

**SIKKIM  
AND  
INDIA**

**B.S.K. CRAVER**

# SIKKIM AND INDIA

STORM AND CONSOLIDATION

**B. S. K. GROVER**

*M. A., Ph. D.*

With an foreword by Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji  
and Introduction by L.M. Singhvi.



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INDIA

STORM AND CONSOLIDATION

**NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY**

(P)

29.8.74

B. S. K. GROVER  
M. A. Ph. D.

FIRST EDITION 1974

With an foreword by Hon'ble Kani Lobsap Dorji  
and Introduction by L.M. Singhi

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873, East Park Road, New Delhi-110005 and Printed at  
P.B.H. Press, Bara Hindu Rao, Delhi-6.

## FOREWORD

Sikkim which is virtually squeezed in by the table top shaped Nepal in west, Bhutan and Chumbi Valley in the east, and India in the south was probably the most secluded and isolated political unit in the world when India became independent. But to-day, on account of its most strategic position in the incredibly complex and volatile frontier region between India and China, it occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of Himalayan countries. Besides, under the protective ramparts of Himalayas, Sikkim is bestirring with winds of change. The mystical aura of Himalayas has been completely broken. Sikkim has witnessed dramatic changes during the last fifteen months, ushering the State into an era of democracy.

Since India is our fraternal and intimate neighbour, we ought to maintain very cordial and close relations with it. It is essential that our neighbours must possess reliable knowledge about our people, their aspirations, achievements and problems. Hitherto there has been a paucity of good work on Sikkim. Dr. Grover's interesting and timely book is a praiseworthy attempt towards filling up this gap. He has succeeded in covering in his survey all the significant aspects of Sikkim's political and constitutional developments, its special relations with India and the recent happenings that have brought parliamentary democracy here. In spite of the fact that there is a paucity of material in this field, Dr. Grover has covered a wide field and dealt with a number of issues in Sikkim-India relationship. He had the benefit of visiting the area and meeting the people in Sikkim to discuss with them issues of public importance. His book is a thought provoking, highly informative and a scholarly work. He has covered all the latest happenings in the state.

I welcome this timely and important publication, which I hope will arouse the interest of those who are interested in the study of this area. It is with great pleasure that I commend it for study by people, scholars and statesmen all over the world who are interested in Sikkim's relations with the neighbouring countries and its development in various aspects of life.

*Thendup Dorji*  
11.7.74

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung  
CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM

## PREFACE

The 'thimble—sized' Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim has come to occupy a significant position in recent times in view of its strategic position and geopolitical implications. But when one looks at the map of the world, Sikkim appears to be insignificant in the mighty Himalayas. But its strategic location gives it an importance out of all proportion to its size. Wedged in as it is between four different countries—Nepal on the west, Bhutan on the east, Chinese occupied Tibet on the north, and India on the south, this land of orchids and eternal snows, sylvan beauty and mountainous sublimity, has come to occupy today a singularly unique position in the chain of Himalayan kingdoms.

Although historically, Sikkim has figured prominently as a trade link between the Indian subcontinent and the heartland of Asia, the events of last fifteen years have converted the otherwise peaceful Sikkimese frontier into the most remote fronts of cold war, the gun-mounted border between the Indian and the Chinese armies. The Chinese aggression on India in 1962 and the subsequent border clashes between China and India have further dramatized the strategic location of Sikkim and reminded India that without friendly Sikkim, the northern defence system of the country would be greatly weakened and the credible Indian efforts in the eastern Himalayan area would be more difficult to sustain. Militarily microscopic Sikkim is vulnerable and could prove to be a possible area of Chinese expansion and aggression. Sikkim is situated directly in the path of invading Chinese because it provides the easiest natural route between India and Tibet. Hence, tiny Sikkim with about 2,00,000 people, is perched precariously on an explosive frontier between 750 million Chinese and 550 million Indians.

However, these developments have terminated Sikkim's isolation into which it had wrapped itself for the last few centuries.

A major transformation is stirring these highlands. Its enlightened ruler, Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal and the politically conscious leadership of different political parties in the kingdom are attempting to change its middle age feudalism, to herald it into the world of the twentieth century. Sikkim's economic, social, cultural and political institutions are passing through a transitional but momentous stage. The 'mini—revolution' of April 1973 and the Agreement of May 1973 have transformed the Sikkim Scenario tremendously. It has led to the adoption of a new constitution and the first ever popular and responsible government in July 1974.

As against the motives and ulterior objectives of China, India during the last twenty five years has helped Sikkim not only to preserve its independence and integrity, but has given substantial aid to put her on the path of development and modernity. All these aspects of Sikkim's life and activity gave me an impetus to undertake a study of Sikkim—India relations since 1947.

The present work is a revised and enlarged version of the thesis submitted by me to the university of Jodhpur in October 1972 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ph. D. degree.

In this regard, I have a deep sense of gratitude for my guide and supervisor, Dr. L.S. Rathore, Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Jodhpur, who not only inspired and actively encouraged me to undertake this study in the initial stages, but took keen interest in my work and gave to me willing assistance and guidance. He supervised the work at every stage of its preparation. This has helped me tremendously to complete my work.

I express my gratitude to sarvshri K.S. Bajpai, Political Officer of India in Sikkim, I.S. Chopra, former Sidlon of Sikkim, Dr. N.C. Sinha, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Kazini Sahiba of Chakhung, Kalu Rai, Martam Topden, C.D. Rai, S.K. Rai, B.B. Gurung, K.B. Thapa, and several other Officials of the Government of Sikkim and various leaders of political parties in Sikkim whose names have not been mentioned here, who in spite of their own busy schedule of work, found time to discuss with me on matters pertaining to this kingdom during my visit to Sikkim in September-October 1970. I am thankful to Professor Leo E. Rose of California (U.S.A.), who spared his valuable time to discuss with me about developments in

Sikkim during his short visit to New Delhi in September 1972 and gave to me valuable suggestions. My learned teacher, Professor A.B. Mathur, Professor of Political Science, Government college, Ajmer, has been a great source of strength and inspiration to me during the course of this work.

I am extremely grateful to Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung, Chief Minister designate of Sikkim for writing a foreword to my book. I express my gratitude to Dr. L.M. Singhvi for writing Introduction to this book.

I am grateful to my wife, Pushplata, who in spite of her own official duties, found time to go through the manuscript and offer many valuable suggestions.

This work is being brought out with a financial assistance of Rs. 2000/- from the University Grants Commission and the University of Jodhpur for which I am obliged and grateful.

I have received unfailing cooperation from the staff of the Libraries of the University of Jodhpur ; Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi ; Ministry of External Affairs, Patiala House, New Delhi ; and Parliament House for which I shall always remain grateful to them.

I am grateful to Messers P.B.H. Press, Delhi for neat printing of the book.

Finally, I thank Messers Jain Brothers, New Delhi for their effective cooperation and prompt publication of the book.

B.S.K. GROVER

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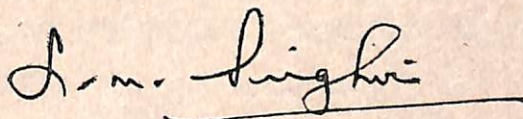
## INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to write this introduction to Dr. B.S.K. Grover's Study of Sikkim which promises to occupy a place of pride among contemporary Indian writings on Sikkim and its political evolution.

Dr. Grover's study of Sikkim is comprehensive in its coverage and in its portrayal of the history and socio-political development of the Sikkimese people and their institutions. Dr. Grover has endeavoured to analyse diverse sources including published materials extensively but he has not confined himself to mere library research for his analysis and understanding of these developments. He is a careful and keen observer of the Sikkimese scene. He has diligently documented his study of the relationship between Sikkim and India from 1947 to 1974 and has up-dated his analysis with an engaging narrative of the latest developments leading to what he calls the storm and the consolidation in Sikkim.

The new Constitution of Sikkim and the working of the newly acquired democratic apparatus by the popularly elected and accredited representatives is a matter of profound interest to the academics as well as the informed citizens. Dr. Grover's book provides a wealth of interesting materials and a dependable description of the Sikkimese political processes and of Sikkim's transitional and fledgeling transformation. Hopefully, Dr. Grover's sustained scholarly interest in Sikkim would continue to provide us with an interpretation of Sikkimese affairs and events. This volume holds out a promise which, I am confident, Dr. Grover will not be tardy to fulfil.

I join the Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung in commending Dr. Grover's study to scholars and statesmen and in wishing Dr. Grover's arduous and erudite interest in Sikkim a full flowering.



(L.M. Singhvi)



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Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa, Chief Minister—designate of Sikkim, presenting the traditional scarf to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, during his visit to New Delhi in July 1974.

## *The Geopolitical Setting of Sikkim*

### **Introduction**

The small but beautiful kingdom of Sikkim, situated in the eastern Himalaya is the protectorate of India and is of great strategic importance<sup>1</sup>. Sikkim is unique for its compact and varied beauty. The forested slopes and ridges, the magnificent vistas of ice-clad peaks framed by dense tropical vegetation and the changing pattern of sunshine and shadow, of mist and cloud, of falling water after rain, make it an artist's paradise<sup>2</sup>. It has an area of 2,818 square miles<sup>3</sup> (7,325 square kilometers). The state of Sikkim is almost rectangular in shape with an area of about seventy miles from north to south and forty miles wide<sup>4</sup>. The name 'Sikkim' is an appellation of Nepalese origin meaning "new palace"<sup>5</sup>. It refers to the new kingdom established by Phuntsog Namgyal, the founder of the present ruling dynasty. The Tibetan's called it as 'Denjong' or 'the land of rice'<sup>6</sup>. It was known to the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the country as 'Nye-ma-el' 'or heaven'<sup>7</sup>. To some Nepalese Sikkim meant 'the land of the Mountain Crests'<sup>8</sup>.

### **Physical Setting**

The kingdom of Sikkim is located between 28° 07' 48" and 27° 04' 46" north latitudes, and 88° 00' 58" and 88° 55' 25" east longitudes<sup>9</sup>. It is bounded in the north by the vast stretches of the Tibetan plateau and to its west lies the kingdom of Nepal, in the east it is bounded by Bhutan and the Chumbi valley of Tibet and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal in India stretches along its southern boundary<sup>10</sup>.

### **Land-Rivers**

Sikkim is essentially a mountainous country without a flat piece of ground of good size anywhere<sup>11</sup>. Sikkim fulfils the wildest conception of mountain grandeur<sup>12</sup>. The whole Sikkimese landscape provides a sweeping panorama of mountains and sky and emerald lakes cupped in the towering folds of rock walls. The late

Frank S. Smythe, who climbed its icy slopes predicted that Sikkim would become 'the playground of the eastern Himalaya'.<sup>13</sup> The country forms part of the inner Himalayan range of mountains which project southwards. Except in the south, it is separated from its neighbours by a wall of great mountains ranging from 10,000 feet to 28,000 feet in height. It may be viewed as a stupendous stairway hewn out of the western border of the Tibetan plateau by glaciers and great rivers and leading down to the Indian plains<sup>14</sup>. However, these mountains contain certain important and strategic passes. The Chola range, which forms the eastern boundary of Sikkim with Tibet, is pierced by several passes, the most important being Nathu La (15,512 feet) and Jelep La (13,254 feet). To the west lies the Singalila range which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal and contains the important pass of Chiabhangjang (10,320 feet). The most magnificent group of mountains is Kanchenjunga group which is dominated by Mount Kanchenjunga 'Sikkim's crowning glory' towering to a height of 28,140 feet. The other mountain peaks are Kinchinjhan (22,700 feet), Siniolchu (22,620 feet), and Chomiome (22,386 feet)<sup>15</sup>. As such, Sikkim is a land of varied elevations ranging from 800 feet above M.S.L. at the southern foothills to over 28,140 feet along its northern and north-western boundaries.

The wide variations in altitudes account for similar variations in climatic conditions. It comprises every kind of exquisite scenery—from the rank tropical luxuriance of the lower valleys to the magnificence of its great snowy peaks, of which there are no fewer than fourteen, all over 20,000 feet on its northern borders<sup>16</sup>. The perpetual snowline in Sikkim is about 16,000 feet and there are often powderings of snow down to 4,500 feet, the level of the most of the towns<sup>17</sup>. In this miniscule country, man meets the entire gamut of climate on this earth. In altitudes of 15,000 feet, an arctic climate prevails; those between 15,000 and 7,000 feet are alpine areas. The valleys and plains below 7,000 feet have a temperate and sub-tropical climate<sup>18</sup>.

Sikkim is the most humid place in the whole range of the Himalayas, because of its proximity to the Bay of Bengal and direct exposure to the effects of the moisture-laden south-west monsoon, from which the ranges east of Sikkim are partially screened by the mountains on the south flank of the Assam Valley<sup>19</sup>. The rainfall varies from fifty inches to two hundred inches a year and in some parts of Sikkim, the rainfall has been as high as two hundred fifty inches a year<sup>20</sup>.

The important river of Sikkim is the Teesta which winds its way through the country. This river, originating in the Tashi-drag glaciers in the north and fed in its journey to the south by the scores of small tributary streams, form the artery of irrigation as well as of drainage<sup>21</sup>. The main tributaries are the Rangit, the Rongni-chu, the Lachen and the Lachung rivers, all snow fed torrents coming

from the northern hills. Essentially, Sikkim is the catchment area of the headwaters of the Teesta river. Since the whole of the state is situated at a considerable elevation within the Himalayan mountain zone, the ranges that bound it on three sides forming a kind of a horseshoe, from the sides of which dependent spurs project, serving as lateral barriers to the Rangit and the Teesta's greater affluents, the Lachung, Lachen, Zemu, Talung, Rongni and Rangpo. These basins have a southward slope, being broad at the top where they leave the watershed, and gradually contracting, like a fan from its rim to its handle in the Teesta valley near Pashok. The rivers are very rapid and generally run in deep ravines, the ascent from the bank for the first few hundred feet being almost precipitous<sup>22</sup>.

### Flora and Fauna

Sikkim, 'the land of leeches', is noted for its gorgeous flora, its picturesque fauna and its gloriously glittering insect world. An outstanding feature of the physical landscape in Sikkim Himalayas is the immense luxuriance and variety of vegetation. Because of its heavy rainfall, Sikkim is a densely wooded country in the world. Its forests are capable of yielding valuable timber<sup>23</sup>. The natural vegetation can be considered as being characteristic of the three separate zones into which the country can be divided. In the sub-tropical zone, which extends upto 5,000 feet, several varieties of bamboo, ferns and tree ferns, pandanus, sal and orchids are to be found. Dense undergrowths and bush vegetation are typical of the sub-tropical zone. In the temperate zone and in the northern valleys the land is covered by the forests of cherry, laurel, oak, chestnut, maple, firs, pine and magnolia. The Rhododendron, the glory of Sikkim, becomes abundant from an altitude of 8,000 feet and above. There are over thirty species, varying in size, of Rhododendron in Sikkim. Magnolias, Conifers, larches and junipers, oaks, walnuts, silver fir, prunus etc. further beautify the landscape<sup>24</sup>. The more gentle slopes at these high altitudes are often covered by a variety of beautiful flowers like the Primula which add a touch of glorious colour to the sombre grandeur of the lonely mountain sides. The floristic composition of the flora of the Sikkim Himalaya is unique of its kind even within the geographical boundary of India<sup>25</sup>. Botanically, it is one of the richest areas in the Indian sub-continent, if not in the world. There are roughly four thousand varieties of flowering plants and shrubs in Sikkim<sup>26</sup>. Orchids are a special feature of Sikkim and nearly seven hundred species are found<sup>27</sup> and around these flutter several hundred species of butterflies which can offer a lepidopterist a life time of work and delight<sup>28</sup>. These many-hued butterflies flash like living jewels from flower to flower, doing a mad dance of ephemeral existence under the stimulus of the sun-laden air. Sikkim is equally famous for its primulas. It may not be any exaggeration to state that perhaps no other country of equal or larger size presents such a wide variety of floral wealth<sup>29</sup>.



