.6. Lesson Learned**

Teesta stage IV project general manager, D Chattopadhyay is quoted as having said, “if the supreme court guidelines and MoEF guidelines are enforce, then not single project can be constructed in a small project can be constructed in a small state like Sikkim (Singh, 2013). Therefore, Lepchas of Dzongu were learned so many things after having environmental disaster through the process of developmental project. Hydel project occupy the land which was belong for their ancestors. Lepcha of Dzongu will like to utilise their land by established Homestay and through the cultivation of organic vegetables. Lepchas of Dzongu will like to give message to everyone that to bring developmental on society was does not by destroying environmental phenomenon but by using their own land they can bring development on society. Therefore, Tenzing Lepcha who is a president of (CLOS) and Gyatso Lepcha who was recently awarded with the best Homestay award by the state



government on World Tourism day they both take initiative to open a traditional Homestay at Dzongu.

Tenzing Lepcha says that the objectives of Homestay is an ensconced in the lush green hills of Dzongu beside the gurgling Rongyung Chu River and commanding a magnificent view of Mt Khangchendzonga, Mayal Lyang Homestay is far removed from the dust and noise of urban existence and promises visitors the magical experience of living in the lap of Sikkim's pristine natural surroundings. Aimed at promoting sustainable development which does not come at the cost of destroying the fragile ecology, culture and tradition of Sikkim, the Homestay has received much appreciation lately with features in national and international publications.

They always felt that development can be achieved without destroying our fragile ecology, culture and tradition. This is how we came up with the idea of Mayal Lyang. We want that everyone to see how beautiful this place is and how intricately our way of life is linked to the nature. We strongly feel that such a venture can bring sustainable economic development to Dzongu and can empower our community, without affecting the pristine nature around us in any way. This is our opinion is the best way to move forward and ensure that we pass on this beautiful gift of god to our future generations. We believe that conservation of nature is equally important to all of us because we all live under the same sky and walk the one earth.

Gyatso Lepcha who is ACT activist-cum-entrepreneur and his wife Samsay started Homestay on 2010, their objectives is they believe that to know a place, first we have to its people. The aim of the Homestay is that their guests understand their culture, traditional, the surrounding they live in, and everything else that is so dear to them. They want that everyone to see how beautiful this place is and how intricately our way of life is linked to the nature. Mr Gyatso Lepcha had a website<sup>4</sup> for Homestay and through the help of website Gyatso reaches out to the potential visitors who can also plan their itineraries and make booking online.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.mayallyang.com](http://www.mayallyang.com) and most of the 80% of his guests make bookings online.

The food served to visitors are 100% organic grown in the family's own kitchen garden or collected from the forests and farms of Dzongu. In fact visitor can even take a tour of the farms where they can sample for themselves the farming and food preparation. Among the recreational activities on offer is a complete tour of Dzongu. Visitor can also visit at the Rongyung Chu River, visit monasteries, go for short hikes, visit the hot springs or simply relax amidst the Home stay's green surroundings and soak in the breathtaking view. Cultural shows are also arranged depending upon the number of visitors. Since it started in 2010, Mayal Lyang has hosted many groups of visitors. But the high point certainly was when the royal family of which was later featured by the popular History channel. This ecotourism venture is being eagerly sought out by those desiring the real Sikkim.

Through the established of Homestay at Dzongu Mr. Gyatso Lepcha and Tenzing Lepcha would like to give message towards Lepcha youth that to preserve and to protect Lepcha identity first we have to practice our traditional way of life. The mottoes of that Homestay are those tourists who went there for their visiting they have a place to stay there that is (Homestay) and Lepcha youth serve them through physically and through moral support. Not only through Homestay the Lepcha of Dzongu want to protect their reserve land but through plantation of orange and cardamom tree they tried to preserve their traditional life.

The Renchong Mutanchi Ringring Kurzum (Sikkim Lepcha Literacy Association) supported the order Lepcha associations in Gangtok, but was not active at the time. Other associations were previously established, but have since ceased to exist, whereas new ones have been founded since 2006. The large number of associations demonstrates their importance for the community, but the continual fluctuations of associations, fractions and committees are also signs of their weakness. These different Lepcha associations are all involved in activities to try and enhance the social and economic conditions of the Lepcha of Sikkim and they preserve, promote and modify Lepcha culture (Bentley; 2007).

