

**Traditional Media:
A Changing Communication Paradigm within the
Nepali Community in the Darjeeling Region**

*Dissertation Submitted to Sikkim University in Partial Fulfilment of the
Degree of Master of Philosophy*

Submitted by
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I, **Saurabh Thapa**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of word done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Traditional Media: A Changing Communication Paradigm within the Nepali Community in the Darjeeling Region**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Mass Communication** embodies the results of *bona fide* research carried out by **Saurabh Thapa** under our guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship, or fellowship.

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Introduction:

Communication in basic can be referred to as the synchronization and coordination of one's senses within oneself, with fellow being or a group with a series of feedbacks leading to certain actions. Communication is very vital for the existence of living beings, similar to food, air and water. Without communication there would be total chaos on intra, inter, group or mass level. This thought leads us to ponder on the functionality of our society prior to the advent of technology and the media. Today's generation is totally dependent upon the new media or the new mediums of communication as well as the contemporary media in-order to access information, have effective communication and even for entertainment purposes. But the origin of these new technological mediums of communication can be traced back to barely 300 years with the invention and evolution of the printing techniques (1450), telephone (1844), the telegraph (1870), and the wireless (1896). Before that, the fastest and the most effective medium for a long distant communication were the runners, the carrier pigeon system and later the modern postal system. But these were still the luxuries of people living in the suburban regions, especially the plains. The hills and the mountainous areas, because of their harsh climate, vast landscapes, rugged terrain and the lack of transportation infrastructure made it impossible for a smooth and easy communication to endure. It can be observed that because of the above said background the people living in those setting had to rely upon other means of communication mediums, basically the traditional ones.

The wide acceptance and employment of traditional forms of communication mediums in the past and present is not a secret.¹ Every community had their own version of long distant traditional communication tools, for example, *Gaines* of the

¹ Kumar, Keval J., *Mass Communication: A critical analysis*, Vipul Prakashan, 1994, pp 197-198

Nepali Community, talking drums of the African tribesmen², wandering mendicants known as *Parivrajakas* of the ancient India Brahmanical era³, etc. All of these in the days had tried to bridge the gap of distant communication until they became redundant in the later phase of technological development around the world. The increase in the inventions as a result of the growth of new social needs⁴ slowly made the tools of the past more and more socially irrelevant until some paved its way towards the museums and some towards the shadows of extinction. But this process has not been abrupt; there has been a series of gradual transitions in the society before it reached to the current situation. The industrial revolution marks the establishment of the institutions of technology in the world.⁵ These institutions provided a platform for the development of consumer society which then gave birth to the cliché modernization and mass culture, leading to the creation of multicultural society at large. This study would be shedding some light on the affects of modernization upon the concentrated Nepali community of the Darjeeling district from the relative past to the present.

The traditional process of disseminating information in this paper means the use of cultural products such as folksongs, conventional musical instruments (Nepali traditional instruments in particular), and musical professions (for e.g. 'Gaine' of the Nepali community), as an alternative medium to communicate within its people. Traditional Media, in this context, refers to the folk or the cultural or traditional process of disseminating information or message, especially in the form of traditional

² Mushengyezi, Aaron, Rethinking indigenous media: Rituals, 'Talking' Drums and Orality as forms of public communication in Uganda, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Volume 16, Number 1, June 2003, Carfax Publishing, pp 109-111

³ Vilanilam, J.V., Growth and development of mass communication in India, National Book Trust, 2003, p 1

⁴ Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural form*, Routledge, 1974, p 8

⁵ *Ibid*, pp 26-28

or other forms of music, within its surrounding areas. Although these folk or traditional forms of communication had a great role and importance in the historical period, these tools of communication got superseded by the new technological mediums in the recent era. It can be observed today that the folk medium of communication, the folk music in particular, found their way to museums and cultural institutions rather than practical life. Therefore, the proposed research will focus upon the process of transformation of the folk music as communication from being the mainstream media (then) to its fringes now as well as the conversion of folk music from a communication tool to mere entertainment. The research would also look upon the implications, importance and the functions of the traditional forms of communication and the resulting cultural crisis prevalent in the Nepali community of the Darjeeling district region at large.

Research Methodology:

This study adapts an interpretivist approach in research. In order to understand the reality on the account of the details of the situation, interpretivism seems to have been proven the necessary research philosophy for this study. Through the perception of an interpretivist, it is necessary to explore the subjective meanings motivating people's actions in order to understand their actions. In other words, the study will adapt interpretative epistemology which simply refers to the philosophical underpinning of the research. Interpretative epistemology has a basic assumption that knowledge can only be created and understood from the point of view of the individuals who live and work in a particular culture or organization. The concept of Interpretivism usually considers the subjective nature of the world in order to have a special concern and as well as to treat meaning as socially constructed along with the

unique character of the human activity and of the agency creating social actions. This approach is chosen in this study as it rejects the scientific discourse and helps to explore concepts, unsettle ideas, engage with social actors, seek to negotiate understanding and as well as argues that humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things and that these meanings are derived from the social interaction that one has with others.

The research strategy adapted for this study has been descriptive as it aims to present the current and past facts about the transformation of the Nepali society of the Darjeeling district on the basis of technological advancement and cultural transition as its consequence. According to Creswell, a descriptive research intends to present facts concerning the nature and status of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study. Descriptive studies also concerns the relationships and practices that exist, beliefs and processes that are ongoing, effects that are felt or trends that are developing.

Sources and acquisition of data: Primary data have been acquired through personal interviews, observations and content analysis. For personal interview, key informant technique has been utilized recognizing individuals who are expected to have knowledge about the issue. Open ended questionnaires have been used exclusively for the personal interviews. Participant Observation technique has been made use of in order to understand behavioral attributes, basically in social events, with reference to the influence of multiculturalism upon the community. Content analysis have been generally done on local television channels and social networking site. Particularly Facebook among other social networking sites has been taken under analysis in order to comprehend the proceedings of virtual communities, specifically concerning political and social issues relating to the local community of the Darjeeling region.

The events for the observation and the social networking site have been considered on a random basis. Data from previous researches, contents and information on books, journals will form part of the secondary data for the study.

Sampling: The area of the study is focused largely upon the Nepali community within the district of Darjeeling. The sample for the personal interview has been based on specified sampling method. Period of the content analysis will vary upon the medium of communication channel evaluated, likely, one month for local cable channel and two months for social networking site.

Method of data analysis: Data obtained has been analyzed through inductive analysis method by identifying patterns within the collected data. Analytic description method will also be utilized to determine the endpoints of the qualitative analysis by involving the identification of recurrent patterns or themes and attempting to construct a cohesive representation of the data. Methods Triangulation technique have been used to analyze the consistency pattern of the findings within the data collected from all the aforementioned data sources, specifically employed for this study. Validation has been measured entirely by testing the findings through the available theories and as well as by analyzing the consistency pattern of the data collected from the employed data sources.

Literature Review:

There has always been the presence of Media or mediums of communication in the human civilization or society in some form or the other. Though, the introduction to the new information technologies is a very recent phenomenon, there can be found traces of communication tools and mediums in the past as well. These

mediums can be termed as the indigenous, ethnic, folk or traditional media in particular. This media generally consists of communication tools likely Folklores, Myths, Oral narratives, Folk music and its musicians, Plays, etc which are usually full of information, messages and stories, passed on from generations to generations for the purpose of preserving its history, culture and traditions. Carole Pegg, an ethnomusicologist, in her book '*Mongolian, Music, Dance and Oral Narratives*' talks mostly about the diversity of performance traditions among Mongols and how instead of huge traditional variety, may be united.⁶ '*People do not have to be the same to be connected – a social relationship may be based on difference (Strathern 1991: 31-40)*'. She explains how a nation can be united without being culturally or socially homogeneous. Also, how performance may make connections on individual and collective levels on different occasions in diverse ways and that identities are not single and static but multiple or partial, and ever-changing. She comes up with a notion that through the power of performance, identities and relationships, societies and cultures may be not only reflected but created, consolidated, or even contested. Pegg observes and interprets the similarities found on the traditional performances within the heterogeneous community of the Mongols. She examines the messages and the information present in those traditional practices, rituals and performances by analyzing the lyrics of the songs sung and the stories passed from generations to generations through oral narratives.

There can be found a similarity between the Nepali community and the Mongols. The Nepali community, like the Mongols, is a heterogeneous mass with

⁶ Pegg, Carole, *Mongolian Music, Dance & Oral Narrative*, University of Washington Press, 2001

diverse ethnicities or tribe that comes under the big umbrella called Nepali and has their own traditional performances and practices. Similar to Pegg, a study can be done through oral narratives, song lyrics and by understanding the community's Music or its instruments in order to understand the creation of ethnic identity through consolidation process.

Likewise, Aaron Mushengyezi, in *'Rethinking Indigenous Media: Rituals, 'Talking' Drums and Orality as forms of public communication in Uganda'*, (Mushengyezi, 2003) talks about the need for the communication planners to understand the significant role the indigenous forms such as popular theatre, drumming, village criers, storytellers, orators, etc., have played - and continue to play - in the context of communication among rural or poor communities within the third world countries.⁷ The current discourse on globalization has many far-reaching implications not only for African economics and politics, but also for the vital question of how we communicate in a 'global village'. African governments and their development partners often tend to extrapolate communication models from the developed world and apply them wholesale in local environments in Africa that are quite unique. His paper argues that such communication strategies often do not impact on the rural masses for which they are meant because they are not 'contextualized' to the local settings, cultural dialectics and worldview of the people. The bulk of the rural people are non-literate, poor and have little or no access to modern mass media such as television, radio, film, newspapers and the internet. He further argues that the roll-out of modern media should continue to occupy centre stage in planning by

⁷ Mushengyezi, Aaron, *Rethinking indigenous media: Rituals, 'Talking' Drums and Orality as forms of public communication in Uganda*, Journal of African Cultural Studies, Volume 16, Number 1, June 2003, Carfax Publishing

African governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations, and these modern media should continue to be used to disseminate various campaign messages (HIV/AIDS awareness, immunization of children, maternal health care, poverty eradication, etc.) to the communities. But given the dearth of these media in many poor countries, the limitation of their coverage to the urban centres, and the costly equipment involved, a strategy that relies solely on them has its drawbacks. In his paper he has tried to answer certain questions such as, Are the indigenous media obsolete relics of a dying age? How would hybridization with the indigenous media help? To what extent are the new information technologies helpful or efficient in terms of certain poor countries with very low literacy percentage and with huge cultural influence?

Both the studies concentrate upon the use of traditional media as a communication tool in-order to understand the culture and community of the region. The requirement for such study seems essential as this may shed some light upon the difference in cultural characteristics concerning the diasporic transnational communities, particularly the Nepali societies of the Darjeeling district and the Nepal nation. Also the proposed study would help to comprehend the current situation, the transformation process of the indigenous media (folk media in particular) and as well as the legitimization process of the new information technologies in the region till the current time.

The Chapter 1, i.e. **Folk Media as a means of Communication: A historical briefing**, focuses upon the historical origin and cultural affiliation of the Darjeeling district and as well as the existence of the traditional communication tools within its residing Nepali community. It has been found that many usually tend to make a

mistake by categorizing the folk media as a mere outdated forms of enjoyment and pleasure, the fact is that they also carry a strong element of communication in them. In the pre-modern era, certain cultural institutions acted as the role of news and information dissemination system, likely, the wandering minstrels of various communities around the world. Besides these wandering minstrels, musical instruments also played and still play a vital role in long distant communication in various communities and tribes. In this chapter, the Nepali community has been taken into consideration and the above mentioned characteristics of folk music as a communication medium has been studied upon. By recognizing some of the indigenous communication channels in the Nepali community, the folk medium has been divided into two categories on the basis of its functionality, utility, significance and approach in order to have a better understanding. These categories are (i) **Incidental**: ones which were not actually meant as a communication tool but functions as such, generally non-verbal form of communication, and (ii) **Fundamental**: traditional communication tools which were meant and employed extensively for information dissemination purposes. Therefore, in a nutshell this chapter would look towards the potential and use of traditional folk music as a communication medium in the past and the present.

Chapter 2, **The Changing Discourse of the Folk Media and Communication and its Implications**, helps understand the gradual development and transformation of the interpersonal communication mediums in the Darjeeling Hills from the past. It also talks about the different patterns of the communication channels employed regarding its availability considering the geographical and demographic status within the same boundary. This chapter has been broadly divided into two topics, **Phases of Gradual Communication Development and the**

Transformation of the Darjeeling Hill Region and Changing discourses in terms of Communication in the Hills. The first theme covers the areas like the existence of aboriginal communication channel, introduction of efficient communication infrastructure, specifically the transportation system, to, the beginning of faster and modern communication technologies in the Darjeeling hills. The second theme helps understand the implications of disproportionate availability of modern communication infrastructure upon the local Darjeeling inhabitants.

The Chapter 3, **Introduction of New Technology and the resulting crisis in the Traditional media**, helps make sense of the outcome of the exposure of new mediums of communication upon the small communities like the Nepali community of the Darjeeling district. The very need to understand the implications of the modern communication channels is crucial to make sense of the transformation of society and culture via the new mediums of communication. The convergence of media channels into a single device has changed the definition of contemporary knowledge sharing institutions in the recent world. It cannot be denied that the very existence of thought controlling process with the help of these new communication channels is mostly demonstrated by the very acceptance of the popular culture by the mass. In order to understand the implications of the modern communication infrastructure in the Hills it would be best to be categorized into two; (i) **Making Sense of contemporary mainstream media** and (ii) **Grasp of New Media**. The first category will help understand the initiation and development of Mass communication medium in the hills, where as the second category focuses upon the formation of multicultural society with the creation of sub-identities and the resulting cultural crisis prevailing because of it.

