

**SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN SIKKIM: NOMADISM TO
SETTLED AGRICULTURE**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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Declaration

I, **Manisha Gurung**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled “**SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN SIKKIM: NOMADISM TO SETTLED AGRICULTURE**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award degree of **Masters of Philosophy**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Manisha Gurung'.

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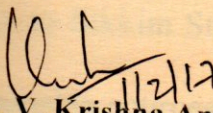
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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN SIKKIM: NOMADISM TO SETTLED AGRICULTURE” submitted to Sikkim University for partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Masters of Philosophy in the Department of History, embodied the result of bonafide research work carried out by Ms. Manisha Gurung under my guidance and supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

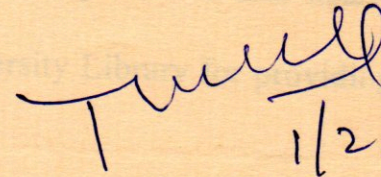

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Manisha Gurung

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Introduction

“Sikkim, the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom is located between Nepal in the west and Bhutan in the east. On its northern borders towers the plateau of Tibet whereas it shares its southern border with West Bengal”. By tradition, its Namgyal rulers were racially and culturally close to the Tibetan theocracy and bulk of its population migrated till the other day from Nepal.¹ The oldest settlers, in Sikkim or Dejong, the land of rice, were the Lepchas who called themselves Rondpa or Dwellers in the valley. There are different views about their origins and the consensus is that they seem to have migrated from the hills of Assam and Myanmar.

Its northern Himalayan ranges were the abodes of the pastoral Bhutias, Dukpas and other such migrant communities from the north. Meanwhile, the Nepali peasants who migrated to Sikkim during the early 19th century were known for their labour, industry and perseverance; they inhabited the western and southern districts of present day Sikkim. The Bhutia immigrants represented the Tibeto-Burman stock, brought Tibetan culture, Tibetan language, Lamaistic Buddhism and semi-settled agricultural pattern from the north. The Nepali community, meanwhile, came in with the Indo- Aryan Languages, Hinduism and settled Agricultural practice to the Sikkim.²

It has been analysed that the `original inhabitants` of Sikkim, indeed, were not agriculturists, in fact they led a very primitive life; gathering wild roots, fruits, hunting and fishing were their means of livelihood. In the primitive culture of Sikkim, the Lepchas did not cultivate enough for all their needs and eked out their

¹Sinha, A.C, (2008). *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus publishing company, New Delhi. p.15.

²Ibid. p.29-30.

living eating the cultivated food supplemented with hunting and wild forest produce.³ “The Lepchas, by nature were too docile, placid and indolent to offer any resistance to the new settlers” according to H.H. Risley. “The woodmen of the wood, knowing the way of birds and beast, and possessing an extensive zoological and botanical nomenclature of their own.”⁴

With the coming of the new phase of evolution and technology it has eliminated natural predators, improved many sectors of public health and on the other hand socio-economic condition did not keep pace.⁵ The socio-economic condition of traditional Sikkim was marked by pastoralism, hunting- gathering and similar forms. However, with the influence of Nepali immigrants and their settlement in Sikkim, the socio-economic conditions also began to take a different course. Whereas, Yishey⁶ in her study has defined that due to the coming of Nepalese in the early 19th century has outnumbered both the indigenous Lepcha and Bhutias and they introduced terrace farming and added beauty to the landscape. As such, the socio-economic conditions in Sikkim underwent a drastic change and this change was heightened after the kingdom’s dissolution and its merger with India. However, this study will only examine Sikkim’s socio-economic history. And various implementation taken by the Government on of them being the Sikkim Agricultural Land Ceiling and Reform Act which enabled the Government to make an assessment on various categories of land and to distribute the surplus land in the state.

³Gorer, Geoffrey. 1996. *The Lepchas of Sikkim*, Gyan publishing house, New Delhi p.110.

⁴Bhattacharaya, Arpana. n.d. *The Prayer- Wheel and Sceptre*, Nachiketa publication, Delhi.

⁵Chakraverty, Chiranjit. 1996, *Environment for everyone*, pauls Press, Delhi. p.10.

⁶Doma, Yishey: 2008. *Sikkim the Hidden Fruitful Valley*, published by Prakash Books India Pvt. Ltd.

Statement of the problem

Since time immemorial, nomadism existed in Sikkim. The resources were self sufficient for the livelihood, though there was the practice of domestication of wild plants and animals. The aborigine Lepchas led the life of hunters and collectors of wild roots. Sikkim, at that time, was very sparsely populated by the primitive tribes of the Lepchas and the Limbus.

The Tibetan grazers and the missionary lamas were possibly the immigrants to Sikkim in search of new pastures and potential converts to their religion in the 16th century. According to Sinha⁷ Tibetan peasants came in search of rice fields. The culture of primitive society changed after the coming of agricultural practice in Sikkim with the immigration of the Nepali community. The nomadic herd used to play a crucial role in the society by providing products of animals to sustain their life but with the introduction of sedentary farming, people started relying on agricultural products. In some places, nomadism still exists but settled agriculture has marginalised and swept away the traditional life style of Sikkim. The study also focuses on the impact of the change in the socio economic culture of nomadism to agricultural practices and marginalisation of the life of nomadism

This study examines the traditional means and practices of livelihood before agriculture was introduced in Sikkim. It focuses on the impact of the change in the socio-economic culture of nomadism to agricultural practices and attempts to arrive at a proper understanding of the nomadic culture practised in Sikkim. The proposed research also seeks to examine the different practices of livelihood within various ethnic tribes and groups in Sikkim.

⁷Sinha, A.C. (1975), *Politics Of Sikkim*, published by Thomson Press (India) Limited, Delhi.

In other words, the study therefore, is an attempt to understand how tradition and culture of the indigenous people of Sikkim has gradually been eroded and been obscured due to the development in settled agricultural farming and the consequent shift from production for subsistence to surplus generation and the new socio economic practices that came with this shift. It examines the three phases in Sikkim (i) the primitive age of Sikkim i.e. Lepcha (primitive tribes) and Bhutias (who came at the beginning of 17th century, precisely in 1642 when three monks consecrated in Sikkim). (ii) 1861 to 1947 British control over Sikkim and the last phase being Indian Independence and its influence in Sikkim from 1947 to 1978.

It explores what was the socio economic culture during this phase in Sikkim and the reason for the transformation from nomadic life that existed in primitive society and the evolution of settled agriculture in Sikkim. It is said to have been that nomadic life paved the way for sedentary agricultural practices rupturing the life of nomads, and then there was an intercultural change in the region. Therefore, the work here looks into the matter and reasons for the transformation of nomadic life to sedentary farming, exploring the origin of agricultural practice in Sikkim and more importantly into impact of agriculture on social and economic life in Sikkim until 1978 with the coming of the Sikkim Agricultural Land Ceiling and Reform Act, 1978, which helped the state to acquire a substantial amount of agricultural land, demarcated as vested land.

Literature Review

“A good reason for trending the Aryan as a unite is their great historical achievement namely demolition of barriers between numerous primitive, conservative peasant communities each of which had separately preserved its archaic tools and beliefs.”⁸ In this, Kosambi has examined and given a brief introduction of the past in his understanding; it reflects from the pre historic society to the modern society. He mentions about the tribal society and its culture. This study, however focuses more on the tribal life and its culture and the change of land pattern for their livelihood.

Macfarlane, Alan and Gurung, Indrabahadur⁹ give a brief description of the Gurung community and it focuses on the origin, village life, family and its life as nomadic herds. It also mentions that the Gurungs were the wandering shepherds who came down through the high pasture of Tibet. It shows that the nomadic people have been immigrating since the time immemorial looking for better pasture for the herd, which resulted in socio economic changes in the land where they migrated to and how it evolved into the nomadic herds to settled agriculture which will be examined throughout this research work.

A.C. Sinha,¹⁰ focuses on the feudal society and its origin. He mentions “Sikkim of 1975 was in a state of transition which may conveniently be termed as traditional. But internal development and exposure to the wider world brought about some social and political change”. Likewise he gives a little emphasis on the tribal life of Sikkim and the nomadic herd of the region. Sinha explains that the Lepchas led the

⁸Kosambi, D.D, (1956), *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Published by RamdasBhatkal for popular Prakashanpvt.ltd.

⁹Macfarlane, Alan and Gurung, Indrabahadur.1990. *A guide to the Gurung*. Published by RatnaPusak,Bhandar, Katmandu.

¹⁰ Sinha. A.C 2008. Op.cit.

life of hunters and collectors of wild roots, and they also traded with different region people for different products according to their needs. Sinha has mainly focused on the feudal society and its origin and has given a little information about the life of the tribes who were the real inhabitants of the region whose social life was hunting and gathering and led a nomadic life. Before knowing the feudal society, it is important to know the pre-feudal society which existed before i.e. nomadism and its transition to settled agriculture which the topic will be taken further during the research work.

Elsewhere, Sinha¹¹ provides insights into the Political history of Sikkim the deals with the historical evolution and it's significance in the social transformation, reflects the socio economic conditions on the perception of the various elite in Sikkim and then the political development in Sikkim, with the coming of migrants. This book also talks about the Nepali immigrants who played a crucial role in the agricultural transformation in Sikkim. It helps to understand the pattern they followed and the culture they brought in and this will be useful throughout this work.

Brig K.S.Gulia provides information on the human ecology of Sikkim. This work comprises all the aspects of man and his culture within the structure of the ecosystem and gives a deep study on the society and culture of Sikkim.

J.R. Subba conceptualises the history of the Himalayan kingdom and its existence thereafter. He has mentioned about the prehistoric Greater Sikkim where he holds that “there were no establishments of settled government were the chiefs and kings use to rule over the area but after the Neolithic period the scarcity of food availability, fixed settlement emerged.”

¹¹ Sinha. A.C. 1975. Op.cit.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the culture of nomadism that existed and the evolution of settled agriculture in Sikkim
- The social change rupturing the life of nomads.
- To explore the origin of agriculture and its practice in Sikkim.
- Socio economic condition of Sikkim before and after the transition from nomadism to settled agriculture.
- Inter cultural practice and its impact on society.

Methodology

The methodology for the study involved primary data employed with qualitative analysis. Primary data included old documents, articles, government orders, etc., in order to understand the social change and transformation from nomadic herds to agriculture. The study also focuses on secondary sources to know about the information which has not been covered and to make the study more authentic and valuable. The research work mainly relied upon the state archives, land and revenue department of the state.

Chapterisation

Introduction

The research topic includes the study of the History of Sikkim and its culture with the existing of different community groups in the society. It also deals with the different cultures which has brought during the migration of the Bhutias and Nepali into Sikkim. It includes statement of the problem regarding this research, followed by the some of the literature reviews, objectives of the study and methodology.

Chapter I: Nomadism and Origin of Agriculture

In this chapter it is based on the definition, meaning and origin of nomadism and agriculture stating from historical times. Furthermore, defining the various categories of nomadism in an around the world. In the first chapter there is a brief discussion about the Nomadism in the Himalayan region supporting with some of the example of nomadic community. Lastly, defining the evolution of agriculture starting from the evolution time, to be more specific it is from the Natufian culture further explaining the Neolithic period. Basically, the first chapter is mainly about the evolutionary process, meaning and origin.

Chapter II: The Nomadic culture in Sikkim

In the second chapter it gives the brief description of the Nomadic culture in Sikkim but most importantly categorise the ethnic groups in Sikkim specifying their culture and origin. There are various ethnic communities one being the aborigines Lepchas, Limboos and the migrants Bhutias and Nepali who played a major role in shaping the society and culture of Sikkim. In addition, there is a classification of nomads in Sikkim and the community based practice. Lepcha being the main inhabitants of the

Sikkim so there is a brief history of their origin and their nomadic lifestyle. Drokpas being the nomadic pastoralist in the Himalayan region of Sikkim and it is important to know about their mobility feature and their way of sustaining their life is furthermore explained. And the how the nomadic herder sustained their life during the primitive mode of production before the advent of agriculture in Sikkim. It is also mentioned in this chapter that because of the evolution of sedentary farming and with the advent of various community the primitive nature of Sikkimese society got marginalised.

Chapter III: Evolution of Agriculture in Sikkim

In the earlier chapter it has been discussed about the migration of Nepali and other community collaborating their culture with the existing society. In this last chapter it gives information about the role of Nepalese in agriculture. The history of Nepali starts from the Gorkha incursion to the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim. During the rule of J.C White 1889 the first political officer in Sikkim encouraged the more Nepalese to settle in Sikkim cultivating the waste land. With the sources and evidence with the advent of settled agriculture there was feudalism in Sikkim and forced labour which has been discussed in more detail in last chapter in this study of work.

Conclusion

Considering the socio- cultural change in the society in the society there has been a drastic social transformation in the society from nomadism to agriculture in Sikkim. Though the primitive culture still does exist but settled agriculture has marginalised and swept away the traditional life style in Sikkim. And Migration has become a social phenomenon in channelizing the society of Sikkim. There has been an intercultural change between the various ethnic groups with their culture, tradition, etc. Forming a new Sikkimese society.

Chapter - I

Origin of Nomadism and Agriculture

1.1 Meaning of Nomadism, and its Origin

In the line of evolution from Palaeozoic Era to Cainozoic Era and from the *Homo Erectus* to *Homo Sapiens*, people lived a very primitive and a nomadic life. The social transformation witnessed during this and has continued to remain at the core of modern development. A gradual 'revolution' took place during the Neolithic period leading to the transition of nomadic life style to one of settled agriculture. In pre-Neolithic South Asia, as elsewhere, from the lower Palaeolithic to the earliest part of Mesolithic period, nomadism was the principal survival strategy of a community that lived in unpredictable conditions only depending for survival seasonally available and patchily distributed food resource.¹

The transition phase between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic-Mesolithic age began about 10,000 years ago before it reached the Neolithic period which began around 2,500 B.C.² The above phase and transition seems to be associated with the change that occurred largely from nomadic hunter-gatherer to more settled, agrarian-based, with the onset of domesticated plants and animals. Going back to the earlier human societies, there was nomadism which existed, where a group of people who have no fixed home and moved according to the seasons, from place to place in search of food, water and grazing. They had the culture of living in tents like the Native Americans and Mongolians³. Ammianus Marcellinus describes nomads as wanderers

¹Rao Arpana, J.Casimir Michael. (2003) *Nomadism in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.p.46.

²Mishra, P.K. (2008) *Archaeological Exploration in Sikkim*. Sundeep Prakash. p.31.

³Bhukya, Bhangya. (2010) *Subjugated Nomads*. Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi. p.86.

from place to place; he says, “No-one ploughs a field in their country, or touches a plough handle. They are ignorant of times, law or settled existence and keep roaming from places in their wagons. If you ask one of their children where he comes from, he was conceived in one place, one far away and brought up still further off”.⁴ This type of nomads reflects, almost directly, the availability of forge resources; the patchier these are, the more likely an individual is to move in an irregular pattern.

All the people on earth were hunter-gatherers. Later on, they evolved, over a period of time. According to Roger, “nomads are people who have no fixed residence and move from place to place to secure supply of food. The normal use of the term nomads includes, three separate groups; mobile bands, of hunter-gatherers, transhumant (seasonal movement of human) pastoralists and trader nomads”.⁵ Likewise, Fox argues that there are neither hunter-gatherers nor pastoral nomads; he further explains that due to their ‘integration’ of their habits, profession and occupation in the wider society, he suggests the alternative term ‘professional primitive’⁶. It may then be held that primitive tribes they never indented to plough a field or cultivate land; they wandered from place to place in search of new hunting grounds with their wagons; and they were ignorant about the fact of settled life. The descriptions of the indigenous tribes, who are called “nomads”, remain controversial. While some description include all those communities whose primary resource extraction strategy, be it animal husbandry, forging, trade or servicing, is based on recurrent physical mobility, others prefer to restrict its usage to communities whose economy is based primarily on mobile herding.

⁴ Blench, R.M. (2001) Pastoralism in New Millennium. FAO: Animal Health and Production Series, No 150. p.11.

⁵ Cribb, Roger. (1991) *Nomads in Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press.p.431.

⁶ Cited in Rao Arpana, J.Casimir Michael, (2003).*Nomadism in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. p.13.

