



SIKKIM

Perspectives and Vision

Speeches of Chief Minister

Pawan Chamling

SIKKIM

Perspectives and Vision

Speeches of Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling

Prof. A. C. Sinha



INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM, GANGTOK

in association with



INDUS PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW DELHI

Foreword

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

A great man always acts as a source
of inspiration. The standards he creates,
the path he treads, others follow.

Warmly nestled in the heart of the Eastern Himalayas, the State of Sikkim constitutes one of the most strategic and naturally endowed states in the country. Centuries-old religious-political history of Sikkim has remained an unexplored source of civilization in and around the Kanchenjunga. One can lay hands on a very few published literature. A huge unwritten collection of historical facts and anecdotes are fast eroding and vanishing. This volume entitled *Sikkim: Perspectives and Vision* is a humble but a conscious effort in collecting, conserving and disseminating the various facets of events and progress that have characterized contemporary Sikkim. Speeches constitute a significant aspect of history. In them, one finds the situational contexts, socio-cultural milieu, development discourse and political environment. This is more so when the head of the government speaks representing people's aspirations.

Sikkim Democratic Front led-government headed by Pawan Kumar Chamling came to power at a very critical juncture in the history of modern Sikkim. This landlocked hill state needed a fountainhead of democratic practices and a forward-looking leader to give a firm direction to the young state. Sikkimese people aspired for a leader of strong grassroot connections to realize the participation-based development gains. Pawan Chamling exactly fitted the bill.

He is different from his predecessors both in terms of perceptions and functional parameters. His visions and orientations are in sharp contrast to many of his counterparts in other states of India. Let me describe him as a dreamer with insurmountable political sagacity and visioned humane actions. His speeches and deliberations do reflect his inner strength as a courageous and concerned human being and his outreach as a mass-based political leader.

More critically, the speeches delivered by Pawan Chamling as the Chief Minister on varied occasions and themes convincingly tell us the saga of how emotionally and comprehensively Sikkim has integrated into the Indian Union. These speeches range from a simple school function to the conference on advance technology, the 50th anniversary of India's Independence to the meeting of the National Development Council, on communal harmony to environmental conservation and on the role of private sector to the partnership with the NGOs. The fine lines in all these speeches and remarks are a very vivid and realistic commentary on the modern-day Sikkim. These speeches do underscore and convey the message of a strong urge and ability of Sikkim and the Sikkimese people to play a major role in the nation-building process.

Sikkim is a happening state today. Despite severe geographical constraints and locational disadvantages, it has hit the national debate and discourse for all positive reasons and affirmative actions. It could lead the nation in very many ways including in the unflinching upholding of national security matrix and management of ecological balance. If the present pace of progressive thinking and well considered collective actions are consolidated, Sikkim could soon very well be in the forefront of human development indices, ecotourism ventures and sustainable development practices. The traditional Sikkimese ethos of absolute communal harmony and societal coherence will continue to be the cornerstones.



25 November 2002

MAHENDRA P. LAMA
Professor of South Asian Economies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and
Economic Adviser to the Chief Minister of Sikkim

Preface

Prof. J. C. Sinha

Speeches of outstanding leaders constitute a significant aspect of historical evolution of a given state or country. The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, through sheer guts and impeccable simplicity, has been successful to a large extent, in providing contemporary Sikkimese society a progressive thought process and a positive outlook. His speeches always have some element of novelty in them. They are distinctly characterized by a strong sense of conviction. In the process, the Chief Minister has been able to engage the attention of the nation and the world, earning compliment and praises from a cross section of leaders in diverse fields.

The present endeavour is one that of conveying the epoch-making events of Sikkim into an attribute of timelessness, frozen and documented in the form of written words. Hence, the volume *Sikkim: Perspectives and Vision*.

The compilation of the major speeches delivered by the Chief Minister on different occasions, which is in your hands at the moment, also reveals many facets of his personality and his thinking propensity on various issues ranging from rural development to information technology. The speeches contained thus, I am sure, will be of interest to contemporary as well as future readers.

The Department of Information and Public Relations has made a humble but a conscious effort to bring out his publication with a firm belief that the thoughts expressed by the Chief Minister would be shared more widely and the issues of Sikkim understood on a broader and deeper scale.

D. DAHDUL, I.A.S.
Commissioner-cum-Secretary
Information & Public Relations Department
Government of Sikkim, Gangtok

Acknowledgements

- People of Sikkim who have so lovingly and collectively given me the responsibility and opportunity of leading them to a newer height and serving them for the last eight years as their Chief Minister.
- People who have always read my writings, announcements and policy decisions with great enthusiasm and helped my government in implementing them.
- All colleagues, supporters, friends, well-wishers, grassroot workers in Sikkim Democratic Front and of other political parties in the state.
- Prof. Mahendra P. Lama of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Shri D. Dahdul, Secretary, Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim
- Shri P.T. Gyamtso, former Secretary to Chief Minister
- Smt. R. Ongmu, Secretary to Chief Minister
- Shri P. Thondup, Director, Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim
- Shri Bhawani P. Rai, Officer on Special Duty, Chief Minister's Office
- Shri C.B. Rai of Namchi
- Shri C.B. Karki
- Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, for so painstakingly taking the responsibility of publishing this book.
- Members of the Fourth Estate for helping me to reach out to cross-section of people in the society in the state and the outside world.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	v
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
I. Vision and Vistas of New Millennium	1
1. We've not Frittered Away Our Time	3
2. Third Millennium and 21st Century	20
3. Human Development Report and Vision Document	29
4. New Millennium Message	33
5. Politics, Programme and Vision for the New Century	35
6. Presentation of 'Sikkim HDR 2001' and 'Sikkim: The People's Vision'	46
7. Release of 'Sikkim HDR 2001' and 'Sikkim: The People's Vision'	53
II. Independence Day and Republic Day	59
8. 48th Independence Day	61
9. 50th Anniversary of India's Independence	70
10. 52nd Independence Day	73
11. 53rd Independence Day	76
12. 50th Anniversary of Indian Republic	86
13. 54th Independence Day	89
14. 55th Independence Day	100
III. State Day	109
15. State Day-1998	111
16. 25th State Day-2000	116
17. State Day-2001	124
IV. Development Agenda, Finance and State Planning Commission	131
18. Conference of Chief Ministers	133
19. Development Finance and Role of Banks	141
20. National Conference of NAFSCOB	144
21. Sikkim State Planning Commission's Meeting-2001	147
22. Charting out the Route for 10th Five Year Plan	151