Wild animals are equally abundant in variety in Sikkim. Even animals like snow leopards are found, though it is fast vanishing. The Himalyan black bear is generally found from 4,000 feet to 11,000 feet. Above this altitude, the brown bear has its habitat. Barking deer, musk deer, sambar, marbled cat, the leopard cat, squirrels, tiger, panda, otter, ovis, nahura, ovismon goral and wild boar are also found at different altitudes<sup>30</sup>.

The birds found in the country are varied enough to make Sikkim an ornithologist's heaven. There are about five hundred species of birds found in Sikkim, the most important being pheasants, partridges, ducks and the lammergeyer. Salmon and trout are the principal fish of Sikkim.

## **Economic Resources**

### **Minerals**

A reasonable measure of economic growth is basic for the political viability of state. In this regard Sikkim has an excellent economic base. The mineral deposits are quite substantial from the point of view of commercial and industrial exploitation. The mineral wealth of Sikkim is mainly in copper, zinc and lead.<sup>31</sup> Copper veins are widespread and constitute the principal source of mineral wealth. The richest ores are found at Pachikhani and Bhotang. Copper mining at present is being worked by the Sikkim Mining Corporation at Rangpo, an enterprise financed jointly by the Governments of Sikkim and India. It was constituted under a royal proclamation in February 1960 for the purpose of exploiting the mineral deposits in Sikkim. Deposits of copper are found at Dikchu, Rhenock, Lingui, Ronglichu, Londok, Rathokhari, Barmiak, Tukkhani and Rinchinpong also<sup>32</sup>. Other minerals such as pyrites, limestone and coal are also mined<sup>33</sup>.

### **Agriculture and Forests**

By and large, Sikkim's wealth is derived from agriculture and forests. The economy of the land is principally, agrarian with nearly 97 percent of its population living in the rural areas<sup>34</sup>. Due to wide variation in the elevation and rainfall, the agriculture has been influenced by the nature of the terrain and diversity of climatic factors. Rice and maize are the main monsoon crops. Millet, buckwheat, barley, dhal constitute the subsidiary crops<sup>35</sup>. Cardamom, potatoes, citrus fruits, apples and pine-apples are major cash crops<sup>36</sup>.

### **Forests**

About one third of Sikkim's area of 2,818 square miles consists of forests<sup>37</sup>. Forests constitute a potential and important source of wealth of the country. The forests of sal and bamboo in the south as well as coniferous trees in the north are capable of exploitation and utilization. Attempts to float timber down the Teesta river from the

Lachen-Lachung area have not so far met with success owing to the occurrence of sudden floods in the river. A fuller survey of the prospects for paper pulp production is currently in progress in the country.

### **Industry**

Mining, distillery, fruit preservation, the manufacture of cloth and blankets, local handicrafts, tanning, the production of copper-ware and wooden goods are the principal industries of Sikkim.<sup>38</sup> The Sikkim Tannery has been located at Majhitar near Rongphu.<sup>39</sup> The Palden Thondup Institute for Cottage Industries situated at Gangtok, is fulfilling the objectives of encouraging and developing native handicrafts.

### **Trade and Transport**

The main exports of Sikkim are cardamom, oranges, potatoes and apples. The cultivations of potato is growing in importance especially in western Sikkim, at altitudes of about 8,000 feet. Tea is a new venture and a government Tea Estate is being developed in Kewzing, in the western part of Sikkim. Distillation of liquors and wines as a large scale commercial undertaking in Sikkim is being done by the Sikkim Distilleries at Rongpo.<sup>40</sup> The fruit preservation factory at Singtam is selling products processed from oranges and apples. The main imports are machinery, cotton piece goods, food-stuffs and consumer goods.<sup>41</sup>

As a results of the impressive road construction programme undertaken since planning began in 1954, almost all parts of Sikkim are now within easy reach from Gangtok. The Sikkim Nationalised Transport operates services on all the important routes of the state<sup>42</sup>. The Sikkim public works department, the central public works department, the border roads organization, the General Reserve Engineer Force have all knitted the different parts of the state into first class roads.

### **Cultural Setting**

#### **The people—The Lepchas**

Within this polychrome of nature live a number of races, speaking different languages. The total population of Sikkim is about 1,62,189 (1961 Census) which is composed mainly of the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese<sup>43</sup>. However, the present total population of the state is well over 2,00000.<sup>44</sup>

The earliest inhabitants of Sikkim were said to the Lepchas or as they call themselves, the 'Rong-pa', meaning literally the 'ravine folk'. The hills, mountains and streams have Lepcha names which further indicate that the Lepchas are the original inhabitants

of the country. Not much is known about their history prior to their conversion to Buddhism and the enthronement of Phuntsog Namgyal as the first ruler of Sikkim in 1642. They number about 14,847.<sup>45</sup> They are believed to have come from the east along the foot of the hills from the direction of Assam and upper Burma<sup>46</sup>. There are two versions regarding the origin of the name 'Lepcha'. According to the first version the name 'Lepcha' had been derived from a nepali word "Lapcha" meaning 'vile speakers'<sup>47</sup>. According to the second version, there is a type of fish in Nepal known as "Lapcha" which is very submissive in nature like the Lepcha people, who are also noted for their mild and quiet disposition. The Nepalese termed them as 'Lepcha' not in contempt but to give them credit for their submissive temperament. The term 'Lapcha' was subsequently modified in English pronunciation as "Lepcha"<sup>48</sup>. They love solitude. His solitary life in the peaceful depth of the great forests makes him timid and shy of strangers. His close companionship with nature has made him a naturalist, a tender lover of flowers. They possess an extraordinary rich zoological and botanical vocabulary of their own. His hard experience of the forces of nature, the storms and floods which wreck his home and scanty crops, and scatter desolation and death around him, has made him "a worshipper of malignant devils, and intensely superstitious"<sup>49</sup>. The Lepchas were originally animists but most of them now profess Buddhism and generally very devout.

### **The Bhutias**

The next group of people to enter Sikkim were the Khambas, popularly known as the 'Bhutias'. They were immigrants from Tibet, of good physique and mangolian features. They number about 14,000. The Bhutias are good traders and agriculturists. Many of them are husky herdsmen looking after the valuable herds of yaks and sheep. They preferred living in the higher cooler regions rather than in the hot humid valleys. The religion of the Bhutias also is a form of Buddhism, specifically called 'Lamaism'. The Bhutiyas of the Lachen and Lachung valleys in northern Sikkim, like the people of the Chumbi valley of Tibet, claim descent from the early immigrants from Ha in western Bhutan<sup>50</sup>.

However, the Bhutias and the Lepchas together number only about a third of Sikkim's population.

### **The Nepalese**

It is indeed curious that the largest group of people in Sikkim should be the Nepali who migrated from Nepal and slowly pushed their way into the country<sup>51</sup>. The British first brought or attracted them into Sikkim around the turn of the century, having found Lepchas and Bhutias unsatisfactory for menial work. Before long the Nepalese had spread through southern Sikkim and Bhutan and the governments in both these states tried to prevent them from over-running the northern highlands<sup>52</sup>. They are an industrious,

energetic, sturdy and thrifty people who have made excellent settlers, rising to important positions in business and administration. The group is multiplying the fastest and may take over Sikkim by sheer numbers. The Nepalese, are a phenomenally fertile people, and it is not unusual to find among them families where there are four or five wives and twenty to thirty children. The result is that, in the course of a single century, the original Bhutia-Lepchas of Sikkim became a minority in their own country, and about two-third's of Sikkim's present population is now found to be of Nepalese original<sup>53</sup>.

With the exception of the sherpas, who live mainly in the extreme west of the country, and the Tomangs, both of whom are Buddhists, the Nepalese are at present all Hindu by religion. They number about 1,08,165.<sup>54</sup>

There is, in addition, a small but distinct group of people, known as Tsongs, originally settlers from the Tsang-po valley in Tibet in what is now the Limbuwana district of Nepal, which was at one time a part of western Sikkim. Some of the Tsongs overflowed into and settled down in Sikkim.

There is also a very much smaller but economically stable and influential community of Indian traders in the state.

Of the present total population of about 2,00,000, the Nepalese are 72 per cent, while the balance, except for the small group of Tsongs, is divided roughly equally between the Lepchas and the Bhutias. However, on the market days in Gangtok and other towns, people of all the three ethnic groups mingle as neighbours.

The principal languages of Sikkim are Bhutia, Nepali and Lepcha which are spoken by 36,577 ; 74,359 ; and 14,847 people respectively<sup>55</sup>. However, English is used extensively and officially, for internal and external correspondences and communications<sup>56</sup>.

### **Religion**

Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Sikkim. But the Sikkimese are allowed full freedom of worship. There are about sixty seven monasteries in Sikkim. The most important monasteries from religious and historical sense are located at Pemayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Phodang, Rumtek and Rolang etc<sup>57</sup>. The Buddhist Sikkimese annually worship the God of Mount Kangchenjunga in their monasteries. They perform a war dance in honour of this God and invoke his blessings for the welfare of the people and the country<sup>58</sup>.

### **Education**

The principal objective of the Education Department in Sikkim has been to provide a pattern of education consistent both with the cultural heritage and the economic conditions of Sikkim. Particular importance is attached to training in handicrafts, to the fostering of

a love for the land, and to the practising of traditional songs and dances<sup>59</sup>.

There are five higher secondary schools, one public school, seven junior high schools and 191 primary schools, one basic training school at Temi, providing education to nearly 15,000 children of whom about one fifth are girls.

Education is practically free and needy students are being further assisted in the form of scholarships and boarderships. A good number of boys and girls are also receiving higher education and vocational training in India and other countries.

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, is a centre for the study of mahayana Buddhism. There is an excellent library of Tibetan literature. The Inchey school imparts knowledge in Buddhist scriptures to young lamas and others<sup>60</sup>.

### **Government**

Sikkim is a hereditary monarchy. The Chogyal of Sikkim was the source of all State power in the kingdom. However, the April 1973 upheaval and the Tripartite Agreement of May 1973 has left the Chogyal as a constitutional head of state.

His chief aid and executive officer is termed as chief executive officer. The powers and position of the chief executive have been elaborately defined in the Agreement of 8th May, 1973. He shall have a special responsibility to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilisation for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim.<sup>61</sup> He shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Government of India. In fact the Chief Executive shall be the kingpin of the new system.

The administration of the kingdom is run by a Secretariat headed by a Chief Secretary under whom are departmental secretaries responsible for individual departments such as finance, panchayats, land revenues, education, public works and law and order.

At the village level panchayats have been established since 1966. The panchayats are responsible for village administration and co-ordination of the development programmes.

### **The Assembly**

Under the proclamation of 1953, a legislative body called the Sikkim State council was formed. Since 1973, it has been replaced by an Assembly'. The May, 1973 Agreement lays down that the

Assembly shall be elected every four years. Elections to the Assembly shall be conducted under the supervision of a representative of the Election Commission of India. The first elections to the 32-member Assembly were held on April 15, 1974.

The Assembly shall have the power to propose laws and adopt resolutions on education, public health, excise, bazars, press and publicity, transport, forests, public works, agriculture, food supplies, economic and social planning, home and establishment, finance and land revenue. These powers shall help in the growth of people's sense of participation in the administration of the kingdom. In fact it shall usher in responsible government in the state. The present working of the newly elected Assembly and the traditions developed therein, shall decide the future of the working of democratic institutions in the kingdom.

### The Executive Council

According to May, 1973 agreement, there shall be an Executive council consisting of the elected members of the Assembly, who shall be appointed to the Executive Council by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive shall preside over the meetings of the Executive Council.<sup>62</sup>

The traditions developed in the working of the newly constituted Executive Council after April, 1974 elections to the Sikkim Assembly shall decide the success or otherwise of this innovation in this remote Himalayan Kingdom.

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## *The Political History of Sikkim and British India's Relations with Sikkim*

### **Early History of Sikkim**

The origin of Sikkim is obscure. The history of its remote past has not come to light. Sikkim does not appear in the historical complex of the Himalayan border countries until the early 1640's. Its early history is mostly legendary and mythical.<sup>1</sup> A few lepcha and limbu legends do speak of something of the ancient Sikkim but nothing has so far been proved historically. In pre-Buddhist era primitive people lived here. According to one account, they were the Kiratas, the then rulers of Nepal. Later on Padmasambhava, the architect of tantric Buddhism in Tibet is supposed to have sojourned in Sikkim on his way to Tibet. Natural inference can be that Buddhism brought civilization to Sikkim.<sup>2</sup> The Namgyal kings had been ruling over the Chumbi valley and the Teesta valley for at least three centuries prior to 1642. The Namgyals were scions of the Minyak House (Eastern Tibet) and were on pilgrimage in Central Tibet at the opening of the thirteenth century. It is said that Khye-Bumsa, a Namgyal Prince, helped in the construction of the great Sa-kya monastery (1268). Khye-Bumsa married the daughter of the Sa-kya heirarch and settled in the nearby Chumbi valley which became the nucleus of the later kingdom of Sikkim. Khye-Bumsa came in contact with the Lepchas and a deep friendship between the newcomers and the Lepchas grew; a blood brotherhood was sworn between Khye-Bumsa and Thekongtek, the Lepcha chief, at Khabi Longtsok.<sup>3</sup> However, the modern history of Sikkim begins with the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal in A.D. 1642 as the Chogyal (Temporal and Religious king). Phuntsog Namgyal, it is said, descended from Raja Indrabodhi who was at one time ruler of what is to-day called Himachal Pradesh in northern India.<sup>4</sup>

Phuntsog Namgyal ruled over a widespread area, many times the size of Sikkim of to-day. His authority extended in the north to Thang La, beyond Phari in Tibet, towards the east of Tagong La, near Paro in Bhutan and to the South to Titalia, near the borders of Bihar and Bengal in India. It extended also to the west, the region of the Timar Chorten, on the banks of the Timar river in Nepal.<sup>5</sup> He organised the first centralized administration in the country and created twelve dzongs—namely, Lassu, Dallom, Yangthang, Gangtok, Rhenok, Barmiak, Tashiading, Song, Libing, Maling, Simik and Pandom—each under a Lepcha dzongpon belonging to one of the leading Lepcha families of the country.<sup>6</sup> Phungsog Namgyal chose Yaksam as his capital.

His son Tensung Namgyal (born 1644 A.D.) who was consecrated in 1670 moved the capital to Rabdentse. Tensung married three times. His first wife was a Tibetan named Numbe Ongmu by whom he had a daughter, Pedi Wangmo, who was destined to play an important but disastrous role in the history of Sikkim. His second wife was a Sikkimese, Debasam-Serpa, who bore him a son, Chador.

In the time of Chador Namgyal (1686-1716), the third ruler of Sikkim, there were fratricidal wars between members of the royal family which resulted in the loss of territory for the kingdom. In 1700, Pedi Wangmo, the elder half-sister of Chador Namgyal fell out with him and sought the help of Bhutan in her scheme to dethrone him and if possible to murder him.<sup>7</sup> The Bhutanese invaded and occupied Sikkim as far west as Rabdantse. A loyal councillor, Yugthing Tishe, carried off the ruler to Lhasa where during his asylum, he distinguished himself in Buddhist learning and Tibetan literature. Chador Namgyal's presence in Tibet for eight long years from 1700 to 1708 was utilized by the Government of Tibet for serving the political ends of Tibet.<sup>8</sup> Actually this reduced years of occupation, the Deb Raja of Bhutan eventually withdrew the Bhutanese expedition upon the mediation of the Tibetan Government except certain south-east areas near and extending upto the Tagona La.<sup>10</sup> Chador Namgyal then returned and began to consolidate his kingdom. Pedi Wangmo, the king's half sister, however, was not reconciled and while the king was at Ralung hot springs in 1716, she conspired with a Tibetan doctor to arrange blood-letting from a main artery and thus caused the king's death. The doctor was eventually executed at Namchi and Pedi Wangmo strangled to death with a silken scarf.<sup>11</sup>

Gyurmed Namgyal (1707-1733) succeeded his father in 1717. To secure the eastern borders of the country against the increasing Bhutanese raids across it, he built extensive fortifications there. However, this reign saw the loss of Limbuana which was later on merged with Nepal.<sup>12</sup>



Namgyal Phuntsog, posthumous son of Gyurmed succeeded in 1733. This reign saw the threat of the expanding Gurkha kingdom under Raja Prithvinarayan Shah of Nepal.<sup>13</sup> In 1773-74 Nepal occupied Sikkimese territory west of the Teesta. A treaty concluded in 1775 fixed the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal at the Sango Chu, Sangdi Dzong, Malliyang, and the Lhachu (the sacred Kankai river), a western tributary of the Meehi river, and also settled all outstanding issues relating to trade and commerce between Sikkim and Nepal.<sup>14</sup> Bhutanese forces invaded Sikkim a second time, but after negotiations at Rhenock in eastern Sikkim withdrew to the present boundaries.