In Nomadism there are various groups of nomad pastoralists or animal herder nomads, hunting and gathering nomads and peripatetic nomads. As Hayrapet Margarian says, there has been a long history of Transcaucasia from 11th- 14th century with the contradictory relationship between the two worlds: the local agricultural and the nomadic ones. He talks about the History of Transcaucasia that would convincingly show the effects of the nomadic factor. He gives the example of Armenians, Georgians, Caucasian Albanians, contacted the prairie-type nomads of the pre-Caucasus the Huns and Khazars⁷. With the intrusion of nomads into a different world, they are characterised with specific features; some penetrate to settle to till the land, to pasture land or worked as criminals to invade other regions. So, this is why nomadism varies from region to region.

With the coming of political socio-economic condition in the world, there has been a lot of controversy regarding nomadic people in and around the world. Their movement or penetration or crossing the borderline of the country made the people there insecure. Many countries banned the incursion of nomadic people. To talk about the colonial rule in many parts of the world, nomadism did not get that much importance. In fact, they were suppressed and even decimated by the colonial power because of their nomadic life style and their role in revolts against the colonial rule. It has been mentioned that during the first half of the 19th century, the tribes in the North West Frontier in India were declared ‘criminal tribes’.⁸ This category became increasingly open ended and by 1871 the British had prepared an official list of Criminal Tribes.⁹ The wandering groups who opposed the penetration of colonial rule

⁷Margarian, Hayrapet. (2001) The Nomads and Ethnopolitical Realities of Trnascaucasia in the 11th – 14th centuries, Iran and Caucasus, vol.5. Np.

⁸Devy, Ganesh. (2000) For A Nomad called Thief. India International Center, Quarterly Vol, 27, No 2. p.51.

⁹Ibid. p.51.

were perceived as criminals such as *Pardhis*, the tribes of India that were mostly found in Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh and *kanjar* tribe, a nomadic ethnic group found across northern and central India; they all were branded as criminals.¹⁰ With the tag of being branded as criminals, many tribes are still facing social ostracism. The communities who used to hunt, the culture and livelihood of the nomads have been ruined by the modern production relations making them redundant from the society.

As mentioned above, in nomadism there are various different categories, which are as follows.

Pastoralists or animal herder nomads

They are primarily endogamous communities economically dependent, often over generations, on livestock. The degree of dependence may vary seasonally and even annually, and included in this category are those often known as agro-pastoralists¹¹. Pastoral nomads are those who choose as their basic strategy for providing year round food for their herds the movement of livestock to pasturage rather than bringing fodder to herds. During the migration route, if there is change in climatic condition they move in large groups into villages and intimidate local people to give access to pasture land and to protect their livestock and the herders. The people welcome the herds in villages for manure in their fields and the pastorals get the pasture land for the cowsheds. Thus the nature of interaction between mobile

¹⁰Kolekar, Sanjay. (2008) Violence Against the Nomadic Tribes, Economic and Political Weekly. Vol.43, No.26/27.pp.569-571

¹¹Rao Arpana, J.Casimir Michael. (2003). Op.cit. .p.5.

pastoralists and the sedentists depends on a variety of ecological, socio-economic, and micro-regional variables.¹²

Hunting and gathering nomads

A hunter is a wild man, his food is wild game; he may built a house, he may not till the ground; he may not tarry in one place.¹³ The principal economic and traditional subsistence strategy consists of gathering/collecting and/or hunting who have little or no regular access to cultivable land. Since the food collected or hunted is patchily and seasonally distributed, mobility is the main feature of the hunting-gathering nomads. Few nomadic communities who subsisted primarily on foraging have managed to economically and physically survive even in condition of socio-economic change. For example, in case of the *Banjaras* of Rajasthan, *Raute* and *Kusunda* of Nepal, the main feature is their mixed economy of nomadic foraging and trading wild products. To describe them, they live in small camps of one to twelve commensal units, for not more than 7 to 10 days where they collect food or wild products to trade and then they move to a new foraging place. There are many tribes in many parts of the world who still exists following nomadic life style and due to the influence of the socio-economic, political that they come into contact and their impact on the new culture of the primitive tribes, they are near to extinct.

Peripatetic nomads

There are primarily non-food producing nomads, preferentially endogamous, itinerant communities, subsisting over long periods mainly on the sale of, sometimes self-produced goods and more or less hereditarily learned, specialized service to

¹²Rao Arpana, J.Casimir Michael. (2003). Op.cit. p.23.

¹³Barker, Graeme. (2006) *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why did forger become farmer.* Oxford University Press.

sedentary or nomadic clients. Some among them may have a little land, homestead, animals, or may forage a little, depending on the nature of the goods and services offered.

With the onset of new a culture and with the unavailability of resources, and food insecurity, many of these nomadic communities have changed their course of life in accordance with their needs and possibilities. In fact, the Archaeologist and Historians, particularly those working in Africa, the Near East, and central Asia, where nomadism is an integral part of modern life, have been aware for a long time of the importance of pastoral nomads. Unfortunately because of their wandering lifestyle, it has proved extremely difficult to recognise these people in the archaeological records¹⁴.

In many regions for a long run, nomadic communities practised foraging and later started to domesticate plants, lived alongside in close contact with which they exchanged agriculture produce in return for products derived from gathering and hunting. The excavations of some Middle and Stone Age settlements suggest either a mixed economy, combining the products of hunting and gathering with animal husbandry, or an exchange of products for meat from early Neolithic communities who have already domesticated animals. The findings at Adamgarh (6400-5700) BC; in the Narmada valley and Langhanj (2400-2100 BC; in Gujarat, for example, show clearly that nomadism played a major role.¹⁵ Communities which existed over a period of time were forced to take a different path, marginalizing the nomadic culture. Many of the people of nomadic community were seen as criminals because they herded the cattle in the forest which was under the Forest Protection. In the earlier

¹⁴Cribb, Roger. (1991), *Nomads in Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press.p.p.431-432.

¹⁵Rao Arpana, J.Casimir Michael.(2003). Op.cit. p.47.

phase, hunting which was rudimentary got desolated. Due to the non-availability of land and food, people were forced to live as bonded labourers or farmers to sustain their lives. In many colonial countries like India and Africa, many tribal communities, who used to live a nomadic life, were made to work as peasants in agriculture and they were exploited and many of them were made to serve as servants and were traded as indentured labourers worldwide.

The *Lambada* community of Hyderabad is the best example of nomadic tribes who converted themselves to bonded labourers in Hyderabad. *Lambadas* were known as major caravan traders and merchants before the advent of modern market and transport system. The caravan trade dates back to ancient times from the eleventh century. As trade and commerce expanded, the caravan trade began to flourish, peaking during the Mughal period, where huge number of nomadic people was employed for the transportation of baggage and food. Several nomadic and pastorals communities were involved in trade and *Lambadas* were one among them. As the treaty opened the trade between British and India, the new regulation of market relation and colonial economy destroyed the long established market relation in the state and paved the way for the emergence of new trading communities that curbed small-scale trade of *Lambadas*. It determined the trade network and the monopoly of *Lambadas* over the food grain trade, and soon the nomadic community got marginalised. D.A Wash book's study on the south observed that the construction of roads for military purpose undermined the *Lambadas* economy. After they lost their transporting occupation, the *Lambadas* settled down as agriculturist in the forested area and greatly contributed to the expansion of agriculture into the eighteen century.¹⁶C.A Bayil's study on the North India suggests that the nomadic groups lost

¹⁶Bhukya, Bhangya. (2010) *Subjugated Nomads*. Published by Orient Black Swan, New Delhi. p.56.

their livelihood with the decline of the Mughal Empire and they settled as either agriculturalists or pastoral cattle breeders in the eighteenth century and played an important role in agricultural production¹⁷.

The nomadic communities are found all over the world, each with their own distinctive history, culture and social background. Over a course of time, each community has developed a varied social and racial composition and past. Every nomadic community have different names and social roots in every region and they claim a variety of statuses within the society. Like *Lambadas* many other tribes in South Asian countries have left their ground of hunting-gathering and have settled in villages with lack of economy and some of the tribes have settled as an out caste in the villages.

The new market place paved the way for the emergence of new trading communities that curbed small-scale traders even further abandon their long standing occupation as food grain traders and cattle-raisers, and to settle down as subordinate peasantry. The deployment of a colonial political rationality that aimed to systematise, stabilise and regularise power relations led ultimately to the loss of *Lambadas'* cattle wealth and their confinement to settled agriculture¹⁸.

Laxaman D. Satya's recent study on the ecology of the Berar region provides an exception to this rule, as he has examined practices of cattle breeding and the developments that undermined the cattle wealth of the region. He argues that the spread in the cultivation of cotton as well as the other commercial crops in the region disrupted existing agriculture practices and the arrangements. He outlines the loss of pastures and grazing land led to reduction in fodder and firewood, deterioration in the

¹⁷Bhukya, Bhangya. (2010). Op.cit. p.55.

¹⁸Ibid. p.7.

quality of the soil and health of the cattle, and epidemics that wipe out large numbers of cattle throughout the region¹⁹. *Lambadas* being one of the communities who shifted their culture of trading to settled agriculture or labourers. Other nomadic communities had its own region for the transformation of nomadic to settled life. As Foucault says, disciplinary state sought to create ‘docile bodies’ which involved the confining of individuals within enclosed spaces. Its aim was to establish presence and absence to know where and how to locate individuals to set up useful communications to be able at each moment to supervise and maybe interfere with the conduct of each individual to assess it and to judge it in order to calculate its qualities or merits. It is a procedure aimed at knowing, mastering and using subjects to the greatest extend²⁰.

1.2 Nomadism in the Himalayan region

There are over two hundred million nomadic people in the world following a productive way of life. South Asia, is said to have been had world is largest nomadic population and a large variety of nomadic herders are found in the region. It is held that, roughly 7 percent of the population in India is nomadic and consists of about five hundred different communities of mobile herders, foragers, and peripatetic²¹. In the Himalayan region mostly mobile herders or pastoralists are found depending upon their livestock.

In the pastoral way of life the availability of foraged food is a necessity according to the needs of animals herd for fodder and water, migration is necessary for the survival of animals and determined by such needs. The mobile herders or

¹⁹Laxman, D, Satya. (2004). Colonialism and cattle Central India in the Nineteeth Century. Delhi Oxford University press.p.p.1-6.

²⁰Foucault, Michel. (1975). Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans Alan Sheridan. London: PenguinBooks Ltd.p.143.

²¹ Randhawa, T.S (1996). *The last Wanderers’. Nomads and Gypsies of India, Ahmadabad: Mapin Publication.*

pastoral nomads of the Himalayan region depend on their livestock, produce no crops for their food source and other necessities, they sell or exchange animals and their products for food grains. They are dependent on their livestock for food, status and cultural practices. Nomadism in the Himalayan region is the movement which involves passage between the lower and higher parts of the mountain slopes. Sheep, yak and goat pastoralism is a constant feature of traditional mountain societies.

The ecosystem diversity does not only mean the variety of ecological zones of habitats but it encompasses cultural diversity and ecological processes as well as related to different pastoral production system. There are large number of pastoral groups in the Himalayan region; – which includes *Gaddis*, *Gujjars*, *Bakarwals*, *Kinnauras*, *Kaulis* and *Kanets* of the north Indian Himalayas, *Bhotias* in the Garhwal Himalayas, *Bhotias* and *Sherpas* in the Khumbu valley of Nepal, *Kirats* of eastern Nepal, *Monpayak* breeders of Arunachal Pradesh, *Bhutias* of Lachen and Lachung, Sikkim and *Changpas* of Changthang.

The pastoralists of Himalayas make use of resources like high mountain pastures in three different ways by characteristic mobility patterns, socio-economic organisation and property rights. Mobility being the main feature of the pastoralist in the Himalayan Region in Sikkim, the Tibetan grazers and the missionary Lamas were possibly the earliest immigrants to Sikkim in search of new pastures and potential converts to their religion.²² With the coming of the new the culture and tradition through immigrants of the mobile herder kind, there has been an intercultural change in the Sikkimese society.

²²Sinha, A.C, (2008), *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*. Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. p.31.

There are nomads like *Changpa* of Changthangin Ladakh, whose economy is predominantly based on animal husbandry; there are agro-pastoralist groups like *Gaddis* of Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh and *Bhutias* of *Lachen* and *Lachung* in Sikkim, who practice marginal agriculture and raise herds of sheep and goats and yaks²³. The extreme altitudes and conditions of the Himalaya-Hindukush and Tibet favour pastoralism based on the unique biology and usefulness of the yak, which are the backbone of pastoral economies along the high northern borderlands of south Asia. Yaks are bovines specially adapted through morphology, physiology, and behaviour to high altitude and cold. They provide butter, milk, hair, dung, traction, transport, meat, calves, and culture capital for a diverse array of groups from Bhutan to northern Pakistan throughout most of highland Asia yak are integrated into systems ranging from fully nomadic enterprise to stock yard production or the yak may be the survival of the people who domesticate them for agriculture or trade.

Nomadism is viable under condition of extreme heat and cold. In the hot dry deserts of Arabia, Sahara, East Africa, South Iran and Baluchistan, camel domestication is prevalent. In the lush Savannah grasslands of Central Africa and Sudan belt, cattle are the main animal. The temperate mountainous valley of Southwest Asia, Mediterranean and Borderland support large populations of sheep, goat, yak and horse. In the extreme climate of Central Asia steppes and mountains horses, Bactrian camel, sheep and goats are preferential and in Sub Arctic tundra of northwest Eurasia, the inhabitants herd only reindeer²⁴. Pastoral nomads are usually self-sufficient in terms of food and most other necessities. Nomadism has been seen as a survival strategy for the pastoralists.

²³Bhasin Veena 1996. Transhumants of Himalayschangpas of Ladak, Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh and Bhutias of Sikkim., Delhi. Kamala Raj Enterprise.

²⁴ Ibid. p.152.

1.3 Pastoralism

The practice of herding as the primary economic activity of a society is pastoralism. Pastoral systems take many forms and are adapted to particular natural, political and economic environment. The livestock they keep vary according to the climate, environment, water and other natural resources and geographical area. The origin of pastoralism has been much discussed, especially in a type of literature that is influenced, unconsciously perhaps by Marxist historical schemas. Mobility is the key feature qualifying pastoralism. The term nomadic is irregular patterns; transhumant when there are regular back and forth movement between relatively fixed locations; and sedentary for the rest. The Pastoralists are specifically mentioned in medieval documents, either due to their involvement in various battles and raids between different rulers, especially in the western part of the subcontinent or in donative inscriptions in parts of south India, as patrons of Temples or trustees of milch animals²⁵. There are also frequent references to cattle-lifters in oral traditions, where many romances, hero stones refer to constant cattle or camel raiding and the entire cowherd goods referring to dairying and forest grazing.

Pastoralism was seen as an evolutionary stage in human history, a phase following hunting and gathering and leading to sedentarization and agriculture. The extensive grazing on range land for livestock production is pastoralism. Pastoralist nomads not only reared herds and moved from one place to another but according to their movement they brought about social as well as economic changes in the society, by selling or exchanging the product of cattle like ghee, wool, leather, etc. In pastoralist communities, it has been incorporated with a mixture of stock types the

²⁵Talbot, C. (2001), *Precolonial India in Practice. Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra History*.

desert-dwelling tuareg herds includes camels, small stocks, and donkeys, Quechua agro- pastoralists in the high Andes keep llamas, alpacas, and sheep and central Asia's Mongolian herders and Nomadic Tibetans run sheep, horses, sometimes camels, and yak. The socio-economic did not keep pace, society also evolved with the new culture which the nomadic pastoralist got in with them. It is said to have been that pastoralism came earlier than agriculture but with the archaeological evidences and based on historical sources in Africa, agriculture seems to have started earlier than the pastoralist phase.

Pastoralism, the use of extensive grazing on rangelands for livestock production, is one of the key production systems in the world with the importance of economic and cultural way of life. Rangelands are lands on which the native vegetation – predominantly, grasses like plants, forage or shrubs- are suitable for use by grazing or browsing. Rangelands encompass approximately half of earth's land surface. Due to insufficient and unreliable rainfall, Rangelands cannot maintain cropping activities²⁶. Therefore, rangeland is predominantly used by livestock. Grazing is the most efficient way to convert cheap primary production into valuable animal products. Though there is great diversity in pastoral systems, they are usually characterized by low population densities, high mobility and dynamism, complex information systems and a high dependency on local knowledge.