The Chapter 4, **Conclusion**, would sum up the research findings based upon three basic subject matters, likely, the **difference of social structure** between the Nepali communities of Nepal and Darjeeling, the **political crisis and the development of contemporary media** in the district and lastly the **creation of sub-identities and the changing communication paradigm** as a consequence. The constant transformation in the technologies resulting in lifestyle changes has been seen to have devastating effects upon the long held cultures. The changes and the influence of these transformations can be better understood viewing the amount of exposure and application of these technologies within migrated transnational communities. The transformational behavior studied in the Nepali community of Darjeeling hills has brought out new understandings about the affects of the development of modern communication infrastructure and modernization upon such small land. The serious deviation from the traditional form of communication towards the acceptance of these new communication technologies not only has been believed to have led the people to recognize westernization but also to make it a part of life.

Chapter 1

Folk Music as a Means of Communication: A Historical Briefing

“Folk Music is considered as a social phenomenon, having a certain function in human life; therefore it has to be observed and referred to in its context” –

Constantin Brailoiu (1970)

In order to understand the functioning of the Folk Music as a communication channel we need to recognize and make sense of the larger Folk or the Traditional Media in general. Basically, Traditional or Folk Media are the indigenous means of communication utilized by the people at large, before the advent of the new Information and Communication tools. It is erroneous to categorize them as only tools for pure amusement and mere outdated forms of enjoyment and pleasure. Apart from the entertainment factor in them, they also carry a strong element of communication and are still alive and in fact receptive to new ideas.⁸

In the process of creating artistic development especially in the field of folk performing arts and media, tradition plays a very vital role. Tradition generally refers to the procedure in which the transmission of the age old values passed on from generations to generations as well as the interpretations of the universe is carried through. The traditional performing arts are considered as an integral part of general life of people in the traditional societies as it indicates a sense of belongingness and familiarity in the cultural context.⁹

⁸ Kumar, Keval J., Mass Communication: A critical analysis, Vipul Prakashan, 1994, p 198

⁹ Mohanty, Manashi and Parhi, Pritishi, Folk and Traditional Media: A powerful tool for rural development, J. Communication, 2(i), 2011, pp 41-47

The quest for expressing, communicating and sharing something in a creative and imaginative manner has given birth to the performing arts.¹⁰ Even though, the traditional media or the tools of folk media have no language, rules or literature, yet they are fostered through oral and functional sources. The nature of traditional folk media is that these forms are personal, familiar and more credible.¹¹ The impact of Folk media on the people is at a much deeper level. The folk media satisfies the inner need for self expression in which all can participate. In simple terms, the folk art forms preserves and disseminates the wisdom tradition and culture of our ancestors.¹²

In the context of the communication dissemination process, the traditional media is referred to as the vehicle the common people or the rural folk employ for the delivery of their messages and as well as to gather or access information. Folk dance, folk music, folklores, collectively termed folk media, out of necessity can be of immense value as communication tools to anyone involved in the dissemination of information to the rural community.¹³

There has been various instances where the Indian traditional performing art has proven its communication prospect and as well as its potential. Alha, the popular ballad of Uttar Pradesh and its equivalents like Laavani of Maharashtra, Gee-Gee of Karnataka, Villupaatu of Tamil Nadu, Burrakatha of Andhra Pradesh and Kabigaan of Bengal with change in their content and focus depending on the contemporary need, were effective in arousing the conscience of the people against the colonial rule of the

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Barthakur, P. B., Patanjali, V. and Parameswaram, P., *Mass Media in India*, Govt. of India Press, 1978, p 69

¹² Kumar, Keval J., *op.cit*, p 199

¹³ Barthakur, P. B., Patanjali, V. and Parameswaram, P., *op.cit*, p 70

British.¹⁴ It cannot be denied that folk songs and sung narrative forms functioned as an expression of the aspiration of the common mass. It is witnessed during the freedom struggle against the British rule that folk songs were used as a tool to communicate information to the local masses regarding the venues of picketing, marches and satyagrahs, and even to keep the people informed about the developments, pacts, agreements, victories, acts of villainy and deceit, etc in other parts of the country.¹⁵

1.1 A Brief Historical Account:

The concept of communication is a multifaceted ideology covering a multitude of meanings. The proliferation of technologies and the professionalization of practices have in a way altered or rather revolutionized the notion of communication in the present period.¹⁶ But, in a very simple understanding, Communication can be referred to as the synchronization and co-ordination of one's senses within oneself, with fellow being or a group or mass, with a series of feedbacks leading to certain actions. Communication is very vital for the existence of living beings, similar to food, air and water. Without communication there would be total chaos on intra, inter, group or mass level. This thought leads us to ponder on the functionality of our society prior to the advent of the new technologies and the media.

There arises a need to understand the history and geography of the region first in order to make sense of the process of communication in the Darjeeling region. The

¹⁴Mukhopadyay, Durga Das, Traditional Media and Development Communication, Issues in mass communication: The basic concepts, J.S. Yadava and Pradeep Mathur, eds., Kanishka Publishers, 1990, p 110

¹⁵ Malik, Madhu, Communication and Society: Traditional forms of Media and the Mass Media in India, Unesco, 1981, pp 33-34

¹⁶Mattelart, Armand and Mattelart, Michele, Theories of Communication: A Short introduction, Sage Publication Ltd, 2004, p 1

district of Darjeeling being located in the Eastern Himalayan area is a home for various challenges, like its harsh climate, vast landscapes and its rugged terrain, resulting as a natural communication barrier. The presence of effective communication infrastructure, may it be the roads and other transportation mediums, communication technologies etc, was introduced to the region in the 1800's by the British, after they decided to make Darjeeling its summer capital. Though roads and railways were introduced in the region, the rural areas were left untouched and the new communication amenities were not found to be the comfort the people living in the periphery could enjoy. Therefore, there emerges a question on the socialization methods or the mediums of communication entertained by the natives of the locale to commune with distant regions.

1.1.I Brief history of the region:

The need to be familiar with the history of the Darjeeling region in order to understand the cultural and ethnic homogeneity and its regional proximity with Nepal is very vital. Darjeeling, once a part of the independent Sikkim has been in the later years been attached to the other nations like Nepal and Bhutan until being permanently dissolved into the Indian union.

The unification of Nepal by the ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah from 1743, the year he descended the throne, was a huge blow towards the adjoining nations.¹⁷ The ambitious army of the united Nepal began advancing towards its surrounding areas with the idea of annexation. After the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1775, his eldest son Pratap Singh Shah descended the throne (1775-1777) and after him Rana Bahadur Shah in 1777. In 1788 the Nepalese army under the rule of Bahadur Shah

¹⁷ Rai, Bandana, Gorkhas: The warrior race, Kalpaz Publications, 2009, pp 36-37

emerged victorious and drove the ruler of Sikkim into exile in Tibet, invading all of its western provinces. The war with Sikkim resulted in Nepal's annexation of Sikkim 'Morang' or 'Terai' at the foot hills as well as a portion of the Sikkim hills which was bounded by the Rammam river on the north, by the Great Rangit and the Tista rivers on the east, and by the Nepal frontier on the west¹⁸.

Nepal ruled Sikkim until 1815 after which the English East India Company interfered into the region's politics by creating an ally with the Sikkim Emperor and waging a war against the Nepal kingdom. The Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-16) concluded with the Treaty of Segauli (1816) in the favor of the British where Nepal lost Sikkim, the territories west of Kali River (Kumaon and Garhwal), and most of the lands in terai.¹⁹ It has been known that the actual motive behind the interference of the British in the region's politics was to acquire Darjeeling as well as to have a vantage point on the trade towards the north and also to have a watch on the military movements on the nations located on its northern frontiers. All the lost counties that belonged to Sikkim including Darjeeling were returned back to the Sikkim's Emperor with the Treaty of Titaliya (1817)²⁰ by the English East India Company. But the return of the Darjeeling region proved to be a temporary phenomenon as in 1835 the region was leased back to the British through the deed of grant by the Raja of Sikkim which ceded to the British rulers a portion of the Sikkim hills which covered the areas south of the Great Rangit river, east of the Balasan, Kahel and Little Rangit rivers and west of the Rangnu and Mahananda rivers.²¹

¹⁸ Dasgupta, Atis, Ethnic problems and movements for autonomy in Darjeeling, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 11/12, Nov. - Dec., 1999, p 47

¹⁹ Rai, Bandana, *op.cit*, pp 38-42

²⁰ Dasgupta, Atis, *op.cit*, p 47

²¹ *ibid.*, p 47

The whole of the district of Darjeeling, with the three sub-divisions, Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, was still not the administration of the English government until a war was waged against Sikkim and the region annexed by the British, accomplished by the Treaty of Tunlong (1861).²² The map of Darjeeling that we see now came into existence only after the inclusion of Kalimpong and Duars area after the Anglo-Bhutanese war resulting in the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865.²³ The treaty concluded with the annexation of the hill tract which was situated to the east of the Tista River, the west of the Ne-chu and De-chu rivers, and the south of Sikkim.

The district was later brought under the purview of the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874, after that it was transformed into 'Backward Tracts' by the Government of India Act, 1919 and by the Government of India Act, 1935 it was declared as Partially excluded area.²⁴ Following the Independence of India in 1947, the region was then more and more made to bond with the West Bengal government and in the momentum was later totally merged with Bengal. There were seen various confrontations in the past and as well as in the present for a separate administration and statehood which has been long anticipated by the people of the region. The details on the movements followed in the later era, currently the Gorkhaland movement is not relevant to this chapter; therefore it will not be covered extensively.

The need for the mentioning of the historical background of the region is to show the affinity of this India's section with the Nepal nation and as well as to have an idea of the establishment of the district's current map. The regional proximity, the invasion and rule by Nepal in the past and also the cross migration still prevalent between the two regions proved a strong traditional bonding having a cultural and

²² *ibid.*, p 48

²³ Rai, Bandana, *op.cit*, p 278

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p 271

linguistic homogeneity apart from the socio-political reality, specifically the border. Unlike the past, the last century has observed the relationship between the sovereign country of Nepal and the Nepali-speakers of India grow extremely complex in the evolving political, social and cultural context.²⁵ Both, the Indian province of Darjeeling and Nepal has a common Cultural legacy and the language 'Nepali' as its lingua franca. Prithvi Narayan Shah played a major role by unifying Nepal and constructing Nepali language as the official language in the end of the 17th century within his empire.²⁶ Before the birth of the Nepali language, the huge umbrella of Nepali community was divided into various small ethnic fragments with their own small principalities and with distinct culture, language and dialects.²⁷ The cultural and linguistic homogenization project started by emperor Shah of Nepal had a great impact in all of its invaded constituencies including Darjeeling. Before the rise of the unified Nepalese empire, a barrier in communication through language was experienced. Therefore, the first and the most important initiative towards an effective communication system to sustain in the region was the introduction of a homogenous language understood by all the people in the locale, i.e. Nepali.

1.2 Use of Traditional Communication tools in the past:

This part of the chapter will be specifically focusing upon the functionality of the Folk Music as a communication tool, among other traditional forms, within the Nepali community sphere of Darjeeling district. The presence of homogeneity in ethnicity, culture and language legitimizes one to compare and even adapt circumstances, particularly cultural and social, linking Indian Nepalis with the

²⁵ Subba, T.B., Nepal and the Indian Nepalis, State of Nepal, Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Ramachandran eds, Himal Books, 2002, p 119

²⁶ Rai, Bandana, op.cit, p 151

²⁷ Ibid., pp 33-39

Nepalese of Nepal. It would not be wrong if it were to find the cultural roots of the Indian Nepali in the Nepal nation. So, keeping in mind the parallel socio-cultural similarities between the Nepali communities of the two regions, when doing such studies the border seems more virtual or fictional than real. Therefore, this paper will generalize the Nepali community in terms of socio-cultural by large and will not touch upon the regional or political differences in any context.

There has always been the existence of indigenous communication channels in communicating at local levels. These indigenous communication channels include a blend of the most common traditional media, precisely, music, drama, dance, sign language and town criers.²⁸ Within these aboriginal communication mediums, Folk Music is the most common indigenous method of message dissemination, because it facilitates songs that are entertaining, rhythmic, repetitive, easy to follow and memorable.²⁹

The rich cultural heritage of Nepali community is a home for various customs and traditions. 'Lok' equivalent to the English term 'Folk' in the Nepali language is used to express the authenticity combined with nostalgia in urban regions for the imaginations and constructions of the village.³⁰ Though in the Vedas the specific meaning of 'Lok' is free or open space, it gained a more enduring and precise connotation as 'World' in the Atharvaveda; but the word in Nepali suggests a different sense, popular or public.³¹ Lok sanskriti referring to the folk culture or the forms of indigenous mediums of entertainment and communication covers a wide

²⁸ Mbakogu, Ifeyinwa Annastasia, Forging a Link Between Indigenous Communication, Effective Community Social Work Practice and National Development, *Stud. Tribes Tribals*, 2(2), 2004, p 90

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p 91

³⁰ Henderson, David, Review: The Real Folk Music of Nepal: "The Nepalese Blues" by Hans Weisethaunet; Jan ErikKongshaug, *Asian Music*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring - Summer, 1999), University of Texas Press Stable, p 162

³¹ Chalmers, Roderick, When Folk Culture met Print Culture: Some thoughts on the commercialization, transformation and propagation of traditional genres in Nepal, 244 *CANS Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2, July 2004, p 245

range, namely, Folklores, Folk Music, Folk Dance, Folk Theatre, etc. By recognizing some of the indigenous communication channels in the Nepali community, it will be better understood if it be divided into categories. The categories would be separated on the basis of its functionality, utility, significance and its approach. The categorisation would be as: (i) Incidental and (ii) Fundamental. The first category will be observed in brief while the latter will be covered in detail, according to its prominence.