23.	'Sikkim Human Development Report 2001'	154	
24.	Sikkim State Planning Commission's Meeting-2002	160	
V.	Budget Speeches and Finance Commissions		163
25.	On the Path of Progress and Self-Reliance	165	
26.	Finance Commission Meeting-1998	195	
27.	Presentation to the Eleventh Finance Commission	197	
28.	Budget Speech-2000	203	
29.	Budget Speech-2001	210	
30.	Budget Speech-2002	220	
VI.	Inter-State Council Meeting		229
31.	North-Eastern Council Meeting	231	
32.	Fifth Inter-State Council Meeting	234	
33.	Seventh Inter-State Council Meeting	238	
VII.	National Development Council and Planning Commission		245
34.	National Development Council Meeting-1997	247	
35.	National Development Council Meeting-1999	251	
36.	National Development Council Meeting-2001	255	
VIII.	Industry and Private Investment		267
37.	Sikkim Partnership Summit	269	
38.	Speaker Project of SITCO	273	
39.	Sikkim Investors' Forum	276	
40.	Partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry	282	
41.	Silver Jubilee Celebration of SITCO	290	
42.	Power Device Project of Sikkim Precision Industries Ltd.	293	
IX.	Agriculture and Horticulture		297
43.	ICAR Regional Committee Meeting	299	
44.	Farmers' Field Day	302	
45.	Agriculture and Horticulture	304	
X.	Environmental Management and Natural Resources		307
46.	National Water Resources Council	309	
47.	Environmental Situation in Sikkim	312	
48.	Challenges to Sustainable Development in Sikkim	314	
49.	The Challenge of Gangtok	319	
50.	Disaster Management	321	
51.	Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation	323	
52.	Computerized Emission Test Centre	327	

XI.	Health and Medicine	329
53.	Health Systems Management	331
54.	Central Referral Hospital	332
55.	Conference of Eastern Zone Indian Psychiatric Society	334
56.	Interplast—Germany Team	335
57.	Homoeopathy Seminar	337
58.	Gastro-Intestinal Disorder	340
59.	Sensitization on Iodine Deficiency Disorder	343
XII.	Education	345
60.	Tashi Namgyal Academy—2000	347
61.	Gorkha Military Inter-College	350
62.	Loyola College, Namchi	355
63.	Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya	359
64.	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan	362
65.	Tashi Namgyal Academy—2001	365
66.	Sikkim Manipal University	370
67.	Lawrence School: Founders' Day Function	374
68.	Release of 'Himalayan and Central Asian Study Journal'	375
69.	Okhrey Secondary School	377
XIII.	Science and Technology	381
70.	Role of Geosynthetics in Hill Area Development	383
71.	Vigyan Mela	385
72.	Planetarium Meeting	387
73.	State Councils and Science & Technology	388
74.	Information Technology Conference	390
75.	Website 'cmonline'	392
76.	State of Scientific Research in India	394
77.	Computer Training in Accounts and Administration	397
XIV.	Tourism	399
78.	Tourism Policy	401
79.	World Tourism Day	404
80.	Kanchenjunga Festival—2001	406
81.	Tourism: A Leading Sector	408
82.	South Asian Regional Conference on Ecotourism	411
83.	South Asia Conference on Ecotourism	414
84.	Challenges to Tourism in the Himalayas	417
XV.	Youth and Sports	421
85.	North-Eastern Sports Festival	423
86.	Yuwa Sankalpa Diwas	424

87.	Youth Camp	429	
88.	National Junior Boxing Championship	433	
XVI.	Children and Women: Rights and Empowerment		435
89.	Occasion of Children Day-2000	437	
90.	SAARC Integration Children's Camp	440	
XVII.	Social Justice, Communal Harmony and Legal Regimes		443
91.	'Communal Harmony in Words as well as in Deeds'	445	
92.	Sikkim High Court Building	455	
XVIII.	Panchayats and Cooperatives		457
93.	State Level Panchayat Sammelan	459	
94.	Panchayati Raj-1997	463	
95.	Panchayati Raj-1998	465	
96.	Strengthening Panchayati Raj in Sikkim	467	
97.	Cooperative Convention	472	
98.	Empowerment of Rural People through Panchayati Raj	477	
XIX.	State Assembly		483
99.	Sixth State Assembly: Commitment and Promise	485	
100.	Concluding Day of the Budget Session-2001	487	
XX.	Human Rights, Media and Press		495
101.	Camp for Physically Challenged People	497	
102.	National Press Day	498	
XXI.	Sikkim in the North-Eastern States		501
103.	Development Dialogue: Sikkim and the North-Eastern States	503	
104.	Security Scenario: Sikkim and the North-Eastern States	508	
105.	Conference of the N-E Commonwealth Parliamentary Association	513	
106.	Our Security Concerns	520	
XXII.	Visiting Dignitaries and State Ceremonies		523
107.	Vice-President of India	525	
108.	His Holiness the Dalai Lama	527	
109.	Visit of the Hon'ble Members of Parliament	530	
110.	Reception of Vice-President, Shri Krishan Kant	534	
111.	Welcoming Shri V. Rama Rao as Governor of Sikkim	535	
XXIII.	Administration, Governance and NGOs		537
112.	Responsive Administration	539	
113.	Chief Minister's Appeal	543	
114.	An Open Appeal	544	
115.	Transparent and Accountable Administration	545	

116.	Vistas of Partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations	547	
117.	Indo-Swiss Project in Sikkim	553	
XXIV.	Culture and Religion		555
118.	Temple at Bodh Gaya, Bihar	557	
119.	3-Day Cultural Programme	559	
120.	Sikkim Guest House in Bodh Gaya	561	
121.	16th Surajkund Crafts Mela	563	
XXV.	Infrastructure		565
122.	Master Plan on Development of Irrigation	567	
123.	Airport: Setting up Infrastructure	569	
XXVI.	Literature, Arts and Misc.		573
124.	Photo Exhibition	575	
125.	Rajya Sainik Board Meeting	576	
126.	Architecture in Practice	578	
127.	Parivar Kalyan Evam Swasthya Mela	580	
128.	Sikkim Philatelic Exhibition	583	

Prof. A. C. Sinha



Section

|

VISION AND VISTAS OF
NEW MILLENNIUM

We've not Frittered Away Our Time

There is an unalterable truthfulness that characterizes earth that whatever we sow, it germinates and blooms. We cannot sow tomato and expect potato out of it. We cannot plant nettle and harvest eatables like brinjal or lemon. We can well understand such earthly honesty being applied to our own social lives. With leaders with corrupt minds and corrupt characters, we cannot imagine to build a clean and healthy society. Establishment of healthy society needs person or group of persons with clean thought and unsullied mentality—just like to get paddy, we need to sow paddy seeds.