Namgyal Phuntsog was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal (born in 1769 A.D. of his third Queen) in 1780. Notwithstanding the treaty of 1775, the Gorkhas under Damodar Pande, the Gorkha General, again invaded through Ilam and reoccupied southern Sikkim in 1788. The capital, Rabdentse was also captured by a surprise attack and the entire lower Teesta was devastated and occupied. The Raja Tenzing, the Rani and their son fled from Rabdentse to Lhasa in Tibet in order to reassemble their troops and to solicit aid from Tibet.<sup>15</sup> Tibet which was already involved in a conflict with Nepal, could render no assistance. Sikkim finally turned to the British for help against the Gorkhas.

Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa in 1793 and was succeeded by his son Tsugphud Namgyal, who had a long reign (1793-1864). His reign witnessed the penetration of British power into the Himalayas and of British efforts to trade with Tibet across the Himalayas. In 1814, Rabdentse being considered too close to the Nepalese frontier, the capital was shifted to Tumlong.<sup>16</sup>

### **Sikkim's Contact with the East India Company**

The attention of the East India Company was attracted towards Sikkim, due to its strategic importance, in the year 1814 when it was involved in a war with Nepal.<sup>17</sup> The opening of relations with Sikkim became a political and military necessity on account of three reasons :

1. it was easily accessible,<sup>18</sup>
2. it would facilitate communication with China via Tibet since the Princes of Sikkim were closely connected by matrimonial relations as well as religious affinities with Tibet ;
3. to prevent possible Nepalese-Bhutanese intrigues against the Company.

In view of these advantages the company instructed Captain Barre Latter of the Bengal Army to establish contacts with Tsugphud

Naingyal, the ruler of Sikkim.<sup>19</sup> Captain Barre Latter after establishing contacts with the Sikkimese authorities, promised to help Sikkim, to recover its territories lost to Nepal during the Nepalese invasion of Sikkim in 1780.<sup>20</sup> Sikkim agreed to support the company and undertook to play the role of a faithful ally. The Nepal war came to an end with the signing of the treaty of Segauly on December 2, 1815 between the company and Nepal.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the territories secured by it, the company made the Nepalese government to agree not to molest or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim and British arbitration was accepted in case of all differences arising between these two states.<sup>22</sup>

### The Treaty of Titalia 1817 and its Significance

To establish the company's relations with Sikkim on a firmer footing, Lord Moira (afterwards Marquis of Hastings), the Governor General of India, restored to Sikkim the territory lying between the rivers Meehi and Teesta (wrested from Nepal) by signing a treaty with the Raja Teugphud Namgyal on February 10, 1817. The British, however, reserved to themselves the right to arbitrate in any dispute that might arise between Sikkim and Nepal.<sup>23</sup> The political significance of the treaty was tremendous :

1. It helped to check the Nepalese expansion towards the east. Sikkim became a strong buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan with the restoration of the territory between the rivers Meehi and the Teesta.
2. It brought Sikkim for the first time under the influence of the company and the freedom of action of Sikkim was limited to a great extent by the provisions of the treaty.
3. The company gained trade privileges and the right to trade upto Tibetan frontier.

The Treaty of Titalia, thus marked the beginning of the British interest in Sikkim as a trade route to Tibet and as a factor in India's security<sup>24</sup>.

Two months after the signing of the Treaty of Titalia, in order to strengthen Sikkim as a buffer between Nepal and British India, **Lord Moira ceded to Sikkim an additional territory of the Morang—the low lands lying between the rivers Meehi and the Mahandi**<sup>25</sup>.

Sikkim though now had security against external aggression, it had no respite yet from its own internal feuds. The Lepchas, who had been in the vanguard of the struggle against the Gorkha invaders were opposed to the domination of the Bhotiyas in the affairs of the kingdom. This tendency was not liked by the ruling group. The ruler and his group went so far as to accomplish the assassination of a Lepcha minister in 1826.<sup>26</sup> This led to the migration of hundreds of Lepchas to the Ilam area of Eastern

Nepal on account of the feeling of insecurity, with the connivance of the Gorkhas, they frequently raided Western Sikkim and caused several border disputes between Nepal and Sikkim. In pursuance of the terms of 1817 treaty, Sikkim referred the matter for arbitration to the Governor General of the East India Company. The Governor General deputed J.W. Grant, who was Commercial Resident at Malda, and Captain George William Aylmer Lloyd, who commanded the British frontier force at Titalia, to look into the matter and make an award<sup>27</sup>. As a result of their intervention, the Lepcha raiders of eastern Nepal were compelled to return to Nepal<sup>28</sup>.

### **The Cession of Darjeeling**

Grant and Lloyd during this tour came across a small hill village called Darjeeling. They suggested to the Governor General that the site would not only make an ideal health resort and as a suitable site for a sanatorium for the convalescence of the British troops, but will also confer considerable commercial and political benefits on the company in the Eastern Himalayas<sup>29</sup>. The British Government offered to buy the site or to exchange some other territory for it. But in the initial stages Sikkim appeared reluctant to part with it. However, after prolonged communication and having regard to the constant need for British help and protection in putting down the hostile elements of the Lepchas and the uncertain attitude of Tibet, Tsugphud Namgyal changed his mind. He presented to the British Government on February 1, 1835<sup>30</sup> in the language of the Grant Deed "all the land south of the Great Rangeet River, east of the Balasun, Kahil and little Rangeet rivers, and west of the Rungno and Mahanadi rivers"<sup>31</sup>. Instead of an equivalent tract in exchange the British Government sanctioned an annual subsidy of Rs. 3,000 as compensation to Sikkim in 1841. It was increased to Rs. 6,000 in 1846.<sup>32</sup>

The territory thus ceded to the British later on became the nucleus of the district of Darjeeling. The British Government first placed it under a Superintendent who besides the administration and development of Darjeeling, held charge of British political relations with Sikkim also. In 1850, the designation of the Superintendent was changed to that of Deputy Commissioner<sup>33</sup>. The cession of Darjeeling was an important event in the history of East India Company's relations with Sikkim. Darjeeling became an important observation post of the British in the Himalayas and enhanced the possibilities of trade with Tibet.

### **The Grant of Darjeeling and the Sikkimese theory of land holding**

It will be interesting to examine in this connection the grant of Darjeeling in the light of the Sikkimese theory of landholding brought forward by Hope Namgyal, the present Gyalmo of Sikkim.

According to Hope Namgyal, Sikkimese law provides that all land belongs to the King<sup>34</sup> and according to Hope Namgyal only usufructage, not outright ownership devolves on the occupants of the land. Therefore, she raises the issue, whether Darjeeling was not given "in the traditional context of a grant for usufructage only ; ultimate jurisdiction, authority and the right to resume the land being implicitly retained"<sup>35</sup>

However, the argument has been overstretched since in all transactions between the sovereign powers only the principles of International law are applied. Therefore the Sikkimese law of land-holding cannot be applied to the Grant of Darjeeling.

But ever since the establishment of the Darjeeling Settlement, the relations between the company and Sikkim were unfriendly for several reasons :

1. The Raja of Sikkim was embittered with the company for not receiving adequate compensation for the cession of Darjeeling.
2. The posting of Dr. A. Campbell of the Indian Medical Service in 1839 as Superintendent of Darjeeling and incharge of political relations with Sikkim.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Campbell could not get along well with the Raja of Sikkim. The Sikkimese authorities were dissatisfied with the treatment received after cession of Darjeeling and he became closely connected with the worsening of British relations with Sikkim.<sup>37</sup>
3. The growth of Darjeeling from an uninhabited place in 1835 to a flourishing settlement of 10,000 people within a decade had roused further the jealousy of the Sikkimese.
4. The loss of Ontoo hill by Sikkim<sup>38</sup>.
5. The arrest and imprisonment of Campbell and Dr. Hooker, the distinguished English naturalist in November-December 1949 on account of repeated defiance of Raja's wishes and authority not to cross Sikkim-Tibet border, *caused a serious* crisis in British-Sikkim relations.

During the period 1839-1861, when A. Campbell was superintendent of Darjeeling, the relations between the British and Sikkim deteriorated. Darjeeling provided numerous facilities for free trade, both in mercantile commodities and in labour. Its extensive forest lands which could be re-claimed for cultivation, attracted large number of Lepchas and the Nepalese to migrate and to settle over there. Such developments not only threatened the privileges traditionally enjoyed by certain Bhōtiya families of Sikkim (for instance, their monopoly of trade in this part of the Himalaya) but also disturbed the age-old population balance and inter-tribal relations in Sikkim.

The presence of the British so close to Sikkim also became a source of embarrassment in Sikkim's relations with other Himalayan states of Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. In 1844, the ruler of Sikkim and the Paro Penlop of Bhutan clashed at Phari in Tibet<sup>39</sup>. The Government of Tibet also gave vent to its displeasure by curtailing the grazing rights that Sikkimese on the border had always enjoyed in Tibet<sup>40</sup>.

### **The Arrest and Imprisonment of Campbell and Hooker**

In 1847, therefore the ruler of Sikkim appointed as his Dewan, one Tokhang Namguay a Tibetan of strong anti-British convictions. Tokhang Namguay was also his relative being the husband of an illegitimate daughter of the ruler.

In 1848 Tokhang Namguay refused permission to J.D. Hooker, a distinguished British botanist, to explore Sikkim. Permission was granted when Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent threatened to report the matter to the Governor General of India.

In 1849, Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling and Dr. Hooker, who were travelling in Sikkim with the prior permission of the Raja were suddenly seized by the Sikkimese authorities and made prisoner near the Sikkim Tibet border by the order of the Dewan Namguay<sup>41</sup>. This arrest which occurred near the border between Sikkim and Tibet was in fact meant :—

1. to show Sikkim's resentment of the British rejection of the Sikkimese demand to stop collecting tax in the Sikkim Morang ;
2. to demonstrate unhappiness towards the British for settling a number of Nepalese on the Sikkim side of the border between Sikkim and Darjeeling ;
3. to express annoyance towards the British for refusing to surrender certain fugitives from Sikkim taking shelter in the Indian territory, and
4. to get the runaway slaves of Sikkim restored.

### **Annexation of Morang**

However, a British ultimatum forced Sikkim to release Campbell and Hooker on December 24, 1849, six weeks after their seizure<sup>42</sup>. The British Government in India retaliated by annexing the Sikkim Morang and the hill tract around Darjeeling bounded by the Ramma river on the north, by the Great Rangeet and the Teesta on the east, and by Nepal on the West and by suspending the payment of its annual subsidy of Rs. 6000.<sup>43</sup> Thus Darjeeling ceased to be an enclave in Sikkimese territory. After the above annexations, it became contiguous with the British Indian districts of Purnea and Rangpur in the plains.

### **The British Expedition to Sikkim and the Treaty of 1861**

The crisis of 1849 resulted in the loss of 640 square miles of fertile territory of Sikkim. This loss, together with the refusal of the Government of India to renew the annual allowance of Rs. 6,000/- embittered Raja Tsugphud Namgyal very much towards the British. Taking advantage of the Raja's strained relations with the British, ex-Dewan Namguay, who was reported to have been banished from the country on account of his involvement in the crisis of 1849, staged a comeback and began to take a prominent part in Sikkimese politics. The Raja, as he became too old to govern the country himself, retired to Chumbi in Tibet, leaving the administration in the hands of Namguay<sup>44</sup>. During this period of strained relations several British subjects from Bengal, were carried off and sold as slaves or detained in Sikkim<sup>45</sup>.

### **The Advance and Retreat of Campbell 1860**

In 1860, in retaliation for the kidnapping of the British subjects in violation of the 1817 treaty, Campbell laid siege on the Sikkimese area between the Rammam and the Rangeet rivers. Unexpectedly, he suffered heavy casualties and was obliged to retreat from Rinchingpong in Sikkim and fall back to Darjeeling<sup>46</sup>. Campbell's expedition to Sikkim had not solved any of the problems then facing the British with that kingdom.

### **The Expedition of Colonel J.C. Gawler**

Campbell's retreat was a blow to the British prestige. The Government of India, therefore, thought it necessary to take immediate steps, not only to show its power but also to counter-act the likely adverse political effects Campbell's retreat might have upon Tibet and Bhutan. Consequently, to avenge the disgrace, the British Government dispatched a strong military force in 1861 under Colonel J.C. Gawler, accompanied by Ashley Eden as Envoy and Special Commissioner. The British Expeditionary force left Darjeeling on February 1, 1861 and met with little or no opposition. Dewan Namguay, the source of all the trouble, fled to Tibet, the moment the British troops approached the Teesta<sup>47</sup>.

### **The Treaty of 1861**

On March 28, 1861 at Tum-long, a detailed treaty containing 23 Articles was signed on behalf of the Government of India by the Hon'ble Asley Eden and by the Maharaja's son, Sidkeong Namgyal<sup>48</sup>. Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal was in Chumbi and declined to return to Sikkim. It was about this time that the title of Maharaja came to be used for the rulers of Sikkim<sup>49</sup>.

The treaty embodied recognition by Sikkim of the defacto British protectorate over Sikkim and of the right of the Government of India to construct roads through Sikkim to the Tibetan border,

the banishment of Ex-Dewan Namgyal and his blood relations to Tibet,<sup>50</sup> and the transfer of the seat of the Government from Chumbi in Tibet to Sikkim for at least nine months in a year<sup>51</sup>. Matters relating to the trade and extradition were also settled to the satisfaction of the British. Further, the Government of Sikkim would not cede or lease any portion of its territory to any other state without the permission of the British Government<sup>52</sup>.

### The Significance of the Treaty of 1861

The Treaty of 1861 was very significant in the British-Sikkim relations. It brought also Sikkim under the British Control. Almost all the demands of the Government of India were realized by the Treaty. The Treaty checked Tibetan influence in Sikkim for a time. The Government of India were then in a position to annex Sikkim, but did not contemplate such a step in view of the British disinclination to involve in any conflict with Tibet, which had vague claims over Sikkim.

Although the British had gained substantial advantages, without having the need to annex Sikkim, still the treaty suffered from two weaknesses. One was the non-definition of the de-jure status of Sikkim, and the other was the privilege granted to the Mahakaja of Sikkim under Article 22 to stay in Chumbi for three months in a year. These two weaknesses manifested themselves within next three decades and were mainly responsible for the subsequent difficulties of the Government of India with Tibet and China.