1.2.I Incidental:

This category will acknowledge the communication tools which did not function as the mainstream media but still acted as a communication medium. There can be found various musical sounds that may not be always used to communicate intentionally but eventually signifies certain information to its audience. This information may be understood only by the ones who are familiar to the culture or accustomed to its tradition. John Fiske refers this theory as '*Broadcast Codes*'.³² Also recognized by many media theorists as '*Restricted Codes*', these codes are described to be "*structurally simpler and more repetitive and are only learned through experience*".³³ Though accessible to all without a good understanding of these codes, in this context the disseminated information through musical sounds, it may only be perceived as a mere music to the untrained ear.

Musical instruments have always been used as a faster medium to communicate certain messages within a limited distant area to a large mass; for e.g., the talking drums of the native Africans used to communicate threat, rituals or

³² Fiske, John, 'Codes', Tobia L. Worth (ed.), International Encyclopaedia of Communication, vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, p 315

³³ Chandler, Daniel, Semiotics: The Basics, Second edition, Routledge, 2002, 2007, p 170

ceremonies³⁴, the bell of a church to communicate prayer time, deaths or certain customs, Blowing Horns commonly used to declare war or communicate the arrival of the kings or rulers, etc. Similarly, there are various such musical instruments in the Nepali community which knowingly or unknowingly disseminates certain information or messages. Among all the available folk musical instruments found in the Nepali culture, only the common ones or the ones with communication potentiality would be taken into consideration.

The communication mediums in this category basically fall under non-verbal form that does not indulge speech, or, the mode of communication through music and its instruments is without the use of a dialogue. The first in this category is Naumati Baja and Panchai Baja. Naumati Baja as the name suggests in the Nepali language is basically a group consisting of nine instruments and its players and Panchai Baja a group of five. These instruments comprise of Sahanai (folk oboe) with two players, Dholaki (traditional drums) with one player, Jhyali or Jhurma (cymbals) with one player, Damaha or Nagara (large kettledrum) with two players, Tyamko (small kettledrum) with one player, Narsiha (a long S shaped trumpet) with one player and lastly Karnal (a wide mouthed, straight trumpet with a bell that resembles the dhatura flower) with one player; if removed Karnal and Narsiha its Panchai Baja.³⁵ The interesting part about these particular instruments is that these are usually played by the members of the lower caste community, likely, the Damais. The Damais are recognized to be the tailor professionals in the Nepali community.³⁶

³⁴ Mushengezezi, Aaron, Rethinking indigenous media: Rituals, 'Talking' Drums and Orality as forms of public communication in Uganda, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Volume 16, Number 1, June 2003, Carfax Publishing, pp 109-111

³⁵ Tingey, Carol, *Auspicious Music in a changing society: The Damai Musicians of Nepal*, SOAS Musicology Series/ vol.2, School of Oriental and African studies, University of London, 1994, p 284

³⁶ Hoerburger, Felix, *Folk Music in the Caste System of Nepal*, Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. 2 (1970), International Council for Traditional Music, p 143

There is a reason behind categorizing this group of instruments within the fold of the communication medium. Naumati Baja and Panchai Baja are instruments usually used in any auspicious occasion in the Nepali society.³⁷ In this regard the sounds resonated by the instruments connote positive and good environment. Therefore, for the ones brought up in the same culture or the one familiar with the Nepali tradition can and will instantly interpret an ongoing wedding ceremony or other such similar event if they hear these instruments being played anywhere. Even though the musical instruments are not a communication tool by origin, they still act as one that communicates a certain message and information to its audience, proving to be an unconventional communication channel.

Similarly, the sound of a Shankha or Conch interprets two meanings, depending upon the sound. When one hears a Shankha or Conch played with gaps or breaks in between two short sounds, the person with the local cultural knowledge and understanding identifies immediately that there is a positive or auspicious Hindu religious ceremony going on in a temple or a nearby house. But in another instance if the sound is long with no gaps or breaks in between, it clearly connotes that there is a funeral going on somewhere, hence, a communication channel.

Madal and Chyabrung are percussion instruments which belong to the same family and are very similar. The only difference is that Chyabrung is a little bigger than Madal and is the traditional instrument of the Limbu community.³⁸ It is believed that besides being used as a mere musical instrument, it was also used to communicate within a limited distance during guerilla warfare or as the Africans used their talking drums. There is a story where a clan was attacked by another and in order

³⁷ Tingey, Carol, *op.cit*, p 284

³⁸ Subba, Churchill, *Hamra Lok Baja haru* (Original publication in Nepali), Information and Cultural Department, Darjeeling, Vol. 62, 2009

to defend their village they used guerilla warfare and communicated with the help of Madal playing different patterned beats to pass information about the location about their enemies and even to order the course of action to one another. It is understood that this instrument were used as an old version of walkie-talkie that we find today resulting in an effective and faster short distant communication.

One of the realities of the above folk musical instruments and its messages were that it was created by and for the normal grass-root people having a horizontal communication approach. The only criteria in order to understand or decipher the information disseminated were to have a thorough understanding and knowledge about the restricted codes or in simple terms the culture and tradition of the Nepali or its sub-ethnic communities within them.

1.2.II Fundamental:

This category will study the functional or the conventional mediums of communication or the mainstream media in the past prior to the advent of the I.C.T's, before they drifted ashore as a mere entertainment tool. The concept of mass communication would not work if the presence of linguistic barrier is prevalent in its audience. There were and still are approximately twenty-six distinct languages and dialects in Nepal.³⁹ The assimilation and integration of all the heterogeneous ethnicities and its kingdoms into a single united Nepal, initiated by Prithvi Narayan Shah, led to the requirement of a specific common language for the smooth functioning of his administration. Therefore, this need facilitated the birth of the new and homogenous language 'Nepali' and declared it to be the administrative or the official language of the empire. The need to have an understanding about the

³⁹ Rai, Bandana, op.cit, p 103

transformation of language in Nepal is crucial as only by then the process of mass communication could function properly and effectively.

The first mass communication tool used in the earlier period was Nagara belonging to the percussion family. Nagara or locally known as 'Dugdugi'⁴⁰ is a big and round drum played with two sticks creating a beat. In the time of the yore, this instrument was used to deliver King's or the Ruler's messages to the public acting as a valuable communication tool.⁴¹ This instrument was usually kept in a hill or a tower as its mobility was limited because of its huge size and weight. The sound of this drum usually interpreted to the people the need to pay attention to what is about to be conveyed by the king's messenger. The sound generated by Nagara acted as a cue for the people to be ready and vigilant for the followed verbal message or the information, thus acting as a powerful mass communication channel or medium. But it can be observed that the communication structure was a top-down process where the messages generated for dissemination meant to be delivered to the general public were usually authored or created by the people in power or the ruler, mainly the upper class. The main problem with this medium was its mobility and its reach. This channel was generally employed in the main town of the empire, thus limiting its contact to its regions and villages within a small radius.

The next communication tool is the most important and common medium known, that bridged the gap of distant communication to an extent before the introduction of the I.C.Ts in the Nepali community. 'Gaine' or now known as 'Gandharva' are a community of musical professionals belonging to the lower caste in

⁴⁰ Personal interview by the author with Tilak Sharma, Secretary Gorkha Library, Kurseong

⁴¹ Rai, Bandana, op.cit, pp 112-114

the Nepali society who has been existent since time immemorial.⁴² This community of music professionals plays a four stringed wooden instrument called 'Sarangi', resembling very close to the Indian string instrument 'Sarinda'.⁴³ They usually travel around close and far off villages playing music and spreading news for their livelihood. Their functionality as a mainstream communication channel dates back to more than a hundred years much before the existence of television and radio.⁴⁴

In the Hindu religion the word 'Gandharva' is referred to as a kind of divine being, considered to be the celestial musicians who plays in the court of Indra.⁴⁵ The myth around the community of Gandharvas or the Gains is that they believe that they used to play music for the Apsaras, who were supposed to be their spouses.⁴⁶ According to the *Nepali Sabdakos* (Nepali Dictionary) there are two meanings for Gandharvas; (i) *a divine being that is accomplished in singing and music playing and* (ii) *a jati (community) which makes a living through singing and playing music. Similarly, the word 'Gaine' also has two meanings; (i) a jati (community) which makes a living by travelling and singing in villages and accepting food and money in return and (ii) a person who is skilled in singing.*⁴⁷ Gains' original job was known to spread the news and deliver messages of the locality from one village to the other. Alert at all times to the latest socio-political events, they used their own skill as medium in the form of an oral newspaper to deliver information to distant regions.⁴⁸

⁴² Morimoto, Izumi, "From Wandering Minstrels to Migrant Workers: Involvement of the Nepalese Music Caste, Gandharbas, in International Tourism" (in Japanese), Bulletin of the Institute for the Culture of Travel, 2000, p 68

⁴³ Rai, Nirjan, "The Gandharvas and their Sarangi", <http://everestbuddha.livejournal.com/1234.html>, 2003

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ Morimoto, Izumi, *op.cit.*, pp 71-72

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p 74

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p 72

⁴⁸ Hoerburger, Felix, Folk Music in the Caste System of Nepal, Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. 2 (1970), International Council for Traditional Music, p 143

The skill of playing Sarangi is passed on from the elders to the younger generations, as is in their tradition.⁴⁹ The name Sarangi is said to be *shaped from the combination of two words, 'Sa' the first note of music (parallel to Do as in Do, Re, Me...) and 'Rangi' meaning colorful.* Hence, Sarangi is the instrument that colors the notes of music.⁵⁰ The instrument is a one piece hollowed out body with a neck that is carved out from a very light wood, locally known as Khiro. With two openings in the body the lower opening is covered up with dried sheep-skin. The original strings for the Sarangi were made out of sheep's intestine. It is said that the village people used to provide the Gandharvas with the sheep intestine that were sacrificed during the festival of Dasain. The insides of the sheep were then left to dry and after it was rotten, the fine nerves of the intestine were pulled out and then woven into quality sound strings. For the bowstring the use of horse tail were popular.⁵¹

The history depicts the origin of the Gandharvas from the Gandhaki Zone located in the districts of Langing, Tanaku and Gorkha in the Nepal nation.⁵² Usually, the men of the Gandharva community travelled to sing from village to village. Their journey varied from a single day to a few months. It can be observed that their travel were not only limited within the hill areas of Nepal but also across to the Darjeeling region of India. The regional proximity and the open border between the two nations have resulted in the settlement of many Ganes in India.⁵³

There can be found two patterns of communication in the Gandharva's process of information dissemination. The first would be Top-down and the second Horizontal. According to Nirjan Rai, Prithivi Narayan Shah, the then ruler of Nepal,

⁴⁹ Morimoto, Izumi, op.cit, p 76

⁵⁰ Rai, Nirjan, op.cit.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Morimoto, Izumi, op.cit, p 80

⁵³ Ibid., p 76

brought the Gandharvas in the Kathmandu Valley when he took over the country in 1768. The Gandharvas were employed by the King Shah to travel around villages and disseminate messages of patriotism through their songs.⁵⁴ They were basically used as a tool of propaganda during the unification period and were sent to far-off villages to sing in the favour of a unified Nepal and the Glory of the Shah dynasty.⁵⁵ This shows that in the feudal era the messages disseminated by these Gandharvas were controlled by the Rulers or the Bureaucrats of the land, hence, a top-down model. But it is also true that not all the Gandharvas were employed by the King, some functioned independently as well.

The Gaines' usually had a very distinct role in the preservation and propagation of Nepali Folklore by blending their music with stories ranging from accounts of battles fought long ago, heroes of the past, mythical stories, histories to passing on of local gossips. The contribution made by them is significant in the matters of historical issues. Their emphasis on music was mostly based upon the unfolding discourse of the society. The songs of the Gandharvas were very significant as it were based on the accounts of specific tales and trials of people and places encountered during their wanderings and in-fact the stories in their music were fully derived from their social environment.⁵⁶ It can still be found in many regions where the communication infrastructure is poor that the villagers often send messages to their relatives living in the towns through the help of this Gaines.⁵⁷ Therefore, we can see that this particular communication channel not only functioned in a top-down pattern but also in a horizontal approach as well. The best thing about this particular

⁵⁴ Rai, Nirjan, *op.cit.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Curtis, Steven, Review: The Performance of Everyday Life: The Gāine of Nepal by Hans Weisethaunet, *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), University of Illinois Press, pp 395-398

⁵⁷ Morimoto, Izumi, *op.cit.*, p 80

channel was that it was easily accessible by anyone and that it could be used by everyone as well.

Below are a few examples of the stories that the Gandharvas usually create and sings. The first story is about their own misery, whereas, the other following song talks about the story of the accomplishment of Tenzin Sherpa after he climbed the Mount Everest.