The RMRT and the RMROS are strongly active in preserving the various political rights the Lepcha have been granted in the past century and in requesting new protection, such as the primitive tribal status and fifty percent of the BL (Bhutia and Lepcha) reservation. Mutanchi Lom Aal Shezum (MLAS) was only association



embedded in Lingthem village and the Lepcha community of Dzongu and it is often simply called the 'NGO'. The Lepcha community in Dzongu embraces most activities of the MLAS, because they combine cultural enhancement projects with programs for livelihood generation and health improvement (Bentley; 2007).

Nowadays, ACT call their protest towards development project is silent protest and with the preservation of own land they tried to protect their reserve land. Homestay is a vigorous and freshly example of silent protest of ACT and Lepcha of Dzongu learned so many lessons after having conflict between nature worshiper and modernization. Development is a needed possession in every sphere and which bring both advantages and disadvantages situation on established value system. Therefore, mega hydro project which was constructed on Dzongu reserve of Sikkim brought so many disadvantages situation among the Lepcha community. Though development project is betterment for the society and which socialised human life in different way. But most of the noticeable point, during the time of Chogyal and democratic set up Lepcha got authority that Dzongu to be their reserve land.

That same reserve land used for the development project and the attachment of Lepcha toward their nature became infringed. Today, Lepcha of Dzongu protest the development project by establishing Homestay (which vision is to portion the visitor through Lepcha's traditional way) and through cultivate organic plantation on remain land. Dams and development conflict brought solidarity among Lepcha of Sikkim, Darjeeling and rest of the world. Nowadays, among Lepcha youth generation the curiosity toward their traditional way of life has been rise up and recently they open new webpage i.e. "U Made Us Proud" where only Lepcha's oral, traditional and modern historical collection are recorded.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

Lepcha of Dzongu were animism by religion and they had a homogenous society and around 7000 Lepcha population reside on reserve area of Dzongu which is located in north-east district of Sikkim. Lepcha clam themselves an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and during the time of Chogyal that Dzongu were declared a reserve land for Lepcha community. Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu try to preserve, promote and modify their traditional way of life. But in Sikkim, a new class of people has emerged who cut across the boundaries of caste, ethnicity, languages and religion.

The emergences of this class are facilitated by equality of educational and occupational opportunity. The Lepcha of Sikkim are the inhabitant of the society and had solidarity behind all its socio-economic, educational and political activities. The Lepcha of Sikkim realised the long term harmful effects of the new class of people and have become conscious of the need to preserve their traditional and their cultural practices.

Dzongu is a reserve and holy land for Lepcha community but after the initiation of mega hydro project the purity of that land turned into impurity. Due to the developmental project, the Lepcha of Dzongu faced environment impact and natural disaster on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2011. The environmental impact create displacement term among the homogenous society and Lepcha of Dzongu leave their place by willingly and by forcefully. Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu protest the developmental project under the banner of affected citizen of Teesta.

The initiation of mega hydro project creates conflict between natural worshiper and developmental project and that conflict brought solidarity among Lepcha community. Through the mega hydro project Lepcha of Dzongu learned numerous things and established most active associations within Dzongu that is Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum (RMRT). Renjong Mutanchi Rong Ong Shezum (RMROS). Lepcha Students Associations (LSA) and Mutanchi Lom Aal Shemzum (MLAS). Those organizations were actively preserving their various socio- economic, political and traditional way of life.

Within Dzongu people became more conscious and concerned about their identity and they started to preserved their reserved land through Homestay and cultivate organic plantation. They always felt that development can be achieved without destroying our fragile ecology, culture and tradition. Therefore, Gyatso Lepcha and Tenzing Lepcha took initiative and established home stay at upper Dzongu and Hee-Gathang lower Dzongu.