Pastoralists are livestock producers who grow no crops and simply depend on the sale or exchange of animals and their products to obtain foodstuffs. Such producers are likely to be nomads, i.e. their movements are opportunistic and follow pasture resources in a pattern that varies from year to year. This type of nomadism

²⁶Richard, Camille. Hoffmann, Kate. (2004) ,Strategic innovations for improving pastoral livelihoods in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Highlands, Volume II, published by International centre for Integrated Mountain Development.p.50.

reflects, almost directly, the availability of forage resources; the patchier these are, the more likely an individual herder is to move in an irregular pattern. The key to their survival is their flexibility of adopting divergent lifestyles, ranging from their existing pattern in the face of drought, pasture failure or the spread of an epizootic. Pastoralists contribute to economy, achievement of development goals and to the maintenance of ecosystem in the rangelands. As users of rangelands who rely upon the provision of numerous ecosystem services (e.g. water, food, fodder), pastoralists have a unique knowledge of how a balance between conservation and sustainable use can be maintained²⁷. Pastoralism is a livelihood system tied to ecosystem services with a complex system of social, political and economic organization. The shifting of global market, population growth and increase competition for land and other natural resources, has marginalised these communities and generally not given due consideration in wider socio-political analysis. In the twentieth century, when national borders began to play a key role in world wide geopolitics, the free movement of livestock started to be seen as a security and health threat, on the one hand, and as a potential loss of national wealth, on the other. Unlike their counterparts in Africa, where pastoral peoples move around relatively freely in open, arid spaces, Asian peoples such as the Kazakhs and the Mongols have been divided by states that have highly varied policies. Moreover, sensitive border areas have generally been closed to outsiders, so information on pastoral societies in these regions has been tightly controlled²⁸.

²⁷N.d, A good practice guide, Pastoralism, nature conservation and Development. P.1.

²⁸Blench, R.M. (2001). Op.cit. p. 12.

1.4 Agriculture

Humans have been there for several million years. There has been separate identities of evolutionary phase of humans, where foraging being the main occupation combined with hunting, scavenging, gathering and fishing. In pre-history, though foraging remained the primary feature, domestication of wild plants was also practiced. The Archaeological evidence of farming was found at the end of Plesistocene Era at about 12,000 years ago,²⁹ later on domestication of plants became more profound replacing the hunting-gathering. The domestication of animals, cultivation of crops on arable land and range land were key methods that led to agriculture. Domestication can be defined as the evolutionary progress whereby humans modify, either intentionally or unintentionally, the genetic makeup of population of plants or animals to extend individual population to lose their ability to survive and produce offspring in wild.³⁰ The ability to produce food through domestication and farming led to the great civilization in the world opening the new pathway for the socio-economic condition.

The Chalcolithic age was marked by the smelting of copper, bronze, iron and making of tools. All these items describe the technologies of this period, which are reliable indication of the access to food resources. Before the pre-historic times, the wild grains were collected and eaten. With the evidence by archaeologies regarding the domestication of plants there is clear enough evidence of farming being practiced but not as profound as settled agriculture. To know as to how the sedentary lifestyle evolved over a period of time, we should look into the details of Natufian culture which was earlier than the Neolithic period which marks the origins of Neolithic

²⁹Barker, Graeme. (2006). *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why did forger become farmer.* Oxford University Press.p.1.

³⁰Ibid. p.2.

settlement; Tell Abu Hureyra is the earliest sites of Natufian culture which gives the evidence of agriculture in the world³¹. With the settlement, there was domestication of crops like wheat, barley, rice, and livestock including horses, cattle, sheep and goats. According to Barker, rice was domesticated in China around 11,500 and 6,200 B.C, sheep were domesticated between 11,000- 9,000 B.C.³² Cattle was domesticated in the areas of modern Turkey and Pakistan around 8,500 B.C. In Andes of South America, potatoes were domesticated between 8,000 and 5,000 B.C, along with beans, coca, and llamas³³.

In the transmission from the ancestors of the apes to modern humans at the end of the Pleistocene Era, approximately 11,000 B.C marks the scarcity of food for the hunter-gatherer due to excessive killing of bigger animals and also excessive harvest of wild food-plants, the world over, which compelled the human race to find alternative means of food for survival in some parts of the world. Agriculture was not a conscious choice between foods productive and foraging was the adoption of food production, evolved with the decision without awareness of farming. The situation also compelled the human race to think over domestication of plants and animals for food, give up their Nomadic lifestyle and start a village or settled life with agriculture for survival³⁴. Agriculture which was not so important until then got profound development and the relationship between the people and the nature.

The origin of agriculture is equally as obscure as the country where, and the people among whom it was first cultivated. Before man devised means of extracting agriculturally from the earth his means of subsistence, centuries must have passed in

³¹Bar, Yosef, Ofer (1998). The Natufian culture in the Levant, Threshold to the origins of Agriculture, Evolutionary Anthropology.pp.159-177.

³²Barker, Graeme (2009), op. cit. p.6

³³Ibid.p.4.

³⁴Subba, J.R. (2008). *The Evolution of Man and the Modern Society in Mountainous Sikkim*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi. p. 34.

preliminary preparation for this act. The taming of the ox and the horse, and it may be other animals, and their affiliation with man as industrial power was a wonderful inspiration of primitive humanity³⁵. In fact J.G Hawkes in ‘The Origin of Agriculture’ argues that the agricultural revolution has undoubtedly been one of the most important steps in the history of mankind – as important as the technological revolution of fairly recent times and the discovery of fire and the use of tools in epochs even more remote than the discovery of agriculture itself. The constitutional wants of man that of food, seems to be the most important imperative for this discovery. In every age and in every climate mankind have been spurred on to the most varied resources to appease and gratify this undying want of the nature.

The history of agriculture, comprehensively written, embracing a comparative study of soils, of climates, of implements, and labour, with corresponding references to the degrees of human civilization as modified and determined by these several agencies yet to be written. There is little doubt of there being a close and inseparable connection between them, which the future is destined to fully disclose. It is said that the earliest African food producers were mobile herders, not sedentary farmers, whereas in Sikkim the producers were the agro-pastorals and later on sedentary agriculture was started by the Nepali migrants. Agro-pastoralists can be described as settled pastoralists who cultivate sufficient areas to feed their families from their own crop production. They hold land rights to cultivate land as well as they value their livestock. Agro-pastoralism is key to interaction between the sedentary and mobile communities³⁶.

³⁵Watson Thomas J. History of Agriculture, (1857). The metropolitan Mesum of Art. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25527666> p.360. (accessed on January 7, 2017).

³⁶Blench, R.M. (2001). Op.cit. p.13.

The un- predictability of wild resource and increasing mobility for food led to sedentary farming and settled lifestyle. The cattle herders, who used to look for pasture land and wander from place to place due to lack of grazing land and with different forest acts prohibiting such grazing led by the government, forced them to look for more settled life, practiced agro-pastoralism, where cattle was used to plough the land for domestication of plants. There has been a mechanization of agriculture due to the drastic change from nomadism to sedentary agriculture. The nomadic herdsmen were brought under conditions of competitive pressure both on land and water to protect their livestock. The over-extraction of resources intimidated the local people so as to go hand to hand in their day to day life. Both the farmers and the pastoralists entered into a diverse exchange of sale/purchase arrangements, where the farmers welcomed the manure of the sheep in their fields and the villagers attracted herdsmen with waterholes and sheds for the herds in such manner. As such, there was a mutual dependence between the shepherds and the farmers. Later on, the herders examined the progress of producing the food and started working as agriculture wage labourers and later ended up as sedentary farmers. Likewise in Sikkim due to lack of land, reserved forest and compound, the cattle herder began asking the higher authority for the allotment of land to make cowshed and a small field to sow some vegetables³⁷. Government reports clearly suggest that due to the action of the Government, the nomadic herders were made to transform their way of life to a very new form i.e. settled way of life.

Sedentarization increased with the onset of the Chalcolithic phase in South Asia; food producing strategies combining pastoralism and the agriculture were introduced into the existing foraging system by incoming communities who

³⁷Permission given to cultivate land at Chandmari, Government of Sikkim, Land and Revenue file no: 6/73/1926, Sikkim State Archive, Gangtok.

established villages in favourable ecological zones. In the long run, there was a continued dependence between the nomadic groups with the sedentists. There has been a cultural change and evolution which led to great civilizational changes in human society with the onset of agriculture, with the development of agriculture system in many areas there has been a transformation in the life-ways of the indigenous forager societies.

1.5 Food production

Food has been of great importance in one's life. Food is either consumed by human, producing themselves or someone else producing it for them with different means i.e. through domestication of plants and animals or hunting-gathering. The end of the Pleistocene Era marked the beginning of village life evolving in few parts of the world, where people started to domesticate indigenous wild species which were of nutritional value. Humans in the pre-historical times used to hunt for their food and gather wild plants for their food. They were, however, unaware of the fact of domestication of plants. There is obscurity over the fact of domestication of plants and there is a controversy between different schools of thoughts with different opinions. The development of agriculture 'man in his "natural state", endowed the high physical organisation and progressive intellect given to him by nature.'³⁸ Nelson eventually concludes that Neolithic herders must have got tired of their wandering lives and understood many advantages of settling down and becoming farmer.³⁹ It is said that the earliest African food producers were mobile herders, not sedentary farmers, whereas in Sikkim the producers were the agro-pastorals and later on sedentary agriculture was started by the Nepali migrants. Agro-pastoralists can be

³⁸Barker, Graeme (2009). Op.cit.p.8.

³⁹Ibid.p.9.

described as settled pastoralists who cultivate sufficient areas to feed their families from their own crop production. They hold land rights to cultivate land as well as they value their livestock. Agro-pastoralism is key to interaction between the sedentary and mobile communities⁴⁰.

It is relevant here to discuss, very briefly, J. R Subba's insights about the evolution of human race and the beginning of civilization.⁴¹ He also gives a brief explanation of the food production and how it spread all around the world.

The idea of domestication of plants and animals triggered the local food production. The new method of domestication enabled the people to become sedentary by evolving the wild plants into local crops. Food production arose in different parts of the world, with the arrival of food production in Southwest Asian crops and animals between 6,000 and 3,500 B.C it influenced in Western and Central Europe⁴². With the above mentioned fact, we can tell that the individual tribes of different region did not cultivate or domesticate, they got influenced by the other tribes of the country to other regions. The idea of food production got spread all over the world. In fact, the nomadic tribes who wander from place to place gave up the idea of mobility. In Iran, during the 17th B.C, they cultivated wheat and barley which evidently spread to the Indus Valley and later on it got triggered into the different countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Africa etc.

The food habitat which was there in the earliest known human ancestors has been a divergent or a line of evolutionary from better hunting skill with new stone to domestication of plants and animals for their survival.

⁴⁰Blench, R.M. (2001). Op.cit.p.13

⁴¹Subba, J.R. (2008). Op.cit. p.41.

⁴²Ibid. p.41.

1.6 Evolution of agriculture

The earliest stage of cultural development of mankind was Stone Age culture. The Stone Age culture can be studied under three broad divisions based on stratigraphical order of occurrence, typo technology and function of stone tools. They are the Palaeolithic period, Mesolithic period and Neolithic period. The term Neolithic Revolution was first coined in the 1920s by Vere Gordon Childe to describe the first in a series of agriculture revolution to have occurred in a Middle Eastern History. This period is described as a “revolution” to denote its importance; and the great significance and the degree of change brought about to the communities in which these practices were gradually adopted and refined⁴³. An alternative explanation for the origin of agriculture is propounded by Mark Nathan Cohen. Cohen believes that following the widespread extinction of large mammals in the late Palaeolithic, the human population had expanded to the limits of the available territory and a population explosion led to a food crisis and the hunter gatherer met with one or two fates; either they were displaced by neighbouring food producers, or they survived only by adopting food producing. It has been mentioned that in few places food production developed independently and they did it so widely that neighbouring areas learned food production; some of the places are southwest Asia, China, Andes of South America, Amazon Basin, and Mexico. Agriculture was the only way in which it was possible to support the increasing population on the available area of land⁴⁴. In the Cape of South Africa, the local kholi hunter-gatherers became herders by acquiring sheep and cows from farther north and ultimately from

⁴³Mishra, P.K. (2008). Op.cit. p.31.

⁴⁴Ibid.p.33.

Southwest Asia. Similarly, Native American Hunter-gatherers of the U.S Southwest gradually became farmers by acquiring Mexican crops.⁴⁵

The Neolithic Revolution seems to have been associated with the transition from nomadic hunting and gathering to more settled farming with the onset of domestication of plants and animals. The changes which took over a period of time had its own reason which resulted the emergent of agriculture. The reason behind the adoption of agriculture by the hunter-gatherer was the awareness of the food production. People were conscious about the unavailability or decline of food in the forest, and domesticating plants and animals minimized the risk of starving. Farmers in each continent did not choose farming consciously, once food production had arisen in one part of the continent, neighbouring hunter-gatherers could see the results and make conscious decision and adopted the system of food production⁴⁶The Neolithic human societies are associated with the techniques of farming adopted in crop cultivation due to which there was a social change that occurred from private ownership to increase in population.

The permanent settlement which was not so important arose during the Neolithic period creating new social, cultural, economic and political institution. There was a sense of subsistence farming and later agriculture started to gain popularity. Agriculture was seen by the communities as the only way in which it was possible to support the increasing population on the available area of land. Without agriculture, the emergence of many of the traits popularly referred to as “civilization” would not have been possible. The documentation and interpretation of natural and

⁴⁵Subba, J.R. (2008).Op.cit. p.42.

⁴⁶Subba, J.R (2008). Op.cit.p.45.

social changes associated with the origin of agriculture is one of the great successes of stories of archaeology⁴⁷.

There has been lot of changes in the society and with the new era and the competition in the world and due to the social domain or emigrants also seems to be an outlet of social mobility and there has been lot of migration that took place in the world in search of better place and society. There has been push factors during the time of migration. To the concepts of migration, there are upper working class and lower middle class origin and none of them emigrated because of dire financial need. Economic factors played a considerable role with the immigrants of people. During the movement of the people, carried the culture and tradition with them which got interchanged with the customs rituals which existed in the society, only got the tradition it also helped to improve the economic and social condition in the society. Giving the example of Sikkim, being a small princely state before it got merged with India, emigration of Bhutia and Nepalis, there has been lot of cultural change and impact on the society, where Bhutias got the culture of their nomadic pastoral, Agro-pastoral and Nepalis came with the techniques of terrace farming which totally change the pattern of cultivation of rice.

Agriculture became the most promising sustainable linkage with the day to day life of the people, those people who used to forage or move from one place to another came with the flow of new era. The evolution of agriculture not only was maintained by the people to sustain their life as self sufficient but the economic condition of the society got clamed up into a higher level. Before the age of Neolithic, people's condition was just to wander from place to place in search of food. The evolution of agriculture took them into a different phase, people who never ploughed

⁴⁷Subba, J.R (2008). Op.cit. p.34.

a field or cultivated land started to adopt this new culture making them conscious through practicing agriculture or domestication of plants can sustain their life in more sophisticated manner rather than to move from place to place or to hunt animals.

In the next chapter it will be further discussed in more details about the origins of Sikkim and the role of Nepalese in transforming the Sikkim society into agricultural based land. Furthermore explaining the reasons for migrating in Sikkim and their historical background which shaped the socio-economic condition of Sikkim into a different fold of society based on production with the identity of its own.

Chapter - II

Nomadic culture in Sikkim

2.1 Ethnic group and its culture in Sikkim

The word 'ethnicity' comes from the word 'ethnic' which means a group of people having similar racial, linguistic or geographical features. Hence we can say that ethnicity, in a broad sense, is the amalgamation or embracement of anything and everything belonging to a particular individual, community or a group of people.

The Himalayan province of Sikkim is composed or made up of many small ethnic communities. Sikkim is not a state of just one ethnic group but is an amalgamation of many ethnic tribes both aboriginal as well as immigrants. All these ethnic groups have together contributed in giving Sikkim the identity it has. Therefore in this chapter we shall further discuss about all the ethnic groups making up the Himalayan state of Sikkim.

Sikkim being small Himalayan kingdom before 1975 (until it was merged with India), is an extremely mountainous region with the existence of multiple ethnic groups which is as old as the Namgyal dynasty and even earlier. Ethnicity and identity plays a very important role, likewise, in Sikkim and there is an unsettling of conventional definition of the indigenous and migrants groups, which will be discussed further. Talking about the ethnic groups in Sikkim, there are three main ethnic categories; the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis There are a lot of differences

between these groups culturally, religiously and linguistically. There are degrees of inclusion and exclusion, which determine ethnic relations in Sikkim.¹

For the reconstruction of the early history of Sikkim only a few sources are available in the form of myths and legends, folk-lore, traditions which are all oral sources. The origin of the first settlers and their historical background can be traced from the myth and folk-lore of the Lepcha tribe. Though there are few sources of the early history of Sikkim, the earliest semblance of human inhabitants in Sikkim dates back to the Neolithic period i.e. 8500 B.C. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has exhumed samples in the different areas of the Eastern district of Sikkim and elsewhere which directs towards early human settlement. The Neolithic sites are marked at *Majitar* on the bank of River *Teesta*, *Uppar Samdur*, *Namcheybong*, *Aho Busty*, *Adampool*, *Ranka*, *Phaungma* and many other places of East Sikkim Districts.² Over the past few years, there has been a controversy regarding the culture of the people and about the main aborigines of the region. The earliest insight of the inhabitants of Sikkim is said to be that of the tribal Lepcha and Limboo community. Later came the Bhutia's followed by the immigrant Nepalese community from Nepal and with the fusion of all these culture the Sikkimese society has evolved, over centuries, and has been increasingly exposed to the winds of change.