Today, I want to place before you some plans and projects to construct Sikkimese society. As I have said that whatever we sow, it germinates and blooms. And thus, I would find it pertinent to say something on the background and the source of my inspiration to fashion out new and *sukhi* Sikkim.

Like the greater chunk of the Sikkimese society, I also had to bear sorrows, trouble, injustice, exploitation and hatred since my early days. The same condition had sown the seed of revolution within me and a burning desire to change the situation. Although restless in mind, due to lack of maturity in my age, wisdom and experience, I was compelled to remain directionless, in a way. Although, I was propelled by the winds to strangle and finish such situation, I had no any concrete planning to end social distortion.

I never wanted my mind and thoughts to remain a mere howl in the wilderness nor do I wanted to remain oblivious of the situation. For me, I were to mingle freely with people and sow the seed of change, and revolution from among themselves. Before the people's revolution of 1973, my poems and literary creations were crutches of my revolution. Through my poems, I wanted to voice my revolt, and create a ripple of change and a sense of revolt among the masses. The Revolution 1973 opened up another door for me to achieve my mission. But, as all revolutions are not successful and people don't carry similar conviction, I could not satisfy myself with the outcome of the revolution.

Disillusionment could not root out my determination, but the experience did help me to engage myself in some other constructive works, along with politics. In order to provide positive support to the Nepali literary world and to introduce good literary creations to the poor people, I started the Nirman Prakashan, a literary publication house, from Yangang with assistance from some friends. Together with politics, I engaged myself in editing, and publication works and other services to the society.

Politics plays an important part in human life. Through this, we can establish direct contact with people's aspirations and can wage an eternal war in the interest of the people. While working among the rural masses, I happened to be elected unopposed as the President of the Yangang Gram Panchayat. During my tenure, I became General Secretary and the Vice-President of the Sikkim Congress Party. But all of those who join politics do not, however, have similar mission and conviction, was clear this time also. Having realized that the leadership of the party was not in the interest of the people, I could not convince myself to support such anti-people forces any longer. Slowly, I became inactive in the party and into oblivion.

I was looking for such a party, which is sincere towards the people, which will liberate the poor from the condition of poverty, illiteracy, injustice, and exploitation. But I could not come across such party. Because, till then, people's party was not born at all. Due to lack of maturity in age and experience to establish a new party, I decided to adopt one of the existing parties. And my entry into the Sangram Parishad party was, in fact, a collective efforts of the like-minded friends to make Sangram Parishad people-oriented and bring it closer to the aspirations of the common masses. I became an MLA from Damthang constituency. During my tenure as MLA, I reached out to every home and each individual, and tried my best to attend to their grievances and sorrows. Once a month, I used to go round my constituency. The people rewarded me for my sincere commitment by electing me their MLA for the second successive term with a record 96% of the total vote cast.

By this time, however, I was completely acquainted with the inner character of the Sangram party. The party leader was not a champion of democracy but one who believed in autocratic habit and who considered his own opinion above people's aspirations. But this time, I did not choose to leave party like before. Because my experience and wisdom had taught me now that it is necessary to fight against such anti-people despots at every front with democratic thoughts, policies and move ahead undaunted. Through my work, I started expressing my dissatisfaction and opposition over the very character of party. For securing a record vote percentage (which still remains a record in Sikkim) for the second time in 1989, I was given an entry into the Cabinet. After becoming a Minister, I could see even clearly that the Sangram Parishad Government and its leadership was totally anti-people, undemocratic and a party with

double standard policies. Knowing well all these facts, it became not only necessary for me to stand against their policies and leadership, but also became duty-bound—a noble obligation for the long-term interest of the people. Thus, thereafter, my disagreement with the Sangram Parishad leadership was deepened even further.

The emerging discord with the Sangram party was not however, based on petty and inconsequential matters. Behind these were many such grave issues directly related with the welfare of the people.

Although, my thinking and character was not as same as those of the government, I tried to transform government policies into pro-people planning. People were sandwiched in the one-man autocratic rule and instead of fighting from outside, I thought it correct to bring about reform and change in the government from within. With the passing of time, when Bhandari's autocratic tendency assumed even greater intensity, and became still more anti-people, I sought an appointment and met Bhandari. For about an hour, I placed my views before him, pinpointed wrong steps of the government and placed my humble suggestions to work for the interest of the weak, poor, helpless and the downtrodden masses. Indeed, what force and persuasion will ever help a dog to straighten its tail? The same thing happened with Bhandari. Let alone listening to my suggestions, Bhandari took them with negative mind and as a challenge, and then I was hounded like anything.

In the year 1987, the Sikkimese Limboo and Tamang were very close to getting the tribal status. That time, Bhandari with cruel machination had snatched away the constitutional right of the two communities. Bhandari knew that owing to that action I was not happy. My stand was clear that any action against the constitutional rights of Limboo, Tamang or any other communities would be anti-Sikkimese and anti-people. Ill-feelings towards me developed from bad to worse.

Immediately after, on 7th October 1988, Bhandari submitted a Memorandum to the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi calling upon him to initiate action against the Christian followers and introduce legislation to ban religious conversion. My argument was that as citizens of a secular country, such action will amount to insulting our secular principle and encouraging communalism. Bhandari had remained silent then, but took my remarks as an insult and an act of rubbing shoulders against him. I knew it too well that but for public support, my nomination as Sangram candidate was impossible for the second time in 1989.

Further, I found myself entangled in another discord with Bhandari. In 1987, Bhandari and some of his Cabinet colleagues were allegedly involved in an economic offence. The scandal known as Gift racket put the Sikkimese society in deep trouble. The act of making black money into white provoked Central Income Tax Act, Wealth Tax and

Gift Tax. I proposed strongly in favour of punishing the guilty and leave the innocent Sikkimese out of the tax purview. Once again, Bhandari turned deaf ears to my arguments.

When the level of arguments rose, political differences on principles deepened. I drew conclusion that the Parishad party coming to the aid of the poor is just like an illusion. At the same time, a very serious issue came to the forefront, i.e. the OBC issue. When the Central Government passed legislation to implement the recommendations of Mandal Commission all over India, Bhandari brought a proposal in the Assembly on 7th September 1990 for non-implementation of OBC recommendations in Sikkim. He kept most of the MLAs in dark about the issue of OBC for about ten years, and suddenly the proposal was passed not to implement the recommendations.