## CHAPTER 5

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Sikkim is a 22<sup>nd</sup> state of Indian union after the half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on 16<sup>th</sup> may 1975. Lepcha claim themselves as an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and according to the Sikkim chronicles; the Lepcha were a primitive tribe of Sikkim. According to the myth of Lepcha, the mother creator has made human beings from the fresh snow ball and after their death the soul of Lepcha will remain at Mt. Kanchenjunga. Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu dearly love that place and worshiped by heart and they are also known as animism. But Lepcha has been facing a drastic and dynamic transition on their traditional culture and practices. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan red hat followers migrated in Sikkim and slowly indigenous people converted themselves into Buddhist religion due to influence of the red hat monks. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Christianity also came into Sikkim and majority of animism Lepcha converted themselves into Christianity. So, today Lepcha in Sikkim are at the verge of extinction and undergoes through a very difficult period in its long history in regard to the preservation of their rich and unique identity.

When the influence of cultural modernization penetrated into Sikkim society, the whole way of living of an indigenous people of Sikkim began to undergo through change. An indigenous people of Sikkim started to adopt western's culture and way of living for instance began to wear a western style of clothing. The major threat to the existence of Lepcha community is closely linked with the lack of languages which poses a major impact on identity crisis of Lepcha community. Today, most of the younger generation of Lepcha people used to speak other languages except their own languages, for example; Bhutia and Nepali. This is mainly because of ever growing influences of other communities on Lepcha community. Historically, the Lepcha were inhabitant of Sikkim and were known as an animist by religion but after 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Lepcha community divided into three religions that is Animism, Buddhist and Christianity.

Although, during the time of Chogyal the Dzongu were declared as reserved land for Lepcha residing there and even made a law to take prior permit for other Sikkimese people belonging to outside the area of Dzongu. However, Lepcha of



Dzongu has been exploited from their own rights, for instance; the hydel project company preferred to employ the outsider workers in the project than the local people. Consequently, Dzongu which has been declared as reserved land are now being flooded with outsider workers due to the initiation of hydel project. Similarly, they also face huge challenges in the cultural practices, economic and political sphere. Culturally, the resident of Dzongu face a huge challenge as the nature which they worship for instance Teesta River has been diverted through tunnels consequently leading to dismay among the resident of Dzongu. In the economic aspect, the people of Dzongu face a challenge in the form of rapid decreasing of cardamom production which they attributed to losing of their land. In the political sphere, the Lepcha people who have been fighting against the hydel project are often being ignored by the state government, since the initiation of hydel project has come under the supervision of state government.

By nature, Lepcha are very docile and nature loving people, they are also called as an indigenous people of Sikkim. However, today they are in minority population in comparison with other remaining groups like Bhutia and Nepali in Sikkim. As a result, the Lepcha community are now being dominated by other majority community like Bhutia and Nepali. Lepcha as described above were a nature worshiper and they love to live close with nature. According to the myth of Lepcha, they share a close affinity with nature which can be substantiated through their deep attachment with environment and their entire cultural, religious practices and festivals had close link the environment. This close affinity with nature has been manifested in the form of praying the Mount Kanchenjunga which they considered as their guardian deity

After the merging of Sikkim with Indian union, there came along a multidimensional opportunity in Sikkim. Due to the development of modernization process the transportation, westernization and industrialization has brought both advantages and disadvantages impact on Sikkimese people. On the negative impact of modernization, the most visible impact was seen as an indigenous people of Sikkim began to adopt new lifestyle influenced by westernization. This modernization impact has its deep impact on the Lepcha community in dividing its people into three different religions.



It has been observed that after the initiation of mega hydro project on the Dzongu reserved land, the homogenous society began to divert into heterogeneous society. The static society underwent through transition into a dynamic nature and because of the modernization process Lepcha people's perception and opinions divided into two parts. One group argues that the development project in Dzongu reserve is good for them and other group stand totally against the developmental project such as hydel project. The main reason for a group protesting against the developmental project lay on their strong attachment with nature. Therefore, Lepcha of Dzongu protest the developmental project under the banner of affected citizens of Teesta.

Dawa Lepcha (who is a president of ACT) and his friends Tenzing Lepcha (who is a member of CLOS) stayed on hunger strike for 93 days along with their friends in front of BL house at Gangtok. They had a non-violent movement and protest the mega hydro power project for preserving their identity and culture value systems. Conflict regarding the hydro power project is a conflict between nature worshiper and modernization. Because as we know that Lepcha worshiped nature phenomenon and they want to preserve their holiness in Dzongu, but after the initiation of mega hydro project the sanctity of the land has been turned into impure.