<i>Sarangi ko taar ley mero maan ko geeta gawcha,</i>	Through the strings of the sarangi, I sing the song from my heart,
<i>lekha dekhi besi samma gaine meet ta lawcha rajai gaine meet ta lawcha,</i>	Gaine's friendship is more with what they write and what they see,
<i>Merai sura merai gaon basti ko katha,</i>	It's a story about my rhythm, my village,
<i>Sunai hidchu banayera pirate ko katha,</i>	I wonder around singing the song of love
<i>sarangi ma gawdai hirda malai mangne bhanchan,</i>	that I create, They call me a beggar when I walk
<i>afnai daaju bhai ley malai na chiney jhai garchan</i>	around singing along with the sarangi, My own brothers pretend not to recognize me

<i>Hamro Tenzin Sherpa ley charyo Himal chuchura,</i>	Our Tenzin Sherpa climbed the Mountain peak,
<i>charyo Himal chuchura, charyo Himal chuchura,</i>	Climbed the Mountain Peak, Climbed the Mountain peak,
<i>Gankeyra bajyo khajari dankeyra nachyo mujura,</i>	With enthusiasm the Khajari was played and with passion the peacock danced,
<i>Hamro Tenzin Sherpa ley charyo Himal chuchura</i>	Our Tenzin Sherpa climbed the mountain peak

Though these mediums were the exclusive mainstream media in the past, the advent or the introduction of the new communication technologies in the Nepali society has transformed it into a mere entertainment tool that has lost its value,

relevance and its presence in the modern period. The development of new convenient communication infrastructure has now made it redundant in terms of social usage not just only in the Darjeeling hills but also in various other parts and communities of the world.

Chapter 2

The Changing Discourse of the Folk Media and Communication

And it's Implications:

It can be witnessed that there has been constant transformation in the mediums of communications that we employ in the later phase of development. This very phenomenon is a universal reality. The ever advancing progress in the communication technologies has evolved our society from an isolated and alienated village to a global one. Fast, faster and fastest, the new ideology surrounding the communication market has resulted in the development of efficient and swift connection between the people around the globe instantaneously. However, this communication technological boom in the world didn't happen overnight. Series of transformations has been witnessed to reach the current stage, from folk media to Industrial Revolution that initiated the employment of new communication infrastructures, to the Globalization era that made possible the commercialization of the very recent advanced communication technologies that we use today.

It can be well seen in the current time that there can be found various secluded areas in not only within the parts of the Darjeeling district but also within the Indian nation and as well as in other countries where communication infrastructure is as good as nil. They still operate with the same traditional institutions and infrastructure available to them.⁵⁸ It has been known in the previous chapter how in some remote regions of Nepal and Darjeeling district the '*Gaines*' functioned and still functions as an important and one of the limited long distant communication channel available.

⁵⁸ Mushengyezi, Aaron, Rethinking indigenous media: Rituals, 'Talking' Drums and Orality as forms of public communication in Uganda, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Volume 16, Number 1, June 2003, Carfax Publishing, pp 107-108

There can be found different patterns of communication mediums employed by the inhabitants differentiating from rural to sub-urban to urban areas. The modern communication amenities requires modern and expensive infrastructure which becomes a liability for the technology providers if the consumerism in the area, mostly remote rural settings, is very low. Therefore, in-order to set aside losses the companies simply tends to avoid those fractions. Through this phenomenon one can understand the differences in communication discourses held by the denizens of different settings distinguished purely on the basis of technological deprivation. But in-order to make sense of this account, the need to be aware of the district's transitional development phases from the past relative to its changing communication discourses is essential. Therefore, this chapter would focus more upon the interactive interpersonal communication rather than the Mass medium encircling the district's populace at large.

2.1 Phases of Gradual Communication Development and the Transformation of the Darjeeling Hill Region:

The phases of interpersonal communication development in the district of Darjeeling can be classified within the introduction of transportation system, print technology and the postal service, telegraph and telephone service successively. The advent of the new technology helped the region to grow into a commercial arena attracting new settlers, business and investors and slowly transforming this part into a modern society.

2.1.I Alternative aboriginal communication channel:

Before the advent of the transportation system and in-fact even in the later phases of communication development in Darjeeling and its constituencies, there were other alternative aboriginal communicating channels through which the process

of interaction took place between far off lands. These communication mediums were born from its necessity as the modern communication infrastructures were generally the privilege enjoyed by the upper class British officers and other urban residents. Within these few aboriginal communication tools one of the most employed medium was the use of '*Gaine*' as an important information disseminator which was used more extensively in the nation of Nepal than in the Nepali community of the Indian province.⁵⁹ The others were pigeon messenger system which were used at a very low scale but the most employed and functioned communication tool was the employment of a messenger system known popularly as the 'Runners'. This system was largely used by the common people in-order to relay messages and pass information to people living in distant regions. Commonly said to be known as '*Sandeshbaag*' in the regional language, they were message carriers who walked or ran from one village to another disseminating the messages entrusted to them.

The *Sandesh-baagi* or the runners were present in various areas of the district even after the introduction of transportation services, telegraph, telephone, teleprinter and postal services in the period. The reach of other modern communication channels were very limited and were not the luxury the common people could entertain. The hierarchical disparity within the region concerning financially as well as geographically, affected much on the accessibility of the same communication amenities at large. Therefore, in bridging this gap the runners proved very effective and helpful, however, the time required to relay the information was great. Parash Chandra Alley talks about the shortage of telecommunication and other modern communication amenities in his village during 1970's. He recalls about the employment of such *sandeshbaag* in the nearby tea estate who used to travel around

⁵⁹ Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

50-60 kms by foot in-order to disseminate information and messages for the Tea-garden Manager within the surrounding areas. The runner or also commonly said to be known as '*Roti-walla*'⁶⁰ in his village was mostly required to visit Darjeeling town and when returning back he was asked to bring along fresh breads produced locally by the tea garden managers, hence the name roti-walla.

The employment of the runner service was not just on a personal or a small scale. The introduction of postal service in India and in the Hills brought upon a great employment of runners for its service. It is said that these runners' who were now the employees of the post office carried a distinctive bag and with belts around their waist and one crossed from shoulder with Indian postal service engraved in regional and English languages. The most distinctive feature that M.r. G.B. Bal recalls that the runner or now the post men had to cover a radius of 6-7 miles and always carried a spear with bells (*ghungroo*) tied in it. The bells made sound as they walked and ran which was an indication to the people that they were coming. This was done because at that period no person was allowed to go near 3 feet of radius of the runner or the messengers had the authority to wound or even kill the person said in self defense in-order to protect the mails.⁶¹ It was rumored that even the wild animals feared them and ran away when the sound of the bells resonated nearby.⁶²

2.1.II Introduction of efficient Transportation system in the Hills:

One of the most important tools of communication is transportation. It functions as an effective medium for faster distant communication. In the time of the yore, communication with remote regions were only possible by walking all the way

⁶⁰ Personal interview by the author, Parash Chandra Alley, Program Executive, All India Radio, Kurseong

⁶¹ Bal, G.B., *Ma Officer Bhaye* (I became an Officer), 1996, Local Publication

⁶² Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

from one place to another personally or by employing 'runners' in order to pass messages or information. Though this medium served its purpose however it took days or even weeks for the message to be delivered and even more time to receive its feedback. Therefore, the introduction of convenient communication infrastructure like the transportation system, specifically the roads and the railways in the hills, proved to be very constructive in terms of bridging the communication gap making the whole process more rapid in nature.

Roads: It is no lie that the British were the pioneers in the development of efficient communication infrastructure in India. The decision of establishing a resting place and a sanitarium for the English officers led to the commercialization of the Darjeeling Hills. This intended process of commercialization of the region resulted in the requirement of constructing transportation infrastructure, likely the roads and the railways. The construction of these communication amenities was very essential because it took more than 5 days in order to reach the hills of Darjeeling from Calcutta before 1870's.⁶³ Not only the journey was tedious and exhausting but it was also expensive. Sir Joseph Hooker in 1848 is known to have paid an expense of Rs 240 in order to execute a journey from Karangola Ghat on the Ganges to the foothills.⁶⁴

The first and foremost task of the British was to establish a faster and efficient communication link between Darjeeling and the plains in its foothills. In order to overcome this shortage, Lord Napier of Magdala (Lieutenant in the Engineers) was deputed to construct the road bridging Siliguri to Darjeeling from 1839 to 1842.⁶⁵ The

⁶³ Malley, L.S.S. O', Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling, Logos Press, 1907, 1985, 1999, pp 132-133

⁶⁴ Dash, Arther Jules, Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling, First published by: Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, 1947, Reprinted by: N.L. Publisher, 2011, p 179

⁶⁵ *ibid*

outcome of this initiative was the construction of the Old Military Road which started from Pankhabari ascending towards Kurseong and moving via Dow Hill reaching Ghum. This was just a pre-road initiative as the constructed path was not suitable for wheeled traffic. The first official road to be build for the actual wheeled vehicles was known as 'Cart Road' constructed by the English government from 1860 onwards. In the year 1864 the road from Darjeeling till Kurseong was completed and was open for daily commute while the whole proposed length of the road was operational later from 1869.⁶⁶ With the construction of over 600 bridges the road connecting the foothills of Siliguri to the hills of Darjeeling was completed creating a stronger, efficient and faster communication union. Later in the 1880's another road adjoining Tindharia descending towards Siliguri was build for the construction of Railway track alignment connecting the plains to the Darjeeling hills.⁶⁷

Without the presence of the modern motor vehicles until 1918,⁶⁸ the commercial use of the road was mostly entertained by strong bullock carts, hence the name Cart Road. Still the carts were not practicable in narrow and steep paths, therefore, pack-ponies or human carriers were used for general transportation.⁶⁹ Coolies at that time played a major role in transporting merchandise from frontier states carrying and walking days through high ridges and steep mountain slopes reaching Darjeeling.⁷⁰ Transportation services were very much limited at that period. The most common medium was by walking, another popular means was by a bullock cart but there were also few luxurious modes available for the rich and the privileged ones like the rickshaw and the Hill dandy.⁷¹ Hill dandy as O'Malley puts it as '*a long*

⁶⁶ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 132

⁶⁷ Dash, Arther Jules, op.cit, p 181

⁶⁸ Ibid, p 180

⁶⁹ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 136

⁷⁰ ibid

⁷¹ ibid

coffin-like reclining chair with one end resting on the shoulder of a bearer, and the other slung across a pole (dandi) which rests on the shoulders of two men behind'.⁷²

There are various other very important roads that have been the initiative of the British rule that helped in creating a better communication link between the regions lying in the Eastern Himalayan belt. One of them is 'The Tista Valley Road' connecting the then autonomous nation of Sikkim and Tibet as well as the subdivision of Kalimpong to Darjeeling and the plains, i.e. Siliguri via Sevoke. The Tista valley road was and still is very important highway for travelers and merchants going to Sikkim and Tibet for personal or financial gains. The Tista Bridge plays a significant role in linking Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Siliguri or the plains along with Sikkim and Tibet with one another. The entry to Tibet is possible only through two points, Sikkim via Rangpo and Jelep-la pass through Kalimpong via Pedong.⁷³

Another important road that needs to be mentioned is the Nepal frontier road connecting Nepal through Darjeeling. This cart road descended from Ghum through Sukhiapokhari via Simana-basti towards the Nepal frontier from where only ponies and pedestrians could pass along the mountain track into the Nepal nation.⁷⁴ The other significant road constructed by the British was the Siliguri Naxalbari road. The road passed through Pankhabari connecting Kurseong with Matighara and then linking Tiribana to Bagdogra and Naxalbari respectively.⁷⁵ There are various other roads build by the English administration but the above mentioned Cart Road, Tista Valley Road, Nepal Frontier Road and the Siliguri Naxalbari Road are the most prominent of them all.

⁷² *ibid*

⁷³ *Ibid*, p 138

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp 138-139

Railways: Before the advent of the railways in the northern part of Bengal, reaching Darjeeling was a very tedious and expensive expedition. The roads through the plains of Bengal were the only route available. Though after 1860, when the East Indian Railway was extended up to Rajmahal, the farthest one could travel were only till Sahibganj on the banks of the Ganges.⁷⁶ The main challenge was the continuing journey from Karagola to Darjeeling passing through Purnea, Kishangunj, Titaliya and Darjeeling. This journey was generally performed by means of palki (palanquin), bullock cart and tonga consecutively, taking more than 5 days to reach the destination.⁷⁷ It was only after 1878 that the Northern Bengal State Railway was open for traffic. The end of 1870 marked the beginning of two railway stations in north Bengal; Jalpaiguri being the first and Siliguri second.⁷⁸ Siliguri automatically became the main terminus covering whole of Darjeeling region by being included in hill's boundaries, later to be known as the Assam and Bengal Railway.⁷⁹

Following a year after the opening of Siliguri Railway terminus or the Assam and Bengal Railway, construction for the railway tracks in the Hills began in 1879. In 1880 the line was open for travel up to Kurseong and a year later in 1881 the steam tramway reached Darjeeling and then thus was re-designated as the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.⁸⁰ Until the arrival of the railway transportation system in the Hills no other motorized vehicle was operational. The introduction of Railway in Darjeeling was a beginning of a transformation. The journey became convenient, faster and cheaper. Goods could be transported in much more quantities, increasing the market and settlers resulting in rapid development in the region. The only drawback was that the railway was a luxury that was not accessible to the common

⁷⁶ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 133

⁷⁷ Dash, Arther Jules, op.cit, p 180

⁷⁸ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 133

⁷⁹ Dash, Arther Jules, op.cit, p 190

⁸⁰ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 133

people at that period. The reach of the railway was limited and the regions in its periphery couldn't enjoy its privilege. Along with commercial development, development in communication was also witnessed. Faster and cheaper travel meant more information exchange between distant places. Not only the railway boost up inter-personal and distant communication but it also helped in the establishment of other communication technologies and infrastructure, like the Telegraph, Telephone and the Post Office within the Darjeeling region.

The role of a road in the context of communication is vital. The effects of the introduction of roads can be basically categorized into two types, the first being the Immediate and the following Secondary. **Immediate effect** in general is the direct outcome caused by the action. Direct outcome in this context connotes, transportation facilities increasing the amount of supply of goods leading to higher consumerisms, market growth, less time required for travelling, face to face communication with distant regions leading to instant feedbacks (inter-personal communication), etc.