### The Relations of the British Crown With Sikkim since 1861

#### Succession of the Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal

In 1862 the ageing Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal abdicated in favour of his legitimate eldest son Sidkeong Namgyal, who succeeded him as the Eighth consecrated Chogyal in 1863. The rule of Sidkeong was the most happy period in the British-Sikkim relations. In 1862, the Government of India restored the annual grant of Rs. 6,000 and in 1868 increased it to Rs. 9000<sup>53</sup> and in 1873, he paid a friendly visit to Sir George Campbell, then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal at Darjeeling. He wanted to reorganise the Sikkim Army which he wished shed to be trained by the British but was unsuccessful in the negotiations.<sup>54</sup>

Maharaja Sidkeong died in April 1874 and was succeeded by his half-brother Thutob Namgyal (1860-1914), the ninth consecrated ruler of Sikkim. At the time of his succession the British Empire in Asia was paramount and Sikkim was already feeling the bywinds of British diplomacy. The year 1874 witnessed a striking assertion of British supremacy over Sikkim. The Government of India succeed

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ed in nominating its own candidate as the ruler of the kingdom, on the death of the Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal in April 1874. The late Maharaja had no issue but only two half brothers—one legitimate and the other illegitimate, Thutob Namgyal and Tinley Namgyal respectively. Ex-Dewan Namguayl wanted to instal Tinley Namgyal on the throne to gain firm foothold on the administration of Sikkim. But John Ware Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling informed the Sikkim Darbar that the Government of India would not recognize any succession which would have for its object, the restoration of ex-Dewan Namguay's influence in Sikkim. H.H. Riseley, afterwards the Secretary to the Government of India commented on this episode thus :

“Not a whisper was heard on the frontier of the remonstrance against this vigorous piece of king-making, and Tibet acquiesced silently in an act which struck at the roots of any claim on her part to exercise a permanent influence in the affairs of the Sikkim State<sup>55</sup>”.

The subsequent events in Sikkim were in tune with the British paramount position in that kingdom. A road was constructed from Darjeeling to the Tibetan frontier at Jelep La<sup>56</sup>.

The increased British influence in Sikkim made the pro-Tibetan party uneasy. John Ware Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling who had been deputed to investigate the possibility of re-establishing British trade with Tibet, brought to the notice of Bengal administration on his return from a visit to the border between Tibet and Sikkim in 1873, a communication addressed by the Chinese Amban in Lhasa to the ruler of Sikkim, calling upon him not to encourage road building in his territory and to prevent British officers from crossing the border into Tibet<sup>57</sup>. Although these were grave provocations, the British overlooked them in view of Edger's other favourable observations and the conclusion of a Sino-British convention in Chefu (in China) on September 13, 1876<sup>58</sup>. A road was constructed through Sikkim to the Jelep La on the Tibet frontier.

### **Settlement of the Nepalese in Sikkim**

The pro-Tibetan party in Sikkim and Tinley Namgyal, who had fled to Tibet in 1874, after his failure to secure the throne, tried to undermine the British position in Sikkim by exploiting the resentment of the local people against the settlement of the Nepalese. It may be pointed out here that ever since the British had gained influence in Sikkim, they made it a policy to settle Nepalese in that kingdom. This they did,

1. to accelerate the economic growth of the sparsely populated Sikkim by settling the hardworking Nepalese who were well suited to work in the hills,



2. to counteract the possible danger to their supremacy from the Sikkim Royal family, whose allegiance was suspected by them, by settling foreign Nepalese who would naturally look towards the British for protection and patronage.

H.R. Risley said,

“Most of all will our position be strengthened by the change which is insensibly but steadily taking place in the composition of the population of Sikkim. The Lepchas as has been stated, are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and Goorkhas of Nepal are pressing forward to clear and cultivate large areas of unoccupied land on which the European tea-planters of Darjeeling have already cast longing eyes. The influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence. Here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism and the praying wheel of the lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahman. The land will follow the creed; the Tibetan proprietors will gradually be dispossessed, and will betake themselves to the petty trade for which they have an undeniable aptitude.

Thus race and religion the prime movers of the Asiatic world, will settle the Sikkim difficulty for us, in their own way. We have only to look on and see that the operation of these causes is not artificially hindered by the interference of Tibet and Nepal<sup>59</sup>”.

The Nepalese settlers, by their industry and their fecundity soon began to displace the local inhabitants. The local inhabitants were afraid lest they were reduced to minority. Maharaja Thotub Namgyal visited Kalimpong in November 1878, to request Sir Asley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to restrict the number of Nepali settlers in Sikkim. The Lieutenant Governor agreed to restrict the settlement of Nepalese to South Sikkim<sup>60</sup>. But this arrangement was vehemently opposed by an influential section of the Bhotiyas of Sikkim. There were riots at Rhenok between the Bhotiyas and the Nepalese in 1880. The Government of Bengal deputed its officer, A.W. Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to pacify the two groups. Consequently an understanding was reached on April 14, 1880<sup>61</sup>.

Thutab Namgyal, who had risen to power with British support, could not stand up to the pressure of the anti-British Bhotiyas and Tibetans. He drifted away from the British influence and succumbed to pressure from the anti-British Bhotiyas and Tibetans. Early in 1886, he abruptly disavowed his subordination to the Government of India, as enjoined by the 1861 treaty<sup>62</sup>.

### **Macaulay Mission 1886 and the Occupation of Lingtu**

The trade route between India and Tibet lay through Sikkim and the question of promoting commercial intercourse with Tibet

involved the Indian Government into complications. In 1886, the Government of India sent a mission to Tibet under Colman Macaulay, who was Secretary to the Government of Bengal at that time, to explore the possibilities of trade with that country. The mission, however, withdrew from Tibet without completing its work in deference to the wishes of the Chinese. No sooner had the mission withdrawn, the Tibetans occupied a strip of the territory of Sikkim south of Jelep La, called Lingtu nearly twenty miles deep<sup>63</sup>. Thutab Nomgyal, in tune with the anti-British sentiment then prevailing in the ruling circles of the kingdom, instead of protesting against it, condoned the Tibetan action. The Government of India felt that the Tibetans had resorted to that action due to their fear of the Macaulay Mission and hoped that the Tibetans would withdraw on learning about the abandonment of the Mission. But Tibetans further consolidated their position by building a stone fort there, commanding the road between India and Tibet<sup>64</sup>. The Maharaja of Sikkim, Thotab Namgyal, who was then staying in the Chumbi Valley of Tibet not only supported the Tibetan action but declared that the land under occupation really belonged to Tibet, even though Sikkim as a matter of grace was allowed to use it<sup>65</sup>. This event placed the British in a great dilemma. The leaders and people of Sikkim were mostly pro-Tibetan and as they did not ask for British help, nor desired it, there was no ostensible ground for interference by the British. At the same time the British could not afford to tolerate the spread of Tibetan influence in Sikkim. Urged by these considerations the British Government decided to send a military expedition. It commenced its operations early in March 1888, and drove the Tibetans out of Lingtu by September. After the Anglo-Tibetan war of 1888, the Government of India exercised effective influence in the administration of Sikkim by appointing a political officer at Gangtok in June 1889, primarily as a British observer on the Tibet frontier and eventually as a British representative for Bhutan and Tibet. The first political officer, J.C. White of the Public Works Department, reorganised the entire system of administration in Sikkim. He created a state council to advise Thutab Namgyal in the administration of the state, conducted land and mineral surveys and settled unoccupied waste land and the land occupied by the monasteries<sup>66</sup>.

### Anglo-Chinese Convention 1890

A settlement of the Sikkim-Tibet hostilities in which the British were actively involved was, however, reached only on March 17, 1890 with the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention at Calcutta by Lord Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor General of India and the Amban Shen Tai<sup>67</sup> (Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet).

It was laid down that the boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet.

It recognised the status of Sikkim as a British Protectorate and the right of the British Government to have direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State<sup>68</sup>.

The Convention settled once for all the status of Sikkim, which for all practical purposes, became part and parcel of British India and lost its separate existence and identity and the Britishers came to exercise paramount political control over Sikkim<sup>69</sup>. Peking gave up the Sino-Tibetan claims to suzerainty over Sikkim<sup>70</sup>.

### The Trade Regulations 1893

After the conclusion of the Convention, the Government of India suggested to the Chinese Government that the three unsettled matters relating to pasturage, communications and trade should be taken up immediately. Consequently on December 5, 1893 Regulations regarding trade, communication and pasturage (to be appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890) were signed at Darjeeling by A.W. Paul for the Government of India and by James H. Hart and Ho Chang-Jung for China<sup>71</sup>.

This protocol provided, inter-alia, for the establishment of a trade mart at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, a mart which was opened in 1894. British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel freely to and from between the frontier and Yatung<sup>72</sup>. But the mart was on an altogether unsuitable site, in a narrow side-valley running down from Sikkim towards the Chumbi Valley. A few yards farther down this little valley a wall was built from side to side and manned by soldiers to prevent British traders and travellers from going any farther into Tibetan territory<sup>73</sup>.

Maharaja Thotab Namgyal was at this time virtually under the supervision and control of Claude White, who had been appointed as the first British political officer in Sikkim in 1889, and had been invested with the authority of a defacto ruler. For a time both the Maharaja and the Maharani were forced to remain in Kalimpong in North Bengal since the Government of India felt that he had caused considerable embarrassment to the British by showing his obedience and respect to the Tibetans and the Amban of China in Lhasa. However, in February 1891, he was allowed to come back to Sikkim with restricted freedom of movement. The king brooding over his fancied wrongs fled from Sikkim in 1892 with the intention to reach Tibet but was captured by the Nepalese authorities and was handed over to the Indian Government. He was kept under surveillance in Kurseong in Darjeeling district and was restored only in 1896.<sup>74</sup> During this period the Political officer carried on the administration of Sikkim with the assistance of a three member State Council<sup>75</sup>. The Maharaja was asked to call back his eldest son Tehoda Namgyal from Tibet to Sikkim<sup>76</sup>. In spite of several warnings Tehoda Namgyal did not come back to

Sikkim. As such Lord Curzon in February 1899 recognized Sidkeong Namgyal as the successor designate to the Sikkim throne<sup>77</sup>, ignoring the claims of the eldest son Tehoda Namgyal. At the same time Tehoda Namgyal was prohibited from entering Sikkim.

This incident demonstrated that the Government of India did not want (as in 1874) a person suspected of Tibetan proclivities to sit on the throne of Sikkim. It further showed a high degree of British influence as no monastery dared to protest against the succession of Avtari Lama<sup>78</sup>. It revealed the power of the local British officers to meddle successfully in the important issues concerning the Sikkim Royal family. In 1874 Edgar had decided the successor by getting the claims of Thotab Namgyal recognized. In 1899, White to a large extent was responsible for having Sidkeong Namgyal selected as the successor designate to the Sikkim throne.

From the above survey it is evident that within a decade after the signing of the Sikkim-Tibet convention in 1890, the Government of India consolidated its authority in Sikkim to such an extent that it was able to meddle with impunity in important affairs of Sikkimese life and administration.

### **Younghusband Expedition to Tibet**

As Tibet was not a party to the convention of 1890, and the protocol of 1893, and considered both agreements as imposed upon it by China, it frequently violated the border agreed upon in these agreements just to show that it was not bound by them, and even refused to recognise them.<sup>79</sup> The British, therefore, decided in the summer of 1894 to appoint, in consultation with the Chinese, a joint boundary commission to demarcate the boundary on the ground<sup>80</sup>. At a preliminary meeting of the Chinese, Tibetan and British delegates at Yatung on April 5, 1895, it was decided that the representatives of three Governments should meet on May 7, 1895 at Permaringo Pass to commence the work of demarcation<sup>81</sup>. A British party led by White reached the border to start the work of demarcation, but as the Chinese and Tibetans did not turn up, it returned disappointed. White, however, erected a few boundary pillars on Jelep La and the neighbouring passes leading into the Chumbi Valley. Demarcation of the rest of the border especially around Giagong was temporarily postponed. In June 1902, military party accompanied by White expelled Tibetan intruders from Giagong and also took the opportunity to complete the work of boundary survey and demarcation left incomplected in 1895.<sup>82</sup> The relations between Tibet and the British, however, became cool and tense. In June 1903, Lord Curzon, after obtaining the consent of the British Government, despatched an expedition to Tibet under the leadership of Colonel Francis Younghusband, the British Resident at Indore. The Expedition went as far as Lhasa.

### The Lhasa Convention 1904

A convention was signed in the audience hall of the Potala on September 7, 1904 popularly known as Lhasa Convention<sup>83</sup>.

It embodied among other things, the Tibetan endorsement of the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet as defined in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and also of commercial rights that the British had secured in Tibet through the Trade Regulations of 1893. The Convention of 1904 stated that Tibet would uphold the Convention of 1890 and reference was made to the "relations of friendship and good understanding which had existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet". It contained nine Articles. Article IX of the 1904 Convention is of paramount importance. This article specified that the Government of Tibet would guarantee that, without the previous consent of the British Government it would allow :

1. No portion of Tibetan territory to be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise given for occupation to any foreign power ;
2. No foreign power to intervene in Tibetan affairs ;
3. No representative of any foreign power to be admitted to Tibet ;
4. No concession for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining, or other rights to be granted to any foreign power or the subject of any foreign power ; and
5. No Tibetan revenues whether in kind or cash, to be pledged or assigned to any foreign power or the subject of any foreign power.

Hence this Convention served to intensify Tibet's isolation from the rest of the world.

### The Peking Convention

The Lhasa Convention was not final, as the assent of China whose suzerainty over Tibet, Great Britain had recognized, was not obtained. Therefore after the return of the Expedition to the British territory, the necessary negotiations with China were undertaken. On April 27, 1906, the Convention between Great Britain and China, generally known as the Peking Convention was signed at Peking. It contained six articles.

The British had always classed Sikkim as a Princely State like many other states of India such as Bashahr, Manipur and Patiala<sup>84</sup>. Hence the Government of India used to conduct its affairs with Sikkim through the medium of the Government of Bengal. But Lord Curzon in 1901 decided that while the internal administration

of Sikkim should remain under the control of the Bengal Government, on political and commercial questions, the Political Officer should correspond directly with the foreign Department of the Government of India<sup>85</sup>.

In 1914, the Simla Convention signed by the representatives of Britain, China and Tibet ratified the delimitation of the northern frontiers of Sikkim, as had been set down in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.

The Government of India exploited the dispute concerning Sikkim-Tibet boundary to open Tibet. The success of the Younghusband Expedition in opening Tibet and forcing it to sign Lhasa Convention on September 7, 1904 had solved all the British difficulties regarding the status of Sikkim and its boundary with Tibet. Tibet had not only recognized the protectorate of the Government of India over Sikkim but also confirmed the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as laid down in the Convention of 1890. China confirmed the Lhasa convention by signing the Peking Convention with British in 1906. Thus the influence of these two treaties on Sikkim was far reaching. The de jure status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India had received international sanction.

By 1906, the Government of India had consolidated its position in Sikkim to such an extent that it had no trouble whatsoever, for the remaining period of British rule in India, either from the Maharaja or from outside powers like Tibet and China.

Sidkeong Namgyal became the tenth consecrated ruler of Sikkim on February 11, 1914 after the death of his father Thotab Namgyal. He was not only educated in English school at Darjeeling under expert care but was sent to England for higher studies in September 1906. Sidkeong Namgyal was indeed an extraordinary man and had developed high intelligence and a forceful personality. On becoming the Maharaja of Sikkim, Sidkeong made no secret of his desire to remove vested interests, and his proposal to liquidate the system of landlords created staunch enemies among a large number of landlords<sup>86</sup>. However, he was not destined to rule for a long time. He died unmarried on December 5, 1914 and was succeeded by his younger half brother, Tashi Namgyal, who was born at Kurseong in Darjeeling district in 1893 during his father's captivity there. For a time, he was under the tutelage of Sir Charles Bell, who was the then Political Officer in Sikkim. Complete restoration of governmental authority was given to the new ruler when he became formally the Maharaja in April 1918. In this year, the British restored to Sikkim its complete internal autonomy.<sup>87</sup> Tashi Namgyal's long and enlightened rule of fifty years saw many social and economic reforms and all round development of the State. Far reaching changes were effected in

the judiciary in Sikkim. A modern type of court designated chief court, was set up and a full time judge was appointed in 1916, thereby bringing the judicial functions of the landlords under the supervision of a superior court<sup>88</sup>. Himself a devout follower of the Mahayana Nyingma tradition, the Maharaja never suffered from bigotry or intolerance in administration and academic fields. The fruitful and momentous reign of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal came to an end on his passing away on December 2, 1963.