One after another, Bhandari had trampled upon the rights of the Sikkimese people, and this time also. I was left with no option except to oppose it openly. I initiated an open objection to the proposal. When Mandal Commission members visited Sikkim to seek the recommendation of the State Government, Bhandari was the head of the government. When the Commission prepared recommendation on the basis of his own reports, and when the same was extended to Sikkim, Bhandari opposed it himself and also passed the proposal. It became crystal clear that he was not going to help the people. Thereafter, differences with Bhandari became open and unguarded.

The difference on matter of principle became open. Stories of blame and condemnation against me were woven. On my part too I began compiling and airing Bhandari's anti-people character and his questionable achievements. Because I have come to politics with certain aims and objectives, I was not in love with the chair, and I am not today as well. Even if I lose my chair, I was not ready to mortgage my mission, my thought with Bhandari. When I was not willing to compromise my principle and aims with any prize or cost, he finally removed me from the Cabinet on June 16, 1992.

As a man committed to do people's politics, among the people, I accepted Bhandari's decision gracefully without a word. I took the possible development in the form of a message of emancipation and I did not lose heart. Immediately after the two messengers handed over the letter (of my removal) to me I wrote down a poem in the similar trends of spontaneous thought. In the poem, I have compared myself with a bird with a new-found freedom and the mind soaring towards the heaven like the legendary Skylark to catch the Sun....

A man who had joined the electoral politics with a sense of revolt, suffocation and anguish, my sacking from the Sangram Parishad party lent a clear direction, programme and a dream for me—a dream to make Sikkim new and prosperous. Henceforth, I was not to join this or that party which is anti-people. Now I was to work for the

formation of a democratic party at the grassroot level with all the like-minded people.

But my position after my removal was not easy. Bhandari after removing me from his party was not settled yet. Threats and intimidation like amputation, burning of houses were issued. Not only my political life, Bhandari was in a hurry to stop my very life-blood. On September 19, 1992, at Allay ground at Namchi, Bhandari blamed that Pawan Chamling is the leader of the Mongols with his guru at Kathmandu in the person of Gopal Gurung. Waving a book called '*Unseen Truths in Nepal's Politics*' written by Gopal Gurung, Bhandari had called that 'the book is Chamling's guru mantra'. With Gopal Gurung in Nepal, Subhash Ghising at Darjeeling and Pawan Chamling in Sikkim, the trios are planning to establish a greater Mongolian rule, Bhandari had growled. Chamling talks of OBCs; OBC is an inauspicious word; when people go mad they become OBC, so on and so forth. Crores of rupees were wasted to oppose me. Bhandari Government ordered police to raid my home three times.

4th March 1993—the day is memorable and unforgettable because on this day, revolution against the anti-people and the autocratic rule was formalized in the formation of the Sikkim Democratic Front party. To conduct the auspicious moment of the formation of the party, we could not find any priest, and lama in Sikkim. They were threatened with dire consequences. Finally, we consulted a priest from Kalimpong, and the day was fixed. After the formation of the party, Bhandari lost his mind. Throughout the state, he went round and round and belittled us with the choicest of abuses. It is in his nature to humiliate every other person other than himself.

In fact, after the formation of SDF party, my colleagues and myself were not the only victims of his unmindful and undemocratic uttering. He also took certain decisions that could have negative ramification upon the entire population of Sikkim. Among them, one was the letter that he sent to the then Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh on 21st September 1993 requesting him to impose Income Tax in Sikkim. After the establishment of democracy in Sikkim, the state was kept outside the purview of the Central Income Tax. To oppose Bhandari's anti-people approach inviting income tax, we called a three-day Sikkim bandh. When the bandh received extraordinary support of the people, the leader along with some of his Ministers came out wielding sticks in their hands. Thuckchuk, in order to intimidate the SDF workers fired 7 rounds at an innocent animal (cow) and killed it. From the Sangram Bhawan, Bhandari issued orders that let them be shot dead who close their shops!

At Namchi, the birth-place of SDF party, the anti-SDF forces put up a *goonda*-training camp in order to intimidate the people. The muscular hooligans were conspicuous by their presence. But, people had already risen from centuries of deep slumber. A group of people burning with the fire of hatred for the despots, swooped down the

camp site on 18th June 1993. The hired goondas went helter skelter and fled the place. And thousands of people descended on the market and pulled down Sangram flags from rooftops and pitched in SDF flags all over, shouted slogans and headed towards my residence at Ghurbisey. The next day, on 19th June 1993, the DIG and the DC (South) together with about 100 police forces raided my home and arrested SDF's youth leaders—Binod Pradhan, Hissey Lanchungpa, Bhojraj Rai and Anil Lachungpa. Besides, the following colleagues were arrested for a number of days and weeks—Tashi Sherpa, Raju Pakhrin, Chandra Khaling, Harka Khaling, H.B. Moktan, B.B. Rai, Suresh Rai, Arun Rai, Dhan Bahadur Rai, Phurden Lepcha, Gyalbo Lepcha, Laxman Rai, Rameswar Tamang, Ashok Rai, Bhupal Chamling, Tika Subba, Dugo Bhutia, Shyamlal Rai, Karma Tshering Lepcha, Kuberraj Rai, I.B. Gurung, M.B. Rai, C.B. Subba, Binod Rai, Narendra Rai and D.N. Sherpa.

As I was encircled, surrounded by about five thousand people, the police could not arrest me. The same day, I went underground and reached Gangtok.

While I stayed in the residence of a well-wisher, I gave direction and guidance to the party people from the same house. On June 21, 1993 tens of thousands of people blocked road from the metro point to the lower Secretariat and shouted slogans against the government. The whole of Gangtok town remained paralyzed by this demonstration.

On 22 June, people took out a peaceful procession. The police, on the instruction of the oppressors, beat our people and threw tear gas. The *sarkari goondas* who came under the protection of the police got the taste of the day at the hands of the people. Police force was deployed at every corner to block people's march towards the market. But people tore apart all the obstacles and reached Gangtok.

On 23rd, I moved out from the house where I was lodged and moved out to Buddhimaya Subba's house at Tadong. Considering the gravity of the situation, the party decided that I should go outside Sikkim for some time.