Secondary effect, in the other hand, illustrates the side effects of the action. In this perspective the introduction of roads leads to not only direct interpersonal communication but it also promotes the formation of indirect or rather specifically the alternative medium for communication process. The secondary effect is still popular in the developing third world nations. In West Africa the 'mammy wagons' which are generally the overloaded busses or trucks carrying women traders commuting to up-country villages from the city still functions as an important channels for news flow.⁸¹ This approach has been accepted and employed in terms of disseminating messages to rural regions where modern communication mediums have not reached. These messages are not only personal in nature but are sometimes political as well. President

⁸¹ Lent, John A., Grassroots Renaissance: Folk Media in Third world nations, Folklore, Vol. 91, No. 1 (1980), Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd., p 88

Nkrumah of Africa in his political carrier has numerously used the help of bus drivers in order to publicize and propagate political events and ideas to the bushes or the tribal people in the rural areas.⁸² Similarly, the coming up of roads and motor vehicles in the hills of Darjeeling proved to be the formation of the fastest alternative communication channel without the accessibility of other communication medium at that period. It was much more feasible, efficient and faster to pass messages (oral or written) and parcels through the drivers of the local taxi vehicles rather than travelling or walking all the way.⁸³ Though in the later phase many convenient communication mediums were introduced, likely, Telephones and Telegraphs, but in the time those were the luxurious common people didn't have easy access to, leaving communication through transportations an easy accessible, inexpensive, faster and efficient alternative communication channel in the Hills.

2.1.III Beginning of faster and modern communication technology in Darjeeling:

The establishment of efficient communication infrastructure, exclusively the transportation system transformed Darjeeling and its adjoining area into a great commercially potential zone. The roads and the railways acted as a foundation to the initiation of a better, faster and efficient communication medium by helping in introducing modern wired communication channels, the Telegraph or in local words '*Taka Tarey*'⁸⁴ and the Telephone in the Hills. Convenient transportation system meant the possibility of an efficient and organized postal system as well. These modern communication amenities meant a healthier connection with the rest of India's metropolis, with less alienation from the world. Communication within the British officers residing in different regions was also very significant for a well-

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

⁸⁴ *ibid*

organized administration to endure which brought forth the introduction of these modern communication channels in Darjeeling. With 33 post offices in the district, the postal communication services covered around 305 miles in the 1900's. Along with the postal service there were 14 telegraph offices situated at Darjeeling, Bagdogra, Ghum, Jalapahar, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Lebong, Nagari Spur, Naksalbari, Panighatta, Rangli Rangliot, Siliguri and Sonada in the same era⁸⁵ These offices offered services as delivering postal articles, money orders and telegrams and also provided the locals with savings bank accounts. The head office in Darjeeling town controlled the accounts of 31 sub-offices in and around the Darjeeling district, Sikkim and Tibet.⁸⁶ During the mid 19th century there were seen a huge growth in the use of this services and the post office was increased to 43 of which 24 were sub-offices and 18 branch offices. The mails were transported through a bus or by the railway depending upon its priority and its weight. The telegraph wire was connected to as far as Calcutta and connected areas like Gangtok as well. In the mid 1900's there were around 450 telephone subscribers in the district.⁸⁷ With having eight public call offices in the Hills at that time the Darjeeling telephone district came under Saidpur Subdivision of the Calcutta East Division of the Bengal and Assam Circle.⁸⁸

The telegraph at that period was generally channeled through the main head office in Darjeeling. All the messages were firstly sent to Darjeeling and from there were finally disseminated to their designated places. These telegraph services were soon replaced by new Teleprinter services which provided with readable messages that manifested the end of the use of Morse code in the later phase of communication

⁸⁵ Malley, L.S.S. O', op.cit, p 142

⁸⁶ Dash, Arther Jules, op.cit, p 198

⁸⁷ Ibid, p 200

⁸⁸ ibid

development.⁸⁹ The telephones in the other hand sustained its employment and were used more on a personal level. At the beginning because of vast financial and geographical distinctions, deprivation in terms of the telephone usage in the hills was high. In the period only the upper class of people could enjoy the privilege of the telephones. The privileged few usually consisted of British officers and rich aristocrats hailing in the urban or sub-urban regions of the district. Few government offices and tea gardens in the rural settings also found themselves connected through the telephone service, but it was very limited to higher class people and high designations.

In the later stage of hill development era this modern communication service were also made commercial by providing public access. Telephones were now to be found in post-offices where anyone could use its service. But at that period the telephone service were very different than today. The phones were without dialers and the person making the call had to use the service through the help of the operators. There were two types of telephone service. The first was direct where a person with a telephone could directly make a call to another in their offices or residents. The other service known as 'Particular Person' was provided by the Post Office as well. The latter was a call made from one post office connecting to the service of the other post offices. It was a personal call made by a person who did not own a private telephone but wanted to get in touch with another particular person residing in another area with a fee of 2 annas. In-order to make the connection at both sides the receiving post office used to note the name and address of the said person with a timeframe to synchronize and co-ordinate the call. Post Office Messengers were employed by the post office whose job was to find the person by visiting the said address and

⁸⁹ Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

informing the particular person about all the necessary information in-order to co-ordinate the call.⁹⁰ This whole process usually took hours before the synchronized communication took place.

The post office was exclusively not an aboriginal idea but there were seen blended version of post mails with the traditional settings as well. At the early era post mail service was very popular amongst the local residents. Before the commercialization and wide usage of other modern communication mediums in the hills, post office was the soul channel for faster, cheaper and much preferred communication service. The traditional blend was mostly seen in mails which were sad in nature. Mostly the mails which contained the information about some persons' demise or other such messages were tied with yellow thread. This mails wrapped by the yellow thread were recognized by all and were usually preferred first to be delivered by the post office. This is one of the classic examples of the blend of local with the modern communication development.⁹¹

2.2 Changing discourses in terms of Communication in the Hills:

The introduction of new mediums of communication was a revolution in the society and communities in the Hills. Before, the same circle of interpersonal communication (referring to the disseminated message and its feedback) used to take more than days or even weeks, now similar process could be performed in a fraction of minutes. This made the information sharing very efficient and convenient. In the past communicating with the Mass was even more complicated and there were no simple and faster medium available in those periods. Traditional media likely had tried to bridge a small gap. Certain ideas, knowledge and information were passed on

⁹⁰ ibid

⁹¹ ibid

to a large group if not mass though the applications of traditional communication medium, the dramas, songs and oral narratives⁹², but it was still not enough. The transformation from traditional media users to a new communication channels in the district of Darjeeling happened steadily and progressively.

The transportation system acted as the base for the social communication transition in the society. The coming up of communication amenities changed the alienated land into a commercial zone, especially the urban area. This attracted many more settlers, professionals, investors and buyers in the district. The evolution of the area from an isolated region to a commercial one was only successful with the gradual development of communication infrastructure. Though the above statements are true in one context but this very process of integrating the whole local mass into the fold of modern communication institution was a very slow one. The dissimilarity in the social structure present then and now, proved very disproportional in terms of access to certain privileges and luxurious infrastructure by the grassroots or in simple terms the effects of early colonialism⁹³. This distinction of social structure was based upon the ethnicity directly relating to the economy⁹⁴ of the residents and as well as their geographical locations. Even in the current situation there can still be seen disparities on the above said grounds. The very concept of development in almost every modern aspect is reasonably different to the people falling either wise on the economical and geographical scale. The past had witnessed great unequal distribution in terms of economical and technological segments as the region's social structure was in the

⁹² Lent, John A., *Grassroots Renaissance: Folk Media in Third world nations*, Folklore, Vol. 91, No. 1 (1980), Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd., pp 78-79

⁹³ Golay, Bidhan, *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, Edt T.B. Subba, A.C. Sinha, G.S. Nepal, D.R. Nepal, Concept Publishing Company, 2009, pp 80-83

⁹⁴ During the early stages of the development of the Darjeeling district, the ones who initiated the commercialization and settlement process in the Hills were the Englishmen. The inhabitants of the region brought mostly as laborers from Nepal belonged to the low class who had come to the locale in order to earn a living. (Thapa, *Indian Nepalis*, 2006) Others settlers were generally from India who had come as small time entrepreneurs. Since the Nepali community then belonged to the lower most class in the region, hence, the distinction of Ethnicity relating to economy.

initiation phase of development and also because the Nepali community in the Hills then were seen to be on low class regarding society.⁹⁵ This disparity can seem logical in the past but now after drastic transformations of the community, society and the region itself, the same disproportion and the underdevelopment of society and communication infrastructure in the modern period appears unreasonable.

The very notion of communication varies very differently from place to place and from people to people. The process of marginalization in terms of certain technological distribution wrought by socio-economic and geographical conditions was witnessed in the Nepali community of Darjeeling district. The transformation and development of communication technologies has not benefited all the sections of the society, particularly the ones who are on the deprived side of the digital divide⁹⁶ fold. This distinction or rather the discrimination is generally caused by deprivation on the basis of their demographic situation. This lack of accessibility of modern mediums of communications or in a nutshell the digital divide leads to different versions of communication discourses. The inaccessibility of the modern communication technologies noticed within the people falling inside the fold of the digital divide responsible for the creation of various perceptions regarding the very idea and its utilization of these communication channels for development can be witnessed even within the people of the same period and regional boundary.

In the current stage where the demographics of the society in the hills have been little improved than the past, the grasp of the digital divide still prevails within certain sections of the hill society. The limited accessibility or more accurately the

⁹⁵ Pradhan, Kumar, *The Gorkha Conquests: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal*, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books, 2009, pp 211-216

⁹⁶ Digital Divide refers to the unequal accessibility of modern communication technologies or the deprivation of certain communication infrastructures on the account of various social, political, economical, geographical or demographic background and settings.

technological divergence in terms of distribution still prevalent in the hills has brought in unequal amount of development in the region. Presently the deprivation of technologies has been limited and is shifting more towards ones age and economic viability rather than geographic environ as one has now the capability to relocate considering better resources concerning modern privileges, infrastructures and institutions. This very occurrence has been observed in certain sections of the community, especially the youths hailing from rural settings, who are migrating to urban surroundings for better jobs, higher education and expedient technological ease. This changing dynamics has resulted in the perceived notion that the foreign culture, technology and trends are much more superior to that of the regions culture.⁹⁷ This particular understanding has brought in great transformations in the social structure leading to the shedding down of long passed traditional professions and institutions like 'Gaines', 'Maruni' Dancers etc. This slow detachment from the traditional and cultural associations has now led some of the cultural heritage towards museums and some towards the shadows of extinction. The unemployment of the traditional tools of communication in the current era has resulted in the conversion of these mainstream communications of the past into mere entertainment tools in the present. The interesting part about this very loss is that this fading episode of the cultural and traditional heritage is not even realized by its community members and there has been no initiative taken to revive it. This peculiar unconcern among the community members creates space for new queries likely, Is there even a need for the revival and endurance of traditional media in a modern society? If revived what should the goals of these traditional media be? Will the complete extinction of these cultural tools affect a community in any context in the present setting?

⁹⁷ Carah, Nicholas, Pop Brands: Branding, Popular Music and Young people, Peter Lang Publishing, 2010, pp 10-17

Though being said the aforementioned statements, however, the creation of communication institutions helped the people of the hills to cope with the slow and time consuming interaction processes leading to better functioning of the society. The later phase of hill development experienced the inclusion of modern technologies within their daily routine lifestyle resulting in their inclination further towards the new mediums rather than their traditional ones. This technological convenience has been appreciated by many and has been widely employed since its commercialization and easy accessibility in the hill society but only after the end of 60's.⁹⁸ This popularization of modern communication infrastructure in the district initiated a trend to own an electronic communication channel by most of the household, leading to the explosion and reach, interlinking a large part of the region within themselves as well as the outside world. As being born from necessity and evolution, the modern communication technologies filled most of the gap which the traditional ones could not. It is clear that the coming up of these new communication amenities have revolutionized the society and the idea of communication potential in the later development phases, as it's advent has drastically transformed the social structure of the community seen today.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the high employment and acceptance of these technologies has disrupted the idea of culture and tradition in almost all the societies, and as well as the unequal distribution and accessibility or the infamous digital divide has been a child of the same technological boon¹⁰⁰. Hence, it is unclear whether the superseding of the traditional tools by the new information technologies is positive or a negative factor since there is very less scope and prospect of traditional media in the modern society but its presence in terms of identity and

⁹⁸Personal interview by the author with L.P. Sharma, member Gorkha Library, Kurseong

⁹⁹Kellner, Douglas, *Media Culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*, Routledge, 1995, pp 2-5

¹⁰⁰Rojas, Viviana, Straubhaar, Joseph, Roychowdhury, Debsmita, and Pkur, Ozlem, *Media access: Social and Psychological Dimensions of New Technology Use*, Edt by Erik P. Bucy and John E. Newhagen, Lawrence Erlbaum associates, Inc., Publishers, 2004, pp 108-111

cultural representation is somewhat essential. This very debate of its slow extinction and revival experiments has brought a sense of confusion within the modern community members.