### Lord Linlithgow visits Sikkim 1938

No Viceroy had ever set foot in Sikkim, but in 1938 Lord and Lady Linlithgow decided to visit the Maharaja of Sikkim.<sup>89</sup>

They stayed at the Residency. The visit was welcome as an indication of the increased interest which the Government of India were taking in the north east frontier. It helped to widen the horizon of the Maharaja and his family and to lessen their shyness of the outer world<sup>90</sup>.

There occurred no important event until the British withdrawal from India and the consequent lapse of British paramountcy over Sikkim in the summer of 1947. However, the British never relaxed their hold on Sikkim till their withdrawal from India. Sikkim due to its strategic location between Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and India, formed a vital point of India's defence in the Eastern Himalaya. Its location enabled the Government of India to watch the developments in the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Another important British interest in Sikkim was trade. The traditional trade from India to southern Tibet was from Darjeeling to Gyantse through Sikkim. The British always recognized Sikkim's importance both for the defence of India and for the development of its trade with Tibet and the countries beyond.

Pending negotiations for a fresh or modified treaty spelling out precisely the nature and extent of its relations with independent India, Sikkim signed a standstill agreement with India on February 27, 1948. According to the terms of this agreement, "all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements 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 Darbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or a treaty<sup>91</sup>. This became essential since the Indian Independence Act, 1947 passed by the British Parliament had stipulated that : "the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses, and with it, all treaties and agreements in force at the date of the passing of this Act between His Majesty and the rulers of India States, all functions exercisable by His Majesty at that date with respect to Indian States, all obligations of His Majesty existing at that date towards Indian States or rulers thereof, and all

powers, rights, authority or jurisdiction exercisable by His Majesty at that date in or in relation to Indian States by treaty, grant, usage, sufferance or otherwise.<sup>92</sup>

Negotiations for the final and a new treaty between the Sikkim Darbar and the Government of India proceeded favourably and the Treaty was signed in Gangtok on December 5, 1950 between Maharaja Tashi Namgyal and Harishwar Dayal, the then Indian Political Officer in Sikkim.

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

### **Development of political Consciousness and Political Parties in Sikkim.**

Sikkim, which to-day occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of the Himalayan countries, on the eve of the Indian independence was a closed book so far as political activity was concerned. The Sikkim Darbar and the British Political Officer stationed in Gangtok had ruled the kingdom with an iron hand. However, the advent of popular Government in India after the British withdrawal from the sub-continent, encouraged the aspirations of the various politically motivated people in Sikkim. Initially, a number of organisations sprouted in different parts of Sikkim, mainly on the lines of welfare bodies. The Praja Sammelan of Temitarku, the Praja Mandal of Chakhung and the Praja Sudhar Samaj of Gangtok were three such organizations.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Birth of Sikkim State Congress**

The leaders of these organisations and others interested in the political life of the country felt the need for a strong and unified political party in the kingdom. Consequently, to consider the question of setting up a strong political party, the representatives from different parts of Sikkim along with the representatives of the above mentioned three organisations met at Gangtok on the historic day of December 7, 1947—a day which will go down in the temporary political history of Sikkim as a red-letter day. Leaders like Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Tashi Tsering, D.B. Gurung, Chandra Das Rai, Captain Dimik Singh Lepcha and Sonam Tschering attended the deliberations.<sup>2</sup> Their thoughtful deliberations gave birth to the Sikkim State Congress<sup>3</sup>. The general meeting was held

under the chairmanship of Tashi Tschering. The establishment of the Sikkim State Congress was an event of great importance in the political life of the country since this premiere organization played a significant role in the public life of Sikkim in the years which followed India's independence in 1947.

### **Demand of Political Reforms and Accession to India.**

These leaders, apart from establishing Sikkim State Congress, also adopted a resolution at their meeting for political reforms in the Kingdom. A deputation called on the then Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal and presented a Memorandum to him incorporating the three demands formulated by them at their meeting in Gangtok. The demands included in the Memorandum were :—

- (i) Abolition of landlordism ;
- (ii) Formation of an interim Government as a precursor for a democratic form of government ; and
- (iii) The accession of Sikkim to the Union of India.<sup>4</sup>

The activities of the State Congress, directed along peaceful and legitimate lines, exercised a considerable influence throughout Sikkim. It sought changes in the social and economic structure of the country. Several deputations waited on the authorities for abolition of slavery, protection against forced labour and demanded that the people be allowed to pay their taxes direct to the state instead of to the landlords who had often cheated them in recording the payments<sup>5</sup>. The movement under the state Congress went ahead from strength to strength and within a short period of couple of months landlordism was on its way to liquidation. Forced labour, locally known as "Jharlangi", which had been the bane of the people of Sikkim, became a thing of the past. The landlord's courts and their powers of registration of lands and deeds were abolished in 1948. The lessee system was dropped and the people were given the right to pay tax direct to the State<sup>6</sup>.

### **Political Agitation and Twenty-nine Day's Ministry.**

During the time lag which preceded the signing of the treaty in 1950 between Sikkim and India and with an almost total lack of cohesion manifest in the internal administration of Sikkim, the Sikkim Congress, being the largest political organisation in the country gathered strength and grew restive. To contain and control such forces in this premiere political organisation of the Kingdom, an experiment to associate popular element with the administration was made by the Chogyal by appointing three State Congress leaders-representing Bhutia, Lepcha and Napali interests as "secretaries to the His Highness, the Maharaja of Sikkim"<sup>7</sup>. The State Congress Executive Committee, however, repudiated the acceptance of office by three congressmen as 'Secretaries' to the Darbar.

The Nepali nominee resigned from the government in obedience to the Party's call while the other two stayed back for some more time<sup>8</sup>.

### **Emergence of Communalism**

The defiance did not much affect the strength of the political agitation for reforms brewing in the kingdom but it did signify the emergence of a new element in Sikkimese politics namely communalism. In selecting the three nominees of the State Congress for association with the governance of the kingdom, the Darbar had taken care to give equal representation to the the three distinct racial groups comprising Sikkim's population. It was alleged by the State Congress leadership that the nominees from the State Congress were supposed to represent not so much the State Congress as the three sections of the Sikkimese people—the Napalese, Bhotias and the Lepchas. The virus of communalism was injected into the body politic of Sikkim.

### **The Establishment of Sikkim National Party**

The Bhutia member, Mr. Sonam Tschering, who had refused to abide by the State Congress call to resign as "Secretary to the Maharaja of Sikkim", instead helped the formation of a new political party known as Sikkim National Party in April 1948 with an avowedly communal bias. It was the feeling of certain knowledgeable circles that the Sikkim National Party was in fact sponsored by the ruler to fight the democratic agitation and to emphasize the communal and racial differences as breakwaters to democratic development.<sup>9</sup> The party leadership asserted that "a time-honoured institution" like landlordism could not "be suddenly wiped out of existence root and branch, without giving rise to grave consequences", called "democratic government in a small state" a "farce" and strongly opposed accession to India "under any circumstances".<sup>10</sup> This party was the very antithesis of the Sikkim State Congress. This is evident from a resolution which the Sikkim National Party passed on April, 30, 1948. It said :

- (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.
- (b) From the geographical and ethnic points of view Sikkim is not a part of India. She has only political relations with the latter, which were imposed on her.
- (c) From the religious point of view, being Lamaist, she is quite distinct from India.
- (d) The policy of the party is to maintain intact by all means the indigenous character of Sikkim and to preserve its integrity.<sup>11</sup>

The Party would make all out efforts to establish a separate entity and to remain outside the Indian Union. To force Sikkim to accede to the Indian Union, either by direct or indirect means would be a denial to Sikkim of her right to stick to her natural affinities<sup>12</sup>.

As such the National Party opposed the State Congress's demand for the establishment of an interim government. It raised a counter slogan demanding the retention of effective powers in the hands of the Chogyal. The State Congress leadership dubbed it as an "Party of the Palace".

### **The Rajya Praja Sammelan**

The Rajya Praja Sammelan, a third political party had its origin about the same time. It was founded by Dhan Bahadur Tewari Chhetri and Goverdhan Pradhan, an elder brother of Kashiraj Pradhan. Its first declared aim was complete union with India and affiliation and identification with the Gurkha population of North Bengal.

### **The Hour of Trial**

Consequently, the effort of the Sikkim ruler to contain political forces by associating three congress leaders as his "secretaries" in the government failed. Instead on account of the above mentioned developments, it further sharpened the political activity in the State. The State Congress demand for the establishment of an interim popular government had gradually gathered momentum. The State Congress further proposed a "no rent" and "no tax" campaign as a part of its programme of agitation. At the annual session of the State Congress at Rangpo which was held in the first week of February 1949, momentous decisions were taken to intensify steps for the achievement of popular ministry. On February 7, 1949 Tashi Tschering and twenty other important members of the Party were summoned for defying the Government notification by preaching 'No rent' Campaign. When the Party members reached Gangtok, six important leaders were arrested and jailed.<sup>13</sup> On hearing, the arrest and detention of state Congress leaders, several thousand people marched to Gangtok and demonstrated peacefully in the streets of Gangtok against the repressive policy of the Darbar. On February 12, 1949 on account of immense public support against the arrests, the Congress leaders were released unconditionally.<sup>14</sup>

It may be pointed out here that according to Chandra Das Rai, who was a prominent State Congress leader at the time, Shri Harishwar Dayal, the then Political Officer in Sikkim, had advised the Darbar to keep the warrant of arrest against Tashi Tschering in abeyance and persuaded the State Congress to suspend their movement.<sup>15</sup>

Prolonged negotiations took place between the State Congress leaders and the Sikkim Darbar. The talks failed to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the political problems facing the kingdom.

### May Day 1949

On the historic day of 1 May, 1949, a crowd estimated at about five to six thousand marched to the Palace for the fulfilment of their legitimate demand for the formation of popular ministry. The atmosphere at Gangtok was surcharged with great commotion.<sup>16</sup> The agitation rose to a crescendo with inflammatory speeches. This was the first instance in the democratic movement in the state, to have raised a ripple on the placid surface of life in this mountain-ringed state. The Political Officer of India in Gangtok was implored to intervene so as to avert more serious trouble and conflict between the Congress and the Darbar and to restore normal life in the country.<sup>17</sup> A detachment of the Indian Army posted in Gangtok rescued the Ruler to its protection in the Indian Residency (now designated as India House). An ugly situation was averted by scrupulous handling of the situation.

### Formation of Popular Ministry

Fully realising the gravity of the explosive situation, the Maharaja of Sikkim after consultations with the Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, acceded to the popular demand for the formation of an interim government and invited State Congress President Tashi Tschering to form the ministry. Accordingly the first ever popular ministry with Tashi Tschering as the Chief Minister, was sworn in on May 9, 1949 with four other ministers.<sup>18</sup>

But this settlement proved satisfactory only on the surface. The experiment of a popular ministry was short lived. The tension between the Maharaja and the interim government continued even after the latter had been formed. Difficulties arose over the functioning of the ministry. There was no specific delineation and demarcation of the powers of the ruler and the Ministry. Each side started blaming the other of encroachment. The ministry strove to curtail the Maharaja's powers to those of a constitutional monarch. In short, the ministry was at loggerheads with the Darbar. This resulted in chaos and the whole administration seemed to be heading towards a collapse.

### Dr. Keskar's Visit to Gangtok

The Political Officer of the Government of India reported to New Delhi that the State was threatened with disorder which neither the Maharaja nor the ministry would be able to control. He had recommended to the Government of India that the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Government of India, should be sent to Sikkim to appraise the situation.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Balkrishna V. Keskar accordingly visited Gangtok towards the end of May 1949. He met with the Darbar officials and the representatives of the various political parties, business associations and organisations and others in the public life of Sikkim. In his report to the Government of India he stated that there was tension between the ministry and the Darbar and that there was likelihood of bloodshed. He, therefore, recommended that since a breakdown in the administration was likely, the Government of India should appoint a Dewan to take over the administration until the situation became normal. He had also informed the Maharaja that the Political Officer might, if necessary, be entrusted with the administration pending the new Dewan's arrival. The Deputy Minister further recommended that a small force should be sent to Gangtok to help the Political Officer in maintaining law and order, should the need for this arise.<sup>20</sup>

The Government of India accepted the Deputy Minister's recommendations. A company of troops was sent to Gangtok on the 2nd June. On the 3rd June, the Political Officer reported that the situation was getting worse and that unless the Government of India took over the administration immediately, there was likelihood of disorder and chaos erupting in the State.<sup>21</sup>

### **The end of Short-lived Ministry**

On the 6th June, the Maharaja of Sikkim had sent a letter to the Political Officer, informing him that the administration cannot be carried on satisfactorily without the Government of India's assistance and requested the Political Officer to take over the administration pending the appointment of a Dewan to whom the Maharaja would delegate all powers necessary for carrying on the administration until normal conditions are restored.<sup>22</sup>

The same day the Political Officer sent for the ministers and informed them that the Government of India were assuming the responsibility for the administration of the State immediately.

### **Political Officer takes over the Administration**

Hence on June 6, 1949 in the interest of internal stability and law and order, the short lived ministry was dissolved after being in office for twenty nine days. Thus ended, rather abruptly, the maiden ambitious experiment of an interim "popular Government" in Sikkim. It was the only one that so far this tiny kingdom has tried. Its tenure of office was of a short duration, from 9 May to 6 June, 1949. The Government of India had decided with the Maharaja's agreeing to it, to appoint a Dewan to administer the state and pending the appointment of Dewan, the charge of administration was assumed by the Political Officer.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of an interim government as a precursor to the establishment of fuller democratic government thus became infructuous.

The Government of India, in its attempt to soothe the hurt feelings of the Sikkimese, came out with the promise of the progressive democratisation of the state. In a Press note issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, on June 7, 1949, it was made clear that the "Government of India have no desire that legitimate political activity in the State should be stopped or that the representatives of the people should not be associated with the administration. They are anxious that political development in Sikkim should follow the peaceful and progressive course that it has followed in Indian States...It is their sincere hope that the present emergency arrangements may be terminated in the near future so that political evolution in Sikkim may take an even and peaceful course."<sup>24</sup>

### **Indian Attitude Criticized**

In spite of this clarification issued soon after the dissolution of the first popular ministry in Sikkim, some of the kingdom's political leaders still firmly believed that the source of Maharaja's strength at that crucial moment in the political history of Sikkim was the Government of India. They even quoted this "1949 affair as an instance of interference by the Government of India in the internal affairs of Sikkim" and as an evidence of its "prejudice against the political parties and the democratic movement in Sikkim". The politicians blamed the Government of India for "conniving with the Palace in dealing a fatal blow to the democratic movement in Sikkim"<sup>25</sup>. They correlated this decision of the Government of India to two of its subsequent actions. These were: firstly, the Government of India's decision to concede to the Maharaja's demand for the appointment of an Indian administrative officer as a Dewan. Secondly, the treaty, the Government of India signed with the Maharaja of Sikkim in December 1950, which till to-day constitutes the sheet anchor of Sikkim's status. This section of political leadership in Sikkim held that the ministry was sacrificed for the sake of this agreement.<sup>26</sup>

Disappointed and frustrated the leaders of the State Congress headed by its President Tashi Tschering went to Delhi and held frank discussions with the Government of India.<sup>27</sup> The delegation was informed that the Government of India's sole wish was to ensure a stable government in the state of Sikkim and that under no condition could India tolerate chaos and disorder.<sup>28</sup> It was made clear that the Indian Government intended to cooperate more closely in bringing about the increasing association of the Sikkimese people with their government.

