

# **Migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and its Impact on Political and Economic Life (1774-1975)**

**A Dissertation Submitted**

**To**

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**By**

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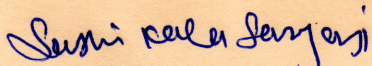
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Date: 27/06/2017

## DECLARATION

I, Sashi Kala Sanyasi, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation title: “**Migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and its Impact on Political and Economic Life (1774-1975)**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, in the Department of History, School of Social Science, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

The content of this dissertation has also been subjected to plagiarism check.

  
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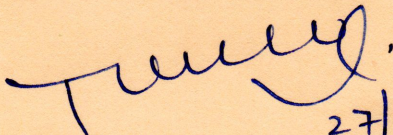
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and its Impact on Political and Economic Life (1774-1975)**” submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the **Department of History**, embodies the result of bona fide research work carried out by **Sashi Kala Sanyasi** under my guidance and supervision. No part of dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship.

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

I recommended this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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**“Migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and its Impact  
on Political and Economic Life (1774-1975)”**

Submitted by **Sashi Kala Sanyasi** under the supervision of Dr. Vijay Kumar Thangellapali of the Department of History, School of Social Science, Sikkim University.

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**Sashi Kala Sanyasi**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The word migration refers to the movement of people to a new area or a country in order to find a work or for better living condition. It occurs due to some pull and push factors related to the problems at their original place or/ and attraction from the place where they wanted to migrate. Once migration occurred in a region, there generally number of changes occurred in the fields of social, economic, and political conditions. In this work an attempt has been made to see the Nepali migration into Sikkim that left a big impact on the socio-economic and political conditions of the region. The Nepali migration started from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards. In the beginning, they came to Sikkim through Invasion and later on by the encouragement of the British along with the pro-immigration lamas.

After British started influencing Sikkim, there were many changes especially after the establishment of first British political officer, J. C White in 1889. They encouraged the migration of Nepalis in large numbers for working purpose and they became a major ethnic community of Sikkim along with Lepchas and Bhutias.

The Nepali migration was induced by two major factors. Firstly, in the eighteenth century, prior to the establishment of the Shah kingdom in Nepal, it comprised of small principalities. The ethnic groups like the Kirats, Mangars, Gurungs had land under a 'customary form of tenure'. This system was known as *kipat* land tenure system predominant among the Kirats of eastern Nepal. From 1768, onwards Shah King tried to expand the kingdom by bringing into one fold of the

small ethnic principalities of Nepal through the transfer of land from the original inhabitants to the new upper caste people. This new system of land tenure was called the *Raikar*. Under new system the *kipat* owners were unable to get their livelihood from the land so the Kirats were the first migrants from Nepal.<sup>1</sup>

However, with a shift from the *kipat* systems to the *Raikar* system there was a change from the *adiya* to *kut* systems of land tenure. In *adiya* system, the cultivator use to pay half of a paddy crop to his landlords. But under *kut* system, the tenants were required to harvest the crop and thresh it in the presence of the landlords and the local revenue functionaries. Rent was often fixed in advance. Land lord used to stay away from Kathmandu for long periods of time for military or administrative duties. So, they needed income in cash, as a result cultivator had to pay sum either in cash, food grains or other commodities to landlords. As a result cultivators were led to increasing indebtedness, and also the richer peasants, landlords and moneylenders exploit the lower class peasant. Such hardship forced them to look for other alternatives that resulted in Nepalis migration.<sup>2</sup>

Other factor for Nepali migration was the caste oppression, there was a process of Hindunisation during the time of Shah Ruler, but after 1846 power was seized by Rana ruler and continued under that dynasty till 1951. They set up a certain laws under which caste rigidity along with the disintegration of land imposed on certain ethnic groups led to a large scale migration towards the neighbouring lands. Such migrants were high even among the low occupational caste. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Sukbir, Khawas, *Emergence of Tea Plantation Labour Force in Darjeeling: a Historical Overview*, URL: [Shodhganga, Inflibnet. ac.in, Bitstream /10603/14985/9/09, Chapter%202 pdf](http://Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in/Bitstream/10603/14985/9/09/Chapter%202.pdf), pp. 61-65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

migrating population comprised of the middle castes (like Limbus, Rais, Mangars) and the lower castes. The upper castes like Brahmins, Chettris and the Newars migrated much later for better economic opportunities rather than due to economic hardship they faced in Nepal.<sup>3</sup>

So, with the coming of Europeans to India, they introduced many types of crops which grown in marginal hill tracts. Secondly, after Anglo-Nepal War, Nepalese found Sikkim very suitable place with small population in Sikkim and side by side British were also impressed with Nepalese with their bravery and hard working. So, they encouraged them to Sikkim for agricultural and constructional purpose. They found Nepalese as a hard workers and chief coolis too and for Nepali people, Sikkim was a land where they wanted to spend their rest of life with more economic opportunity than In Nepal.

The Nepalis migration in Sikkim started with the emergence of Nepali power during the time of Prithivi Narayan Shah, the king of Nepal. Under whom the Nepalese made a numerous raids in eastern parts of Sikkim and clashed with the Bhutias as well as Kirats in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this period some Nepalis like Basnet, Thakuris and the Chettris came and settled in Sikkim. Major sub-cultural stocks of Nepali are the Limbus, who along with the Lepchas are said to be the aboriginal inhabitant of Sikkim. Another community of Nepali's, the Pradhans who started settling in Sikkim from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, belonged to the business class people of Nepalese also known as Newars.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Bal Gopal, Shrestha, *the Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture, and Identity in the Diaspora*, Vajra Book, Kathmandu, 2015, pp. 4-5.

However, as compared to other ethnic groups, the Lepchas are considered to be the earliest ethnic community to have settled in Sikkim. The Bhutias were came to Sikkim from thirteenth century onwards, and they were Buddhist in nature while Lepchas were a natural worshipper, but initially after the advent of Buddhist in Sikkim the Lepchas were converted to Buddhism. While the Nepalis were predominately Hindus (while certain section of the Nepalis, particularly Tamangs, Gurungs, and Shakyas are Buddhist). If we looked today then these three ethnic communities of Sikkim were lived in peace and harmony with each other in the state.<sup>5</sup>

However, these people settled here, after Businessman Lakshmidas Pradhan Obtained rights to mine copper and mint coins in south Sikkim. Along with the Newars, other service- castes of the Nepalis such as the miners (mangars), black Smiths (Kami), tailors (Damai) and cobblers (Sarki) and the Priests or pundits of Nepalis (Sharma) also came and settled down in Sikkim. The following copper mines in which Lakshmidas Pradhan and his family worked in: Tuk Khani near Turuk in South Sikkim, Rinchi Khani in Rinchinpong in West Sikkim, Bhotang Khani near Rangpo Bazar in East Sikkim, Pachey Khani near Rhenock in East Sikkim and Rathok Khani in Namthang in South Sikkim.<sup>6</sup>

The Nepalis came to Sikkim as labourers and slowly put their efforts in the agricultural field and changed the agricultural pattern of Sikkim. Even after, the beginning of large-scale immigration of Nepalese into Sikkim the land settlement pattern remained unchanged in which true ownership has been retained by the then landlords (*kazis* and other aristocrats) on behalf of the feudal king. But changes

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<sup>5</sup> M. P, Lama, *Sikkim, Society, Polity, Economy and Environment*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp.1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Shrestha, *Op, Cit.*, pp .4-5.

occurred from 1889, when J.C. White, the first British political officer in Sikkim, introduced a modified lease system of land tenure.<sup>7</sup> Remarkably, this resulted into the emergence of some early Nepalese settlers particularly, Newars as a lease landlords who were later designed as ‘*thikadars*’. However, the British allotted a land in contract (*thikas*) to the Newars for mining. Because the Nepalis are not only considered as better cultivators, industrious and hardworking labourers but also considered as the people who could challenge the uncertain conditions in the new lands for their better survival. The Nepalese gradually acquired a land from the Lepchas and the Bhutias, on lease for farming. Subsequently, the old system of shifting hill cultivation was replaced by the new terrace type of cultivation, which became popular. In fact this system was introduced by the later immigrant Nepalese in the country.<sup>8</sup>

Not only that Nepalis even successful to become major ethnic communities of Sikkim among the three Ethnic groups: Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalis. After they became a *thikadars* they were involved in politics as well as they were participated in democratic movement and they were even successful in replacing the monarchy with the Democracy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study will examine the migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and its impact on the political and economic life from 1774-1975. The main argument in this work is that the migration of Nepalese influenced thoroughly the political and economic systems of Sikkim and they became majority in demographic ground.

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<sup>7</sup> Lama, *Op. Cit.*, p.72.

<sup>8</sup> L.B, Basnet, *Sikkim: a Short Political History*, S. Chand and Co (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1974, p. 75.

However, Sikkim experienced three waves of Nepali migration from 1774 onwards. In the first wave, which occurred during the reign of Tenzing Namgyal, Prithivi Narayan Shah, the ruler of a small principality of Nepali in Western Nepal, invaded on Sikkim and annexed some areas into Nepal. From that time onwards Nepalis started settling down in Sikkim. Second wave of migration was held during the time of Sidkeong Namgyal, in 1867. In that year, two Newar brothers migrated to Sikkim. Third wave of migration was prevailed in Sikkim after British make Sikkim as their protectorate kingdom and J.C White became a first Political Officer of Sikkim in 1889. After spending a year in Nepal he studied the Nepalis and their industrious habits. So, he encouraged the settlement of Nepalis with a view to opening up Sikkim and strengthening its economic base.

The Nepali migration in to Sikkim has tremendous influence in the fields of agriculture, trade and commerce, industry and political. In agriculture, the traditional shifting cultivation practised over centuries gradually replaced by terrace cultivation. Due to the influence of Nepalis, the mixed system, which is a combination of agro-forestry,<sup>9</sup> forestry and livestock, was developed. The Nepalese gradually acquired land from the Lepchas and Bhutias, after having leased land for farming in the beginning. Newars were the first business community in Sikkim after they migrated from Nepal from second wave of Nepali migration. It was also believed that Lakshmidas Pradhan first began his trade in Darjeeling by selling *gundruk*, a form of dried and fermented vegetables. These Newars community were invited by the then king of Sikkim for business purpose and for working in copper mines, so they settled in Sikkim from 1867 onwards, in order to work at the copper mine in Tuk khani in

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<sup>9</sup> Agro-forestry: a complex of vegetation areas within an agricultural areas or an agro-ecosystem.

South Sikkim, and went to work in a number of other copper mines later. Even this Newar community helped in minting coins in Sikkim from 1881 that boosted the trade in the region. Nepali migration played an important role in political development also. After the third wave of Nepali migration into Sikkim, Nepalis became *thikadars* and included in the administration.

### **Review of Literature**

On the migration of Nepalis into Sikkim and their impact on the political and economic life have been discussed by several scholars but they focused mainly on North eastern region especially Assam, Nagaland, but not on Sikkim region.

A .C. Sinha and T.B. Subba, in the edited volume, *The Nepalis in North-Eastern India, a Community in Search of Indian Identity*, they focused on various aspects of socio-political aspirations of Indian Nepalese and their contribution in various fields.<sup>10</sup> In prologue, Sinha discussed about the immigration of Nepalis. He further analysed the history of Nepalese migration in Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Assam. This volume also dealt with the main factors for migration, but mainly focused on Assam and gave little information about Sikkim.

A.C. Sinha, in his book *North Eastern Frontier of India, Structural Imperatives and Aspects of Change*, explain about North-east states and their aspect of change and in of the chapter he discussed about the immigration of Nepalese from Nepal to India especially in north eastern region.<sup>11</sup> He focused on how British played an important

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<sup>10</sup> A.C, Sinha, and T.B, Subba, *The Nepalis in North East India, a Community in Search of Indian Identity*, Indus publishing company, New Delhi, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> A.C, Sinha, *North Eastern Frontier of India, Structural Imperatives and Aspects of Change*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994.



role for encouraging Nepalese migration into Darjeeling, and Assam for working in tea plantation and agricultural field. Though, this book narrated about Nepalis history that includes migration but mainly focussed on Assam and Darjeeling.

Another book of A.C. Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, throws a light on Sikkim past which covers mainly the political conditions of the region.<sup>12</sup> He explained how feudal landlord exploited the peasantry. In one of the chapters, Sinha dealt with the migration of Nepalese in Sikkim and also stated that only after Lakshmidas Pradhan one of the Newars came to Sikkim and obtained the rights for mining and minting coins, which boosted the migration of Nepalese into Sikkim. Later on, the Newari got land on lease, and became business people in Sikkim. However, it didn't cover how such Nepali migration into Sikkim affected the economy of the region.

B. Bhattacharya, in his book *Sikkim land and people*, explained about the Sikkim's people particularly the contribution of the Nepalis and their contribution to the State.<sup>13</sup> This book clearly shows that the Nepalese are migrated from Nepal belonging to different stocks. It owes much of its economic development to the Nepali people. Within the Nepali people, many communities were included, who performed different work, like Newars involved in a business. This book mainly covered an ethnicity and economic history of Sikkim but not much on political aspects.

Bal Gopal, Shrestha, in his articles "Rituals and identity in the Diaspora: the Newars in Sikkim", explained that Newars were the original inhabitant of the Kathmandu valley of Nepal.<sup>14</sup> Newars were very much active in political and economic fields. It

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<sup>12</sup> A.C, Sinha, *Sikkim: Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> B. Bhattacharya, *Sikkim land and people*, R. Kumar, Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Shrestha, *Op, Cit.*

was also explained that Newars were the first people who started minting and mining in Sikkim after migrating from Nepal to Darjeeling and from Darjeeling to Sikkim and became a business class people of Sikkim. This articles also dealt that Newars were became a *thikadars* in Sikkim. However, this article did not cover much about on political impacts of such Migration.

E.G. Ravenstein, “The Law of Migration”, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, stated that migration appeared and go on without any definite law and limit.<sup>15</sup> According to him, he gave this statement after the publication of the census of 1881. In this article he mainly focused on three main countries, United Kingdom, Scotland and Ireland. He further asserted that encouragements to migrate are offered by educational facilities, suitable climate or cheapness of living. However, this article is based on the census report of 1881 and dealt with the statistical study of the three countries and gave absolute demographic figures.

H.H. Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, this Gazetteer mention details information about Sikkim, from Chogyal’s times onwards.<sup>16</sup> This book described all aspects of social, political, economic and geographical description about Sikkim. Risley also talk details about a Gorkha incursion from the time of Prithivi Narayan Shah onwards, and how slowly Nepali were migrated in Sikkim and became major ethnic groups of Sikkim. However, he touches the migration part but not its impacts.

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<sup>15</sup> E.G. Ravenstein, “Law of Migration”, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun, 1885).

<sup>16</sup> H.H. Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Sikkim Nature Conservation Foundation, Gangtok, Reprinted 1984.

J.C White, in his book *Sikkim and Bhutan Twenty-one years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, explains about his experience in both Sikkim and Bhutan on his staying of twenty-one years.<sup>17</sup>

L. B Basnet, in his book *Sikkim: a Short Political History*, gives detailed information about Sikkim from Namgyal Dynasty to the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union, including British dominated in Sikkim.<sup>18</sup> In one of the chapters, he described about the immigration of Nepalese in Sikkim and their important factors for migration and their contribution on political field. The authors further asserted that before British encouraged Nepalis to migrate, some Nepalis were already settled down in Sikkim. Though this book highlighted the political aspects but not much on socio-economic aspects.