Chapter 3

Introduction of New Technology and the resulting crisis in the

Traditional media:

The modern technological advancement in the development of communication channels has been a revelation on how efficient and faster a communication can take place, especially from 1837 onwards after which a complex technical possibilities was brought to a working system.¹⁰¹ The present era has witnessed a rapid increase in the technological evolution in terms of communication in the past decade. The audience reach has been a mammoth escalation since the coming up of Radio, Television, Telecommunications, Computer, Internet and the Mobile phones. People now-a-days prefer faster mediums to communicate and as well as entertain themselves. With the introduction of new mediums of communication like the internet and the Smartphone, information sharing system has been more play than work. The present years has seen a gradual decrease in the digital divide and the accessibility to these new communication tools, especially the mobile phone, has been easy. This mass reach of communication channels has brought in a great change in the society and its culture.¹⁰² Keeping in mind specifically the mass medium channels like Radio, Television and Internet, their presence has transformed the society into a large commercial market and its implications on the hosting land's culture is unavoidable.¹⁰³

The convergence of media channels into a single device, particularly known as the Smartphone with the inclusion of almost all the features of a computer, internet and mobile phone into one, has changed the definition of contemporary knowledge

¹⁰¹ Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural form*, Routledge, 1974, p 9

¹⁰² Saxena, Pawan Kumar, *Television and Social Change*, Random Publications, 2011, pp 264-270

¹⁰³ Williams, Raymond, *op.cit*, pp 11-12

sharing institutions in the recent world.¹⁰⁴ With the advancing growth of the knowledge industry, there have been competitions within the information providers to reduce proximity issues and make it even more accessible and faster regarding the communication process.¹⁰⁵ This characteristic has been seen in the recent years, may it be the creation of Emails, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, or recent mobile communication applications like Whatsapp, Viper, Hike, etc. The only goal for the introduction of these new mobile communication channels is to reach a large number of subscribers attracting them with faster communication potential with a number of striking features. This approach is somewhat similar to that of attracting Television Rating Points by the network providers in Television.

The very need to understand the implications of these modern communication channels is crucial to make sense of the transformation of society and culture via the new mediums of communication. It cannot be denied that the very existence of thought controlling process with the help of these new communication channels which can be demonstrated by the very acceptance of the popular culture by the mass. In order to understand the repercussions of the modern communication technologies in the Hills, it would be best to be categorized into two. The first would be to make sense of the contemporary mainstream media and the next would be to grasp the idea of new media within the hills.

3.1 Making sense of the contemporary mainstream Media in the Hills:

The later stages of development in the communication system in the region were not so different than the rest of the world. After the introduction of the

¹⁰⁴ Lax, Stephen, *Media and Communication Technologies: a critical introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp 1-6

¹⁰⁵ Newhagen, John E., Bucy, Erik P., *Media Access: Social and Psychological Dimensions of New Technology Use*, Edt by Erik P. Bucy and John E. Newhagen, Lawrence Erlbaum associates, Inc., Publishers, 2004, pp 3-6

interpersonal communication channels, the next new initiative was the slow explosion of mass communication mediums in the district. The previous technological development fell within the strings of the government resulting in a low accessibility of this privilege by the common mass.¹⁰⁶ Slowly the commercialization process liberated the communication sector leading to an increase of personally owned common communication devices like the telephone.¹⁰⁷ Though there were still communications technological deprivation seen, but the number of percentage got reduced drastically.

The growth of literate personalities and local government officials meant the increase of consciousness in terms of socio-politico-economical field within the region. However, there can be seen two lineage of development regarding communication in the Hills. This differentiation is made on the basis of the ruler and the ruled or in simple words deprivation on the basis of ethnicity and economy. It is no secret that the communication development in this part of India happened slowly and much later than many other parts of the country. Though there were already modern communication channels present at the time, this uninhabited land got to enjoy its privilege only after the settlement of the British in the region. The disparity in terms of economy rather than ethnicity meant the uneven control of accessibility regarding modern available communication tools. The use of ethnicity regarding the disparity issue is used because, at the time the native people were mostly illiterate and their profession was generally laborers. The only upper-class people were the Englishmen, government officers or wealthy settlers who because of their great influence and economical status could enjoy the modern communication facilities much earlier than the rest of the region's general populace. The need to understand

¹⁰⁶ Lax, Stephen, *op.cit*, pp 5-6

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp 19-22

this dynamics is because in-order to make sense of the communication transformation process in the district, the grass-root view of the local common people is more important than the acknowledgement of the upper-class.

3.1.I Initiation of Print Technology within the District:

Before the influence of the Queen's rule in the Darjeeling region, the Hills were either controlled by the sovereign nation of Sikkim or Nepal consecutively. This part of Eastern-Himalayan region enjoyed a simple lifestyle as the modern technologies had not yet held its grip on this part. After the arrival and the taking over of the Darjeeling Hills by the English government, the region witnessed a drastic change regarding its socio-politico-economic aspect. After the introduction of roads and railways in the hills, these new communication devices (explicitly transportation) paved a way for new, better and modern communication amenities like the latest media technologies present then. The Telegraph, the Telephone and the Postal service was a revolutionary communication counterpart that completely transformed the locale into an advanced society with faster communication potential. But this was just the beginning of the transitional phase of the region and its inhabitants.

After the successful transition of the region into a commercial constituency, the agrarian society was now to be transformed into a modern information community. The initiative of the British government to start cultivating tea in the region proved fruitful and the finished product was better than expected. With little or no coverage of the local news of the region in the papers published in Calcutta, communication with the metropolis of the Empire proved very difficult.¹⁰⁸ The need to commercialize Darjeeling's tea market into the larger national and international

¹⁰⁸ Chandra, Mrinal Kanti, *History of English Press in India (1858 – 1880)*, K.P. Bagchi and Company, 2008, pp 87-88

arena and to catch the attention of big investors led to the introduction of Darjeeling's first print media, The Darjeeling Advertiser in the year 1866. By the 1860's the North-Eastern part of India was experiencing a boost in the development of Tea industry and with a larger number of English settlers, Darjeeling was at the centre of this development. In order to compete in the larger arena a fortnightly paper, The Darjeeling Advertiser started its publication from January and was published from the region itself. Owned and edited by William Lloyd, The Darjeeling Advertiser was a single sheet folio produced every Saturday having a circulation of about 200 copies¹⁰⁹, but, however, the circulation slowly fell down to 150 in the later years. In March 31st 1869, for to counter this deteriorating circulation situation a number of steps were executed, likely, the size of the newspaper was enlarged especially meant to include a broad coverage of appealing extracts and interesting information for planters and settlers in the North-Bengal region. Also to attract more readers, a corner was kept reserved for the publication of "*Verses of local origin and Himalayan inspiration*".¹¹⁰ After a few more months of circulation, the paper, The Darjeeling Advertiser got transformed into Darjeeling News. After the new transformation, Darjeeling News initially witnessed a circulation growth to 200 copies yet again but that did not last for long. Later, because of decreasing circulation and low income of the paper, Darjeeling News went on to the hands of a new proprietor and editor in the year 1872. It can be known through the reference on the publication of The Hindu patriot on August 9, 1880, that the paper circulated until the same year but it cannot be known whether the circulation of Darjeeling News continued with or without intervals till its closure.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

Though The Darjeeling Advertiser and the Darjeeling News was the first printed English newspaper published in the 18th century from the region, because of its linguistic complexity, as the majority Nepali residents and migrants being illiterate, had no broad and significant impact upon the area. In the mean time Christian Missionary, particularly the Scottish Mission had slowly started educating the locals by establishing educational institutions within the constituency. While a number of Christian Missionaries had attempted to educate the locals from 1841 onwards, it was only since 1870 that with the efforts of Rev. W. Macfarlane of the Church of Scotland Mission, the widespread dissemination of elementary education among the local inhabitants was successful.¹¹¹ Within a short span of three years there were 25 primary schools functioning in the region. Around the beginning of the 19th century there could be found educational institutions in almost all the subdivisions of Darjeeling. This later brought a great sense of socio-politico-economic consciousness and enlightenment amongst the inhabitants of the area. Before the establishment of these schools in the region, in-order to obtain education, one had to go either to Banaras or to other expensive metropolitan cities within India.

Banaras is considered to be the birth place of Nepali publishing industry.¹¹² Even after having a full-fledged Nepalese Empire, i.e. Nepal, the technologies of print had not yet reached the Eastern Himalayan regions till the middle of the 18th century. It was only in 1851 that Junga Bahadur Rana, the first Rana prime minister brought a Guttenberg's printing press on his return to Nepal from England. The Darjeeling region though had a working publishing house in the later years; however, its accessibility was limited to the regional British community and because of the

¹¹¹ Dewan, Dick. B., Education Today: A Darjeeling Hill Region perspective, Himalayan Observer Press 2009, p 74

¹¹²<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/When+folk+culture+met+print+culture%3A+some+thoughts+on+the+...-a0126849006>

linguistic barrier and zero technological knowledge within the locals, the natives showed no interest for the knowledge or the information industry at that moment. Although shortly in the coming years various Nepali publications were witnessed but all of them were published from the same locale, Banaras. In 1894, a publication entitled '*Ukhan Bhakhan*' which was a compilation of Nepali proverbs accumulated by Motiram Bhatta being published from Banaras by Ram Krishna Khatri was seen. Later, similar publication named '*Mukha Ukhan Bhakhan*' published from Hitacintak Press, Banaras, by Badri narayan was found in 1897. This Hitacintak Press has been responsible for various other Nepali language publications in the era.¹¹³

The greatest breakthrough in the Nepali Media History of the Darjeeling region was the publication and circulation of a Nepali language newspaper named "*Gorkhe Khabar Kagat*" (In English 'Gorkha Newspaper'). This newspaper was owned and edited by a Nepali priest named Ganga Prasad Pradhan. Locally known as Padri Ganga Pradhan, he was an exiled Nepalese citizen in India who had joined the Scottish Mission Church and became the first ordained Nepali priest. In his later phase of life he bought the Mission Orphanage Press and renamed it as 'The Gorkha Press'.¹¹⁴ It was in this Press that the first Nepali language newspaper '*Gorkhe Khabar Kagat*' was published in the Hills of Darjeeling. Started in the year 1901, the paper had a good run until 1930 and in-fact is considered as the longest lived Nepali periodical around the pre-independence era. Around the same year Nepal had also published its first Nepali language newspaper known as the '*Gorkha-patra*'¹¹⁵. The *Gorkhe Khabar Kagat* contained upto 36 news reports in a single issue. Among the reported events, the news about the World War I, earthquakes in Myanmar,

¹¹³Chalmers, Roderick, When Folk Culture met Print Culture: Some thoughts on the commercialization, transformation and propagation of traditional genres in Nepali, 244 CANS Journal, Vol. 31, No. 2, July 2004, pp 247-248

¹¹⁴ <http://kentthink7.blogspot.in/2008/10/new-maosit-nepalese-budget>

¹¹⁵Chalmers, Roderick, op.cit, p 248

Darjeeling Hockey Cup account and random general knowledge information is found.¹¹⁶ Though, Darjeeling being located in a remote locality, the reports consisting world-wide coverage is admirable. However, it is found that this paper was despised by many as it is said that the paper was mostly used as a tool for religious preaching, specifically Christianity. This may well be the case but anyhow this paper marks the beginning of Nepali Journalism in the Hills.

The availability of newspapers and other printed Nepali books was a source of new knowledge for the locals that were unconventional and revolutionary in nature. As the linguistic barrier was slowly coming down in terms of the knowledge industry, more and more natives got saturated in the information dissemination system in the region. Though there were many learned men in the Nepali community in the beginning of the 1900's, there still lacked an efficient information distribution system for the purpose of sharing knowledge and discussing ideas amongst them. A centralized idea sharing foundation was institutionalized with the coming up of print technology in the Hills. It has been argued by many scholars that in the Sixteenth century Europe, the introduction and availability of printed books created the individual's sense of identity and encouraged the idea of early vernacular nationalism.¹¹⁷ Similarly in the Hills, the newspaper became a channel to discuss and share modern ideas with a large mass. This continuum eventually brought upon a new revolution questioning certain issues like the identity, sense of belonging and community development which led to demands for separate administrative setup, acceptance of Nepali language in the Indian constitution, etc, in the coming period.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.kalimpong.info/2006/08/18/padris-journalism-award-to-priyadarshi/>

¹¹⁷ Ghosh, Avik, *Communication Technology and Human Development: Recent experiences in the Indian social sector*, Sage Publication, 2006, p 25

3.1.II Paving way for new contemporary mass mediums in the Hills:

The consciousness that grew with the introduction of new interpersonal communication mediums amongst the simple hill residents created a path for new mass communication channels to establish and sustain. The process of sharing ideas and information became popular within the communities of the district. Slowly several institutions were created to communicate more and have an understanding on the current situations. These institutions varied from libraries to social welfare organizational institutions to modern conventional communication infrastructures like the radio and television.