### **Dewan Appointed**

A senior civil servant, Mr. J.S. Lall, sent by the Government of India, was appointed as Dewan by the Maharaja of Sikkim and he took office on 11 August 1949.<sup>29</sup> Soon after his arrival the Dewan



got busy modernising the anachronistic administrative system of the state in accordance with the democratic aspirations of the people and under his guidance extensive administrative land and tax reforms were introduced in the State so as to strengthen its internal stability.<sup>30</sup> He made substantial improvements in all spheres of governmental activities.<sup>31</sup> The administrative privileges and the tax collecting duties were abolished. Begar (forced labour) was also abolished.<sup>32</sup>

### **Representatives of Sikkim meet in Delhi, March 1950.**

Another Conference of the representatives of political parties from Sikkim was held in March 1950 in New Delhi, which coincided with the timing of the final stages of negotiation on an Indo-Sikkim treaty. The discussion covered the entire field of future relations between Sikkim and India and necessary administrative arrangements within the State, including the association of popular representatives in the Government of the State. During this Conference decisions were taken regarding the administration of the kingdom also. The outcome of both, the political talks and the treaty negotiations were explained in the press release of 20 March, 1950 issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The Press Note stipulated :

“For the present an officer of the Government of India will continue to be the Dewan of the State. But the Government of India's policy is one of the progressive association of the people of the State with its Government, policy with which happily His Highness the Maharaja is in full agreement. It is proposed, as a first step, that an Advisory Council, representative of all the interests should be associated with the Dewan. Steps will also be taken immediately to institute a village panchayat system on an elective basis within the State. This is an essential and effective process of education in the art of popular Government and it is the intention that these panchayats should, in due course, elect a council for the state, whose functions and area of responsibility will be progressively enlarged.

The Maharajakumar of Sikkim, who was authorised by the Maharaja to participate in the discussions on his behalf is taking back with him the terms agreed upon”.<sup>33</sup>

The policy statement of the Government of India constituted an important step towards the development of political consciousness in the State.

Although, the Government of India assured the political leaders that its avowed aim was to see that democracy was made a living force in Sikkim and to which the Maharaja of Sikkim by concurring agreed that the introduction of democratic institutions in Sikkim was his cherished goal, still a popular government seemed

a distant goal. For immediate practical purposes, it became evident that political development and the establishment of a representative government in Sikkim had been put into cold storage.

### Setting up of the Advisory Committee

In spite of this setback to the establishment of a popular Government in Sikkim, some measures were, however, introduced without delay for the association of the representatives of the people for the maintenance of good administration in Sikkim. An Advisory Committee was set by the Dewan.<sup>34</sup> It was the first step towards the fulfilment of the pronounced policy of the Government of India of the progressive association of the people of the State with its Government. It was laid down in the Press note of March 20, 1950 released by the Government of India that "it is proposed, as a first step, that an Advisory Council representative of all the interests, should be associated with the Dewan." Consequently, the Advisory Committee included the representatives of major political parties in the state. The members of this Committee included Tashi Tschering, Kashiraj Pradhan, Captain Dimik Singh, Gyaltsen Tschering and Sonam Tschering.<sup>35</sup> Besides the ten member advisory council included representatives from the Sikkim State Congress, the Sikkim National Party and other interests like trade and commerce.<sup>36</sup> But the Praja Sammelan declined to join on the grounds that this Committee did not truly represent all the regions and communities in the State. Among the first questions that were considered by the Advisory Committee were the establishment of Panchayats throughout the country and holding of elections towards the formation of the proposed legislative council of the State. An issue of prime importance which came up repeatedly for discussion in the committee pertained to the distribution of seats and the administrative jobs in the government among the principal communities of the kingdom—the Nepalis, the Lepchas and the Bhutias. The attempt at equating the Nepalis on the one hand with the Lepchas and Bhutias on the other, the "parity formula" as it was called, figured prominently in these discussions.

### Village Panchayats

However, steps were taken to establish village panchayats in the state in 1950. These panchayats were to be elected but as no safeguards were provided to the indigenous population—Lepchas and Bhotias—the election to the Panchayats was boycotted by the Sikkim National Party. The result was that only a handful of Panchayats could function.<sup>37</sup> This effort, thus in its initial stages, could not make much headway in the kingdom.

### State Congress Resentment

In the meanwhile the representatives of the Sikkim State Congress to express their discontent and disapproval of the steps

taken to establish 'popular government in Sikkim' boycotted the state banquet given by the Sikkim Darbar on the occasion of the signing of the Indo-Sikkim treaty on 5 December, 1950.<sup>38</sup> Their complaint was that too little was done, and there was too much philandering which was stalling the realisation of a responsible government in Sikkim.

### Proclamation of 1953

The State Congress kept on its demand for the establishment of an early interim democratic government in the country. Ultimately after a prolonged period of discussion, accusation and recrimination among the political parties in the state as well as the Advisory Committee, the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation of 23rd March, 1953 was issued by the Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal. This proclamation set out the powers of the proposed Sikkim Council as well as the composition and powers of its component, the Executive Council. Prior to this the Prime Minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru had told the Indian Parliament that a scheme of constitutional reforms associating the people with administration had been framed with the agreement of the main political parties. Elections for the Legislative Council envisaged by the scheme are expected to be held soon.<sup>39</sup>

The State Congress, however, in a memorandum denounced the Proclamation as "contravening all principles of democracy", and saw no prospect of democratic rule for the State in it.<sup>40</sup>

### First Elections to Sikkim Council 1953

In spite of the limitations of the Proclamation of March 1953, Sikkim's evolution to a modern welfare state was initiated with its first general election in 1953 to elect people's representatives to the Sikkim Council.<sup>41</sup> The infiltration of democratic ideas had destroyed the foundation of many a traditional establishment and had released new forces which ended the "splendid isolation" of Sikkim. J.S. Lall, Dewan of Sikkim in his Darbar Day address on February 14, 1953 voiced his feelings for this great event in the history of the political evolution in these words :

"In a few months the first elected legislature will come into being and a new chapter in the constitutional history of the state will be opened. Your Highness is well aware of the extent to which the good counsel of the Government of India has enabled us to bring these labours to fruition."<sup>42</sup>

The elections for the first Sikkim Council were held from March to May 1953. About 40 per cent of the electorate of 60670 went to the polls.<sup>43</sup> The salient features of Sikkim's first ever elections in its history were as under :

1. The Council was composed of twelve elected and five nominated members. These members were to be nominated by the Maharaja at his discretion.
2. For elected members, the overall parity between Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali communities was maintained. Out of the twelve elected members, six seats each were reserved for the Bhutia, Lepcha and Sikkim Nepalese communities. (Section 3 (b) of the Proclamation). This arrangement had been agreed to by all the political parties in May 1951.<sup>44</sup>
3. The election of the members of the Sikkim Council was based on the universal adult franchise. (Section 4).

The result of the 1953 elections was a triumph for the forces of communalism in Sikkim. The National Party captured all the six Bhutiya, Lepcha seats in the Sikkim Council and the Sikkim State Congress won all the Nepali seats.<sup>45</sup> A few Praja Sammelan candidates and members of the scheduled caste League had also contested, but all were defeated at the polls. Thus in the first election held in the tiny Himalayan kingdom, an equal number of candidates was returned by both the major political parties of Sikkim, each having six seats in the Council.<sup>46</sup> The wedge was firmly and effectively driven between the Bhutiya-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities.

### Introduction of Dyarchy

Since no party enjoyed a majority in the Sikkim Council, the question of forming a government by the people's representatives did not arise. Although the Maharaja of Sikkim retained absolute powers, as announced by a Proclamation in March 1953, a diarchical system of administration was set up as a step towards the progressive association of the people with the administration of the kingdom. Consequently, the two elected leaders of the State Congress and the National Party, Kashiraj Pradhan and Sonam Tshehing respectively, were taken into the Executive Council, with the Dewan as its Chairman. The administration of Education, Public Health, Excise, Press and Publicity Transport, Bazars, forests and Public Works were transferred to the Executive Councillors elected by the people and the Darbar retained the administration of *Ecclesiastical, External affairs, State enterprises, Home and Police, Finance, Land Revenue, Rationing and Establishment*. The Executive Councillors were made responsible to the Darbar for the executive and administrative functions of the government.

The State Congress voiced strong opposition against the system and composition of such a complicated set up, maintaining that it fell short of popular aspirations. The critics said that the first general elections held in Sikkim instead of ushering in a democratic government proved a farce.<sup>47</sup> The Sikkim Darbar had no intention

to part with its powers and prerogatives which a democratic government would necessarily entail. The Darbar assiduously applied itself to sowing the seeds of discord among the three communities by playing up the probability of the tyranny of the majority community.<sup>48</sup> But in spite of these limitations, there is no denying the fact that political activity was accelerated in the tiny kingdom.

## **Proclamation of March 16, 1958 and Second Election**

### **November 1958**

After prolonged discussions between the Darbar and the representatives of the principal political parties in the State, the Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal made a proclamation on March 16, 1958.<sup>49</sup>

In pursuance of this Proclamation, Elections were again held for the second time in Sikkim in November 1958. Normally second elections to the Sikkim Council should have been held in August 1956 since section 7(c) of the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation, 1953 stipulated: "The Sikkim Council, unless sooner dissolved by the Maharaja, shall continue for three years from the date appointed for its first meeting."<sup>50</sup> But pending decision regarding future administrative arrangements, the Darbar extended the term of the Sikkim Council by a Proclamation.<sup>51</sup>

### **Sikkim on the eve of Second Election**

However, it may be pointed out here, that many changes had taken place in the kingdom since the first elections were conducted in March-May 1953. A seven year Development plan was in operation. A net work of roads and communications were being laid which had made more parts of the kingdom now easily accessible. Many administrative reforms had been introduced and the government administration was now more effectively extended to even the remote and distant parts of the state. There was, therefore, wider and more extensive political consciousness and a general feeling of participation in the processes of administration of the country. With these growing and important changes, political parties and organisations demonstrated slightly more mature political attitude. Emphasis was given on representative government and the removal of communal electorate, especially the abolition of the system of separate Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali constituencies. The demand for accession to India seemed to have receded into the background. It was in this setting that the Second Elections to the Sikkim Council were held.

The salient features of Sikkim's second elections were as under :

**(1) Membership enlarged**

The number of seats in the Sikkim Council were increased to twenty as against seventeen in 1953. Six seats were reserved for Bhutias and Lepchas, Six for the Nepalese, six for the Maharaja's nominees, one for a member of the Sangha, to be elected by an Electoral College, consisting of Lamas of the Sikkimese monasteries recognised by the Sikkim Darbar and one general seat with the whole of Sikkim serving as one single constituency. (Section 1 of the Proclamation).

**(2) Complicated Communal system of voting introduced**

The earlier system of election was abolished. Instead a system in which all the communities had to cast their votes together in a single election was introduced. In fact it was a very complicated system of communal voting. Section 2 (b) of the Proclamation laid down :

"The candidate securing the highest number of votes of the community which he represents will ordinarily be required to have secured also at least 15% of the total votes of the other community for which seats have been reserved to entitle him to be returned. If, however, he fails to secure 15% of the votes of the other community, the candidates securing the next highest votes of their own community and who have also succeeded in securing 15% of the votes of the other community will be eligible to be returned, provided the difference between the number of votes of their own community secured by them and the highest candidate does not exceed 15% of the total votes secured by the latter. If the difference is in excess of 15% the latter will be regarded as returned, notwithstanding that he shall not have secured 15% of the votes of the other community."<sup>52</sup>

Thus the most complicated voting procedure was adopted which could block the way of the most suitable candidates being elected. The primacy of communalism in the elections of November 1958 can be indisputably proved by the following tables indicating the results of the election.<sup>53</sup>

**Table "A"**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia- Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Gaden Tashi	181	431	11	623
2. Gompu Bhotia	106	1232	10	1348
3. Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa	169	1062	31	1262

Table "B"

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia- Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Kazi Norbu Wangdi	263	218	14	495
2. Dubo Bhotia	175	2037	24	2236
3. Nayan Tsering	145	611	13	769

In both these cases Gompu Bhotia and Dubo Bhotia defeated their rivals with an overwhelming majority, yet they were declared defeated on account of communal voting procedure and counting arrangements introduced by the Darbar in 1958. The above given Tables A and B prove without a shadow of doubt that communalism was deliberately placed as a stumbling block in the path of the candidates who enjoyed popular support. It looked absurd that according to the procedure laid down in the Proclamation of the Darbar, a candidate representing a particular community would not be declared elected even if he had polled highest number of votes, unless he could secure 15% of the votes of the other communities in that particular constituency. On account of this very complicated procedure of election, people like Gompu Bhotia and Dubo Bhotia were declared defeated although they had secured the overwhelming majority of the votes.

But despite this complicated communal voting procedure, Sikkim State Congress secured 8 of the 14 elected seats in the Sikkim Council which included One Bhotia-Lepcha seat and as well as the general seat.<sup>54</sup> This procedure of communal voting has hampered the growth of democratic institutions in the kingdom. The political power had not been given to the people in a major way.

### 3. Swatantra Dal (new Political Party)

On the eve of November 1958 elections a significant new development was the formation of a new political party, Swatantra Dal, a splinter group of the State Congress, under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa, who had been the President of State Congress since 1953 after the death of Tashi Tschering.<sup>55</sup> The Swatantra Dal could secure only one seat (Bhutia-Lepcha) in the elections. Unfortunately with elections coming up and the prospect of various government offices in sight, frictions had developed within the two major parties of Sikkim. The Sikkim National Party also ousted its President Sonam Tschering and elected Martam Topden in his place.

### 4. Unseating of the Members by the Election Tribunal

Rival parties made allegations of malpractices by some of the leaders. Swatantra Dal and some defeated candidates of National

Party filed petitions against some of the elected candidates with Darbar. An election Tribunal was appointed by the Darbar and as a result of its findings five elected members of the Sikkim Council, which included leaders like Kashiraj Pradhan, Nahakul Pradhan and Sonam Tschering, were deprived of their seats and removed from office in 1959.<sup>56</sup> The Darbar upheld the decision of the Tribunal and ordered a fresh election. The State Congress and the National Party were mainly affected by the verdict of the Tribunal, the former losing three seats and the latter two in the Sikkim Council.

### 5. Executive Council Enlarged

In February 1959, the new Executive Council was formed with enlarged membership of five persons. The two councillors were Kashiraj Pradhan and Martam Topden with the former being the senior councillor and Nahkul Pradhan, Norbu Wangdi and Chuksam Bhutia were designated deputies. The senior Executive Councillor having two deputies under him and the latter one.<sup>57</sup> Following the disqualifications of the candidates due to the verdict of the tribunal and the re-elections, the membership of the Executive Council changed to Martam Topden and Nahakul Pradhan as councillors with Norbu Wangdi, Chuksam Bhutia and Bhawajit Makhia as its deputies.<sup>58</sup>

### 6. Formation of Advisory Committee

In February 1959, the Maharaja issued a proclamation, which while extending wider powers to the Executive Council, instituted an Advisory Committee, comprised of all the five Executive Councillors, three senior Executive Officers of the State and the Dewan as its President. The Committee was empowered to discuss all matters of administration, including those subjects held by the Dewan.<sup>59</sup>

### 7. Representation for Monasteries

For the first time in the election of 1958 a seat in the Sikkim Council was reserved for the Sangha. In a note issued by the Sikkim Darbar on March 17 1958 with reference to the Proclamation dated 16th March, 1958, it was said :

“It has long been felt that, as the Monasteries and the Sangha have constituted such a vital and important role in the life of the *community since the earliest known history* of Sikkim, and have played a major part in the taking of decisions in the councils of the past, there should be a seat specifically reserved for the Sangha in the Sikkim Council. It is this reason that a seat has been provided specifically for their representation.”<sup>60</sup>



### 8. Introduction of General Seat

For the first time a general seat was also allocated. The above mentioned note said :

Both the Sikkim Congress and also some leading members of the other parties have from time to time expressed the need for representation in the council of such persons as have fixed habitation in Sikkim, but who do not fall under the category of Bhutia, Lepcha or Nepali. It is in response to these representations that it has been decided to constitute one additional General seat, although demands from some quarters have been for as many of the elected seats as one-third.<sup>61</sup>

These were some of the important features of Sikkim's second Elections held in 1958.

Thus Sikkim's second elections constituted as yet another important step towards the evolution of political consciousness in the state.