The same night (i.e. 23rd June 1993) at about 9 p.m., my host Buddhimaya handed over her shawl, her husband's long-coat and a cap. Having camouflaged myself with the cloths as much, I left Gangtok with my friend Mr. Neelu Chettri, riding on his scooter. To outmanoeuvre police at Ranipool checkpoint, Neelu continued on road with his scooter and reached Seti Khola while I scrambled through the shortcut to meet him there. About 11 p.m. at night, we had reached Pakyong. It must have been about 12.30 a.m. at the night when we reached Rhenock Reshi via Rorathang. Here too, I went across the bridge through the shortcut. The road to Kalimpong was bad and the light system of the scooter was poor enough that we had fallen many a times before we reached Kalimpong. It was passed the first crow when we reached L.D. Kazi's residence. L.D. Kazi and B.B. Goorong were together. I could not however, received as much

encouragement from them as solicited. We stayed together. On 26th, L.D. Kazi and B.B. Goorong went to Gangtok to meet the Governor. The Governor passed on the same story that was handed down to him by Bhandari. Hence as they returned they said that all was finished, and that you are all booked under TADA, and so on. But we had already taken a vow to face more difficult situation than this. We were not disappointed. Whatever their stand, they remained with us in principle because we together with the CPM had constituted a Joint Action Committee.

Having received feelers about some impending danger, I left L.D. Kazi's home at 3 a.m. at night on 28th June. In just five minutes of my leaving, a combined police force of Kalimpong and Sikkim reached Kazi's house. According to my friends, the police thrust their revolvers towards my empty bed and searched for me. With Lhendup Lepcha as my companion, I climbed up the hill and reached a secluded home located at about 1 km distance, owned by a Bengali gentleman. Only one chowkidar lived here. He took me to a room and locked the door from outside. As he served me food twice daily, I was not much troubled by hunger and sleep. But the absence of toilet provision inside the room was a worrisome matter. The same chowkidar bhai had, however, provided a rusted old tin for the purpose.

We again moved out of the place and took shelter for the night at Chhibo Busty at M.B. Bhatarai's house. In the morning of 30th June, we (Lhendup Lepcha, Neelu Chettri, Sushil Pradhan, C.B. Karki, Nahkul Rai, and I) left the house, resumed our journey and wandered all day among the thick foliage of Amphitaar jungle, in search of a route. In the process, we reached the bank of Teesta. We climbed again. Unable to find exit route, we again descended on the bank towards dusk. Tired and hungry, we decided to pass the night under a temporary leaf tent. To scare away wild animals, we burnt logs. Without food, body constitution was revolting. When the night deepened, there was a heavy rain, which doused the fire. We were totally drenched in the torrential rainwater. We could very soon feel the Teesta water lapping the edge of our ground. Nahkul Rai was worried. Neelu Chettri proposed climbing the hill for safer ground before the ambitious wave claim us. The night was spent and that night became the most memorable night of my life.

In the morning at 6 a.m., we resumed our uphill journey. After day's long wandering, we settled for the night at the top of the hill which was covered by dense forest. We spent the night with some wild berries and layers of banana trees. The next morning, we scrambled up and covered a long distance. We met two persons descending the hill. Although apprehensive initially, they finally came to our aid. They had come down to collect bamboo shoots. Having promised greater reward than their bamboo shoots could fetch them, they even parted with their tiffin. They belonged to Kamsi village. The village with just sixty households with people like J.B. Rai, Kalpana Thapa, Indra

Bahadur Rai including the villagers accorded us with a warm hospitality. Having spent two days in the village, we left for Darjeeling in a hired vehicle at the dead of night at 2 a.m. In a hotel near Chowrasta, I met my 33 party colleagues and discussed with them about the party functions. When my identity was surfaced in the hotel, I moved out to Dalli. And after three days, i.e. on July 10, I along with some of my colleagues left for Delhi.

On arriving at Delhi, I reserved my room at a hotel in the name of B.S. Thapa from Dehradun. I met a number of Central Ministers and MPs from different parties and apprised them about the situation in Sikkim. After a week of work, we returned to Darjeeling. Due to my declining health and from security point of view, I spent some days in eastern Nepal at Elaam.

After returning from Elaam, I called a party meeting at the Darjeeling Tourist Lodge on 14th August 1993. In the emergent meeting, the party took the following decisions:

- (a) Three months ultimatum to the Bhandari Government;
- (b) Leaders and party workers to coordinate;
- (c) Check on the indiscriminate collection of party funds;
- (d) Party's interest is self interest;
- (e) To open party office at Geyzing;
- (f) Strengthening of party organizations in all four districts;
- (g) To acquire anticipatory bail;
- (h) To form party committee at the village level;
- (i) To increase membership;
- (j) To circulate party literatures at all village to secure strong base and the fighting edge with the Sangram party.

In the meeting lasting about 11 hours, decision was also taken to open up youth and women wing of the party.

Words spread about my presence at Darjeeling and from security point of view, it was again felt necessary to leave the place. Thus, on 18th, I crossed over to Nepal and reached interior Heelaytaar under Dhankuta district. I stayed there for about fifteen days with one well-wisher. The stay from political viewpoint proved very fruitful.

I utilized the time in serious study, and in framing political programme and in shaping political principles. I again returned to Darjeeling from Nepal. I left for Delhi on 12th September 1993. And during this visit, I was granted the anticipatory bail from the court.

After three months of underground life, on 22nd September 1993, we returned to Gangtok. With the anticipatory bail in my hand, Bhandari's legal manoeuvring was rendered immune against me. Above it all, thousands of vehicles and extraordinary

public presence formed a long tail of support from Rangpo (Sikkim border with West Bengal) to Gangtok. The message was clear and Bhandari had lost his hope and mind. Having reached Gangtok, we organized a historical public meeting at the Palzor stadium.

After this, the political events in Sikkim were rapid and sometimes rather dramatic. In a bid to disturb the traditional communal harmony among the three ethnic communities of Nepali, Bhutia and Lepchas, Bhandari's own rule crumbled like the house of cards. Due to the misadventure of handful of oppressors, and the subsequent gift racket episode, the Centre decided to extend the Central Income Tax Act in Sikkim. All the Sikkimese people rose against it, and Bhandari again tried to advocate an inconsistent stand to divide the unified Sikkimese and the seed of mutual suspicion was sown. The century-old peace in Sikkim was disturbed. A kind of tendency developed in Sikkim and the possibility of communal conflagration was imminent. As long as Bhandari's misrule was unchallenged and secured, he was never tired of calling Sikkim the 'abode of peace'. When his autocratic rule and cruelty was in a crisis, he publicly announced that he would transform Sikkim into a communal battlefield 'Kurukshetra' among the three ethnic communities (from Bhandari's speech in Sangram Bhawan on May 6, 1994). Mention may be made that only one day before, on May 5, eighteen of his MLAs had deserted him and chosen a new master!