Migration which has been a core concept of changing society has played a major role in the region. The cultural and ethnic mobilization process in Sikkim cannot be regarded as expected development. There is a lot of evidence which

¹Arora, Vibha. (2007) Assertive Identities, Indigeneity and the politics of Recognition as a tribe: the Bhutias the Lepchas and the Limbos of Sikkim, Sociological Bulletin vol, 56, No2. Published by Indian Sociological Society. p.197. www.jstor.org, accessed on 30-10-2016.

²Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, JigmeWangchuk. (2003). *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Published by Home Department of Sikkim.p.71.

highlights the cultural exchange and inter-community marriages among the members of these three major communities.

2.2 Aborigines of Sikkim.

Going back into the history of the inhabitants of Sikkim, Lepchas were the people who first settled in the mountains of Sikkim. There are a lot of controversies and myth surrounding their origin. There are various scholars with different interpretation regarding the origin of Lepchas. One school of thought believes that the Lepchas have migrated from the Assam and Upper Burma region and belong to the Tibeto-Burman Family.³ There have also been references to connection with the origin of the Lepchas with those three warriors of Alexander who remained in India, or with the missing tribes of Israel on the basis of their physical features, their artefacts and events and linguistic similarity.⁴ Haffden Siiger writes, “ if a straight line is drawn from the north to the south through Sikkim and Darjeeling and compare the Lepchas with other people of the west and the east, the Lepchas are much similar with the eastern people, as such, the Lepchas may have migrated from the east to Sikkim and Darjeeling in the dim past”.⁵

Likewise Risley writes, “though the Lepchas claim to be the autochthones of Sikkim their physical characteristics stamps them as members of the Mongolian race, and certain peculiarities of languages and religion render it probable that the tribes is a very ancient colony from southern Tibet”.⁶ The Lepchas, on the other hand, consider themselves as autochthones of Sikkim called “*MayelLyang*”, which means

³S.K Chatterjee. (1951), *kirataJanakriti_Indo-Mongoloids, Their contribution to the History and Culture of India*, Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

⁴Gurung, S.K. (2011), *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics A Triadic Perspective*. Kunal Books, New Delhi India.p.95.

⁵Siiger, H. (1967), *The Lepchas-Culture and Religion of a Himalayan People*, Part I, the National Museum Of Denmark, Copenhagen. p.66.

⁶Risley, H.H. (1993). *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Low Price Publication, New Delhi. p.1.

“the land of the hidden paradise”, or “the delightful region” and then later migrated to other places.

According to the myth, folklores and folk tales of Lepchas, their belief is that they have been created by *Itbu-moo* (mother Creator). Yet it seems to be very difficult to come to any definite conclusion on the origin of tribe and the authenticity of them being the first settlers in the region. Nevertheless the Government of Sikkim has officially recognised the Lepchas as the primitive / indigenous tribe and this resolution has been passed seeking concurrence of the Government of India in the state legislative Assembly of Sikkim.⁷ From the time of the establishment of a Sikkimese Kingdom, the Lepchas have become an ‘inferior’ or a ‘minority’ race, under the domination of the Sikkimese Tibetans or Bhutia’s, to which society the Maharajah and the big landowners belonged while the Lepchas continue to become a dying and disappearing race.⁸

An insight from the folklore and folk tales of the Lepchas community show that the area or the place which has developed so much, was a barren land filled with forest and dense jungle; the cultivation of food or the art of agriculture was not known to the early settlers of the region. They worshipped the mother creator and believed that all the rivers, lakes, men and the women were created by her divine powers. They also believed that the first Lepcha man and woman gave birth to the first child and this is how Lepchas gradually prospered in this small Himalayan Kingdom. According to the myth, during the time of Demons, the Lepchas remained hiding; they had nothing to eat and roamed about hunting for some animals or

⁷Gurung, S.K. (2011).Op.cit. p.96.

⁸Gorer, Geoffrey. (2005).*Himalayan Village an Account of Lepchas of Sikkim*, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi. pp.36-37.

looking for food such as tubers or yams or anything that could satisfy their hunger.⁹ This description clearly shows that the Lepchas had a very primitive and crude life style; the only occupation known to them was that of hunting and gathering food for survival. During their forays into the forest, the Lepcha men discovered many valuable plants, thus earning the tag of ‘gentle botanists’.¹⁰

2.3 Limboos

According to many scholars, the Limboos are considered to be the first settlers along with Lepcha tribe in Sikkim. Etymologically the word Limboos means archer or bow shooter¹¹ traditionally the Limbus were animistic like the Lepchas. The scripts of the Limboos have many similarities with that of the Tibetan and the Lepcha scripts, although it was later influenced more by the Devanagiri script. There are many scholars who claim that Limboos have migrated from Tibet especially from the region of Tsang where yak is found in abundance. Their original homeland is said and believed to be in the Tsang province of Tibet from where they migrated to a place lying on the eastern side and extending towards Sikkim was referred to as Limbuan or the country of the Limboos.¹² According to R.K Sprigg, “the Limboos were living in Sikkim before there was a Sikkim for them to live in! By this paradoxical remark I mean that Limboos have inhabited the area in which they now predominate from the time immemorial” but Sikkim has been in existence only since

⁹Doma, Yishey. (2001).Legends of the Lepchas Folk Tales from Sikkim. Published in Tranquebar, New Delhi,p.12.

¹⁰Ibid.p.12.

¹¹Subba, T.B. (1999) *Politics of Culture. A study of three Kirata Communities in the Eastern Himalayan*. Chennai: Orient Langman. p.32.

¹²Gurung, S.K. (2011).Op.cit. p.124.

1642, water Horse Year, and in this very year Phuntsong Namgyal ascended the throne as the first Chogyal at a place called Yak sum, now in west Sikkim.¹³

But when it comes to the history of Sikkim and its indigenous people, Limboos have lost their place. Only the Lepchas are given in the list of primitive tribe, not considering the fact that Limbus were also one of the oldest aboriginal tribe so in fact, they have now been reduced into a minority group in their own homeland. It is said that during the reign of Gyurmed Namgyal, in the early 18th century, there had been a massive Limboos rebellion in Sikkim that led to the outmigration of Limboos from Sikkim into Eastern Nepal.¹⁴ Only a small proportion of the Limboos population immigrated into Sikkim in the 19th century.

Today, the single feature that distinguishes the Limboo tribe of Sikkimese origin from those of Nepali origin is the Sikkim subject certificate.¹⁵ Some Limboos blame the theocratic regime of the Namgyal dynasty for the discrimination faced by them Limbus and reducing them to a minority in their own homeland.¹⁶ Archival research for the period 1830 to 1917 reveals that the British administrators were conscious that the Limboo were indigenous to Sikkim. In 1835, when the British Raj annexed the Darjeeling Hills, officers commented that 'they were practically uninhabited excepting a few hundred Lepchas and Limbus'.¹⁷ If we see the fact of the treaty of "Lho-Mon-Tsong-Sum", believed to have been signed in the middle of the Seventeenth Century, it is mentioned 'Tsong (limboos) along with 'Lho' (Bhutias) and the Mon (Lepchas). The treaty signed with the historical testimony of a blood relationship among the three communities of Sikkim and a pledge to "abide by the

¹³Gurung, S.K. (2011) .op.cit. p.125.

¹⁴Risley, H.H. (1894). Op.cit. p.5.

¹⁵Arora, Vibha. (2007). Op.cit. p.200.

¹⁶Subba, T.B. (1999).Op.cit. p.p 124-125.

¹⁷Arora, Vibha (2007). Op.cit.P.200.

commands of the king, his Guru and his sons and will never let arise a bad thought against Sikkim”.¹⁸ And later it was created that Limboos fall under the category of Nepali community.

Later, the Limboo community (*chumlung*) was established i.e. the Akhil Sikkim Kirat Limboo and with the help of this organisation they adopted a resolution declaring ‘*Chongs*’ (Limboos) as one of the indigenous tribes of Sikkim and were not Nepalese. Though the Limboos are considered as one of the Schedule Tribes of Sikkim, their seat in the Assembly is yet to be reserved.

2.4 Bhutias and Nepali

Sikkim being a small mountainous kingdom, had huge economic resources and had many natural routes for trade with Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. Due to the trade and other social conditions there has been a penetration of other communities in Sikkim.

(i) The Bhutias of Sikkim are the people of Tibetan origin. It has been widely accepted that the people from ‘kham’ province of eastern Tibet first started to come down and to settle in Sikkim during the 10th and 11th century. Hence gradually Sikkim became the colony of Tibetan settlers and this in fact played a major role in holding the ruler of Namgyal Dynasty through 12th succeeding “chogyal” or the “darmaraja” of Bhutia lineage till the merger of Sikkim with the Indian union in the year 1975.¹⁹ The Bhutia immigrants, representing the Tibeto-Burman stock, brought Tibetan culture, Tibetan language, Lamaistic Buddhism, and a combination of pastoral and semi-settled agricultural pattern from the

¹⁸Gurung, S.K. (2001). Op.cit.p.125.

¹⁹Lama, M.P. (nd) *Sikkim Society, Polity, Economy and Environment*, Indus publishing Company, New Delhi. p.25.

north.²⁰ The Bhutias were mostly herders and traders and some of them were also involved in cultivation. They generally preferred the hilly terrain, high altitude and cold climate for habitation but after getting the hegemony of religion, i.e. after 1642, the settlement pattern changed. And the social stratification also began to take shape. And later on took the course of wielding political and economic powers in Sikkim.

(ii) The Nepali community is also a migratory community, hailing from mainland Nepal, because of attractive cultural and social aspects in Sikkim. They migrated in the hope of a better standard of living and also because of greater economic opportunities. The Nepalese form a great majority in Sikkim and this migration has not only made the economy of Sikkim prosper but has also made the Nepalese community equally prosperous; hence this migration was beneficial to both Sikkim as well as the Nepalese immigrant community. The Nepamual contributed to the Indo-Aryan languages, Hinduism, and settled agricultural practices to Sikkim.²¹ Nepali is just an umbrella term under which various tribes and communities fall, all the tribes under the Nepalese community have their own dialect and language. The Nepalese identity is not just linguistic, but also racial and above all historical.²²

Broadly speaking, the immigrants from Nepal and their historical background is supplemented with never ending facts and hence the actual truth to come to the definite point is evasive. But with the evidence of penetration, the incursion of different communities in Sikkim, there is an impact in the society. There is an

²⁰Sinha, A.C. 2008, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. p.29.

²¹Sinha, A.C. 2008).Op.cit. p.30.

²²Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.cit. p.114.

amalgamation of culture in Sikkim with the inclusion and combination of different communities. One of the examples is the ‘pastoral nomads’ who have penetrated from Tibet to Sikkim in search of pasture land. In Sikkim there were different nomadic communities that existed and yet still some communities manage to continue their tradition likewise.

2.5 Categories of nomads in Sikkim

As discussed in the previous chapter, about the various nomads, it is possible to connect with different categories of nomads which are as follows:

1. Pastoralists or animal herder nomads.
2. Hunting and gathering nomads.
3. Peripatetic nomads.

In Sikkim there is evidence of Hunting and Gathering being practised by the indigenous nomadic community. Some of these nomadic communities even ventured into pastoralism and animal herding and to a certain extent constituted a peripatetic nomad. The Lepcha community had the features of hunting and gathering and lived a nomadic and peripatetic life style because before the western culture got dominant in Sikkim, their main source of livelihood was very primitive, they used to hunt, weave cloths and trade with Tibet and this exchange was carried on in the form of a barter system, the barter units being that of knives and other forms of weaponry. Likewise, the *Drokpas* of the Himalayan region of Sikkim still live the lives of pastoralist nomads and some other communities of Nepalese community like *Gurung*, *Mangers* also herd animals in the hilly region.

2.6 Lepcha the nomadic tribes.

Lepchas being the earliest settlers in Sikkim, who had a very nomadic life style with hunting and collecting foods; but they settled in one fixed area. They were the woodmen of the woods, knowing the ways of birds and beasts, and possessing an extensive zoological and botanical nomenclature of their own.²³ According to Kahlyeu, at about the beginning of the seventeen century, the Lepchas were entirely nomadic, only building temporary mud huts, and travelling about the forests, living on such animals they could kill, and the wild plants, of which the Lepchas have considerable knowledge, for they know the edible properties of nearly every tree and plant.²⁴

For almost all primitive people, by far the most important subjects in their lives are food and for Lepcha the greatest part of their lives are centred on food gathering. They relied on hunting for a great deal of their food. Oral tradition indicates the tribal customs of the *Rong* they used to weave their own cloths, bamboo being the most important single material, used and fashioned different products out of it like pin, brooches, bows and arrows. Out of bamboo they made straws *pa-hip* to drink fragmented grain beverages. Hunting weapons, quivers and scabbards, all are made out of bamboo. Practically, the Lepchas only instrument was the knives of iron with a wooden handle and a blade about eighteen inches long and three inches wide.²⁵ This knife is used for every conceivable purpose, from lopping trees on land about to be cultivated, to cutting of meat or wood for any domestic or agricultural task.²⁶

²³Risley, H.H. (1894). *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Printed at Bengal Secretariat Press. p.10.

²⁴Gorer, Geoffrey.(2005). *Op.cit.* p.69.

²⁵*Ibid.* p.6.

²⁶*Ibid.*p.66.

Lepchas are practically omnivorous; they eat all wild animals that they can eat or found dead and keep and eat oxen, goats, pigs and hens; they also eat a wide variety of wild forest produce. According to Geoffrey Gorer, the customs of Lepchas give insights about the youth; at attaining the age of fifteen, he starts hunting with bows and arrow acquired through his father, if not through his father, from his elder brother or his uncle. It is said that if the boy is to go out for hunting he is to make requisite sacrifice at first. No ceremony is connected with his first kill but he himself must not eat a piece of this kill, nor of the first hundred animals does he kill with his bow. Were he to eat the first hundred animals, he would develop sores and leprosy; but after he has killed this number a hollow will develop in his shoulder blade and after that he can eat with safety.²⁷ It is evident that Lepchas had a very nomadic life style, where the ritual sacrifices were done, with supernatural beliefs. But later on, with the winds of change, that occurred with the stigma which Lepcha interpretation of Lamaism places on the killing of animals, excludes some of the community entirely from this pursuit, and even those who are not lamas feel a certain disinclination to kill animals.

The nomadic culture which was the traditional way of leading life of Lepchas has taken a divergent turn. Over the years the new culture which came along with the Tibetans, i.e. pastoralism during the 16th century, influenced to a great extent and of late, the hills have been stripped of their timber by European tea planters and the pushing of Nepalis influenced with more sustainable and settled agriculture. While the forest Department has also set it face against primitive method of cultivation, the tribe on the other hand, is being pushed out. In the new era of employment, labour had been brought into process during the European reign with setting up new industries of

²⁷Gorer, Geoffrey.(2005). Op.cit. p.85.

tea cultivation. The Lepchas had a very tough time and seem to doubt if they could sustain under the shadow of advancing civilization and there can be little question that this interesting and attractive race will soon go to the forest which they believed to be their original home. The settled houses and the greater amount of ground under cultivation and increasing domestic herds make the necessity for wild animals less urgent, and the growing commitments of agricultural life gives less time for hunting.