Certain important developments took place in Sikkim in the post November 1958 election period which had an immense bearing on the further development of political consciousness and evolution of the kingdom.

#### **Melli Joint Convention September 1959**

An important development in the political history of Sikkim took place when, after many vicissitudes, a joint convention of all the political parties of Sikkim—the Sikkim National Party, Sikkim State Congress, Sikkim Swatantra Dal, the Sikkim Scheduled Caste League, was convened by the Sikkim Swatantra Dal at Melli, Western Sikkim on 23-24 September 1959. The pressing and immediate necessity for the written constitution of the State was demanded by all parties. It was unanimously decided that an interim government should be formed until the framing of the constitution was finalised.<sup>62</sup>

#### **Singtam Conference of Political Parties October, 1959**

A second joint meeting of the representatives of the Sikkim State Congress, Sikkim National Party, Sikkim Swatantra Dal and Sikkim Schedule Caste League was held at Singtam in eastern Sikkim on October 22, 1959. It was attended by Kashi Raj Pradhan, Sonam Tschering, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Puranbahadur Khati and Chhudup Lepcha. The meeting passed several resolutions. The meeting resolved :

“Past experiences have clearly shown that the system of communal electorate is the stumbling block towards the realisation of a fully responsible and democratic government in Sikkim. The joint meeting is of the firm opinion that a full responsible and democratic

government could only be realised with the introduction of joint electorate system based on universal adult franchise as in India".<sup>63</sup>

Besides, they demanded that the legislative body of the State should be composed of the Maharaja and representatives of the people as follows :

Two representatives—to be nominated by the Maharaja to represent special interests.

Twenty two represen— to be elected by the people in a general election on the basis of joint electorate, elected by secret ballot by a universal adult franchise and with the following reservations :

Bhutia-Lepcha —9 seats

Nepali —9 seats

General —4 seats

**N.B.**—One seat being reserved for scheduled caste out of 4 general seats.<sup>64</sup>

It is interesting to note here that the leaders of the various political parties could not agree to any better arrangement except the much criticized "Parity formula" as was propounded by the Darbar in 1953. In the light of this recommendation made by different political parties in the State, the statement of policy issued by the Darbar in a note on March 17, 1958 seemed to be rational and reasonable and hence justified. It said :

"It is the desire of His Highness that the Government should be carried on equally by the two major groups of Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalis respectively, without the one community imposing itself or encroaching upon the other. It is to this end that the Chogyal has endeavoured always to direct his Government ; so that, with a constitution based on equality and justice, the communities should live in harmony with each other and that such harmony may always be maintained for the good of all his people."<sup>65</sup>

### **Sikkim National Congress**

Another most significant event of the contemporary history of Sikkim was the emergence of Sikkim National Congress, which made its debut in the politics of the country on 20 May 1960, as a powerful force in Sikkim's political landscape. "Keeping in view the futility of the existence of small political parties", said the resolution establishing this new party, "and bearing in mind the larger interests of the people of Sikkim, the four parties, namely, the Sikkim Swatantra Dal led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa, the Sikkim National Party led by Sonam Tschering, the Sikkim Praja Samme-

lan led by D.B. Tewari and the Sikkim State Congress (Progressive Group) led by C.D. Rai decided at a joint convention held at Singtam, sponsored by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Chakhung, to merge into one compact body to be known as the Sikkim National Congress.<sup>66</sup> The objectives of the new party, outlined in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Nehru were :

- (i) a constitutional monarchy for Sikkim ;
- (ii) a council based on communal parity, but elected by a joint electorate ; and
- (iii) an independent judiciary with a High Court established by a charter.

Hence with the emergence of the Sikkim National Congress as a significant political unit capable of tremendous influence on the Sikkimese people, the entire political picture of Sikkim underwent great changes.

Since its inception, the Sikkim National Congress has been demanding a written constitution incorporating fundamental rights, for codified laws and for representative government. The President of the Party, Kazi Lendhup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Chakhung, is not satisfied with the Royal Proclamation of 1953—revised in 1966 and 1969 and with the Durbar's contention, that it acts as the country's constitution. The system resembles the dyarchy under the Government of India Act of 1919.

### Interim Election 1960

In 1959 on account of the decision of the Election Tribunal the election of five candidates to the Council was set aside. The Chogyal had upheld the decision and ordered fresh elections. On account of these vacancies an interim election was held in 1960. Consequent to these elections the party position in the Sikkim Council on 1st June, 1960 was :

1.	Sikkim National Party (led by Martam Topden)	5 Seat (all Bhutia—Lepchas)
2.	Sikkim National Congress (led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa)	4 Seats (one Bhutia and 3 Nepalese)
3.	Sikkim State Congress (led by K.R. Pradhan)	3 Seats (all Nepalese)
4.	Sangha	1 Seat
5.	Seat Vacant	1
	Total	14 Seats (Elected Seats)
6.	Maharaja's Nominees	6 Seats
	Grand Total	20 Seats

The Sikkim National Party, having a strength of five, later roped in one more from the National Congress and claimed a majority in the Council and hence Senior Executive Councillorship also.<sup>67</sup>

### Reorganisation of Executive Council—Sikkim National Congress ignored

The Chogyal by a Proclamation appointed on June 1, 1960 Martam Topden as Senior Executive Councillor and one of his party colleagues as Deputy Executive Councillor. It is significant to note that no councillor from the Sikkim National Congress was taken into the Government, despite the fact that the Sikkim National Congress commanded second place in the Sikkim Council. This omission was greatly resented by the National Congress. There was a sharp criticism of the composition of the Executive Council and the leaders of the Sikkim National Congress even threatened to embark on a programme of Satyagraha.<sup>68</sup> On second thoughts, however, the party decided to send a seven men delegation to New Delhi consisting of Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Sonam Techering and C.D. Rai to express their "grievances" and present their "demands" to the Government of India.<sup>69</sup> There were outcries against the Darbar and the Dewan. Gradually the excitement and the fervour of the impending satyagraha had cooled down.

### Namchi Constituency Bye-election December 1960

In the Namchi bye-election, on account of complicated voting procedure Nidup Bhotia of Sikkim National Party was declared elected in spite of the fact that Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Sikkim National Congress had secured overwhelming majority of popular votes. The number of votes polled by the candidates in the bye-election are given in table below :<sup>70</sup>

Table "C"

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (Sikkim National Congress)	398	1877	2	2277
2. Nidup Bhotia (Sikkim National Party)	600	241	10	851
3. Phurgey Lama (Sikkim State Congress)	33	374	1	408

The defeat of Kazi provided a glaring example of the iniquitous communal voting system prevailing in Sikkim. Kazi Lhendup Dorji reacting on the results said, "This is the end. We will contest no more elections in this State. The Council is completely under Maharajkumar's power and there is no possibility of fair and free elections".<sup>71</sup> A country-wide civil disobedience movement was threatened.<sup>72</sup>

### **Political Parties Reiterate Demand for Reforms**

Early in 1962, the Sikkim Darbar again announced its intentions to hold new elections to the Sikkim Council. The Sikkim Council was dissolved on May 1, 1962.<sup>73</sup> Political activities reached new heights when the two political parties, the State Congress and the National Congress joined hands for a show down with the Government in order to compel sweeping political reforms. The State Congress even though it was weakened by a split in its ranks, did not give up its agitation for the democratization of Sikkim's administration. At the annual conference held at Singtam on March 2, 1962 under the chairmanship of Kashiraj Pradhan, it demanded more elective seats in the Council, and simultaneous reduction of nominated members from the existing one-third of the total number of seats to one-sixth. Another resolution demanded the introduction of joint electorate for all communities in the State. They demanded transfer of all administrative departments to the Executive Councillors chosen from among the elected representatives of the people.<sup>74</sup> Threats to boycott the elections were uttered. The National Congress passed a resolution :

"Taking into serious and thoughtful consideration the bitter lessons of the last fifteen years we received in the political life of Sikkim, this meeting of the all Sikkim National congress unanimously resolves, and is hereby resolved, that until and unless the communal voting system is abolished and a system of joint electorate on parity basis is introduced in its place, together with the materialisation of the much needed political reforms embodied in a written constitution, and also in accordance with the JOINT DECLARATION made, and signed, by both the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim State Congress at their joint meeting held at Rangpo on 9th August, 1960, the Sikkim National Congress shall fully boycott the forthcoming elections in Sikkim, and shall take resort to a Sikkim-wide non-violent Satyagraha movement. Thereupon the Sikkim National Congress, through this resolution, calls upon the people throughout Sikkim to get ready and be at hand, if need be, to whole-heartedly participate in the proposed Sikkim-wide non-violent Satyagraha movement and to make the same a real success."<sup>75</sup>

### **People's Consultative Committee**

While brisk preparations were being made to hold the third election in Sikkim, the Chinese in October 1962, launched a massive

attack on India and the election was postponed sine die. The Sikkim people's consultative committee, consisting of 31 members, was formed with the sole objective of advising the Government of Sikkim on defence measures necessary for the territorial integrity of Sikkim on November 26, 1962. The number of members chosen from different political parties to serve on the committee are given below in a table :

Table "D"

<i>Names of Political Parties, Independents etc</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Sikkim National Party	14
2. Sikkim State Congress	5
3. Sikkim National Congress	2
4. Independents	5
5. Servicemen	2
6. Sikkim Scheduled Caste League	1
	29

Besides these twenty-nine members, the Maharajkumar of Sikkim and the Dewan of Sikkim were to serve as its President and Chairman respectively.

On account of negligible representation given to the National Congress, it submitted a memorandum simultaneously to the Maharaja of Sikkim and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India to revive the Sikkim Council of 1958 or to broadbase people's representation in the administration or to dissolve the Executive Council so that the administration of the state could be run directly by the Dewan during the period of emergency.<sup>76</sup>

However, the demands for early elections and political reforms were continued to be made by various parties. It was said that there is nothing, during the state of emergency to prevent the authorities from introducing political reforms to the satisfaction of the people at large. It was contended that on account of the proximity of the border, where heavy concentrations are reported, it is all the more necessary that the state and the parties are unified and that they make united efforts whole-heartedly for the defence of the country.<sup>77</sup> It was said that the political parties were fully alive to the imperative need for cooperating with the Government of India in defending Sikkim from a possible threat of Chinese aggression.<sup>78</sup>

In spite of the limitations imposed by a complicated communal voting procedure, and postponement of elections in 1962-63 during the last two decades of intense political activity in the tiny state, a drastic and extensive process of social, political and economic change had taken place in Sikkim. During the last-twenty years a brief period in the context of the development of a country, Sikkim had emerged as modern welfare state from the dungeons of feudalism. Revolutionary changes had taken place since 1947 when the seeds of political consciousness were first sown in the kingdom. A renaissance, a reformation, a commercial and economic revolution, and liberal changes had occurred in the kingdom. The country had completed two development plans with liberal Indian aid and assistance. On account of vastly improved roads and communications, the "splendid" isolation, had been broken as a result of the free movement of ideas and people from outside. It was in this background that the Chogyal's Proclamation of December 21, 1966 paved the ground for country's third election.

Although the state council and Executive Council Proclamation 1953 had expressly laid down in section 7(a) that "the Sikkim Council shall be summoned to meet twice at least in every year, and six months shall intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session,"<sup>79</sup> fresh elections to the council could not be held for nine years due to the state of emergency declared in Sikkim on account of Chinese aggression in 1962. The critics alleged that the Council had been dead since 1962 clearly showed that the solemn words of the Proclamation had been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The political parties charged that the Darbar took advantage of the Sino-Indian border dispute, to scuttle people's demand for a democratic pattern of administration.

### **Third Election March 1967**

However, Sikkim went to the polls for the third time in its history in March 1967. The peaceful manner in which the election was conducted in Sikkim was a matter of achievement and pride. It constituted another landmark in the political development of Sikkim. Following March 1967 elections politics in Sikkim had reached an interesting phase. The salient features of Sikkim's third election were as under :

#### **1. Increase in the Elective element**

In keeping with the Darbar's policy of "associating the people more and more closely with the governance of the state, there had been a steady increase in the elective element of the Council. The Council was enlarged to twenty four members and the elected seats were raised to eighteen. The number of Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese seats was raised to seven each. Three members were to be elected

by the General constituency of which one was to be a general seat, one from the scheduled castes and another from Tsongs. One member was to be elected by the electoral college of the Sanghas belonging to the monasteries recognised by the Chogyal.<sup>80</sup>

The increase in the Bhutia-Lepcha and Sikkimese Nepali seat was welcomed by all the political parties but the reservation of seats for the scheduled castes and Tsongs was criticised by the Sikkim National Congress (which captured the maximum number of seats in the election) and the Sikkim State Congress.

## 2. Sectional Reservation

As stated above one seat each was reserved for the Tsongs and the Scheduled castes, the reservation of seats for Tsongs and the Scheduled castes was, however, deplored by both the state congress and National Congress. Kashiraj Pradhan, President of the State Congress said: "the proclamation has slowed down the process of democratisation. All our attempts to remove communalism from Sikkim politics have been in vain, casteism has been introduced instead... This trend if not checked, will lead Sikkim one day to communal abyss."<sup>81</sup> The national executive of the National Congress also condemned it. It said: "it has been issued in total disregard of the popular demands and in effect, it seeks to disintegrate the Sikkimese people."<sup>82</sup> It was argued by the National Congress that the election results have clearly shown that the new seats lacked support even from the communities whom they had sought to represent. The pattern of voting by the scheduled castes and the Tsongs for the general seat had shown that sixty percent of them voted for the National Congress candidates and twenty percent for the State Congress candidates, who were both opposed to the creation of these reserved seats, as against only twenty percent for the National Party which alone had supported the creation of these new seats on the basis of sectional reservation.<sup>83</sup>

It may be pointed out here that the Tsongs, known also as Limbus, are claimed to be indigenous Nepali immigrants who had swarmed into Sikkim during the last two centuries in search of work and profitable settlement. It is stated that Limbuana in Nepal, which borders on both Sikkim and Tibet, used to form part of Sikkim till Prithvinarain Shah of Nepal conquered it. The descendants and spill over of the people hailing from this region now settled in West Sikkim are counted under this category. Without paying due heed to their indigenous origin, taxes had been collected as if they were immigrant Nepalese and thus their special identity had tended to get lost. By the sectional reservation of a seat for them in 1967 election, this was being sought to be restored. The estimated number of Tsongs is about ten thousand out of which about five thousand were made eligible to vote.<sup>84</sup> The Chogyal reiterated that the Tsongs were not Nepalese although they had so



far been "lumped" with the Nepalese. They are a distinct identity in themselves and as such have now been given a separate seat.<sup>85</sup>

3. As in 1958, except for the general and reserved seats, for the other fourteen elective seats allotted on party basis, it was obligatory for the successful candidate to secure a minimum of 15 per cent of votes from the other community also. But unlike 1958, when some of the candidates who got a wide measure of approval from their own communities, lost the election since they had failed to get the required minimum number of votes from the other community, there was, however, not a single case in 1967 where the minimum restrictive vote may have defeated a popular candidate. This result testified to the efforts that the candidates made to secure their approval from the other community and this general concern to be acceptable to all the communities was responsible for the remarkable degree of harmony that characterised the entire election campaign.