To avenge it, the very next day, Bhandari issued a provoking statement to make Sikkim a Kurukshetra. Sikkim-wide communal tension developed. No force was capable of easing the communal tension, bred and sponsored by Bhandari, except through the collective determination of the hard-working Sikkimese people, and except through democratic sensitivity and conviction. In the same context, the extraordinary meeting of 15.05.1994 called by SDF party at Singtam was finally able to replenish the lifeblood of communal harmony and unity in Sikkim.

The eighteen defected MLAs formed the government under Sanchaman Limboo. Before that, there was an offer to me to form the government. Having reached Delhi, Sanchaman and Thukchuk once again offered me the proposal to form the government. I declined, for I did not like to snatch power by resorting to alliance and horse trading, nor did I harbour any cheap illusion to become Chief Minister.

Like the proverbial straw for a drowning man, Bhandari also offered me the Chief Ministership. As I have said, my chief aim was to ensure justice to the people more than becoming Chief Minister. Moreover, I was not in favour of inheriting the crisis bred by the autocratic, cunning and irresponsible brats and thereby forfeit the faith, confidence and support bestowed on me by the poor Sikkimese by betraying them.

In the mean time, Bhandari was to prove his majority in the House. I refrained from voting. I did not want to support either of the two groups. Bhandari's fall was a pre-

gone conclusion, but I did not want to endorse the power hungry group led by Sanchaman by voting in their favour. In all these days I had the cent percent chance to become the Chief Minister. But let alone Bhandari, even Kuber himself could not have enticed me away from my principles, conviction and commitment with his money and wealth.

The six-month Government of Sanchaman was a period of propaganda against the SDF party. Quarrelling for the chair, the two groups led by Bhandari and Sanchaman were bent on creating misunderstanding between the SDF party and the Sikkimese people. Both groups were all out to smear the SDF party with the communal colour. They had never believed that with the support of the people the SDF will form the next government or even with that knowledge, they never had that courage to express thus. But history is not made as they wish it! The creators of history were ready to give a different decision.

In November 1994, the Assembly election was held. With the mandate of the people, we formed the government on December 12, 1994. We fulfilled the first phase of our campaign to pull down the tyrant bent on playing with the fate of the common masses. To pull down the tyrant from his saddle became our first task. After the formation of SDF government, the leader of the oppressors Bhandari predicted the life of the government—government will run for three months; within six months we will form the government; I will receive the Independence day salute; the government will fall before Dussehra; I will be the new year Chief Minister, so on and so forth.

Surprisingly, the man who called me the follower of Gopal Gurung and the Mongol leader until yesterday changed his tune and called me the follower of communist block in Nepal and with Anand Pathak at Darjeeling, the R.B. Rai's CPM, and with the Communist China in the north, the formation of communist government (SDF government) in the border state of Sikkim is dangerous for the country. What a blatant contradiction in Bhandari's allegations! The two allegations of Bhandari go to prove that they are baseless and irrelevant. How Pawan Chamling can be both Gopal Gurung's follower (Mongol) and a communist? Allegations quarrel among themselves, they are self-contradictory. Bhandari's allegations are one that of opportunistic in nature. Bhandari reaches out for the pond when there are fishes in it, and pulls out when he sees serpent! Sometimes he alleges that Chamling does narrow regional politics and at times says that Chamling emulated the Central leaders. When I argued that the ration card should be issued only to the Sikkim subject holders and the permanent employees, Bhandari blames that Chamling discriminated against the outsider.

When we came to the government, Sikkim was bleeding from the excessive exploitations. The Sikkimese people were burdened by loans amounting to whopping 100 crores, and our first task was to provide immediate relief to the people from this situation. We

decided to stop further borrowing, and decided to ease the burden of loan gradually. Because we were not to deceive the people by indiscriminate borrowing and the compounding interest thereon. The previous government used to give a meagre Rs. 20 to the labourers to sustain their lives. We increased the wage by more than 100% to make it Rs. 50 to give them maximum access to the modern amenities.

We have removed the system of penalizing the workers for taking a day's leave. We have also improved upon the pattern of irregular women wage rate at par and consistent with that of the male. The women labourers can now avail of three months of maternal leave along with Rs. 300 as maternal allowances. Our intention is that let not the pang of wage cut further compound the labour pain. We have initiated steps to regularize the senior muster roll labourers. With a view to engage all matured youths; we have started work to set up a number of industries and doing some productive works in different parts of the state. To create self-reliant peoples, we are finalizing self-employment schemes to encourage unemployed people to earn their own bread, by setting up small scale industries.

With the formation of our government, it was first necessary to remove the fear psychosis rooted deep inside the minds of the people and supplanting their minds with enthusiasm and democratic consciousness. We freed the people and the journalists from the condition of forced silence and gave them the freedom to express their minds freely for formation of better society and the state. We were successful to re-establish an era of peace and tranquillity among the ethnic communities. We normalized the law and order situation in the state. We have prohibited the practice of gambling, alcoholism and the practice of exploitation of our women folks.

We are providing free school dress, books and *khatas* for those children belonging to poor family upto the class V level, and books and exercise books free of cost upto class XII. The government has shared the major burden of the poor parents by providing these facilities. Provision of mid-day meal has also been implemented.

We have tried to help the economically backward poor people by providing them with piglets, milch cows, ginger and potato seeds, tools and implements for our Scheduled Caste brethren, Rs. 20,000 in cash to the poor households for construction of house and providing land to the landless.

Our government is committed to providing address to the landless Sikkimese together with dress to the school children. We passed a legislation to provide land to the landless. Let me remind you that as an MLA I have already initiated this step by acquiring land at Namchi Boomtaar and distributed it to a number of poor people. Schools have been repaired and at the same time a number of new buildings have been constructed. To the police personnel, we are providing ration allowance and to the poor, the government

has subsidized the rate by Rs. 2. To encourage floriculture, the government has distributed free seedlings and seed bulbs. Cows, piglets, ginger seeds, cardamom saplings are being distributed free of cost annually.

We know that by merely addressing to the physical deficiency, the old and backward society cannot be transformed all of a sudden. For this the society should be transformed with that revolutionary spirit. A new soul should characterize each thing in society. By revolutionary change, it means that Sikkim should be self-reliant from all perspectives, establishment of permanent prosperity and peace among the people, uprooting poverty from the face of the state, and establishment of state as a model state in the whole world. People should be able to visualize that for how long is revolutionary change imperative?