Lepchas have been very greatly influenced and their way of life much modified by the contact and pressure of their more highly developed neighbours, the Sikkimese, the Nepali, and above all the Tibetans. Lepchas being the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim, with the immigrants and their settlement, Lepcha easily accommodated them with peaceful submission by enjoining perpetual friendships. The Tibetans, who came down to Sikkim from the upper regions of Tibet, were devout, Buddhists, brought with them the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, known as the “Vajrayana”, sect which ultimately was recognised as the state religion of Sikkim. If we see the community wise distribution of population in the Gazetteer of Sikkim, published in 1891 and 2013, it shows that the Lepcha population was 5,762 and the Bhutias were 4,894 in the year 1891²⁸ likewise in 2013 census report Bhutia community consists of 76,070 outnumbering Lepcha community with 45,239.²⁹ The Lepcha, who were the nature and spirit worshippers, were gradually brought under the fold of Vajrayana Buddhist with the help of Buddhist lamas.³⁰

In the present day Sikkim society, many of the Lepcha tribes have taken a different course in leading their life, the tradition which was so engraved and had been carried on throughout their ancestors had put a stop and have expanded and

²⁸Risley, H.H. (1894).Op.cit. P.27.

²⁹Kheral, Sunita. Bhutia, Wangchuk, Jigme. (2013). Op.cit. p.115.

³⁰Lama, M.P. (nd). Op.cit. p.25.

bonded with other religion and customs. Hunting was one of the most important rituals and the sacrificial ceremony was profusely practised but later the developing society started viewing these things as irrational and uncivilized. As given in the example in the first chapter, regarding the *Lamadas* of Hyderabad, being given the titles of criminal's tribes. Taking the path of new religion and accepted their vows have changed the life of Lepcha tradition, many of them have converted themselves as Christians and into Buddhists. There are few who still follow their old tradition but because of the modernization they are on the verge of changing their customs like the other Lepchas in their community. There are many of the instances when foreigners, including missionaries, have ignored local indigenous culture and history. For instance, the theory of "white man's burden" where all the Europeans or the white people had the concept of civilizing the black people. Likewise, the advent of colonisation and imperialism, shaped the idea and thought of tribal people to leave their indigenous culture. The Lepchas who were poor and ignorant were vulnerable to the missionaries to propagate Christianity among them. Conversion to Christianity meant access to modern and secular education, economic well-being, and political consciousness and perhaps development in the field of hygiene and sanitation too.³¹

According to folklores, it has been mentioned that the Lepchas' main settlement region were in *Zongu, Lingthem* (present north Sikkim). Due to the increasing cultivated land, the custom of primitive gathering of wild products and hunting has decreased. Zongu was their main hub of settlement, but due to globalisation it has gradually witnessed the increasing number of Lepcha people moving from one place to another for better life and hence many of them have left their main settlement area e.g. Zongu. The Lepchas led a semi- nomadic economic

³¹Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.cit. p.101.

life style depending, mainly on forest products- fruits, roots and tubers, hunting and fishing. The forestlands which provided ample scope for such simple economic formation to sustain got influenced with the economy of the western world to sustain their life. The first language, the beautiful songs, the folk tales which have been passing down from generation to generation a song bond of their social group, has been separated. Today they have left all the things behind and emphasize on western culture.

2.7 Ethnic group and nomadic herds.

During the rule of the Namgyal, Buddhism was the predominant religion. But after the migration of different community, with their religion, Hinduism also became more important as a state religion. A number of indigenous communities viz., *Lepcha*, *Limboo*, *Gurung*, *Manger*, *Chettri*, *Bhutia*, *Sherpa*, *Lachenpa* and Tibetan *Dokpa* have been residing in this landscape for at least the past several centuries. As for the cultural diversity of local communities living adjacent to one another in the society, traditionally the *Gurungs* and *Mangers* were the shepherds, the *Bhutias* were the traders and yak herders, the *Lepchas* and the *Limbus* were the hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators, the *Chettries* and *Bahun*s were the agro-pastoralists rearing cattle and the Tibetan *Dokpas* were nomadic yak herders in the trans-Himalaya.³² The nomadic groups own cultivable land and during half of the years are involved in agricultural activities. There are communities in Sikkim like *Bhutias* living in *Lachen* and *Lachung* valleys of Sikkim who all practice semi-Nomadic pastoralist life. There are *Drokpas*, who have lived as nomadic herders in the north Sikkim.

³²Tambe, Sandeep. Rawat, G.S. (2009). *Ecology, Economic and Equality of the pastoral systems in the Khangchenzonga National park. Sikkim Himalayan India.*

2.8 Drokpas nomadic herders.

Sikkim is spread below the Mount Khanchendzonga(8534 mts). Agriculture is mostly concentrated in the lower mountain ranges, primarily in the Eastern and Southern Districts. Nomadic lifestyle is mainly found in high-altitude primarily herding 6 livestock (goats, sheep and yaks) is found along the borders of Nepal, Bhutan and in the North District approaching the Tibetan Plateau. The nomadic Drokpas (Tibetan pastoralists), are guardians of the Trans-Himalayan ecosystems, a unique example of how people survive in such drought and cold-stricken landscapes through mobile livestock production systems.

Sikkim Himalaya ranges from the northern cold desert adjoining the Tibetan plateau is the home of the Drokpas as they practice transhumance. Transhumance is the seasonal movement of people with their livestock, over relatively short distance, typically to higher pastures in summer and to lower valleys during the winter season. Herders have their permanent homes, typically in valleys but they migrate from time to time but their permanent residence remains the same. Only the herders travel while their family lives in the permanent residence. They herd yaks, dzos (cow-yak hybrid), sheep and goats (pashmina type) in the plateaus and meadows. Adapting to the harsh climatic conditions over several centuries, through the Dzumsa (traditional institution in North Sikkim) the Drokpas have indigenously regulated and managed the grazing regimes of the Greater Himalaya.

A study concerning the traditional lifestyle of Tibetan pastoral by Rinzin Thargyal, during 20th century, focuses on the community known as Zilphukhog, based on the part of the ancient Tibetan Kingdom of Dege located in the kham region of the eastern Tibetan plateau. They were an independent pastoral community, sublimated

by seasonal trade. They led a life of pastoral nomadism and they identified themselves as the *drogpas*, which literally means nomads³³

Drokpas of east Sikkim are believed to have originated from Tibet where the head of their particular lineage decided to distribute all his property among his three sons called “*Khebo*”, “*Phalongtha*” and “*Tangtha*”: The eldest son *Khebo* was allotted with the family’s house of residence and land while the youngest son *Tangtha* was given all horses and his descendants are believed to exist in the neighbouring kingdom of Bhutan as well. The Drokpas are said to be the descendents of the second son i.e. *Phalongtha* who was handed over with all the livestock of the family which included yaks, sheep, goats, etc.

There has been a trend of migration for many centuries from Tibet to Sikkim and it still continues to take place although now the migration is due to political reasons rather than economic and social reasons, which was the case in the past. Likewise, the Drokpas, being one of the communities of the Sikkim region, would spend six months in Sikkim and move towards Tibet during the snow bound harshness of Sikkim winters but soon after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Drokpas’ migration to India threatened the Sikkimese people and this made the borderland very insecure. Hence, the border was sealed and Sikkim offered the Dokpas to either relocate to Tibet or to settle down on this side of the border as the official Sikkim Subjects or citizens. There were, at that time, approximately 26 families of the Drokpa community in Sikkim. The borders after this immigration were or became inconsiderate towards the people who live along it. Contemporary geopolitical realities, unfortunately now no longer had any respect for traditional

³³Thargyal, R. (2007). *Nomads of Eastern Tibet: Social Organisation and Economy of a Pastoral Estate in the Kingdom of Dege*, in Toni Huber(ed.). The Netherlands: IDC Publishers.

linkages and hence where earlier, borders were porous enough to accommodate the life style of border people now the situation in that very same border changed considerably with strict rules and thus began constant checking on cross border infiltration and migration.³⁴

The Drokpas have immense faith in animism as nature is their major source of livelihood. They totally depend on the forest and the favourable climatic conditions for their living. Thus, they have several beliefs in the existence of supernatural spirits in the forests, often referred to as the ‘forest spirits’. The Drokpas were the residents of the mountains and were expected to live there which is a representation of their belief in the purity and harmony of nature. Thus, they restrain from making their natural habitat impure or adulterated and this idea is carried forward by their practice of burning meat for consumption in their hearth, not making loud noise and making offerings of their first produce, of any fruits and vegetables, with butter mixed tea leaves to the forest deity “Chen” asking it to protect their yaks and other animals that they reared from being eaten by the wild animals. The Drokpas follow the system of patriarchy and they have, or they practise, a clear cut gender division of labour in the family. The male members are engaged in herding the yaks, butchering, trade, etc, while the female members are engaged in household activities like mulching, churning, cooking, rearing children, etc. Hence, we can say that the Drokpa society was a male dominated one with the women having a very little say in the important aspects of social, cultural and political lives.

The main occupation of the Drokpas is the rearing of livestock in the highlands of the mountains. They are very ‘opportunistic’ and follow pastoral resources in a particular pattern that varies from year to year and they also simply

³⁴Wangchuck, Pema. (2015). Border Versus Boder People, Sikkim Now (Article).

depend on the sale and exchange of animals and their products to obtain their necessary lifestyle requirements. They manufacture products like *Ba*, (course cloth woven with yak hair) *khur* (rainproof yak hair tent and blankets) .Yak bone and other parts of the yak body were also used by them to make medical concoctions, potions and ointments as the yak fed on medicinal plants on the Himalayan mountains. The Dri (female yak) produces butter, meat, cheese (*churpi*) etc..They are nomads who depend primarily upon sheep and goats, and many may even keep substantial number of horses as part of their stock holdings. However, the pastoralists in the *Kupup* and *Nathang* valley of East Sikkim live predominantly from their bovine animals known as yak and dri (female).

The traditional homestead products such as blankets, rugs and carpets made from the wool of high altitude sheep are rare marketable times apart from animal products such as skin, meat, cheese, butter etc..Seabuckthorn (*Hippophaetibetiana*) and YarsaGunenboob (*cocedycepsSinensis*) are potential high value products that plough back substantial income to the communities. As we look into the tradition of and culture, the agricultural tools, farm implements and techniques, cultivation methodology system, farm raised animals, local crops, irrigation system are traditions but since the time immortal, grazing of cattle is a part of their culture and livelihood. Over a period of years, the tradition of nomadic life of the Sikkimese society has been marginalised and virtually forgotten.

The culture which was so important and played a crucial role in the society has gone down, given no importance and has been deserted in the Himalayan region. According to the government reports of Sikkim, rules for Sikkim Forest passed at the council meeting on the 30th April year stating that there will be no grazing allowed in

the forest protected area.³⁵ Because of the protected area and reserved forest and making barren land into cultivable land made the herders move into the highland for the herds to graze. Now, the Drokpas who lived as nomadic community are referred to as forgotten tribes because they have lost the connection with the government, the institution deals only with the modernisation and to make it a better place to cultivate. The farmers have encroached on nomadic pasture lands and with the help of governments, hostile to the nomadic way of life, driven the nomadic pastoralists into progressively more marginal lands, often forcing them to emigrate and take work in the non-pastoral economy. It can be further seen due to the political change, the lifestyle of the Drokpas has been pushed into extinction and on the other hand they do not want artificial life support due to which a unique way of life is the final flickers of being extinguished. The primitive society and its rituals have been suppressed in this ongoing evolution process. There are many other regions for marginalising the nomads one of the regions being the settled agriculture, which will be discussed into more detail in the next chapter.

Although nomadism is viewed negatively in many countries in which it is practised, it is often viewed positively by outsiders. Writers are frequently impressed by the independence of nomads, their ability to survive in extremely harsh climate and in the discourse of the crises and problem. It is interesting to know that the older Drokpas have not changed much, but everything around them has changed. And it clearly depicts that it is not the community or an individual that takes the hand towards change but it is because of the changing wind that everyone is fascinated.

³⁵Proposal for stoppage for grazing from five years to twelve years, Sikkim Government report, Durbar. File no:9/2/111 (1915), State Archive, Gangtok.

2.9 Economic condition of primitive culture

Economy has been a core concept of the society to continue the human civilization. In the general discourse, economy is a cycle of production, consumption, saving and investment. A primitive caveman may have gradually saved his time from hunting, which is the means of livelihood and invested it in making bow and arrows or stone implements.³⁶ Understanding regarding the economy of a region comes from the historical background of the region which has been discussed above from migration to setting up of colonies in Sikkim. With the evidences, it can be said that the economy of the country greatly influenced the colonisers to penetrate the country for economic purposes which later changed their social and political structure of the people and the region. All the south Asian countries were colonised by the European countries in a similar manner to augment their economy by draining the wealth of the colony, India being one of them.

Taking a look into the economy of Sikkim, we see that it was only after the British colonisation that the economy of the Sikkim started to take a lift and later on it boomed with the influence of Indian Economic policies (after 1947) i.e. through the “Green Revolution”. Later on, this process transformed the human resources into human capital which led to the development of modern economy and helped towards its growth. Before the modern economy that boomed by suppressing the indigenous way of life, it is important to know the primitive culture which paved the way for the development process. To look into the details of the primitive economy of Sikkim it is predestined with three major economic activities, which was identical with each of the three major ethnic groups. The Lepchas were associated with sedentary activities;

³⁶Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Economic Development and Employment in Sikkim. Authorspress, Delhi p.1.

pastoralism and border trade was primarily dominated by the Bhutias. Finally, the Nepalis were primarily settled agriculturists.

When the Lepchas were the main inhabitants, life in the region was such that they lived in the ravines and had no economic structure. Their primary means of survival was hunting and fishing. According to J.C White, till the early seventeenth century, Tibetans had no contact with Sikkim and the Lepchas were supposed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim.³⁷ Prior to any infiltration into Sikkim from outside, the lifestyle of Lepchas was marked by a high degree of mobility subsisting on roots, tuber, fishing and hunting.³⁸ The evidence that the Lepchas had a system to trade and exchange is seen by the products that they fashioned by themselves mainly their main manufactured products were bamboo weaved artefacts, carpet weaving, etc. They used to trade with the other people exchanging theirs with of other products. It is said that the Lepchas traded with the Bhutias for Knives. Other than that, Lepcha lives were purely based on forest products. Broadly speaking Lepchas economy was very primitive in nature. The inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was ‘ from each according to his ability; to each according to his work’, tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent misfortune.³⁹ However, these people had no oxen, no jewels, no permanent cultivation, when they went out to work two people had to stay back at home to do the cooking and one to gather leaves for the fire. Their main crop was dry rice; millet (grown exclusively for fermenting for *chi*) and buckwheat were grown in temporary fields. These consist of clearing the forest and growing the crops for one year and left fellow for seven years. The Lepcha agriculture was extremely inefficient by the

³⁷Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Op.it. p.1.

³⁸Ibid.p.1.

³⁹Gorer, Geoffrey. (2005). Op.cit. p.86.

standard of yield per acre; it was absolutely insufficient to suffice their growing population.

The next ethnic group were the Bhutias; they were agro-pastoralist and were mainly involved in trade. Bhutias being the pastoralist, especially herded yaks. The “yaks” working power and their various by products were the main source of shelter, clothing, food, transportation and trade. The products of the yaks was the most traded item and it can be stated that the main economy of the Bhutias were yak. Bhutias also practiced sedentary farming but not for the long run. They farmed wild plants just to sustain their life and with no intention to sell the products for economy, but for them animals were mainly the wealth. During the primitive times, animals were of great help; they were reared for different purpose for instance to carry huge loads for trade, meat, milk, wool, etc. And it has been mentioned that yak meat is a rare delicacy among the people of the hilly terrain.

Finally, the last migrants were the Nepalese who were basically brought by the British to plough the field in the Indian regions of Darjeeling hills and they later migrated to Sikkim because of greater economical prospects. They basically brought the concept of terrace farming and settled agriculture which later diminished and marginalised the traditional economy (hunting, trading etc.). Settled agriculture, with bench terracing of sloppy lands of mountainous Sikkim was first debuted during the 1890s with the British policy of promoting Nepalese settlement in Sikkim.⁴⁰ Nepalese with the culture of settled agriculture played a crucial role in shaping the economy of Sikkim, leaving the indigenous tribes to think about their economy which was not so developed and advanced. Hence, this situation made them, i.e. the indigenous people

⁴⁰Subba, J.R. (2008). *The Evolution of Man and the Modern Society in Mountainous Sikkim*. Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.p.63.

realise that they cannot cope with the changing scenario with their primitive culture, to the necessary transformation of many indigenous tribes from being a herding and pastoralist community to that of agriculturalist or labours in the fields to sustain their life, leaving their main traditional occupation behind.