The initiation of group and mass communication between the hill residents started with the instigation of institutions like the Gorkha Library in the hills. Established in 1913, the Gorkha library was started by Padma Sundar Malla who was designated as the secretary of the organization in the same year.¹¹⁸ Though in the period there were already a couple of publications seen like 'The Darjeeling Advertisers and the Darjeeling News' in English and '*Nepali Khabar Kagat*' in the regional Nepali language, their objective and content were not liberating and their sole purpose was very personal in nature. The first was created in-order to establish a good reputation of the District produced Tea industry within the nation whereas the latter was more of a Christianity preaching tool¹¹⁹. Therefore, in this situation the literate few formed establishment such as the Gorkha Library where educated few met to discuss and share ideas regarding politics and other such matters. Having the spread of education as it's first and foremost objective the library still acted as an institution where people spread democratic ideas as well as political and social consciousness,

¹¹⁸ Personal interview by the author with L.P. Sharma, member Gorkha Library, Kurseong

¹¹⁹ Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

similar to Habermas's concept of Coffee House Public Sphere¹²⁰. It is said that in the later phase of regional development, learned men gathered in this particular institution and talked about matters relating to the nation's freedom struggle and their possible role in it.¹²¹ This specific institution is a good example for an establishment with good group communication potential or discursive space, which widened the spread of political and social consciousness in the region. Other such institutions were the introduction of civic society as Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924), G.D.N.S (Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sangathan, 1932) etc, in the hills which catered to the well being of the Society.¹²²

It can be observed that the initiation of modern communication infrastructure meant for the Hill people were basically shaped for more political than social needs. Before the formation of All India Radio in the Kurseong sub-division of the district in 1962, there were very few radio proprietors in the region. The primary reason to establish a government run radio station in the hills was to assimilate the region within the national domain, spread nationalistic and patriotic feelings among the natives and counter the Chinese radio transmission in the land.¹²³ It is believed that before the regional All India Radio started its broadcast, the locale witnessed a transmission of Chinese radio known as 'Radio Peking' surprisingly in the regional Nepali language.¹²⁴ This was basically anticipated as to influence the natives of the region to join the Chinese faction. The greatest motivation that resulted in the establishment of the All India Radio in Kurseong was the Chinese invasion and the Indo-China war of 1960. The geographical advantage of the region was known to both

¹²⁰ Thomassen, Lasse, Habermas: A guide for the perplexed, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010, pp 40-44

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Personal interview by the author, Parash Chandra Alley, Program Executive, All India Radio, Kurseong

¹²⁴ Personal interview by the author with L.P. Sharma, member Gorkha Library, Kurseong

the nations. The produced 90 watts of medium waves by the A.I.R, Kurseong was strong enough to cover a very large area and is even rumored that at one point of time the radio transmission produced by this particular Radio station could be accessed as far as Switzerland.¹²⁵

The initiation of a government mass communication body in the hills led to the democratization of information accessibility in the Darjeeling region. After the setting up of the All India Radio in Kurseong, it became the only source for local news, resulting in a faster and efficient mass communication tool. The produced programmes were generally in the local regional themes and languages which attracted more audience within its domain.¹²⁶ The programs included topics such as Tibetan culture, Nationalism, Youth views and talents, Literature, Music, etc¹²⁷. The people could now associate themselves with the new broadcasting channel as prior to its existence the only transmission accessible to the region were that of different regional boundaries, surroundings, backgrounds and cultures unfamiliar to them. In the period, listening radios were a group event as the radios then were expensive and because of the social division on economical grounds the proprietors of radio devices were limited.¹²⁸ Neighbours and relatives who did not possess this gadget usually gathered in a household with a radio in-order to enjoy its programs. The regional production of local news and entertainment segments which were very new to the natives slowly changed their daily habits leading to the employment of the radio for entertainment and amusement in their leisure time rather than doing their usual activities.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Personal interview by the author, Parash Chandra Alley, Program Executive, All India Radio, Kurseong

¹²⁷ Personal interview by the author with L.P. Sharma and Tilak Sharma (Secretary), member Gorkha Library, Kurseong

¹²⁸ ibid

Before the initiation of the local broadcast, the availability of other foreign transmission resulted in the slow penetration of foreign culture within the community. The construction of society in the hills was a planned one and the exposure of the alien culture towards the simple hill people had already begun its influence resulting in a transformation of cultural habits. The initiation of the entry of mass culture started with the easy accessibility of radios within the district was adequate but later the audio-visual medium, i.e. the television's impacts were even rapid and wide. At the early stage of television commercialization in the hills, the only network channels available to them were the National network or the Doordarshan, Nepal channel and Bangladesh channel accessed with the use of an antenna.¹²⁹ Similar to Radio, the ownership of television at the period was based upon economical hierarchy and this again became a group event. This was just the beginning of a drastic transformation in the society.

The coming up of new network channels proved a high saturation of the mass culture preached by these television programs within the hill residents. The social functioning of the hill residents were totally altered as the time devoted to other activities such as social interactions, use of traditional tools for entertainment and information were later consumed by this modern technological tool resulting in the gradual shedding of certain cultural traditions and institutions. The coming generations born within the grip of modern communication technology became more and more influenced by the modern communication infrastructure rather than their cultural establishment. This marks the slow corrosion of the strong cultural body of Nepali community within the district. But it can be observed that this phenomenon was generally customary in the urban and sub-urban surroundings. The rural setting

¹²⁹ *ibid*

because of technological deprivation stood in a paused mode leading to very slow transformation in the modern development context.

The advancement in the audio-video technology and the coming up of cable and direct to home services has further modernised the community or rather popularised the concept of mass culture within the society.¹³⁰ The high penetration of television amongst the hill audience has developed the potential to create virtual relation and link within its audience members through local network channels. This network channel produced by the local cable providers which acts as a regional information dissemination system also holds a powerful social and political capability for societal change.¹³¹ So far it has been utilized for news broadcast, updating people of the local happenings and as a propaganda tool by the regional political parties. Unlike the Nayuma TV channel of Gangtok and C.C.N of Siliguri, the local channels present in the three main sub-divisions, Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong does not provide full day viewing. They are mostly aired in the evening time enlightening the local mass about the day's activities and events. Having no alternative television network channel to cater the regional needs and promote the local culture, these particular provincial cable channels functions as the only source facilitating the home requirements in terms of audio-visual resource in the district. These channels for example, Hamro Kurseong Channel, Kalimpong Television and Darjeeling Television, can only be accessed through the local cable distributors and are not available for Direct to Home services. In the current satellite television era, the only trump card the local cable distributors possess is the access to these local television network which has resulted in their endurance and sustainability. However, the

¹³⁰ Saxena, Pawan Kumar, *Television and Social Change*, Random Publications, 2011, p 247

¹³¹ Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural form*, Routledge, 1974, pp 11-15

channel's existence has not been so exclusive in terms of social transformation. Their utilities are limited and mostly dependent upon events.

It is clear about the absence of network channels in the D.T.H services facilitating the process of cultural and traditional perseverance but neither the local television network has been found supporting this aspect. In-fact the process of preserving the local cultural institutions has been lacking and there has been seen no activities for cultural conservation in the hills. Though the cable with the help of the local channels has the ability to promote this cause, however, the initiative has not been taken into account by anyone. The lack of consciousness on social and communication institution's part may not prove fruitful in terms of cultural preservation concerning the Nepali community of the Darjeeling hill region. The necessity of locally produced television programs upholding the district's culture and tradition in the regional network channel has been greatly experienced in the globalised world in order to balance the penetration of foreign culture within the community. The insufficiency in terms of promoting certain cultural institutions including certain traditional establishments like the *Gaines*, Folk dramas, *Maruni* dancers, *Madal* players, etc, has resulted in their slow disappearance and irrelevance in the Nepali society making it obsolete for the younger generations.

3.2 Grasp of New Media:

The penetration of western culture or in common term the pop or mass culture has paved its way through the advent and commercialization of radio and television which slowly disrupted the idea and understanding of cultural tradition in almost all the societies.¹³² This phenomenon was later succeeded by the arrival of new media, namely the internet and the mobile-phones, which increased the amount of

¹³² Saxena, Pawan Kumar, op.cit, pp 189-190

communication technological saturation in the society. The convergence of the modern communication tools into small and single devices have been said to have revolutionized the flow of information completely. Though the convergence of technology has in the period provided the world with inexpensive, mobile and convenient communication possibility, the very fact that the existence of Media diversity or the choices available to common mass in terms of media accessibility, in a nutshell 'Media Pluralism'¹³³, resulting in even efficient modern social structure cannot be denied. Media convergence as well as Media Pluralism¹³⁴ resulted in the growth of easy and convenient accessibility and options in terms of communication technologies providing a large section of people the power to author and gain unlimited information and knowledge leading to better participation relating socio-political functionality of the society.

3.2.I Creation of Sub-Identities:

The easy accessibility to the new improved information communication technologies has transformed the society into a small global village having instant interaction anywhere. The result of this transformation in the Darjeeling hills brings forth certain social divergence, depending basically upon its amount of exposure. While there can be seen small and expected change in lifestyles and adoption of some foreign traditions, there is also the creation of various **sub-identities** within the hill communities.

Creation of Sub-Identities in this context refers to the Continuous exposure eventually resulting to the acceptance of one culture leading to the hosting section to

¹³³Though the generalization of Media Diversity and Media pluralism is still a very contested ideology, but it is often widely used more or less interchangeably (Karppien, 2013, 85-86) as has been done in this chapter.

¹³⁴ Karppien, Kari, Rethinking Media Pluralism, Fordham University Press, 2013, pp 3-5

function and distinguish them inside the perceived cultural fold resulting in the formation of multicultural society. This experience has been usually found almost exclusively within the younger section of the community. The reception, functioning and characteristic of this circle as a different cultural body leads to the creation of a different society with the same larger Nepali identity in its core but a distinct sub-identity in the surface. This creation of new Sub-Identity is mostly the result of high participation and attachment towards one of the most influential elements of mass culture, Music.

Currently there has been the existence of numerous such sub-identities depending upon the genre of the music they listen.¹³⁵ For instance, Heavy metal fans have their own society or community having similar taste of music, outfits, jargons, brands and other relative cultural trends often distinguishing themselves from the rest of the mass. This peculiar homogenization of this created sub-identity can be witnessed more distinctly in times of a concert or a musical and social event. Jesus Martin Barbero in a similar study has described the construction of modern youth society being abnormally resembling some characteristics of the nomadic tribes.¹³⁶ In his theory 'Tribalization of Modern Cultures', it is argued that the nature of the influenced young section by the popular culture resulting in them having no attachment to a particular place and identities, giving temporary and momentary identity to certain places without defined territory, for example discotheques, street corners, neighborhoods, etc., marking with symbols and graffiti, ultimately linking the whole social process with that of nomadic cultural lifestyle. The aforementioned theory acknowledges the diverse cultures, traditions and identities shaped by the

¹³⁵ Connell, John and Gibson, Chris, World music: Deterritorializing place and identity, *Progress in Human Geography*, 28, 3, 2004, Arnold Publishers, p 343

¹³⁶ Barbero, Jesus Martin, *Rethinking Media Religion and Culture*, Edited- Stewart M. Hoover, Knut Lundby, Sage Publications, 1997, p 115

repercussion of pop culture upon the youth society of the time. This idiosyncratic feature of cultural adaptation resulting in a very different socio-psychological Sub-Identity is an important revelation of the implications of the mass culture upon the society.

Excluding the physical sphere, now because of easy accessibility to new mediums of communication, there can be seen huge number of virtual identities forming digital communities, distinct chat-rooms and groups in social networking sites. These communities range from social, political, educational to entertainment segments. Based upon observation, creation of these virtual identities and communities has led to a wide and active consciousness and participation in terms of social as well as political affairs. This precise hypothesis can be evaluated through the online assessment of the past Member of Parliament election of 2014 within the Darjeeling district. Also through the same virtual discursive space various social programs to renovate the public areas in the Darjeeling region has been successful. The maintenance of the 60 stairs, popularly known as '*Satthi Siri*', in the Darjeeling town as well as the initiation of the beautification process through paintings and graffiti art works in various spaces is a good example for the above comment.

The digital social institutions¹³⁷ and the wide participation in these virtual discursive spaces have led to a drastic growth in terms of communication technological consumerisms lately. This been said, the course of cultural adaptation in the hills has been a one-way process. The high exposure and dominance of global culture in the region has led the home cultures and traditions at bay. This very phenomenon has brought a sense of crisis in terms of traditional institutions' relevance in the society. The shedding down of cultural establishments may have

¹³⁷Mostly implied to the Social Networking websites and modern mobile socializing applications, likely, Whatsapp, Viper, Hike, Skype, etc.

slowly transformed the community into a modern civilization, but its disappearance may result in the loss of distinct cultural identity and traditional social mechanisms as well. The traditional mediums of communications have not been able to function in the contemporary period moving gradually towards museums and story books. Though there is the presence of a cultural institution named Cultural and Information Affairs department in the district, their only effort has been to organize cultural programs twice or thrice a year that too only in major events, not really playing the role of preserving the cultural heritage. In other regions of India there has been a new reformation to revive, preserve and employ the fading cultural tools by changing its content and focus depending on the modern need.¹³⁸ This very process of reinventing the traditional tools of communication dissemination system may be required in-order to safeguard the region's culture from the course of its extinction. Therefore, it can be said that there has always been advantages and disadvantages on both sides of the coin but the very need to balance the cultural flow in any community seems to be of utmost importance at the moment.

¹³⁸ Lent, John A., *Grassroots Renaissance: Folk Media in Third world nations*, *Folklore*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (1980), Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises Ltd., pp 81-84

Chapter 4

Conclusion

'Communication is fundamental to the human construction of reality: that is, we ourselves create our social reality in multiple communicative processes' – Andreas Hepp (2013)

It has been a long journey since men first learnt to communicate using, sounds, pictures, speech, and sign languages to the advent and use of printing press, wired telecommunication systems to modern information and communication technologies. The scientific development in terms of communication around the world has transformed the conventional society into a modern, faster and better one with its handiness, feasibility, affordability and its ability of rapid and wide interpersonal and mass communication possibility.¹³⁹ The ever evolving technologies have been constantly altering the very concept of communication potential and its limits. The very development of new social needs has been the strong foundation for new inventions and technologies.¹⁴⁰ These developments and growth of new needs has transformed our society drastically. The constant transformation in the technologies resulting in lifestyle changes has been seen to have devastating effects upon societies and the long held cultures.¹⁴¹ The changes and the influence of these transformations can be better understood viewing the amount of exposure and application of these technologies within migrated transnational communities. Therefore, this chapter would shed some light towards the affects of the aforementioned behavior depending upon the characteristics of the transmigrated Nepali communities within the

¹³⁹ Lax, Stephen, *Media and Communication Technologies: a critical introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p 1

¹⁴⁰ Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural form*, Routledge, 1974, p 8

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, pp 4-5

Darjeeling hill boundary and the hosting community hub, i.e. Nepal. This chapter would also shed some light on the implications of this transformational phenomenon upon the focused Nepali community of the Darjeeling district.