This conflict between nature worshiper and modernization issues has translated into four different levels that is from local to state, from state to national and from national to international. Lepcha of Dzongu protest the hydro power project under the banner of Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT) and when thousand of outsider started to settle in Dzongu reserved land for the reason of developmental project, then the clash emerged at the local level in regard to differences in culture and practices between outsider the local resident. Lepcha has been grown up in docile nature and they lived on homogenous community but the developmental project made them a remonstrating community by taking non-violent movement and having a hunger strike in front of BL House in Gangtok and its come under conflict at state levels.

To protest the mega hydro project at Dzongu, not only Sikkimese Lepcha but Lepcha from west Bengal also raised their voice to conserve the Lepcha's unique identity and to look after the environment of Dzongu. Therefore, the Lepcha of Dzongu along with the Lepcha from the neighbouring state of West Bengal also



joined in protest of preserving Lepcha's culture by taking the issue in Delhi and had rallies to protect their reserve land which ultimately taken the conflict to the national level. The Youth of Lepcha community have also taken active participation in the protest; they uploaded the videos of hunger strike in the internet and published it with the slogan of preserving their environment. This medium of publishing their protest has an immediate effect in spreading the news globally. As a result of this high tech medium, Lepcha residing in abroad for their professional work have also joined the protest and through the multimedia this conflict comes into highlight even at an international level.

Lepcha people protest the developmental project for the preservation of their cultural and unique identity. As mentioned above, Lepcha by birth were a natural worshiper and they worships natural phenomenon and according to their myth, they were a creature of mother Itbu-moo and she made first human beings from Mt. Kanchenjunga. Therefore, the protest by Lepcha people against the developmental project mainly came in preserving their traditional practices and their reserve land. They fight against the governmental project and proposed to put forward their own way of development in Dzongu without harming and destroying their land. Such initiatives of local resident of Dzongu can be attributed to the construction of Homestay and cultivation of organic vegetables. Through these initiatives, they indeed try to show the example in front of state government. Lepcha of Dzongu believe that by obliteration and the total utilization of environment cannot positive development and transforms old society into a proper modernized society but rather they claim that, only through the preservation and protection of natural calamities can bring positive development which can indeed play a vital role in everywhere.

Sikkimese Lepcha as described above since 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century divided into three religions but in Dzongu even today majority of Lepcha religion are Animism. But, due to the developmental project like hydel project, even Lepcha following other religion like Buddhist and Christianity also joined hand with animist Lepcha to protest the project. Therefore, by protesting the developmental project the Lepcha people across religious differences got united and create solidarity among them to preserve their identity. When Sikkimese Lepcha raised their voice against developmental project, the Lepcha from the West Bengal also earnestly supported them and took a part on their rallies and hunger strike. Lepcha organised ACT, CLOS SIBLAC and



MOE to protest the project. These organisations also succeed in their vision and also got result in terms of scraping a four hydro projects at upper Dzongu.

Hydel project in the Dzongu over the period has ruined the reserve land and the project has dramatically changed the natural course of rivers. So, they are of the view that even if the Lepcha of Dzongu get back their land in future but can't turn it as before but due to the constant blasting and technological process over the reserve land which already led fracture into different parts. Even though, they loosed their reserve land but they want to maintain the remaining portion of reserve land by cultivating organic plantation and opening traditional Homestay in Dzongu.

The conflict between nature worshiper and modernization is still going actively even today but the nature and strategy of protest has been underwent through change from earlier vocal protest in the form of hunger strike to a new way of protest which they call as a silent protest. This silent protest as described by Lepcha residing in Dzongu reflects in the form of building Homestay for a people visiting from outside the Dzongu premises and it also includes the cultivation of organic plantation in the remaining land. Through such initiations the people in Dzongu want to convey their message to the concerned state department regarding the model of development without necessarily damaging the environment which they refer it as their guardian deity.