2.10 Marginalizing nomadism in Sikkim

Nomadic societies are known for their resilience, resourcefulness, versatility, flexibility and adaptability. Now it has been largely ignored and still continues to remain undocumented because none of the modern society gives much heed and importance to their nomadic past. The primitive people who were relatively sedentary foragers, first lost free access to the forest because of the other communities who were more civilized than them. The new administrative policies lost their economy which was based entirely on forest and forest products; increasingly hunting became illegal for those who had subsisted and sustained on it and later remained or became a prestigious pastime for the people. Taking into the context of the Lepchas A.R Fonning, in his work has talked about the decline of the Lepcha tribe. Paraphrasing his words, he believes that the Lepchas were governed by religious values and mythical beliefs⁴¹. They also believed that the Kanchenjunga was created by the “mother creator” who was supposed to be the guardian of the tribe.

Thus, their decline is mostly attributed to the invasion of the “three Red Hat” lamas who came from Tibet who not only influenced their religion i.e. “Mahayana Buddhism” but also succeeded in ascending the throne and turning Sikkim into a Buddhist kingdom. The next were the Nepalese migration which led to outnumbering

⁴¹Fonning, A.R. (1987). Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe, Chya-PAndi Farm, Kalimpong, West Bengal.

the tribes, and then playing a major role in shaping the Kingdom towards a more sustainable economic process.

The British power was felt in Sikkim as far back as 1757 with the commencement of battle of Plassey. The British brought with them modern administrative practices, new devices and tactics. These new practices quickly influenced the Sikkimese administration because the British exercised considerable control over Sikkim due to historical reasons (e.g. The treaty of Singu). Also because of this, Sikkim became a protectorate kingdom under the British imperial government.

Christian Missionaries came into this small Himalayan kingdom with the advent of the British. They brought along with them modern science and understanding with a religious backdrop. They attracted the local population with their charismatic and appealing way of living and their idea of all people being one without any social stratification appealed to the local uneducated masses and hence rapid conversions to Christianity took place particularly among the Lepcha tribe. The Lepchas converted to Christianity mainly because they had become a minority in their own land and they were also an economically deprived community. The Christian missionaries promised them better future and education which could or would enhance their standard of living. Their standard of living would be enhanced with the availability of modern amenities, greater advancement in the field of medicine, scientific development, all of which influenced the people and their beliefs.

A government report has taken the measures to bring waste land under cultivation and to stop shifting cultivation, Government of Sikkim, General, File No: 32/9/111/1925, Sikkim State Archive, Gangtok. It also emphasises that the settlers

should be permanent not temporary. They emphasised that there should be a system of permanent and settled cultivation leaving behind their traditional practice of shifting cultivation. It declared that proper initiative must be taken to create proper terraces on the hill slopes for farming purposes. The government also felt the need for the conservation of the forest areas and its resources and banned the indiscriminate felling of trees especially that of timber woods. Specific areas were to be reserved for cattle and sheep grazing and these areas were not allowed to be encroached upon for agriculture.⁴²The above government report clearly signifies the drift of the Sikkimese people from the nomadic lifestyle to permanent system of cultivation.

The major drawback of this system of lifestyle was that the land for cultivation was expanded while on the other hand foraging and the coarse lifestyle of hunters and grazers became limited, in the sense that their land became limited while the land available to the agriculturists expanded. This whole process is a paradoxical situation or called evolution.

The livestock producers who did not grow any crops and simply depended on the sale and exchange of animals and their products to obtain necessary things for their survival were being deprived of their occupation with the emergence of new practice of agriculture with the implementation and support from the government to develop the same.

This lifestyle that had been maintained for generations by the ancestors was deemed impractical and they are accustomed to the easy and comfortable way of life which is more secure and profitable than transhumance. The multi-racial and multi-linguistic people have influenced the main inhabitants of Sikkim to leave behind the

⁴²Measures taken to bring waste land under cultivation and to stop shifting cultivation, Sikkim Government Report, General file no:32/9/1925. State Archive, Gangtok.

ancestral forage and coarse society. The pasture land and the hunting ground has been encroached by the peasants for the cultivation of the rice for the self consumption and in a more sustainable manner. The forest policies which led to the ban on grazing, foraging and felling in the traditional land slowly drifting the forager to take to different occupations. The land ownership also marks the beginning of the new development in Sikkim. Sikkim has witnessed many changes in the pre colonial period and after the independence of India and finally the merger of Sikkim with Indian union in 1975. The British resettlement programme supervised by political officer J C White which beginning 1889 marked a turning point in the landownership system of Sikkim. Regarding the land ownership and the agriculture policies which gradually transformed into a feudal mode of production, which was implemented during the Namgyal Dynasty under the influence of British will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter - III

Evolution of Agriculture: Sikkim.

It has been discussed in the previous chapter as to how the immigration of Nepalis and other communities and the influence of their cultures on the existing society brought about changes in the Sikkim society. There has been a lot of change in the society, which took a turn towards a different level from primitive society to a modern society. There has been a lot of influence from the colonisers and from India after it got independence in the changes in the social formation in Sikkim.

Historical background does play a vital role. Most of the Asian and African countries were the colonies of western European countries. During the reconstruction of economic process it was observed that economic, political structure, educational and social institutions were greatly influenced by the economic, political and social structure of the then colonisers.⁴³ With the passage of time, Sikkim got into a different scenario of feudalism and by means of the advancement of agriculture it slowly got evolved into the feudal mode of production. And later, with the influence of Indian economic plan, it got into a different course and a distinct mode of production. In every period of time Sikkim got evolved from nomadic life to a feudal mode of production. With the advent of the British, the land rights (1889) in the kingdom helped the feudalism to sustain in Sikkim. The region got divided into various valleys with an uneven distribution of population.

The early livelihood, i.e. Lepcha settlement, reveals that they primarily lived at lower altitudes especially in the Dzongu (presently North Sikkim); while the

⁴³Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Economic Development and Employment in Sikkim, Authorspress, Delhi. p.3.

Bhutias occupied the region of higher altitude, i.e. Lachung and Lanchen, practicing the life of mixed farming, nomadic pastoral life and trading being their main economy. Lastly, the immigrant Nepali community, with their main occupation being agriculture, settled in the hilly terrain practicing terrace farming. In the process, the original inhabitants of Sikkim were marginalised and their identity got diluted too. The demographic composition of Sikkim underwent a rapid change. In this chapter we will be discussing the above mentioned changes in more detail. If we look into the aspect of the agriculture in Sikkim, then it goes back to the immigration of Nepalis into Sikkim and the role of J.C white as a political officer in Sikkim, further explaining the improvement in the administration which not only made the economy boom but also it led to the differentiation between elite and common people.

3.1 The Role of Nepalese in Agriculture

The term ‘status of agriculture’ denotes production, productivity, use of high yielding varieties, use of chemical fertilisers, land used for agriculture.⁴⁴ However, such an analytical study leads us to the fact that the agricultural pattern followed in the hills differs from the agricultural patterns followed in the plains. The differences can be seen with regard to the cropping pattern, irrigational practices, and use of rain water. However, in both the cases there is existence of settled farming in Sikkim but most importantly terrace farming is resorted.⁴⁵

The history of terrace farming system in Sikkim dates back to the Eighteenth Century when king Prithvinarayan Shah of Nepal occupied Sikkimese territory and with this, the Nepali community started settling down and began agriculture in Sikkim. Erstwhile, there was the tradition of *Jhum* cultivation and nomadic

⁴⁴Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Op.cit. p.20.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.20.

pastoralism which existed and was practiced by the Lepchas and Bhutias in the Himalayan region.

Thus, it is only after the immigration of the Nepali community that terrace farming got introduced and the agriculture system flourished in Sikkim. The Nepalis came to Sikkim under the tutelage of some Bhutias and Lepchas and the British Political Officer had settled them in the barren land and later they converted the barren wasteland or forest land into agriculturally productive land and practiced terrace farming. A look into the primary data, reveals notifications and circulars to landlords and managers of the Estates to deal with the allotment of the sites for settlement of *Bustiwallas*. It further explains the measures to bring waste land under cultivation and stop shifting cultivation; the points are mentioned below:⁴⁶

1. The settlers should be permanent and not temporary;
2. That a *Bustiwalla* should not be allowed more land than he can conveniently manage to cultivate during the year, and that “shifting” cultivation should, on no account, be permitted;
3. That field on steep hills-side should be properly terraced;
4. That timber and fuel trees should not be ruthlessly felled or wantonly destroyed;
5. That sufficient area should always be reserved for *gorucharani* (land left for grazing by the Government).
6. That the streams should not be denuded of trees. Trees should be allowed to grow freely on both sides of a stream.

With the above primary source and points regarding the measures to cultivate land, it is evident that encouragement was done to cultivate the waste land

⁴⁶ Measures taken to bring waste land under cultivation and stop shifting cultivation, Government of Sikkim, General, file no: 32/9/1925. Sikkim State Archives, Gangtok.

and to stop the traditional pattern of shifting cultivation. It is of no doubt that the Bhutias did not cultivate, even the Lepchas did not and the only people who cultivated this way were the Nepalis. It can be under scored that more land was allotted to Nepalis to cultivate. As for the third point emphasising to practice terrace farming in steep hill side, it has been known that all the good flat lands were taken by Bhutias and the hilly and sloppy region were allotted to the Nepali.

Nepalis in Sikkim, in spite of having no land rights, made impressive progress because of their high productivity skills and low consumption philosophy. It is interesting that in the Nepalese words, “*Padhigumikekam, halo jotikhayo mam*” which means what is the use of studying and writing as ultimately you have to plough the field for living. The above quote signifies that Nepali people in Sikkim had the concept that their main occupation is to plough the field; if they studied also they had to come down to the level of agriculturalist. In another sense, education was given less importance in the Nepali community. With the arrival of Nepali and the concept of production for economy, the land tenure system got evolved, primarily with rice and cardamom, using the techniques which they had mastered in Nepal’s steep terrain; agriculture thus developed on a large scale in Sikkim with the techniques of terrace farming. Not only fields were covered with rice but cardamom was also the prominent crop for the economy, along the slopes of the rice field, cardamom was grown. In addition, the system supported water conservation and flood control techniques thus providing nutrient and biomass to the farm and the homestead.⁴⁷ The shifting cultivation which was traditionally followed over decades slowly and gradually got replaced by sedentary agriculture.

⁴⁷Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, Wangchuk, Bhutia. (2013) Gazetteer of Sikkim, Published by Home Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok.

In Sikkim, the main people to plough the fields were Nepalese and to encourage them were the British. To ensure agriculture, meetings were held regarding the scheme for an Indian Agricultural Society in Sikkim too.⁴⁸ The work force of Nepali and their enthusiasm for hard labour brought in place the changing socio-political situation in the Himalayan Kingdom. Soon, with the techniques of terrace farming overshadowed the methods of cultivation of Bhutias and Lepchas who were averse to hard labour and struggle. An insight from Sikkim and Bhutan by J.C White mentions the Nepalis as “*Paharias*” he writes “Bhutias were herdsmen and trader than agriculturists and the *Paharias* are on the whole steady, industrious and thrifty people, very pushing and eager to take up new employment and he further writes by the dint of their hard work and perseverance *Paharias* rise to important position which they have successfully filled.”⁴⁹

The Bhutias, who were the ruling class of Sikkim, were apprehensive of the fact that Nepalese doing well in the economic sense and as such were concerned with the exploitation of Lepcha and Bhutia community with their assertive nature. An insight from S.K Gurung that “Nepalese seemed to have shown great resilience despite the use or misuse of legal-political apparatus against the community in the past.... The differential treatment against the community actually strengthened the feeling of togetherness or belongingness among the various sections of Nepalese”.⁵⁰ In fact there was lot threat regarding the Nepalese to the elite and it led to in condemnation of the Nepalese; the elite people disapproved them as Sikkimese and called them as immigrants or non Sikkimese.

⁴⁸ Scheme for the formation of an Indian Agriculture society, Government of Sikkim, General, File no: 7/1/iv/1920, Sikkim state Archive, Gangtok.

⁴⁹White, J.C. (1971) *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-one Years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, Vivek Publishing House, Delhi. p.9.

⁵⁰Gurung, S.K. (2011). *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics A TraiadicPersective*, Kunal Books, New Delhi. p.121.

As we go back in the History of Sikkim, there is a controversy regarding the aborigines, even that the Lepchas have migrated from the hills of Assam. Bhutias who consider themselves as the indigenous tribes and trying incorporating in the Sikkimese society, themselves have migrated from Tibet. It is just a matter of fact that they migrated earlier than the Nepalese. The possession of land for cultivation and the increase in population of the Nepalis threatened the minority community, i.e. Bhutia and Lepcha, favouring their interest; this led to the issuing the Revenue Order No. 1 in May 1917 directing that “no Nepali can purchase Bhutia-Lepcha land unless special permission to that of effect was granted by His Highness.”⁵¹ In every institution involved in making policies regarding the communities, Nepalese interest was set at last, intended to deny them the fruits of exemption as enjoyed by Bhutias and Lepchas. During the time of paying taxes, Nepali had to pay high tax than Bhutia-Lepcha community; further in favouring the community, the political officer clearly mentioned in the notification dated March, 1912 to fix one rate for Nepalese and another for Lepchas and Bhutias for terrace rice fields.⁵² It is true that agriculture overshadowed the primitive culture that linked their traditional customs but agriculture also led to the sustainability of food in the society. Nepalese who were immigrants and ploughed the fields slowly outnumbered the indigenous community.

The other communities did not fear about their assimilation of culture but they feared the economic strategy and their role in politics. So, as to protect the land of Bhutias and Lepchas, many orders were passed, starting from 1897 (prohibiting the Bhutias and Lepchas from selling or subletting their land to other communities) which further strengthening the Revenue Order No. 1. of 1917. With the growing influx of

⁵¹Gurung, S.K, (2011). Op.cit. p.162.

⁵²Proposal to fix the rate for terraced rice field for Nepalis, Bhutias, and Lepchas, Government of Sikkim, General, File no: 10/1/1912. Sikkim State Archive, Gangtok.

Nepalese in the society and growing intensity of resisting social discrimination led the Nepalese to riot. The Nepalese who were seen as immigrants were given an equal proportion of seats in Legislative party with the proclamation of his *Highness* Maharaja Tashi Namgyal on 23rd March, 1953. By this, there was parity in representation between the Nepalese on the one hand and the Bhutias/Lepcha on the other.

3.2 The impact of Gorkha incursion in Sikkim

In the Eastern Himalayan Region the incursion of Gorkhas began from middle of the 17th century during the period of Prithivi Narayan Shah. Gorkha were the people from Nepal and have migrated to the other region with historical background of immigration. There are Ghorkas who are Indian citizens who are allowed to stay as citizens of India consequent to the 1950 treaty of Indo-Nepal for peace. According to A.C Sinha, Nepalese immigration in Sikkim appears to have taken place in two waves – the Gorkha incursion from 1770 to 1815 and the British induced settlement efforts since 1861.⁵³

In the middle of 17th century Nepal emerged as a powerful and victorious over the entire Eastern Himalayan region. The main leader being the Prithvi Narayan Shah, they slowly started to approach into the Himalayan Kingdom; they first reached the borders of Sikkim with their armed forces and later conquered Sikkim. It is evident that General Kazi Damoder Pande, who conquered the whole of Sikkim west of river Tista, reinforced the invaders. There, on the bank of the Tista, at the confluence of Tista and Rangeet, the Gorkhas celebrated their victory on the Magha Sankranti day of 1789. The sub-divisional town of Jorhang in present day Sikkim, is said to be

⁵³Sinha, A.C. (2008) *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. p.67.

named after General Jahar Singh Thapa.⁵⁴ The Gorkhas brought Sikkim under their control sometimes between 1770 and 1815.

During the middle of the 17th century, all communities like Chettris, Brahmins and other castes such as Damai, Kami, and Sarki had settled in Sikkim with the incursion of Gorkha. Thus it can be concluded that before the British induced immigration of Nepalis there was the pre inhabitation of Nepalis in Sikkim.

It is evident that during the period between 1641 and 1817, Sikkim was engulfed in a series of wars, with Bhutan in 1706 during which Sikkim lost Kalimpong to Bhutan. Rabdanste, the then capital of Sikkim, was devastated. During the time of war Sikkim lost its territory to Nepal; the entire land, west of river Tista was conquered by Nepal. Subsequently, to settle the war and when Nepal was also losing its control over Tibet, due to the intervention of Chinese over Tibet, they signed the Sino-Nepalese Treaty. While signing the treaty, Sikkim lost its vast territory to Nepal, where the entire Tista basin, Kalimpong, including Bhutan was taken. And on the other hand, the British colonial rulers in India were interested on Sikkim because they were extremely eager to open a trade route to Tibet from India and Sikkim being the hub and it shares borders with Tibet. Knowing the background of Sikkim and its relation with Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan, the British made use of the opportunity of Sikkim being the weakest of the entire three kingdoms in the region.