Lopita, Nath, "Migration in Flight: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement of Nepalis in Northeast India", *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, explained about the ethnic violence, to the states of postcolonial Northeast India.<sup>19</sup> In his article he looks at conflict-induced internal displacement of the Nepalis settled in the seven states of Northeast India. He further explains the reasons for Nepali migration which was started from 1820s onwards and also says that they not only moving across the India but also to the seven states of Northeast India. He further asserted that during the postcolonial period these Nepalis have often been victimized as the ethnic others. Northeast India even experienced discrimination and persecution against Nepalis, as a

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<sup>17</sup> J.C, White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, A Twenty-One Years in North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, Low Price Publications, New Delhi, 1909.

<sup>18</sup> Basnet, *Op, Cit*.

<sup>19</sup> Lopita, Nath, "Migration in Flight", *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 1, No 1, January, 2005.

result they are often force to flee to their habitual place from settled place, which leading to the internal displacement of Nepalis settlers. He also talks about the second wave of Nepali migration which is also the part of this work.

Monimala Devi, “Economic History of Nepali Migration and Settlement in Assam”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, explained that, like Sikkim, Assam’s population is composed of many heterogeneous elements with number of Tribes, performed different rituals and beliefs and speaks different languages and dialects.<sup>20</sup> However, with the growth of the tea industry, after 1855 and due to the shortage of local labourers, Assam experienced four types of migrations. One such group that Assam experienced migration was from Nepal. After the expansion of British rule in India, they encouraged the Nepalis for agricultural purpose. However, this article concentrated on Assam’s migration, which is not part of this study.

Similarly, in another volume of T.B Subba, *et al. Indian Nepalis Issues and Perspective*, it was emphasized that the Nepali settlements were occurred not only in Sikkim but in entire India.<sup>21</sup> It further explained the idea of nation, nation state and nationalism and most importantly the nationality and the identity of Indian Nepali Organization .In one of the articles of this book, Sinha outlines many important issues and gave the idea about ethnicity and ethnic identity, Nation and Nation State. He asserted that it was during the British colonial time that they adopted the policy of recruitment of Nepalese for armed forces, constructional purpose, coolis, plantations and forced labour. So Nepalese migrated in large numbers into India. These books

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<sup>20</sup> Monimala, Devi, “Economic History of Nepali Migration and Settlement in Assam”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 29 (June. 21-27, 2007).

<sup>21</sup>T.B, Subba, A.C, Sinha, G.S, Nepal and D.R, Nepal, *Indian Nepalis Issues and Perspective*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2009.

mainly discussed about the Indian Nepalis as a whole but did not discuss much about Sikkim.

Srikant, Dutt's, "Migration and Development the Nepalese in Northeast Migration and Development", *Economic and Political Weekly*, explained that many issues that came up because of migration of Nepalis in Northeast region.<sup>22</sup> The Nepalis are one such group, who migrated from various parts of Nepal. Migration occurred throughout the world for a number of reasons and one of the main reasons was for improving the economic conditions. However, he claimed that not only British were responsible for encouraging Nepali settlements, but *kazis* were also equally involved. The main focus of this article was on agrarian economy that developed after large numbers of migration of Nepalis in this hills region, but didn't touch much on political impact of such migration.

Sukbir, Khawas, in his article "Emergence of Tea Plantation Labour Force in Darjeeling: A Historical overview", explained that after the emergence of tea garden in Darjeeling; many Nepalis were migrated there for working in tea garden.<sup>23</sup> This article also talk about the factors for Nepali migration from Nepal to Darjeeling and in Sikkim, and how they settled in new place as a labourers. This article mainly focused on Darjeeling district then Sikkim.

Suresh Kumar, Gurung, in his book *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, a Traditional Perspective*, he touches on the notions of ethnicity, ethnic groups and

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<sup>22</sup> Srikant, Dutt's, "Migration and Development: the Nepalese in Northeast", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 16, No. 24 (June. 13, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Khawas, *Op, Cit.*

their process of formation while studying political and economic history of Sikkim.<sup>24</sup>

While explaining the creation of ethnic consciousness in Sikkim, he talks about the determinate role played by the Nepali, for the creation of the sense of ethnicity. However, he failed to explain what was the impact of Nepalese on urbanization and trade and commerce in this region

The edited volume of M.P. Lama (ed.), *Sikkim-Society, Polity, Economy, Environment*, focused on the large scale Nepalese migration into the region, which gradually exerted considerable pressure in changing the land settlements pattern and agricultural techniques.<sup>25</sup> However, this book did not cover how the migration affected the socio-economic conditions of the region.

Vibha Arora, “Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim”, stated that, the history of Sikkim is layered and complicate because of the various cultural, religious, linguistic, and racial diversity.<sup>26</sup> The population of Sikkim was broadly classified into three main ethnic categories: the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis. However, she asserted that after the migration of Nepalese in large numbers there was a racial hostility among them, because of which they enforced certain laws on marriage. Though she explained the socio-cultural and political changes in this region after Nepali migration, she failed to explain the economic impact that was occurred due to Nepali migration.

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<sup>24</sup> Suresh Kumar, Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, a Traditional Perspective*, Prem Sing Bist, Delhi, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Lama, *Op, Cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Vibha, Arora, “Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim”, *Sociological Bulletin*, 56 (2), May - August 2007.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of the study is to analyze the Nepali migration in Sikkim from Nepal and their impact on the political and economic life. The main objectives of the present study are:

1. To understand the various waves of Nepali migration in Sikkim.
2. To analyse the impact of Nepali migration on economic conditions of Sikkim, particularly on agriculture, trade and commerce, and on mining and minting.
3. To discuss the political impact of Nepali migration in Sikkim.

## **Methodology**

For this present study, it will be based on historical method. An introspective study will be made with the help of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly related to the government documents (published and unpublished), reports and gazetteers will be collected from various archives and National Library etc. Apart from that, the secondary sources like books and articles will also be collected from various libraries, as well as from websites.

## **Chapterization**

The following are the tentative chapterization for the present study.

### **1. Introduction**

The introductory chapter will be a statement of problem, literature review, and objectives of the study, methodology and tentative chapterization.

### **2. The Waves of Nepali Migration**

This chapter will describe the brief history about the various waves of Nepali migration in this region during 1774-1975.

### **3. The Impact of Nepali Migration on Economic Conditions of Sikkim**

This chapter will deal with the impact of Nepali migration on economic conditions of Sikkim that includes the changes in agriculture, trade and commerce, industry and mining.

### **4. The Political Impact of Nepali Migration in Sikkim**

This chapter will discuss the political impact that occurred after Nepali migration in this region, particularly it will analyse how the Newaris worked as *thikadars* in the region.

### **5. Conclusion**

The last chapter will be the summary of the above chapters.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WAVES OF NEPALI MIGRATION**

From the eighteenth century, Nepalis from Nepal migrated into Sikkim. It was not occurred in a single year but several waves of Nepali migration continuously occurred in two centuries. Generally, there are three waves of Nepali migration. The first wave started in 1774, when various Nepali invasions were held and as a result, large migration of people started and they settled in Sikkim. The second wave of migration started in 1861, where Newars had moved from Darjeeling to Sikkim due to the influence of the British. Third or the final wave was started from 1880s onwards, in which other Nepalis started migrating into Sikkim with the help of British. This chapter focuses the three waves of migration of the Nepalis into Sikkim.

#### **Background of the Nepali Migration**

The history of the origin of Sikkimese people is known from eighth century, with a Tibetan king Khri Srong Ide Btsan. It was said that he had three sons, among them, two of which Mu Ne Btsan Po and Sad Na Legs, ruled the Tibetan empire at different times. However, the middle son Mu Ne Btsan Po travels to eastern Tibet and it is from this second son that the Sikkim king are said to descend. However, the main history of Sikkim is known from the thirteenth century with the signing of a blood brotherhood treaty between the Lepcha chief and Bhutia chief at Kabi- Lungsok in North Sikkim. Gradually, after a treaty a political history was also began with the coronation of the first Chogyal in 1642 at Yuksum, west Sikkim. Before that it was believed that there were a various autonomous chieftains belonging to a Lepchas and Limbus community

who ruled the territory of “Greater Sikkim”<sup>1</sup> However, at present there is only a little evidence to indicate the precise origin of the Tibeto-Sikkimese populations who ruled Sikkim. However, it is important to note that there were different migrations occurred in Sikkim at different times and that these waves of immigration into Greater Sikkim came from different places both from Tibet as well as from Himalayan ranges and continued till twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Gradually, after Bhutias, Sikkim witnessed another flow of migration and that was a Nepali incursion from Nepal from the mid eighteenth century. However, before Nepali migration, Sikkim had large tracts of territories as the first Chogyal of Sikkim ruled a huge territory. After Nepalis started invading Sikkim from western side in between 1770s till 1816, Sikkim, subsequently started losing its territories like Limbuwan,<sup>3</sup> River Mechi etc to Nepal. Hereafter, Sikkim again witnessed another tragedy that was British colonial empire that frequently ceded Darjeeling in 1835 to British India from Sikkim. Consequently, British controlled the whole territory of Sikkim after 1861, and they encouraged a huge Nepalis from Nepal for various purposes. After that Nepalis started settling down in a territory of Sikkim, because of various opportunities found in sparsely populated Sikkim and today they became a

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Sikkim denotes the wider region of Sikkim (which may fall outside the contemporary boundaries of the state), a region of the eastern Himalaya stretching from the watershed of the Arun river in the west to the Wang Chu river in the east, the Mchod rten nyi ma range in the north to the plains of Siliguri in the South.

<sup>2</sup> Saul, Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land, State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Brill, Leiden, 2011, pp. 36-38.

<sup>3</sup> Limbuwan is an area of the Himalaya historically made up of 10 limbu kingdom, all now part of Nepal. Limbuwan means “abode of the Limbus” or “land of the Limbu”.

major ethnic community by succeeding Lepchas and Bhutias and constituted about 72 percent of the total population in Sikkim.<sup>4</sup>

In Sikkim, the Nepali community has been divided into three sub-cultural stocks, the Kirats, the Nepalis/ Khasas and the Newars. Where, the Kirats included the Rais, the Gurungs, the Mangars and the Tamangs. Another was the Khasas or the Nepalis and at present the Khasas or the Nepalis defined themselves as Hindus with a distinct caste system consisting of the Bahuns, the Chettris, the Majis, the Kamis, the Damai, and the Sarkis. The Bahuns are the high caste Nepalis, the Chettris are placed only next to the Bahuns in the social hierarchy. These Bahuns, Chettris, Thakuris community are called themselves as Tagadhari or who wear the sacred thread, and another group consist of those who don't wear sacred thread and are in the habits of drinking alcohol, they were termed as Matwalis; they were the Kamis, Damais, Sarki, Rais, Gurungs etc. Lastly the Newars consist of the Pradhans.<sup>5</sup>

Migration is not occurred easily anywhere without any cause. Several such causes were responsible for Nepali migration from Nepal to Sikkim. Among them the most important are: in the beginning of the eighteen century, the land between the valley of Kathmandu and Kumaon was fragmented into forty-six lordship, grouped into two loose considerations. Meanwhile, the Shah family of Nepali, a small state in Chaubisi emerged as a strong force under Prithivi Narayan Shah of Rajput origin,<sup>6</sup> who was very much successful in uniting the various tribes under the Banner of

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<sup>4</sup> J. C, Debnath, *Economic History and Development of Sikkim*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi, 1984, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> Suresh Kumar, Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, a Traditional Perspective*, Prem Sing Bist, Delhi, 2011, pp. 114-115.

<sup>6</sup> A.C, Sinha, *North-Eastern Frontier of India, Structural Imperatives and Aspects of Change*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 136-137.

Gorkha and emerged as a powerful ruler of Nepal in the middle of the eighteenth century. Then after, these Nepalis started occupying the vast land of the Nepal valley and reached up to the Limbuwana and frequently taking a keen interest towards Sikkim.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the Gorkha forces increased with their forces by 1815 they had subjugated the territories from the River Tista in the east to the River Sutluj in the west and from the northern Gangetic plains to the high Himalayan ranges. In the course of time, the Nepali, of this region turned out to be a nation of several tribes and castes, who claimed to be the descendants of the original subjects of the Nepali and who speak the language called Nepali.<sup>8</sup> However, it also to be noted that the Nepali migration has been taken place throughout South Asia not just in the Northeast alone, and as such must be viewed on a world scale.<sup>9</sup>

Migration occurred throughout the world for a number of reasons; firstly, the internal situation within Nepal was very much harsh which made the life of the Nepali people so difficult for their livelihood. It was also the fact that there was a limited arable lands in the forested and snow bound mountain region. Another reason was the basic law of the Nepali kingdom which was based on the Hindu Dharmashastra, where a different punishment was awarded to the criminals for the same crime, according to the social status in the caste hierarchy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Aparna, Bhattacharya, *the Prayer-Wheel &Sceptre: Sikkim*, Nachiketa Publications, Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai, 1994, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Sinha, *North-Eastern Frontier of India, Op. Cit.*, 1994, pp. 136-137.

<sup>9</sup> Srikant, Dutt, "Migration and Development: the Nepalese in Northeast", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 16, No. 24 (June. 13, 1981), p .2.

<sup>10</sup>A.C, Sinha and T.B, Subba, *The Nepalis in Northeast India a Community in Search of Indian Identity*, Indus publishing company, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 14-15.

Secondly, the process of migration of the Nepali into Northeast India, Darjeeling and their settlement began about two centuries ago with the British started recruiting Nepali Soldiers to the British Indian army after the Treaty of Sugauli (1816), and the permanent migration started after 1850s. The first Major Nepali migration to India was into the virtually unpopulated areas in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and from there into the Southwest Sikkim in the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the British officers always wanted a cheap and hard working labour force for their tea plantation; consequently, they encouraged Nepali migration into Darjeeling. In case of Sikkim, the Nepalis served as wage labourers. Nepali also fitted admirably and they were successful in economic expansion of both Sikkim and in Darjeeling from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. By 1900, the Nepali population formed more than 50% of the total population in Sikkim, which is strong enough in the past century to form a government in the region. Even in Darjeeling region, their growing population led to the demand for a separate state in India.<sup>11</sup>

Srikant Dutt stated that British before encouraging Nepali settlement, they concerned about how much land was available for settlement in the region for economic expansion. It is also true that the northeast particularly hill areas were still sparsely populated and land was open for settlement.<sup>12</sup> From above statement it was clear that British made a detailed inquiry before they took a step and encourage Nepali in those places where there was sparse population. J. C. White, the first political officer in Sikkim, encouraged Nepali immigration enormously. He while reflecting on the issue of the Nepalese immigration to Sikkim, considered that due to

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<sup>11</sup>Lopita, Nath, "Migration in Flight", *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Vol. 1, No 1, January, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Dutt, *Op. Cit.*, p .2.

spars population in a country and also to bring a more land under cultivation, it was necessary to encourage immigration, and it was possible only after giving a land on favourable terms to the Nepali, and White have a believed that once Nepalis knew about the new opportunities in Sikkim they could immigrated into Sikkim. It was also making him easy that in earlier service he had spent over a year in Nepal on special duty and had learnt something of the Nepali and their ways of living which was used in dealing with them.<sup>13</sup>

Ravenstein remarks that “migrations appeared and go on without any definite law and limits”. They migrate either in search of economic opportunities or grazing land for cattle, and they constantly moving; not only across the India but also across the seven states that constituted Northeast India. The 1871 *Census Report* registered general report says that, the improved roads, the facilities offered under the railway system, the development of the mercantile marine, the habit of travelling and the increasing knowledge of workmen, have all tended to facilitate the flow of people from the place where they are not wanted to live into a place where a labour is in demand, and also the establishment of a manufactured of a new mine, not only from the nearer town but also from the remote parts of the kingdoms. Further, migration is also offered by educational facilities, suitability of the climate and cheapness of living.<sup>14</sup> From above statement made by Ravenstein, it was clear that migration occurred due to certain causes. It was a result of opportunities in new places as well as for good facilities, which make people more comfort as compare to their home place.