Lepcha were an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim and Dzongu is a reserved land for Lepcha community but in the post 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous community of Sikkim had to face new challenges towards their culture, religions and identity. Therefore, when mega hydro project first brought into Dzongu the Lepcha community instantly became conscious of a threat looming over in the form of destroying the nature which they revered as their guardian deity and vulnerability on the status of Dzongu as reserved land. Such thought of destroying their environment and nature has instilled within the Lepcha of Dzongu a sense of protecting it which ultimately led to a protest against this developmental project. The protest also came because many workers infiltrated into Dzongu were primarily from outside and they have brought along with them a different culture, languages, religions and community background. Because of this different culture, languages, religion and socio-economic background has brought some sort of psychological fear in the heart of Lepcha in



Dzongu in regard to losing their unique culture and identity as well as becoming a minority in their own land if the workers from outside continue to infiltrate and settle permanently there, which might cause a threat to existence of their culture value systems in the long run in future.

This developmental project has brought more harm than good particularly to life of Dzongu residents. Through this developmental project, Lepcha in Dzongu reserve of Sikkim became more conscious and concern about their traditional practices. Although, Lepcha claim themselves as an indigenous inhabitant of Sikkim but in contemporary era they are facing unprecedented threat in terms of vanishing tribe of Sikkim. In Sikkim due to rapid growth of the modernization procedure, cultural practices and way of life of an indigenous people have been highly influenced by this modernizing agent and this impact of this modernizing agent is very visible in the life of Lepcha community. Therefore, Lepcha protest against the modernizing agents in Sikkim in order to preserve or protect their rich and unique Identity.

The movement against the hydel project in Dzongu was first initiated by Lepcha community under the banner of Affected Citizen of Teesta (ACT). The main purpose of ACT was to halt the hydel project immediately to preserve the land which they referred as guardian deity. The main medium of their protest involve the hunger strike based on the principle of non-violence. Member of the ACT staged a hunger strike before the BL house to convey their demands before the state government which include the immediate suspension of hydel project in Dzongu reserved land. Nonetheless, the movement of ACT which was initially been very active in highlighting the problems of Dzongu have gradually transformed into a silent movement. Today, the role of ACT has been limited only to spreading the news or development in regards the Dzongu and hydel project. It has been observed through different sources that the main reason behind the ineffectiveness of ACT in the post hunger strike is due to absence of their own manifesto.

In conclusion, it has been observed through my research based on field work and other relevant materials which unveiled that the conflict which exists between the developmental project and Lepcha community was primarily based on the preservation of the Lepcha's identity. It has also been noticed that the Dzongu which

has been declared as reserved land during the time of Chogyal has been violated through the infiltration of outsider settlers in Dzongu.



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**Treaty of Titaliya 1817**

Treaty, covenant of agreement entered into Captain Barre Latter, Agent on the part of His Excellency, the Right Hon'ble, the Earl of Moira, K.G., Governor General, ect ., and by Nazir Chaina Tenjin and Macha Teinbath and Lama Dichim Longdoo, deputies on the part of Raja of Sikkimputtee being severally authorised and duly appointed for the above purpose, 1817.

**Article I**

The Honourable East India Company Cedes, transfers and makes over in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputtee Raja, his heirs of successors, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward to the Mechi river and to the westward to the Teesta river, formerly possessed by the Raja of Nepaul but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the treaty of Peace signed at Segoulee.

**Article II**

The Sikkimputtee Raja engages for himself and successors to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against the Goorkhas or any other state.

**Article III**

That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any dispute or question that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul or any other neighbouring state and to abide by the decisions of the British Government.

**Article IV**

He engages for himself and successors to join the British troops with the whole of his military force when employed in the Hills and in General to afford the British Troops every aid and facility in his power.

**Article V**

That he will not permit any British nor the subject of any European and American state to reside within his dominions, without the permission of the English government.

#### **Article VI**

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits or notorious offenders that might take refuge within his territories.

#### **Article VII**

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue or other delinquents when demanded by the British Government through their accredited agents.

#### **Article VIII**

That he will afford protection to the merchants and trades from the company's province and he engages that no duty shall be levied on the transit of the merchandise beyond the established custom at the several golahs or marts.

#### **Article IX**

The Honourable East India Company guaranteed to the Sikkimputtee Raja and his successors, the full and peaceful possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the first of the present Agreement.

#### **Article X**

The Treaty shall not ratified and exchanged by the Sikkimputtee Raja within one month from the present date and the counterpart when confined by his Excellency, the Right Honourable the Governor General, shall be transmitted to the Raja.

Done at Titaliya, this tenth day of February 1817 answering the ninth of Phagun 1873 samat and to the thirtieth of Magh 1223 Bengallie.