The main idea of the British was to extend their influence into Sikkim through friendly moves and peace-making approach. In that way, they hoped to gain the good offices of the Sikkimese court and nobles not only in checking the Gorkha expansion

⁵⁴Sinha, A.C. (2008). Op.cit. P.68.

but also in their endeavour to establish contact with the Tibetans.⁵⁵ Erstwhile, before the advent of the British in Sikkim, their mission was to keep friendly relation with Tibet. An insight from the Colman Macaulay's Report of a mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier reveals this:

“I was deputed to Sikkim and the Tibetan frontier by the lieutenant-Governor in October last with a triple object. (1) To discuss with the Maharaja certain pending question concerning the administration of his state and his relations to the British government; (2) To visit the lichen valley to see if a trade route could be opened up in that direction, with the province of Tsang In Tibet. (3) To endeavour to meet and to establish friendly relation with the Tibetan authorities of the districts adjoining Sikkim on the north”⁵⁶

The memorandum⁵⁷ on Tibet's relation with British did not find much favour with Tibet; so slowly the Europeans started to look up to Sikkim to facilitate trade with Tibet. After the end of the Anglo-Nepalis war (year) British took an opportunity to take Sikkim in their hands. Simultaneously, the treaty of Segauli, with the defeat of Gorkha force and with the virtue of the treaty of Segauli, in addition to the interest of Sikkim, treaty of Titalia was signed between the British and the Sikkim Durbar on February 10, 1817. The treaty restored all the land taken by Nepal and its return to Sikkim; and Sikkim turned out to be a British India protectorate. The treaty of Titalia marks the complete set up of the rule of British through the adjudication with Sikkim. Henceforth, British sent dozens of inspection missions and expeditions to Sikkim. Furthermost, Sikkim was made as an open field for trading centre.

⁵⁵Kotturan,George. (1983) *The Himalayan Gateway history and culture of Sikkim*. Sterling Publishers, Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi. p.57.

⁵⁶Macaulay, Colman. (1977) *Report of a mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier 1884*. RatnaPustakBhandar Kathmandu, Nepal. p.i.

⁵⁷Macaulay, Colman. (1977). Op.cit. p.63.

3.3 British relation with Nepali

British induction of Nepali settlement in Sikkim played a major role in transforming the society and later the question of ethnicity became the main issue in the kingdom. British soon found that the land around the Darjeeling was ideal for cultivation and provided numerous facilities for free trade in mercantile commodities and also the labour which ensued as a place for new opportunity. And naturally, Nepalis started to move towards the areas of Sikkim for cultivation. In no time Nepalese were encouraged to settle in the hills, clearing extensive forest land of jungles, reclaiming them for cultivation of tea plantation. The colonial rulers encouraged the Nepalese settlers to reclaim the wasteland, open copper mines and work as labour force to construct roads. Apparently, J.C White the then political officer of Sikkim had spent a year in Nepal, experiencing the hardworking life of Nepali people. Looking into their life, he encouraged the settlement of Nepali people on the motto of developing economic level. He writes; “the un-enterprising, lazy and unthrifty aborigines would not respond to the strong inducements held out to them to open up this new land.”⁵⁸

The Bhutia rulers were opposed to the migration of Nepalis in Sikkim because of the miseries caused by the Gorkha invasion in earlier times. The allies, who were tied up with British and the kings, had little control over his country; furthermore, they were determined to use Nepalis for their usefulness in developing Sikkim. Later, with the interest of the Bhutia ruler they came with an agreement limiting the extent of the Nepali settlement. The Durbar chronicles claims that Khangsarpa Dewan, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, approved the desire of the Governor and allowed the Gorkhalese to settle in uninhabited waste lands of Sikkim but not allowed to hold any

⁵⁸White, J.C. (1971). Op.cit. p.9.

of the office of village headman or a post of importance. This document was exchanged between the Sikkim ruler and the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling.⁵⁹ It has been known that the Sikkim had no currency of its own; British introduced a system of monetary economy.

As for the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim, there are lot of controversies between various scholars. P.K Rao and B.S.K Grover consider that Nepali were particularly encouraged to settle in Sikkim by the British for two important reason: first to accelerate the economic growth and secondly to counteract the supremacy of the Sikkimese royal family and their Bhutia councillors.⁶⁰ Scholars like S.K Dutta however consider J.C White, the first British political officer of Sikkim, was predominantly responsible for large-scale migration of the Nepalis.⁶¹

3.4 Newar's role in copper mines

Copper ores were very widespread in Sikkim in the middle of 18th century and constituted the main source of its prospective mineral wealth.⁶² Copper mining was adopted from India in Sikkim. The mining of copper was done manually, and people who all were engaged in all this work force, were Nepalese; they were employed in taking out of ore, segregating impure ore, smelting it to the finished product and it is important to note that all this process is done with physical labour. During the excavation of the ore, no machinery, blasting like the present day was resorted to. It has been mentioned in the Gazetteer of Sikkim (1894) that the Nepali community, who all are engaged in mining, were the Mangers and they were called "Agries"

⁵⁹Sinha, A.C. (2008). Op.cit. P.54.

⁶⁰Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.ct.p.117.

⁶¹Dutta-Ray, S.K. (1984), *Smash and Grab – Annexation of Sikkim*, Vikash Publication, New Delhi, pp.37-39.

⁶²Rishly, H.H. (1894) The Gazetteer of Sikkim, printed by Kwality Stores, Gangtok. p. 62

means the men who excavate. And other community who are indulged in this process are *kamis* their main occupation being smelting of ores, called blacksmith.

Ultimately all the miners were Nepali were mangers and *kami*, played an important role excavating the ores. *Kami* being the outcaste and falls under the low caste of Hindu social status, there was lot of discrimination; they were not allowed to enter the house of mangers. In fact according to Hisley, he noticed that because of the social discrimination, it is easy to distinguish the house of the miners (mangers) from that of the smelters (belonging to the caste of *kami*).

Meanwhile, Newar's also played a significant role in prospering the wealth of minerals. Seeing the Newar's entrepreneurship British decided to develop this natural resource in Sikkim. In 1883, Newars were allotted the land in lease for copper mining and minting coins. In fact, the copper miners worked under the lessee (Newar's) and were paid by them. Simultaneously, there was the use of Nepali coins; Sikkim did not have its own currency at that point of time. The first person to mint the coin, with permission from the Sikkimese authority, was Lachmidas Pradhan (Newar); he minted coins called *Chaptepaise*. With the authority of minting of coins and due to economic reasons, Lachmidas supported the British for the migration of the Nepalis. Lachmidas were the first to mint the coin in Sikkim it was evident that the main hub for minting coin is *Pachey Khani* near Rhenok in Sikkim. With no time Nepalis got diluted with the local community. With the arrival Nepalis agriculture developed on a large scale.

3.5 John Claude White

J.C White was the First political officer of Sikkim and he introduced a new system of assessment and collection of revenue, to enhance the revenue of the

government. He was born in Calcutta in 1853; graduated as civil engineer from the Royal Indian Civil Engineering College in England in 1876. White worked as an engineer in the British Residency. In 1888, White was sent to Gangtok to survey the Sikkim's border with Tibet and demarcate Sikkim boundaries with assisting A.W Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling and Political officer of Sikkim. Thereafter, in 1889 White was appointed as the Political officer of Sikkim. When he came as political officer, what he found in Sikkim is worth quoting "chaos reigned everywhere, there was no revenue system, no court of justice, no police, no public work, no education for the young generation".⁶³ The above quotes clearly mentions that before the advent of British in Sikkim there was no revenue system with any proper function of the administration. Only the Namgyal dynasty existed where the ruler with his absolute power. Soon after his arrival in Sikkim, White became the de-facto ruler of the kingdom. It was during his tenure as political officer that Sikkim witnessed the birth of Zamindari system, *Thikadari* system, *Kalibari*, *Jharlangi* and *Theki- bhethi*.

Historically if we go back to the Chogyal time there was the ownership of land but not the revenue system. the only system that prevailed was from the time Phuntsong Namgyal II, where a system of crude form of assessment and collection of revenue, called Zolung, collected in kind (grain and wine) or cash⁶⁴. There was this revenue collection but not regular assessment and collection of tax; it was clear enough that it was collected in kind. Looking into the functioning of the administration, the first thing J.C White did was to appoint an Advisory Council and a representative body. Later, he divided the country into revenue blocks called *Ellakas*. The land ownership which existed was changed into contractual lease system on the

⁶³Sinha, A.C. (2008). Op.cit. p.93.

⁶⁴Gurung, S.K (2011). Op.cit.p.60.

feudal pattern and arable land were leased to the bidders on fixed land rent for a period of ten years. Slowly, Sikkim was well integrated into the British colonial system. In order White ordered a to raise the revenue of the state White ordered a survey of the districts which he had divided into *Ellakas*. He not only encouraged the production of rice but he classified the forests and declared them as the reserve forest for cutting of timber, cattle grazing. In the Indian context, it is said that the British drain of wealth from the country; but in case of the Himalayan kingdom, intervention of the British played a major role in uplifting the society politically, economically, functioning in more sustainable manner. Erstwhile, society in the late 18th century was hunter gatherer. J.C White initiated the settlement of its own people and the Nepalese people from Nepal to increase the food production of Sikkim state. The settlers cleared the forest for food production. White gave preference to the hard working and productive Nepalese and to bring more land under cultivation, encouraged immigration by giving land on favourable condition to Nepalese.

J.C White not only increased the revenue of the state but his efficiency in administration cannot be overlooked in Sikkim. His administrative reforms paved the way for a better functioning of the government. His awareness on such matters as conservation of forest, collection of revenue, education, etc; functioned well. Many of the scholars blame White and hold him responsible for the immigration of Nepali. In the administrative reports of 1905-06, he writes, “The Nepali ryot is hardworking and thrifty as a rule, pays his taxes regularly and at the same time is a law-abiding and intelligent settler.”⁶⁵ It was evident that White was partial to the “*Paharis*” (Nepalese) and on the eve of his departure from Sikkim many Nepalese commended, and to quote “Prior we had neither roads nor bridges. But since your advent you have

⁶⁵Dutta-Ray, S.K. (1984). Op.cit .pp.37-38.

constructed a large number of good roads and bridges all over the country... You have founded charitable dispensaries, established Nepalese and Bhutia Schools, laid out beautiful vegetables and fruits gardens and encouraged gardening by free distribution of seeds and grafts... Your impartiality in dealing with the various tribes living in this locality, Nepalese, Bhutia, Lepcha and others... are household words in Sikkim".⁶⁶

A.C Sinha describes that the British brought a die-hard imperialist, J.C White as Political Officer and had secured Sikkim so well with the British Empire that his efficiency in administration can be followed as a routine for the following years by the Political Officers.⁶⁷

3.6 Feudalism in Sikkim

The term Feudal has been derived from the word *feudal* and *Feodalite* meaning *fief* according to French Academy.⁶⁸

Feudalism is considered to be a system of contractual relationship among the members of the upper class in medieval Europe, in which lords made grants of fiefs to vassals in return for pledges of military and political service.⁶⁹ Erstwhile, the pre-British Revenue system was poles apart from the British Feudal revenue collection. The concept of revenue was not in cash but in kind; very few taxes⁷⁰ were levied which are as follows:

- (i) Land tax (*Bha-p*).

⁶⁶Meyer, Kurt. Pamela D Meyer. (2005). *In the Shadow of the Himalayans: Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim, a Photographic Record of John Claude White, 1883-1908*. Mapin publishing Pvt.Ltd, Ahmedbad. P.27.

⁶⁷Sinha, A.C. (2008). Op.cit. p.98.

⁶⁸Bloch, Marc. (2006). *Feudal Society Volume 1 The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, Gaur Publishers And Distributors, Delhi. p.xxiii.

⁶⁹Sinha, A.C. (1987) *Frontier Feudalism and State Formation*, Publisher K.P Bagchi and Comany, Calcutta. p.340.

⁷⁰Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, Wangchuk, Bhutia. (2013). Op.cit. p.311.

(ii) Forest tax (*Zo-lung*)

(iii) Coustoms or income tax (*Tshong-skyed*)

With the advent of the British Political Officer, the revenue system in Sikkim took a different course, John Claude in his book *Sikkim and Bhutan* remarks: “*the Coffers were empty, and the first thing to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise revenue*”.⁷¹ It is evident that only after the introduction of British revenue system that feudalism got established in Sikkim. In constructing the feudal system, the social structure also played an important role where the elite people, representing the upper most strata, controlled the various social institutions. To begin with, Fedrik Barth’s study of the Swat Pathans may be quoted in the case of Sikkim as well.

The distribution of ethnic groups is controlled by the distribution of the specific ecological niches which the groups, with its particular economic and political organisation, is able to exploit.... Different ethnic groups will establish themselves in stable co-residence in an area if they exploit different ecological niches and especially if they can establish symbiotic economic relations.⁷²

R.S Sharma, similarly, comes out with his own definition of Feudalism he defines “we see feudalism as the form of social order in which the possessing class appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising superior rights over the land and person.”⁷³

Apparently, it was presumed that all feudalism grows out of period of warfare. Whereas, in Sikkim, there is a different concept regarding the feudalism. Being a small Himalayan kingdom, Sikkim has its own social and ethnic diversity. The ethnic

⁷¹White, J.C. (1971). Op.cit.

⁷²Barth cited in Sinha, A.C. (1987) opcit. p.330.

⁷³Sharma, R.S. (1965) *Indian Feudalism*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi. p.16.

groups consisting the Lepcha, Bhutias and Nepali, with its own culture and diversity, which has been already discussed in the first chapter. In feudal society, social-stratification does play an important role in collecting taxes and in production of goods. In Sikkim, the elite groups were Bhutias and Lepchas and mostly Nepalis becoming the producers. Similarly, monasteries also played an important role in possessing huge land over which the lamas enjoyed both revenue and administrative control. It was found that the tenants of the monastery were to deliver compulsory labour of the individual lamas or the monastery as daily household worker, tenants being *Chakhurey* and *Pakhuray*. The *kazis*, on the other hand, were landlords / zamindars, mostly belonging to the Bhutia-Lepcha groups, who enjoyed immense economic and political power in feudal bureaucratic and economic set up under the Chogyal.⁷⁴

As the land rights in the kingdom were vested primarily in nine Kazi families it helped sustaining feudalism.⁷⁵ The aristocrats of Sikkim consists of *Kazis*, *thikedars*, the lamas of monastery, lessee (land holders) *Bustiwallas* and the *Mandals* of the village. The *kazis* and *Thikadars* were the absentee lords, and on the other hand there were the *Bustiwallas* and *Mandals* who appointed tenants on behalf of the *Kazis* and *Thikadars*. Thus *Bustiwallas* and *Mandals* were acted as intermediaries between the estate and the actual tillers of the land and the *kazi* and the *Thikadars* were intermediaries between *Mondals* and *Bustiwallas* and the State.⁷⁶ According to Kharel, Jigme and Gurung, Sikkim was divided into 104 *elakas* (estates) out of which 61 *elakas* were leased to *kazis* by orders which were issued by the Durbar, for a

⁷⁴Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.cit. p.108-109.

⁷⁵Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Op.cit. p.12.

⁷⁶Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Op.cit. p.16.

period of 15 years. Hence, land and the division of the estates became the main component for collecting revenue.

Sikkim being under the regime of Chogyal and feudalistic in nature, there existed forced labour (Jharlangi) to carry loads. Jharlangi and Kalo Bhari (black loads) are most commonly known in Sikkim.⁷⁷ During the Feudalism in Sikkim the *Kazis* at the high grade, exploited many of this labour; the huge black loads were transported over land to China via Tibet, carried in the prescribed rates. And the *kazis* forcefully compelled the labours to carry his own private loads without any compensation and on top of it the black loads which they used to carry for their living the earn wage under the prescribed rates for force labour was barely sufficient to buy his meagre meal for the journey to and from.⁷⁸ The resentment against exploiting the manual labour as free labour was growing wide in the time Sir Tashi Namgyal, and consequently in 1924 the use of unpaid labour was prohibited. The over exploitation of labour by the landlords compelled the Sir Namgyal to abolish forced labour which was malevolent practice in 1947.⁷⁹ Thereafter, in the year 1958, the judicial and magisterial function of the landlords were completely abolished.