With the mandate of the poor people, we came to the government and emancipated the people from the condition of poverty and initiated measures to provide them with the basic necessities of life. On the other hand, we have undertaken various schemes for the all-round development and progress of the state. We still need some more time before we lay the foundation of the future course of development in Sikkim. In the last three years, we have utilized our time fully. The people are satisfied with our works so far. They have encouraged us further.

Our Sikkim basically is a backward state. Democracy in Sikkim came after 28 years of establishment of democracy in India. Yet in the next 15 years, the oppressors and the tyrants in Sikkim, paralysed the very system. Looking at this fact, Sikkim in comparison to the country is still lagging behind by 40-42 years. From this viewpoint, it was necessary to support the Central initiative in promoting the backward classes into national mainstream. We have done our job in this regard.

The previous government put objections to the members of the Mandal Commission when they visited Sikkim to prepare a list. The previous government objected to the rights of the OBCs and chose not to implement them in the state. Chhettri, Bahun, Newar, Jogi and Sanyasi were not allowed to be included in the list. The concept of OBC was given a bad name. After we came to government, we implemented the OBC recommendations. We have continuously prayed to the Central Government to include the left-out castes in the list of OBC. We have been placing our demands to accord Limboo, Tamang, Gurung, Mangar, and Sunwar communities the scheduled status. More than that our efforts have been to provide the backward allowance to the entire state of Sikkim.

The greater Nepali community has absorbed a number of castes and sub-castes, with individual identity—culturally and linguistically. By recognizing languages like Gurung, Mangar, Newar, Rai, Tamang, Sherpa, and Sunwar as the state languages,

we have opened up a vista of greater progress and prosperity of these languages in the future. Besides, we have put special attention in safeguarding the rights and privileges of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes communities in state. For the development of different communities, we have set up a ST/SC/OBC Development Corporation in the state.

We have restored the traditional Dzumsa system of the tribal people in north Sikkim which was done away with by the previous government. Sikkim is made up of different villages. Majority of the Sikkimese people live in village. For ages, the village people have suffered the feudalistic system. Due to the lack of development in road infrastructures, education and other facilities, the villages in Sikkim are far more backward in comparison to some of the towns in Sikkim itself. We tried to provide immediate relief for the labourers and the farmers. We also want to initiate action for the long-term development of the people living in villages. Hence, to make village prosperous in every way, we have diverted 70% of the annual state budget for rural upliftment. Not only plan allocation, we have directed all government machinery to free the villages out of their backwardness. Because poverty is the root cause of backwardness with the people, our first aim has been to root out poverty.

It is said that education brings awareness which in turns leads to revolution. To realize our mission, we have started laying the foundation of higher education in the state. Education alone will end the prevalent ignorance, social taboos, and superstitions among the people and because of ignorance the people are subjected to cruel treatment. After we formed the government, we have opened up a Degree college at the south district headquarters, Namchi, Mahavidyalaya at Geyzing in the west district headquarters, and Engineering and Medical colleges at Gangtok. To make knowledge popular and widespread, we have established more and more Primary schools and more Junior High schools, and High schools are being upgraded into a center of higher learning with all the required facilities.

Apart from all these educational incentives, we have placed our demand for the establishment of a University in Sikkim after the name of the father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi with the Central Government. Works are being done to open up library-cum-reading room at each Gram Panchayat level. Books are being procured and furniture and other amenities for the library are being enlisted. Giving due consideration to the health hazards and providing better health, facilities in the health centers all over the state have been enhanced, and a Referral hospital and a Medical college have also been set up at Gangtok itself. People no longer need to cover extra miles and spend enormously for advanced medication outside the state. Henceforth, Sikkimese sons and daughters need not go outside the state to become Doctors and Engineers.

To make Sikkim self-reliant means enhancing the revenue gains of the state. For the same, we have decided to setting up viable industries conducive to the environment and ecological structure of the state. And a special emphasis is being given on the development of tourism industry in the state. They say that with one tourist coming in, more than 300 people are benefitted, directly or indirectly. We have to develop areas of tourist attractions. Sikkim is rich in natural beauty, but much needs to be done to develop it for the tourists. We have set up the Tourism Development Board which is entrusted with the responsibility of preparing blue print for the development of tourism in the state. We have also initiated steps to install ropeways connecting Deorali with Tashiling Secretariat and Gangtok with Ranka and also at Namchi. A satellite town will be developed at Gangtok and Namchi.

We have demanded airstrips in the state to connect Sikkim with the rest of the country and the world. Sikkim will also be linked by railroad upto Singtam. Repair and maintenance of roads has also been taken up to ensure smooth transport and communication facility. The government has scrapped the Rathongchu hydel project to honour the sentiment of the people. The site will now be further developed as a cultural heritage site. For tourists, the area will be projected as cultural attractions. Little above Namchi at Samduptse, we have started works to install statue of Guru Padmasambhava to attract more tourists. From religious point of view, this is a landmark and for tourism also, this will be a centre of main attraction. We have also come together to prepare an industrial policy for setting up small and big industries.

In the process, however, we have overcome stiff opposition and disruption against the good works we have been doing. This obstacle basically originates from the oppressors, the feudalistic and anti-people groups. These people predicted the life of our government by three months. But our government is successfully running. These people are taking undue advantage of the renewed democracy in Sikkim. They are bent on creating suspicion and doubt among the people and divide the Sikkimese people on grounds of caste and creed, and disturb normal life by raking up irrelevant issues. We will however, go to punish all these elements as per law and democratic norms.

We are facing still more problem in the implementation of pro-poor measures undertaken by the government. Some of the government employees are uninterested to work for the welfare of the people. Many government schemes meant for the poor are not percolated down to the needy. The mentality that characterized Bhandari's regime still lives in some of our bureaucrats. We have taken all measures to safeguard the interest of the government servants. They, in turn, have to reciprocate in equal measures and help government to work for the poor. We also have another problem. Many of our party functionaries have not been able to appreciate and follow the principles, and programmes of the party. As a result, greater numbers of people are

still ignorant about our policies and programmes. The party workers at the grassroots level can establish a direct contact with the people. And if the workers are ignorant themselves, the people will not be able to reap the full benefit of our sincere works.