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<sup>13</sup> J.C, White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, A Twenty-One Years in North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, Low Price Publications, New Delhi, 1909, pp. 20-22.

<sup>14</sup> E.G, Ravenstein “Law of Migration”, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun, 1885), p 167.

## **First Wave of Nepali Migration**

The general notion that the Nepali migration started from the advent of British in Sikkim during the middle of the nineteenth century was quite contradicted by several authors, who indicated the migration of Nepalis started with their wars with Sikkim. This happened from the time of fifth Chogyal Namgyal Phuntsug (1733-1779), when Nepalis invaded on Sikkim. From the reign of Chogyal, various internal as well as external problems were witnessed. Firstly, the Lepcha and Bhutia courtiers began to dispute among themselves for authority. In this conflict, Tibet intervened from the side of the infant king and sent the Tibetan aristocrat Rapden Sherpa, as a regent till the infant king would grow to an adult. At the same time the Mangar chief from Morong had died and his son was chosen as his successor. There was a tradition that, the ruler of Sikkim had to invite for the installation ceremony. The regent unaware of the traditional practices, neither he went himself to attend the ceremony, nor send any delegation to represent the Namgyal court. The young Mangar chief felt insulted with the absence of Namgyal delegation, so, he decided to take revenge, and joined with Deb Raja of Bhutan, who was planning to attack Sikkim. Their combined forces attacked south-eastern part of Sikkim. Consequently, it resulted in loss of the portion of Sikkim (east of River Teesta,) which is now called as Kalimpong Sub-division of Darjeeling district.<sup>15</sup>

After this tragedy, Sikkim frequently faced another major tragedy towards the closing years of Namgyal Phuntsug's reign, when a new power was rising in the westwards of Nepal. However, 1770-1815 was remarks an important phase in Nepal,

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<sup>15</sup>A.C, Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 66-67.

between that phases Nepal had adopted a confrontational approach in the eastern Himalayan regions. This was also a period when Prithivi Narayan Shah, ruler of the small principality of western Nepal, tries to consolidate and unified all the numerous petty principalities that was scattered all over Nepal. While doing so, he and his armed Nepali forces, advanced towards Khambuwan (land of the Khambus or Rais) and Limbuwan (land of the Limbus) bordering Sikkim.

After the death of Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1775, his son Pratap Singh continued his father's ambition to invade Sikkim too was success by occupying most of the territories which lies in west of Singallia range. However, a territorial settlement was negotiated at the intervention of Tibet in the Year 1775, which fixed the boundaries between Nepal and Sikkim at Tsang- Chu.<sup>16</sup>

However, during the time of the Tenzing Namgyal (1780-1793) the Nepalis broke the settlement of 1775 and again attack Sikkim in 1787, in eastern Nepal. The Nepalis armed bands continued raiding Sikkim, and pushed their way far into the Nepalis territory, i.e. Sikkim. Lepcha leader, Chutup, whose half sister was married to the King of Sikkim, distinguished him during such situation and they manage to protect Sikkim for sometimes. For that Lepcha leader, Chutup came to be known as 'Satrajeet' the title given by Nepalis (victory of seventeen times again Nepali). During that time the Sikkimese continued their support to the Limbus against Nepalis for conquering Limbuwan, but after Satrajeet beaten up harshly they failed to support, as

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<sup>16</sup> Bhattacharya, *The Prayer-Wheel & Sceptre: Sikkim, Op. Cit.*, p. 64.



a result Nepalis were able to defeat them and occupied Illam and part of western Sikkim.<sup>17</sup>

In this connection, L.B. Basnet stated that:

In 1788-89, the Gorkha General, Jahar Singh Thapa, crossed the Chiabhanjang pass, taking the Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim by complete surprise, and made a lightning raid on Rabdentse (the state capital). The capital was caught as if in napping, and the most disorganized abandonment of any capital imaginable took place. Terrified by the suddenness of the blow, the Bhutias and Lepchas fled for their lives. The Raja and Rani had to flee so precipitately that the very thought of saving any valuable property had to be abandoned. So close was the pursuit that the Raja and his band of faithful followers had to subsist, for days together, on yam and other edible roots. The Lepchas' unrivalled knowledge of the jungle and its produce came in handy. After days of toil, the party made its way to Kabi. The Raja and his family lived in great misery, suffering untold hardship nursing better hated for the Gorkhas.<sup>18</sup>

From above statement it was clear that, because of the Gorkhas, the raja and his family faced huge problems and the Nepalis were strong enough to capture the capital of Sikkim.

Furthermore, any hopes of relief were further dispelled when the invaders were reinforced by another army under the General *kazi* Damoder Pande, who conquered the whole of Sikkim west of the Tista. There on the bank of the Tista, at

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<sup>17</sup> Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Op. Cit.*, p.67.

<sup>18</sup> L.B. Basnet, *Sikkim: a Short Political History*, S. Chand and Co (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 25-26.

the confluence of Tista and Rangeet, the Nepalis celebrated their victory on the Magha Sankranti day of 1789.<sup>19</sup>

The bulk of the Nepalis, have been migrated even before the middle of the nineteenth century. Scholars like T.B. Subba, believed that the territory between the eastward of River Mechi to the westward of Teesta River of Sikkim, was under Nepali for about thirty-seven year since 1780. Many Nepalis living on that territory are known to have come and settled in Sikkim since then. Not only Sikkim, but the present day Terai belt consisting of Siliguri and other adjoining region was also inhabited by Nepalis. The term Siliguri is itself renamed by them as the original name was *Silagadi* which means stone fort, constructed by the Nepali army at the time of invasion of Sikkim.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Lepcha clan Magarmu suggested the close ties between the Lepcha and Magars in Sikkim, which indicates the presence of Nepalis in this region. Their early settlements in Sikkim are confirmed on the basis of their association of the Tibetan term '*Dzong*' or Jong for fort. Even today, one of the largest Magar villages is situated in Saldun, under Chakhung constituency of west Sikkim, which indicates ancient Magar settlements. The village seem to be in existence when the Nepalis brought Sikkim under their control sometimes in between 1770-1815. It is believed that Magars were confined to Nepal west of the river Arun. However, S.K Gurung believed that a significant number of Chettris might have settled down in Sikkim during that time. Brahmins were inseparable from the movement of the Gorkha

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p.117.

occupying force along with other service castes, such as Damai, Kami, and Sarki and perhaps Majhis (boat man of Majitar).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it is very much possible to conclude that a large numbers of Nepalis were living in Sikkim even before the British encouraged them for migration, who came by invading the territories and started settling down in invaded place.

### **Second Wave of Nepali Migration**

At this juncture, the British East India Company had gradually been making slow inroads into the Himalayan Kingdom. Their primary interest was to find a possible trade route to Tibet, and Sikkim provided the most viable one. A conflict of interest to occupy the Terai region had ultimately culminated in the Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814-1816, where the British wanted Sikkim to be a supporter and it was promised that Sikkim's lost territories would be restored. The British won the battle; as a result the treaty of Sugouli was signed on second of December 1815 and ratified on March 4, 1816 between the East India Company and Nepal. As a result, the Raja of Nepal agreed and promises that they never disturb the Raja of Sikkim and in case of any differences between them, the British Government would arbitrate.<sup>22</sup> Nepal also surrendered the entire hilly region to the east of the Mechi River and west of the Tista River to the East India Company, which the former had annexed from Sikkim in 1788-1790. Finally in 1817, through the treaty of Titalia, the British restored some area to Sikkim. The treaty finally gave the British their long cherished goal to control the polity and economy of Sikkim.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, trade interest of the East India

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

Company was also protected through this treaty. However, fear of Gorkha invasion persisted, and as a result of that the capital was further shifted from Rabdentse to Tumlong.<sup>24</sup>

However, the favourable climatic conditions encouraged Europeans in India to request the then Governor General of Bengal, William Bentinck, to find out a suitability of place for sanatorium. Finally, in 1835, Darjeeling was ceded to the British, in the Treaty of Tumlong (1861), and Sikkim lost all freedom of action and became a de facto protectorate of the British. At the same time, tea plantation in Darjeeling was also started in a large scale.

After 1815, Nepalis were recruited to the British Indian army because British believed that they were not only strong military force but also worked as labourers in tea plantation in Darjeeling. In 1835, the British acquired the areas of Darjeeling with a population of 100 as the site for the health resort. In 1839, Darjeeling contained about a hundred Basti- wallahs, but within ten years more than 10,000 houses had settled there. People from all parts of the country flocked there, it having become a great market, the slaves and menial classes of Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal, all took refuge there.<sup>25</sup>

The second wave of Nepali migration was prevailed in North-east India and the foothills of Southern Bhutan accelerating in the middle of the nineteenth century. Following the Indo-Bhutanese war of 1864, a section of the industrious Nepali people particularly the Newars were entered into Bhutan, Darjeeling and from there to

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<sup>24</sup> H.H. Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Sikkim Nature Conservation Foundation, Gangtok, Reprinted 1984, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Sinha, *North- Eastern Frontier of India, Op. Cit.*, p. 139.

Sikkim.<sup>26</sup> After 1816 treaty, which was made between Nepal and the British East India Company, the Nepali migration began to increase in India especially in northeast region.<sup>27</sup>

This wave witnessed a large scale migration of Nepalis particularly the Newars<sup>28</sup>. The Newari were invited by the Namgyal courtiers for the purpose of developing thinly-populated southern district of Sikkim, so, that agriculture could be encouraged and cash revenue could be generated. Subsequently, they settled down in Darjeeling hill station around 1840s and engaged in trading activities across the border of Nepal. They entered into Sikkim as monopolists of the copper mines and minting industry. He saw the Newaris as enterprisers at Darjeeling and was blooming as businessmen involved in minting coins in Nepal. So, he decided to use Nepalis with a view to develop Sikkim's natural resources by minting currency for Sikkim. Hereafter, the Newaris encouraged other Nepali ethnic groups to settle in newly acquired areas of Darjeeling and Assam hills with a view to clearing the forest for tea plantation and increased the state revenues.<sup>29</sup>

The first Newari person who migrated into Sikkim was a Lakshmidas Pradhan, a Newar from Bhaktapur (Nepal) in Sikkim. Many have suggested that with the

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<sup>26</sup> Nath, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup>Bal Gopal, Shrestha, *The Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture, and Identity in the Diaspora*, Vajra Book, Kathmandu, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> The Newars are the original inhabitant of the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. The word Newari itself derived from the name of the country Nepal. At the same time, the term 'Nepal' was derived from the ascetic and patron saint of Nepal "Ne-mini", despite the Gorkhas conquest of 1769. The Newars are said to be early settlers of the land, who spoke Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language. However, the Newars, managed to maintained their history, culture, tradition and language. Simultaneously, they were considered skilful and successful trading community, and involved in the trans-Himalayan trade. They are part of Hindus and located themselves below the Brahmin and Chettris in the caste hierarchy.

<sup>29</sup> Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

arrival of Lakshmidas Pradhan, many other Newars migrated there also. There are a number of stories in circulation about how and when Lakshmidas Pradhan left Nepal. While some suggested that Lakshmidas escaped from the Nepal valley to save his life right after the Kot massacre of 1846, others believe that he left Nepal long before that incident. According to Bhuwan Prashad Pradhan, a historian from Nepal, Lakshmidas Pradhan and his family had already moved from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu and were engaged in business there. Chakraj Timila another historian, believed that Lakshmidas Pradhan living in the Inacycho quarter of Bhaktapur at the time of his departure from Nepal. According to Cakraraj, Lakshmidas first began his trade in Darjeeling by selling *gundruk*, a form of dried and fermented green leaves. At the same time, Bhuwan Prasad Pradhan, writes that the location where Lakshmidas used to sell *gundruk* is known as *Gundri Bazaar* at Darjeeling to this day. Later on Lakshmidas succeeded in establishing himself as a successful businessman in Darjeeling.<sup>30</sup>

According to another source, the Newari migration started from 1853 only. In the beginning the Nepali migration in Darjeeling started soon after the establishment of tea garden. Later on, Newars settlement in Sikkim started for the purpose of working in copper mine in Tuk Khani in South Sikkim and later on they worked in different copper mines. Some Newaris of Sikkim suggested that the then king invited him to Sikkim to act as the collector of land revenue.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Shrestha, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>31</sup> A.C, Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim*, Thomson press (India) Ltd. Delhi, 1975, pp. 27-28.

### Third Wave of Nepali Migration

Soon after British took over the Darjeeling, they developed it for military station. For this, they need a large number of people to settle in Darjeeling as well as in Sikkim.<sup>32</sup> Scholars like P.K Rao and BSK Grover consider that Nepalis were particularly encouraged to settle in Sikkim by the British for two important reasons: a) to accelerate the economic growth and b) to counteract the supremacy of the Sikkimese royal family and the Bhutia councillors.<sup>33</sup>

During the regime of Tsugphud Namgyal, the relations with British East India Company were not good because of the ‘Pagla Dewan’<sup>34</sup>. After British make Sikkim as a de facto ruler from 1861, they vanished the much maligned ‘Pagla Dewan’ along with his family from Sikkim, his opponent, the Lepcha Kazi, Cheebu Lama<sup>35</sup> from Chakhung, was appointed as the first Sikkim *Vakil* at Darjeeling.<sup>36</sup> However, Sidkeong Namgyal in order to improve the relation with British India he made effort by making a state visit to Darjeeling and met George Campbell, the Lt. Governor of Bengal. After Sidkeong Namgyal, his half brother Thutop Namgyal became a ninth

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<sup>32</sup> P.K, Bhattacharya, *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim: Studies Coinage*, K P Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, New Delhi, 1984, p.15.

<sup>33</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p.117.

<sup>34</sup> Dunya Namgyal, better known as Pagla dewan, he was a Prime minister of Sikkim, but after he made imprisonment of two British officers he was vanished from Sikkim and gave a title as Pagla Dewan.

<sup>35</sup> He was a Lepcha Kazi from Chakhung. Though a priest by profession, he was appointed as the first Sikkim *vakil* at Drjeeling in 1861. He accompanied in 1864 Eden mission to Bhutan as Tibetan interpreter. As a reward for his pro-British service he was granted a tract of land comprising 115 square miles situated in the northwest of the Darjeeling district.

<sup>36</sup> Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

ruler of Sikkim. At the same time Maharaja Thutop Namgyal supported a British venture to construct a road from Darjeeling to Jelep-la on the frontier of Tibet.<sup>37</sup>

Subsequently, after the expansion of the British rule in India, they led various expeditions against the tribes of the North-east, and involved in large scale lumbering and clearing of the forest for agriculture and plantation. However, all works encouraged Nepali migration. The Nepalis were just the people to fit for these needs. So, they encouraged Nepali migration in large numbers to the forest, roads, construction sites, mines, and plantation and so on.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the Government of India appointed J.C White<sup>39</sup> as a Political officer of Sikkim at Gangtok in June 1889, to administer the region and to serve the affairs of the state in conjunction with a council composed of the chief Dewans, Lamas and *kazis*, and he himself was a president. By doing so, White recognized the entire systems of administration in Sikkim.<sup>40</sup> J.C White, once he became political officer of Sikkim, he took the job of infrastructural and economic development and gave much importance to Nepalis.