Sd/-

Barre Latter

Moira Nazir chaina Tinjin

Macha Timbah

Lama Duchim Longadoo



Sd/-

N.B. Edmonstone

Archd.seton

Geo. Dowedswell

Ratified by the Governor General in council at Fort William, this Fifteenth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

Sd/-

J.Adam

Acting Chief Secretary to Government

## Status of Hydro Power Projects Allotted to IPPs in the State of Sikkim

| Sl. No | Name of project and capacity | Implementing agency            | Date of signing of MoU | STATUS OF                 |              |              |                         |                  |                   |                          |                  |                      |                 | Project survey & investigation works delayed due to local apphrensions.DPR not prepared |                   |
|--------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|
|        |                              |                                |                        | Techno-economic clearance | ELA          | EMP          | Environmental Clearance | Forest clearance | Financial closure | Power purchase agreement | Land acquisition | Award of EPC contact | Govt's Equality |   | R&R Issue/remarks |
| 1      | Teesta stage-I 280 MW        | Himalayan Green Energy Pvt.Ltd | 05.12.2005             | Not obtained              | Yet to start | Yet to start | Not obtained            | Not obtained     | Not obtained      | Not achieved             | Not signed       | Not acquired         | Not awarded     | 26%   |                   |





|   |                       |                       |            |          |             |                |          |          |              |            |          |             |   |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|-------------|----------------|----------|----------|--------------|------------|----------|-------------|---|
| 5 | Teesa Stage-IV 520 MW | Ltd.                  | 6          | ned      | preparation | er preparation | obtained | obtained | achieved     | signed     | acquired | awarded     | hearing of the project yet to be conducted                                  |
|   |                       |                       |            |          |             |                |          |          |              |            |          |             |   |
| 5 | Teesa Stage-VI 500 MW | Lanco Energy Pvt.Ltd  | 07.12.2005 | Obtained | Completed   | Completed      | Obtained | Obtained | Achieved     | Signed     | Acquired | Awarded     | Project under construction and expected to be commissioned by November 2013 |
|   |                       |                       |            |          |             |                |          |          |              |            |          |             |   |
| 6 | Panan HEP 300 MW      | Himagiri Hydro Energy | 05.12.2005 | Obtained | Completed   | Completed      | Obtained | Obtained | Not achieved | Not signed | Acquired | Not awarded | Preliminary construction works started. Expected to                         |





|    |                              |                                      |                |              |               |                   |              |              |              |                  |                  |              |             |     |  |
|----|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|-----|--|
| 9  | Chuzac<br>hen<br>HEP<br>99MW | Gati<br>infrastr<br>ucture<br>Ltd.   | 14.11.200<br>3 | Obta<br>ined | Comp<br>leted | Com<br>plete<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Achiev<br>ed     | Signed           | Acquire<br>d | Awarde<br>d | 10% | Project under<br>construction.<br>Expected to<br>be<br>commissione<br>d by January<br>2012 |
| 10 | Bhasme<br>y HEP<br>51MW      | Gati<br>infrastr<br>ucture<br>Ltd.   | 14.11.200<br>3 | Obta<br>ined | Comp<br>leted | Com<br>plete<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Achiev<br>ed     | Signed           | Acquire<br>d | Awarde<br>d | 10% | Project under<br>construction.<br>Expected to<br>be<br>commissione<br>d by January<br>2012 |
| 11 | Rangit-<br>II HEP<br>66 MW   | Sikkim<br>Hydro<br>Venture<br>s Ltd. | 08.12.200<br>5 | Obta<br>ined | Comp<br>leted | Com<br>plete<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Obtaine<br>d | Under<br>process | Under<br>process | Acquire<br>d | Awarde<br>d | Nil | Project under<br>construction.<br>Expected to<br>be<br>commissione<br>d by June            |