4. The Proclamation laid down that a person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Sikkim Council unless he was ordinarily a resident in the area from which he was a candidate or paid for the preceding financial year land revenue or local tax to the Government for the landed property or house owned in his name in the area from which he was a candidate. The executive committee of the Sikkim National Congress at its meeting held on December 28, 1966 expressed its opposition to any such restrictions and had urged the Darbar to allow any contestant to fight elections from any constituency in Sikkim. It said, the restriction on contesting from only such constituency where he had either a house or some other property is "unique to Sikkim in as much as all democratic countries allow their citizens to contest elections from any constituency in the country."<sup>86</sup>

Replying to such criticisms, the Chogyal said that these arrangements are correct and justified because a candidate should have a live interest in the constituency which he contests and can identify himself with the people.<sup>87</sup>

5. The honours of the election had gone to Sikkim National Congress which secured eight elected seats out of the eighteen. The popularity of the National Congress was seen from the votes polled in the General seat election. The party President Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa polled more votes than the total votes of his two rivals put together. While Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa polled 8384 votes, his opponents Phurgey Lama of State Congress and Ramjiwan Prasad of National Party could muster 3618 and 3226 votes respectively.<sup>88</sup> The Election results party-wise were as under :

Table "E"

<i>Name of the Party</i>	<i>Bhutia-Lepcha seats</i>	<i>Nepali</i> <i>seats</i>	<i>General</i> <i>seats</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Sikkim National Congress	2	5	1	8
2. Sikkim National Party	5	—	—	5
3. Sikkim State Congress	—	2	—	2

The Sikkim State Congress, the oldest political party in the State fared miserably and could manage to secure only two elective seats.

The other three sectional elective seats were held by the representatives of Tsongs, the monasteries and the scheduled castes and none of them adhered to any distinct political organisation. The Council was completed with the nomination of six members by the Chogyal, three of whom were government servants, and the other three were the representatives of the public without party affiliation<sup>90</sup>.

6. A constant feature of Sikkimese politics has been that almost on the eve of every election some or the other political party had cropped up on Sikkim's political landscape. On the eve of 1967 election, a new political organization, Sikkim Independent Front, was formed under the leadership of one Miss Ruth Karthak Lepchani. In a statement to the Press, Lepchani said: "In Sikkim there is a strong feeling of frustration amongst the educated masses that the political parties in Sikkim have done nothing to alleviate the suffering of the masses."<sup>91</sup> However, the Front could not make any impression on the Sikkim electorate as it failed to get any seat in the council.

Thus the third General elections took Sikkim a step further in its development of political consciousness.

### **Sikkim's Fourth Election 1970**

Sikkim, the microcosm of the Himalayan borderland, went to polls fourth time in April, 1970. The political activity was accelerated by the Proclamation of the Chogyal Palden Tondup Namgyal Sikkim Subjects Act, 1969 when he promulgated the Representation of Sikkim Council, the state had made strides in all spheres of the life of the Sikkimese. The country had achieved economic progress due to the implementation of three five year plans. The people through the three preceding elections had understood the political processes ushered in the country since 1953. It was in this background that this small kingdom went through the experience of the fourth

election. The important features of the fourth election were as under :—

1. A record number of 114 nomination papers were filed for 18 seats. After scrutiny and withdrawals 72 candidates were left in the field.<sup>92</sup>

2. For the first time in the election campaigns in Sikkim since 1953, during the course of election campaigning, demand for the revision of treaty was raised at public meetings.<sup>93</sup> Sikkim State Congress which in 1947-48 pleaded for Sikkim's integration with India, now in 1970 pleaded for revision of the 1950 treaty. Nahakul Pradhan, the then President of Sikkim State Congress told a rally that it was time the Indo-Sikkim Treaty signed twenty years ago was revised.<sup>94</sup>

3. Both the Sikkim State Congress and National Congress had published their election manifestoes. Both the parties demanded written constitution, fundamental rights for the citizens, better and adequate educational facilities and other social and economic reforms. They pleaded for responsible government with the Chogyal as a constitutional monarch.<sup>95</sup>

4. Martam Topden (National Party), Nahakul Pradhan (State Congress), Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (National Congress), Ashoke Tschering (National Party), Harka Bahadur Basnet (National Party) and Kaloo Rai (State Congress) were appointed new Executive Councillors.

5. Out of the eighteen elective seats, National Party captured seven, Sikkim National Congress five (which included the General Seat also), State Congress four and Independents two.<sup>96</sup>

6. A new political party, Sikkim Janta Party, under the Presidentship of Lal Bahadur Basnet was formed on the eve of election. But it could not capture any seat. Lal Bahadur Basnet resigned both from the Party membership and its leadership after elections.<sup>97</sup>

This is how the march of Sikkimese towards the development of their political consciousness and evolution of its political system brought them during the last twenty three years in their urge to secure a responsible government.

### **Sikkim's fifth Election, January-February 1973**

The 1973 elections to the Sikkim Council have proved to be a turning point in the political and constitutional development of Sikkim. In its wake, Sikkim witnessed a political upheaval which has radically transformed the political scenario of this landlocked kingdom. The salient features of these elections were as under :—

### (1) Emergence of Sikkim Janta Congress

On the eve of the election, the Sikkim State Congress and the Janta Party were merged into a new political party, "the Sikkim Janta Congress". At their joint meeting held on August 15, 1972 at Gangtok, it was resolved that "Sikkim politics have become wholly stagnant and there appears to be no prospect of any change in the immediate future. With a view to improving this State of affairs and bringing about some vital changes in the body-politic, it was resolved to form a new and progressive party by combining the forces of the Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim Janta Party. The new party was to be called "the Sikkim Janta Congress". But the party could capture only two seats in the elections.

(2) Fifty-five candidates contested for 18 elective seats of the 24 member Council.

(3) Out of 18 elected seats, the National Party captured 11 seats (7 Bhutia-Lepcha seats, 2 Nepali seats, 1 Sangha seat and a scheduled caste candidate), the Janta Congress 2 (Nepali seats) and the National Congress 5. The veteran Janta Congress leader Nahkul Pradhan was defeated by Kazi Lhendup Dorji in the General constituency.

4. The March-April 1973 crisis was to great extent the result of these elections. As the counting of votes for the 24-member Council began on January 29, the National Congress led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji and the Sikkim Janta Congress headed by Mr. K.C. Pradhan walked out, charging the Presiding Officer with "aiding and abetting the Sikkim National Party in rigging the elections." They said they were boycotting the counting in "utter desperation". The Sikkim National Congress and the Janta Congress joined together and formed a Joint Action Council (JAC). Their agitation, rocked this strategically located kingdom and engulfed it with political turmoil. The whole administration was paralysed and the Government of India had to take over the administration on April 8, 1973 on the request of the Chogyal. The political parties were demanding political and administrative reforms, introduction of universal adult franchise and the principle of one man one vote.

However this agitation has completely transformed the direction of political life in the State. An agreement between the Chogyal, leaders of political parties in the kingdom and the Government of India was signed on May 8, 1973 at Gangtok about the administrative and political set up of the state. The Chogyal has been made a constitutional ruler. The agreement calls for the establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim, with a more democratic constitution, the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and greater legislative and executive powers

for the elected representatives of the people. It meant the ushering in of a representative and responsible form of Government in place of paternalistic "guided democracy". In sum, political reforms are the beginning of a new phase in Sikkim. ✓

### **Problem of Political Parties in Sikkim**

During the course of preceding analysis of the development of political consciousness in Sikkim, the development of political parties in the kingdom of Sikkim has also been traced. Though political parties had sprung up in this kingdom rather early, they have not been able to exert an influence on the life and politics of the state to the extent desired. To a great extent the basis of political organisation in Sikkim has been the ethnological division of the population into the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. This fact retarded the growth of a healthy, strong and effective political organisation in the kingdom. Although the two largest parties—Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim State Congress claim (and to some extent they possess too) multiracial character of their parties but communal considerations come up in the actual working of the Sikkimese society. This has retarded the healthy growth of political institutions in the country. In spite of the fact that the political parties in Sikkim raised their voice for a responsible government in late 1947, they have not been able to achieve it till this day. This is largely on account of a lack of disciplined, scientifically organized party system. The Party structure in Sikkim suffers from undermentioned shortcomings.

#### **1. Lack of Participation by the younger generation**

There is a lack of active participation by the younger generation of the Sikkimese. The leaders of early fifties continued to dominate the political scene till 1970. The result has been that there is an absence of dynamic and bold leadership. The young educated section of the Sikkimese society finds lucrative jobs as soon as they finish their education.

#### **2. Weak Political Cadres**

Almost all the political parties suffer from weak political cadres at the village and other levels. On account of this shortcoming, a large body of people cannot get an opportunity to share in the development of party programme and activities.

#### **3. Lack of ideological basis and Party Programmes**

Normally the individual citizen often finds the party meaningful in that it provides a focus for his emotional reactions to the social and economic forces that act upon him. But none of the political parties in Sikkim, has any clear cut economic and social programme. In absence of the clear cut economic programmes and social policies,

a dynamic and progressive political life is difficult to achieve. Except on the eve of elections, political life in the kingdom becomes stale and stagnant. An effective party system requires firstly that the parties are able to bring forth programmes to which they commit themselves and secondly that the parties possess sufficient internal cohesion to carry out these programmes.

#### 4. Lack of Party System with sufficient party loyalty

To make party policy effective the parties have the right and the duty to announce the terms that shall govern the participation by the rank and file in the common enterprise of capturing political power in a state. But Sikkim's politics has shown lack of loyalty and discipline in the working of political parties in the state. Almost on the eve of every election in Sikkim the factious spirit and lack of loyalty lead to the emergence of splinter groups and factions. This fragmentation is the inevitable outcome of the proliferation of parties as a result of splits and schisms. For example, the National Congress which won eight seats in 1967 broke in two when the Chogyal nominated B.B. Gurung one of the eight, to his executive council. Kazi Lhendup Dorji, best known among the party leaders in Sikkim, saw this as an attempt to undermine his position. As a result Gurung was expelled by the party but he carried a section of it with him to form a dissident rump. The National Congress had fielded 17 candidates in 1970 election and had the satisfaction of seeing five of them returned, the largest score achieved by any of the contending groups. The rump put up eight who were all defeated. But Gurung, as it happened being of Nepali ethnic stock, his departure from the party has to a great extent weakened the alliance between Lepchas on the one hand, and the Nepali elements in the population on the other. This probably explains the decline the party has suffered in the recent elections.<sup>98</sup>

#### 5. Communal basis of Party Structure

The basis of political organisation to a great extent is community oriented. *In fact the chief obstacle* to the achievement of a responsible government has been the division between Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese.<sup>99</sup> Sikkim National Party has under its fold mostly Bhutia-Lepcha people. In fact it was propped up against a possible sweeping off the interests of these two communities by predominantly powerful Nepalese. All through its history except for a lone seat in 1970 election, it has been able to capture only Bhutia-Lepcha seats. Now defunct Sikkim State Congress claimed to be multiracial. The first two Presidents of the Sikkim State Congress have been Tashi Tschering (1947-53) and Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (1953-58). The latter resigned in 1958 to lead the newly created Swatantra Dal. Sikkim National Congress and the newly established Janta Congress have tried to be multiracial. It must be said to

the credit of the main political parties, the National Congress and the Janata Congress and even the predominantly Lepcha-Bhutia National Party that of late they have made a conscious endeavour to build their movements on secular foundations.

The party system, if it has to be strengthened for attaining power in a democratic government, needs selfless, devoted and honest leadership. Instead Sikkim presents chaotic scene where lust for personal power and the lure of the public offices deviate many a political leaders from their declared and avowed objectives. Of late political parties like National Congress and Janata Congress gave an unhealthy preference for populist agitation. This was amply borne out by mass uprising in the kingdom in April 1973.

However, in spite of these lacunas in the working and development of political party structure in the state, Sikkim happens to be the first state in the Himalayas where the seeds of political consciousness were developed at a very early stage. Comparatively Sikkimese society to day is greatly politicized society and the political activity in the kingdom has reached at a very interesting stage.

## 6. Sikkim Council

Sikkim Council symbolised the legislative branch of the Sikkimese administration. Sikkim Council was set up in 1953 by a Proclamation of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal in March 1953.<sup>100</sup> The State Council and Executive Council Proclamation was the result of serious and animated discussions, accusations and recrimination among the various political parties in Sikkim as well as the deliberations of the Advisory Committee. This Proclamation as amended from time to time had set the powers and composition of the Council.

Since 1966 it had been designated as Sikkim Council.<sup>101</sup> Earlier, it was known as the State Council.

### Composition of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council had been successfully enlarged since 1953. Till December 1972, besides the President, the Sikkim Council consisted of twenty four members. The Council consisted of :

- (a) A President who was nominated and appointed by the Chogyal. Earlier the Dewan of Sikkim and later on the Principal Administrative Officer had been entrusted with the duty to preside over its deliberations. Afterwards the Sidlon of Sikkim presided over its meetings.
- (b) Seven Bhutia-Lepcha members representing five constituencies in Sikkim.
- (c) Seven Sikkimese Nepalese.

- (d) One General Seat representing the whole of Sikkim.
- (e) One Tsong representing the Tsong community all over Sikkim.
- (f) One Lama to be elected by all the Sanghas belonging to the monasteries recognized by the Chogyal of Sikkim.
- (g) One scheduled caste-representing the scheduled castes all over Sikkim.
- (h) Six seats were filled by nomination at the discretion of the Chogyal. (Section 3 of the Sikkim Subjects Act, 1969).<sup>102</sup>

In 1953 when the Council was first established, it had besides the President twelve elected (six Bhutia-Lepcha and six Nepalese) and five nominated members only.

### **Manner of election**

All the voters in a particular constituency cast their votes together in a single election. But the candidate securing the highest number of votes of the community which he represented would ordinarily be required to have secured also at least 15 per cent of the total votes of the rest of the electors to entitle him to be returned. If, however, he failed to secure 15 percent of the total votes of the rest of the electors it would not have entitled him to be returned. If, however, he failed to secure 15 percent of the votes of the rest of the electors, the candidate securing the next highest votes of his own community and who had also succeeded in securing 15 percent of the votes of the aforesaid rest would have been eligible to be returned, provided the difference between the number of the votes of his own community secured by him and the highest candidate did not exceed 15 per cent of the total votes of his own community secured by the latter. If the difference was in excess of 15 percent, the latter would have been regarded as returned, notwithstanding that he would not have had secured 15 percent of the votes of the aforesaid rest (Section 4(b) Representation of Sikkim's Subjects Act, 1969).<sup>103</sup>

### **Qualifications for the membership of the Sikkim Council**

Elaborate qualifications had been laid down for the membership of the Council. A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Sikkim Council unless he :

- (a) was a subject of Sikkim,
- (b) was not less than thirty years of age on the date fixed as the last date for filling nomination for the seat for which he was a candidate,
- (c) was ordinarily a resident in the area from which he was a candidate or paid, for the preceding financial year, land



Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa  
of Chakhung, *President*, Sikkim  
Congress and the first *Chief*  
*Minister* of Sikkim.



Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa with his  
wife, The Kazini Saheba, Elisa-Maria of  
Chakhung.

revenue or local tax to the Government for the landed property or house owned in his name in the area from which he was a candidate,

- (d) possessed such other qualifications as may have been prescribed by the Chogyal in this behalf. (Section V)<sup>104</sup>

### Sessions of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council normally met at least twice a year. Section 7(a) of the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation laid down: "The State Council shall be summoned to meet twice at least in every year, and six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session."<sup>105</sup>

The Sikkim Council, unless dissolved sooner by the Chogyal, had a tenure of three years.

The Chogyal, however, could summon the Council at such time and place as he thought fit. He prorogued or dissolved the Council.

The Chogyal could address the Council or send messages to it in regard to a matter pending before it or otherwise. (Section 8).

Every member of the Sikkim Council before taking his seat made and subscribed before the Chogyal or any person appointed in that behalf by the Chogyal, an oath of affirmation.

### Forms of Business

The business of the Council normally took three forms—Questions, Resolutions and Legislations.

The Council had limited power of legislation. The assent of Chogyal was required for any legislation passed by the Council to become a regulation.

A fortnight's notice was required for moving questions, resolutions or legislative proposals by a member.

### Powers of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council enjoyed only limited powers. Subject to the assent of the Chogyal, the Sikkim Council could enact laws for the peace, order and good government of Sikkim. However, without the previous sanction of the Chogyal, the Sikkim Council could not make or take into consideration any law affecting reserved subjects pertaining to Ecclesiastical, External Affairs, State Enterprises, Home and Police, Finance, Land Revenue, Rationing, Establishment Departments.

The Sikkim Council, apart from the limitations imposed on it relating to the above mentioned Departments, had no power to