How do we bring awareness, if the people are not informed about their basic rights and privileges and if they are not introduced to what the government is doing for their well-being? Only an informed and conscious citizen can enjoy the facilities provided by the government or else schemes meant for the poor will be sidelined and go to brokers. The practice of monopolizing schemes meant for the poor still persists. So the SDF party workers need to be extra conscious all the time. There is great responsibility on their shoulders. While in opposition, we were educating people against injustice, exploitation and superstition exhorting them to fight social evils. The campaign must still continue. It is necessary to make them conscious of all negative choices and encourage them to think good and do good works.

In order to bring about improvement in the living standard of the people and also at the level of their consciousness, the party workers must work ceaselessly. But sadly enough, majority of our workers are not aware of their noble duties and responsibilities. They still appeared to have followed the opposition's culture. There are loads of grievances against the government that they are not cared for enough. Let our friends realize that we have come together to make our society and the state richer and prosperous. If Sikkim becomes rich, all its inhabitants will be richer. If few people are rich, it does not imply that Sikkim has become prosperous. To absorb the swelling numbers of the unemployed in self-employment ventures, we have undertaken to provide loans to them. Instead of government jobs, they need to start on their own, which will not only ease the problem of unemployment but also increase state's revenue making Sikkim self-reliant and self-sufficient. I appeal to my party workers that let us visualize and choose to become self-sufficient and stand on our own feet. If the workers think of themselves, who would care for the people? We have to understand this.

The workers should qualify themselves as role model and should inspire people to follow the ideals based on human virtues through their own examples. They should be able to lead people into the world of peace and prosperity. There is a collective responsibility of all towards the party. Together with the party President and the Chief Minister, every party worker should be willing to share the responsibility of guiding the people out of ignorance. Because, there are reactionary forces bent on creating confusion among the people. We have to fight against all kinds of exploitations that affect the well-being of the people and the state.

I humbly appeal to our friends that you develop a regular reading habit to study party literatures, newspapers and political principles. As a well-informed party worker, you give leadership to the people. For if we are ignorant ourselves, how do we educate

the masses. May you ever move ahead with knowledge and wisdom, and I would like you to take the responsibility of leading the party in the future.

Due to the ever-growing strength of the people and democratic convention, the oppressors and the tyrants and especially the Sangram Parishad and its allied forces are badly upset. With limited resources and means, our government is working sincerely in favour of the people. The Sangram Parishad has no other programmes other than to disrupt the present government. Bhandari himself under the CBI net manifested an utter lack of moral judgment to register corruption case against me and our government in the High Court, Supreme Court and pleaded, helplessly before the Governor. But his allegations remained a mere propaganda, as the Supreme Court dismissed the case on 10th November 1997. Having beaten again and again before the people's court, people like Bhandari has neither reason nor rhyme to sustain himself as political leader. To avenge political defeat, they are trying to befool the people. But the Sikkimese people who have felt, understood and accepted our pro-poor policies, programmes and philosophy dismissed the selfish move of the opposition. The increasing madness and the declining moral ground of the opposition has convinced us that the direction we have taken, our policies and programme are not wrong, after all. In the face of innumerable obstacles, false propaganda and baseless allegations, we have never hesitated to do good work for the welfare of the people.

In our march to transform Sikkim into a prosperous state, it is but natural that the growing unemployment problem should come as a challenge. When we were about to address the problem at its initial stage through some effective means, the opposition created unnecessary confusion, embroiled the problem of unemployment with cheap politics and created an ugly scene at Gangtok. There were some ambitious proposals and demands to make the unemployed youths independent and self-sufficient. Considering the gravity of the problem, the government decided to do everything possible to ease this problem. The proposal for extending the Central Employment Exchange Act, 1959 in the state began in right earnest. One of the demands of the unemployed youths was that all vacant posts in all Central offices and organizations in the state be filled up from among the local people. However, due to non-extension of the Act, the State Government never knew about the number of vacancies in the Central offices in the state. People from outside were recruited in the Central offices. With the extension of the Act, we could have provided jobs to the local people in all Central offices and organizations like NHPC creating about eight thousand employments. As per the provision of the Act, only the persons enlisted in the Employment Exchange are eligible to sit for the interview, hence, the Sikkimese youths will have to forfeit this right. Moreover, with the extension of the Act, all the privileges and the facilities admissible to the state would have remained inviolate.

Because, the state of Jammu & Kashmir, who enjoys special constitutional provision, has already extended this Act way back in 1970. All other states have also extended this Act without any loss. On the basis of this ground, no sooner had we considered extending the Act in the state, the opposition started propaganda campaign, to create confusion among the people. They alleged that the government was going to revoke Sikkim subject and repeal Article 371F etc. They called the strike, tried to mislead the people, government employees. So much so that they did not even hesitate to involve small school children in destructive activities. Together with this scene, the prospect of employment in Central offices for our Sikkimese brothers and sisters was nipped in the bud. Who are the criminals to play with the future of the children? I fervently hope that the conscious people of Sikkim will kindly identify these culprits and help common people to understand it.

Why did the opposition created this scene, is a natural question. It was not for the interest of the people of Sikkim. Through this drama, they had different fish to fry. In reality, they were not in favour of holding the upcoming Panchayat election of 6 October 1997. In case of party-wise elections, they had no candidate of their own, secondly their defeat was certain and thirdly they were not willing to see rural tribal people, Scheduled Castes, minority, backward classes, and women holding responsible position (there was provision for reservation). Through decentralization, poor people were becoming more and more powerful while the oppressive, and the reactionary forces had little chance to regain their past monopoly over the poor. Having realized this, they wanted to disrupt the process at all cost. With similar aim Tewari, Bhandari, Thukchuk, Upreti assembled on the same platform. The case that they registered against the reservation of women, tribal, Scheduled Castes (in Panchayat election) also goes to prove that they had the one and the only one agenda.

But before the growing waves of people, they were helpless and truth finally prevailed. The Panchayat election was held, and the poor, exploited and disadvantaged people came up with greater enthusiasm and stronger commitment. The alliance of the oppressive groups crumbled like the house of cards. Our supporters from rural villages cast 85 percent of votes in our favour and strengthened the foundation of democratic system, while the oppressor and the tyrants were washed away by the tide of unfathomable time into oblivion.

Disciplined workers and friends who are committed to the well-being of people, their progress and emancipation, will alone lead people in our quest to make Sikkim new and prosperous. The day is not far when a sense of new thought, regard for a new change, revolutionary enthusiasm, love and unbreakable kinship with the people will transform Sikkim into a *naya and sukhi Sikkim*; this is my conviction, which I feel happy to share it with you.