|    |                           |                                  |            |          |           |          |          |          |          |                        |          |         |     |  |
|----|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|---------|-----|--|
| 12 | Rangit-IV HEP 120 MW      | Jal Power Corporation Ltd.       | 19.12.2005 | Obtained | Completed | Obtained | Obtained | Obtained | Achieved | Signed                 | Acquired | Awarded | 26% | Project under construction. Expected to be commissioned by June 2012     |
| 13 | Dikchu HEP 96 MW          | Sneha Kimitic Power Project Ltd. | 01.03.2006 | Obtained | Completed | Obtained | Obtained | Obtained | Achieved | Signed                 | Acquired | Awarded | Nil | Project under construction. Expected to be commissioned by December 2014 |
| 14 | Jorethan g Loop HEP 96 MW | DANS Energy Pvt.Ltd              | 05.12.2005 | Obtained | Completed | Obtained | Obtained | Obtained | Achieved | Merchant plant. no PPA | Acquired | Awarded | Nil | Project under construction. Expected to be                               |

|    |                     |                       |            |              |                   |                   |                   |              |              |              |              |            |              |             |     |  |                               |
|----|---------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----|--|-------------------------------|
| 15 | Lachung HEP 99MW    | Lachung Power Pvt.Ltd | 18.01.2008 | Not obtained | Under preparation | Under preparation | Under preparation | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed | Not acquired | Not awarded | Nil | Project survey & investigation works delayed due to local apprehension s. DPR not prepared | commissioned by December 2012 |
| 16 | Bhimkyong HEP 99 MW | Teesta Power Pvt.Ltd  | 18.01.2008 | Not obtained | Under preparation | Under preparation | Under preparation | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed | Not acquired | Not awarded | Nil | Project survey & investigation works delayed due to local                                  | commissioned by December 2012 |



|    |                        |                                |            |              |                   |                   |              |              |              |                        |               |             |     |  |
|----|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----|--|
| 17 | Bop HEP 99 MW          | Chungthang Hydro Power Pvt.Ltd | 18.01.2008 | Not obtained | Under preparation | Under preparation | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed             | Not acquired  | Not awarded | Nil | Project survey & investigation works delayed due to local apprehension s. DPR not prepared |
| 18 | Tingt Energy HEP 99 MW | T.T. Energy Pvt.Ltd            | 03.09.2008 | Obtained     | Completed         | Completed         | Obtained     | Obtained     | Not Achieved | Merchant plant. No PPA | Under process | Not awarded | Nil | Held up due to religious sentiments and apprehension s.                                    |

|    |                            |  |            |              |              |           |              |              |              |                           |              |                    |     |  |
|----|----------------------------|--|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----|--|
| 19 | Tashidi<br>ng HEP<br>97 MW | Shiga<br>Energy<br>Pvt.Ltd                     | 03.09.2008 | Obtained     | Completed    | Completed | Obtained     | Obtained     | Achieved     | Merchant plant.<br>No PPA | Acquired     | Under finalization | Nil | Preliminary construction works started. Expected to be commissioned by September 2013. |
| 20 | Lethang<br>HEP 97<br>MW    | KHC<br>Lethang<br>Hydro<br>Project<br>Pvt. Ltd | 05.11.2008 | Obtained     | Completed    | Completed | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed                | Not acquired | Not awarded        | 11% | Project not granted clearance by the National Wild Life Boar, Govt. Of India           |
| 21 | Kalez<br>Khola-I           | Cosmic<br>infra                                | 22.03.2011 | Not obtained | Yet to start | Yet to    | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed                | Not acquired | Not awarded        | 11% | Project under survey &   |



|                   |                          |                                  |            |              |                   |                   |              |              |              |            |             |  |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|--|
| HEP<br>27.5<br>MW | powergen Pvt. Ltd        |                                  | ned        |              | start             | d                 | d            | d            | d            | d          | d           | investigation. DPR is under preparation                        |
| 22                | Kalez Khola-II HEP 54 MW | Pentacl e power Pvt.Ltd          | 25.04.2011 | Not obtained | Under preparation | Under preparation | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed | Not awarded | Project under survey & investigation. DPR is under preparation |
| 23                | Rechu HEP 25 MW          | Green Lake power development Ltd | 11.04.2011 | Not obtained | Under preparation | Under preparation | Not obtained | Not obtained | Not achieved | Not signed | Not awarded | Project under survey & investigation. DPR is under preparation |
| 24                | Rangit-II HEP 60 MW      | NHPC Limited                     |            |              |                   |                   |              |              |              |            |             | Project already commissioned                                   |

|                                   |                               |                 |                              |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 25                                | Teesta-<br>V HEP<br>510<br>MW | NHPC<br>Limited | Project already commissioned |
| <b>TOTAL CAPACITY : 5087.5 MW</b> |                               |                 |                              |