In this context, the Nepalese were used to counter the Bhutia's intransigence. Herbert Risley symbolically put it way back in 1894 in terms of

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<sup>37</sup> Bhattacharya, *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim: Studies Coinage, Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Monimala, Devi, "Economic History of Nepali Migration and Settlement in Assam", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 29 (June. 21-27, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> John Claude White was one such person, who does not figure prominently along with Lord Clive, Warren Hasting and William Bentinck and so on. He was born in Calcutta in 1853 of a mixed German and British parentage. He attended secondary school in Bonn, Germany and Graduated in 1876 as a civil engineer from the royal Indian civil engineering college in England and began working in Bengal Public Works Department, from that very year. He joined as an engineer in 1883 at Kathmandu British residency and worked there for about a year. Perhaps his task included inspecting the residency grounds, making surveys and preparing building plans and estimates for the construction. By this time it was clear that, White had a good sense of architecture.

<sup>40</sup> White, *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.



religious conflict between the Hindu Nepalese and the Buddhist Bhutias, in which he predict that the Hindu Nepalese would have their way:

The Lepchas are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and Nepalis are pressing forward...here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim, as in India Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism, and prayer wheels of the lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahmins. The land will follow the creed; the Tibetan proprietor will gradually be dispossessed (by the Nepalis) and will be taken them to petty trade.<sup>41</sup>

White preferred to encourage the Nepali migration mainly because, he was more familiar with them as he worked in the British residency at Kathmandu as engineer. That is why he always proved them for their bravery. In the looks of such British officers about the Nepalis as Basnet puts it, “the Nepalis made as good a peasant in peace time as they made soldiers in war”.<sup>42</sup> *Administrative report of 1905-1906*, also stated that the Nepali people is hard working and thrifty as a rule, pay his taxes regularly and at the same time is a law abiding and intelligent settlers<sup>43</sup>. Even, Veena Basin also remarks that the British always favoured the opening up of the waste land of Sikkim to Nepali settlers. Nepali immigration was encouraged as a labourer was needed for construction of roads and extending of agriculture.<sup>44</sup>

Due to the efforts of such British officers like White, Sikkim was opened for free trade with India. Sikkim government also agreed to render all possible help to the British for establishing a trade route to Tibet. Gradually, British residency was also

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<sup>41</sup> Riskey, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1905-1906*.

<sup>44</sup> Veena, Basin, *Ethnic Relation Among the People of Sikkim*, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi, 2002, p. 5.

established in Gangtok. Then after White introduced revenue-earning agricultural methods and encouraged a large number of Nepali immigration. They also supplemented the demand for labour, especially required for British led construction activities.<sup>45</sup>

Gradually, after a large numbers of Nepalis migration occurred, the demographic composition of Sikkim underwent a rapid change. As a result Nepali settlers soon outnumbered the Bhutia – Lepcha combination of the population in Sikkim (Table 1). Both pull and push factors worked in favour of immigration of the Nepalese in Sikkim. Migration of the Nepalese into Sikkim also brought a technological change in agricultural practices in Sikkim, because neither the Bhutias nor the Lepchas had interested in the settled cultivation. Therefore, migration of the Nepali helped the settled cultivation to expand in Sikkim. The migrated Nepalis were allowed to clear forest and carried out cultivation but without having any land rights. Consequently, it not only had a positive impact on agricultural production and average productivity but also strengthened the economic conditions. Then Immigrant Nepali as an agrarian community had undoubtedly increased the size of the economic marginalization section.<sup>46</sup>

Table 2.1: Population, Tribes, and Chief Families of Sikkim.

Caste or ethnic groups	Male	Female	Children	Total
Lepcha	2,362	2,399	1,001	5,762
Bhutia	1,966	1,960	968	4,894

<sup>45</sup>H, Namgyal, “The Sikkimese History of Land- Holding and the Darjeeling grand”, *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1966, p. 48.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Limbu	1255	1,159	942	3,356
Gurung	1,108	1,047	766	2,921
Murmi(Tamang)	801	778	1,288	2,867
Rai	742	691	587	2,020
Khambu	726	648	589	1,963
Kami	626	464	580	1,670
Brahmin	521	372	521	1,414
Manger	363	346	192	901
Chettri	303	253	273	829
Newar	240	183	304	727
Slaves	124	99	103	326
Darji	102	92	93	287
Miscellaneous including troops	350	72	99	521
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,589</b>	<b>10,563</b>	<b>8,306</b>	<b>30,458</b>

Source: H.H. Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Sikkim Nature Conservation Foundation, Gangtok, Reprinted 1984, p. 27.

*Another Administrative Report of 1910-1941* says that the immigration from Nepal continued but not an as large scale as formerly. According to the latest census of 1941 the population has in the last decade increased from 59,014 to 88, 248 or 49%. Out of this increase of about 29,000, probably 5,000 or 6,000 must be attributed to the more careful and through system adopted at this census.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the Year 1910-1941.*

Table 2.2: Showing the increasing of population of Sikkim from 1931-1941.

Year	Male	Female	Total
1931	55,776	54,032	1,09,808
1941	63,027	58,752	1,21,789
Total Increased	7,251	4,720	11,981
percentage of Increased			10.91%

Source: File No. 194, Judicial Department, Government of Sikkim. 1941, Sikkim State Archives.

J.C. White pointed out that by 1911 Nepali population in Sikkim increased enormously. By far the greater number of the inhabitants of Sikkim is the Nepalese in 1911 that number nearly 50,000 of the estimated total population of 80,000.

Table 2.3: Growth of Population in Sikkim since 1891.

Years	Bhutias	Lepchas	Nepalese	Total
1891	4,894	5,762	18,714	30,458
1911	NA	NA	NA	87,920
1931	11,955	13,060	84,803	1,09,808
1951	15,626	13,625	97,863	1,37,725
1961	49,894 <sup>1</sup>	49,894	1,08,165	1,62,189
1971	23,572	22,316	1,34,275 <sup>2</sup>	2,09,843

**Notes:** <sup>1</sup>. Figure based on religious (Buddhism) affiliation.

<sup>2</sup>. Figure based on claims of linguistic affiliations.

<sup>3</sup>. NA- Not Available.

Source: A.C Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008; *Census Reports from 1891-1971*.

The above table shows very clearly the increase of Nepalis from 1891 to 1971. The increase of the percentage from 1891 to 1971 is more among Nepalis than other two groups. This was due to regular inflow of Nepalis into Sikkim.

The population of Sikkim was recorded as 87,920 in 1911. The census of 1931, figure for the ethnic affiliation were, when out of a total population of 109,808, 13,060 were Lepchas, 11,955 Bhutias and the rest mainly Nepalis. The population figures rose to 121,520 in 1941. In 1951, statistics based on religious affiliation presented an overall increase to 137,725 with 39,397 Buddhists (largely 13,625 Lepchas and 15,626 Bhutias) and 97,863 Hindus (include of 15,991 Limbus). After 10 years these figures increased to 162,189, 49,894 and 108,165. The figures for 1971 census were the following: total population 209,843; Bhutias 23,572; Lepchas 22,316 and Nepalese 134,275. There was a dramatic change in the population of the state after its merger with India.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim, Op. Cit.*, pp. 36-37.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE IMPACT OF NEPALI MIGRATION ON ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF SIKKIM

In the earlier days, the Sikkim economy was completely primitive. The earlier inhabitants the Lepchas, were semi-nomadic and tribal in character, and followed a primitive mode of acquisition of foods. In such a society all the production and means of production are equally distributed among them. After the arrival of the Bhutias in Sikkim, they tried to establish a Tibetan-type of feudal society. However, with the fact that king had no money and state had no monetary system, king received revenue from the tenant in the form of kind which was mainly consisted of the agricultural produce and the labour for the transit purpose.

Before the advent of the British, the economy of Sikkim had been purely in a primitive stage. The trade was irregular which was carried out between different sections of the community by a barter system, because of the absence of the currency. At that time the Nepalis currency was accepted as a legal tender in Sikkim by 1849 AD, it was only after British encouraged the Nepali settlers, especially the Newars who were the trading community of Nepal, and who took a charge of the minting and mining in Sikkim. Gradually, after Nepali migration, minting was started. The Newari traders also started mining, after having a land on lease in various copper mining in Sikkim. Since then, money based trade and commerce continued in Sikkim.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P.K Bhattacharya, "Study of a Few Documents Relating to the Coinage of Sikkim", *East and West*, Vol. 32, No. 1/4 (December 1982), p. 95.

The Nepali people, who migrated to Sikkim in different periods, had a different culture and practices. They are responsible for making money changes in the economy of the region. They were much skilled and experienced and were very easily moulded to suit in the physical situation and gave rise to a form not much different from the economy that was practised in similar Himalayas.<sup>2</sup>

### **Agriculture**

However, as compare to the other Himalayan states, the economy of Sikkim is based on agrarian in characters, which was totally based on terrace farming. Hence, it was reasoned by Suresh kumar, that the Bhutias, who were mainly traders, and the Lepcahs who always wanted an easy going method for farming, the agricultural economy is the contribution of industrious Nepalis who by virtue of historical antecedents had acquired immense knowledge on terrace farming.<sup>3</sup> However, it was because of the similarity of the topography with Sikkim, the Nepalis who migrated from Nepal secured their agricultural habits by introducing the terrace farming in Sikkim.

T.B Subba, in his one of the paper explains about the pre- Namgyal agrarian society of Sikkim. He stated, “Not much is known about the agrarian society of Sikkim before the establishment of Namgyal Dynasty (1642). It was believed that, even during the pre- Namgyal period of Sikkim, lands were measured in *Dhoors* or

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<sup>2</sup> B. Bhattacharya, *Sikkim Land and People*, R. Kumar, Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Suresh Kumar, Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, a Traditional Perspective*, Prem Sing Bist, Delhi, 2011, p. 59.

paces of land and tax were collected from the tenants on that basis”.<sup>4</sup> From above statement, it is clear that before the establishment of Namgyal Dynasty, the process of agriculture as well as the process of taxation which was collected from tenants was existing.

However, after 1642, the agrarian structure was feudal in character till its integration with India. There was a hierarchical in order. At the top, there was a king or a Chogyal and according to the traditional Sikkimese economic system, all land belongs to the king. After king there were Landlords, then *kazis* or *thikadars* who collected revenues from the tenants as much as they can without proper measurement or assessment of land.<sup>5</sup> However, the first Chogyal, Phungtsug Namgyal, appointed twelve ministers from Bhutia and divided Sikkim in twelve *Dzones* which is headed by twelve Lepchas. The king leased out the portion of land as a gift to the *kazis* and *thikadars*, who were primarily absent, landlords. After they got land on lease from the king they also leased out that land to the tenants, under various exploitative terms. They appointed *Mandals* (headman) and *Karbaris* (accountant to assist Headman or *Mandals*) for the purpose of rent collection from the tenants and also given them a power to settle the disputes of the tenants.

However, it was believed that until the large scale immigration from Nepal, the system was continued, where the people of Sikkim was categories into three classes and king came first then chief, *kazis*, *thikadars* and royal councillors in the middle, and the tenants in the bottom. Moreover, chiefs were ethnically either Lepchas or Bhutias with the exception of the manger chief. The middle category also

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<sup>4</sup>T.B, Subba, *Agrarian Relation and Development in Sikkim, Limits of Change*, Paper Read in the Seminar, (August), (NE ICSSR: Shillong), 1984, p. 319.

<sup>5</sup> A.C, Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim*, Thomson Press (India) Ltd, Delhi, 1975, p. 47.



headed the power. They were basically the Lepchas and the Bhutias, a few Nepalis, were made *thikadars* and even the councillors but that was much later.<sup>6</sup>

There were four categories of tenants in the agrarian economy of Sikkim. They were *adhiadar / adhiawal*, *kutdars / tenam*, *pakhureys* or *sukumbasis* and *chakureys/ slaves*. The *adhiawal*, was a sharecropper. He had to pay half of the produce as a rent and generally possessed a sizeable amount of land. The *kutdars* had to pay a specific amount of grain (minimum half of the produce) as rent to the landlords at the end of the harvest. In case of *tenam*, rent was paid in the form of cash and rent was fixed for one year then after it was renewed after the discretion of the landlords. Landless agricultural labourers were called as *pakhureys* or *sukumbasis*. The *pakhureys* had to pay rent in the form of labour as well as in the form of gift or *kosali* which consisted of milk, butter, eggs, and fowls. *Chakureys* or a slave, are the same group of people who served their life to the landlords.<sup>7</sup>

Up to the mid eighteenth century, there was no proper system of revenue collection in Sikkim, however, it was only during the time of Namgyal Phungtsug in 1740s a Tibetan Monk, Rabden Sherpa who used to come Sikkim for the purpose of accompanying the infant king and served as a regent for five years. During that time, he introduced a system called *Zolung*, which was a crude form of assessment and collection of revenue, which was either in cash or kind. The tenant had to pay a

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<sup>6</sup> Subba, *Op. Cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>7</sup> Anjan, Chakrabarti, "A Critical Review of Agrarian Reforms in Sikkim", *Economy and Political Weekly*, Vol. 45, No. 5, (January 30, February 5, 2005), p. 24.

basketful of rice and a rupee annually, which means tenant, had to pay their rent in the entire situation, including war conditions.<sup>8</sup>

In 1889, a new modified system of assessment and revenue collection was introduced in Sikkim by J.C White, the first political officer of Sikkim. He introduced a new system with an objective to enhance the revenues of the government. He along with Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan facilitated some Nepalis of Darjeeling, especially a two Newari brothers, Lakshmidas Pradhan and his uncle Keshab Narayan Pradhan and they get a *thikadarship* for Cultivation and for Mining. By that time, Bhutias opposed digging of earth because it was against their religion. After White introduced the lessee landlordism,<sup>9</sup> it proved that a new system was so successful, where land revenue constituted as high as 67% of the total revenue of Sikkim.<sup>10</sup>

The lease landlordism which was introduced by the first political officer was proved to be successful. Hence, by the end of the nineteenth century, a large portion of the cultivable lands were brought under the lessee systems. At the same time, through the deed of land grants, numbers of lessee landlordism were created throughout Sikkim. However, the majority of the landlords were formed by the *kazis*, which was called as “lessee landlordism”. Hence, they claimed themselves as a leading landlord which belonged from the old Nobility of a feudal system. Subsequently, with the emergence of lessee landlordism, a new land settlement pattern was developed, as a result for a first time in the history of Sikkim, changed

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<sup>8</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> The term landlords refer to a person who owns a property and allows these properties to another person to use it for a fee. Hence, the person who is using that property is called a tenant. So, the agreement between a landlords and a tenant is known as lessee landlordism.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

was occurred in land ownership. Consequently, lessee landlords who was particularly the Newars and later on they were designed as *thikadars* were emerged. However, before there were only a Bhutias and Lepchas who became a landlords but after the introduction of new land settlement pattern, Nepalis were also emerged as a landlords. However, after a course of time, the Nepali landlords were gradually increased in numbers and from 1913 onwards, about one third of the total *elakas* were under the Nepali *thikadars*. Though they got land on lessee but they did not have any security on tenancy right on a plot of a certain land under the jurisdiction of lessee landlordism. Meanwhile, the Nepalis were settled down in waste land under the control and jurisdiction of lessee landlords, as skilled and unskilled labourers. As a result, by 1917 onwards, more land was brought under the lease system as a cultivable land. They even converted paddy fields to cardamom field which have a much high income.<sup>11</sup>

After White appointment as political officer in Sikkim, he introduced a *Zamindari* system and other landlordism, which was created in all areas and asked peasants to confiscate the land of the innocent tenants who did not pay the rent.<sup>12</sup> Under the lessee landlord system which was introduced by White, the landlords collected the revenue from tenant on behalf of king. The landlords encouraged the settlement of the Nepali migration with the view to increase both the revenue and to extract the free forced labour. As a result, in 1915, the two sets of land revenue rates were introduced in Sikkim. And the system was continued until the abolition of landlordism in 1949, in this system, almost half of the landlord and revenue collector

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<sup>11</sup> Jeena, Tamang, *Feudal Lords in Sikkim: A Study on the Kazis and the Thikadars in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Department of History, Sikkim University, 2016, pp. 64-67.