3.7 Indian Influence over Sikkim

Sikkim being close to India and sharing its boundaries (before 1975) with India did influence the making of the society in Sikkim; starting from British intervention to the merger with India. The policy of divide and rule during the colonial times, did play an important role in Sikkim, where the good relation of Sikkim with Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal took a drift after their arrival. There was lot of

⁷⁷Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.cit. p.64.

⁷⁸Ibib. P.64.

⁷⁹Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, Wangchuk, Bhutia. (2013). Op.cit .pp.92-93.

hostility between the Tibetans and Bhutias. Taking advantage of the situation Government of India took a position to annex Sikkim in a friendly way so that they could maintain a buffer zone between the plain Indians and the Tibetan plateau. Until, 1947 Sikkim being the British protectorate, did get affected into the negative as well as positive way, Ram Rahul is of the view that “with the establishment of democratic government in India after 1947, Sikkim witnessed the growth of a movement of democratic force”.⁸⁰ He further explains the social-political set up of the country was such that, despite their minority position in the total population of the country, the Bhutias controlled the government and owned large landholdings, obviously the people of Nepalese origin, forming the bulk of Sikkim’s population largely controlled the democratic movement in Sikkim.⁸¹

The democratic values led to the realisation of the oppressive rule towards the oppressed class; in addition to that, opposed the practice of *Zharlangi* (force labour) and Zamindari system in Sikkim, the Land and Revenue report that Zharlangi did exist in Sikkim, who worked under the landlords and kazis to carry out the transportation work.⁸²

After being the protectorate of British, Sikkim did not stay as an independent Kingdom for too long; the Indo-Sikkimese treaty in 1950, signed with Government of India again made Sikkim a Protectorate of India followed by the merger with India in 1975. Gradually, it led to the change in old laws and system of government accommodating the interest of all the ethnic community including Nepalese.

⁸⁰Rahul, Ram. (1978) *The Himalayan as a Frontier*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi. p.50.

⁸¹Ibid. p.50.

⁸²Government of Sikkim, Land and Revenue, File no: 16/9/1927, Sikkim State Archive.

Being the protectorate, Sikkim did benefit and the Indian development did affect Sikkim. According to Census of India 1991, “the traditional life of the people of Sikkim was simple and administration devoid of any complexity. The society was feudal and hence the feudal lords provided the administrative machinery by performing regulatory functions. The abolition of landlordism in the year 1949 necessitated the reorganisation of administrative system”.⁸³ On all the sectors of Education, Administration, Revenue, setting up of new economic plan took a different level and the revolution that took place in India did mobilise the peasants of Sikkim and many of the workers revolted against the higher authority for exploiting them.

Economy is the main reason for development. Accordingly, there was the continuous planning for the economy of Sikkim from 1954-1981.

- (i) The first was the Seven Year Plan from 1954-61.
- (ii) Secondly Five Year Plan was from 1961-66.
- (iii) Fourth Plan starting from 1971 to 76.

The planned economic development in Sikkim was initiated in 1954 when a Seven Year Plan from 1954 to 1961 was formulated with the help of a technical team of the planning Commission of Government of India. The planned economic and social development was first initiated in 1952 in dialogue that ensued between the then prime Minister of the Indian Union, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Maharaja Tashi Namgyal.⁸⁴ The economic plan meeting was held on 13th August 1954 in the presence of the Durbar of Sikkim. The meeting was held especially for the progress of Agriculture sector which has been clearly mentioned in the file of Development in state Archive of Sikkim. Further, meeting emphasised on encouraging the *bastiwallas*

⁸³Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, Wangchuk, Bhutia. (2013). Op.cit. p.264.

⁸⁴Ibid. p.317.

to till land and those who had no sufficient funds were to grand loans and according to the plans the amount of Rs-35,000⁸⁵ is provided for the improvement of agriculture. And in 17th August 1954 the decision which was held on the 13th August 1954 with regard to the programme under the agricultural section of the Development Plan was approved by the officer in charge of Development Department of Sikkim state.⁸⁶

In Seven Year Plan Indian Government financed some of Rs 325 Lakhs for Development programme. Ever since the Independent of India and its friendly relationship with Sikkim, there are Reforms that took place considering the fact of developing the kingdom in the category of Education, Finance, Forest, General, Health, Industrial, Judicial and Land Revenue. The second economic plan for five years outlay the amount of Rs 972 lakhs and the last Fourth plan expense was initiated by the Indian Government was Rs 2000 lakhs. According to Jigme at “Gazetteer of Sikkim mentions the money which was invested by the Government of India for three consecutive plan for economy was to provide a firm foundation for economic reconstruction by the time the state got integrated with the Indian Union, it will led to an overall increase in economy.⁸⁷ Soon after the economic plan it was followed by the merger with India because of the wide spread of the concept of Democracy. The emergent of political parties with different memorandums seeking the abolition of the Chogyal Dynasty ultimately, made the Himalayan Kingdom the 22nd state of the Indian Union in 1975. The first chief Minister of Sikkim was Kazilendhup Dorji Khangsarpa followed by the Mr. B.B Lal the Governor of Sikkim.

⁸⁵Proceedings of the executive council meetings in connection with development plan programme, Sikkim Government report, Development, File no: 6/34/1954-55, Sikkim State Archive.

⁸⁶ Sikkim Government report. Op.cit.

⁸⁷Kharel, Sunita and Bhutia, Wangchuk, Bhutia. (2013). Op.cit. p.318.

However, in order to implement various welfare policies, various Legislations were passed in the post merger era by the state government namely Sikkim Agricultural Land Ceiling and Reform Rules with the notification of 1978 it got amended in 1979.⁸⁸ With the adherence of modern democracy there is a change of land tenure system in Sikkimese land the old land system were the *Kazis* and *Tikidars* use to posses' huge amount of land, the *Mandal* and *Bustiwalas* who played the role of intermediary was abolished with the recommendation of Land Ceiling Act. The Recommendation was first constituted by the committee under the leadership of *Katiwara* to secure the provision for the tenant with fair rents and rights. The committee main objectives are as follows:

- The committee tried to ensure the right of the tenants against eviction.
- The committee recommended the above mentioned provision should be supported by ceiling on agricultural holding which in no case should exceed 16 standard acres.
- Regarding Private estate the committee recommended that they should be divested from maintaining the land records and the responsibility must be borne by the elected Government.
- Lastly, it was pointed out that are like Dzongu should remain outside permanent settlement record and finally private state and monastic estate should be abolished.

However, with the above recommendation the government responded by enacting the Sikkim agricultural land Ceiling and Reform Act, 1977 on contrary to Khatiwada proposal the Act came out with some differences. The Government did not abolish the Monastery Estates the land ceiling was applicable only on Agricultural

⁸⁸Gurung, S.K. (2011). Op.cit. p.144.

holdings.⁸⁹ The imposition of land Act did help the state to acquire substantial amount of land demarcated as “vested land”.⁹⁰ It has been pointed out by many scholars like T.B Subba, S.K Gurung that instead of the Land Ceiling Act resolution still *kazis* in many estates holds huge amount of land stated as private land but actual being the agricultural land. Nevertheless, with the acquisition of the land Act many lands which were taken from *kazis* and *Tikadars* were vested to the small peasants to cultivate the land.

The feudal system which existed from the very beginning was transformed into democratic state where the economy was given preference for development. Soon, the feudal mode of production was setback with the new economic plan under the rule of independent India. In every involvement of rule in Sikkim coming from indigenous Lepcha, Rule of Chogyal, and Intervention of British lastly with the merger with India there is a change. In each epoch, Sikkim changed the course of system to administer the state; each phase of Sikkim can be looked as an evolutionary stage because of the flexibility nature of the people.

⁸⁹Gurung, S.K. (2011). P.65.

⁹⁰Chakrabarti, Anjan. (2009). Op.cit.p.19.

Conclusion

Over a period of time there has been a change in the line of evolution. The changes can be in the realm of culture, society, political, etc. And these transformations can be connected or seen from any perspective. Migration, colonisation, immigration (push and pull factor) can be the main factor for bringing changes in society. Likewise, in this analytical study of Sikkim, migration of certain ethnic communities played an important role in shaping the economy of Sikkim as well as in the marginalisation of the nomadic community which existed since time immemorial.

Migration has become a social phenomenon in upgrading the society of Sikkim. There are various ethnic groups whose culture, tradition have amalgamated forming new Sikkimese identities of its own. In the process of forming and collaborating among themselves in the new region and from where they came from, both the communities went through various stages to include themselves and proving themselves as the Sikkimese people. The Nepalese of Sikkim neither do not call themselves as Gorkha nor do the Bhutias call themselves as Tibetans; this is despite the fact that they came from different region; Bhutias from Tibet and Nepalese from Nepal. All the people who have settled in Sikkim call themselves as Sikkimese and struggle for that. For instance, the revenue order of No. 1 of 1897/1917 clearly depicts that the Bhutias have the right to possessed the land of Lepchas but contradicting that Nepali not to possess their land. The Revenue order states that it further prohibits the Nepali to buy Bhutia- Lepcha land. During the time of Chogyal dynasty, Nepalis were called as immigrants and described as labourers.

The indigenous community which existed with its own tradition of hunting and gathering and worshiped the wild forest, slowly got eroded with the advent of the two major communities Bhutias and Nepali who not only marginalised their community customs and rituals. They took over the land by becoming rulers of Sikkim (Chogyal Dynasty) from 16th century till the middle of the 19th century. There after, Nepalis in 20th century outnumbered the indigenous community, took up higher position in the democratic state of Sikkim. With the passage of time, the Lepchas gradually lost their land, leadership and their freedom of worshipping and hunting in the forest ground. B.S.Das explains that “with the dominance of Bhutias with their overwhelming nature, Lepchas remained neglected and economically was not stable... Mostly Lepcha settled in *Djongu*, the northern region of Sikkim, were with the exploitation of Bhutia where they live a life of indolence and neglence”¹

At first, the traditional means of life of the indigenous tribe, i.e. Lepcha was alienated and declined by the invasion of the Tibetan (who later called themselves as Bhutias). A.R Fonning, in his work gives a brief description about the Lepcha tribe, its origin and how it declined over a period of time. Lepchas’ who were governed by mythical beliefs and religious values’ got replaced with the idol worship of Buddhism and later converted to Christianity. The emergence of settled life gave a new life for indigenous folk who used to lead a nomadic life mainly dependent on forest produce, hunting and fishing.

Thereafter, the advent of the Nepalese, with their method of terrace farming eroded the lifestyle of hunting and gathering. . Looking into the settled lifestyle and self sufficient food encouraged the Lepchas to practice settle agriculture. With the

¹B.S.Das Cited in. Gurung, (S.K, 2011), Sikkim ethnicity and Political dynamics a triadic perspective. Published by Kunal Books, New Delhi India. p.160.

immense knowledge of cultivation and terrace farming, the Nepali had a tremendous growth in the society. On the line of change, the practiced of nomadic herders and semi-agriculture was practice in the Northern part of the Sikkim and still it is being practiced by the Drokpas and Bhutias as yak herders.

With the emergent rule and policies of the borderlines of State limited the movement of the nomadic herders was limited. Erstwhile, the borders were porous and the herders use to herd in the range land without any border restriction. With various alienation, Acts and state rule, in fear of another nation, there is restriction of movement from one border line to another which affected the life of nomadic herders. Likewise, Drokpas of Sikkim was one of them to face the consequences of the borderline rule. Historically, Drokpas were the nomadic herders from Tibet, who used to herd their animals and they used to move towards Sikkim. Later, with the new trends of strict borders, the Drokpas were made to choose either to be the part of Sikkim or Tibet; but slowly with the advent of Nepali and the practice of agriculture in Sikkim the nomadic herders have started to move their way of life to more profound lifestyle which led to the marginalisation of the Drokpa community in Sikkim.

With the advent of the British, with their consolidated rule over Sikkim, agriculture was given more importance, inculcating Nepalese to cultivate more on the waste land. The British not only made the economy of the kingdom prosper but they shaped the administration and functioned well. It is evident in the writing of J.C White that “Sikhum and Bhutan” he was impressed with the hard work, sincere and resolute nature of the Nepalese people and land was parcelled out to the people who belonged to Nepali community. As per the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim, there are lot of controversies and it is to blame that because of the British, Nepali were

encouraged to settle in Sikkim. Various scholars like P.K Rao, B.S.K Grover and S.K Dutta also believe the point of Nepali settlement were in the hand of British.

This study argues too that because of the British encouragement, Nepali got into Sikkim and it cannot be overlooked or acknowledged the hard work of Nepali and their contribution in economy prosperity with their virtue of immense techniques in cultivation. The introduction of terrace farming and a variety of crops has influenced the occupational habits and settlement of Lepchas. At the same time, Bhutias were busy protecting their interest over Sikkim land with the fair of Nepali migration and in their hand on economic affluence. Though Nepali were mainly for agriculture purpose but now there are people who hardly cultivate there are majority of Nepali who have also taken a high position in different social structure in the democratic state after it got merged with India.

In the line of different phase of evolution and the advent of different community, there has been a transition from a very primitive culture to settled agriculture. The culture of hunting to nomadic herding to semi-agriculture which people use to practice over a period of time got diverted into different mode of production. From the coming of Bhutias, Nepali community, British, and lastly merger with India it did affect the society, culture and economy over a period.

It clearly signifies that with different ethnic groups there has been an intercultural exchange; for instance Bhutia got into semi-settled agriculture and yak herding. There is no doubt that Nepali got settled agriculture and assimilated in the land of Sikkim and still it is being practice. Further, it is seen in this study that with the hard labour of Nepali and Bhutias authoritative nature, British took full advantage of it and made the society more productive. Later, transformed the society into

agriculture mode of production and paved the way for feudalism in Sikkim. With the new custom, the availability of food anytime, secure the life for sustainability instead of eaking food or herding animals and selling their by product, which was of lengthy process. The primitive people and their customs got diluted with the new culture which became more secure for them to leave their life.

The advent of the British Political Officer J.C White in 1889, is a marking point for the Sikkim to see the changes in the society. The British rule not only enhanced the revenue and economic condition of the Sikkim but it had a huge impact on improving the peoples' way of life. From the commencement of J.C White is term in 1889 till 1947, Sikkim underwent numerous changes from loosing of land i.e. Darjeeling to West Bengal till the shaping of the economy of the state. During the British and their hand on encouraging Nepali in Sikkim lent to the uncertainties among the community i.e. Lepcha and Bhutias leading to the dissolution of the monarchy in 1974 and further Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union in 1975.

Before Sikkim became the 22nd state, Sikkim was a protectorate of India since 1947 which influenced the people of Sikkim especially the Nepali to fight for their right asking for seat reservation in the council, etc. The zamindari system which existed was sought to be abolished because many elite people like *kazis* and *thekidar* used to exploit the labourers, who were Nepalese. With certain disparities among the people in the society there was the movement led by small groups asking for the abolition of Zamindari system. Furthermore, this also led to the decline of feudalism in Sikkim with the introduction of certain economic changes in 1954-1961. The economic plan was hugely funded by the Indian government, mainly for the

agriculture sector. The agriculture areas which were under the many elite people during the rule of chogyal was seized with the Act of Land Ceiling.

Sikkim being the newly formed state was given little bit of liberty over them being a monarchical kingdom. So many funds were generated for the improvement of economy of the state for improving education, agriculture, industries, economic etc...

Therefore, in the Sikkimese society the development is mainly attributed to the consciousness of the Nepali people from the setting up of agriculture prosperity to the merger of Sikkim with India. Though Nepali being migrants they have fought for their self identity of its own being. Though there has been lot of disparities between various communities in Sikkim but the ethnicity of the specific culture has strengthened the society of Sikkim. Earlier, Bhutias, who were the traders and herdsmen, generally preferred the cold climate and high altitude and never cultivated in the slopes or hilly terrain; it was the Nepali who cultivated in the waste land and made them agricultural land. The Bhutias were only in the line of keeping peace and friendly relation with other nations until J.C White's advent to Sikkim. The Sikkim economy was not good and the administration did not function well; only after White the administration was managed well.

In Sikkim there has been an intercultural fusion due to the contact of many different cultural people within the same society. In olden days there was a nomadic practice of occupation and with the progress of society the occupational practice has been changed to settled agriculture. Due to the migration of the people in Sikkim many cultural group came in contact with each other. After interacting with different people they started following the particular trait of culture which was not practiced

within their own culture. The process of enculturation started taking place with the increased amount of interaction within the different cultural groups.

With the development of machinery and high yielding variety of seeds, which was the outcome of green revolution, people focused largely on agricultural land. They started to work on their agricultural land which also enhanced their economic productivity. With this economic prosperity, many other groups of people also diverted their focus to agriculture.

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