**Article 371F of the Indian constitution:**

**Special provisions with respect to the State of Sikkim**

Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution-

- (a) The Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim shall consist of not less than thirty members;
- (b) As from the date of commencement of the Constitution (Thirty-sixth Amendment) Act, 1975 (hereafter in this article referred to as the appointed day)-
- (c) The Assembly for Sikkim formed as a result of the elections held in Sikkim in April, 1974 with thirty-two members elected in the said elections (hereinafter referred to as the sitting members) shall be deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim duly constituted under this Constitution;
- (d) The sitting members shall be deemed to be the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim duly elected under this Constitution; and
- (e) The said Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim shall exercise the powers and perform the functions of the Legislative Assembly of a State under this Constitution;
- (f) In the case of the Assembly deemed to be the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim under clause (b), the references to the period of 372 [five years], in clause (1) of article 172 shall be construed as references to a period of 373 [four years] and the said period of 373 [four years] shall be deemed to commence from the appointed day;
- (g) Until other provisions are made by Parliament by law, there shall be allotted to the State of Sikkim one seat in the House of the People and the State of Sikkim shall form one parliamentary constituency to be called the parliamentary constituency for Sikkim;
- (h) The representative of the State of Sikkim in the House of the People in existence on the appointed day shall be elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim;
- (i) Parliament may, for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different sections of the population of Sikkim make provision for the number of seats in the

Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim which may be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the assembly constituencies from which candidates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim;

- (j) The Governor of Sikkim shall have special responsibility for peace and for an equitable arrangement for ensuring the social and economic advancement of different sections of the population of Sikkim and in the discharge of his special responsibility under this clause, the Governor of Sikkim shall, subject to such directions as the President may, from time to time, deem fit to issue, act in his discretion;
- (k) All property and assets (whether within or outside the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim) which immediately before the appointed day were vested in the Government of Sikkim or in any other authority or in any person for the purposes of the Government of Sikkim shall, as from the appointed day, vest in the Government of the State of Sikkim;
- (l) The High Court functioning as such immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim shall, on and from the appointed day, be deemed to be the High Court for the State of Sikkim;
- (m) All courts of civil, criminal and revenue jurisdiction, all authorities and all officers, judicial, executive and ministerial, throughout the territory of the State of Sikkim shall continue on and from the appointed day to exercise their respective functions subject to the provisions of this Constitution;
- (n) All laws in force immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim or any part thereof shall continue to be in force therein until amended or repealed by a competent Legislature or other competent authority;
- (o) For the purpose of facilitating the application of any such law as is referred to in clause (k) in relation to the administration of the State of Sikkim and for the purpose of bringing the provisions of any such law into accord with the provisions of this Constitution, the President may, within two years from the appointed day, by order, make such adaptations and modifications of the law, whether by way of repeal or amendment, as may be necessary or expedient, and thereupon, every such law shall have effect subject to the adaptations and modifications so made, and any such adaptation or modification shall not be questioned in any court of law;



- (p) Neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall have jurisdiction in respect of any dispute or other matter arising out of any treaty, agreement, engagement or other similar instrument relating to Sikkim which was entered into or executed before the appointed day and to which the Government of India or any of its predecessor Governments was a party, but nothing in this clause shall be construed to derogate from the provisions of article 143;
- (q) The President may, by public notification, extend with such restrictions or modifications as he thinks fit to the State of Sikkim any enactment which is in force in a State in India at the date of the notification;
- (r) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may, by order 374, do anything (including any adaptation or modification of any other article) which appears to him to be necessary for the purpose of removing that difficulty:
- (s) Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of two years from the appointed day;
- (t) All things done and all actions taken in or in relation to the State of Sikkim or the territories comprised therein during the period commencing on the appointed day and ending immediately before the date on which the Constitution (Thirty-sixth Amendment) Act, 1975, receives the assent of the President shall, in so far as they are in conformity with the provisions of this Constitution as amended by the Constitution (Thirty-sixth Amendment) Act, 1975, be deemed for all purposes to have been validly done or taken under this Constitution as so amended.