<sup>12</sup> File No. 9, Judicial Department, Government of Sikkim, 1920, Sikkim State Archives.

were the Nepalis and rest were either the Lepchas or the Bhutias. Nonetheless, the lessee of land given to the Nepali landlords was for ten years, and to the Bhutias and the Lepchas landlord, is for fifteen years.<sup>13</sup>

However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Sikkim witnessed a change in the land holding pattern and collection of revenue. For the purpose of the revenue collection, the state of Sikkim was divided into 104 estates, out of which, 61 estates were leased out to the *kazis* and the *thikadars* and they were assigned to pay a fixed sum of revenue to the state. Five estates belonged to the monasteries and fifteen estates which were managed by the Maharaja as private estates.<sup>14</sup> Altogether, there were 71 landlords, out of which, 13 were Lamas, 21 were *kazis* and 37 *thikadrs*. Moreover, within their territorial area the landlords enjoyed a certain degree of civil and administrative power, including magisterial power.<sup>15</sup>

Table 3.1: Community Wise Distribution of Estates in Sikkim in 1913.

Type of authority	Name of landlords	Number of landlord's district (estates)
King	1	9
Monastery	2	2
<i>Kazi</i> , and lama <i>kazi</i>	16	19
Bhutia-Lepcha landlords	15	21

<sup>13</sup> Vibha, Arora, "Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim", *Sociological Bulletin*, 56 (2), May - August 2007, p. 205.

<sup>14</sup> Chakrabarti, *Op, Cit.*, p.23.

<sup>15</sup> Gurung, *Op, Cit.*, p. 61.

<i>Thikadars</i>	9	23
Ordinary peasant	1	1

Source: D.P. Boot, *Tribal Land Holding and Cropping Pattern in Sikkim*, Sikkim through Periodical Article, Reprint Seminar Proceed, p. 198.

However, after large scale immigration of Nepalis as labourers and cultivators, who were encouraged by White with the view to bring an economic growth in state, and settling down them in Sikkim, these immigrants introduced a new form of cultivation which is known as terrace cultivation. The Nepalis frequently take a land on lease from Lepchas and Bhutias for rice cultivation.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the economy of the state was improved. On the other hand, there was an increased competition between Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalis, which led to the social confrontation among them. As a result, in 1897, restrictions were imposed on transfer of land from of Bhutias and Lepchas to others including the Nepalis. In 1917, the land prohibition law was redefined on Revenue Order No. 1. Apart from this, inequality regarding payment of revenue is also prevailed. But discrimination for payment still prevailed, for the same amount of land, the Bhutias and Lepchas used to pay less than Nepalis. The rate of house tax between the Lepchas- Bhutias and Nepalis was also unequal, the Nepali used to pay Rs. 6, while it was Rs. 2 for the Bhutias-Lepchas.<sup>17</sup> Further, preference rates of eight *annas* i.e. half a rupee per *pathi* of seed sown was charged to Bhutia and Lepcha farmers, while, on the other, the Nepali ethnic groups were charged fourteen *annas* i.e. Rs. 0.87.5. Again, Bhutia and Lepcha farmers were allowed to graze three cows free of charge while, the Nepalis were taxed eight *annas*

<sup>16</sup> File No. 21, Judicial Department, Government of Sikkim, 1912, Sikkim State Archive.

<sup>17</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 62.

(Rs. 0.50) per cattle.<sup>18</sup> The reason behind such discrimination was because of the system of lessee landlordism, where *kazis* and *thikadars* worked as *zamindars* like in permanent settlement in British India. Hence with such system they can take fifty percent for themselves and fifty will be given to the king.

In relation to the above statement, the *Administrative Report of 1912-13* supported the inequality, where it stated that the rate of assessment of terrace rice cultivation was fixed at one-fifth of the produce for Nepalis and at one-eighth for Bhutias and Lepchas in accordance with the report of the committee. Then after, they appointed a member of committee for the purpose of the inquiry into the matters.<sup>19</sup> In this matter, the ryots even asked in the petition to the Maharaja of Sikkim, who in order to resolve the matters, he himself involved in this matter and he appointed a member of committee for solving the problem of the fixing of the rate of assessment of terrace rice fields. The members in the committee were the Barmaik *kazi*, Rai Sahib Lambodar Pradhan on behalf of the landlords, Subedar Tikaram Gurung and Pratab Sing Rai of Namchi on behalf of the ryots, and Babu Dalbahadur Giri on behalf of the state.<sup>20</sup> However, with regard to the unequal rate of taxation, it is pertinent to note that, in the beginning the inequality was practiced on the basis of the status of peasantry, but at later period the inequality was however, practised on the basis of communities.

Consequently, the different categories of *ryots* with unequal status were emerged. The *ryots*, irrespective of differentiation within, had to render for free

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<sup>18</sup> Dick B, Dewan, *Education in Sikkim: an Historical Retrospect*, Tender Buds Society, Pedong, 2012, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the Year 1909-1910*.

<sup>20</sup> File No. 10, General Department, 1912, Government of Sikkim, Sikkim State Archives.

service of labour to their landlords, headman and the account assistant of the headman. Forced labour in Sikkim was an outcome of the feudal system of administration, which was also existed in other feudal societies as well. This system was practised in Sikkim throughout the Namgyal period. Even during the time of British this system was carried out, where the feudal lords exploited the weaker section of people beyond its limits. However, unlike other feudal societies, in Sikkimese feudalism, the *kazis* and the Nepali *thikadars* play an important role as feudal lords. They were invested with Judicial and magisterial powers. Hence, the ultimate result of their power was to extract labour service from the peasants, including Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalis, which has taken into the form of free labour. Anna Balikci estimated that until 1924, all the villagers had to furnish eighteen days a year of free labour to the state, the landlords, and the *mandals*, seven days to state, one day for road preparing, six days to the landlords and four days to the *mandals*, which was totally a free labour.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, these were compulsory labour which was imposed on the *ryots* for which they didn't get anything in return. The landlords had unlimited powers over civil and criminal matters and could do anything to the *ryots* if they got a power in hand. In addition, the various kinds of force labour were *Kalo-bhari*, *Kuruwa*, *Jharlangi*, and *Thekibeti*, also prevailed in this region.

*Kalo-bhari*: The practice of this system of forced labour was started after Sikkim's contact with the British. '*kalo-bhari*' in Nepali term literally means 'black load'. However, it was already discussed in earlier chapter that the main interest of the British in Sikkim was linked with its trade in Tibet. British sold arms and ammunitions to Tibet. The *kalo-bhari* was utilized not only by the kings and feudal

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<sup>21</sup> Anna, Balikci, *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, Brill publications, Leiden, 2008, pp. 87-90.

lords in Sikkim but also the British, who utilized the labour service of the common people. In fact this system was accelerated in Sikkim after the British intervention in Sikkim. It was the British who gave contracts for transportation of *kalo-bhari* to *kazis* and *thikadars*. Meanwhile, it was a duty of a *kazis* and *thikadars* to collect the *ryots* to carry the roads.<sup>22</sup>

However, it is interesting to note that why this system of forced labour was called *kalo-bhari*. In order to save the commodities from rain and snow they were wrapped in cardboards and put inside gunny bags bedaubed with tar. The tar protected the commodities from outside rain, and it also hides commodities within, hence the black colour gave the loads its local name *kalo-bhari* or black load. The *ryots* had to carry the load across the border of Tibet. There was a risk, while carrying a load through the snow and sometimes they even die on the way. If they failed to comply in their duty they were punished by the *kazis* and the *thikadars*. But this system was abolished in the year 1924 vide Notification No. 5874/G dated 15-8-24 and new system of payment called *Bethi* was introduced.<sup>23</sup> Hence, it can be said that not only the *kazis* and *thikadars*, but also the British were culprits, because they also utilized this system to get more profit by transporting commodities to Tibet without much expenditure.

*Jharlangi*: The British were supposed to maintain the trade routes along with the necessary security. But they have to depend on the *kazi* contractors. British paid money to *kazis* for this purposed, but the peasants who worked for them did not get their wages. This system of labour without wage was called *Jharlangi* system. Under

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<sup>22</sup> Hong, Tran, *Chogyal's Sikkim: Tax, Land & Clan Politics*, SIT Digital Abroad, 2012, pp. 61-65.

<sup>23</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 64-65.



this system, there was neither a fixed time nor place for carrying such loads. The *kazi* contractors could order anyone to offer their unpaid labour according to their convenience, and the peasant had no choice. The disobedience invited punishment.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the *ryots* had to carry loads within country. Apart from this, it was also used for the tourists and officers, to carry goods without any payment. The tourists and the officers came into Gelkhola by train, where coolies received them and they even sometime had to wait for a long period of time, because loads comes from different places like from Rangpo, Singtam, Melli and Gangtok. The coolies who waited for the loads are called *kuruwa*, who waited in such a different station, with their own afford of food, clothes for at least for fifteen days, till another person come to replace him.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, it is noted that the *ryots* get no wages for such service, which means they have to work free. At the same time, the extraction of the above service at all times accompanied by the cruelties, if they disobeyed they got punishment. Consequently, unable to bear the oppression from *kazis*, *thikadars*, *Mandals* and *Karbaris*, many families left Sikkim and took shelter in Nepal, Darjeeling, Assam and Siliguri.<sup>26</sup> From above, it is cleared that the *ryots* or the peasants who don't have anything are actually involved in force labour. Moreover, all communities of Sikkim were affected by such systems. Subsequently, all of them were brought together to fought against the feudal regime and they were successful to abolished such system during the middle of the twentieth century.

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<sup>24</sup> Dewan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>25</sup> Subba, *Op. Cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>26</sup> Dewan, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 90-96.

Above conditions led to the peasant protest in Sikkim to abolish such social evils. They formed a various political parties. By August, 1949 they started 'No-Rent' movement, which was led by Nayan Tshering Lepcha and Chandra Das Rai.

### **No Rent Movement**

The movement was actually started in February 1949, where some five thousand people of Sikkim were gathered at Rangpo, for the Annual Conference of the state congress. During that time, Tashi Tshering launched the 'No Rent Campaign', by asking the people about the discontinuation of the land revenue as well as other taxes to the Sikkim Durbar, until and unless their demand was fulfilled. Hence, this movement also turned their nature and demanded the participation of whole peasantry. Side by side, the people also understand about the movement that, the failure and success are entirely depending on their own efforts. Hence, after concluding the Annual conference on February 6, 1949, Chandra Das Rai, along with five other congress leaders were arrested, for banning of political assemblies. At the same time Tashi Tshering, because of his old age, he was arrested and kept his in his own room and kept like a cage lion. However, the people take an arresting case seriously, as a result a large number of people around five thousand defied curfew. However, in order to resolve the matter, the Indian political officer Harishwar Dayal, came to Sikkim and he advice the government to withdraw the warrant of arrest against Tashi Tshering. Moreover, in February 11, 1949, demonstration was started by around seven thousand people. Basnet stated that "a number seen for the first time

in Gangtok". After this the arrested leaders along with Chandra Das Rai, were released.<sup>27</sup>

However, the first round confrontation between the state congress and the Sikkim government was over with the victory of people. Hence, the congress movement was suspended at the instance of Harishwar Dayal, who promised to help both to the Maharaja and congress committee. But he was failed to do so; as a result the congress decided to continue their agitation, with the weapons of Satyagraha, through which Gandhi got success in India. Hence, on May 1, 1949, about ten thousand people were gathered at Gangtok to offer Satyagraha. Basnet, again stated that, "early in the morning a three thousands strong procession went up to the palace, shouting slogans like 'Down with the Landlords', 'Long Live Democracy', 'People Rule is a must', etc". At that time, the Maharaja Kumar, were on the way to palace but because of the demonstration he was compelled to get down and travels until the gate on foot, amidst ear splitting slogans.<sup>28</sup>

As a result, Durbar was cleared about the people's anger, and they can even cross all the limits. Gradually, after the incident the political officer advised the Maharaja for accepting their demands. As a result, Maharaja accepted their demand and formed a popular ministry under the chief minister ship of Tashi Tshering. Hence from May 9, 1949, a new chapter was begun in Sikkim after closing the dark feudal chapter forever.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> L.B, Basnet, *Sikkim: a Short Political History*, S. Chand and Co (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 86-87.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Until then, the peasantry had to pay their taxes through the intermediaries like *kazis*, who collected taxes by their own without proper measurement of land. Due to such protest, the government issued a Notification on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1949 announcing that the land revenue previously paid to the agent of the estate could be paid directly to the Government.<sup>30</sup> However, it is pertaining to note that peasants of Sikkim had made complaint against over assessment of labour service. However, most of the peasants who gave a free labour belonged from Nepali communities because of which there was a friction in between Lepcha-Bhutia and Nepalis because most of the *kazis*, *thikadars* were from Bhutias and Lepchas.

In this matter, Vibha Arora in one of her articles, “Assertive Identities, Indigeneity, and the Politics of Recognition as a Tribe: The Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Limbus of Sikkim”, stated that there was a friction among them and the Lepcha and the Bhutias treated Nepalis as a foreigner. To solve this problem what actually government took a step:

Sikkim Subject status epitomises the indignity of the Lepchas and the Bhutias by reinforcing the migrant identities of the Nepali group. Under the Sikkim Subject Regulation of 1961, the early Nepali settlers, who paid land revenue were recognised as legal settlers and given the Sikkim Subject Certificate. The Bhutias and the Lepchas were automatically granted citizenship, irrespective of their status as an owner or the cultivator of the land. A large portion of the Nepalis were denied to grant the Sikkim Subject status, since they were labourers. According to the 1975 Sikkim Citizenship Order, ‘every person who immediately before 26 April 1975 was a Sikkim Subject under the Sikkim subject regulation of 1961 shall be deemed to have become a

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<sup>30</sup> Council Order, Sl. No. 39, File No. 28/1/1911, Land Revenue, Govt of Sikkim, 1911.

citizen of India on that day'. In addition to the Nepalis, there is a large section of population of Indian origin, residing and working in Sikkim (like Marwari and Bengali) since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who does not possess a Sikkim Subject Certificate.<sup>31</sup>

### **Trade and Commerce**

There was no trading system in particular before British advent in Sikkim. It was started only after the British started to rule over Sikkim, it was there but not in a regular basis. There were no denying facts that the bulk of Nepali tenants were immigrant and were subject to all kind of exploitative devices that existed between landlords and the tenants, sub-tenants and finally landless labourers. A section of the Nepalis belonged to the Newar community, migrated from Nepal in the middle of the eighteenth century, and settled down in Darjeeling, and then came to Sikkim. By the middle of the last century, they monopolized copper mines and minting industry. By the end of the nineteenth century, these Newars elevated to the status of *thikadars*. After that they improved their economic position in a very short period of time. Therefore, the Nepalis after changing the cultivation practice, the Lepchas were pushed back in agricultural activities and Bhutias in trading activities.

In the past the Indo-Tibetan trade routes lay from Varanasi to Lhasa through the Kathmandu valley with the emergence of Nepali Kingdom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This route came under the control of Nepalis. In British India, Calcutta emerged as the political as well as commercial capital of the British Indian Empire. They discovered a most strategic and economic trade route from Calcutta to Lhasa through the Chumbi valley. In 1773 British because of a good relation with Bhutan rulers, they opened a

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<sup>31</sup> Arora, *Op. Cit.*, p. 205.

trade route to Tibet. Further, in order to make a trade relation with Tibet, they started negotiations with Sikkim and make Sikkim as a buffer zone.