4.1 Different Social Structure:

Social structures depend basically upon the political, social and economic environment and its surroundings and are mostly prone to changes.¹⁴² Not all the social organizations and institutions belonging to the same family, in specific the ethnicity or community, functions in a similar fashion, though having a homogenous culture and identity as its core. Its functionality and behavior depends upon certain factors likely, the regional development concerning technological development along with the economic stature of the hosting boundary.¹⁴³ Ethnic Diaspora or the Diaspora of transnational communities prevalent in many nations around the world has brought up new understandings about the different structures of the same migrated faction. The outer shell of ethnic identity remains always intact whereas there can be seen various changes and differentiations on micro level.

It is known that the Nepali Diaspora being witnessed in India, Bhutan and other nations excluding its ethnic hub Nepal has brought out questions about identity, representation and belongingness. However, the difference lies mostly in terms of political identity. When talking about its social and cultural identities one can always trace the roots to Nepal. Being said that, though the presence of cultural and linguistic homogeneity is prevalent and dominating but still the social structure of the community and society is different in all the places hosting this ethnicity.¹⁴⁴ The fact

¹⁴² Sharma, K.L., Indian Social Structure and change, Rawat Publications, 2011, p 308

¹⁴³ Ibid, p 317

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp 339-340

that Darjeeling was made a commercial zone by the British brings forth certain factors transforming the characteristics of the region and its inhabitants.

The creation of a homogenous umbrella of Nepali ethnicity can be dated back to just a few hundred years ago after Emperor Prithvi Narayan Shah, the then ruler of Nepal, consolidated the Nepal nation since the midst of 17th century.¹⁴⁵ This assimilation process led to the acceptance and employment of Nepali language as the nation's lingua franca in order to subdue the huge linguistic barrier that was prevalent because of the presence of various small ethnicities within the empire with their own scripts, languages and dialects. The homogenization of a specific language meant the possibility of a wide interpersonal and mass communication process throughout the kingdom as well as the neighbouring frontier states. After the recognition of a common lingua franca the mass communication process with the help of *Gaines* were functionalized by Emperor Shah of Nepal to be used as an effective propaganda tool.¹⁴⁶ This medium was a source of traditional distant communication channel which were employed by both the noble men for propaganda purposes as well as by the common mass as messengers. Though there was the presence of runners in the period, there was a difference between the two. The runner's sole objective was to deliver the specific messages sent whereas *Gaines*, being the wanderers, acted also as an independent source for news from other regions as well.

The settlement of British in the isolated hill of Darjeeling, leased from the independent Sikkim nation, transformed the locale into a huge business arena. This commercialization process resulted in the migration of laborers from the nearby

¹⁴⁵Pradhan, Kumar, *The Gorkha Conquests: The process and consequences of the unification of Nepal*, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, Himal Books, 2009, p 167

¹⁴⁶ Rai, Nirjan, "The Gandharvas and their Sarangi", <http://everestbuddha.livejournal.com/1234.html>, 2003

regions, especially Nepal.¹⁴⁷ The ongoing migration process in due time escalated considerably forming a dominant Nepali population in the district by assimilating other hill tribes into its fold. Consequently, the lingua franca of the region became Nepali. However, the social structure between the Nepali populace of the two regions, Nepal and Darjeeling, can be observed slightly different from one another. The migrated as well as the indigenous residents of the Darjeeling hills were exposed to a prospering commercial environment with new administration, better communication infrastructure, foreign culture and an organized English society as compared to Nepal. This well functioned society led to the development of the region as a whole, creating a consumer society in the long run. This region being a planned estate by the British government was then equipped with new transportation and communication technologies which eventually transformed the locale into a modern society. This transition led to the development of the local residents regarding, social, economical, political features by receiving education, experiences on administration and organization and understanding of the functioning of the society. The influence of the British culture and governance on this region can be even observed on the Nepali language used within the Darjeeling district boundary. Though Nepali being the lingua franca of both the Nepal nation and as well as the Darjeeling district of India, it is found that the two languages are significantly different from each other in terms of tone, jargons and even words. Many words in the Nepali language used in the Darjeeling hills have been till date been replaced with tarnished English words. This peculiar feature found in the Nepali language used in the hills of Darjeeling, basically the result of high exposure with new foreign language, culture and people, makes the local dialect unique from that of its counterpart Nepal. In fact, communication

¹⁴⁷Thapa, Tapasya, *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*, Edt T.B. Subba, A.C. Sinha, G.S. Nepal, D.R. Nepal, Concept Publishing Company, 2009, p 102

between the people of the two Nepali speaking boundaries will not be as smooth as expected because of the slight difference in the language used within its territory.

The early development initiated in the hills of Darjeeling, before that of the Nepal nation, led to the acceptance and high indulgence in the modern technologies, especially the urban area, which facilitated the modernization and somewhat westernization of the local society. This particular process transformed the application and employment of certain culture and traditions in the local community's fold. Though not abruptly, but in a subtle and considerate fashion, the transition in the traditions of local inhabitants were witnessed, particularly the mode of communication. Gradually, because of the availability of modern technologies, the folk-ness in the cultural dogma of the local communities began to shade off. Raymond Williams talks about the initiation of social transformation through complex and related fields concerning systems of mobility and transfer in production and communication.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the institutionalization of modern communication infrastructure, such as postal service, telegraph and telephone service etc, eradicated the very requirement of traditional communication mediums, which were normally very slow and hectic, leading to drastic transition of the village community to a modern and westernized society in the Darjeeling region. The employment of runners or *Sandeshbaag* has been known to have been engaged by the local hill residents of Darjeeling where the technological presence was missing for message dissemination compared to the Nepal nation where the Ganes were highly indulgent for the said matter. The traditional institution of Ganes only arrived to Darjeeling seeking better money and lifestyle and performed more as a simple music performer than an

¹⁴⁸ Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural form*, Routledge, 1974, pp 11-12

information disseminator.¹⁴⁹ The very difference of these characteristics concerning the employment and application of certain rituals, traditions and culture and its transformations because of high foreign cultural influence makes the social structure of the same community within different boundaries slightly unique from each other.

4.2 The Political crisis and the development of the Media:

The other important attribute found in the hills of Darjeeling is its political importance and the development of media just because of it. The construction of All India Radio in the Hills in 1962 can be traced back after the Chinese invasion and the Indio-China war. Before that the residents of the district had to rely upon broadcasts from other states and bordering nations including china that transmitted radio programs surprisingly even in the regional Nepali language. The national security as well as the process of assimilation into the Indian mainland motivated and encouraged government run media institutions to be established and function in the hills. This meant the establishment of a powerful 90 kilowatts medium waves transmitter in order to counter the Chinese broadcasting in the Indian lands, normally the frontier states. The formation of the region's first radio station provided a new dimension towards information and ideas sharing process within the locale consequentially changing the dynamics of tradition in the community by transforming it into a consumer society.

The political and social crisis had earlier, before the formation of the audio communication medium, established certain civic institutions, likely The Gorkha Library (1913), Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924), G.D.N.S (Gorkha Dukha Niwaran

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

Samithi, 1932), which acted as an idea sharing medium concerning social and political issues, close to the concept of Habermas' Public Sphere. It has been claimed that they in the period of national freedom struggle had functioned as a source for regional contribution in the movement.¹⁵⁰ This creation and the functioning of the civic societies can be assumed as the beginning of political and social consciousness brought out by the creation of institutions meant to act as a platform for communication development in the hills.

4.3 Creation of Sub-Identities and the changing Communication Paradigm:

The created consumer society established by the British in the district of Darjeeling has proven to have been developed more in the coming period of time. The early influence of the foreign culture upon the local inhabitants has transformed the society into a technologically indulgent region in a short time span, since its introduction to the migrated and residing communities from the past. Eric Hobsbawn has talked about how a tradition or practices is created which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, ultimately implying continuity with the past.¹⁵¹ Likewise, the sudden exposure to the modern technologies after the settlement of the British led to the acceptance and application of those western infrastructures by the locals which ultimately resulted in the drastic transition of the simple agrarian society to an information one, paradoxical to that of the Nepali community of the neighboring nation of Nepal. The continuing employment and approval of the western culture and modern technologies from the times past by the local populace of the district has corollary engraved the western practices and influences upon their culture slightly modifying their actual customs and traditions.

¹⁵⁰ Personal interview by the author with Tilak Sharma, Secretary Gorkha Library, Kurseong

¹⁵¹ Hobsbawn, Eric, *Invention of Tradition*, Etd Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp 1-4

This has been seen in terms of dialect used, lifestyle, and the use of technologies over traditional mediums.

In this transitional phase of societal change in terms of technological reception and increase of consumer society in the hills, this indulgence towards modern communication infrastructure, especially by the youths, has brought out certain concerns and characteristics within the existing community body. The increase of foreign culture or the cliché westernization has slowly disrupted the flow of cultural influence upon the modern communities present in the district. One of the greatest outcomes of this phenomenon is the wide acceptance and augmentation of multiculturalism in the communities within the district's border. The other is the consequential crisis prevalent at the traditional and cultural level.

Multiculturalism generally recognizes the presence of various cultural constituents of identity.¹⁵² Globalization in today's world has been very dominant towards advertising and encouraging certain cultural features, mostly of developed nations. In the current situation, identity has become more mobile, multiple, personal, self reflexive and subject to change and innovation but however it also gains distance from tradition because of the new perceived social roles.¹⁵³ The advent of new mediums in the local society of the Darjeeling hills has been found to host a set of new sub-identities¹⁵⁴ in the ongoing era which are generally not related to the social and cultural dimension of the Nepali community present. The easy and convenient availability of the new media, likely the internet and the mobile phone, has been proven to be the catalyst for the development of the said created sub-identity. Jesus Martin Barbero, in his theory of "Tribalization of modern cultures", has talked about

¹⁵²Kellner, Douglas, *Media Culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*, Routledge, 1995, p 96

¹⁵³ Ibid, p 231

¹⁵⁴ Refer to chapter 4, sub topic Creation of Sub-identities page 62 for elaboration

how the modern youth society constantly changes its cultural affiliations from one to another and acts similar to a nomadic tribe as a result of the constant exposure to the ongoing pop-culture.¹⁵⁵ Similarly this has been true regarding the Nepali society of Darjeeling where various sub-identities and virtual communities has been created, though with some characteristic differences from his theory. The core identity of the hosting individual of the society of created sub-identity is basically the same, i.e. Nepali, but the surface is usually distorted. It is hard to say whether this influence of multiculturalism is countering the spread of stereotypes or rather encouraging them with its certain, distinct and specific features of the dominant cultures. This peculiar characteristic has in a long run threatened the very existence of traditional societies creating a crisis on the cultural level. Anyhow, one can still argue about the irrelevance of certain cultural norms and traditions in the present modern society and the very need for a drastic transformation pertaining social requirements.

The absence of social institutions in order to balance the influence of cultural flow has been experienced in this small part of the country as well. In the past years it has been seen that the functioning of the social mechanisms in the Nepali society of the Darjeeling hills has been very different, mostly implied to the urban settings. The ease of communication and convenient lifestyle has led the people of the rural surroundings to move to better urban locations. Easy access to better communication mediums has transformed the society leaving the cultural institutions in the past, thus moving it more towards museums than their daily lifestyle. The need for socially conscious establishments for the sole purpose to encourage and preserve the cultural institutions seems relevant in the present circumstances. However, it can be taken into consideration that many third world countries in the period have started

¹⁵⁵ Barbero, Jesus Martin, *Rethinking Media Religion and Culture*, Edited- Stewart M. Hoover, Knut Lundby, Sage Publications, 1997, p 115

experimentations on the incorporation of traditional media with the mass media contributing identity and continuity to the national culture by giving expression to the indigenous arts.¹⁵⁶ The same can be applied not only in the hills of Darjeeling but also throughout the world as a modern tool for preserving the local culture and traditions. These practices may later mean the acceptance of new rituals and traditions which likely in the future end up being an invented tradition within the community which Eric Hobsbawn refers to.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Lent, John A., Grassroots Renaissance: Folk Media in Third world nations, Folklore, Vol. 91, No. 1 (1980), Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises Ltd, pp 84-85

¹⁵⁷ Hobsbawn, Eric, op.cit, p 5

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Personal Interviews:

Personal interview by the author with Parash Chandra Alley, Program Executive, All India Radio, Kurseong

Personal interview by the author with G.B. Bal, Ex-principal North Bengal Commercial Institute, Kurseong

Personal interview by the author with L.P. Sharma, member Gorkha Library, Kurseong

Personal interview by the author with Tilak Sharma, Secretary Gorkha Library, Kurseong

ANNEXURE

Questionnaire for the personal interview:

- ‘*Madals*’ apart from being an entertainment medium have also been said to have functioned as an important communication tool during guerilla warfare with having different beat patterns connoting different messages. What are your thoughts on this particular remark?
- How would you portray the ‘Runners’ of the past who ran or walked from one place to another in order to pass messages in this region?
- How do you recall the days when there were no electronic communication mediums like the Radio, Television and the Mobile phones? How was this communication gap bridged then between distant regions?
- How would you illustrate your personal experience regarding the evolution of electronic communication technologies in the hills from past to present? How would you describe the emergence and its sustenance of these new electronic communication mediums in this region?
- What kind of changes according to you have these new Information and communication technologies brought upon the hills?
- ‘The ignorance and the negligence of the younger generation towards their long held customs, beliefs and traditions in the Nepali community have a direct connection with the introduction of the new communication technologies in the Hills.’ Where do you stand on this remark?
- Do you think the coming up of Television and cable networks in the hills of Darjeeling have altered the social functioning and traditional social conventions in its residing Nepali community? According to you does it have more positive or negative aspect?