As a result, in one hand the hostilities arose between Tibetan and the Bhutia aristocracy and on the other hand, the British led a number of military expeditions to Sikkim between 1850 and 1860. These hostilities led to the agitation between them, which led to the peace treaty which was known as Treaty of Tumlong on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1861. It was signed between the British and Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal. It consists of twenty three articles. Through this treaty Sikkim came under the British control, and all the trade concessions demanded by the British Government was granted. The British granted many trading privileges under article VIII, which assured a free trade between Sikkim and British.<sup>32</sup>

By then the Indian rupee appeared in Sikkim, after handover the territory of Darjeeling in 1835. The introduction of Indian rupee gave a great shock to the almost stagnant economy of Sikkim. At the same time a number of Nepali settlers in Sikkim were witnessed towards the latter half of the Nineteenth century. The two brothers Tseepa Lama and Lasso Athing, the brothers of Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan, brought the Newari traders from Darjeeling to Sikkim, (who migrated from Nepal to Darjeeling after the establishment of tea garden in Darjeeling by the British) under which a large tract of land was confiscated from Sikkimese nobleman and handed over to them. At the beginning this deal was criticized by the people of Sikkim but after some initial difficulties faced by these Newari traders particularly Lakshmidas and his uncle Keshav Pradhan, settled themselves in Rhenock and other areas of

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<sup>32</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 51-52.

Sikkim and began their business and also worked of extracting copper from mines which was found in Sikkim.<sup>33</sup>

After opening up trade route to Tibet by British, Sikkim took the opportunity, to open a passage not only between themselves and with the inhabitants of Darjeeling but also between Bengal and Chinese territory. By 1860 commercial interest, were diverted from western Tibet to the road to Lhasa through Sikkim. Jahar Sen explains that a considerable trade sprang up between Lhasa and Darjeeling. The Tibetans exchanged gold dust, musk, borax, wool and salt for English clothe, tobacco etc., and the people of Sikkim gained as carriers of this trade, and their Government raised considerable revenue from the transit duties. The merchandise imported from Sikkim to Darjeeling, as the report indicated, consisted of horses, cattle including sheep and goats, blankets, salt, musk, wax, ghee, oranges, millet, rice, lime and copper. Trade was conducted in four routes in Sikkim: to via Namchi and Chadam to the great Rangeet and to via Zeeme to Goke and Tramdue to Colbong.<sup>34</sup>

After flourishing trade between Sikkim and other places like Darjeeling, Tibet and China, the Government had to improve transportation system. In 1879, a cart road to Jelep la pass was completed they also constructed a route to other places and in 1881 the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway had been opened up to Darjeeling. As a result, it shows that the brisk trade was going on between Darjeeling and Sikkim during the last decades of the nineteenth century. For this, by 1892-93, an increase of commodity movement was noticed on both exports and imports. Hence, the exports

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<sup>33</sup> P.K, Bhattacharya, *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim: Studies Coinage*, K P Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 25-26.

<sup>34</sup> Jahar, Sen, *Sikkim and Himalayan Trade*, URL: Himalaya Socanth. Com.Ac.UK/ Collection/ Journals/bot/Pdf-1981-03-02. Pdf. pp.11-12.

that raise the income were in timber, hides cattle, sheep and goats and woollen manufactures. At the same time the rise in imports was evident in cotton goods, tobacco, rice etc. During 1893-94, trade with Sikkim showed further increase of 15.47 percent and 41.20 percent in comparison with the previous year. However, the large increase of import trade was recorded particularly in the rain crops, timber, gram and pulse, and hides of cattle and in the export trade, rice, salt, mineral oils and cattle. Further, in 1895-96, it was increased by 61.93 percent.<sup>35</sup>

However, trade with Tibet was continued but in small scale during the time of 1909-1910, and trade with British India continued steadily to increased, through the values of the imports and exports, are not as much owing to lower price prevailing. The below tables gave the details on the value of the trade in grains and pulses.

Table 3.2 Exports and Imports between Sikkim and Bengal

Years	Exports to Bengal (In Rs.)	Imports from Bengal (In Rs.)
1906-07	1,14,319	1,40,822
1907-08	5,18,976	1,82,421
1909-10	3,40,499	2,03,727

Source: *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the Year 1909-1910*.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 12-14.



Table 3.3 Trade in the various Commodities with Bengal from 1906-1907

Articles	Imports into Bengal from Sikkim		Exports from Bengal into Sikkim	
	Quantity (in maunds)	Value (Rs.)	Quantity (in maunds)	Value (Rs.)
Gram and pulses	29,905	1,00950	2,520	8,808
Wheat	-	-	6,208	26,388
Other spring crop	383	976	-	-
Rice-husked	812	4,193	28,093	1,67,873
Rice- unhusked	81	198	-	-
Other rain crops	1,16,374	2,34,182	318	653
<b>Total Grain and Pulse</b>	<b>1,47,555</b>	<b>3,40,499</b>	<b>37,148</b>	<b>2,03,727</b>
Coconuts (in Numbers)	-	-	8,536	452
Fruits and vegetables	26,250	36,128	3,733	4,866
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,73,805</b>	<b>3,76,627</b>	<b>49,417</b>	<b>2,09,045</b>

Source: *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the Year 1909-1910*

### Mining and Minting

Immigration of Nepalis were always favoured Khangsa dewan and Phodong Lama for the development of Sikkim, but Tsugphud Namgyal and his son, Sidkeong Namgyal and Bhutia councillors were always hostile towards the Nepalis because of the Nepalis incursion on Sikkim. But the fact was that the king had a little control

over his country, after then British influence started on Sikkim from 1861 onwards. In 1867, the two councillors issued the deed of the land leased to the Newars in perpetuity to their descendent to all the forest, trees, bamboo, canes etc., within the boundary of this land they can do whatever they like to do. The deed also described the boundaries of leased land and adjoined them to pay annually Rs. 500 to the king and Rs. 700 to the two councillors. After this, they settled the large numbers of Nepalis on their land and turned out to be influential in Sikkim. In 1883, Nepalis got leased for copper mining and minting coins on behalf of the Maharaja of Sikkim.<sup>36</sup>

The main reason behind the leased out of land to the Nepalis for copper mining was due to the unwillingness of the mining by the local Lepcha- Bhutia communities. The Bhutias believed that mining would bring ill-luck to the land and they also disliked the animals sacrifice performed by the Nepalis during festivals. Lakshmidas Pradhan and his uncle settled down in Darjeeling, and started their business by selling *Gundruk*. In 1867 they settled down in Sikkim in order to work at the copper mines in Tuk khani in South Sikkim and later on went on to work in other copper mines.<sup>37</sup>

After they became a lease landlord they started copper mining. Then, Lakshmidas invited his family as well as other Nepalis for working in copper mines. He owned a large track of land which was leased out by Phodong Lama and Khangsa Dewan. He after that invited a hundred of Nepalis for looking after the land under his

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<sup>36</sup> Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim, Op, Cit.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>37</sup> Bal Gopal, Shrestha, *the Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture, and Identity in the Diaspora*, Vajra Book, Kathmandu, 2015, pp. 7-8.

control. In this manner, a large number of Newars were migrated and started settling down in Sikkim by the beginning of the 1870s.<sup>38</sup>

Working in mining was continued through the period and the mining where Lakshmidas and his families work were still there in Sikkim. It comes to know by the administration report of 1909-10, because the worker of Messrs, Burn and Company was applied for the concession to utilize the water power in Sikkim.<sup>39</sup> Hence, from above instance it was clear that those places where Lakshmidas worked was still continued that is why the people were asking for the water facilities.

After Newari traders' possession of copper mines in Sikkim, they started minting coins. Before that Sikkim had no currency system, and the traders followed a barter system during that period in Sikkim. The Newari traders were having an advantage of minting coins; they put forward their case to the proper authorities. For this, the British authorities granted them permission to use Nepalis currency in Sikkim. In 1881, the king of Sikkim formally approved the request and gave permission to begin minting Sikkim's own coins. In 1883, government of Sikkim gave the contract to mint coins for five years, and Lakshmidas introduced the first Sikkim's coins into the market. After they got permission and started minting coins for the Sikkim government, they were all known as *Taksari* meaning 'owner of minting houses'.<sup>40</sup>

P.K Bhattacharya in 'Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim' explained about the process of minting coins.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Administrative report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1909-10.*

<sup>40</sup> Shrestra, *Op. Cit.*, p. 30.

This was almost the same in all the native states of India. These coins are fashioned in a rude way with the hammer and anvil, and have plain, unwilled edges. Stamping is carried out in a similarly rough manner— one workman holding the piece of metal between the two dies, whilst a second, with a blow from heavy hammer completes the coins, with very few exception, the coins bear only portion of the inscription carried by the dies.<sup>41</sup>

After copper mining was started, the coins of Sikkim were also made out of copper by cutting of copper sheet in pieces conforming more or less to a particular weight standard and they called as a *Doli Paisa*, (*Doobdi Paisa*). After that these, Newari traders has been issued a permission to mint *Chepte Paisa*, and they paid one hundred rupees as a government tax for a period of five years.<sup>42</sup>

The Newari traders, who then became the owners of the copper mines of Sikkim, found that the minting of copper coins would not only facilitated commercial transactions but also found that it was a profitable business, From 1882 AD, both *Doli Paisa*, and later *Chepte Paisa*, which were the Nepalis currency earlier, began to issue by the Newari traders of Sikkim.<sup>43</sup> The minting of coins was gradually done in two places near the mines of Tuk- Khani and Pachey Khani. The new coins remained in circulation in Sikkim along with the coins of Nepal. Similarly, the Sikkim coins were

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<sup>41</sup> Bhattacharya, *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Bhattacharya, “Study of a Few Documents Relating to the Coinage of Sikkim”, *Op. Cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup> Bhattacharya, “Study of a Few Documents Relating to the Coinage of Sikkim”, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 96-97.

also accepted as legal tender in the territories of Nepal. But later on, Nepal disallowed the Sikkim's coins, which gave a fatal blow to the minting business of Sikkim.<sup>44</sup>

Later on it appears that the process of extracting copper from mines and also for the minting of copper coins, were given to the other service people who belong to the 'Kami-class and a few others who had the technical knowledge in this respect'. Newars brought them from Nepal in large numbers as already mentioned above for the purpose of working in this field.<sup>45</sup>

Lakshmidas and his family helped the British in different ways and for this the British authorities in India honoured them by giving a specific title, like Lhambodar Pradhan, son of Lakshmidas Pradhan, honoured a title with Rai Sahib for his service and loyalty to the British. Then later on, the grandson of Lakshmidas Pradhan became a chief magistrate and chief executive officer by the government of Sikkim.<sup>46</sup>

Hence, it is possible to summarised that, the economy of Sikkim was a part and partial contribution of the Nepalis after they immigrant to Sikkim with a varying techniques.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Bhattacharya, *Aspect of Cultural History of Sikkim, Op. Cit.*, P. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim, Op. Cit.*, P. 77.

## CHAPTER 4

# POLITICAL IMPACT OF NEPALI MIGRATION IN SIKKIM

It was already mentioned in previous chapters that the modern history of Sikkim has begun after 1642. However, it has been a common practice among the scholars to begin political history of Sikkim with the establishment of the Namgyal Dynasty. According to S.K. Gurung, the main reason behind this was the Tibetan lamas have destroyed the documentary evidence when they migrated to Sikkim.<sup>1</sup> That is why there is no availability of authentic chronicles of Lepchas, who are considered as the original inhabitants of the country.

A detailed documentary and chronological history of Lepchas is not available but a few was scattered. Legend described that the first Lepcha ruler of Sikkim was Pohartak Panu<sup>2</sup>. Though, there is no record of immediate successors of him but sometime during 1230-1316 AD. After him, Turvey Panu, ruled Sikkim near Kurseong as his capital, now in Darjeeling district and he had a Tsong (Limbus) and Mangars in his court.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Debnath provided a little Historical information from their folklore and tradition. From this folk-lore and Lepcha traditions, they refers that there are four Lepcha kings, who reigned evidently at the same time in different parts of the

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<sup>1</sup> Suresh Kumar, Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, a Traditional Perspective*, Prem Sing Bist, Delhi, 2011, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> The King who was polite, humble and a sociable person and who remain bachelor and possess no property, such person was called as Panu, *Ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> D. Dahal, *Sikkim Ko Rajnaitik Itahas, Part 1*, Subba Publication, Gangtok, 1984, pp. 2-3.

region. However, after they died, positions like treasurers and headman were vacant. So, it may be clear from above about the kings and their reigns in Sikkim before the arrival of the Bhutia chief Khye-Bumsa. Subsequently, Khye-Bumsa and his successors acquired their loyalty and tried to re-transferring the occupied land from the headman and treasurers who occupied earlier and Khye-Bumsa created a feudal clan of the Lepcha chief under the subservient to the Bhutia supremacy.<sup>4</sup>

However, a valid account of Sikkimese political history is found from the time of Bhutias and Nepalis, who have been migrated in later periods from different places. This chapter tries to seek, address and examine the emergence and establishment of democracy from a monarchical system, since from the emergence of Namgyal Dynasty, till merger of Sikkim with Indian Union and the Nepalis involvement in politics. It will also analyze that how Newars community became a *thikadars* in Sikkim. After the establishment of British Political officer in Sikkim, he along with two brothers encouraged them for Economic benefits and for these they gave a land on lease to the Nepalis particularly the Newars. However, the Newars were became a *thikadars* after migrating to Sikkim, and later on they were also renowned as *Zamindars*/landlords. However, after the evolution of *kazis* and Nepali *thikadars*, a new pattern of regional and local administration was emerged in which the Bhutia-Lepcha *kazis* and the Nepali *thikadars* played the central role, as a fact they were even successful for displacing *Dzongpas* (district officers), which was the main agent in Sikkim government at regional level. Hereafter, the Newars were added into the

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<sup>4</sup> J.C, Debnath, *Economic History and Development of Sikkim*, Abhijeet Publication, Delhi, 1984, pp. 17-19.

administration of Sikkim as a revenue collection officer, not only that later on, these Nepalis were also included as members in council.<sup>5</sup>

### **Political Evolution during Namgyal Dynasty**

The political system of Sikkim that existed during the Namgyal Dynasty was essentially a type of Himalayan theocratic feudalism parallel to the Tibetan Lamaist pattern and based on absolute monarchy. Where, the ruler was not only the secular head of the state, but he also had a responsibility to rule the subject in accordance with the tenants of the “*Chhos*” (the *dharma*). The basic rule of the lamaists policy in Sikkim ever 1642 was the *Chhos* as the established religion of the rulers (Chogyal).<sup>6</sup>

The political structure of the theocratic Sikkim combined with three distinct segments: the clergy, the aristocracy, and the commoners. During that time, monasteries were considered as an important institution not only for the socio-religious points of view, but also from economic and political consideration. Because of which the monks were drawn from Bhutia-Lepcha families and ordained a monk of Pemayangtse monastery. In the same way, clergyman were trained in various ways like as painters, calligraphers, embroiders, carvers and skilled craftsmen. The monks were worked in the secular fields as well. Since the ruler were also a monk-incarnates constantly in transaction with the high lamas of Tibet.<sup>7</sup>

However, the kingdom that Phungtsug Namgyal, a first Chogyal of Sikkim established was a strong and viable political entity, because of the fact that most of the

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<sup>5</sup> Durga, P. Chettri, *Decentralised Governance and Development in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p.12.

<sup>6</sup> *Chos* means dharma while *rgyal* means ruler, Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> A.C, Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim*, Thomson Press (India) Ltd, Delhi, 1975, p. 19.



areas, where both Lepcha and the Bhutia were inhabitant which were under his direct administrative control. The Limbus and the Mangar's areas in the west and southwest was nominal allegiance by him. Further, he extended the boundary of Sikkim as far as Chumbi valley in the North, Tagongla (Bhutan) in the east, Titalia (Bihar) in the south and Devagaon (Bangladesh) and Singalia range in the west. He ruled the country very smoothly by considering Bhutias as a father, Lepchas as a mother and Tsongs (Limbus) as a son, which means a member of a same family.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, for administrative efficiency, he divided the territory into twelve districts such as Lassu, Dallom, Yangthang, Sang, Libing, Malling, Simik, Pandam etc and governors were appointed from Lepchas and Limbus.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequently, the political history of Sikkim was further changed when Sikkim, came into contact with the British power in India during the reign of Tsugphud Namgyal. However, Sikkim already loosed much of the territories from Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, and it was reduced to a tiny strip of land. During such time, British being a major power in the Indian side of the frontier were involved into the politics of Sikkim as a mediator on behalf of Sikkim, who has been suffered from the Gorkha aggression.<sup>10</sup> The main reason behind the British entry into Sikkim was for the trading purpose to Tibet via Sikkim. After they came to Sikkim, they found a Darjeeling and thought that Darjeeling was suited for development into a hill station, where the soldiers and the civilians of the British East India Company could take rest

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<sup>8</sup> George, Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway, History and culture of Sikkim*, Sterling Publication, Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1983, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> N. Sengupta, *State Government and Politics: Sikkim*, Sterling Publications, Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1985, p. 3.

in summer seasons. Therefore, for this they ceded a Darjeeling in 1835 from Sikkim.<sup>11</sup> As already mentioned in previous chapters, that Nepali incursion was started from 1774 onwards because of which Sikkim lost many territories from Nepal. Even during his (Tsugphud) reign, the Nepali forces were continuously raiding the plains in the south.<sup>12</sup> However, the most important things that Sikkim witnessed after the British came into contact with Sikkim, was the evolution of the *Kazis* and the Newars as a *thikadars*.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Nepalis are involving in politics of Sikkim with the help of British. As a fact that British also encouraged the Nepali immigration and they brought them into work on preparing and working on tea garden, for building roads and bridges, as for a political reason for counter acting the strong Tibetan influence on Sikkim.<sup>14</sup>

### **Nepali's Struggle for Power after Immigration**

As already mentioned in the first chapter about the various waves of Nepali migration into Sikkim from the eighteenth century onwards, it was visible only from the nineteenth century because from the nineteenth century onwards a bulk of Nepalis belonging from all communities migrated to Sikkim including Nepali *thikadars*, especially the Newars. The Nepalis' main location after Nepal was Darjeeling, where a Newars *thikadar*, Lakshmidas Pradhan, migrated to Darjeeling. Later on, the Nepalis slowly moved to Sikkim and settled in South Sikkim.

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<sup>11</sup> L.B, Basnet, *Sikkim: a Short Political History*, S. Chand and Co (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1974, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Sengupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Sinha, *Politics of Sikkim, Op. Cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 41.

Moreover, after 1850s, Sikkim was suffering from internal disputes between Bhutia and Lepcha for power, so a frequent durbar intrigues were also carried out by them. As a result, the court was full of with intrigues, conspiracy, instability and factionalism. Therefore, this period witnessed the authority of the king and disunity among the Bhutia- Lepcha *kazis* and the prominent members of the ruling class.<sup>15</sup> However, from this period onwards, the system of polarization of the ruling class was witnessed and the internal ethnic disputes have increased.

Gradually, from this period onwards, the division among the aristocracy of Sikkim especially the *kazis* was visible and the most important issues among them was that some had become pro- British and some are anti- British. However, the main reasons behind their division were that pro-British ruling class thought that the encouragement of Nepali immigration was profitable opportunity for them. While, at the same time anti- British ruling class thought that the presence of Nepali in Sikkim was a big threat to their political and economic dominance, so they went to the side of the king and the lamas of Pemayangtse monastery.<sup>16</sup> From the above it was clear that the settlement of the Nepalis under the influence of British policy makers in combination with some influential local Lepcha *kazis* was for their own political and economic interest, which naturally led to the common cause for anxiety amongst Bhutia elites.

Since the British always adopted a divide and rule policy in the regions where they made them as a colonies, here in Sikkim too they adopted the same policy. As a result, British tried to seek allies from the discontented *kazis* and the courtiers who

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<sup>15</sup> A.C, Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Politics*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 70-73.

<sup>16</sup> Hong, Trans, *Chogyal's Sikkim: Tax, Land & Clan Politics*, SIT Digital Abroad, 2012, p. 42.

were against the king. However, they were successful for doing so, and therefore, the durbar was divided on all the major issues faced by the state including the allowing the settlement of the Nepalis. Consequently, the Nepalis faced lot more problems because of the fraction between the Bhutia and the Lepchas in one side and the Kings and the section of *kazis* in another side. Therefore, one section retained the power in the state with the support of the British and the other section united themselves with the Tibetan interests along with the king.<sup>17</sup>

However, according to the above instance, the British was successful for their settlement policy; they encouraged the huge and rapid influx of a Nepalis including Mangars, Limbus, Newars, and other remaining ethnic groups, who gradually began to clearing and cultivating the large tract of unoccupied areas in the Southern parts of the region. Bhattacharya gave a reasonable answer, why actually British encouraged them in Sikkim. He explained that they were more industrious and advanced in agriculture, hardy porters, and were faithful as well as a reliable people.<sup>18</sup> Debnath also gave similar reason for this, where he stated that the above statement may be true, but the important reason behind the encouragement of Nepali settlement in Sikkim was that The British wanted to reduce the Tibetan influence on the Bhutia monarchy. Apart from this, they wanted to have a large population of their own supporters in the state more than the Chogyals of Sikkim were having.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, after British started encouraging Nepalis into Sikkim, some councillors also had the keen perception of the benefits accruing to them by settling

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<sup>17</sup> Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> Aparna, Bhattacharya, *the Praying Wheel and Sceptre: Sikkim*, Nachiketa Publications, Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai, 1994, pp. 69-70.

<sup>19</sup> Debnath, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 22-23.

the Nepalis. Apart from them, an influential section of the Sikkimese *kazis* shared the similar view of the British and at the same time, they interested in cultivating their huge land holdings by reassigning lands to the agriculturally competent Nepalis; for this, they not only earned bribes but also got more rents through abundant harvest. Hence, other landlords have also begun to allow the settlement of the Nepalis on their lands.<sup>20</sup>

While the pro-immigration faction led by the Khangsa Dewan and Phodong Lama, transferred the lands on the lease in favour of Newars. They did so, because they will get land revenue in the form of salaries continuously from the political officer. Later on, Newars asked to the political officers for discontinuation the salaries to both Khangsa Dewan and Phodong Lama, and asking that salaries should be given to them instead of Dewans from Government.<sup>21</sup>

Eventually, the Bhutia leaders like Dala Athing Densapa and Tarching Lama of Pemayangtse monasteries led the anti-immigration faction. The struggle was carried out between the two groups when Khangsa Dewan seized the land belonged to Lasso Athing and subsequently, they transferred these land as a lease in favour of Lakshmidas Pradhan and his brothers. Gradually, the flame of fire for rivalry was witnessed between the two faction groups. In addition, Thutob Namgyal met the British Governor Ashley Eden at Kalimpong for requesting him to stoppage of Nepalis immigration. The Government partially accepted the request of Maharaja by ordering that the immigrants were to be allowed to settle on uninhabited and

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<sup>20</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> File No. 29, General Department, Government of Sikkim, 1906, Sikkim State Archives.

wasteland only. As a result, the matter was sorted out and the Nepalis were allowed only in uninhabited areas.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, J. C. White was appointed as the first political officer of Sikkim in 1889. With this, the political structure of Sikkim further changed. Moreover, he implemented the settlement plan, with the help of the pro-British Lepcha councillors and landlords, who always favoured the Nepali settlement in Sikkim for the economic development of the region. Furthermore, he seized the authority of the Chogyal Thutub Namgyal, and he brought the state administration under his control. Hereafter, from 1890 onwards, he became the virtual ruler of Sikkim, who exercised the power of both internal as well as external affairs of Sikkim.<sup>23</sup> Further, he introduced an advisory council, which was later called the state council, and it was mainly composed of *kazis*, landlords and the *thikadars* who were mainly Nepalis, and considered them as a loyal people to the British Government. He further made a rule that the members of the council have to attend regularly at the palace and the political officer always took attendance of them, in which the maharaja also has to be present on each occasion.<sup>24</sup>

In this connection, Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim stated that, the council grew both in terms of maturity and in its content gradually with the progress of time requiring it to meet the council thrice a year.<sup>25</sup> White, tried his best to establish a modern system of administration in Sikkim, and for this in 1895, he

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<sup>22</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 44-46.

<sup>23</sup> Saul, Mullard, "A History from the Hidden Land: Some Preliminary Remarks on a Seventeenth Century Chronicles", *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 41, No. 1, May 2005, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p.197.

<sup>25</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1935-36*.

restored the charge of judiciary to the Maharaja Thutob Namgyal, which was seized earlier. Gradually, after him his son Sidkeong Tulku, the then maharaja of Sikkim was appointed as the vice-president of the state council and given the charge of education and forest department in 1908, after he returned from Oxford University by completing of his education.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from this, during Tashi Namgyal reign, certain other departments were also transferred to the Chogyal and he had a full control over this.<sup>27</sup> Even for this, K.P Dewar, who was the chief executive officer in his administration of Sikkim, assisted the Chogyal in the administrative issues. Gradually, by April 1918, Charles Bell, the then political officer of Sikkim, conferred Tashi Namgyal with full powers of administration.<sup>28</sup>

However, the history of Sikkim witnessed a changes in socio-economic as well as in political field in twentieth century. Where, bad feudal landlords leading a life in a harder manner, at the same time a good one allowing him some respite. At the same time the peasant were also successful in removing the feudal tyranny during that time.<sup>29</sup> Earlier the peasants led their life very harshly because of the exploitation of the landlords and *kazis*. As already mentioned earlier that Charles Ball, the then political officer of Sikkim, restored Tashi Namgyal to Maharaja in 1918. He had a long reign of about fifty years spanning the periods of the British raj and Independent India. During his reign, many social and economic reforms were witnessed in the state. One of them was the setting up of an independent judiciary in 1916, where all

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1915-16*.

<sup>28</sup> *Administrative Report of the Government of Sikkim for the year 1818-1919*.

<sup>29</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

the judiciary functions of the Kazis and the landlords were supervised by the Supreme Court. Later on, the judicial and magisterial functions of landlords were completely abolished and replaced by the judicial procedures on the Indian civil and criminal codes.<sup>30</sup> However, Basnet, remarks that the bitter strife that marked the early days of the immigration of the Nepalis into Sikkim had long ceased. Most of the anti-immigrant party also accepted them but only a few among the Bhutia landlords discriminated the Nepalis. However, after a passage of time, these Nepali peasants were successful to secure their position and settled down in the village, where they can live and cultivated their acre along with Bhutia and Lepcha peasants. Their free labour was also over and they too can pay their land revenue directly to the state coffers. Side by side, the Bhutia and Lepchas had learned about the terrace cultivation from the Nepali immigrant.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Thikadars***

The term *thikadars* is a word of Indian origin denoting to those whose function was set up according to the terms and conditions of contract. In Sikkim, there were various important places or fertile places which was suitable for cultivation among them Morung was one. However, in Morung<sup>32</sup>, four different classes connected with the land, they were *Jotedar*, *Bhagaidar*, *Thikadar* and *Praja*. Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century, Sikkim witnessed an emergence of a Newars as the Nepalis

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<sup>30</sup> Kotturan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>32</sup> The plains of Terai below the foothills of the Darjeeling district were called as Sikkim Morung and traditionally it was the part of Sikkim. In the Treaty between Nepal and Tibet in 1792, this Tract of land was ceded to Nepal. However, in the anglo-Nepal war of 1814-1815, Sikkim was allied with British and in the subsequent treaty of Titalia concluded in 1817, where by Sikkim regained this territory. It was however, annexed by the British in 1850 after which Sikkim has never been able to regain it, Debnath, *Op. Cit.*, p. 23.



counterpart of the *kazis* and they came to be known as *thikadars* (contract holders). However, they were a counter part of *kazis*, but their contract was not hereditary whereas the *kazis* had a hereditary title to their office.<sup>33</sup>

However, the history of the origin of *thikadars* in Sikkim can be traced back from British period. However, as already mentioned above that during the British domination in Sikkim, the pro-British officers in Sikkim government like, Cheebu Lama<sup>34</sup> and Phodong Lama determined to introduce Nepalis in the administration for their usefulness in developing Sikkim. After Cheebu Lama, becoming the first *Vakil* at Darjeeling in 1861, the Newar entrepreneurs were turning from rag to riches in Darjeeling, and they created a considerable wealth for the state, which was witnessed by Sikkim. Therefore, Cheebu Lama, decided to use them as a good office with a view to develop Sikkim's natural resources. Furthermore, he was stuck with the fact that Sikkim had no currency of her own at that time and Newars were thriving as businessmen in minting copper coins in Nepal.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Sikkim too needs to have its own currencies and it was taboo for the Lamaist Bhutia- Lepcha *kazis*, to extract the mines.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Khangsa Dewan and Phodong Lama struck a deal with the Newari traders of Darjeeling, under which a large tract of land was given to the Nepalis brothers.<sup>37</sup> However, the main reason behind the deal with Newari brothers

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<sup>33</sup> Debnath, *Ibid*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>34</sup> He was the Lepcha *kazi*, from Chakung, though a priest by profession, he was appointed as the first Sikkim *Vakil* at Darjeeling in 1861. He accompanied in 1864 Eden mission to Bhutan as Tibetan interpreter. As a reward for his pro- British services, he was granted a tract of land comprising 115 square miles situated in the north west of the Darjeeling district, Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Op. Cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> The Sikkimese people particularly Bhutias and Lepchas believed that mining would bring ill luck to the land, it would also cause Sickness to men, cattle and crops would fail, Sinha, *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>37</sup> P.K, Bhattacharya, "Study of a Few Documents Relating to the Coinage of Sikkim", *East and West*, Vol. 32, No. 1/4 (December 1982), p. 95.

was that they were expert in both mining and minting thus they were invited to Sikkim for mining and minting purpose. So, during Sidkeong Namgyal reign, he granted a land on lease in his state to them. As a result, they settled in Sikkim for working in copper mines in Tuk Khani in South Sikkim.<sup>38</sup>

However, the system of lessee landlordism was continued in the later years as well, with the fact that, a deed dated 1874 recorded that two Lama Brothers has leased lands to Lakshmidas, Chandrabir, jitman and Lambodar. Under this deed of lease, they were given the seldom land with the lease of contact to hold power upon descendants. The deed describes as follows:

Boundary of the land on the North of East form [sic] Rooe Naddi to its confluence to the Tista River, on the East South all along the Tista River, on the South and West all along the Burra Rungit upto its suspension Bridge over the Rungit river, on the North-West from the Rungit suspension Bridge along the old road up to Pukka village along the Government Road to Koolow Ektompani, from the Jhora of Koolow Ektompani up to the Manfar river, on the East from the North of Manfur all along the Manfur Jhora up to its source.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, in 1883, Newars got a contract to mint coins for the periods of five years by the authority of Sikkim. As already mentioned earlier, among the Newars, Lakshmidas Pradhan was more prominent one. Hence, by 1913, the family members of Lakshmidas Pradhan could be found all over Sikkim. Some important members of Lakshmidas Pradhan's family were Dalbahadur Pradhan, Ratnabahadur

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<sup>38</sup> Kotturam, *Op. Cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> "Deed of Lease of Lands to Luchmidas and his Family in 1874" signed and sealed by Phodung Lama and Khangsa Dewan, Dated, 1873, in S.K. Sharma, Usha Sharma, (ed.) *Documents on Sikkim and Bhutan*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 14.

Pradhan, Sherbahadur Pradhan, Rai Sahab Lambodar Pradhan, Rai Saheb Lakshmi Narayan Pradhan.<sup>40</sup>

Following were the list of estates that was owned by Lakshmidas family.

- ❖ Kitam, Chidam, Namthang, singtam and Chakung, owned by Rai Saheb Lambodar Pradhan;
- ❖ Pakyong, Rungpo, Pedang, Rigoo, Pathing and Timi, owned by Rai Saheb Lakshmi Narayan Pradhan;
- ❖ Ney and Broom, owned by Suriman Pradhan;
- ❖ Pachey Khani and Taza, owned by Dalbahadur Pradhan;
- ❖ Rhenock, owned by Ratnabahadur Pradhan;
- ❖ Marming, owned by Sherbahadur Pradhan.<sup>41</sup>

From the above, it is clear that though the Nepalis in initially were small in number but they were able to acquire important positions within the Sikkimese administration with the help of both British authority and pro-immigrant *kazis*. These people were also renowned as landlords/*zamindars* or the contractors/*thikadars*. However, the grandson of Lakshmidas Pradhan, who was known by Rai Saheb Balkrishna, was more popular and he is even known as ‘Baburam’. He built the well known *baunna dhoka darbar* (the palace with fifty-two doors in Namthang. Even a song was composed which was related to the *dhoka* and the song was; ‘*kasko baja kasko baja*

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<sup>40</sup>Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Political, Op. Cit.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>41</sup> Bal Gopal, Shrestha, *the Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture, and Identity in the Diaspora*, Vajra Book, Kathmandu, 2015, pp. 26.

*Baburam ko baja'* (it means: whose band is it? whose band is it? It is Baburam's band) this song is still popular among the people of Sikkim.<sup>42</sup>

Another house was also built by a descendant of Chandravir with fifty-two doors in Pachey Khani, which is known today by five mines, in east Sikkim and mainly inhabited by people of Nepalis origin.<sup>43</sup>

### **Political and Administrative Development of Sikkim after 1947**

Gradually, after the Departure of the British from India in 1947, the British Empire was collapse. Subsequently, the British had to give up into the demands of the Indian National Congress, which was led by Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, India gained independence through a non-violent struggle which was an epoch making event in the history of human mankind, through which the rule of colonialism was over and it leads in an era of freedom and self rule from the boots of the European colonialist.

Consequently, the remarkable changes have been occurred after India got Independence on August 15, 1947, and after the advent of the popular Government in India, because of which it was considered an important event in Sikkim as well. Gradually, after independence, the intellectual among the peasants and the politically motivated people of Sikkim hope for a better deal for them. For which, those enlightened members of peasantry who was influenced from the lofty ideas which was proclaimed the Indian leaders, tried to free themselves from the feudal bondage.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> BSK, Grover, *Sikkim and India 1947-1975*, Jain Brothers, New Delhi, 1974, p. 34.

At the same time, Sikkim was bounded by new terms of declaration with Indian Union under the Indian constitution Act of 1935. Consequently, a group of people went to Delhi for further discussions with the chamber of Prince, a body representing the several hundred princely states in India and the new Government of India, with official delegation which was led by Maharaja Kumar (later the Chogyal) Palden Thondup Namgyal with Rai Bahadur T.D. Densapa, Private Secretary to the Maharaja as a member. However, during this discussion both Government of India and the Constituent Assembly, which have been established to draft a Constitution for a new and independent India, formulated a draft that Sikkim had a special position.<sup>45</sup>

However, the Sikkimese delegation continued their discussion with the Government of India as a result they decided to conclude their discussion with a standstill agreement between the Sikkim Durbar and the Government of India. So, they signed an agreement on 27 February 1948, which pointed out that “all agreements, relations and administrative arrangement as to matters of common concern existing between the crown and the Sikkim state on August 14, 1947, were deemed to continue between the Dominion of India and the Sikkim Durbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or treaty. These matters of common concern, specifically included currency, coinage, customs, postal channels and regulations, telegraph communication, External affairs and defence matters.”<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, the final negotiations for a new treaty between the Durbar and the Government of India were signed in Gangtok on December 5, 1950 between

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<sup>45</sup> V.H. Coelho, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Indian Council for Cultural Relation*, Vikas Publications, New Delhi, 1970, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-26.

Maharaja Tashi Namgyal and Harishwar Dayal, the then political officer of Sikkim.<sup>47</sup> Gradually, after the establishment of popular Government in independence India, it encouraged the aspiration of various political organizations in Sikkim. However, three political parties had already been existence in 1947. Among them, the Sikkim State Congress, which was formed under the leadership of Tashi Tshering, who represented predominantly Nepali group; the Sikkim National Party, which was led by Gyaltsen Tshering and later on this organization was led by Sonam Tshering; the third political organization was the Praja Sammelan, which was formed under the presidential ship of Dhan Bahadur Tiwari Chettri.<sup>48</sup>

In this connection Coelho, mentioned about the aims and ambitions of these three political organizations by remarking that:

The aims of these political organizations especially of the first two mentioned above differed greatly, in fact were almost contradictory. In 1947, the State Congress believed for a responsible government in Sikkim, functioning as a state within Independent India. They also sought changes in the social and economic structure of the country. The Sikkim National Party, on the other hand, campaigned for continuing the relationship which had existed for many decades between Sikkim and the British Government in India. The Praja Samalan, the third political party, was believed again to favour Sikkim's merger with or accession to India. On the economic front this party was distinctly opposed to the landlords and supported the agrarian peasantry.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Basnet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>49</sup> Coelho, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

However, it was cleared from above statement that all the three parties have their own perception. The third party Praja Samalan, which was established by Dhan Bahadur Tiwari Chettri, and Goverdhan Pradhan at Timi Tarku in South Sikkim, who are a Nepalis people wanted for merger with the Indian Union.

Gradually, on December 7, 1947, Sikkim State Congress which was led by Tashi Tshering decided to hold a public meeting at Gangtok football ground, from that day onwards that ground is known by Polo ground. This organization also invited the other two parties for participation.<sup>50</sup> Basnet further explained about the meetings:

On December 7, 1947, all roads led to the polo Ground, where the peasants of Sikkim were holding their meeting under the auspicious of political parties. And on that day the people of Sikkim heard their first political speeches. And the speeches were no baby-talk. In strident voices the speakers dealt with the past sufferings of the people, the iniquities heaped on them by the administration, and the cumulative sins of the landlords. And all of them talked of change, wholesale revolutionary change. And the people released their pent-up feelings by lustily cheering speakers after speakers.<sup>51</sup>

The main speakers of the meeting were Tashi Tshering, Sonam Tshering, Helen Lepcha, Roy Choudhary, and Chandra Das Rai. However, the important facts about the meeting was that all the speeches were in Nepali language, the language of an over whelming majority of the population and also the *lingua franca* of Sikkim. Another important fact was that Chandra Das Rai, was marked as a budding hero in

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<sup>50</sup> Basnet, *Op, Cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 76-77.

the inchoate politics of Sikkim after his speeches, who was asked to read the Nepali version of the paper, 'A few facts about Sikkim' which he read with witty remarks.<sup>52</sup>

Subsequently, the three parties formally merged together and formed a new party called as the Sikkim State Congress. As a result, they decided:

A five-member delegation should call on the Maharaja and Present the 'three-fold' demand of the Sikkim State Congress. The three-fold demand read;

- a) Abolition of landlordism;
- b) Formation of an interim government as a necessary precursor of a democratic and responsible government and;
- c) Accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union.<sup>53</sup>

However, the demand was basically the expression of the call of the downtrodden and suppressed ryots of Sikkim consisting of the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis. Meanwhile, the Nepalis, who were dominant in the Sikkim State Congress, were assumed for being later migrants, while at the same time the Bhutias and the Lepchas, were considered as already settled in Sikkim when the Nepalis were unknown, were classified as indigenous people.<sup>54</sup>

Finally with all these controversies and all Sikkim was merged with Indian union in 16 May, 1975. Hence, the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim became a twenty-second state of the Indian union as a consequence of the unanimous decision of the

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<sup>52</sup> Sinha, *Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Op. Cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> Basnet, *Op, Cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55.



Sikkim Legislative Assembly, seeking abolition of the institution of the Chogyal. Mr. B.B Lal was appointed as the first Governor of Sikkim on May 16, 1975. Article 371F was incorporated in the constitution of India which provides the special constitutional status to the state of Sikkim.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, it is clear from the above instance that Nepalis too played an important role in the politics of Sikkim, and also in Sikkim merger with Indian union. After 1947 Nepalis were also influenced with the Indian freedom struggle, where they did not have any land rights and they were facing the problems with the feudal systems. Gradually, they were impatient against the monarchical systems so, with the help of the various political organization which was carried out against such systems. Then after the three fold demand, they organized the No-Rent Movement in Sikkim, because of which in 1974, the act was enabled by the Government of India to give a place for Sikkim. As a result, in 16 May, 1975, Sikkim was finally merged with the Indian Union. Hence, in the process the Monarchical system was replaced by the Democratic systems and Nepalis by virtue of being a majority of Sikkim they occupied an important position in Sikkim.

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<sup>55</sup> Gurung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 43.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

After a close look into the Sikkim history from 1774 onwards there have been some disconcerting features. However, the first phase of the history of Sikkim which was a pre-British phase was a phase of marginalization of the Lepchas and the Limbus by the immigrant Bhutias. The second phase refers to the British period which was marked as an important era in the History of Sikkim. Because after that phase Sikkim became a *de facto* protectorate country and it also reflect the time when the political hegemony of the minority Bhutias- Lepchas combination over the majority of Nepalis, who were mostly a landless people who just arrived to the country with the help of British and the pro-immigration people. However, they migrated to Sikkim in different times through different ways. In the beginning, they came to Sikkim through invasion which was considered as a first wave and that was occurred from 1774 onwards, where a large Nepali people were settled down in Sikkim after numerous incursion. The second wave occurred in 1861, when a trading community particularly the Newars were migrated to Sikkim from Darjeeling for the purpose of working in copper mines and for minting purpose also. The final wave was occurred after the establishment of the British hegemony over Sikkim; they encouraged a large number of Nepalis for various purposed which gave them economic benefits.

However, the first wave of Nepali migration was actually occurred from 1774 onwards, when a fifth Chogyal Namgyual Phungso was a ruler of Sikkim. During that time Sikkim was facing internal as well as external problems. In one side Bhutia-Lepcha courtiers began to disputes among themselves for authority, and in

another way, Sikkim was facing external problems from Nepal. Moreover, from 1774-1815, Nepal was in a phase that a new ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah, adopted the policy to unify the entire numerous petty principalities which were scattered all over Nepal. While doing so, he and his armed forces, advanced towards Khambuwan (the land of Rais) and Limbuwan (land of Limbus) bordering Sikkim. After that, the armed band continued raiding Sikkim and pushed their way far into the Nepali territory, i.e. Sikkim. During that time Sikkim lost the entire lower Tista Basin to Nepal. At the same time, from 1774 onwards, Prithvi Narayan Shah, a ruler of Western Nepal, established a system of Hindunization, which ultimately forced the lower caste people to leave the Nepal and to settle in Sikkim. Which means a sizeable number of people started settling in Sikkim from 1774 onwards through invasion as well as for better life.

Further, the second wave was occurred from 1861 onwards, after Sikkim signed a treaty with British East India Company. During that particular time an industrious Nepali people particularly the Newars were migrated to Sikkim from Darjeeling for various purposes. However at the beginning they were emerged as lessee landlords, later on they became as *thikadars*, with the help of British as well as with *kazis*.

However, after 1861 treaty, British were successful to make Sikkim as their *de facto* protected state. In 1889, J.C. White became a political officer of Sikkim. As an engineer by profession he started an infrastructural work in Sikkim which need a cheap labour as well as a hard working people. So he along with Khangsa Dewan and Phodong lama encouraged a large number of Nepalis for working purposed. So

a large number of Nepalis came and settled down in Sikkim, which was considered as a third wave of Nepali migration.

Nepali migration had enormous impact on economic field especially on agriculture, trade and commerce and on minting and mining. After British encouraged them, they were allowed to clear forest and settled there. So after that slowly they put an afford on agriculture and they change the agricultural pattern of Sikkim. They introduced terrace farming, which help the country to increase the economy of Sikkim. Gradually, the Nepalis were very much successful in improving their economic position within a short period of time and they were in a comparable position with Lepchas. However, it was believed that the Lepchas were better cultivators as compared to Bhutias, though they practised a pastoral activity with the fact that they were a semi-nomadic tribes. As a result, they pushed back Lepchas in agricultural activities, because Nepalis were little ahead in their agricultural skill as compare to them. Once the Nepali migration was emerged, the trade and commerce was also flourished. However, after British established their complete monopoly they removed all the barriers and opened trade with Tibet, these Nepalis, particularly the Newars, were actively involved in trading activities. As a result, a certain form of labour force was also emerged in Sikkim, where the Nepali people have to render free service like *kalo- bhari*, which means a black load; the tenant had to carry the load across the border of Tibet. Another was a *Jharlangi*, in which the tenants had to work without any wages. Another form of labour service was a *Kuruwa*, under which the tenant had to wait for a long period of time. Hence these people not only have to pay rent but also to render a free service for *kazis* and *thikadars*. After Newars got a land on lease they started minting and mining in Sikkim which was a

taboo for Lepchas and Bhutias in Sikkim. They started copper mining in South Sikkim, at the same time they mint coins for Sikkim government, which also helped for flourishing trade ultimately, which have its impact on Sikkim's economy. As a result they pushed back the Bhutias in trading activities, with the fact that Bhutias were marginal traders, before Nepali migration.

After Nepali migration many Nepalis played an intermediary role in between king and the actual cultivators. Before Nepali migration, *kazis* played an important role, but after migration of Nepalis, some of these Nepali migrants also acted as a *thikadars*, in the beginning as lessee landlords, later on they were completely *thikadars*. Once they became a *thikadars*, these Nepali *Thikadars* acted as absent landlords. Moreover, these migrant Nepalis, who became a *thikadars* with the help of *kazis* or along with *kazis*, they played an important role in changing the political system in Sikkim. So, as a process they even displaced *Dzongpas* (district officers), who are the main agent in Sikkim government in regional level in Sikkim. Hereafter, these people were added into the administration of Sikkim as revenue collection officers, not only that later on, these Nepalis were also included as members in Council.

However, after the migration of the bulk of Nepalis, these Nepali people contributed to bring the changes in the field of production techniques especially in the field of agriculture sectors, as well as in political field. Later on it led to the demand for land rights and proportionate representation of the Nepalis which paved the way for merger of Sikkim with Indian Union. With the passage of time, the Nepalis became a major ethnic group in Sikkim. Initially, after the departure of British from India in 1947, Sikkim had a standstill agreement with India in 1948. As a result, the

majority of the Nepalis also influenced by the Indian freedom struggle, by that time, they had no land right till then, only they were allowed to settle and cultivate the land, because of which they were facing the problems with feudal systems. Gradually, after India got independence, the Nepalis were impatient against the monarchical system, so various political demonstrations carried out against such systems. Hence, these political organizations asked for a three- fold demand, after sometimes they started a 'No Rent Movement' in Sikkim. As a result, in 1974, the act was enabled by the Government of India which main purpose was to give a place for Sikkim in Indian union. Finally, in 16 May 1975, Sikkim was merged with the Indian union, and in the process the monarchical system was also replaced by Democracy with the majority of Nepali Ethnic groups who constituted 75% of the total population in Sikkim.

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